

The Influence of Visa Restrictions on the Choice of Travel Destination among the Academic and Senior Staff of Michael Okpara University of Agriculture, Umudike

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Abstract

This research evaluated the influence of visa restrictions on the choice of travel destination among academic and senior staff of Michael Okpara University of Agriculture, Umudike (MOUUAU). The travel and tourism industry has witnessed a lot of restrictions imposed by nation-states for various reasons, while a hot debate rages among scholars of the positive and negative influences restrictions have on tourism destinations, this study tried to understand the to what extent the restrictions influence the choice of travel destinations among academic and senior staff of MOUUAU. Guided by three research questions, the research tried to apply the Random Utility Maximization (RUM) model to sample respondents' opinions. Data for the study was collected using a twenty item structured questionnaire which made use of simple descriptive statistics and a four-point scale. Simple frequency percentage and mean statistics were used to analyze the data generated by the research. The findings of the analysis proved that even though there are various forms of visa restrictions experienced by the academic and senior staff of MOUUAU, these restrictions are not really considered by the respondents when choosing their travel destinations. The study found out that visa denials, being allowed limited time within the host country, outrageous visa requirement(s) and ineligibility to apply were the major forms of visa restrictions experienced among the academic and senior staff of MOUUAU. The study also found security, curbing illegal immigration, wrong application format, ineligibility and incomplete information as the main causes of the restrictions experienced. Analysis of the mean response of respondents on the suggested ways of minimizing visa restrictions experienced indicated that respondents generally agreed that making visa application process and requirement open, orientating visa officials towards a pro-tourism approach, reducing visa issuance criteria, devising other means of securing a country other than travel restrictions and developing an international standard for visa issuance were ways of minimizing the forms of visa restrictions experienced. The study finally tried to make suggestions and recommendations on carrying out more studies to understand other factors which influence to a greater extent the choice of travel destinations among travelers in general. The work also recommends carrying out a similar study on a different social group in order to verify its findings.

Keywords: Travel destination; Tourism industry

Introduction

A careful examination of the concept of consumer behavior would reveal a mutual relationship between available products and services and consumer choices. Generally, a consumer's choice is influenced by many factors which include price, income, substitute products, health, culture, religion, legislations etc., in tourism particularly, consumers (tourists) have an array of destinations to choose from. Their choice of a destination is influenced by factors such as the cost of the tour package, the tourists' expectations (needs), the method/type of transportation, the level of security at the destination, the laws and legislations governing the destination among others. Economic policy, cultural, and geographic factors largely determine the destination of travelers each year [1].

Franklin [2] defines tourism as the sum of the phenomena and relationships arising from the travel and stay of non-residents in so far as they do not lead to permanent residence and not connected with any earning activity. Tourism is the movement of people from one geographical location (usually their place of residence) to another location for the purpose of leisure, business or any other activity which does not relate to income earning at the place visited for at least twenty-four (24) hours and not more than one consecutive year [3]. Franklin [2] stated that tourism in itself is an attitude to the world or a way of seeing the world. It involves the totality of the tourist's experience from the moment he plans the trip to the time he returns to his home and the reminiscence afterwards. Tourism Society of England in Holloway [4] also defined tourism in terms of particular activities selected by

choice and undertaken outside the home environment. It may or may not involve overnight stay away from home. Tourism comprises the activities of persons travelling to and staying in places outside their usual environment for not more than one consecutive year for leisure, business or other purposes. Holloway [4] further stated that these definitions have been quoted at length because they reveal how broadly the concept of tourism must be defined in order to embrace all forms of the phenomenon and how exceptions can be found for even the most narrowly focused definitions. Cook et al. [5] defined tourism as the temporary movement of people outside their normal places of work and residence, the activities undertaken during their stay in those destinations and the facilities created to cater for their needs. According to Sharma tourism is the act of travel for predominantly recreational or leisure purposes and also refers to the provision of services in support of this act.

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The World Tourism Organization [6] defined a tourism destination as a physical space in which visitors spend at least one night and is made up of tourism products such as support services and attraction, and tourism resources with physical and administrative boundaries that define its management, image and perceptions of market competitiveness. A tourist destination according to Popescu and Rotariu is defined as a geographical area that has a critical mass of development that can satisfy the objectives of the tourist. A tourist destination is a country, state, region, city or town which is marketed or markets itself as a place for tourists to visit [7]. Also Srinivas refers broadly to destination as an area where tourism is a relatively important activity and where the economy may be significantly influenced by tourism revenues.

Tourism could be in three (3) major forms namely; domestic tourism, inbound tourism and outbound tourism. The last two forms make up international tourism [6]. Domestic tourism according to WTO involves the undertaking of tourism trips by the citizens or residents of a country within the borders of the country while international tourism involves cross border tourism trips.

According to Holloway [4] a destination can be a particular resort or town, a region within a country, the whole country or even a larger area of the globe. Defining a destination is probably one of the most difficult tasks in the study of tourism, it could be said to be the principal purpose of all tourism trips [4]. Swarbrooke defined destination as larger areas that include a number of individual attractions together with the support services required by tourists.

For the purpose and context of this study, the work will view destination as the tourist receiving country or the host country.

In discussing destinations one must bear in mind two important considerations. First, they have both physical and psychological characteristics; that is to say, the image of a destination consists of physical attributes (attractions and amenities, buildings, landscapes) together with perceptions allied to the destination which includes general hospitality of the host country, alienation and atmosphere generated while in the destination. Secondly, destinations have very different appeals to different markets. It is paramount that the appeal of destinations is varied, this allows the opportunity for tourism to be developed in almost any country and to almost every region [4].

According to Seddighi and Theocarous understanding how tourists select the destinations they visit is central to destination marketers so they can decide upon which marketing strategies to use to influence consumer behavior. At a simplistic level, every traveler is faced with a range of motives. In the case of business travel, this is often not a choice-related form of travel and is dedicated by employment needs, although conference and incentive travel may be influenced by choice. The attitudes and perception of the prospective tourist towards alternative destinations leads to different preferences, as a multi-stage process. This also indicates the importance of buyer behavior as a key element in destination choice [5]. Middleton and Clarke indicate consumer behavior have traditionally emphasized price as a key determinant of a purchase but growing consumer sophistication has seen destination image, travel regulations and other non-rational considerations and attitudes influence buyer behavior in the travel business. Sharma identified the following factors as determinants of the choice of destination among tourists in the tourism industry generally;

- Availability of disposable income.
- Available time for leisure.

- Tourism infrastructures such as the mode of transportation and the form of accommodation at the destination.
- Legal restrictions on exit and entry into the various destinations.

Ashok [8] stated that work related travel and tourism destination choices are influenced by a broad range of factors in both the generating region and the destination. Factors like availability of cheaper and convenient transport, fewer or no restrictions on travel, availability of a mass information on various destinations and newer marketing techniques often take center stage in deciding where to visit [9].

Whatever be the reason for a trip, one thing is paramount- certain documents must be obtained to be allowed into foreign spaces. These documents include valid international passport, visa of the intended country of visit, health insurance and so on. A visa according to the Etymology Dictionary is a conditional authorization granted by a country to a foreigner allowing them to enter and temporarily remain within or to leave that country; It further stated that visas typically include limits on the duration of the foreigner's stay, territory within the country they may enter, the dates they may enter, the number of permitted visits or an individual's right to work in the country. Neumayer [10] stated that visas can be categorized according to the purpose of issue, method of issue and by number of entry times allowed by the visa. Certain conditions may warrant denial or refusal of visa to an applicant who has applied to be granted access into a foreign country. These conditions are contained in the visa policy and form part of or the main body of visa restrictions. Restrictions are rules or laws that limit or controls what people can do. According to the Oxford dictionary restriction is a limiting condition or measure, especially a legal one.

According to Neumayer [10] visa restrictions are rules and laws countries establish in order to check and control the flow of visitors in and out of the country and to prevent illegal immigration and other criminal activities. Emerging issues of visa restrictions, increased cases of stringent visa policies, incessant visa denials and travel bans imposed on nationals of certain countries has bedeviled the travel and tourism industry since the wake of the September 11 terrorist attacks on the United States of America. The vast majority of states impose visa restrictions on travelers from some foreign countries. Such restrictions are likely to deter foreign visitors from affected countries.

According to Sangkakom and Suwannarat tourism has become a highly competitive business for tourist destinations over the world, competitive advantage is no longer natural, but increasingly driven by science, information technology and innovation. This global spread of tourism in industrialized and developed states has produced economic and employment benefits in many related sectors-from construction to agriculture and telecommunications. These opportunities can be fully harnessed by the destination which portrays itself as the most convenient place to visit.

San-Andres [11] identified and grouped determinants of tourist destination choices into exogenous and endogenous factors; He further identified endogenous factors as those that are more directly related to, or influenced by tourism development policy. Examples include connectivity, safety, awareness, and entry requirements (visa etc.). Many countries use visa restrictions as a mechanism to prevent entry to unwelcome travelers. The cost and hassle of obtaining a visa represent an important hurdle for many travelers, as it forces them to submit an application to the consular office of their intended destination, which can ask for processing fees, impose long waiting times, and possibly deny the visa with or without any cogent reasons. Political,

economic, and security matters use to lie behind entry restrictions of people at country borders [12]; However, it further stated that all these regulations present indirect, but clear effects on other sectors (and economic flows) and the big question is “how much does these restrictions influence the destination selection process of the intending travelers or visitors?”

Songa et al. [13] while studying the impact of strict visa regime employed by the United Kingdom (UK) immigrations service during the 2012 Olympic games in London noted that an important number of tourists from several countries complained about the tight restrictions on travel and visa requirements hitting the tourism industry hard, prompting many travelers to decide to spend their holidays elsewhere as a result. The British Office for National Statistics reported that foreign tourists visiting the UK during August 2012, while the Olympic Games reached its momentum, fell 5 per cent compared to the same time on previous years, a drop which is being blamed on arduous visa restrictions encountered [13].

In recent times, the tourism industry has witnessed a lot of restrictions and travel bans imposed on prospective tourists. This trend has led to long standing arguments between researchers, analysts and major players in the industry about its influence on the choice of destination by tourists. Froelich and Bhattacharjee [14] stated that stringent visa restrictions have created much concern among business groups, research centers and universities of undue delay in granting visas and keeping out students, scientists, businessmen, and tourists whose entry would be beneficial to the country’s interest.

It is pertinent to state that although many studies have been conducted on the area of visa restriction and its effect on the travel and tourism industry, not much attention has been paid to the resounding influence visa restriction has on the choice of destination among intending travelers and while other research works have gone a long way in outlining the benefits and detriments of visa restriction to the industry, this work seeks to find out the importance travelers attach to visa restriction when deciding their destination of visit.

According to the United Nations World Tourism Organization [15] in a world where tourist arrivals have surpassed 1 billion of travels along the past year, ignoring the impact of visa restrictions on international travel could have serious effects on economic receipts of nations. It is against this backdrop that this study seeks to find out the role visa restrictions play when academic and senior staff of Michael Okpara University of Agriculture, Umudike (MOUAAU) choose their travel destinations.

Since most studies carried out on factors that influence the choice of destination tends to focus on socio-economic and cost based factors like income, exchange rate, cost of the trip, social class, age, sex, religion, culture etc. this work seeks to throw more light on the role played by visa regulations and restrictions in the choice of destination, it also seeks to determine if information about visa restriction helps define the destination to be visited by academic and senior staff of MOUAAU.

Methodology

Research objectives

The main objective of this work is to assess the influence of visa restriction on the choice destination among the academic and senior staff of Michael Okpara University of Agriculture, Umudike (MOUAAU) Abia State, Nigeria.

Specific objectives;

- To assess the forms of visa restriction experienced by academic and senior staff of MOUAAU.
- To determine causes of visa restrictions imposed on intending travelers by some countries.
- To determine ways of minimizing visa restrictions for a more convenient destination selection process by MOUAAU staff.
- Research questions
- What are the forms of visa restrictions experienced by the academic and senior staff of MOUAAU?
- What are the causes of visa restrictions imposed on travelers by some countries?
- What are the ways of minimizing visa restrictions for a more convenient destination selection process by MOUAAU staff?

Research design

The research design adopted for this study was a survey design.

Area of the study

The study was carried out in Michael Okpara University of Agriculture, Umudike (MOUAAU), Abia State, Nigeria. The university is an institution which specializes in the study of courses related to agriculture.

Population for the study

The population for the study covers the academic staff and the senior staff cadre of the non-academic staff. The population of the study comprised 2,359 persons (1,026 academic staff and 1,333 senior staff) (office of the registrar MOUAAU).

Sample/sampling technique

Taro Yamane’s formula was used to determine the sample size of 342 from the population. Purposive random sampling technique was used for the study.

Instrument for data collection

The instrument for data collection of this study was a twenty (20) items structured questionnaire.

Data collection technique

The researchers administered 342 copies of the questionnaire by hand to the respondents. The questionnaires administered to the respondents were retrieved, some on the spot others were retrieved later. 325 completed copies of the questionnaire were collected from the respondents.

Data analysis technique

Simple descriptive statistics was used to analyze the information gotten from the data. Simple descriptive statistics, such as mean, percentages and frequency distribution were used to analyze objective one, two and three. The average mean of the survey was 2.5, any response with a mean of 2.5 and above was regarded as agreed while any response below 2.5 was regarded as disagreed. The grand mean was used to assess the overall influence of visa restrictions on the choice of travel destination among the population under study.

Data Presentation and Analysis

Research question 1: what are the forms of visa restrictions experienced by the academic and senior staff of MOUAU?

Have you applied for a visa before now?

Table 1 above showed that 75.1% of the total respondents have applied for a visa before while 24.9% have not applied for a visa before the research was carried out.

How many times have you applied for visa?

Only respondents who have applied for visa were allowed to fill this section, this brings the sum of the percentages in the table to 75.1% which is the percentage of respondents who agreed that they have applied for a visa in the previous table.

Table 2 above indicate that out of the 75.1% of the total population who have applied for a visa before, 40% applied for visa once, 25.5% applied for visa twice, 7.1% applied for visa three times while 2.5% applied severally for visa.

Have you experienced any form of visa restriction?

Table 3 above showed that out of the 75.1% of the total sample population who stated that they have applied for a visa before, 59.1% have experienced visa restrictions in one form or the other while 16% of respondents who have applied for visa before the research work stated that they have never experienced any form of visa restriction.

What forms of visa restriction have you experienced?

Multiple responses were used; therefore the sum of percentages in the table exceeds the percentage of the respondents who have experienced visa restrictions as stated in Table 4.

Table 4 showed that 37.5% of the respondents were denied visa, 18.8% of the respondents were ineligible to apply for the visa, 11.7% were allowed limited time within the host country, 22.8% of the respondents experienced outrageous visa requirement in obtaining a visa. 0% were recorded for restricted movement within the host country, travel ban and any other form of visa restrictions experienced that was not mentioned.

	Frequency	Percentage %
Yes	244	75.1%
No	81	24.9%

Source: Field survey 2017.

Table 1: Number and percentage of respondents who have applied for a visa before.

	Frequency	Percentage %
Once	130	40%
2 times	83	25.5%
3 times	23	7.1%
Severally	8	2.5%

Source: Field survey 2017.

Table 2: The number of times the respondents applied for visa.

	Frequency	Percentage %
Yes	192	59.1%
No	52	16%

Source: Field survey 2017.

Table 3: The percentage number of respondents who have experienced visa restrictions.

Would you attempt getting a visa from a country where you have experienced visa restriction?

Only respondents who have experienced visa restrictions were captured, this brought the sum of the percentages in the table to 59.1% which is the percentage of respondents who stated that they have experienced visa restrictions in Table 4.

Table 5 above showed that out of the 59.1% in Table 4 who have experienced visa restrictions 56.6% were willing to attempt getting a visa from a country where they have experienced visa restrictions. 2.5% of the respondents stated that they would not attempt getting a visa from a country they have experienced visa restrictions.

Research question 2: what are the causes of visa restriction imposed on travelers by some countries?

Where you given a reason for the visa restriction?

Only respondents who have experienced visa restrictions were captured, this brought the sum of the percentages in the table to 59.1% which is the percentage of respondents who stated that they have experienced visa restrictions in Table 4.

Table 6 above indicates that all respondents who stated that they have experienced visa restrictions in one form or the other were given reasons for the restrictions they faced. 59.1% agreed that they were given reasons for the restrictions experienced, 0% stated that there was no reason given for the restrictions they experienced.

What reasons were given for the restriction?

Multiple responses were used, therefore the sum of percentages in the table exceeded the percentage of the respondents who have experienced visa restrictions as stated in Table 4.

Table 7 showed that 18.8% of respondents stated that security

	Frequency	Percentage %
Visa denial	122	37.5%
Ineligibility to apply	61	18.8%
Limited time within host country	38	11.7%
Restricted movement within host country	0	0%
Outrageous visa requirement	74	22.8%
Travel ban	0	0%
Any other	0	0%

Source: Field survey 2017.

Table 4: The distribution of forms of visa restrictions and their percentage as experienced by the respondents.

	Frequency	Percentage %
Yes	184	56.6%
No	8	2.5%

Source: Field survey 2017.

Table 5: The percentage of respondents who are willing to reapply for a visa from a country where they have experienced visa restrictions.

	Frequency	Percentage %
Yes	192	59.1%
No	0	0%

Source: Field survey 2017.

Table 6: The distribution of the respondents who were given reasons for the visa restrictions they experienced.

was the reason for the visa restrictions they experienced, 33.2% of respondents stated that they experienced visa restrictions because the countries wanted to curb illegal immigration, 6.2% of the respondents experienced visa restriction because they submitted incomplete information to the issuing office, 25.2% of the respondents stated that they experienced visa restrictions because they applied for the visa using the wrong application format, 11.7% of the respondents stated that they were deemed ineligible to apply for the visa. 0% of the respondents experienced visa restriction as a result of diplomatic row (reciprocity), classified issues and any other reasons which were not mentioned.

Where you allowed to reapply for the visa?

Only respondents who have experienced visa restrictions were captured, this brought the sum of the percentages in the table to 59.1% which is the percentage of respondents who stated that they have experienced visa restrictions in Table 4.

Table 8 showed that 59.1% of the respondents were allowed to reapply for a visa after experiencing visa restriction in one form or the other, this represented the figure of all respondents who stated that they have experienced visa restrictions in Table 4. 0% of the respondents were not allowed to reapply for a visa after experiencing visa restriction.

Have these restrictions affected your choice of travel destination?

Only responses from respondents who have travelled outside Nigeria were used as these represented those who have had the opportunity to put visa restrictions into consideration while choosing their travel destinations.

Table 9 showed that 10.2% of the respondents stated that visa restrictions affected their choice of travel destination very much, 11.7%

	Frequency	Percentage %
Security	61	18.8%
Curbing illegal immigration	108	33.2%
Diplomatic row (reciprocity)	0	0%
Incomplete information	20	6.2%
Wrong application format	82	25.2%
Ineligibility	38	11.7%
Classified	0	0%
Any other	0	0%

Source: Field survey 2017.

Table 7: The reasons for visa restrictions imposed by countries on the respondents.

	Frequency	Percentage %
Yes	192	59.1%
No	0	0%

Source: Field survey 2017.

Table 8: Indicates the number and percentage of respondents who experienced visa restrictions and were allowed to reapply for the visa.

	Frequency	Percentage %
Very much	33	10.2%
Much	38	11.7%
Not much	62	19.1%
Not at all	81	24.9%

Source: Field survey 2017.

Table 9: How visa restrictions have affected respondents' choice of travel destination.

of the respondents stated that the visa restrictions affect their choice of travel destination much, 19.1% of the respondents stated that visa restrictions do not affect their choice of travel destination much, 24.9% of respondents believe that visa restrictions do not affect their choice of travel destinations at all.

Research question 3: what are the ways of minimizing visa restrictions for a more convenient destination selection process by MOUAU staff?

Do you think anything could be done to minimize the forms of visa restrictions experienced?

Table 10 showed that 61.9% of the total respondents believe that something could be done to minimize the forms of visa restrictions experienced, 38.1% of the respondents think that nothing can be done to minimize the forms of visa restrictions experienced.

What do you think could be done to minimize the forms of visa restriction experienced?

Table 11 above showed the mean responses of the respondents who indicated that making the visa application process and requirement open is one of the ways of minimizing the forms of visa restrictions experienced, respondents also agreed that orientating visa officials towards a pro-tourism approach is one of the ways of minimizing the forms of visa restrictions experienced, reducing visa issuance criteria is a way of reducing the forms of visa restrictions experienced, respondents also agreed that devising other means of securing a country other than travel restrictions is a way of reducing the forms of visa restrictions experienced, respondents agreed that developing an international standard for issuing visa would minimize the forms of visa restrictions experienced as 2.94, 2.78, 3.01, 2.81, 2.67 respectively. The total mean of the responses was 2.84, this indicated that respondents agreed to the suggested ways of minimizing visa restrictions experienced because from the decision rule any mean response of 2.5 and above is regarded as agreed while any response below 2.5 was regarded as disagreed.

Findings

- Majority of the academic and senior staff of MOUAU have travelled outside Nigeria and majority of the academic and

	Frequency	Percentage %
Yes	201	61.9%
No	124	38.1%

Source: Field survey 2017.

Table 10: Indicates the number and percentage of respondents who think something could be done to minimize visa restrictions experienced.

S/N	ITEM	X	SD	REMARK
1.	By making the visa application process and requirement open	2.94	0.79	AGREED
2.	By orientating visa officials towards a pro-tourism approach	2.78	0.98	AGREED
3.	By reducing visa issuance criteria	3.01	1.22	AGREED
4.	By devising other means of securing a country other than travel restrictions	2.81	0.83	AGREED
5	By developing an international standard for issuing visa	2.67	0.72	AGREED
	Total	2.84	0.91	

N=Number of respondents; 325, X=Mean response of respondents, SD=Standard Deviation.

Source: Field survey 2017.

Table 11: Indicates ways of minimizing the forms of visa restrictions experienced.

senior staff of MOUAAU have applied for visa, also majority of the academic and senior staff of MOUAAU who applied for visa have experienced visa restrictions in one form or another.

- More academic and senior staff of MOUAAU applied for visa than academic and senior staff of MOUAAU who actually travelled outside Nigeria. This could mean that many members of the academic and senior staff of MOUAAU are hindered from travelling by inability to acquire a visa.
- The academic and senior staff of MOUAAU agreed that visa denial, ineligibility to apply for a visa, being allowed limited time within the host country and outrageous visa requirements are major forms of visa restrictions experienced.
- The academic and senior staff of MOUAAU also agreed that security, curbing illegal immigration, wrong application format, incomplete information and ineligibility of applicant are major reasons given for visa restrictions experienced.
- Majority of the academic and senior staff of MOUAAU disagreed that the visa restrictions they experienced affected their choice of travel destinations and agreed that they would attempt getting a visa from a country where they have experienced visa restriction.
- Majority of the academic and senior staff of MOUAAU agreed that something could be done to minimize the forms of visa restrictions experienced. Respondents also agreed that making visa application process and requirement open, orientating visa officials towards a pro-tourism approach, reducing visa issuance criteria devising other means of securing a country other than travel restrictions and developing an international standard for visa issuance will minimize the forms of visa restrictions experienced.

Discussion of Findings

Data from questionnaire survey were analyzed and results were presented. From these results major findings were noted, the finds are discussed extensively below.

The finding of research question one revealed that majority of the academic and senior staff of MOUAAU have travelled outside Nigeria before now. Academic and senior staff of MOUAAU usually travelled for holidays, conferences/workshops/conventions, study leaves or to visit relatives. The study also indicated that majority of the respondents have applied for visa, this showed that the academic and senior staff of MOUAAU are active travelers and make up a reasonable percentage of travelers from Nigeria in general. The study also found that majority of the academic and senior staff of MOUAAU have experienced visa restrictions. This represents a worrying trend in the travel and tourism industry and supports the view of the World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC, 2014) which stated that in recent times, the tourism industry has witnessed a lot of restrictions and travel bans imposed on prospective travelers and tourists. It also supported the view of the United Nations World Tourism Organization [15] that in a world where tourist arrivals have surpassed 1 billion of travels along the past year, ignoring the impact of visa restrictions on international travel could have serious effects on economic receipts of nations.

The finding of research question one also indicated that more academic and senior staff of MOUAAU applied for a visa than academic and senior staff of MOUAAU who actually travelled outside Nigeria, with a difference of 9.2%. This could mean that many members of the

academic and senior staff of MOUAAU are hindered from travelling by their inability to acquire a visa. Travelers from Nigeria do not require a visa to access any of the West African countries and many academic and senior staff off MOUAAU travelled to West African countries, this fact when considered makes the finding more worrisome as the difference between visa applicants and actual travelers among the academic and senior staff of MOUAAU would be wider if the figure of those who travelled to west African countries should be removed from the percentage of actual travelers. This finding seemed to back the view of Froelich [14] who stated that stringent visa restrictions have created much concern among business groups, research centers and universities of undue delay in granting visas and keeping out students, scientists, businessmen and tourists whose entry would be beneficial to the country's interest.

The finding of research question one indicated that the academic and senior staff of MOUAAU agreed that visa denial, ineligibility to apply for a visa, being allowed limited time within the host country and outrageous visa requirements were major forms of visa restrictions experienced. This supported the view of Wikipedia which stated that visa restrictions could take the form of outright visa denial (with or without reasons), restricted access within the host country, travel ban, severe conditions of issue (for instance, requirement to possess certain assets), limited time in the host country. It also supported the view of the World Travel and Tourism Council which stated that emerging issues of visa restrictions, increased cases of stringent visa policies, incessant visa denials and travel bans imposed on nationals of certain countries has bedeviled the travel and tourism industry since the wake of the September 11 terrorist attacks of the United States of America.

The finding of research question two indicated that all academic and senior staff of MOUAAU who experienced visa restrictions in one form or another were given reasons for the restrictions experienced. The finding of research question two indicated that the academic and senior staff of MOUAAU agreed that security, curbing illegal immigration, wrong application format, incomplete information and ineligibility of applicants are major reasons given for visa restrictions experienced. This supported the view of Neumayer who stated that visa restrictions are rules and regulations countries establish in order to check and control the flow of visitors in and out of the country and to prevent illegal immigration and other criminal activities. It also supports the view of Muqbil who stated that the reason states impose visa restrictions on foreign nationals are to curb illegal immigration, security concerns and reciprocity for visa restrictions imposed on their own nationals. The finding also supports the stand of Requente that many countries use visa restrictions as a medium to prevent entry to unwelcome travelers, and Zengeni and Zengeni and Zengeni [16] that countries facing a high influx of visitors, both long term and short term, see visa restrictions as the best and easiest way of restricting immigration. On the contrary, the finding disproved the view of Anderson [17] who stated that visa restrictions are ways in which autocratic and repressive governments use to hide human rights abuses from the world.

The finding of the research question two indicated that majority of the academic and senior staff of MOUAAU disagreed that the visa restrictions they experienced affected their choice of travel destinations, this was contrary to the view of Dese [18] who stated that if obtaining permission or meeting other requirements to be able to go to a particular destination take longer or cost more than those needed to travel to otherwise comparable destination, a traveler will likely choose the alternative comparable destination, all things else being equal. It answered the question posited by the US Office of Immigration

Statistics [12] saying how much does the restrictions influence the destination selection process of the intending travelers or visitors? The finding supports the theory propounded by the Random Utility Maximization (RUM) model established by Guimaraes et al. [19] and extended by Guimaraes et al. [20] which stated that as far as tourism policy externalities are concerned, a visa restriction imposed by one destination can increase bilateral tourism flows to other destinations from the origin country subject to the visa by between 3 and 17 percent on average. It also supported the view of Songa et al. [13] who noted that during the August 2012 UK Olympic games in London, an important number of tourists from several countries complained about the tight restrictions on travel and visa requirements hitting the tourism industry hard, prompting many travelers to decide to spend their holidays elsewhere as a result, this resulted in a 5% fall in the number of tourist arrivals compared to previous years. The study also revealed that respondents agreed that they would attempt getting a visa from a country where they have experienced visa restriction; this was contrary to the view of the World Travel and Tourism Council that the vast majority of states impose visa restrictions on travelers from some foreign countries. Such restrictions are likely to deter foreign visitors from the affected countries.

The finding of research question three showed that majority of the academic and senior staff of MOUAAU agreed that something could be done to minimize the forms of visa restrictions experienced. The finding of research question three also revealed that the academic and senior staff of MOUAAU agreed that making visa application process and requirement open, orientating visa officials towards a pro-tourism approach, reducing visa issuance criteria devising other means of securing a country other than travel restrictions and developing an international standard for visa issuance will minimize the forms of visa restrictions experienced.

Conclusion

This work attempted to evaluate the influence of visa restrictions on the choice of travel destination among the academic and senior staff of Michael Okpara University of Agriculture, Umudike. The major findings of the research led to the following conclusions:

The academic and senior staff of MOUAAU represents a population with a healthy travel habit, sadly this is threatened by the obvious problem posed by inability of some staff to acquire visas to certain countries which was evident when data from the analysis was critically examined.

There are so many visa restrictions faced by travelers in the travel and tourism industry among them visa denial, limited time within host country, outrageous visa requirements and applicants' ineligibility were most common among the population studied.

Most countries who met out visa restrictions on prospective visitors give reasons for these restrictions. Issues such as security, curbing illegal immigration, wrong application formats, incomplete applicant's information and ineligibility of applicants were the most common reasons given to members of the population studied.

Visa restrictions do not influence the choice of travel destinations among the academic and senior staff of MOUAAU. This is so because majority of the respondents willingly attempt to get visa from countries where they experienced visa restrictions. Moreover, majority of the population studied do not consider visa restrictions as a factor which affects their destination selection process.

Something needs to be done to minimize the level of visa restrictions experienced by travelers and a majority of members of the academic and senior staff of MOUAAU agreed that making visa application process and requirement open, orientating visa officials towards a pro-tourism approach, reducing visa issuance criteria devising other means of securing a country other than travel restrictions and developing an international standard for visa issuance will minimize the forms of visa restrictions experienced.

Recommendations

The following recommendations were drawn from the work:

Recommendations for findings from research question one;

- Visa issuing authorities should give considerations to first-time visa applicants as any unfavorable outcome might affect their overall attitude towards traveling. Also travelers who have become regular visa applicants should be given some sort of consideration and preference when they apply for visa, this will serve as a sort of loyalty reward and will help reassure them that their little contribution to the travel industry is recognized and appreciated.
- Also countries should device means of enforcing visa duration of visitors as this would invariably reduce the level of restrictions experienced as a result of curbing illegal immigration.
- Recommendation for findings from research question two;
- Visa issuing authorities should endeavor to provide a guide for visa applicants when completing visa forms as this will eliminate issues such as incomplete applicant information and wrong application format which are common reasons given for visa restrictions experienced. Also issuing authorities should make visa requirements and criteria public so as to minimize if not eliminate the issue of ineligibility of applicants.
- There should be a level of consideration given to visa applicants who experienced visa restrictions and are told to reapply for such visas, a slight reduction in the visa fee or a preferential treatment in service would help reassure them.

Recommendation for findings from research question three

- The World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC) in collaboration with the United Nations World Tourism Organization should create a forum where nations come together to discuss and adopt an international standard for issuing visa to prospective travelers, this will go a long way in enhancing inter-border travel experience and will help foster goodwill among nation states.

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