

**International Students as Tourists: Exploring Impressions of Ghana's
Destination Image¹**

¹ This document is the author's pre-print version of the journal article. There may be differences between this version and the published version. You are advised to consult the publisher's version if you wish to cite from it. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1504/EJIM.2021.10029973>

International Students as Tourists: Exploring Impressions of Ghana's Destination Image

Abstract: This study explores how tourists' impressions of destination attributes influence the image formation of Ghana as a destination. A qualitative approach was utilised to conduct the research due to the exploratory nature of the investigation. The study employed focus group discussions and semi-structured interviews of a sample of 28 international students. Findings show that Ghana has a positive image in the minds of the tourists as a destination. In addition, most of the participants were willing to return to Ghana and even recommend Ghana as a vacation destination. Theoretically, the study discussed the meaning of destination image from three dimensions: perceptual, image and outcome. The practical implication of the study's findings is that Ghanaian destination marketing organisations should consider country of origin and travel motivation as factors that exert the greatest influence on how tourists assess the value of tourist destination.

Keywords: Destination image, Ghana, country of origin, tourists' impressions, historical heritage, information sources, tourism, international students, internationalisation

Introduction

In recent times, tourism has been considered by several scholars as one of the world's largest business sectors (Roe and Khanya, 2001; Benfield, 2004; Reddy and Wilkes, 2015; Shantha, 2005). In 2017, international global tourist arrivals grew by 84 million people, with the industry accounting for 10.4 percent of global GDP and 9.9 percent of global employment (World Tourism Organisation 2017; World Travel & Tourism Council, 2018). It has been speculated that by 2020, global tourism will amount to 1.6 billion tourist arrivals (Havi and Enu, 2013). As a result of this increased demand, it is expected that tourism space will be keenly contested by countries searching for innovative ways to boost their appeal to potential visitors. One method for achieving this goal of attracting visitors involves the creative use of a destination image. A destination image affects the tourists' behaviour before, during, and after experiencing a destination (Lee, Lee and Lee, 2013). Holloway (1998) observed that a stronger image of a destination's attributes invariably increases the destination's attractiveness to potential visitors.

The current and expected rise in tourism has created a growing interest in tourism destination by academics and professionals in the travel industry (Gartner and Ruzzier, 2011). Several factors account for this increased attention. First, there is a remarkable growth in the tourism sector, and new tourism destinations are continually on the rise. This has created both opportunities and challenges to destination service providers. Second, the need to create a unique identity and differentiate destinations from one another to be competitive has become imperative (Morgan, Pritchard and Piggott, 2003; Ashton 2014). Third, tourists make decisions based on the perceived images of destinations; hence, images act as a nexus between their travel motivations and destination choices (O'Leary and Deegan, 2003).

Tourism is likely the fastest growing sector in Africa after the extractive industry (Chironga Leke, Lund and Van Wamelen, 2011). In 2017, the continent recorded an eight percent increase in international arrivals, matching the percentage increase in international tourist arrivals for destinations in Europe, the market leader in the industry (World Tourism Organisation, 2018). A study of tourism development in Africa may compare more established destinations like South Africa and Kenya to emerging destinations like Ghana, the context for this study. A common feature of emerging destinations is their struggle to sufficiently distinguish themselves from other destinations in the region. Like many emerging countries in Sub-Saharan Africa, Ghana's formal efforts to establish a sustainable tourism sector began in 1970 (Teye, 2000).

Despite this substantial attempt, The Ghanaian Ministry of Tourism (2013) in its assessment of the 15-year tourism plan (the period from 1996-2010), indicated that Ghana is still struggling to achieve its major tourism objectives as evidenced by the country's low rankings on the World Economic Forum's Travel and Tourism Competitiveness Index (TTCI). One of the ways that the government has tried to address the country's competitiveness is to improve Ghana's image as a destination by setting up the Brand Ghana Office (Brand Ghana Office, 2018). This move can help create an attractive and emotionally beneficial nation brand identity for Ghana (Marfo, Adeola, Achi and Hinson, 2020). Perhaps, a clearer understanding of the image that visitors have of the country could support the various governing bodies' and destination-marketing organisations' efforts to craft a compelling identity for Ghana.

The notion of destination image first appeared in academic literature within the 1970s (Gkritzali,

Gritzalis, and Stavrou, 2018), and relates to the branding of destinations (Papadimitriou, Kaplanidou, and Apostolopoulou, 2018), which when seen in this light, makes it a complex phenomenon considering that places (destinations) have multiple facets and are embedded with different meanings depending on an individual's perception (Ashworth and Page, 2011; Freire, 2009). Destination images play an influential role in relaying a tourism location's traditional and cultural heritage, scenery, potential business activities, and the attitude of residents to tourists (Barisic, Presebac and Mikulic, 2012). Generally, destination image refers to the totality of beliefs, notions and opinions people hold about a particular location (Kotler, Hauder and Rein; 1993; Kotler and Gertner, 2002). Notwithstanding the increased interest in the phenomenon, it can be argued that most of the studies on this topic are bereft of logical theories (Hallman, Zehrer and Muller, 2015), especially in sub-Saharan Africa.

The concept of destination image is a pivotal component of a tourist's destination decision-making process (Baloglu and McCleary, 1999a, 1999b; Chon, 1990, 1992) as it affects tourists' behaviours, choice, and perception of a destination (Chon, 1992). Despite the general agreement about the value of positive destination images, many countries and destinations struggle to build and maintain strong images in the minds of visitors. Prebensen (2007) suggests that although various reasons contribute to this challenge, exploring the fundamental criteria for tourists' understanding of destination images is the foundation for further research.

This study specifically adopts international students as the sample population because they are often excluded from the definition and composition of tourists. However, Payne (2009) argues that international students depending on their length of stay can be classified as either foreign (those who stay less than a year) or domestic tourists (more than a year). Furthermore, other scholars like Abdullateef and Biodun (2014) have argued there is a substantial basis for considering international students as tourists and including them as respondents in tourism research. The authors reached this conclusion after a review of both academic work and industry reports which confirmed the economic influence international students exert on the destination country through the monies they spend on tuition, living expenses and sightseeing within the country. Additionally, Abdullateef and Biodun (2014) found that the opportunities for relaxation, fun and sightseeing are among the major reasons why students choose to study abroad. This finding is reinforced by the works of Llewellyn-Smith and McCabe (2008) and García et al. (2015) both of which found that the destination image and tourism opportunities were major factors that influence international students' choice of where to study. World Youth Student & Educational Travel Confederation (2015) has reported that student travellers contributed US\$203 billion in 2014. Although student travel continues to be a niche marketing, Future Marketing Insights (2019) has named it as one of the fastest-growing tourism segments in the tourism industry. However, in spite of its potential, this population is often neglected by destination marketing organisations in Ghana. This is mainly because academic tourists make up only 17% of Ghana's international tourists arrivals according to the most recent tourism statistics (Ghana Tourism Authority, 2016). However, given the significant contributions that international students make to the global economy, they present a viable and lucrative market segment that could make significant contributions to the Ghanaian tourism economy and help shape Ghana's destination image.

In light of the above, this study explores international student tourists' impressions of Ghana through focus group discussions and interviews to help identify destination attributes that can be used to develop a strong brand for the country. Noting Dieke's (2003) observation about the dearth in mainstream literature on tourism in Africa and the limited number of qualitative studies into destination image theory (Pike, 2002, 2007; Prebensen, 2007), we state that this study is guided by the research question: *how do international students' impressions of destination attributes influence the image of Ghana as a destination?* In doing so, we contribute to existing knowledge by adopting a qualitative research to present perspectives on destination image from a segment of tourists that is often overlooked. Besides, the study also contributes to extant literature on Ghana's destination attributes as well as its image formation. The study's findings and conclusions offer critical insights for Ghana's tourism marketers to help strengthen marketing activities, thereby increasing Ghana's destination value. This will, in turn, build the destination image in the minds of tourists. Furthermore, policymakers would be able to formulate policies that will enhance tourism development in Ghana, thereby boosting Ghana's tourism competitiveness globally.

The rest of the paper has been divided into five sections. The first presents a review of literature and discusses the meaning of destination image along three dominant dimensions. The second discusses issues identified in extant mainstream literature relating to destination image. The third sets forth the methodology used by the authors. The fourth presents the results and discussion of findings based on the analysis of the collected qualitative data. The fifth section offers recommendations, conclusions, limitations, and areas for further research.

Literature review

Theoretical Framework of the research

Drawing from the works of Beach (1990) in organisation studies, our study is underpinned by the image theory from an individual outlook. Images may represent a person's principles, goals, or plans (Beach, 1990). The theory is built on three fundamental propositions. First is the value image, which represents the guiding imperatives of an individual's principles. The second is the trajectory image which reflects the aspirations of the individual, and lastly, the strategic image, which is the tactics for achieving the trajectory image. Further, the image theory illustrates that making decisions is not equivalent to selecting a choice between two alternatives. In this sense, the individual's decision might fit or not fit with the images leading to adoption or rejection of alternative options (Mitchell and Beach, 1990).

In the context of this research, the image theory can aid tourists in identifying the underlying goals they have in mind when forming a destination image. Therefore, tourists will choose destinations based on subjective images they feel will help them achieve their touring impression goals. This supposition serves as a need to explore the tourists' impressions of Ghana as a destination image.

Review of existing conceptualisation of destination image

Several researchers have proposed divergent definitions and frameworks to capture the destination image construct (Gallarza, Saura and Garcia, 2002). In addition, many scholars have theoretically

conceptualised the destination image construct along two dimensions (Oxenfeldt, 1975; Genereux, Ward and Russel, 1983; Beerli and Martin, 2004; Konecnik and Gartner, 2007). First, the perceptual-cognitive dimension which explicates the knowledge and beliefs relating to the attributes of a destination. Second, the affective dimension, which describes the emotional predispositions about a destination (Papadimitriou *et al.*, 2018).

The conceptualisation of Baloglu and McCleary (1999) extended the two-component conceptualisation of destination image by introducing a global (overall) dimension. This dimension captures the resulting image from the combination of both perceptual and affective dimensions. Moreover, Echtner and Ritchie (1991; 1993) employed a divergent configuration by developing a destination image framework based on a three-continuum perspective. The first, attribute–holistic continuum represents the features of a destination as well as the holistic mental image of the destination. The second continuum, functional–psychological represents the range of observable (functional) to unobservable (psychological) features of a destination, and lastly, the common–unique continuum explicates the range of common to distinctive attributes of a destination.

In addition, a review of existing literature illustrated that while there seems to be no universally accepted definition of destination image, the various definitions that have been proposed present overlapping concepts (Gallarza, Saura and Garcia, 2002; Tasci, Gartner and Cavusgil, 2007; Papadimitrou, Kaplanidou and Apostolopoulou, 2018; Zhang *et al.*, 2018). This is illustrated in Table 1.

Insert Table 1 about here

There seems to be some form of inherent overlap in the three-continuum perspective of Echtner and Ritchie (1991; 1993). For instance, in the evaluation of the common-unique continuum, a particular attribute of a destination could be considered as unique by one tourist and seen as common by another tourist.

Besides, to our knowledge, the majority of these conceptualisations were designed and conceptualised based on European and American contexts. Thus, applying such conceptualisation to the emerging sub-Saharan setting might be difficult. In the paragraphs that follow, building on the works of Beerli and Martin (2004), we propose a three-component dimension of destination image from the limitations observed in our review of extant studies.

Meaning of “destination image”

In the past forty years, the concept of “destination image” has undergone significant changes (Baloglu, Henthorne and Sahin, 2014). A review of the extant mainstream literature demonstrated that there is no single universal definition accepted by scholars for describing destination image. This can be attributed to the vague and complex nature of “image” (Tasci, Gartner and Cavusgil, 2007). Consequently, the authors have categorised the meaning of destination image into three dimensions; *perceptual*, *image*, and *outcome* (see Table 2).

Insert Table 2 about here

Perceptual dimension: The concept of a perceptual dimension of a destination image is found in extant literature. These authors emphasise that the perceptual aspect of image involves the formation of a mental construct based on information from an image formation driver (Tasci and Gartner, 2007). A destination image seeks to change and/or confirm the connotations and impressions people hold about a place or destination. Since image as a term is subjective in nature (Del Bosque and Martin, 2008), we noted that expressions which included the words beliefs, impressions, perception, or mental representation were utilised by authors under this dimension to explicate the notion of a perceived destination image.

Image dimension: The image dimension is described in the works of authors who have explored destination image from various image perspectives (e.g., Prayag, 2009).

- The cognitive image sub-dimension explains destination image as the knowledge and beliefs held by a tourist about a destination's attributes. Cognitive image subdimension, according to Chen, Lin, Gao, and Kyle (2015), involves unique (such as distinctive tourist attractions), common (such as price, quality, and cleanliness), and atmospheric (e.g. atmosphere or moods related to destinations) images.
- The affective image sub-dimension explicates destination image as an emotional or visceral response to destination features. This refers to the feelings of a tourist in response to different destination attributes (Kim, Lee, Shin, and Yang, 2017).
- The collective image sub-dimension is an amalgam of the cognitive and affective image components that capture and explicate destination image (Zhang, 2014) from a more in-depth perspective.

Outcome dimension: The outcome dimension is derived from scholars who have argued that destination images have consequences on destinations themselves. The outcome dimension of destination image speaks to tourists' intentions to revisit a destination based on qualities of trust, loyalty, and satisfaction, and also tourists' behavioural intentions, including an intention to recommend. Destination image affects the personality of a destination, place attachment, tourism destination, and internalisation of favourable destination qualities.

From the foregoing, it is evident that there are various means of demystifying the meaning of destination image to illustrate the various perspectives that diverse authors have used to explain the concept. From our study findings, we operationally define destination image as an international students' impressions and feelings about a destination as well as the likelihood that he or she would recommend that destination as a result of those impressions and feelings. Therefore, the foundation of this exploratory paper is based on the image dimensions of destination image.

Determinants of destination image

Several elements influence the formation of an image of a destination. Efficient management of a tourist destination requires an accounting of these elements that fall into two general categories: stimulus factors and personal factors (Baloglu and McCleary, 1999a). Stimulus factors are sources of information, exposures, and experience of the destination. The personal factors that are often discussed within the destination image literature are tourists' motivations and demographic variables as well as the social values and psychological norms that comprise tourists' internal beliefs and preferences (Um and Crompton, 1992, Gartner, 1993; Baloglu and Brinberg, 1997; Baloglu and McCleary, 1999a, b; Govers, Go, and Kunar, 2007b).

Destination images formed by existing information about the destination (Lee, Lee and Lee, 2012) may or may not be accurate, depending on the information's originating source (Stern and Krakover, 1993). Furthermore, the characteristics of the image receivers have been pointed out as a key influencer of destination image because the past travel experience, demography, and experience of a tourist plays a major role in the formation of an image (Beerli and Martin, 2004; Tasci and Gartner, 2007).

Gunn (1988) identified three sources of information: organic or non-commercial sources, induced or promotional sources, and autonomous or primary sources. These sources were expanded by Gartner (1993), who created "information source typology".

Although a number of scholars have provided distinct ways of classifying information sources, the classification systems crafted by Gartner (1993) and Gunn (1988) have been largely accepted in the mainstream tourism marketing domain (see Lee *et al.*, 2013; Tasci & Gartner, 2007; Echtner and Ritchie, 2003). This present study adopts the three information sources categories identified by Gunn.

A key role of information sources in the image formation process is ensuring that a rich source of information and knowledge about the destination is provided (Baloglu and McCleary, 1999a). Information sources assist in mitigating against associated risks tourists could face in their decision making; tourists' expectations are built on these decisions (Beerli and Martin, 2004). It is safe to assume that when a tourist acquires favourable information about a destination, the chances of choosing that destination increases (Stern and Krakover, 1993).

The degree to which destination information will influence a prospective visitor depends largely on the perceived credibility of the source (Holloway, 1998). For example, in their study of tourists to the Spanish island of Lanzarote, Beerli and Martin (2004) found that with the exception of information from travel agents, all induced sources employed in the study played a minimal role on the post-visit image of a destination. On the contrary, autonomous and organic sources significantly accounted for the post-visit visitors' image of the destination because visitors considered these sources more credible.

The image formed from organic, induced, and autonomous sources often creates what Phelps (1986) describes as the “secondary destination image”, i.e., the image potential visitors have of a destination before visiting that destination. Visitors' primary image is built on information gained from their own experience of the destination rather than on second-hand information from other sources (Beerli and Martín, 2004).

Information is a key determinant of image formation, but how tourists use that information to form both secondary and primary images largely depends on tourists' personality elements. The characteristics or elements that are often examined in the literature include tourist motivations, gender, age, educational status, and country of origin (Baloglu and McCleary, 1999a; Govers, Go and Kunar, 2007a). These characteristics help tourists filter the information they receive and how they make sense of said information.

It has been argued in extant literature that one of the major personal factors that influence how tourists' view a destination is the tourists' motivations for travel (Baloglu and McCleary, 1999a; Del Bosque and Martin, 2008). In this context, motivation refers to a driving force derived from an unsatisfied need that forces an individual (tourist) to behave in a particular manner. It has been reported over the years that tourists' motivation and the feelings that they develop about a particular destination are directly linked (Beerli and Martín, 2004; Gartner, 1993). Hence, tourists' motivations are the benefits sought by a visit to a destination. This implies that as long as these benefits are achieved, tourists with comparable motivations will assess a destination in a similar manner (Beerli and Martín, 2004). For destination marketers to ensure that visitors are satisfied and maintain a positive image of their destinations, they must identify these motivations and design products that will satisfy them.

Another factor that influences how tourists interpret information is the country of origin. This factor has variously been described as nationality (Firmino, Santos and Carneiro, 2006; Dündar and Güçer, 2015), cultural values (Del Bosque and Martin, 2008), and race (Tasci, 2007). Regardless of the term used, the culture or society from which the tourist emanates plays a significant role in their expectations, perceptions of destinations and this, in turn, influences their evaluations of destination (Bonn, Joseph and Dai, 2005). This factor has been linked to the notion of cultural proximity. Cultural proximity refers to the extent to which a tourist's cultural background is related to the local culture of the destination. Ryan's (2002) study found that cultural proximity influences the level of interest that their two groups of respondents showed in the cultural products offered by the tourist destination while Kastenholz (2010) found that majority of his respondents preferred destinations that struck a balance between novelty and familiarity regarding culture.

Other socio-demographical elements that influence the formation of destination images include gender, age (Firmino *et al.*, 2006), and educational status (Firmino, Santos and Carneiro, 2006; Stern and Krakover, 1993). For instance, Chen and Kerstetter (1999) found that female tourists were more likely than their male counterparts to approve of tourist infrastructure and amenities. On the issue of education, however, there seems to be a disagreement in the literature. While some scholars (Baloglu and McCleary, 1999a; Firmino, Santos and Carneiro, 2006) have argued that

educational status can also have an impact on cognitive evaluations of destination images, some recent studies established a non-significant relationship between educational status and destination image (Rafael and Almeida, 2017; Santana and Sevilha Gosling, 2018).

Destination image and tourism

The continuous involvement of enterprises, businesses, organisations, and nations in foreign markets spur internationalisation. The advent of globalisation in business has therefore created the opportunities for companies to engage in marketing activities with customers across the globe (Srikatanyoo and Gnoth, 2002) such that the tourism sector has become a profit centre for many nations (Omerzel, 2006). Destinations with attractive and valuable resources encourage the pursuit of internationalisation approaches with maximum efficiency (Ainuddin, Beamish, Hulland, & Rouse, 2007; Chang and Rhee, 2011). Tourism is one of the activities that are of utmost priority in the world; and as a result of its need to attract both local and international tourists, its competitiveness is highly intense (Oliveira, Braga, and e Silva, 2018). Tourism has become a crucial element in the internationalisation of economies (e.g. Omerzel, 2006; Ruzzier, 2005).

Khojastehpour and Johns (2015) averred that relationship marketing has a very significant role to play during the process of internationalisation along two different continuums, pre-internationalisation continuum and the post-internationalisation continuum. Pre-internationalisation efforts to create destination brands involve advertising the destination images in overseas markets through the use of social media and web 2.0, digital platform booking sites, transnational trade shows and fairs, and foreign agents. Post-internationalisation efforts, on the other hand, are defined by the services offered to tourists from their arrival to departure. Some services are rendered even after their departure (Shams, 2016).

Successful internationalisation of destination images requires the effective use of relationship marketing to establish connections along the pre-internationalisation and post-internationalisation spectrum (Shams, 2016). Agariya and Singh (2011) earlier noted that two relationship marketing factors (communication and responsiveness) are germane during the pre-internationalisation process in order to ensure trustworthiness and credibility, which are crucial for future relationships. Similarly, some relationship marketing constructs such as service quality, culture, premium security, commitment, and responsiveness are significant in the post-internationalisation process to establish a tie between the tourists and the destination through an unforgettable perceived tourism experience (Agariya and Singh, 2011). The goal is to successfully coordinate the internationalisation strategy of a destination brand (Khojastehpour and Johns, 2015). Internationalisation of domestic tourism (such as that of Ghana) requires that sound policies and programs be put in place to harness the potential of tourist destinations by meeting tourists' values and expectations (Pesonen et al., 2011).

Ghana's tourism industry's aim of becoming a top destination brand for tourists is built on the existing demand conditions. These conditions include the demand from its local market and the internationalisation to the global market, which, according to Porter (1990), are the 'proving grounds' for any industry. Ghana's destination image aims at attaining the definition of destination as espoused by Foroudi et al. (2016, p. 245): "a place that attracts tourists or visitors for a temporary stay".

Thus, it is safe to argue that in many instances, it is the demand from the local market when firmly established, that expedites a country's destination image and tourism potential. This in return enables the foreign demand to grow correspondingly (Dwyer and Kim, 2003).

Methodology

This study adopted a qualitative approach because of its exploratory nature as well as its emphasis on context (Creswell 2013; Merriam 2009; Sonmez and Sirakaya, 2002). Although many studies of this nature adopt quantitative approaches, this study uses a qualitative approach to facilitate the identification and understanding of more specific aspects of destination image (Cave, Ryan, and Panakera, 2003). The rationale behind the methodology adopted by the authors was based on its utility for attaining the research objective (see Marfo et al., 2020; Nazarian, Atkinson and Foroudi, 2017).

The focus of this study is the international tourism aspect of the Ghanaian tourism sector. International tourists contribute a large chunk of the nation's tourism income. In addition, international tourism is well organised when compared with local tourism. Specifically, this study considers international students as tourists. While their contribution to the country's tourism sector is currently not as strong as other categories of international visitors, they present a significantly viable market that destination marketing organisations have let unexplored. Additionally, this population was selected because they spend a relatively long time in the country as compared to the average tourist and thus tend to see more of what Ghana has to offer in terms of tourism, this makes them a potential source of rich information given the contextual emphasis of this study. Consequently, this population was selected for the study because international students constitute a significant portion of Ghana's international tourist arrivals.

This study used a purposive sampling technique which is non-probabilistic in nature. The sample was made up of international students of the University of Ghana in the capital city of Accra, who participated in the study within a period of three months. These students were from Gabon, the United Kingdom, the United States of America, and Nigeria. The first criterion for the use of international students to serve as international tourists was that they had been in Ghana for no more than 12 months. Secondly, the students had visited cities and destinations outside Accra during their stay in Ghana. To the best of the authors' knowledge, these criteria made the students suitable as international tourists in Ghana.

Data was gathered using focus group discussions and interviews based on a semi-structured interview pattern that accommodated a free-flowing conversation, pivotal for the collection of sought-after feedback (Ashton, 2014). An estimate of forty (40) students were contacted through the focus group discussions to ensure an over-recruitment of participants by 10-25 percent that would mitigate against participant non-attendance in the data collection process (see Rabiee, 2004). However, data was gathered from twenty-eight (28) respondents. Twenty-five (25) persons attended seven (7) focus group discussions, while three (3) preferred individual semi-structured interviews.

Participants were allowed the chance to choose between focus group discussions and individual interviews. The researchers intended to assess whether being interviewed in a group setting or as

individuals would influence how the participants evaluated Ghana as a destination. However, the option of individual interviews was withdrawn once it became evident that parallel themes were emerging from the focus group discussions and the individual interviews. Participants were largely grouped according to their country of origin (see Kitzinger, 1995) and their age to a lesser extent. Thus, all the members of each session were from the same country and approximately about the same age. In keeping with recommended validity practices in qualitative research, transcripts and interviewer notes were presented to participants and interviewees not more than a month after the interviews and discussions to confirm their accuracy and credibility (Creswell and Miller, 2000).

Based on extensive desk research and a review of extant literature, a semi-structured interview guide for the focus groups was developed using the already established interview guides for studies of this nature (see Beerli and Martín, 2004; Mwaura, Acquaye and Jargal, 2013). A pilot study was conducted with three (3) interviews, which aided in the refinement of the interview guide. This The pilot interviews allowed the researchers to ensure the interview questions were clear and were eliciting the required information (See Interview Protocol – Appendix).

The collected qualitative data from the interviews and focus group discussions were analysed through framework analysis (see Rabiee, 2004; Krueger, 1994; Ritchie and Spencer, 1994) which is increasingly becoming a tool for qualitative data analyses. Framework analysis was adopted because it allows for emergent themes to be derived from the study in a systematic manner, even if the researchers already had knowledge of the areas they want to explore (Parkinson et al., 2016). Moreover, the method is centred on the observation and narrations of a study's participants. It also makes room for generating recommendations concerning policy issues (Srivastava and Thomson, 2009). Throughout the analysis stage, emerging themes were presented to colleagues and peers for peer debriefing to further enhance the validity and credibility of interpretations (Creswell and Miller, 2000).

Results

This section presents and discusses the results of the study from the gathered data of the focus group discussions and semi-structured interviews. The findings from the interviews and focus group discussions are presented together because there were similar themes developed from the analysis of the two sets of data. The analysis of data showed that the nationalities of respondents exerted the strongest influence on their impressions and reactions to their experiences in Ghana as a destination. This confirms the findings of several scholars (e.g., Chen and Imran, 2018; Kozak, 2001; Tasci and Gartner, 2007) that tourists' origins influence their perception of a destination. Therefore, the results presented here are from non-African and African perspectives, although respondents' countries of origin was not a criterion for asking students who were approached to participate in the study.

Socio-demographic profile of participants

It was observed that several students from African countries reluctantly refused to be interviewed and did not participate in the focus group discussions. This is evident in Table 3, which shows that

58 percent of the respondents are British, and 14 percent were Americans, but Nigerians and Gabonese made up 21 and 14 percent of the participants respectively.

Insert Table 3 about here

Perceptual Dimension of Tourist Image: Pre-visit knowledge and impressions of Ghana

This section of the results presents the respondents' pre-visit impressions and knowledge of Ghana and the sources of these impressions. African respondents had the most extensive pre-visit knowledge of Ghana, while the non-African respondents had limited knowledge of the country. Both groups reported that their primary sources of information were organic or word-of-mouth (friends, family, and faculty advisors) and autonomous Internet sources like Wikipedia, TripAdvisor, and YouTube. However, African respondents were more reliant on organic sources than on autonomous sources for information. Interestingly, only five (5) of the respondents (all Africans) reported using any induced (commercial or official) source of information (see Figure 1).

Insert Figure 1 about here

Additionally, the findings show that respondents' information about Ghana before their visit was associated with general information about the country. However, because African respondents had more detailed information about Ghana, their pre-visit impressions about the country seemed to be stronger than their non-African counterparts. For example, in response to the question regarding their pre-visit knowledge, a non-African participant responded,

"I did a lot of research on the internet just to see. I mean obviously to understand the heat and stuff, what to wear, what to eat – like your food. That sort of thing. General sort of stuff just to get an idea of what it was going to be like when I got here" (Respondent 1, Focus Group 3)

An African participant, in response to the same question, said,

"Ghana, for me it was... it was a country of democracy. My first opinion of Ghana was when Barack Obama came here in 2010, I guess. It was a great example for Africa." (Respondent 2, Focus Group 7)

Image Dimension

Although literature presents four sub-dimensions that comprise the image dimension, discussions with respondents were dominated by themes related to the cognitive sub-dimension and the affective sub-dimension.

Visitors' cognitive impressions of Ghana

The majority of the respondents expressed largely favourable impressions of Ghana as a destination. Overall, the respondents were drawn to the country's cultural and historical heritage and its natural resources, with the distinction of non-Africans finding both cultural and natural attributes most appealing while the African respondents seemed to prefer heritage attractions over cultural attractions. One American recounted his experience of visiting some historical and natural attractions saying,

"My favourite one [attraction] has been Cape Coast Castle because that's where you can feel the eerie atmosphere of what the slaves faced and also Nzulenzu, the canopy walk at Kakum, Boti Falls. They're all beautiful places, and I'm glad I chose Ghana because it's a very cool place." (Respondent 1, Focus Group 1)

Some focus group participants from the UK expressed their experience of the Ghanaian culture. Two of the respondents (R1 and R3) from Focus Group Discussion 3 had this exchange:

R3: *"I've enjoyed the culture. I really like the market actually. In comparison to England, there's a real community feel here. Everyone speaks to everyone. If you're walking down the street, they say hi whereas I don't even know my neighbours at home."*

R1 [interjects]: *"It's a lot friendlier"* [R3 nods agreement]

R3 [continues]: *"It's so much friendlier. It's a completely different culture."*

However, some of the Nigerian students were underwhelmed by the country's attractions. Interview Participant 2 offered this observation:

"I wouldn't say it's boring, but [pauses] I think it's still developing. It's not really exciting. I think most of the stuff here you guys have are more about your history and stuff."

However, this result is particularly noteworthy given that statistics from Ghana's Ministry of Tourism (2013), reported that Nigerians rated Ghana among its top five international tourist markets.

While respondents' impressions of Ghana's tourism products may have diverged, they all seemed to agree that the country's support services, mainly public transportation, internet and

telecommunications, could be improved. One Gabonese respondent expressed his frustration with the public transportation system:

"For me, taking the bus, "tro-tro" (local name for commercial minibuses), and it takes a long time in traffic which is very difficult for me because before I didn't do that. It's a new experience for me. And to take a taxi dropping is very, very expensive because we are using loading car in our country and is not expensive there, you can pay, if for example if you are going to Circle, the driver can charge you right now 20 cedis. But 20 cedis in our country you can rent a car for the whole day. So, it's difficult for us, sometimes too, that's why" (Respondent 3, Focus Group 7).

Most respondents agreed that internet and telecommunication services were not as bad as they expected as indicated by this exchange during Focus Group Discussion 4:

R2: *The internet is a lot slower than it is at home but hasn't been so bad.*

R3: [interjects] *It's more than I imagined it would be.*

Others (R1, R2, and R4): *Yeah.*

R1: *I didn't think that we'd get any signal or Wi-Fi so it's more than expected.*

R3: *Probably works better since we turned off the mobile data, so we only work off Wi-Fi.*

Visitors' affective impressions of Ghana

Overall, the respondents were of a similar opinion that their visit had been enjoyable and cheerful. However, there were disagreements on the level of excitement. Non-African respondents expressed a feeling of great excitement. A reason for this was their first-hand exposure to the Ghanaian way of life, which they frankly admitted was very different from what they had been exposed to beforehand. The excerpt below from a Focus Group Discussion 2 conversation on the issue of excitement describes their thoughts:

R3: *Yeah, every day. Yeah, it's very exciting.*

R2: *When we went to the market, it was demanding, and it was quite exciting to be there.*

R4: *They had like music blaring all over the place.*

R3: *You do get quite a bit of a buzz.*

R4: *Yeah, it's a good vibe.*

Two other Non-African respondents shared the following sentiments:

I think the most exciting thing is trying all the food. As I said, it's just so simple but so tasty. And it's like we are trying to do all this fancy stuff with food like freezing and stuff like that, but essentially it's just rice and chicken, but it's [really really really] tasty. I've also found that meeting people is very exciting. People in the same situation as us. At university. Just,

International Students as Tourists: Exploring Impressions of Ghana's Destination Image

things are so different, but you can talk to them and you still have things in common even though everyone's so different. And I found that it's really, really good. And anyone would talk to you so it wouldn't be a problem. Even if you came on a normal holiday, you could talk to anyone." (Respondent 1, Focus Group Discussion 3)

"Every day is an adventure, I've been able, just personally, I've been able to achieve so much growth, mental, emotional, spiritual by being here, it's something about I don't know whether its Africa or Ghana particularly that just, it allows you to embrace yourself, like embrace yourself 'cause everything is real..." (Interview Participant, 1)

While the male African respondents expressed pleasant feelings with Ghana, they did not consider their visit particularly exciting. On the other hand, the female African respondents expressed a feeling of frustration with Ghanaians in general. One of them expressed her exasperation saying,

I really wanna emphasise on this question. Let me give you a scenario when you come into Nigeria, the first person you meet will speak English to you. But in Ghana, it's so irritating that when you meet someone it's their dialect and it's really annoying. You can't see every black man and assume that they speak your language. It's really embarrassing. Their way of life is slow as compared to where I am coming from. In Nigeria, we are quick to learn, we are quick to do everything, but in Ghana here, everything seems to be extremely slow..." On the issue of safety, there was no clear distinction within the nationalities. Although the respondents indicated that they generally felt safe staying in Ghana, some indicated the presence of elements of danger. A couple of them noted that they are usually within the University of Ghana and its environs. A respondent noted that they go out in groups and walk-in places with adequate lighting to ensure they are out of risk and danger.

I was told to be careful at night-time, especially in dark places, so I've been abiding by that when I walk across campus at night time. I try to take an avenue where I already see, and if I'm in a dark place by myself, I just try to walk in the middle of the street and just try to be aware of my surroundings. (Focus Group 1)

One of the male tourists specifically mentioned that it is not necessarily safe for the females. In his words,

"Well as a male, a black male particularly, it's very safe. I wouldn't say the same for my female friends of any colour; I mean particularly the white females. However, any of my female friends I don't encourage any of them to go out, like go out at night 'cause it's unsafe. It isn't safe. When asked additional questions, he expressed that most Ghanaian men treat women in an aggressive manner.

He noted further that:

You know, Americans like to party so that's like one of the first things we did coming here, and I remember just seeing with my own eyes the way the guys would grab them, and this

International Students as Tourists: Exploring Impressions of Ghana's Destination Image

is not something that we do. Like guys are aggressive in America but not that aggressive they're not going to invade your personal space. There is no such thing as personal space in Ghana. So, like they'll grab their arm and pull them over like 'o hey, pretty girl come over and dance with me' like force them to dance and that's really... that an extreme violation, extreme. (Interview Participant 1).

Some female respondents voiced similar concerns about the safety with one of them recounting an incident of rape near her hostel:

Now, you can't just walk anywhere. I was even told that where I am, I shouldn't come home late. I finish by nine, and before you get a car to where I stay, you have to [trek] (walk) for a while. I heard a couple of days ago that on that same route a Ghanaian lady was raped.... (Excerpt from Focus Group 1).

Outcome Dimension of Image: Visitors' intentions to return to and recommend Ghana as a Destination location

It was observed that most respondents had positive experiences during their stay in Ghana. With the exception of four (4) respondents, all other participants expressed the willingness to return to Ghana and to recommend Ghana as a vacation destination. The main reasons given for why they would return were the Ghanaian culture and to explore the country in general. As indicated by these sampled responses

And anyway, I would say what makes Ghana the gateway to Africa is like the people, the people, the culture, the environment, the vibes like the intangible things you can't put your fingers on. But I, I could not live here, right now, not at this point of my life, but if I could, I want to bring my friends here, my friends, my parents, and my family. They need to see like this is what Africa is, not what they see on TV. This is Africa, you know, or at least Ghana. (Interview Participant 1)

"I think I wouldn't recommend it to someone who wanted a really relaxed holiday or to get away because here you come to be sociable and talk to people and to experience the culture. And I think most people are looking for that, but maybe not everyone. Well, not boring people [laughs]. (Respondent 1, Focus Group Discussion 4)

I want to enjoy Ghana because there are so many places I haven't been. Like yeah, I will come back one day. (Respondent 2, Focus Group Discussion 7)

The four (4) participants who stated that they did not wish to return to Ghana included two Britons and two Nigerians. The Britons indicated that the reason for their lack of desire to return stemmed from inadequate recreational activities available in Ghana. One that had already been to South Africa said,

I personally prefer South Africa. It's not as hot. Or it wasn't at the time of year. I stayed in Cape Town, which is more "touristy". I just feel there's more to do in Cape Town. So, that'll probably draw people in. (Respondent 2, Focus Group Discussion 5).

Remarkably, one of the Nigerian tourists noted that although she does not have the intention of returning to Ghana, she would still recommend the country to others because of their quality of education. She stated that:

I'll tell the person to come because of the educational standards of Ghana. It's not that Nigeria is not good, but here they explain better. They teach, and you will understand what they are teaching. That's one good thing about Ghana, otherwise, I wouldn't advise anyone to come here. (Respondent 4, Focus Group Discussion 7)

Discussion

This exploratory paper sought to establish the specific attributes of Ghana, which attract visitors and how these attributes influence the country's destination image. Findings indicate that respondents' pre-visit impressions or secondary images of Ghana, particularly of those visiting from outside the African continent, were not clearly defined. This was because their pre-visit knowledge of Ghana was largely derived from autonomous and organic sources. These sources of information do not purposefully work to distinguish the destination in the minds of visitors. As Holloway (1998) implied, to adequately distinguish one destination from similar ones, destination marketing organisations must improve potential visitors' access to induced information.

This study's findings also confirm that tourists' cultural and social values influence their impressions of a destination. In line with several findings (e.g. Beerli and Martin, 2004; Chen and Kerstetter, 1999; Del Bosque and Martin, 2008), the results of this study show that tourists' background influences the type of attractions they will be drawn to and how they will process their experience with those attractions. This finding gave credence to Ryan's (2002) findings that tourists often showed interest in novel cultures. The allure of cultural heritage was mainly dependent on the origin of the visitor. For African visitors who shared similar cultures, Ghana's culture was not new, and so they showed a comparatively lesser interest in cultural products than their Western counterparts. However, respondents seem to be interested or not interested in Ghana's culture. Overall, the strongest attractions were the country's cultural heritage, historical heritage, and natural resources. This emphasises the need for the distinction of attractions that a destination has to offer (Holloway, 1998). Findings also suggest that safety and security standards in Ghana may have reduced appeal. This is of concern since Ghana is often regarded as one of West Africa's safest countries and personal safety has been highlighted as a key index that has drawn tourists to Ghana (see Braimah, Kesse and Bulley, 2012). Also, the level of dissatisfaction expressed by the participants with regards to the quality of the country's support services is also of concern given that exceptional service is crucial to tourists' assessments of a destination experience (Owusu-Frimpong et al., 2013).

In addition, the findings revealed that female respondents had a stronger negative assessment of Ghana as a destination than males. This is contrary to several research findings (e.g., Beerli and Martin, 2004; Chen and Kerstetter, 1999) which reported that females usually have positive perceptions about destinations and Dündar and Güçer's (2015) study which reported that there is no significant difference between the gender of tourists and their perceived destination image. The main complaints that the female respondents communicated were related to Ghana's basic infrastructure and security issues. Taking into consideration that most advanced countries tend to have more robust infrastructure and relatively better surveillance, the influence of gender on tourist evaluations, therefore, could depend on the destination under evaluation given that the previous studies were carried out in destinations situated in advanced countries.

Remarkably, few respondents said that they would not be returning to Ghana. However, they would be willing to recommend Ghana to potential visitors depending on their motives for visiting. Other respondents also said that while they would like to re-visit Ghana, they would find it difficult to recommend it to other prospective visitors depending on those visitors' motives for visiting. This development is indicative that the relationship between motivation and the outcome of a tourist experience is not as simple as previous studies (Baloglu and McCleary, 1999a; Beerli and Martin, 2004; Del Bosque and Martin, 2008) have implied. As presented by Gnoth (1997), motivation is often multi-layered and thus tends to have a complex effect on tourists' behaviour. Since a number of the students interviewed indicated that they would likely recommend visiting Ghana only to people who were interested in being immersed in the history or the culture, or the educational standards. These findings suggest that international student tourists' behaviour especially relating to recommending a destination could be influenced by what they know or perceive to be the motivation of the person to whom they are making the recommendation. Therefore, there is a possibility that motivation influences the decision to recommend a tourist destination. However, the motivation in question is not that of the tourist but the motivation of the individual seeking the recommendation. Given the qualitative nature of this study, this finding will have to be further confirmed with a quantitative study.

Additionally, the findings have revealed that positive perceptions of the cognitive and affective components of destination images would result in tourists making a favourable decision about a destination (Del Bosque and Martin, 2008; Lee, Lee and Lee, 2013; Stepchenkova and Eales, 2011). Not all the dimensions of image identified (cognitive, affective and conative dimensions) in literature must necessarily be present for destination image to have an influence of tourist behaviour.

Overall, the results of this study indicate that visitors (tourists) mainly rely on autonomous and organic sources for pre-trip information about Ghana and that the secondary image of Ghana is quite weak, which reduces the likelihood of the country being chosen as a tourist destination. However, because most of the visitors' experiences in the country were positive, Ghana seems to leave a positive impression on visitors who actually visit. Thus, destination marketing organisation need to ensure positive experiences for visitors. The findings revealed that one major hindrance to ensuring tourists' positive experience is the unreliable and inefficient support services in Ghana.

Given the arguments put forward in the review of the literature and the discussion that followed the analysis of qualitative data, the authors have devised a framework that binds the major arguments and emerging themes from the study. Figure 2 explicates the factors that build tourists' image perceptions of Ghana and the impressions they have of Ghana after their visit.

Insert Figure 2 about here

Figure 2 explicates the destination image of tourist information, which is formulated through induced, autonomous, and organic sources available to international tourists. These sources can be divided into primary or secondary sources. In addition, the emerging themes from the study suggested that destination image can result in favourable pre-visit knowledge and comparison of a destination and enhances the visitors' cognitive and affective impression of a destination. Lastly, it can help encourage tourists' intentions to return and recommend a destination.

Theoretical and Managerial Implications

This study has contributed to the meaning of destination image from three theoretical dimensions: perceptual, image, and outcome. In addition, the study has been able to explicate Ghana's destination image and highlighted key themes that can aid in improving the image of Ghana as a destination. Further, the authors devised a framework (see Figure 2) that explicates the sources and outcomes of destination image formation by tourists.

The findings of the study have implications for tourism in Ghana, particularly to destinations seeking to create favourable impressions in the minds of tourists. Understanding destination image creation from the three-dimensional meaning of destination image introduced in this study highlights the divergent ways tourism service providers in Ghana can help facilitate a good image of destinations in the tourists' minds.

Moreover, considering the framework developed in the study which illustrates the importance of information sources, destination marketing organisations operating in both Ghana and other similar societies and contexts need to improve their use of induced sources of information. Given that destinations of this nature remain largely unknown, destination marketers and practitioners in these locations could craft alluring narratives that will be attractive to the targeted audiences. They could achieve this through social media networks since nowadays, these networks play an essential role in the development of strong destination images through the provision of insider information utilised by previous and prospective visitors (Govers and Go, 2003; 2005). Another option would be the use of more dialogic websites that will allow these organisations to engage with potential tourists (Hinson, Osabutey, and Kosiba, 2018).

Furthermore, in designing tourism products and packages for visitors, destination marketing organisations should consider the country of origin or cultural proximity and motivation for travel

as these factors exert significant influence on how tourists assess the value of the destination. Destination marketing organisations should particularly incorporate the multifaceted nature of motivation. For non-African (international) visitors, tourism packages should emphasise Ghana's culture, history, and natural resources while the country's history should be the focus for products designed for visitors from other African countries. However, they need to make sure that their tourism products provide a contain the right mix of novelty and familiarity for the customers.

Conclusion, Limitations and Suggestions for Future Research

The paper concludes that tourism packages should emphasise Ghana's culture, history, and natural resources for tourists of African origin while the country's historical heritage should be the focus for products designed for international visitors, in order to build Ghana's image as a tourist destination, while at the same time, enhancing internationalisation.

There are a few limitations to the study. The first is concerning representativeness. This study was focused specifically on international students who represent only one category of tourists. Thus, insights gained from the study must be viewed as specifically applicable to tourists who fall in this or related categories. Second, this study adopted a qualitative approach with the select interviewees and focus group participants drawn from a limited number of countries at a point in time.

Despite these limitations, this study extends existing theoretical knowledge on destination image, particularly within the context of Sub-Saharan Africa, and thus provides potential opportunities for further research. Future research should consider using more varied samples of respondents from different tourist categories as well as those with more varied demographic characteristics to determine how factors like profession, age, social class, and duration of visit influence image formation.

Further studies should consider adopting a survey method with a quantitative approach. In addition, a longitudinal study is recommended for further analysis as it would capture the dynamism of destination image formation since tourist perceptions are likely to change during their travel. Also, further studies can consider including respondents from different countries of origin in the same groups to further explore the influence of origin on image formation. Lastly, extending studies on destination image to other Sub-Saharan African countries could offer the opportunity to validate the transferability of the findings of this present study.

References

- Abdullateef, A.O. and Biodun, A.B., 2014. Are international students tourists? *International Journal of Business and Globalisation* 1, 13(3), pp.298-306.
- Agariya, A.K. and Singh, D., 2011. What really defines relationship marketing? A review of definitions and general and sector-specific defining constructs. *Journal of Relationship Marketing*, 10(4), pp.203-237.
- Ainuddin, R. A., Beamish, P. W., Hulland, J.S., and Rouse, M.J., 2007. Resource attributes and firm performance in international joint ventures. *Journal of World Business*, 42(1). pp.47–60.
- Al-Azri, H.I. and Morrison, A.M., 2006. Measurement of Oman's destination image in the US. *Tourism Recreation Research*, 31(2), pp.85-89.
- Ashton, A.S., 2014. Tourist destination brand image development—an analysis based on stakeholders' perception: A case study from Southland, New Zealand. *Journal of Vacation Marketing*, 20(3), pp.279-292.
- Ashworth, G. and Page, S.J., 2011. Urban tourism research: Recent progress and current paradoxes. *Tourism Management*, 32(1), pp.1-15.
- Assael, H., 1987. *Consumer Behaviour and Marketing Action*, 3rd edn. Boston: PWS-Kent Publishing Company.
- Beach, L.R., 1990. *Image theory: Decision making in personal and organizational contexts*. John Wiley & Sons Incorporated.
- Baloglu, S., 2000. A path analytic model of visitation intention involving information sources, socio-psychological motivations, and destination image. *Journal of Travel & Tourism Marketing*, 8(3), pp.81-90.
- Baloglu, S. and Brinberg, D., 1997. Affective images of tourism destinations. *Journal of travel research*, 35(4), pp.11-15. Baloglu, S. and McCleary, K.W., 1999a. A model of destination image formation. *Annals of tourism research*, 26(4), pp.868-897.
- Baloglu, S., and McCleary, K., 1999b. U.S. international pleasure travellers' images of four Mediterranean destinations: a comparison of visitors and nonvisitors. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 38(2), pp.114-129.
- Baloglu, S., Henthorne, T. L., and Sahin, S., 2014. Destination image and brand personality of Jamaica: a model of tourist behaviour. *Journal of Travel & Tourism Marketing*, 31(8), pp.1057-1070.
- Barišić, P., Prebežac, D., and Mikulić, J., 2012. The image and identity of Croatia as a tourist destination: An exploratory study. Paper Presented at *6th International Conference An Enterprise Odyssey*, The University of Zagreb, Zagreb, 1280-1290.
- Beerli, A., and Martin, J. D., 2004. Factors influencing destination images. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 31, pp. 657-681.

- Benfield, R., 2004. "Geotourists" the next big thing for botanical garden? Retrieved from <https://www.bgci.org/resources/article/0404/>.
- Bianchi, C., and Pike, S., 2011. Antecedents of destination brand loyalty for a long-haul market: Australia's destination loyalty among Chilean travelers. *Journal of Travel & Tourism Marketing*, 28(7), pp. 736-750.
- Bigne, E. A., Sanchez, I. G., and Sanz, S. B., 2005. Relationships among residents' image, evaluation of the stay and post-purchase behaviour. *Journal of Vacation Marketing*, 11(4), pp.291-302
- Bonn, M. A., Joseph, S. M., and Dai, M., 2005. International versus domestic visitors: an examination of destination image perceptions. *Journal of Travel Research*, 43(3), pp.294-301.
- Braimah, M., Kesse, N.Y. and Bulley, C., 2012. Branding Ghana as a Tourism Destination: An Exploratory Study. *African Business and Development in a Changing Global Political Economy: Issues, Challenges and Opportunities*, 13, pp.604-6012.
- Brand Ghana Office. ,2018. *Uniquely welcoming*. <http://brandghana.gov.gh/index.php/vision/> (Accessed 12 September 2018)
- Cave, J., Ryan, C. and Panakera, C., 2003. Residents' perceptions, migrant groups and culture as an attraction—the case of a proposed Pacific Island cultural centre in New Zealand. *Tourism Management*, 24(4), pp.371-385.
- Chang, S.J. and Rhee, J.H., 2011. Rapid FDI expansion and firm performance. *Journal of International Business Studies*, 42(8), pp.979-994.
- Chen, C.F. and Tsai, D., 2007. How destination image and evaluative factors affect behavioral intentions? *Tourism Management*, 28(4), pp.1115-1122.
- Chen, C.F. and Phou, S., 2013. A closer look at destination: Image, personality, relationship and loyalty. *Tourism management*, 36, pp.269-278.
- Chen, H. and Rahman, I., 2018. Cultural tourism: An analysis of engagement, cultural contact, memorable tourism experience and destination loyalty. *Tourism Management Perspectives*, 26, pp.153-163.
- Chen, P.J. and Kerstetter, D.L., 1999. International students' image of rural Pennsylvania as a travel destination. *Journal of travel research*, 37(3), pp.256-266.
- Chi, C.G.Q. and Qu, H., 2008. Examining the structural relationships of destination image, tourist satisfaction and destination loyalty: An integrated approach. *Tourism Management*, 29(4), pp.624-636.
- Chironga, M., Leke, A., Lund, S. and van Wamelen, A., 2011. Cracking the next growth market: Africa. *Harvard Business Review*, 89(5), pp.117.
- Chon, K., 1990. The role of destination image in tourism: a review and discussion. *The Tourist Review*, 45(2), pp.2-9.

- Chon, K. S., 1992. Self-image/destination image congruity. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 19(2), pp.360-363.
- Cave, J., Ryan, C. and Panakera, C., 2003. Residents' perceptions, migrant groups and culture as an attraction-The case of a proposed Pacific Island cultural centre in New Zealand. *Tourism Management*, 24(4), pp.371-385.
- Creswell, J. W. and Miller, D. L., 2000. Determining validity in qualitative inquiry. *Theory into practice*, 39(3), pp.124-130.
- Creswell, J.W., 2013. Educational Research: Pearson New International Edition. Harlow, UNITED KINGDOM: Pearson Education UK. [online]. Available from: <http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/lancaster/detail.action?docID=5137595>.
- Crompton, J. L., 1979. Motivations for pleasure vacation. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 6(4), pp.408-424.
- Del Bosque, I. R., Martín, H. S. 2008. Tourist satisfaction – A cognitive-affective model. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 35(2), pp.551-573.
- Dieke, P. U., 2003. Tourism in Africa's economic development: policy implications. *Management Decision*, 41(3), pp.287-295.
- Ditcher, E. 1985 What's in an image. *Journal of Consumer Marketing*, 2, pp.75-81.
- Dündar, Y. and Güçer, E., 2015. The impact of socio-demographics on tourism destination image: a study in Ankara Turkey. *International Journal of Economics, Commerce and Management*, 3(2), pp.1-22.
- Dwyer, L. and Kim, C., 2003. Destination competitiveness: determinants and indicators. *Current issues in tourism*, 6(5), pp.369-414.
- Echtner, C. M., and Ritchie, J. R., 1991. The meaning and measurement of destination image. *Journal of Tourism Studies*, 2(2), pp.2-12.
- Echtner, C. M. and Ritchie, J. B., 1993. The measurement of destination image: An empirical assessment. *Journal of Travel Research*, 31(4), pp.3-13.
- Embacher, J. and Buttle, F., 1989. A repertory grid analysis of Austria's image as a summer vacation destination. *Journal of Travel Research*, 27(3), pp. 3-7.
- Firmino, N., Santos, S., and Carneiro, M. J., 2006. A Importância das Características Sócio Demográficas dos Visitantes enquanto Determinantes da Imagem dos Destinos Turísticos. O caso do Concelho de Aveiro. *Revista Turismo & Desenvolvimento*, 5, pp.41-52
- Foroudi, P., Gupta, S., Kitchen, P., Foroudi, M. M., and Nguyen, B., 2016. A framework of place branding, place image, and place reputation: antecedents and moderators. *Qualitative Market Research: An International Journal*, 19(2), pp.241-264.
- Freire, J. R. 2009. Local people as critical dimension for place brands. *Brand Management*, 16, pp.420-438.

- Future Marketing Insights., 2019. Educational Tourism Sector Outlook. *Future Marketing Insights*. [online]. Available from: <https://www.futuremarketinsights.com/reports/educational-tourism-sector-outlook> [Accessed December 27, 2019].
- Gallarza, M. G., Saura, I. G. and Garcia, H. C., 2002. Destination image: Towards a conceptual framework. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 29, pp.56-78.
- Gartner, W. C., 1993. Image Formation Process. *Journal of Travel and Tourism Marketing*, 2(2/3), pp.191-215.
- Gartner, W. C., and Ruzzier, M. K., 2011. Tourism destination brand equity dimensions: Renewal versus repeat market. *Journal of Travel Research*, 50(5), pp. 471-481.
- Genereux, R. L., Ward, L. M. and Russel, J. A., 1983. The behavioral component in the meaning of places. *Environmental Psychology*, 3, pp.43-55.
- Ghana Tourism Authority., 2016. *Tourism Information on Ghana* [online], Available from: <http://www.ghana.travel/tourism-statistics/> , Accessed on 18 March 2019.
- Gnoth, J., 1997. Tourism motivation and expectation formation. *Annals of Tourism research*, 24(2), pp.283–304.
- Govers, R., and Go, F. M., 2003 Deconstructing destination image in the information age. *Information Technology & Tourism*, 6(1),pp.73-89.
- Govers, R., and Go, F. M., 2005. Projected destination online: Website content analysis of picture and text. *Information Technology & Tourism*, 7(2), pp.1-18.
- Govers, R., Go, F. M., and Kumar, K., 2007b. Promoting tourism destination image. *Journal of Travel Research*, 46(1), pp.15-23.
- Govers, R., Go, F.M. and Kumar, K., 2007. Virtual destination image a new measurement approach. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 34(4), pp.977-997.
- Gkritzali, A., Gritzalis, D. and Stavrou, V., 2018. Is Xenios Zeus still alive? Destination image of Athens in the years of recession. *Journal of Travel Research*, 57(4), pp.540-554.
- Gunn, C. A., 1988. *Vacationscape: designing tourist regions*. (2nd ed). New York: Van Nostrand Reinhold.
- Hahm, J., and Wang, Y., 2011. Film-induced tourism as a vehicle for destination marketing: is it worth the efforts? *Journal of Travel & Tourism Marketing*, 28(2), pp. 165-179.
- Hallman, K., Zehrer, A., and Muller, S., 2015. Perceived destination image: an image model for a winter sports destination and its effect on intention to revisit. *Journal of Travel Research*, 54(1), pp.94-106.
- Havi, E., and Enu, P., 2013. The impact of tourism on economic performance in Ghana. *European Scientific Journal*, 9, pp.242-257.

- Hernández-Lobato, L., Solis-Radilla, M. M., Moliner-Tena, M. A., and Sánchez-García, J. 2006. Tourism destination image, satisfaction and loyalty: a study in Ixtapa-Zihuatanejo, Mexico. *Tourism geographies*, 8(4), pp.343-358.
- Hinson, R. E., Osabutey, E. L. C. and Kosiba, J. P. 2018. Exploring the dialogic communication potential of selected African destinations' place websites. *Journal of Business Research*, (In press), pp.1-9.
- Holloway, J. C., 1998. *The business of tourism* (5th ed). Harlow: Addison Wesley Longman.
- Hosany, S., Ekinci, Y., and Uysal, M. 2006. Destination image and destination personality: an application of branding theories to tourism places. *Journal of Business Research*, 59(5), pp.638-642.
- Hu, Q. F., 2010. The relationship between visitors' perceived image and loyalty in Yue Lu Mountain Scenic Area. DBA thesis, Hunan Normal University, Changsha, China.
- Hunt, J. D., 1975. Image as a factor in tourist development. *Journal of Travel Research*, 13(3), pp. 1-7.
- Kaplanidou, K., and Vogt, C., 2007. The interrelationship between sport event and destination image and sport tourists' behaviours. *Journal of Sport & Tourism*, 12(3/4), pp.183-206.
- Kastenholz, E., 2010. Cultural proximity' as a determinant of destination image. *Journal of Vacation Marketing*, 16(4), pp.313-322.
- Khojastehpour, M., and Johns, R., 2015. From pre-internationalization to post-internationalization: relationship marketing perspective. *Journal of Strategic Marketing*, 23, 157-174.
- Kim, H. and Richardson, S.L., 2003. Motion picture impacts on destination images. *Annals of tourism research*, 30(1), pp.216-237.
- Kim, S.E., Lee, K.Y., Shin, S.I. & Yang, S.B. (2017), Effects of tourism information quality in social media on destination image formation: The case of Sina Weibo. *Information & Management*, 54(6), 687-702.
- Kirstin, H., and Christoph, B., 2010. Image fit between sport events and their hosting destinations from an active sport tourist perspective and its impact on future behaviour. *Journal of Sport & Tourism*, 15(3), pp.215-237.
- Kitzinger, J., 1995. Qualitative research: introducing focus groups. *British Medical Journal*, 311(7000), pp.299-302.
- Kotler, P., Hauder, D.H and Rein, I. 1993, *Marketing Places. Attracting Investment, Industry and Tourism to Cities, States and Nations*. New York: Free Press.
- Kotler, P., and D. Gertner. 2002. Country as a Brand, Product, and Beyond: A Place Marketing and Brand Management Perspective. *Journal of Brand Management*, 9 (4/5), pp.249-61

- Kozak, M. 2001. Comparative assessment of tourist satisfaction with destinations across two nationalities. *Tourism Management*, 22(4), pp.391-401.
- Krueger, R. A. 1994. *Focus groups: a practical guide for applied research*. Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications.
- Lawson, F. and Baud-Bovy, M., 1977. *Tourism and recreation development, a handbook of physical planning*. Architectural Press: London.
- Lee, B., Lee, C.-K., and Lee, J., 2013. Dynamic nature of destination image and influence of tourist overall satisfaction on image modification. *Journal of Travel Research*, 53(2), pp.239–251.
- Lee, C. K., Lee, Y. K., and Lee, B. K., 2005. Korea's destination image formed by the 2002 World Cup. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 32(4), pp.839-858.
- Lee, M. J., and Back, K. J., 2007. Effects of destination image on meeting participation intentions: empirical findings from a professional association and its annual convention. *The Service Industries Journal*, 27(1), pp.59-73.
- Lee, T. H., 2009. A structural model to examine how destination image, attitude, and motivation affect the future behavior of tourists. *Leisure Sciences*, 31(3), pp.215-236.
- Lin, C. H., Morais, D. B., Kerstetter, D. L., and Hou, J. S., 2007. Examining the role of cognitive and affective image in predicting choice across natural, developed, and theme-park destinations. *Journal of Travel Research*, 46(2), pp.183-194.
- Llewellyn-Smith, C. and McCabe, V.S., 2008. What Is the Attraction for Exchange Students : the Host Destination or Host. *International Journal of Tourism Research*, 607(October), pp.593–607.
- Marfo, S., Adeola, O., Achi, A., and Hinson, R. E., 2020. Exploring the nation brand perception of Ghana. In P., Foroudi, C., Mauri, C., Dennis, & T.C., Melewar (Eds.). (2020) *Place Branding: Connecting Tourist Experiences to Places* (pp. 144-159). London: Routledge.
- Merriam, S. B., 2009. *Qualitative research : a guide to design and implementation*. Somerset, UNITED STATES: Wiley. [online]. Available from: <http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/lancaster/detail.action?docID=1662771>. [19 March 2019]
- Ministry of Tourism., 2013. National Tourism Development Plan. Accra: Government of Ghana. Available from: <http://www.ghana.travel/wp-content/uploads/2016/11/Ghana-TourismDevelopment-Plan.pdf> [18 July 2018]
- Mitchell, T.R. and Beach, L.R., 1990. "... Do I love thee? Let me count..." Toward an understanding of intuitive and automatic decision making', *Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes*, 47(1), pp.1-20.
- Morais, D. B., and Lin, C. H., 2010. Why do first-time and repeat visitors patronize a destination? *Journal of Travel & Tourism Marketing*, 27(2), pp.193-210.

- Morgan, N. J., Pritchard, A., and Piggott, R. , 2003. Destination branding and the role of the stakeholders: the case of New Zealand. *Journal of Vacation Marketing*, 9(3), pp.285-299.
- Murphy, P., Pritchard, M. P., and Smith, B. ,2000. The destination product and its impact on traveller perception. *Tourism Management*, 21(1), pp.43-52.
- Mwaura, D., Acquaye, D., and Jargal, S. , 2013. Marketing implications of the destination image of Mongolia. *Worldwide Hospitality and Tourism Themes*, 5(1), pp.80-91.
- Nadeau, J., Heslop, L., O'Reilly, N. and Luk, P., 2008. Destination in a country image context. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 35(1), pp.84-106.
- Nazarian, A., Atkinson, P., and Foroudi, P.,2017. Influence of national culture and balanced organizational culture on the hotel industry's performance. *International Journal of Hospitality Management*, 63, pp.22-32.
- O'Leary, S., and Deegan, J., 2003. People, pace, place: qualitative and quantitative images of Ireland as a tourism destination in France. *Journal of Vacation Marketing*, 9(3), pp.213-226.
- Oliveira, A., Braga, V. and e Silva, E.C., 2018. Internationalization Strategies for Tourism in Portugal. In *International Conference on Innovation, Engineering and Entrepreneurship*, 978-984, Springer, Cham.
- Omerzel, D. G., 2006. Competitiveness of Slovenia as a tourist destination. *Managing Global Transitions*, 4(2), pp.167-189.
- Owusu-Frimpong, N., Nwankwo, S., Blankson, C., and Tarnanidis, T., 2013. The effect of service quality and satisfaction on destination attractiveness of Sub-Saharan African countries. *Current Issues in Tourism*, 16(7-8), pp.627-646.
- Oxenfeldt, A.R.,1975. Pricing policy. *AMACOM, New York*.
- Papadimitriou, D., Kaplanidou, K. and Apostolopoulou, A., 2018. Destination image components and word-of-mouth intentions in urban tourism: A multigroup approach. *Journal of Hospitality & Tourism Research*, 42(4), pp.503-527.
- Parkinson, S., Eatough, V., Holmes, J., Stapley, E., and Midgley, N., 2016. Framework analysis: a worked example of a study exploring young people's experiences of depression. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 13(2), pp.109-129.
- Payne, K., 2009. International students as domestic tourists in New Zealand. A study of travel patterns, behaviours, motivations and expenditure. *New South Wales: Southern Cross University*.
- Pesonen, J., Komppula, R., Kronenberg, C., and Peters, M., 2011. Understanding the relationship between push and pull motivations in rural tourism. *Tourism Review*, 66(3), pp.32-49.
- Phelps, A., 1986. Holiday destination image – the problem of assessment: an example developed in Menorca. *Tourism Management*, 7(3), pp.168-180.
- Pike, S., 2002. Destination image analysis - A review of 142 papers from 1973 to 2000. *Tourism Management*, 23(5), pp.541-549.

- Pike, S., 2007. Destination image literature 2001-2007. *Acta Turistica*, 19(2), pp.107-125.
- Porter, M. E., 1990. *The competitive advantage of nations*. Free Press: New York.
- Prayag, G., 2009. Tourists' evaluations of destination image, satisfaction, and future behavioral intentions— The case of Mauritius. *Journal of Travel & Tourism Marketing*, 26(8), pp.836-853.
- Prebensen, N. K., 2007. Exploring tourists' images of a distant destination. *Tourism Management*, 28(3), pp.747-756.
- Qiu, H. L., Wu, X. F., and Qian, Z. Y., 2012. The effects of tourist attraction image on customer loyalty. *Tourism Forum*, 5(1), pp.17-22.
- Qu, H. L., Kim, L. H., and Im, H. H., 2011. A model of destination branding: integrating the concepts of the branding and destination image. *Tourism Management*, 32(3), pp.465-476.
- Rabiee, F., 2004. Focus-group interview and data analysis. *The Proceedings of the Nutrition Society*, 63(4), pp.655-660.
- Rafael, C.S. and Almeida, A.R., 2017. Socio-demographic Tourist Profile and Destination Image in Online Environment. *Journal of Advanced Management Science*, 5(5), pp.372-379.
- Ramkissoon, H., Uysal, M., and Brown, K., 2011. 'Relationship between destination image and behavioral intentions of tourists to consume cultural attractions. *Journal of Hospitality Marketing & Management*, 20(5), pp.575-595.
- Reddy, M. V., and Wilkes, K. 2015. Tourism in the green economy: Rio to post-2015. In *Tourism in the Green Economy* (pp. 25-53). London: Routledge.
- Rimington, M., and Yüksel, A., 1998. Tourist satisfaction and food service experience: results and implications of an empirical investigation. *Anatolia*, 9(1), pp.37-57.
- Ritchie, J., and Spencer, L., 1994. Qualitative data analysis for applied policy research. In A., Bryman & R.G., Burgess (Eds.). *Analysing Qualitative Data* (pp. 173-194). London: Routledge.
- Roe, D. and Khanya, P. U., 2001. *Pro-poor tourism: harnessing the world's largest industry for the world's poor*. International Institute for Environment and Development: London.
- Ruzzier, M., 2005, *International entrepreneurship: small and medium companies' internationalization model*. Arak National-und Universitätsbibliothek: Kranj, Slovenia.
- Ryan, C., 2002. Tourism and Cultural Proximity. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 29(4), pp.952-971.
- Santana, L.D. and Sevilha Gosling, M.D., 2018. Dimensions of image: a model of destination image formation. *Tourism Analysis*, 23(3), pp.303-322.
- Shams, S. R., 2016. Branding destination image: a stakeholder causal scope analysis for internationalization of destinations. *Tourism Planning & Development*, 13(2), pp. 140-153.

International Students as Tourists: Exploring Impressions of Ghana's Destination Image

- Shantha, M. S., 2005. Enhancing domestic tourism in Kataragama and Yala Sri Lanka. *Sabaragamuwa University Journal*, 5(1), pp.17-24.
- Shen, P. Y., 2012. The effects of social responsibility of tourism enterprises on destination image and tourist loyalty. *Tourism Tribune*, 27(2), pp.72-79.
- Sonmez, S., and Sirakaya, E., 2002. A distorted destination image? The case of Turkey *Journal for Travel Research*, 41(2), pp.185-196.
- Srikatanyoo, N. and Gnoth, J. J., 2002. Country image and international tertiary education. *Journal of Brand Management*, 10(2), pp.139-146.
- Srivastava, A., and Thomson, S. B., 2009. Framework Analysis: a qualitative methodology for applied policy research. *The Journal of Administration & Governance*, 4(2), pp.72-79.
- Stepchenkova, S., and Eales, J., 2011. Destination Image as Quantified Media Messages: The Effect of News on Tourism Demand. *Journal of Travel Research*, 50(2), pp.198-212.
- Stern, E., and Krakover, S., 1993. The formation of a composite urban image. *Geographical Analysis*, 25(2), pp.130-146.
- Stylidis, D., Shani, A., and Belhassen, Y., 2017. Testing an integrated destination image model across residents and tourists. *Tourism Management*, 58, pp.184-195.
- Su, L. J., and Huang, F. C., 2010. The influencing factors of tourist perceived image and their effects on tourist loyalty. *Journal of Business Economics*, 224(6), pp.80-88.
- Tasci, A. D., & Gartner, W. C., 2007. Destination image and its functional relationships. *Journal of Travel Research*, 45(4), 413-425.
- Tasci, A. D., Gartner, W. C., and Cavusgil, S. T., 2007. Conceptualization and operationalization of destination image. *Journal of Hospitality & Tourism Research*, 31(2), pp.194-223.
- Teye, V. B. 2000. Tourism development experience in Ghana. *DPMN Bulletin*, 7(1), pp.8-12.
- Um, S., and Crompton, J. L., 1992. The roles of perceived inhibitors and facilitators in pleasure travel destination decisions. *Journal of Travel Research*, 30(3), pp.18-25.
- Wang, B. 2011. An empirical study of the relationship between destination image, perceived value, satisfaction and destination loyalty. *Tourism Science*, 25(1), pp. 61-71.
- Wang, B., and Wu, C. Y., 2011. The effect of destination image on destination loyalty. *Management Review*, 23(11), pp.83-91.
- Wang, C. and Hsu, M. K., 2010. The relationships of destination image, satisfaction, and behavioral intentions: An Integrated Model. *Journal of Travel & Tourism Marketing*, 27(8), pp.829-843
- Wang, Z. L., 2012. The influence of brand image of leisure- and sightseeing-oriented agricultural parks on tourist loyalty. *Zhejiang Academic Journal*, 2, pp180-185.

International Students as Tourists: Exploring Impressions of Ghana's Destination Image

- World Tourism Organisation (2018) *2017 International Tourism Results: the highest in seven years*. UNWTO Annual Report 2017.
http://cf.cdn.unwto.org/sites/all/files/pdf/unwto_barom18_01_january_excerpt_hr.pdf
(Accessed 12 September 2018).
- World Travel and Tourism Commission, WTTC, 2018, 'Economic Impact 2018. Travel and Tourism.
- World Youth Student and Educational Travel Confederation., 2015. Youth and Student Travel Market. Amsterdam
- Wu, X.F., 2010. The relationship among tourist destination image, online word-of-mouth and customer loyalty. *Journal of Shenyang Normal University*, 34(4), pp.37-40.
- Xie, L.S., Han, X.Y. and GU, B., 2007. The impact of service justice, service quality and organizational image on visitors' behavior intention: an empirical study on museum service. *Tourism Tribune*, 12(22), pp.51-58.
- Zhang, Z.C., 2012. Analysis of the impact of enterprise image on customer loyalty: a case study of Starbucks in China. *Journal of NeiJiang Normal University*, 27(2), pp.57-60.
- Zhang, J., Wu, B., Morrison, A.M., Tseng, C. and Chen, Y. C., 2018. How country image affects tourists' destination evaluations: A moderated mediation approach. *Journal of Hospitality & Tourism Research*, 42(6), pp.904-930.
- Zhu, Q., 2011. The effect of destination image on tourists' revisit intention: a case of Fenghuang Ancient Town. DBA thesis. Hunan Normal University: Changsha, China.

Tables

Table 1. An overview of selected destination image definitions from extant literature

Author	Definition
Lawson and Baud-Bovy (1977)	destination image as the expression of all knowledge, impressions, prejudices and emotional thoughts an individual or group has of a particular object or place
Crompton (1979)	the sum of beliefs, ideas, and impressions that a person has of a destination
Ditcher (1985)	The concept of image can be applied to a political candidate, a product, and a country. It describes not individual traits or qualities, but the total impression and entity makes on the minds of others
Embacher and Buttle (1989)	Image is comprised of the ideas or conceptions held individually or collectively of the destination under investigation. Image may comprise both cognitive and evaluative components
Al-Azri and Morrison (2006)	a combination of a visitor's or tourist group's impressions, beliefs, or perceptual representations of a place as a tourism destination
Govers, Go, & Kumar (2007a)	mental portrayal or "prototype" that depicts a knowledge structure in a person's mind that is formed based on beliefs and emotional pieces of information

Source: Authors

Table 2: Categories and research sources on the extant definitions of destination image

Perceptual dimension			
		Assael, 1987	Kim and Richardson, 2003
		Baloglu and McCleary, 1999	Lawson and Baud-Bovey, 1977
		Bigne, Sanchez and Sanz, 2005	Murphy, Pritchard and Smith, 2000
		Crompton, 1979	Phelps, 1986
		Echtner and Ritchie, 1991	
		Hunt, 1975	
Image dimension	Cognitive	Bianchi and Pike, 2011	Ramkissoon, Uysal and Brown, 2011
		Chen and Tsai, 2007	Rimington and Yüksel, 1998
		Chi and Qu, 2008	Shen, 2012
		Lee, 2009	Wang, 2012
		Lee and Back, 2007	Zhang, 2012
		Qiu, Wu and Qian, 2012	
	Affective	Baloglu, 2000	Hernández-Lobato et al., 2006
		Hu, 2010	Nadeau et al., 2008
		Lee, Lee and Lee, 2005	Zhu, 2011

International Students as Tourists: Exploring Impressions of Ghana's Destination Image

Collective	Del Bosque and Martin, 2008 Kaplanidou and Vogt, 2007 Kirstin and Christoph, 2010 Morais and Lin, 2010	Wang, 2011 Wu, 2010 Wang and Wu, 2011
Overall	Alcañiz et al., 2005 Bigné et al., 2001; Choi et al., 2011 Kaplanidou and Gibson, 2010 Lee and Back, 2007 Lin et al., 2007	Hahm and Wang, 2011 Prayag, 2009 Qu et al., 2011 Su and Huang, 2010 Xie, Han and Gu, 2007;
Outcome dimension	Baloglu, Henthorne and Sahin, 2014 Chen and Phou, 2013 Chen and Tsai, 2007 Chi and Qu, 2008	Hosany, Ekinci and Usyal, 2006 Shams, 2016 Stylidis, Shani and Belhassen, 2017

Source: Authors

Table 3: Socio-demographic profile of participants

	Variables	Percentage
Gender	Male	54%
	Female	46%
Age	19-23	78%
	24-27	22%
Nationality	British	54%
	American	14%
	Nigerian	11%
	Gabonese	11%

Source: Interview data

Figures

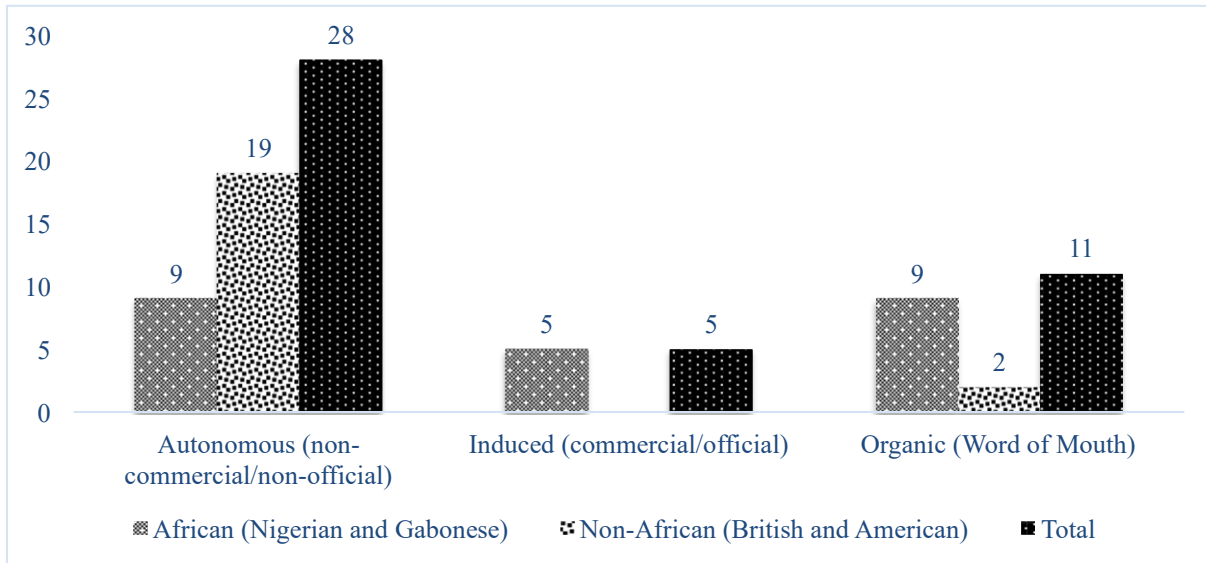


Figure 1: Sources of participants' pre-visit information
Source: Interview data

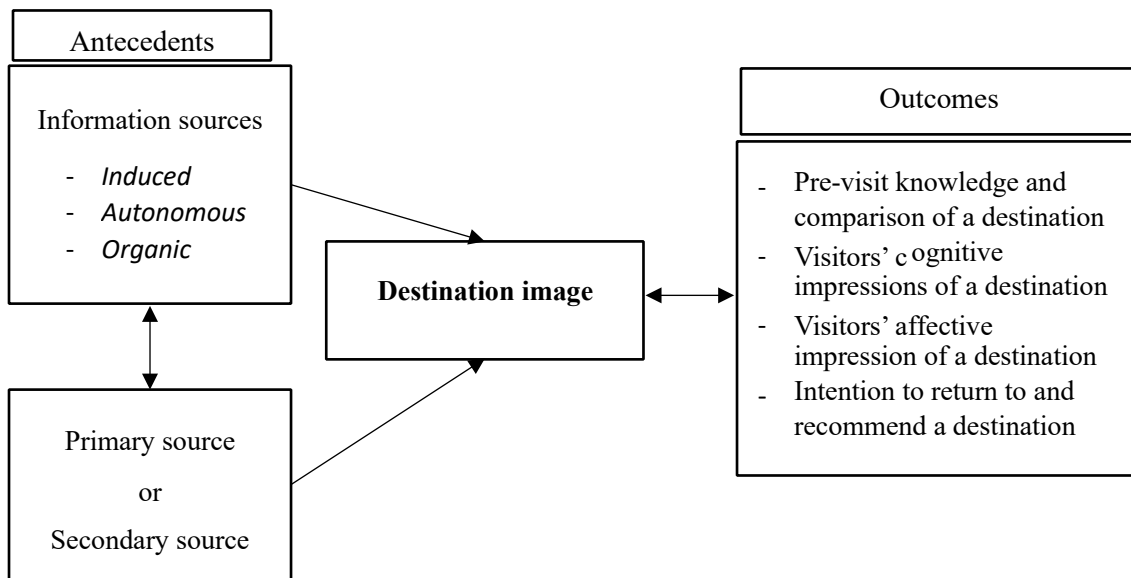


Figure 2: Tourist formation of destination image: Sources and outcomes
Source: Authors

Appendix

Interview Protocol

Community & Location _____ Date/time _____ No. of people attending _____

Researchers conducting session _____

My name is ----- and I will be facilitating/conducting this focus group discussion/ interview along with my colleague, ----- who will be recording the session. The goal of this project is to explore your impressions of Ghana as a tourist destination from your perspectives as an international visitor. Ultimately, we hope the findings of this study will help enhance our understanding of destination image and provide some information to help destination marketing organisations and other hospitality-related organisations to improve visitors experience.

You were contacted with the permission and clearance from the International Programmes Office (IPO) of the University of ----- as well as the administration of the International Studies Hostel of the University. Each of you has agreed to participate in a session of either a focus group discussion or an interview (if that is your preference). Between 6 and 8 focus group discussions will be conducted (number of interviews will be determined by the number of interested participants but will not exceed 5). The focus group discussions/interviews will take approximately 30-45 minutes and will follow a designed interview protocol.

If there are no further questions, let's get started.

-
1. To get started, let's introduce ourselves. In your introduction please tell us who you are, how old you are, how long you have been in Ghana, and how long you will be staying?
 2. How did you first learn about Ghana?
Probe:
 - What information did you have about Ghana before visiting the country, and where did you get this information?
 - How does the prior information compare with what you've learned about the country since you've been here?
 3. Have you visited any tourist attractions? Probe: if yes
 - Which ones?
 - What did you think about them? if no,
 - Why not?
 4. What do you think about your experiences in the country so far?
Probe:
 - What do you think about the people, customs, culture, food, natural environment?

International Students as Tourists: Exploring Impressions of Ghana's Destination Image

5. What do you think about the support services (transportation, telecommunications, access to the internet)?

Probe:

- What are your experiences with these services?
- How do they compare to what you are used to?

6. How do you feel about your visit so far?

Probe:

- What aspects of the visit have elicited these feelings?

7. How safe do you feel Ghana is as a destination? Why do you feel this way?

8. What was your perception about Ghana before you visited the country?

9. What is your perception of Ghana now?

Probe:

- If there is a change, what has contributed to the change?

10. How would you describe Ghana to someone who has never visited the country?

11. Have you visited any other African countries?

Probe: if yes,

- Which ones?
- How does Ghana compare to them?

If no,

- Which other African countries would you like to visit?
- How do you think Ghana will compare to them?

12. Would you visit Ghana again? Why?

13. Would you recommend visiting Ghana to others? Why?

14. Are any other observations, thoughts, comments or experiences you would like to share?