

# CHALLENGES OF HOSPITALITY SERVICE DELIVERY IN OBUDU MOUNTAIN RESORT AND OKOMU NATIONAL PARK

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## Abstract

*Effective hospitality service delivery plays vital role towards enhancing tourist experiences at tourist destinations. This study assessed the Hospitality service delivery in Okomu National Park (ONP) and Obudu Mountain Resort (OMR), in the South-South region of Nigeria. Data for the study were obtained through in-depth-interviews, personal observations and administration of two sets of self-structured questionnaires. The first set of questionnaires was administered to 90 hospitality staff of the two eco-destinations with a minimum of five years working experience and the second set was administered to 100 tourists who have spent a minimum of two nights in the accommodation facilities of the two eco-destinations. Data were analysed using descriptive and inferential statistics. Findings show that OMR and ONP were rated relatively well on food and beverages but fairly poor on accommodation and laundry. Further analysis shows that OMR performed relatively well on the entertainment while ONP was poorly rated on entertainment. For effective hospitality service delivery in the two eco-destinations, it is important to strengthen areas where OMR and ONP have proven to be weak while improving further areas of strength.*

**Keywords:** Eco-destinations, Hospitality, satisfaction, service delivery, tourists.

## Introduction

Man, regardless of race, culture, tribe and economic status always craved for pleasure, comfort, happiness, freedom and privacy. The hospitality industry readily provides an avenue to meet these needs (Ejikeme et al., 2016). The industry provides specialized services which enhanced tourist's experiences at tourist destinations. The industry is incredibly service oriented and include all services and products provided by the accommodation (hotels, boarding houses, motels, tourist camps, holiday centres, resorts and youth/backpacker hostels) as well as restaurants, bars, cafeterias, snack bars, pubs, nightclubs) and other similar establishments for the comfort of both local and international travellers (International Labour Organization, 2010). Hence, the services provided by hospitality sector can greatly influence tourist's experiences and can create amazing memories after their stay. These services will naturally encourage

or discourage future visitation. Besides enhancing tourist's experiences, it also contributes significantly to the image of a country/region.

The incredible growth in both domestic and international global travel in the recent times has also resulted in corresponding increase in global demand for hospitality services. Therefore, the industry is experiencing profound investment in new facilities and equipment in order to meet the rapidly increasing needs of both local and international tourists (OECD, 2008). Current increase in global demand for hospitality services can easily be attributed to sharp increase in global travel with astounding rise from 674 million international tourist arrivals recorded in 2010 to over 1.2 billion in 2016 (UNWTO, 2017). Global travel to eco-destinations has also recorded astonishing rise recently, which has also resulted in corresponding increase for hospitality services in protected areas. Hospitality services in eco-destinations similarly involve services, in relation to food, drink and accommodation. The manner of delivery of these services is very critical and could make or mar a destination. Tourists will normally patronize destinations that satisfy their needs and avoid those that did not.

Service satisfaction is a subjective individual personal feelings or experience that arises when consuming services provided a service oriented industry such as hospitality and tourism industry and have a powerful influence on customers' rating and choice of a destination (Mihaela, 2014; Manhas and Tukamushaba 2015). Effective service delivery is fundamental to encouraging and sustaining patronage while deficiency in service delivery could be detrimental to the survival of a destination. The services provided by the hospitality sector of eco-destinations ordinarily should enhance tourist experience which undauntedly will encourage repeat visit. Destinations with efficient service delivery enjoy good patronage which invariably contributes to their strong performance. Moreover, good patronage is the hallmark of any service-oriented industry. The objective of this paper, therefore, is to identify the hospitality services available in the two eco-destinations and assess the level of tourist satisfaction regarding the services provided by the hospitality sectors of the two eco-destinations.

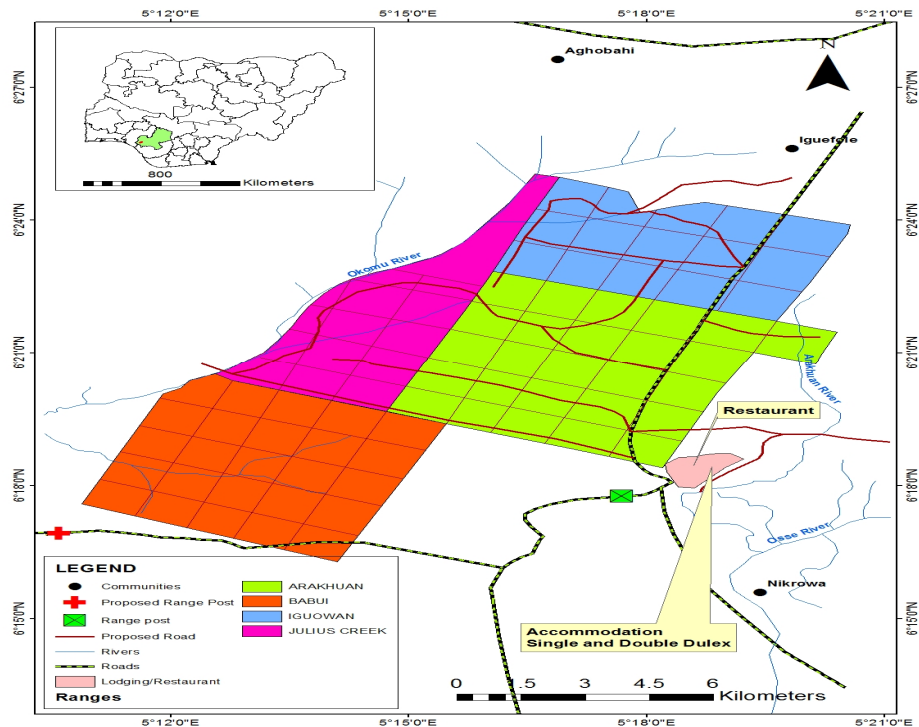
### **The Study Areas**

Two sites were selected for the study. Okomu National Park was selected to represent a wildlife Park while Obudu Mountain Resort represents a ranch.

#### **The Okomu National Park (ONP)**

The park is located in Ovia South-west local government, Edo State, Nigeria (Figure 1). Okomu National Park was established by Decree 46 of 1999. It lies between latitude 6° 21' N and longitude 5° 13' E (Soladoye and Oni, 2000). The Park covers an area of 202.24 km<sup>2</sup> (Okomu National Park,

2010). Okomu National Park (ONP) is the smallest national park in Nigeria with land area of 212km<sup>2</sup> (National Park Service, 2009). The park has four ranges which are; Julius Creek Range, Iguowan Range, Arakwan Range, and Babui Creek Range. The topography is gentle ranging between 30m and 60m. above sea level. Rainfall is between 1,524 and 2,540mm. The park's dry season occurs from December to February and the wet season lasts from March to November (Soladoye and Oni, 2000). Vegetation is Guinea-Congo lowland rain forest, including areas of swamp-forest, high forest, secondary forest and open shrub (Okomu National Park, 2010). It was selected as a wildlife park in southern Nigeria with endemic species and more developed tourism facilities than Old Oyo and Cross River National Parks, the two other National Parks in the south.

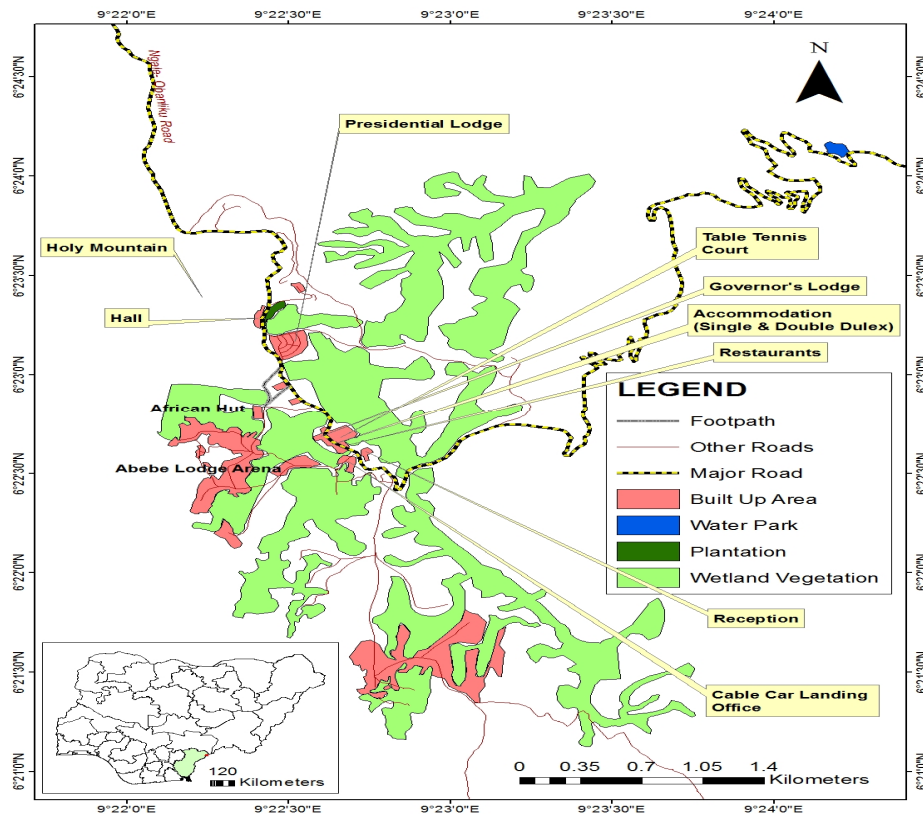


**Figure 1:** Showing the map of Okomu National Park

**Source:** Field Survey, 2018

The Obudu Mountain Resort (OMR) is a cattle ranch and resort in the highlands of Cross River State in the South Eastern part of Nigeria. Obudu Mountain Resort is located in Obaliku Local Government Area of Cross River State. It lies between latitude 6° 21' 30<sup>11</sup> and 6° 22' 30<sup>11</sup> N and longitude 9° 22' 0<sup>11</sup> and 9° 22' 45<sup>11</sup> E, with an approximate area of 104sqm, and a height of about 1576m above sea level (Cross River State Tourism

Bureau, 2010). Cross River State shares boundary with Benue State to the North, Enugu and Abia States to the West, Cameroon Republic to the East and Akwa-Ibom State and the Atlantic Ocean to the South. OMR is situated on a relatively flat Plateau on the Oshie Ridge of Sankwala Mountains. It is an area of idyllic tranquility, beautiful scenery and breath-taking views. It has 22 U- bends that consist of the most exciting “the Devil’s Elbow” which is halfway through the stretch. OMR enjoys a climate typical of the temperate regions of the world. It has a temperature of between 26°C to 32°C between November and January and the low temperature range of 4°C to 10°C between June and September (Okojie and Ijaola, 2011).



**Figure 2:** Showing the Map of Obudu Mountain Resort (OMR)

**Source:** Field Survey, 2018.

### Method of Data Collection

Information for this study was collected from personal observation, review of administrative records, in-depth interviews and administration of two sets of structured questionnaires. Two sets of structured questionnaires were used to collect data for this study. The first set was designed to gather information from tourists to the two eco-destinations while the second set

was designed to gather information from hospitality staff of the two eco-destinations.

### Sampling Technique

The first set of questionnaires was administered to 115 randomly selected tourist respondents who have stayed for at least 2 nights in each of the eco-destinations. The second set of questionnaires was administered purposively to 85 hospitality staff of the two eco-destinations with a minimum of 5 years working experience at the selected eco-destination.

### Data Analysis

Data obtained were analysed using descriptive statistics in form of tables, percentages and frequencies. Likert scale was used to determine level of tourist satisfaction and perceived efficiency of services rendered. A total of 190 (one hundred and ninety) copies of questionnaires were administered to the sample population, out of which 89 % (170 copies) were retrieved and certified usable for the analysis.

### Results

**Table:1** Shows the Services Provided by the Hospitality Units of OMR and ONP which Include Accommodation, Food and Beverages, Laundry and Entertainment

Types of Services	OMR	ONP
Accommodation	Single	Single
	Double	Double
	Deluxe	Deluxe
Meals	Local	Local
	Continental	Continental
	Inter-continental	Inter-continental
	Special	Special
Drinks	Water	Water
	Alcoholic	Alcoholic
	Non-Alcoholic	Non-alcoholic
Laundry	In-house -----	In-house Outdoor
	Reception	Reception
Entertainment	Discotheque	Discotheque
	----- -	Cinema/Theatre

**Source:** Field Survey, 2018

Table 2 shows the rating of the services rendered by the hospitality units of Okomu National Park and Obudu Mountain Resort by tourist respondents. Accommodation service was rated good by most respondents (61.5%) to the two eco-destinations while 29.7% rate it poor. Food and drinks were rated good by most respondents (64.8) in the two study areas but 20.9% rated food and drinks excellent. Most respondents (58.8%) rated entertainment good while 7.8% rated it excellent in the two study sites.

**Table 2:** Rating of the Services Rendered by the Hospitality Units of Okomu National Park and Obudu Mountain Resort by Tourist Respondents.

Services Rendered	Rating	OMR		ONP		Total	
Accommodation	Poor	Freq. 8	18.6	Freq. 19	39.6	Freq. 27	29.7
	Good	31	72.1	25	52.1	56	61.5
	Excellent	4	9.3	4	8.3	8	8.8
<b>Total</b>		<b>43</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>91</b>	<b>100</b>
Food and Beverages	Poor	5	11.6	8	16.7	13	14.3
	Good	27	62.8	32	66.7	59	64.8
	Excellent	11	25.6	8	16.7	19	20.9
<b>Total</b>		<b>43</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>91</b>	<b>100</b>
Laundry	Poor	20	46.5	34	70.8	54	59.3
	Good	23	53.5	14	29.2	37	40.7
	Excellent	0		0		0	
<b>Total</b>		<b>43</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>91</b>	<b>100</b>
Entertainment	Poor	8	18.6	27	56.3	35	38.5
	Good	28	65.1	21	43.8	49	58.8
	Excellent	7	16.3	0	0	7	7.7
<b>Total</b>		<b>43</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>91</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: Field Survey, 2018.

Table 3 shows the number of previous visits and purpose of visits by tourist respondents to OMR and ONP. The table shows that those who have visited the eco-destinations twice were the highest (39.6%). Tourist respondents who have visited the two eco-destinations more than 5 times previously were 19.7%. Tourist respondents who visited the two eco-destinations for

the purpose of recreation were the highest (52.7%) while those who visited for the purpose of education and research were 30.8%.

**Table 3:** Previous Visits by tourists to Obudu Mountain Resort and Okomu National Park

Variables		OMR		ONP		Total	
		Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%
Have you visited before?	Yes	13		17	39.6	30	33.0
	No	27.1		26	60.9	61	67.0
		35					
		72.9					
<b>Total</b>		<b>48</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>43</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>91</b>	<b>100.0</b>
Number of previous visits	1	12	25.0	10	23.2	22	24.2
	2	18	37.5	18	42.0	36	39.6
	3	0	0.0	10	23.2	10	11.0
	4	0	0.0	5	10.6	5	5.5
	5	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
	Above 5	18	37.5	0	0.0	18	19.7
<b>Total</b>		<b>48</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>43</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>91</b>	<b>100.0</b>
Purpose of visit	Recreation	38	78.3	10	22.9	48	52.7
	Education/	4	8.3	24	55.8	28	30.8
	Research	3	5.5	0	0.0	3	3.3
	Conference	2	4.9	9	20.9	11	12.1
	Official Business	1	3.0	0	0.0	1	1.1
<b>Total</b>		<b>48</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>43</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>91</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Source: Field Survey, 2018



**Plate 1:** Showing dilapidated accommodation facility in Okomu National Park. **Source:** Field Survey, 2018



**Plate 2:** Showing poor state of a bathroom in one of the chalets in Okomu National Park. **Source:** Field Survey, 2018



**Plate 3:** Showing inner view of a student hostel in Okomu National Park. **Source:** Field Survey, 2018

### **Discussion of Results**

#### **Hospitality services provided by Obudu Mountain Resort and Okomu National Park**

The result presented shows various hospitality services rendered by the hospitality units of the two selected eco-destinations. The hospitality units

of Okomu National Park and Obudu Mountain Resort offer various customer centric services which include guest rooms of varying categories, food and beverages, laundry, entertainment and discotheque (Table 1). The result of this study agrees with that of Enemu and Iredia (2013), in their assessment of hospitality services in Etsako West Local Government area of Edo State, Nigeria, that, hospitality industry is generally associated with hotels and restaurants. According to them, accommodation industry (also referred to as the lodging or hotel industry) and the food and beverage industry (also referred to as the catering industry) encompass a variety of facilities and are a dynamic part of the global travel and tourism industry.

They further reiterated that, hospitality industry satisfies the demand for away from home meals and beverages as well as accommodation. These services rendered by the hospitality industry has of necessity made it very important component of tourism industry as it caters for the lodging and related needs of the tourist outside their usual place of residence and other areas of the economy like provision of catering services for schools, hospitals and conferences. Although the staff respondents of the two eco-destinations offer similar services to tourists, however it was observed that OMR offer better services to tourists particularly regarding food, drinks and accommodation. Moreover, it was also observed that OMR has better kitchen equipment especially cooking, and serving equipment such as cutleries, serving plates and cups.

Similarly, the accommodation facilities in OMR are of better standards compared to ONP and some accommodation facilities in ONP were observed to be in bad state as shown in Plates 1-3. This could imply that the management of OMR is more proactive at fixing or repairing any malfunction facility or equipment which could have negative effect on the appeal of the destination. It is important to state that the appeal of facilities in tourist destination also enhances tourist satisfaction, because the sight of bad and dilapidated facility in tourism destination could affect tourist's rating of the destination. It was also noticed that the hospitality unit of OMR received better financial support from their management when compared with ONP which is a federal government agency with a very complex bureaucratic process. Hence, at OMR better equipment and facilities could be sighted because prompt attention is given to bad or malfunction facility. Moreover, interactions with hospitality staff of the two eco-destinations revealed that many hospitality staff of Obudu Mountain Resort are better trained in the business of hospitality service and are more exposed to the business of hospitality service delivery than those at ONP.

### **Perceived Tourist Satisfaction and Efficiency of Services**

The result of the study as shown on Table 2 clearly shows that on the average, most tourist respondents (61.5%) were satisfied by the

accommodation service rendered by the hospitality units of the two eco-destinations, hence, it was rated good while 29.7% rated it poor. The result also shows that most tourists (72, 1%) in Obudu Mountain Resort rated accommodation services good in comparison with 52.1% of tourist respondents in Okomu National Park who rated it good. This could be alluded to the fact that the accommodation facilities in Obudu Mountain Resort are tastefully furnished and of high quality, thus, could meet the demand of tourists when compared to Okomu National Park with poor room furnishings and dilapidated accommodation facilities especially as shown in Plates 2 and 3. This agrees with the findings of Manhas and Tukamushaba (2015) who reported that the ambience of guest rooms provide the feelings of satisfaction to tourists and could influence tourists to pay repeat visit.. Also, Brunner-Sperdin et al., (2012), affirms that the destination environment can affect tourist's emotions and consequently influence their overall perception of the service delivery at tourist destinations. Thus, a good and well-maintained tourist destination devoid of dilapidated facilities and awful sights can powerfully influence tourist satisfaction positively thereby encouraging them to visit again.

Similarly, the result of the study indicates that the Food and Beverage service was satisfactory to majority of the tourists (64.8%) who rated it good while 20.9% rated it excellent. This agrees with Nield et al., (2000) who argued that quality food and good food service contribute to tourist satisfaction. It could therefore be argued that quality food and excellent food service can be considered as an important marketing tool for tourist destination. It was observed at Okomu National Park that serving cold drinks to tourists was a big challenge due to erratic power supply while drinks were usually served cold at Obudu Mountain Resort due to better power. However, most tourist respondents (59.3%) on the average were displeased with the laundry service. Specifically, 72.2% of the tourists in Okomu National Park and 46.5% were unhappy with the laundry service thereby rated it poor. This can be attributed to poor laundry facilities and poor power supply at Okomu National Park compared with Obudu Mountain Resort which generally has better facilities in comparison to Okomu National park. Additionally, the entertainment service was adjudged good on the average by most tourists (58.8%) to the two eco-destinations.

Nevertheless, Table 2 further shows that majority of the tourists (65.1%) in Obudu Mountain Resort actually rated it good and 56.3% of the tourists in Okomu National Park rated it poor. This clearly shows that tourists in Obudu Mountain Resort were provided with better and improved entertainment facilities and opportunities than in Okomu National Park which also reflected in the excellent rating of entertainment by just 16.3% of tourists in Obudu Mountain Resort. This perceived rating of services in

the two eco-destinations obviously have significant implications on the number of repeat visits by the tourists. For example, Table 3 indicates that only 33% of the sampled tourists claimed they have visited the two eco-destinations in the past and 67% are new visitors to the eco-destinations. Of this, 74.8% have paid between 1-3 visits previously. The table (Table 3) also shows that only 19.7% of the tourists to the two eco-destinations have visited more than five times. These previous visits to Okomu National Park is likely because of education/research since this is the main purpose for most tourist respondents (55.8%) in Okomu National Park as shown in Table 3 which is not necessarily influenced by the quality of service delivery.

It could be concluded that most tourists to these eco-destinations are not encouraged to pay repeat visits after one or two visits. The United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO, 2017) reiterated that, the manner of service delivery by the hospitality industry is very critical and could make or mar a destination. Hence, it is vital to sustaining patronage and promotion of tourist destinations. Kukoyi and Iwuagwu (2015) also noted that, majority of the regular customers are attracted for repeat visit simply because of the good experience they get each time they lodge and the variety of the customer centric services offered by the hospitality unit of the eco-destinations they visit. This reflects a good rating by tourists based on the personal satisfaction of the services rendered to them.

From the foregoing, it can be deduced that each time guests are satisfied, it becomes a source to receive them again and additional potential customers they might have shared their experiences with. They further explained that “service delivery” and “customer satisfaction” are significantly related and could improve the quality of services offered and increase the patronage and revenue generated at any tourist centre. Hence for any tourist centre to satisfy its customer, gain good customer patronage, quality service delivery cannot be compromised.

### **Conclusion**

The hospitality sectors of the two eco-destinations offer different types of services including accommodation, food and drinks, laundry and entertainment which enhances tourist experiences at the two eco-destinations. It was however observed that OMR offers good and tastefully furnished accommodation facility while dilapidated and poor accommodation facilities could be found at ONP. Tourists who are found of cold drinks are better satisfied at OMR and more tourists experienced good food service at OMR. Hence, from the study, the hospitality sector of Obudu Mountain Resort offered better services to tourists and has better equipment and facilities when compared with Okomu National Park. Moreover, majority of tourists encountered during the study at the two eco-

destinations have different motives for their visits. Majority of tourists at Obudu Mountain Resort were there for recreation and relaxation. However, education/research is the primary aim of most tourists at Okomu National Park. Therefore, most tourists encountered at Okomu National Park are not too bothered about the facilities and services offered to them. The level of satisfaction and the experiences created for tourists by the hospitality sectors at eco-destinations usually create lasting impressions in the mind of tourists and could encourage or discourage repeat visits. The fact remains that the hospitality sector plays significant roles both at entry and departure points of tourists at every eco-destination.

The experiences created by the hospitality sector via meals, accommodations and entertainment can actually overwhelm tourist's recreational activities at eco-destinations when properly delivered. Nevertheless, making tourists feel comfortable such that they want to come back again is an indicator that their aim for visiting the destination is a fulfilled one. It is therefore very important for the management to regularly assess and check that every single service rendered meets the desire and the aspiration of tourists. The tourists' destinations are in business because of tourists and good and efficient services are key to sustaining tourists and in sustaining hospitality business operations. Improved funding for the hospitality unit of ONP will enable the management of hospitality unit to procure better equipment and facilities to meet tourist's satisfaction. Similarly, training and re-training of hospitality staff will contribute significantly to effective and efficient hospitality service delivery at ONP.

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