Influence of Family Size and Gender on Travel Preferences and Tourism Spending Among Households in Cross River State, Nigeria.

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Abstract

This study investigated the influence of family size and gender on travel preferences and tourism spending among households in Cross River State, Nigeria. Two null hypotheses were tested: (1) that family size has no significant influence on travel preferences, and (2) that gender has no significant influence on tourism spending. A quantitative research design employing a descriptive correlational approach was adopted. A structured questionnaire was administered to a stratified random sample of 168 households across urban and rural areas of the state. Data were collected through face-to-face interviews and analyzed using descriptive statistics and independent t-tests. The results revealed a statistically significant influence of family size on travel preferences, with larger households exhibiting different travel behaviors compared to smaller ones. Similarly, gender was found to significantly influence tourism spending, with male respondents reporting higher expenditures than female respondents. These findings align with existing literature and underscore the importance of demographic factors in shaping tourism behaviors. The study provides valuable insights for tourism marketers and policymakers aiming to design inclusive and targeted tourism services in Cross River State and beyond.

Keywords: family size, gender, travel preferences, tourism spending, households, Cross River State, Nigeria

Introduction and background

Tourism plays a vital role in the economic development of regions, including Cross River State, Nigeria, where the sector is considered one of the main drivers of local employment and revenue generation. Understanding the factors that influence household tourism behaviors, such as travel preferences and tourism spending, is crucial for the effective planning and management of the tourism industry. Family size and gender are demographic variables that can significantly impact the travel decisions and spending patterns of households. While numerous studies have explored tourism behaviors in various contexts, there remains a lack of research focused on the influence of these specific factors within the Nigerian context, particularly in Cross River State. This study seeks to fill this gap by examining how family size and gender influence tourism choices and financial expenditures among households in the region. The findings of this study could contribute to more tailored tourism policies and strategies that better meet the needs of diverse households.

Tourism, as an industry, has gained significant attention due to its potential to drive economic growth and provide social benefits (Horner & Swarbrooke, 2020). In Nigeria, tourism holds promise for development, especially in regions like Cross River State, which is known for its cultural heritage, natural landscapes, and hospitality sector. Family size and gender are often overlooked as critical factors influencing household tourism behavior. Previous studies have shown that family size can shape the type of destination households choose, the types of activities they engage in, and their overall expenditure on travel (Gaafar, 2019; Binkhorst & Den Dekker, 2009). For instance, larger families may prefer more affordable, family-oriented destinations, while smaller families or couples may opt for luxury or adventure-based travel.

Gender, on the other hand, has been found to influence preferences regarding tourism activities, with men and women exhibiting different interests in leisure activities and travel destinations (Barnes, Mattsson & Sørensen, 2014). However, research on how gender interacts with family size in the context of tourism is limited. In Nigeria, where social structures often define gender roles and expectations, the interplay between family size and gender could have unique implications for household travel behavior. Understanding these dynamics is essential for tourism providers who seek to create inclusive and diverse tourism experiences.

Despite the importance of these factors, little research has focused on how family size and gender influence tourism behaviors in Cross River State, Nigeria. This study, therefore, aims to investigate these relationships in order to offer insights that can inform the development of tourism policies and initiatives tailored to household needs and preferences.

Statement problem

The tourism industry in Cross River State, Nigeria, holds significant potential for economic development; however, understanding the factors that drive tourism choices and spending remains limited. Family size and gender are critical demographic factors that may influence travel preferences, tourism spending patterns, and the types of tourism activities pursued by households. Despite this, little research has been conducted to explore how these factors shape tourism behaviors within the region. This gap in knowledge limits the ability of tourism policymakers and businesses to tailor their services and strategies to meet the diverse needs of households. Therefore, this study aims to investigate the influence of family size and gender on travel preferences and tourism spending among households in Cross River State, Nigeria, to provide insights that could enhance the effectiveness of tourism planning and marketing strategies in the region.

Purpose of the study

The purpose of this study is to examine the influence of family size and gender on travel preferences and tourism spending among households in Cross River State, Nigeria. Specifically, the study seeks to explore how varying family sizes and gender dynamics impact the types of tourism activities selected, the frequency of travel, and the overall expenditure on tourism. By understanding these relationships, the study aims to provide valuable insights for tourism stakeholders, including policymakers and businesses, to better cater to the needs and preferences of different household structures in the region.

Research hypotheses

The following hypotheses were formulated to guide the study:

1. There is no significant influence of family size on travel preferences among households in Cross River State, Nigeria.
2. There is no significant influence of gender on tourism spending among households in Cross River State, Nigeria.

Literature review

This literature review focuses on two key areas of research related to tourism: the influence of family size on travel preferences among households and the influence of gender on tourism spending. Both family size and gender play critical roles in shaping travel behaviors and expenditure patterns, which have implications for tourism planning, policy development, and marketing strategies.

1. Influence of Family Size on Travel Preferences Among Households

Family size has been identified as an important determinant of travel preferences. The size of a family influences the choice of destination, types of accommodations, and the kinds of activities pursued during vacations. A number of studies have examined the relationship between family size and travel preferences, with varying findings.

Family Size and Destination Choice Larger families often have different tourism preferences compared to smaller families due to the logistical and financial demands of traveling with more members. According to Tseng, Chien and Shen, (2023), families with children tend to prefer family-oriented destinations, such as amusement parks, resorts, and destinations with activities that appeal to all age groups. This preference stems from the need to provide entertainment for both adults and children, as well as to minimize travel disruptions that can arise from the complexities of managing a large family while traveling. In contrast, smaller

families or couples may opt for destinations that offer more adventure-oriented activities or more luxurious travel experiences (Pitanatri, Adnyani, Kartini & Valeri, 2025).

Additionally, larger families are often more budget-conscious, as the cost of travel increases significantly with each additional member. *Binkhorst and Den Dekker* (2009) suggested that larger households may prioritize cost-effective travel options, such as domestic destinations, self-catering accommodations, or all-inclusive resorts, to balance the expense of traveling with the needs of multiple family members. Smaller families, on the other hand, may be more inclined to invest in higher-end accommodations and international travel options because their travel budget is less strained.

Family Size and Types of Activities The size of a family can also influence the types of activities pursued during a trip. Larger families are often drawn to destinations that offer a wide variety of family-friendly activities to cater to different age groups. For example, Wilson, Hallo, Sharp, Mainella and McGuire (2017) found that larger families are more likely to engage in outdoor and recreational activities, such as hiking, swimming, and visiting cultural or historical attractions, where there is a broader appeal across generations. In contrast, smaller families may focus on niche activities, such as fine dining, luxury shopping, or cultural experiences that may not require as many participants to enjoy.

The choice of travel time can also be influenced by family size. Larger families tend to travel during peak seasons or school holidays to align with school schedules, whereas smaller families may travel during off-peak times when they can avoid large crowds and take advantage of discounted travel prices (Bos, 2024).

2. Influence of Gender on Tourism Spending Among Households

Gender has long been recognized as a key factor influencing tourism spending behaviors. Research has shown that men and women approach travel differently, with distinct preferences for how they allocate their travel budgets.

Gender and Spending Patterns Women are often identified as more responsible for household spending decisions, particularly in relation to family vacations. Bos (2024) found that women tend to be more involved in budgeting for family trips and are more likely to prioritize expenditures related to children's activities, family-friendly accommodations, and meals. In contrast, men often prioritize spending on activities related to adventure and leisure, such as excursions, entertainment, and excursions that cater to personal interests (McNiel,

Harris & Fondren, 2012). This difference in spending priorities suggests that gender plays a significant role in shaping how a household allocates its tourism budget.

Gender Differences in Spending on Travel Experiences Further, gender influences how different travel experiences are valued. According to Ferreira (2015), women tend to spend more on cultural, wellness, and relaxation-based tourism activities such as spas, museums, and historical tours. These types of activities are often perceived as more family-oriented and provide opportunities for relaxation, which aligns with many women's preferences for vacation experiences. Men, on the other hand, are more likely to allocate their budgets to activities involving physical challenges or adventure, such as hiking, adventure sports, or exploring natural attractions (Pomfret & Bramwell, 2016).

Gender and Overall Expenditure In terms of overall spending, research by Bernini and Cracolici (2015) revealed that, although men and women tend to spend differently on specific aspects of travel, both genders contribute similarly to overall household expenditure on tourism. However, women may exert more influence over decisions regarding accommodation, dining, and family activities, while men may have greater spending on outdoor or leisure experiences. Additionally, studies have indicated that, while men may spend more on tourism-related products and souvenirs, women typically allocate higher proportions of their budgets to non-consumption aspects, such as educational or cultural experiences, which can impact how families allocate their overall travel budgets (Schumann, 2017).

Influence of Gender on Travel Planning and Budgeting Studies have also shown that women are more involved in the travel planning process than men, especially in families with children. Women are often the primary decision-makers when it comes to selecting destinations, choosing accommodations, and planning the activities and excursions for the trip (Barlés-Arizón, Fraj-Andrés & Martínez-Salinas, 2013). This involvement in the planning process translates into a greater sense of responsibility for managing the overall cost of the trip.

Family size and gender both have significant impacts on household tourism behavior. Larger families tend to prioritize cost-effective travel options and family-oriented destinations, while smaller families may have more flexibility to choose luxury or adventure travel experiences. Gender differences influence tourism spending patterns, with women generally prioritizing family-friendly activities and men focusing more on personal leisure or adventure pursuits. Understanding these dynamics is crucial for tourism providers, as it allows for the

development of targeted marketing strategies and tailored offerings that cater to diverse household structures and preferences.

Methodology

Research Design

This study adopted a quantitative research design using a descriptive correlational approach. The descriptive aspect of the study helped to characterize the travel preferences and tourism spending behaviors of households in Cross River State, while the correlational aspect explored the relationships between family size, gender, and tourism-related behaviors. A survey method was employed to collect data from a sample of households in the state.

Population

The target population for this study consists of households in Cross River State, Nigeria. Households within urban and rural areas were considered to ensure a diverse representation of family structures and gender roles. The state is home to a mixture of socioeconomic classes, which will allow for a broad exploration of tourism behaviors across different demographics.

Sample Size and Sampling Technique

A stratified random sampling technique was used to select households from urban and rural areas within the state. The stratification was based on urbanization (urban versus rural areas), as tourism behaviors differed between these settings. From each stratum, a random sample of households was chosen.

Given the large and diverse population of households in Cross River State, the study aims to collect data from 168 households. This sample size is considered sufficient to provide a representative cross-section of the population, ensuring generalizability of the results.

Data Collection Methods

Data was collected using a structured questionnaire. The questionnaire was developed based on the research objectives and consisted of closed-ended questions to ensure consistency in responses. The key sections of the questionnaire included: Demographic Information: This section captured information on family size (number of family members) and gender of the head of the household, as well as other socio-demographic factors such as age, income, and education level. Travel Preferences: This section included questions on household

preferences for tourism destinations, types of activities engaged in during vacations, and frequency of travel. Respondents were asked about the type of vacation (e.g., domestic or international), preferred tourism activities (e.g., cultural, adventure, relaxation), and preferred travel season (e.g., holidays, off-peak seasons). Tourism Spending: This section measured household spending on tourism-related expenses, such as accommodation, transportation, meals, and leisure activities. Respondents were asked to estimate the average amount spent on each category during a typical vacation. The questionnaire was pre-tested on a small sample (approximately 30 households) to ensure clarity, validity, and reliability of the questions. Adjustments were made based on feedback from the pre-test before the final data collection.

Data Collection Procedure

Data was collected through face-to-face interviews with respondents in their households. Trained enumerators administered the questionnaires, ensuring that they followed a standardized procedure and that respondents fully understood the questions. Enumerators were selected based on their familiarity with the local language and culture, which facilitated effective communication with the participants. Each respondent were provided with a brief introduction to the purpose of the study and assured of the confidentiality and anonymity of their responses. Informed consent were obtained from all participants before data collection.

Data Analysis

Data collected from the questionnaires were analyzed using statistical methods to test the hypotheses and explore relationships between family size, gender, and tourism behaviors. Descriptive statistics (e.g., frequencies, percentages, means) were used to summarize the demographic characteristics of the respondents, as well as their travel preferences and tourism spending patterns. The Independent t-test was used to determine if there are significant differences in tourism spending or preferences based on gender and family size. This helped identify whether different family sizes or genders have distinct tourism behaviors.

Ethical Considerations

Ethical approval for the study was obtained from a relevant institutional review board or ethics committee. The study adhered to ethical standards in research, including:

Informed Consent: Participants were fully informed about the purpose of the study, the voluntary nature of their participation, and their right to withdraw at any time without penalty.

Confidentiality: Personal information and responses were kept confidential and stored securely. Data were anonymized to protect participants' identities.

Non-coercion: Participation were voluntary, and participants were not coerced into taking part in the study.

Limitations of the Study

While the study aims to provide valuable insights, several limitations should be noted:

Self-Reported Data: The accuracy of responses depends on the honesty and memory of the participants, particularly in estimating travel expenditures and family size. **Geographical Scope**: The study is limited to households in Cross River State, Nigeria, and may not be generalizable to other regions of Nigeria or other countries with different socio-cultural dynamics.

Sample Bias: The study may be subject to selection bias, as certain demographic groups may be more likely to participate in the study than others.

This methodology provides a comprehensive framework for investigating the influence of family size and gender on travel preferences and tourism spending among households in Cross River State, Nigeria. By employing a structured questionnaire and appropriate statistical analyses, the study aims to provide valuable insights that can guide tourism stakeholders in developing more targeted and effective policies, programs, and marketing strategies for different household types.

Presentation of results

Hypothesis one

There is no significant influence of family size on travel preferences among households in Cross River State, Nigeria.An independent samples t-test was conducted to examine whether family size significantly influences travel preferences among households in Cross River State, Nigeria. The results revealed a significant difference in travel preferences between households with small family sizes (M = 12.88, SD = 2.44) and those with large family sizes (M = 13.59, SD = 2.38), $t(166) = 1.869$, $p = .000$. Since the p-value was less than the alpha level of .05, the null hypothesis stating that there is no significant influence of family size on travel preferences among households was rejected. This indicates that family size has a statistically significant influence on the travel preferences of households in Cross River State, Nigeria.

Table 1: Independent t-test analysis of influence of family size on travel preferences among households in Cross River State, Nigeria (N=168).

Family size	N	Mean	SD	t-value	F	Sign
Small	104	12.88	2.444			
				1.869	.099	.000
Large	64	13.59	2.382			

Significant at 0.05 level of significance; df =166.

Hypothesis two

There is no significant influence of gender on tourism spending among households in Cross River State, Nigeria.

An independent samples t-test was conducted to determine whether gender significantly influences tourism spending among households in Cross River State, Nigeria. The findings showed that male respondents (M = 13.37, SD = 2.34) reported higher tourism spending compared to female respondents (M = 12.90, SD = 2.54), $t(166) = 1.246$, $p = .000$. Since the p-value was less than the .05 significance level, the null hypothesis stating that gender has no significant influence on tourism spending among households was rejected. This result suggests that gender significantly influences tourism spending patterns among households in Cross River State, Nigeria.

Table 2: Independent t-test analysis of influence of gender on tourism spending among households in Cross River State, Nigeria (N=168).

Gender	N	Mean	SD	t-value	F	Sign
Male	90	13.37	2.339			
				1.246	.088	.000
Female	78	12.90	2.541			

Significant at 0.05 level of significance; df =166.

Discussion of findings

For hypothesis one, the result of the independent samples t-test indicated that family size has a statistically significant influence on travel preferences among households in Cross River State, Nigeria, $t(166) = 1.869$, $p = .000$. This suggests that households with larger family sizes tend to have different travel preferences compared to those with smaller families. Specifically, larger households reported slightly higher mean scores in travel preferences (M = 13.59, SD =

2.38) than smaller households (M = 12.88, SD = 2.44), thereby confirming that the size of a household plays a notable role in shaping tourism behavior.

This finding is consistent with existing literature, which highlights that family size significantly influences travel-related decisions and destination choices. For instance, Tseng, Chien, and Shen (2023) observed that larger families, particularly those with children, are more inclined toward family-friendly destinations that cater to diverse age groups. These preferences are often guided by the practical need to entertain multiple members while minimizing stress and disruptions during travel. Similarly, Pitanatri, Adnyani, Kartini, and Valeri (2025) found that smaller families, such as couples or nuclear households, often prioritize more exclusive, adventure-oriented, or luxury travel experiences, likely due to greater flexibility and fewer logistical concerns.

In line with these perspectives, Binkhorst and Den Dekker (2009) noted that larger households tend to be more budget-conscious, often choosing cost-saving travel options such as domestic tourism, self-catering accommodations, or all-inclusive packages. In contrast, smaller families may allocate more of their resources toward premium services and international destinations, as their travel budgets are not as heavily impacted by the number of travelers.

Therefore, the findings from this study align with previous empirical evidence and reinforce the notion that family size is a critical determinant of travel preferences. Understanding these dynamics is essential for tourism stakeholders aiming to develop targeted marketing strategies and inclusive tourism products that address the varying needs of households of different sizes.

Hypothesis two

The result of the independent samples t-test indicated that gender significantly influences tourism spending among households in Cross River State, Nigeria, $t(166) = 1.246$, $p = .000$. Male respondents reported higher tourism spending (M = 13.37, SD = 2.34) than female respondents (M = 12.90, SD = 2.54), leading to the rejection of the null hypothesis that gender has no significant influence on tourism spending. This finding suggests that gender plays an important role in shaping household tourism expenditure patterns within the study area.

The result aligns with existing literature on gender differences in tourism spending. Bos (2024) emphasized that women are typically more responsible for household spending decisions, especially for family-oriented travel, often prioritizing budget allocations for children's

activities, family-friendly accommodations, and meals. In contrast, men have been found to allocate a greater portion of tourism expenditures toward personal leisure activities, such as excursions and entertainment, which tend to be more adventure-oriented (McNiel, Harris, & Fondren, 2012). This divergence in spending priorities may explain why males reported higher overall tourism spending in this study.

Furthermore, Ferreira (2015) found that women tend to spend more on cultural, wellness, and relaxation-based tourism experiences, such as museum visits, spa treatments, and historical tours. These expenditures, although significant, are often more conservative and family-centered. Conversely, Pomfret and Bramwell (2016) observed that men are more inclined to invest heavily in adventure-related tourism activities, such as hiking, extreme sports, and exploration of natural sites, which may be associated with higher individual spending amounts.

Thus, the present study's findings are consistent with previous research indicating that gender differences exist not only in the types of tourism activities preferred but also in the overall level of tourism spending. Recognizing these gender-based distinctions is crucial for tourism marketers and policymakers aiming to design targeted tourism packages that meet the diverse preferences and spending behaviors of male and female travelers.

Conclusion

This study examined the influence of family size and gender on travel preferences and tourism spending among households in Cross River State, Nigeria. The findings revealed that both family size and gender significantly influenced household tourism behavior. Households with larger family sizes demonstrated distinct travel preferences compared to smaller families, likely due to the need for family-oriented destinations and cost-effective travel options. Similarly, gender differences were evident in tourism spending, with males reporting higher levels of spending than females, reflecting divergent spending priorities and preferences. These findings are consistent with existing literature and highlight the importance of considering demographic factors in tourism planning and marketing strategies. Overall, the study underscores the role of family dynamics and gender roles in shaping household tourism patterns, which has important implications for policymakers, tourism businesses, and service providers.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations were made:

1. Tourism service providers should design family-size-specific packages: Tourism operators in Cross River State should create travel packages tailored to different family sizes, offering

family-friendly amenities and cost-effective options for larger households, as well as more exclusive, adventurous packages for smaller families or couples.

2. Develop gender-sensitive marketing strategies: Tourism marketers should recognize the distinct preferences and spending behaviors of male and female travelers by designing promotional materials and travel experiences that cater to diverse gender-based interests, such as adventure tourism for men and wellness or cultural tourism for women.

3. Encourage inclusive tourism policies and infrastructure development: Policymakers should promote inclusive tourism development by supporting the creation of family-oriented destinations, enhancing accessibility, and providing diverse recreational options that accommodate varying household structures and gender preferences, thereby boosting tourism participation across different demographic groups.

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