

Reimagining Africa and Reinventing Tourism: Perceived Destination Image among Young Indians

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Abstract

Considering the recovery of tourism industry, confidence building among travelers is of crucial importance. In this regard, destination image poses a serious challenges and complications for all the stakeholders of the tourism industry. Indian are potential target audience considering the wide range of experiences provided by the various countries of African continent. Africa's dependence on foreign travelers. For countries in Eastern and Southern Africa this effect is more visible where a large chunk of tourists are foreigners. Significant leisure and safari oriented facilities strongly appeal to European, American, Asian visitors. Therefore, tourism management agencies must have appropriate policy and plans.

Keywords: *Tourism Industry, African Tourism, Tourism Marketing, Destination Image, Tourist Behavior*

Introduction

Every African nation has been affected in the similar manner by the pandemic-induced lockdowns and grounded flights. The continent's tourism industry has created a huge implication for all the tourism departments across the length and breadth of Africa. As per IFC report, the vaccination rollout has started instilling some confidence among travelers and the recovery is expected. But this poses a serious challenges and complications for all the stakeholders of the tourism industry.

Over the past 20 years, tourism importance has been witnessed by African economies. During 2019, tourism industry accounted for 7% of Africa's GDP and contributed to nearly 170 billion dollars to its economy. This is equivalent to the size of combined GDP of Kenya and Côte d'Ivoire. According to the World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTTC), Africa's travel and tourism sector had given employment opportunities to more than 24 million in 2019 prior to covid19 disruption. It can give clear idea about the negative impact of declining tourism for a large chunk of population.

By 2020, a prediction of 12 % decline in the GDP of African countries was given by International Monetary Fund in a report of nations who are dependent on tourism. Along with domestic contribution, the pandemic and crisis has also exposed Africa's dependence on foreign travelers. For countries in Eastern and Southern Africa this effect is more visible where a large chunk of tourists are foreigners.

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As per WTTC (2019) study, local tourism contributes to 55% of travel and tourism spending in Africa. This is far below when compared to other continents. The contribution of domestic tourism in North America, Europe and Asia were reported at 83%, 64% and 74 % respectively. Although, domestic market is more resilient, international bookings are of higher value while considering revenue. There is a pressing need to reinvent and reimagining the approach adopted by African nations to leverage their tourism potential.

Literature Review

In Africa, the industry has its fair share of challenges. Despite the rich natural tourist attractions, the continent continues to attract the least share of international tourist arrivals with a share of 4.8% in 2018 (Jumia Travel, 2019). This has partly been linked to the continent's prolonged negative image and perceived risks (Matiza & Oni, 2014). The continent's touristic image has often been described as "troublesome" and "unfortunate" (Lwegaba, 2013; Matiza & Oni, 2014).

The continent continues to be associated with socio-economic ills such as political unrests, violent crimes, ethnic conflicts among others. These often get amplified by the media and in turn manifest into stereotypes and negative images (Matiza & Oni, 2014). In particular, the international media often cover the continent in a distorted manner. Their most preferred topics include poverty, diseases burden, human rights violations, insecurity, political and ethnic conflicts (Avraham & Ketter, 2017; Muhwezi, Baum, & Nyakaana, 2016).

Destination Image

Destination image has a significant impact on tourist's destination choice (Iordanova & Styliadis, 2019; Pike, Gentle, Kelly, & Beatson, 2018). Therefore, travelers faced with alternative choices of competing destinations are more likely to favor destinations with strong positive image (Foroudi et al., 2018). This is

because a significant proportion of tourists rely on the subjective judgments on a destination as opposed to the factual information on the destination to make decision on their travel choices (Jeong & Kim, 2019; Li, Cai, Lehto, & Huang, 2010). Therefore, managing, measuring and improving a destination's image is necessary to increase visitation or re-visitation (Jago et al, 2003; DJensen & Kwiatkowski, 2019). Destination marketers need to develop marketing strategies which may include use of events to continuously enhance a destination's image.

It is evident that events today have become important as host destination image builders (Jensen & Kwiatkowski, 2019). Positive relationship between events and destination image has been supported by many empirical studies focusing on the influence of events on the host destination's image. The relationship, however, depend to some extent on the size and reputation of an event, with more prestigious and famous events having more significant effect on host destination image (Deng, Li, & Shen, 2015). In a systematic review, Jensen and Kwiatkowski (2019) identified a total of 40 past studies on image interplay between events and destinations. From the review, they observed that events play a significant role in influencing the host destination's image. This was achieved through increased awareness and familiarity with the destination, reduced negative perceptions and images by changing existing stereotypes and generating believable associations and authenticity. They also highlighted that the size, status and frequency of an event greatly influence its impact on the destination's image. The quality of event experience has also a significant impact on the event image, and hence, the destination's image. The quality of event experience is an antecedent to destination image and comprises of the variety of event programs and service delivery processes (Kim, Lee, Petrick, & Hahn, 2018). Studies also indicate that, hosting events often lead to upgrading of host destination's infrastructures; enhance their attractiveness, overall image and competitiveness (Getz & Page, 2016; Lai, 2018).

Perceived Risk

In Africa, the industry has its fair share of challenges. Despite the rich natural tourist attractions, the continent continues to attract the least share of international tourist arrivals with a share of 4.8% in 2018 (Jumia Travel, 2019). This has partly been linked to the continent's prolonged negative image and perceived risks (Matiza & Oni, 2014). The continent's touristic image has often been described as "troublesome" and "unfortunate" (Lwegaba, 2013; Matiza & Oni, 2014). The continent continues to be associated with socio-economic ills such as AIDs, political unrests, violent crimes, ethnic conflicts among others. These often get amplified by the media and in turn manifest into stereotypes and negative images (Matiza & Oni, 2014).

Cultural Heritage

The indicators of destination image were mainly borrowed from studies focusing on mega sports, festivals and cultural events (Dongfeng, 2013). In regard to festivals the experience factors include the local cuisine, sceneries, restaurants, entertainment, cultural resources and attractions (Duarte, Folgado-Fernandez, & Hernandez-Mogollon, 2018; Hernandez-Mogollon et al., 2018).

Social Safety

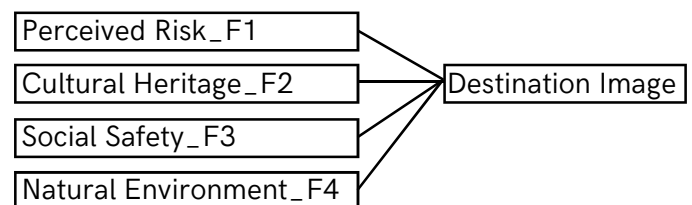
The intangible event experience factors such as communication, quality service, personal safety and security having a significant influence on the destinations image (Jeong & Kim, 2019; Moon, Kim, Ko, Connaughton, & Lee, 2011). In particular, the international media often cover the continent in a distorted manner. Their most preferred topics include poverty, diseases burden, human rights violations, insecurity, political and ethnic conflicts (Avraham & Ketter, 2017; Muhwezi, Baum, & Nyakaana, 2016).

Natural Environment

Gallarza Gil & Calderón (2002) found that the locality is the main attracting dimension of destination image. Beerli and Martin (2004) stated classified natural

attractions, cultural heritage, and infrastructure as attributes affecting image assessment. Rittichainuwat, Qu, and Brown (2001) stated that tourist return to a destination depends upon the perceived image in the form of value, social and environmental acceptance. Gardner et al (2002) research argued that natural and scenic beauty is the main attraction for tourists. Dwivedi et al (2009) in his research also identified natural resources as the main dimension of the destination image.

Conceptual Framework



Methods

This study adopted a convenience sampling technique, which allowed large numbers of respondents to be surveyed over a short period (Hair et al., 2021). An online questionnaire survey was developed and adopted. The use of online surveys has become increasingly popular because it reduces the costs associated with locating appropriate respondents and ensures their immediate availability (De Gregorio and Sung, 2010). A questionnaire was developed on 5 point Likert scale 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree.)

Analysis and Results

Overall, 188 individuals participated in the survey collected between 29 September to 11 October 2021. All incomplete questionnaires were eliminated from the analysis. Of the 188 completed questionnaires, 154 were useable after data cleaning, which enabled us to remove non serious respondents. Out of the 154 respondents, 117 were male and 37 are female, and the majority of them have education qualification in terms of masters' degree. Majority of the respondents are between 25 to 30 years old. Also, majority of our respondents had no prior experience of traveling to any of the African countries.

Table 1: Summary- Sample

Variable	Category	Percent
Gender_Male	117	75.9
Gender_Female	37	24.1
Marital Status_U	44	28.5
Marital Status_M	110	71.5
Age_Below 20	16	10.3
Age_20 to 25	21	13.6
Age_25 to 30	65	42.2
Age_30 to 35	23	14.9
Age_35 to 40	19	12.3
Age_Above 40	10	6.5
Education_PG and above	96	62.3
Education_UG	45	29.2
Education_Below UG	13	8.5
TravelledtoAfrica_No	139	90.3
TravelledtoAfrica_Yes	15	9.7

EFA and CFA

To extract the factors the 5-step procedure suggested by Hair et al., (2021) was used. The R-type extraction was used which is based on the correlation among variables. The inter-correlation was checked through the Bartlett test of Sphericity ($\chi^2 = 6306.51$, $df = 1081$, $p < .001$). The perceived destination image factor structure was validated through PLS-SEM 2.0. The factors' reliability and validity statistics were tested in terms of composite reliability (CR); Cronbach's alpha value (α); average variance extracted (AVE) and communality. Scale reliability was assessed in three ways: using an Alpha coefficient (α), Composite reliability (CR) and Average variance extracted (AVE) indices, the cut-off values of which were 0.7, 0.7, and 0.5, respectively (Hair et al., 2021). Since all the estimates of α , CR and AVE were above their respective thresholds, the results demonstrated adequate scale reliability.

Table 2: PLS SEM Output: Validity and Reliability

Factors	AVE	CR -alpha	Communality
F1	.422	.713	.422
F2	.467	.792	.467
F3	.557	.804	.557
F4	.528	.832	.528

Table 3: PLS SEM Output: t-Value and Path Coefficient

Factors	T value	Path Coefficient	P value
Perceived Risk_F1	1.961	-0.13**	0.050
Cultural Heritage_F2	6.172	0.28***	0.000
Social Safety_F3	2.157	0.47***	0.000
Natural Environment_ F4	5.618	0.35***	0.000

The partial least squares (PLS) technique was applied in this study. To obtain and assess the key reliability and validity indices and the direct and the moderating effects, Partial Least Squares (PLS) was employed, using the SmartPLS 3 software (Ringle et al., 2005). According to Sarstedt et al. (2014), "PLS-SEM does not make any distributional assumptions regarding the indicators or error terms that would facilitate the immediate testing of the weights' significance based on, for example, the normal distribution". Unless a bootstrapping routine is applied, which is a resampling technique that draws a large number of sub samples (typically 5000) from the original data (with replacement) and re-estimates the model for each sub sample, it will be difficult to generate T-statistics for significance testing for both the inner and outer models.

Conclusions and Discussions

Security and safety are extremely important for travelers and the tourism industry. One construct that has remained largely unexplored in explaining visitors' perceived safety while at the destination is their level of emotional solidarity. This study provided a holistic picture of the tourism industry by proposing and testing the factors relevant to various aspect of tourist's perceptions. The COVID-19 pandemic has heightened the risk associated with tourism and induced a

paradigm shift in tourist behaviour. The study explores the nexus between COVID-19 induced perceived risk the subjective safety associated with tourism activity.

Tourist want to explore natural beauty and new cultural experiences. Therefore tourism management agencies must have appropriate policy and plans. These plans should develop by focusing on natural sceneries such as sand hills and mountains, archaeological sites of significance, historical locations, and cultural experiences. There is a need to upgrade cultural activities and facilitate the interaction of international tourists with the local culture to enhance tourists' satisfaction. Tourists overall sense of perceived safety and the impact of various safety measures can influence the feelings of safety while on vacation.

Strict rules pertinent to safety also should be established. Any accommodation and travel business who flout regulations must be regulated to reduce the perceived risk .Leveraging on the online platforms quick response to travelers in any situations of help and urgency must be focused by governmental and nongovernmental aiming to improve the tourism experiences. Indian tourists may have stayed away from many geographies mainly due to perceived safety and security threats. There have been serious instance of rising anti-Indian sentiments as a result of poor public policy and measures. The safety and security of a destination is an essential factor that helps travelers decide whether to visit or not.

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