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Improving customer Experience at Olumo Rock: A review of key attributes of customer experience at tourist sites



TOURISM AND HOSPITALITY
MANAGEMENT

Autumn 2024



**KAMK • University
of Applied Sciences**

Abstract

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Title of the Publication: Improving Customer Experience at Olumo Rock: A review of key attributes of customer experience at tourist sites

Degree Title: Bachelor of Tourism and Hospitality Management.

KEYWORDS: tourist, tourist-Site, satisfaction, attributes, experience, customer, expectation

The Olumo rock tourism site has been experiencing a decline in patronage. The thesis was commissioned by the site's management to explore the key attributes of customer experience in tourist destinations, and how the tourism site could adopt best practices to improve patronage.

The study consisted of a narrative review of contemporary literature to determine key attributes of customer experience in tourist destinations. Academic Search Complete and Ultimate Business Source were used in the search for relevant research material.

Full text articles published in English between 2014 – 2024 that are relevant to the research question were included in the review. Six (6) papers were applied in the review. Three (3) papers each were included from the databases.

The primary attributes of tourist experience identified are low price, quality of food and drink, hospitality, professionalism of staff, environment, safety, infrastructure, aesthetic, comfort, and cleanliness. The study provided implications of the results for Olumo rock and the tourism industry, as well as recommendations for improvement.

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1 Introduction

1.1 Background

Olumo rock is an ancient and cultural site in Abeokuta, Ogun State, Nigeria. Some studies have pointed to potential decline of visitors to the site (Dada et al., 2020; Ilesanmi & Aako, 2016). The commissioning party, Olumo Rock Administration, emphasised a declining number of visitors to the site. Consequently, the present literature review was commissioned to study the potential decline of visitors and recommend interventions to increase patronage to the site. The tourist destination's administration intends to identify and improve customer experience outcomes, as an inroad into increasing visitors to the site. Whilst the literature review was formulated to achieve that objective for the landscape, potential insights from the study could be applicable in other tourist landscapes.

Contemporary application of customer experience evolved from initial conceptualisations of experience (Gahler et al., 2023; Holbrook & Hirschman, 1982). Experience was conceptualised as personal and involved encounters (Gahler et al., 2023). However, initial conceptualisations of experience did not capture business applications of experience. In business settings, experiences are mostly formed after encounters with core product performances, business environment of a vendor, and brand staffers (Caru & Cova, 2003). In optimum encounters, the cognitive and emotional faculties of the individual are intimately engaged (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990).

However, the formalisation of experience as a practice in business settings was later proposed. The scholars proposed an integration of experience into business marketing strategies (Pine & Gilmore, 1999). Other academics built on that integration to establish the concept of co-creation (Prahalad & Ramaswamy, 2004). The principle of co-creation describes experience as the outcome of interactions between brands and customers (Prahalad & Ramaswamy, 2004). The interaction points between customers and brands include core products or services, business environment, and brand employees (Prahalad & Ramaswamy, 2004). The experience that follows such interactions between brands and their customers is considered customer experience (Caru & Cova, 2007; Pine & Gilmore, 1999; Prahalad & Ramaswamy, 2004). Therefore, post-service perceptions of experiences are established after emotional and intellectual processing of those interactions by customers (Chung & Kwon, 2009; Meyer & Schwager, 2007).

However, scholars have asserted that customers' interpretations of their encounters with business are subjective (Caru & Cova, 2007; Pine & Gilmore, 2013). In some instances, brand attributes could significantly influence customer perceptions. Particularly, when those brand attributes were specifically designed for that customer persona (Pine & Gilmore, 2013). Therefore, customer perception is subjective and follows a co-creation construct between a customer's internal disposition and a brand's external attributes (Caru & Cova, 2007; Frow & Payne, 2007; Gentile et al., 2007; Prahalad & Ramaswamy, 2004). However, positive and engaged customer perceptions are more likely when brand attributes are personalised in value propositions (Pine & Gilmore, 2013).

Irrespective of industry, customer experience strategies and factors are relatively generic. Gopalan and Narayan's (2010) articulation of customer experience strategies and factors for tourism sites includes air, land, and sea travel components. The authors also assessed that cultural difference and changing legal requirements have implications for travel to tourist centres. These factors were studied collectively and in connection with internal attributes of tourist site' such as ambience, personnel etc. The objective was to determine the influence scale of each logistics attribute against internal characteristics of the tourist site in determining customer experience (Gopalan & Narayan, 2010). Other factors studied in relation to tourism sites are feelings of pleasure and extreme excitement (Bello & Etzel, 1985; Havlena & Holbrook, 1986; Holbrook & Hirschman, 1982). Safety, novelty, and ease of use have also been studied in relation to service experience (Otto & Ritchie, 1996). Seasonal dynamics have also been studied as inputs that influence patronage to tourism centres (Dada et al., 2020; Ilesanmi & Aako, 2016).

Dada et al. (2020) and Ilesanmi and Aako (2016) have studied seasonal and nonseasonal patronage to Olumo rock. The studies recorded probable decline of tourists, and patronage inconsistency at Olumo rock. The inconsistencies in patronage were observed irrespective of seasons. Whilst Dada et al. (2020) examined how seasonal variations influenced visitor patterns at Olumo Rock, as well as the implications of those fluctuations for social, cultural, and environmental dynamics, Ilesanmi and Aako (2016) applied statistical analysis to project the decline in patronage at Olumo Rock.

While logistics to tourist destinations have been studied, the linkages between internal costs such as costs of logistics and perceptions of customer experience have not been made (Bello & Etzel, 1985; Dada et al., 2020; Gopalan & Narayan, 2010; Havlena & Holbrook, 1986; Holbrook & Hirschman, 1982; Ilesanmi & Aako, 2016; Otto & Ritchie, 1996).

Whilst the present study will not be making such linkages, the study will attempt to establish primary attributes of customer experience at tourists' sites. Such attempts have been undertaken on aesthetic values that shape customer experience in food business (Surucu & Bekar, 2017) and visual perception on food choice (Vermeir & Roose, 2020). Ryu and Han (2009) attempted to make connections between aesthetics, price perception, and customer experience. Other authors (Markovic et al., 2021; Oh & Kim, 2020; Wardono et al., 2012) also presented diverse implications of aesthetics to service business. Pooi (2006) focused on the influence of safety and transportation on patronage to tourist locations. Westscott (2019) studied the implications of accommodation, and Chen and Chen (2018) discussed the influence of brand promotion on tourist patronage. Quality of infrastructure (Mazrejah, 2020), affordability (Kijima, et al., 2020), and shopping facility (Kong & Chang, 2016) have been reviewed in the context of tourists' attraction.

Whilst these authors considered separate attributes of tourist attraction, Luo and Fan (2022) assessed tourist experience as comprehensive. Therefore, the present paper will use peer reviewed papers to determine consistent and contemporary attributes that improve customer experience at tourism locations. Results of the review will be used to recommend key attributes that influence customer experience at tourist destinations and their potential implications for patronage to Olumo rock.

1.2 Research question

- a. What key attributes influence customer experience at tourist sites?

1.3 Research objective

- b. To identify key attributes influencing customer experience at tourist sites through a review of academic literature.

1.4 Justification

The study aims to establish key primary attributes of customer experience at tourist sites. Olumo rock tourism landscape could improve or incorporate such attributes, which may have implications for patronage to the site. Overall, such insight could have implications for resource allocation, strategy, and competitiveness. Particularly, results of the review could impact staff training, employee welfare, customer inclusion in experience design, infrastructure development, and regulatory compliance. The study also aims to improve contemporary literature on customer experience at tourist sites, especially, in developing nations of Africa. Such contribution could have implications for research-resource application and improved academic focus on critical attributes of customer experience in tourist sites.

1.5 Scope of the thesis

The study will attempt to establish primary attributes of customer experience in tourist destinations. These attributes will be assessed through peer reviewed literature on customer experience in tourist sites. Whilst the paper attempted to be exhaustive, the literature review was limited to academic sources. The paper intends to analyse the results and recommend strategic solutions to Olumo rock administrators.

1.6 Outline of the thesis

The study continues in chapter 2 with adopted theoretical framework and conceptualizations reviewed for the study. Chapter 3 discusses methodology of the study, while Chapter 4 assesses results of the study. Chapter 4 also discusses results of the study and evidence from existing studies. Chapter 5 presents study conclusions, implications of the study, limitations and recommendations.

2 Conceptualizations and Theoretical framework

The present literature review attempts to assess seminal and contemporary evidence on customer experience (Brakus et al., 2009; Holbrook & Hirschman, 1982). Peer-reviewed papers on different conceptualisations of experience and customer experience were critically evaluated (Meyer & Schwager, 2007; Hirschman & Holbrook, 1982). The different dimensions of customer experience in service and product settings were also reviewed. Specifically, customer experience in the tourism and hospitality industry was evaluated. An assessment of some theoretical models and performance measures that are typically adopted in tourism and hospitality studies was also performed. The theoretical frameworks reviewed in the present study such as Expectation-Disconfirmation (Hughes, 1991; Oliver, 1980) and Attribution (Gilliam et al., 2022) Theories are typically applied in customer satisfaction evaluations.

2.1 Experience

The application of customer experience as a strategic imperative in brand formulation is well reported (Gentile et al., 2007; Hirschman & Holbrook, 1982; Meyer & Schwager, 2007; O'Loughlin et al., 2004). However, contemporary application of customer experience could be traced to initial conceptualisations of consumption (Hirschman & Holbrook, 1982), and consumer behaviour (Holbrook & Hirschman, 1982). Experiences are formed after memorable encounters and perceptive interpretation of such meetings (Holbrook & Hirschman, 1982). In business settings, experiences could be formed after encounters with core product performances, business environment of a vendor, and business staffers (Caru & Cova, 2003). In optimum experiences, the cognitive and emotional faculties of the individual are intimately engaged (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990).

Generally, experiences occur when cognitive and emotional faculties of people interact with external stimuli (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990; Holbrook & Hirschman, 1982). While the foregoing conceptualisation seem sufficient, the linkages between experiences and business profitability was not established (Pine & Gilmore, 2013). Therefore, a formalisation of experience as a potential business objective was lacking. However, scholars identified that gap as well as potential transitioning of experience into a commercial object (Pine & Gilmore, 2013). Initial papers on that transitioning focused on conscious integration of experience into business marketing strategies (Pine

& Gilmore, 2013). However, other researchers assessed that such approach is minimalist and isolates the dynamics of co-creation (Prahalad & Ramaswamy, 2004). The co-creation dynamics posits that customers co-create unique experiences with brand assets (core products, business environment, and brand employees) (Prahalad & Ramaswamy, 2004). Thus, customers are participants in their own experiences. The co-creation postulation is different from initial assessments that assumed experience as a standalone business asset (Pine & Gilmore, 2013; Prahalad & Ramaswamy, 2004).

2.2 Customer experience

The interactions between a customer's emotional faculties and assets of a brand, produces customer experience (Biedenbach & Marell, 2010; Frow & Payne, 2007; Verhoef et al., 2009). These brand assets include core products or services, business atmosphere, and brand staffers (Berry et al., 2002). Furthermore, the business environment and interactions with human brand representatives also serve as potential inputs into customer experience (Berry et al., 2002). While researchers acknowledge the roles of these interaction points in shaping customer experience, some scholars posit that eventual customer experiences are subjective (Meyer & Schwager, 2007). They argued that a customer's experience depends on a customer's intellectual, emotional, and physical state (Chung & Kwon, 2009; Meyer & Schwager, 2007).

Therefore, an assessment of past experiences with a brand, may not be enough to describe future customer behaviour (Chung & Kwon, 2009). The foregoing submission seems to imply that customers could have positive or negative experience with minimum input from interactions with company attributes (Chung & Kwon, 2009). However, other scholars insisted that customer experience comes from interactions with brand employees, business setting, and actual commodity (Sirapracha & Tocquer, 2012).

However, a potentially unifying perspective was reported (Pine & Gilmore, 2013). The scholars attempted to establish a distinction between direct experience from a product or service and deliberate entertainment to improve customer conversion (Pine & Gilmore, 2013). Therefore, a customer could find the actual shopping engagement and core product satisfactory but unsatisfied with other non-shopping services or the reverse (Terblanche & Boshoff, 2004). So, a customer's intellectual and emotional state may find actual shopping engagement positive than non-

shopping entertainment services. The foregoing assessment seems to sustain part of the subjectivity argument (Gentile et al., 2007; Meyer & Schwager, 2007). For instance, a postulation that customers' emotional interpretations of an experience, weighs more on outcomes than the quality of actual experience (Addis & Holbrook, 2001; Prahalad & Ramaswamy, 2004). But subjective interpretation of interaction outcome seems predominant in post-consumption of intangible commodities such as theatre presentations, movies, and physical games (Hirschman & Holbrook, 1982).

While scholars identify with the subjectivity perspective, they assert that subjective interpretations are constructed during interactions with brand attributes (Hirschman & Holbrook, 1982). Therefore, customer perception is subjective and follows a co-creation construct between a customer's internal disposition and a brand's external attributes (Frow & Payne, 2007; Gentile et al., 2007; Prahalad & Ramaswamy, 2004). However, positive and engaged customer perceptions are more likely when brand attributes are personalised in product or service settings (Hirschman & Holbrook, 1982).

2.3 Impacts of customer experience on tourism

There are implications associated with customer experience outcomes. Positive customer experience has been linked to brand loyalty (Chaudhuri & Holbrook, 2001). Researchers have also linked brand loyalty to increased patronage and business profitability (Chaudhuri & Holbrook, 2001). The relevance of brand loyalty to profitability has influenced increasing interest in customer experience (Berry et al., 2002; Prahalad & Ramaswamy, 2004). Inability to demonstrate excellent customer experience facilitates high patron turnover rate (Schembri, 2006). Scholars have suggested that traditional good customer relation strategies are no longer enough to create loyal customers (Schembri, 2006). However, customer experience strategies and factors are relatively generic (Gentile et al., 2007). Therefore, businesses may be incapable of adopting an appropriate customer experience strategy for their situation (Gentile et al., 2007).

2.4 Factors that impact customer experience

Customer perceptions are impacted by multiple factors. For instance, customers construct a pre-service expectation of a brand (Verhoef et al., 2009). These pre-service expectations are likely

contrasted against post-service perceptions to establish actual customer experience (Boulding et al., 1993). Therefore, service quality seems to weigh less on customer experience when compared to pre-service expectation (Frow & Payne, 2007). Other factors studied by scholars include ambience, commodity functionality, business environment, social connections, and technology (Bitner, 1992; Pareigis et al., 2011; Verhoef et al., 2009). Price and convenience have also been studied as drivers of customer experience (Pareigis et al., 2011; Verhoef et al., 2009).

Overall, these drivers interact with the senses to produce a codified experience (Gentile et al., 2007). Therefore, businesses usually design customer experiences to positively interact with the five senses (Hirschman & Holbrook, 1982; Holbrook & Hirschman, 1982). The drivers of customer experience also interact with the intellect of customers (Hirschman & Holbrook, 1982; Holbrook & Hirschman, 1982). Researchers also have suggested that simultaneous engagement of all senses, intellect, and emotions of a customer optimises customer satisfaction (Hirschman & Holbrook, 1982; Holbrook & Hirschman, 1982; Pine & Gilmore, 2013). The foregoing assessment applies to customer experience in any industry.

2.5 Tourism Industry

Some factors could be specifically applied to customer experience in the tourism industry (Otto & Ritchie, 1996). Factors identified that effect customer experience in tourism business are feelings of pleasure, safety, newness, extreme entertainment, and ease of use (Bello & Etzel, 1985; Otto & Ritchie, 1996). These factors were reported by other scholars (Havlena & Holbrook, 1986; Holbrook & Hirschman, 1982). Scholars also identified the following as likely satisfying factors in tourists' destinations: quality of accommodation, cost of services, outdoor experience, ambience, quality of food, networking opportunities, quality of staffers, and security (Pizam et al., 1978). These factors are like other dimensions identified in a paper. Four dimensions were identified namely: enjoyment, learning, aesthetics, and serenity (Pine & Gilmore, 2013). Whilst these variables were not fully explored, other scholars studied their completeness (Oh et al., 2007). Further research suggested a modification of these four factors to include feelings of arousal (Oh et al., 2007). Researchers have also suggested personalised services, potential opportunities for education, and engagement as drivers that effect customer experience in tourism services (Poulsson & Kale, 2004).

The multifaceted nature of tourism requires an inclusion of logistics as a major driver. Logistics drivers include air, land, and sea travel components (Gopalan & Narayan, 2010). Other factors will include cultural differences and changing legal requirements (Gopalan & Narayan, 2010). These factors have been studied collectively (Gopalan & Narayan, 2010). Specifically, they were evaluated in the context of their impact on customer experience (Gopalan & Narayan, 2010). The collective impact of these logistics' attributes was studied against potential input characteristics of the tourist site (Gopalan & Narayan, 2010). The objective was to determine the influence scale of each logistics attribute against input characteristics of the tourist site in determining customer experience (Gopalan & Narayan, 2010).

The study found that external attributes of logistics such as public infrastructure, city population, safety profile, and neatness of the host city is beyond the tourist site managers (Gopalan & Narayan, 2010). While internal attributes such as employee behaviour and core product functionality are critical to positive customer experience, a negative perception of these external attributes could undermine customer experience (Gopalan & Narayan, 2010). The study suggested a collaborative relationship between relevant players in public and private settings to improve customer experience in tourism sites (Gopalan & Narayan, 2010). Operationally, such collaboration will support decision making for resource utilisation and better customer experience outcomes.

Similarly, there have been studies on improving policy outcomes to mitigate the impacts of social and natural perturbations in tourists' destinations (D'Amico et al., 2002; Gopalan & Narayan, 2010). Researchers have also studied the impacts of core product functionality, business environment, and employee performances on customer experience in tourists' areas (Pizam & Ellis, 1999). For instance, employee performances and attitudes were measured against customers' emotional assessment of employee behaviour (Yang et al., 2020). The result was used to measure the likelihood of repeat business and brand loyalty (Yang et al., 2020). The study suggested that tourists' emotional state could be a reliable input into their perception of customer experience. The result of the study has implications for resource allocation, service design, and public relations campaign (Yang et al., 2020).

There have also been academic investigations into seasonal and nonseasonal patronage at Olumo rock (Dada et al., 2020; Ilesanmi & Aako, 2016). The studies applied Seasonal Autoregressive Moving-average model (SARIMA) and Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) to forecast and study patronage at Olumo Rock respectively (Dada et al., 2020; Ilesanmi & Aako, 2016). The studies' findings recorded probable decline of tourists, and patronage inconsistency at Olumo rock (Dada et al., 2020;

Ilesanmi & Aako, 2016). The probable patronage decline and inconsistency were observed irrespective of seasons (Dada et al., 2020; Ilesanmi & Aako, 2016). Whilst Dada et al. (2020) examined how seasonal variations influenced visitor patterns at Olumo Rock and the implications of those fluctuations for social, cultural, and environmental dynamics, Ilesanmi and Aako (2016) applied statistical analysis to project the decline in patronage at Olumo Rock. Zimu (2023) recognised the influences of social and cultural impacts on customer patronage and decision making.

2.6 The Expectancy-Disconfirmation Theory (EDT)

Some frameworks that are applied to study customer satisfaction the Expectancy-Disconfirmation Theory (EDT) (Hughes, 1991; Oliver, 1980), the Evaluative Congruity Model (ECM) (Sirgy, 1984), and the Attribution Theory (Gilliam et al., 2022). The EDT is considered a popular customer satisfaction model (Hughes, 1991; Oliver, 1980). Whilst inferred and direct methods are used to assess EDT (see methods of assessing disconfirmation below), the present thesis plan could not identify a unique mathematical formulation for expectancy-disconfirmation theory. However, vignette has been applied to assess expectation-disconfirmation in measuring citizen satisfaction (Grimmelikhuijsen & Porumbescu, 2017; Van Ryzin, 2013). Zhang et al. (2021) also performed meta-analysis to determine the empirical performance of expectancy-discrimination when applied in public service studies. The meta-analysis applied over 50 studies to assess correlations between expectation, disconfirmation, performance, and satisfaction. In another study, De Vries and Knies (2023) applied vignette to study the influence of expectation-discrimination on employee satisfaction. The report attempted to predict employee satisfaction given supervisory assistance (De Vries & Knies, 2023). The EDT has also been studied by other researchers to determine the model's effectiveness at predicting satisfaction (De Vries & Knies, 2023; Petrovsky et al., 2017; Poister & Thomas, 2011).

Overall, the EDT postulates that satisfaction or dissatisfaction derives from a disagreement between expectancy and assessed performance (Oliver, 1980). In hospitality and tourism management, EDT has been applied to construct the discrepancy between service expectations and perception of actual delivery (Hughes, 1991). Therefore, EDT could be adopted to construct the probable linkages or gaps between customer expectations and customer experience (Hughes, 1991; Oliver, 1980).

- **Positive disconfirmation**

The EDT framework holds that customers buy products with preexisting customer expectations (Oliver, 1980). Therefore, post-utilisation' appreciation for a product is determined by pre-buy expectations. Positive disconfirmation is recorded when post-utilisation perception of a product exceeds the pre-buy prospects (Oliver, 1980). Positive disconfirmation produces customer satisfaction.

- **Confirmation**

Unlike positive disconfirmation, confirmation is established when pre-buy expectations are consistent with post-utilisation perception of a product (Oliver, 1980). However, confirmation produces similar satisfaction experienced with positive disconfirmation (Oliver, 1980). While satisfaction has been extensively studied, no clear distinctions between satisfaction types from positive disconfirmation and confirmation has been made (Bearden & Teel, 1983; Pizam & Milman, 1993; Tse & Wilton, 1988).

- **Negative disconfirmation**

Negative disconfirmation is established when prior product expectation underperforms post-utilisation assessment (Oliver, 1980). Furthermore, negative disconfirmation produces dissatisfaction, which differs from post-utilisation outcomes of positive disconfirmation and confirmation (Oliver, 1980).

2.6.1 Methods of assessing disconfirmation

Discrepancy under the EDT framework could be inferred or directly assessed (Prakash & Lounsbury, 1992). The inferred method applies analytical solution that uses post-utilisation expectation discrepancy to form a new variable (Yuksel & Yuksel, 2008). The inferred method is scientifically involved. However, the direct method applies a scaling system to determine discrepancy, which is considered unambiguous relative to inferred method (Prakash & Lounsbury, 1992; Oliver, 1980; Tse & Wilton, 1988).

Scholars have debated predictability accuracies of inferred and direct methods for assessing expectancy discrepancy (Oliver, 1980; Tse & Wilton, 1988). Whilst no consensus has been reached on predictive accuracies of the methods, both methods could be applied in tourism studies (Oliver, 1980; Pizam & Milman, 1993; Whipple & Thach, 1988).

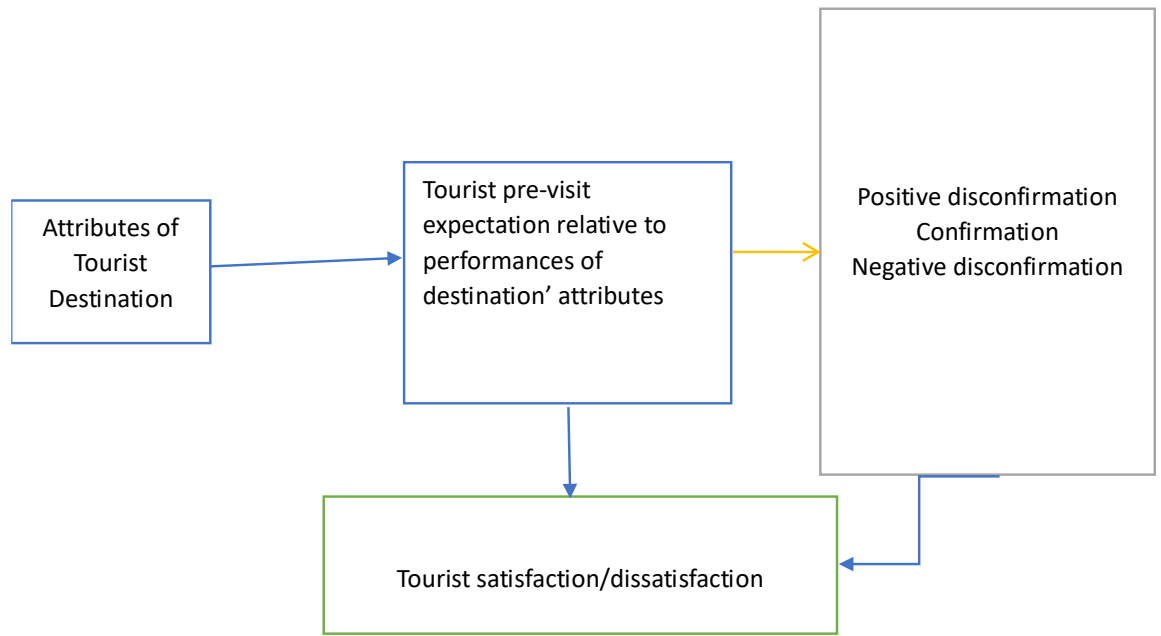


Figure 1: Theoretical Framework

There are limitations associated with the EDT framework irrespective of method applied. The EDT is ineffective when the concept of pre-buy perception is isolated from the model (Krüger, 2011). Furthermore, the concept of pre-buy is not applicable to products and services that are novel to a customer (Krüger, 2011). Therefore, people do not form prior judgments on unknown quantities, which weakens the legitimacy of EDT model.

Evaluative Congruity Model (ECM), which postulates that multiple states of satisfaction are derived from a combination of multiple service attributes (Li et al., 2015; Sirgy, 1984) has been considered as alternative to the EDT. Like EDT however, the ECM model measures the spectrum of congruity (Sirgy, 1984). The Attribution Theory has also been applied (Gilliam et al., 2022). However, unlike the EDT and ECM, the Attribution Theory study's dissatisfaction and negative feedback (Gilliam et al., 2022). While these models could be tweaked to suit studies on customer satisfaction, the EDT has been widely used for studies on positive disconfirmation (Oliver, 1980; Pizam & Milman, 1993; Whipple & Thach, 1988).

2.7 The Evaluative Congruity Theory

The Evaluative Congruity Theory (ECT) assesses the linkages between perception and an evoked referent under a cognitive process (Sirgy, 1984). Whilst the cognitive process produces either an instrumental path of action or an outcome (Sirgy, 1984), consumer satisfaction and dissatisfaction are adjudicated as outcomes. Sirgy (1984) framed Instrumental assimilations as inputs into motivational states, which result into an action. Outcomes produce positive or negative emotional states, which assesses different courses of action to optimise satisfaction or minimise dissatisfaction (Sirgy, 1984). Hence, the ECT postulates three states of congruity, essentially positive incongruity, congruity, and negative incongruity (Yuksel & Yuksel, 2008).

Positive incongruity refers to cognitive state of satisfaction that developed from positive discrepancy between perception and evoked referent cognition. Whilst negative incongruity denotes negative discrepancy between perception and evoked referent cognition that produces a state of dissatisfaction, congruity refers to an insignificant shift in discrepancy that leads to a neutral state (Sirgy, 1984). Whilst similarities between EDT and ECT exist (Yuksel & Yuksel, 2008), ECT utilises non-linear combinations of expectations and perceptions to determine satisfaction, neutrality, and dissatisfaction (Yuksel & Yuksel, 2008). For instance, Sirgy (1984) posited that functional attributes of a product and personal image of a customer are assessed for congruity, which serves as input into broader expectation and performance assessment by the customer. Whilst notable distinction exists between ECT and EDT, both theories are not appropriate when customers do not have expectations a priori (Krüger, 2011; Yuksel & Yuksel, 2008).

2.8 Attribution Theory

The Attribution Theory (AT) models customers as rational entities with capacity to articulate service outcomes (Yuksel & Yuksel, 2008). The theory posits that customers engage in causal assessment to determine the attributes responsible for incongruity or disconfirmation with a product or service. The theory postulates that customers assess these attributes under three causal categories (Gilliam et al., 2022; Yuksel & Yuksel, 2008). The causal categories are Internal or External Locus of Causality, which assigns causality to an attribute unique to the customer (internal) or outside factors (external); Stability, which refers to stable or impermanent factors that could be observed through time; and Controllability, which refers to vulnerability or control of a customer or business over limitations and outcomes (Gilliam et al., 2022; Yuksel & Yuksel, 2008).

Customers assess attribution based on these categories. For instance, a customer could assess service outcome by asking, which locus (internal or external) attribute is responsible? Will the outcome remain consistent through time (stability)? Can the outcome or constraint be controlled by the customer or business (control) (Yuksel & Yuksel, 2008)? Whilst EDT and AT appear similar, AT has been predominantly applied in dissatisfaction models (Gilliam et al., 2022).

2.9 Chapter summary

The present review critically evaluated several conceptualizations of experience. The review assessed conceptualizations of customer experience including academic constructs on interaction points and co-creation (Gentile et al., 2007; Meyer & Schwager, 2007; Prahalad & Ramaswamy, 2004). Furthermore, factors and impacts of customer experience (Bello & Etzel, 1985; Chaudhuri & Holbrook, 2001; Otto & Ritchie, 1996; Parasuraman et al., 1988; Schembri, 2006) have also been reviewed. Specific papers that studied seasonal patronage at Olumo rock were also evaluated (Dada et al., 2020; Ilesanmi & Aako, 2016).

While the reviewed papers relatively exhausted their areas of concentration, there were no linkages between initial customer experience, primary attributes of customer experience, and customer expectations (Gopalan & Narayan, 2010; Mondo & Fiates, 2017). Whilst the present paper will not attempt such linkages, the paper will aim at determining primary attributes of customer experience. Results of the paper will be applied to make recommendations that Olumo Rock tourist destination could adopt.

3 Methodology

The present study conducted a narrative review (Efron & Ravid, 2018) of contemporary evidence to determine key attributes of customer experience in tourist destinations. Narrative review integrates multiple conclusions from distinct peer-reviewed papers to assess a topic of interest. The papers adopted for present review were chosen because of proximity to study objective. Attributes identified in the current paper are consistent with observable attributes at Olumo Rock. Therefore, they were adopted because of consistency. Academic Search Complete and Ultimate Business Source were searched for relevant resources. Full text articles published in English between 2014 – 2024 that are relevant to the research question were included in the review. Six (6) papers were applied in the review. Three (3) papers each were included from the databases.

Inclusion Criteria	Exclusion Criteria
Articles published between the year 2014 - 2024	Articles published prior the year 2014 - 2024
Full text available	Full text unavailable
Articles in English	Articles in other languages
Relevant to research question	Irrelevant to research question

Table 1: Inclusion Criteria

KEYWORDS: Tourist, Tourist-Site, Satisfaction, Attributes, Experience, Customer, Expectation

Academic Search Complete and Ultimate Business Source were used to search attributes of tourist satisfaction, tourist sites, tourist expectation, and tourist experience. Several papers were identified and evaluated for consistency with the objective of current study. Nevertheless, six (6) papers were selected for close alignment with the paper's objective. Two (2) of the papers assessed attributes of customer experience in tourist destination, three (3) papers evaluated tourist experience relative to expectations, and one (1) paper evaluated tourist satisfaction. However, all the papers explicitly or implicitly evaluated tourist satisfaction relative to expectation. Four (4) of the papers applied quantitative research method, one (1) applied qualitative research method, and one (1) applied the mixed method.

Article Title	Author	Year	Method	Country of study	Participants	Aim of study
TOURQUAL: Proposal of a Protocol for Quality Evaluation on Services at Tourist Attractions	Mondo	2017	Mixed Method	Brazil	Age = 24 to 45 years Number of valid respondents = 476	The objective of this research is to propose a model to analyze the quality of services at tourist attractions.
Tourist Expectation and Satisfaction with Li Jiang Old City	Wang	2019	Quantitative	China	Age = Not reported Number of participants = 400	The purpose of this research is to study the tourist expectation and satisfaction with Li Jiang old city, and the relationship between tourist satisfaction and loyalty.
Understanding Tourists' Experience Expectation: A study of Chinese Tourists' Behavior in Bali	Maghrifani	2019	Qualitative	Indonesia	Age = Not Available Number of participants = Not Available	This study aimed to identify the relationship between attitudes towards destination, subjective norms and perceived behavioral control to tourists' experience expectation.
Tourist Expectations and Motivations in Visiting Rural Destinations:	Sanchez-Oro et al.	2021	Quantitative	Spain	Age = 18 and above Number of participants = 6,108	The paper aimed to investigate the motivation of tourists who travel to rural destinations in the Extremadura Region, in order

Article Title	Author	Year	Method	Country of study	Participants	Aim of study
The Case of Extremadura						to expand its popularity amongst the tourism industry.
Linking Nature-based Tourism Attributes to Tourist' Satisfaction	Marzuki et al.	2017	Quantitative	Malaysia	Age = Not Available Number of participants = 516	The paper aims to link nature-based tourism attributes to tourists' satisfaction.
Satisfaction, Seasonality and Tourist Expenditure in Consolidated Tourist Destinations	Perles-Ribes et al.	2021	Quantitative	Spain	Age = Not Available Number of participants = 612	The study aims to establish the relationship between tourist experience, seasonality and expenditure.

Table 2: Sample studies' characteristics

Whilst Marzuki et al. (2017) and Mondo and Fiates (2017) categorized tourist experience attributes into Physical, Environment, Main Facilities, Support Facilities, and Infrastructure; and Access, Environment, Human Element, Experience, Safety, and Technical Quality thematic areas respectively, other papers (Maghrifani, 2019; Perles-Ribes et al., 2021; Sanchez-Oro et al., 2021; Wang & Satchabut, 2019) directly assessed the attributes of tourist experience. However, major attributes identified by reviewed studies are: Low Price, Quality of food and drink, Hospitality, Professionalism of staff, Environment, Infrastructure, Safety, Aesthetic, Comfort, and Cleanliness. The present study will categorize and analyze the attributes under the following categories: Low Price, Quality of Food and Drink, Hospitality, Professionalism of staff; Environment, Safety, Infrastructure, Aesthetic, Comfort, and Cleanliness.

4 Discussion of the Results

The following chapter presented and discussed study results. The results were discussed under Low price, Quality of Food and Drink, Hospitality, Professionalism of staff, Environment, Safety, Infrastructure, Aesthetic, Comfort, and Cleanliness. The results were compared against existing literature. There appears to be consistency between results obtained in the present study and existing evidence.

4.1 Results

The present review assessed contemporary literature to determine key attributes of tourist experience. The following attributes were observed from reviewed studies: Low Price, Quality of Food and Drink, Hospitality, Professionalism of staff, Environment, Safety, Infrastructure, Aesthetic, Comfort, and Cleanliness. Whilst the attributes were presented individually, there are evidence of potential overlap amongst them (Kijima, et al., 2020; Luthuli et al., 2021; Mazrejah, 2020; Pooi, 2006).

4.1.1 Low Price

Mondo and Fiates (2017) discussed price as an attribute of technical quality. The authors identified high quality service delivered at reasonable price to be an important factor. The paper also found that perception of quality by a tourist could be related to cost of service. Hence, quality of services should be higher than price charged (Mondo & Fiates, 2017). Maghrifani (2019) also identified low price as the most significant attribute of customer experience. Whilst Maghrifani (2019) and Mondo and Fiates (2017) identified low price as an attribute of customer satisfaction, Wang and Satchabut (2019) determined that price of food and beverages was a non-determining factor of customer expectation and satisfaction.

4.1.2 Quality of Food and Drink

Whilst Wang and Satchabut (2019) assessed that the price of food and beverages did not significantly impact satisfaction, the author did not minimize the importance of access to food and beverages in hospitality facilities. Marzuki et al. (2017) studied food and beverages as attributes of tourist experience under main facilities. Perles-Ribes et al. (2021) studied the significance of restaurants to tourist satisfaction, and Maghrifani (2019) also studied the importance of food and beverages as attributes of tourist satisfaction. Food and beverages were established as highly significant attributes of satisfaction (Maghrifani 2019; Marzuki et al., 2017). Adequacy of restaurants was also considered highly significant to tourist experience (Perles-Ribes et al., 2021).

4.1.3 Hospitality

Overall hospitality at tourist sites was identified as important attribute of customer satisfaction (Sanchez-Oro et al., 2021; Wang & Satchabut, 2019).

4.1.4 Professionalism of Staff

Interactions with people in general at the tourist location was identified as a significant attribute of satisfaction (Perles-Ribes et al., 2021). Professionalism of employees (Mondo & Fiates, 2017) was observed as key attribute of customer satisfaction.

4.1.5 Environment

Mondo and Fiates (2017) studied temperature as an attribute of environmental attraction. Marzuki et al. (2017) assessed and found cleanliness of water bodies as an important environmental attribute of tourist satisfaction, whilst Wang and Satchabut (2019) identified beautiful scenery as a significant environmental attribute of customer satisfaction. Sanchez-Oro et al. (2021) identified the level of natural conservation as a critical environmental attribute. The level of noise pollution was also assessed (Marzuki et al., 2017; Wang & Satchabut, 2019) and determined as a significant attribute of customer satisfaction.

4.1.6 Safety

Safety was identified as a critical aspect of tourist satisfaction (Mondo & Fiates, 2017; Perles-Ribes et al., 2021; Sanchez-Oro et al., 2021).

4.1.7 Infrastructure

Mondo and Fiates (2017) assessed infrastructure in the context of maintenance and availability at time utilisation. Marzuki et al. (2017) interpreted infrastructure in the context of water and electricity supply, as well as availability of reliable telecommunication signal. Overall, infrastructure was assessed as a significant aspect of tourist satisfaction (Marzuki et al., 2017; Mondo & Fiates, 2017; Sanchez-Oro et al., 2021).

4.1.8 Aesthetics

Mondo and Fiates (2017) identified aesthetic as a significant attribute of tourists' satisfaction.

4.1.9 Comfort

Mondo and Fiates (2017) evaluated tourist comfort. The paper assessed attributes such as high performing theatre as indicators of tourist satisfaction. Mondo and Fiates (2017) also assessed comfort as an environmental attribute that induces pleasure.

4.1.10 Cleanliness

Mondo and Fiates (2017) and Perles-Ribes et al. (2021) established cleanliness as a significant attribute of customer satisfaction.

4.2 Discussion

The present thesis sort to determine primary attributes of customer experience at tourist destinations utilizing contemporary evidence (Maghrifani, 2019; Marzuki et al., 2017; Mondo & Fiates, 2017; Perles-Ribes et al., 2021; Sanchez-Oro et al., 2021; Wang & Satchabut, 2019). Mondo and Fiates (2017) evaluated indicators of tourist attractions, which includes safety, cleaning, infrastructure, comfort, price, and aesthetic. Marzuki et al. (2017) evaluated tourist expectation and satisfaction under physical, environment, main facilities, supporting facilities and satisfaction constructs. Perles-Ribes et al. (2021) studied determinants of tourist satisfaction, which includes restaurants, shops, cleaning, safety, and traffic conditions. Maghrifani (2019) assessed low price, food, drinks, and beach as tourist expectations that determine experience. Sanchez-Oro et al. (2021) evaluated staff professionalism, hospitality of friends, tourist infrastructures, and environment as attributes of tourist satisfaction. Wang and Satchabut (2019) assessed tourist expectation and satisfaction under safety, level of noise pollution, friendliness, and access to multiple shops as attributes.

The results of present literature review are consistent with existing studies. For instance, aesthetic has been studied. Surucu and Bekar (2017) studied the implications of aesthetic for food delivery business. Vermeir and Roose (2020) evaluated the implications of visual perception on food choice. The authors assessed that food choice and repeat customer visits could be influenced by visual cues. Ryu and Han (2009) studied the connections between aesthetics, price perception, and customer experience. The foregoing studies adequately established the impacts of aesthetics on business performance. However, determining the components of aesthetics that impact business performance is critical to measuring customer experience. Markovic et al. (2021) discussed the importance of exterior to business aesthetics. Oh and Kim (2020) emphasised the importance of sensory features in design of aesthetics, and Wardono et al. (2012) described the inclusion of aesthetic in the physical presence of company staff. A review by Markovic et al. (2021) concluded that aesthetic is critical to guest experience.

There have been studies on hygiene and sanitation. For instance, a study (Sharma & Kaushik, 2021) on an Indian Hotel made the linkages between aesthetic and sanitation. Sanitation and safety have also been linked to customer satisfaction in food services (Sarmiento & Apritado, 2022). Alex-Onyeocha et al. (2015) linked the implications of good road transport infrastructure to the safety of tourists. Luthuli et al. (2021) also concluded that tourism will not thrive without decent good road networks. Although the foregoing studies on tourism and road infrastructure

did not discuss road networks inside the tourism sites, Ryu and Han (2009) studied the impacts of a tourist' destinations physical environment on customer satisfaction. Ryu and Han (2009) extended the conversation by connecting physical environment and pricing to customer' brand loyalty.

Safety, transportation, and environment were also included in a study on factors that influence decisions to visit tourist locations (Pooi, 2006). Other attributes that attract tourists are accommodation (Westscott, 2019), brand promotion (Chen & Chen, 2018), quality of infrastructure (Mazrejah, 2020), affordability (Kijima, et al., 2020), and shopping facility (Kong & Chang, 2016). However, Luo and Fan (2022) attempted to capture tourist experience as integrated entertainment. The authors assessed attributes of tourist experience provide unique entertainment values either behavioural, functional, or affective.

Whilst customer satisfaction models were not directly applied for present study, EDT, ECM, and AT could be utilised to interpret the findings. Whilst EDT could be applied to determine differences between expectation and disconfirmation (Yuksel & Yuksel, 2008), performances of identified attributes serve as inputs into broader customer' facility assessment (subject to customer personality profile) under the ECM (Sirgy, 1984). The AT could be applied to articulate service outcomes (Yuksel & Yuksel, 2008). The theory supports causal assessment to determine the attributes responsible for incongruity or disconfirmation with a product or service. Similar satisfaction models not discussed in the present paper include Equity theory, Importance-Performance model, and the Value Percept Theory (Yuksel & Yuksel, 2008). Whereas multiple attributes of customer experience exist (Mondo & Fiates, 2017), the attributes determined by present literature review seem consistent with existing studies. Furthermore, no significantly dissenting literary conclusions were observed.

5 Conclusion

The chapter discusses theoretical contributions of the study. Practical implications of the study are also discussed. The study has practical implications for strategy and team development. The remainder of current chapter outlined study limitations and recommendations. Overall, the study aimed to answer: What key attributes influence customer experience at tourist sites? The study identified Low Price, Quality of Food and Drink, Hospitality, Professionalism of staff, Environment, Safety, Infrastructure, Aesthetics, Comfort, and Cleanliness as key attributes that influence customer experience at tourist sites. The study concludes that whilst other attributes exist, these attributes are key to influencing customer experience at tourist sites.

5.1 Theoretical contributions

Primary attributes of tourist experience in tourist destinations are Low Price, Quality of Food and Drink, Hospitality, Professionalism of staff, Environment, Safety, Infrastructure, Aesthetic, Comfort, and Cleanliness. Results of the present study are consistent with findings from existing literature. However, the literature review attempted to narrow the conversation on primary attributes of tourist expectations and satisfaction in tourist landscapes. Whilst other attributes of tourist expectation and satisfaction exist, the attributes identified in the present review could be utilized to narrow attributes of customer experience in tourist sites. The primary attributes identified in the thesis could be used as macro-attributes. The objective could be to reasonably capture, map, and explain other attributes of customer experience under the primary attributes discussed in the thesis. Such application could optimize research resources and provide an opportunity to streamline the attributes of customer experience. Such an outcome will have implications for strategy, competitiveness, and resource allocation.

5.2 Practical implications

The study highlighted the premise for competitiveness and differentiation in tourism and hospitality business. The adopted theoretical framework emphasized the ability of customers to measure these attributes. Hence, Olumo rock and other tourist destinations can reassess their performance on these attributes and readjust their strategies to remain or improve competitiveness. At

the strategic level, site administrators and leaders could use results from the thesis to improve resource allocation and revenue strategies. Team development and capacity building could be developed under the findings of the study. Finally, tourism sites should constantly benchmark these attributes against high performing tourist sites. The results of the study practically apply to all tourist destinations.

5.3 Limitations

The study methodology was assessed as major constraint. The utilization of a narrative review undermined the generalizability of findings from current study. For instance, a quantitative assessment of these attributes and their interactions would have strengthened the quality of evidence. Furthermore, some of the reviewed papers provided dynamical conclusions on the attributes. Hence, paucity of available studies that captured tourism in the context of expectation and satisfaction also impacted the review. However, the constraints were mitigated by observable consistencies between the review's results and existing studies.

5.4 Recommendation

The study found that Olumo rock could apply results of current study to improve their strategies and operations. For instance, Olumo rock could present package offers that improve customer experience but at reduced price. The quality of food and drinks should be consistent with optimum expectations of different cultures and communities that visit the site. Hospitality and professionalism of site employees must optimize first impressions and excellent service delivery. Overall, tourist site's environment must be aesthetically positioned for a captivating experience. Landscapes and site' ambience must be in excellent form. Visitors to Olumo rock must feel and interact with high level physical security, cleanliness, and comfort. The attributes are quintessential to competitiveness in tourism and hospitality business. Papers have been developed on these attributes as well. Therefore, Olumo rock administrators and other tourism sites should consider differentiating on these primary attributes of customer experience to improve patronage, revenue, and profitability. Although multiple papers have been developed on these attributes, research should be commissioned that will understand how these attributes combine to drive competitiveness, revenue, and profitability.

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