


# The Effect of Demographic Variables on International Tourist's Perception of Destination Image in the Volta Region of Ghana

## Abstract

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The effect of demographic variables on the perception of destination image among international tourists has attracted the attention of academics and practitioners, this study aims to evaluate the effect of demographic variables on the perception of international tourist on destination image. Using the quantitative research approach, utilising a survey strategy and structured questionnaires were used to collect data from 403 international tourists randomly in selected key tourist sites in the Volta region of Ghana. Responses received were analysed with Partial Least Square Structural Equation Modelling (PLS-SEM). To understand the effect, a further multi-group analysis was conducted to determine the significant differences in the path coefficients of gender and education. The study findings revealed that majority of international tourists had a positive perception towards the destination and key tourists' attraction sites and were satisfied but had a negative perception of the destination pull elements. The destination and sites are seen to influence tourist revisit intentions and recommendations. The demographic variables of gender and education significantly positively moderate destination image and tourists' future intentions to recommend and revisit the destination. Implications of practice opportunities are provided. It contributes to the role that demographic plays in development of tourism

**Keywords:** Destination image, behaviour intention, positioning, tourism marketing, consumer behaviour

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## Introduction

The topic of destination image has garnered significant scholarly interest since the 1970s, as noted by Pike et al. (2018). Numerous definitions have arisen pertaining to the concept under consideration, predominantly characterising it as the cognitive manifestation of a tourist's knowledge, emotions, cognitions, viewpoints, and holistic understanding of a specific destination. This manifestation is derived from the assessment of various elements and attributes associated with the destination (Mackay & Fesemaier, 1997; Fakeye & Crompton, 1991). According to Dogra & Karri (2021) from a holistic perspective, destination image can be defined as the collective amalgamation of an individual's beliefs, thoughts, and impressions about a certain location. The portrayal of a destination's image holds significance in the realms of marketing and branding, as supported by scholarly works such as those by Lee & Jeong (2018), Li et al. (2017), and Pike et al. (2018). Furthermore, the concept of destination image is employed to get insights into the present and future behavioural intentions of tourists towards a certain destination (Qui et al., 2018) encompassing the intention to recommend (Prayag et al., 2017), the intention to visit (Molinillo et al., 2018), and the intention to revisit (Loi et al., 2017). Numerous scholarly investigations have been dedicated to examining effect of destination image on the decision-making process of tourists, as well as their future behavioural intentions and preferences for specific destinations (Tan & Wu, 2016). An investigation into travelers' perception of destination helps to determine or devise the appropriate strategy thereby allowing the destination to improve its product image in the target market (Tavitiyaman & Qu, 2013). Travelers use several attributes and attractions to measure destination image (Dabphet, 2017). For instance, Chi et al (2008), cited by Rajesh (2013) classified destination attributes to nine aspects namely natural attractions, entertainment and events, travel environment, historical attractions, accessibility, infrastructure, relaxation, price and value and outdoor activities. Similar nine attributes were developed by Beerli & Martin (2004a), including tourist leisure and recreation, natural environment, natural resources, culture history and art, general infrastructure, social environment, leisure and recreation, and political and economic. However, few researchers have investigated the impact that socio demographics variables have on the image of a destination by international tourists in the Volta region. The Volta region is one of Ghana's 16 regions with Ho as its capital. The region is divided into 18 administrative districts. Tourism in the region is classified into recreation, mountains and attractions. The region is endowed with some scintillating tourist's sites to include ancestral caves at Likpe, Nyagbo and Logba, the Akpafu Iron Mines, Atorkor Slave Market, The Snake Farm, Tafi Atome Monkey Sanctuary, Mount Afadja and Tagbo falls Alavanyo and Ayafie falls, German historical sites at Kpando, European Bell at Ho, Ote waterfalls at Amezorfe, Kalapa Resource Reserves at Abutia and Adaklu among others.

According to the Ghana Tourism Authority the implementing arm of the Ministry of Tourism, the Volta region recorded 27,755 tourists and generated a revenue of GHC 281,527 in 2021. Out of the total number generated, 24,349 were Ghanaians (domestic) and 3,446 non-Ghanaians (international). In 2022, the number surged with 44,676 tourists visiting and



generating a revenue of GHC 626,282. Out of the number 36,839 comprised of domestic tourists and 7,834 international tourists. The authority has attributed the increase of tourists to the beauty, improve infrastructure and awareness creation. They have refuted to look at how external factors like demographics can help them in improving and developing marketing and branding strategies. Socio demographics have been found to have a great impact on the marketing of tourism. According to Kakara & Mkwizu (2020) they have been found to influence tourists' participation in tourism and how they select destinations. But it is unknown as to whether demographic factors affect tourist selection of the Volta region and their behavioural intentions. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to: (a) explore how tourists' perceived destination images of Volta region and their future behavioral intentions; and (b) assess the moderating effect of demographics variables on the relationship between destination image and behavioral intentions.

## Literature review

### *Destination image and behaviour intentions*

According to Zhang et al. (2014), there is no agreed definition of destination. But generally, it refers to the total sum of perceptions, ideals, beliefs, impressions, feelings and expectations of an individual towards a destination (Kim & Richardson, 2003; Chon, 1990; Crompton, 1979). Other scholars (Kayat & Haiz 2014; Zehrer et al., 2007; Beerli & Martin, 2004a; Gallarza et al., 2002; Baloglu & McCleary, 1999) define it as individual's psychological representation of thoughts, knowledge, beliefs, emotions and overall impression about a certain destination. Different approaches have been used in the conceptualization of destination image. Echtner & Richie (1991) adopted the three-continuum component approach of attribute-holistic, functional-psychological and common-unique. Gartner (1994) also proposed cognitive, affective and conative components. Despite the above approaches destination image is also defined from its overall image perception which according to Styliadis et al. (2017) is the holistic perception of the tourist destination. In forming image of destination, scholars have also emphasized on tangible quality attributes of places, such as service and atmospheric attributes (e.g. landscape, historical attractions, infrastructural, accommodation and facilities) to influence tourists (Kim et al., 2012). Destination image is seen to influence tourist choice of a destination (Stepchenkora & Morrison, 2006). Behaviour intentions is seen as a strategic metric (Prayag et al., 2013) and an important concept in understanding tourist selection of destinations and future motives and behavior (Afshardoost & Eshaghi 2020). Research studies have also revealed that behavioural intention of tourist is influenced by the overall image (Styliadis et al., 2015); the cognitive image also significantly affects behaviour intentions (Afshardoost & Eshaghi 2020); the affective image plays a determining role in the influence of behaviour intention (Afshardoost & Eshaghi 2020).

### *Demographics*

Demographic factors have been defined by Mazilu & Mitroi (2010) as descriptive segmentation technique which has socio-demographic factors involved. Tourism experts therefore use age, gender, family life cycle, education, income and nationality as socio-demographic factors (Ma et al., 2018; Mkwizu, 2018a, 2018b). To predict travel behaviour patterns and describe tourism market, the variables have been deemed to be a very useful tool (Weaver & Oppermann, 2000). According to Hwang et al. (2013) the moderator role played by socio-demographics has been affirmed in consumer behaviour. They have also out-dooed gender, age and marital status to have such moderating roles. Mak et al. (2012) also reveals same demographic features of age, marital status, income, education level and gender to have effect on decisions that tourists make with regards to destination image and behaviour intentions. **Age:** Age has been found to play a significant role in influencing consumer behaviour and also its effect on attitudes and behaviour towards a product or service (Singh & Verma 2017). Dündar & Güçer (2015) also found that age affect individuals' perception of a destination. In another study Walmsley & Jenkins (1999) found out that tourist's perception of different tourist's resorts differs depending on one's age. **Gender:** In the tourism literature gender is found to be a moderator among behaviour constructs (Jin et al., 2013; Beauregard, 2012; Karetepe, 2011). For instance, in a study by Sreen et al. (2018) gender is found to affect consumer intention to purchase. It is also found that the differences in gender leads to different behaviours (Shaout, 2016). This differences in male and female have been realised in consumer behaviour (Heidarin, 2019) and tourism research as well (Dedeoglu, 2019; Khan et al., 2019). A study by Moriarty & Honnery, (2005) found that men travel for business related activities whiles women mostly travel for visiting friends and relatives. In a study to find the image of Pennsylvania as a rural tourism Chen & Kerstetter (1999) found that gender significantly influenced tourist perceived image. But in a study by Baloglu (1999) to finalize the image of US among German tourists there was no statistical difference between tourists perceived image and demographic variables of gender, income and education. **Education:** A study by Esu (2015) which is based on studies by Font (2000) identified that a person's level of education influences their destination choice. Studies from the same scholars revealed a significant difference in the level of qualification from tourist and their behaviour intentions. This is due to the fact that those with high educational qualifications demands high levels of service. This is similar and more related to research by Mittal & Kumar (2001) that found that people with lower levels of education accept lower levels of satisfactions. In another research work, Font (2001) reveals how the moderating factor of educational qualification influences the choice that tourist makes of a destination.

It has been revealed that some empirical studies (e.g Baloglu, 1997; Baloglu & McCleary, 1999; Calantone et al., 1989; Walmsley & Jenkin, 1993) have examined the relationship between socio-demographic variables (such as gender, age, education, occupation, income, marital status and country of origin), destination image and behaviour intention. Their studies have shown different results; some showed differences in the perceived image base on all the demographic variables whiles others also found only age and education to have differences. But because of the debate surrounding the socio-demographic, further studies are required (Kim et al., 2017). It has also been revealed in the literature that some of these variable's intent to

influence tourist to recommend is unclear. According to Kim et al. (2017) and Chi (2010) there is still lack of understanding about relationship between the socio-demographic variable, destination image and behaviour intention. This study therefore seeks to find the effect of demographic factors on destination image and future behaviour intentions of international tourist that visit the Volta region in Ghana.

### Theoretical framework

This study adopts the Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB) which is used to predict human behaviour in social psychology studies (Chen & Tung, 2014; Han & Ryu, 2012). The three key components of TPB are (i) attitude towards behaviour, (ii) subjective norms and (iii) perceived behavioural control. Attitudes are the positive or negative feelings about performing a behaviour. In this case the tourist feelings towards the key destination attributes. If it's positive the tourist will have a positive attitude towards the destination and vice versa. The subjective norms refer to the perceived social pressures to perform or not to perform the behaviour. These are pressures that influences the tourist to visit the destination. Lastly the perceived behavioural control refers to the individual's belief in their capability to perform the behaviour. It is about the perceived ease or difficulty of the behaviour and is assumed to reflect past experience as well as anticipated impediments and obstacles (Ajzen, 1985). Thus, tourists visiting the destination are likely to be influenced by flights availability, the ease of setting visa and even their understanding of certain cultures e.g. language. TPB is again apply to this study because it considers demographic characteristics (age, gender, race, religion, education, income etc.), intelligence, general attitude and life values, emotions etc. These variables are also known as background factors in TPB. They influence intentions and behaviour only directly by their effects on behavioural, normative and control beliefs. The conceptual model of the study with hypothesized paths is shown in Figure 1.

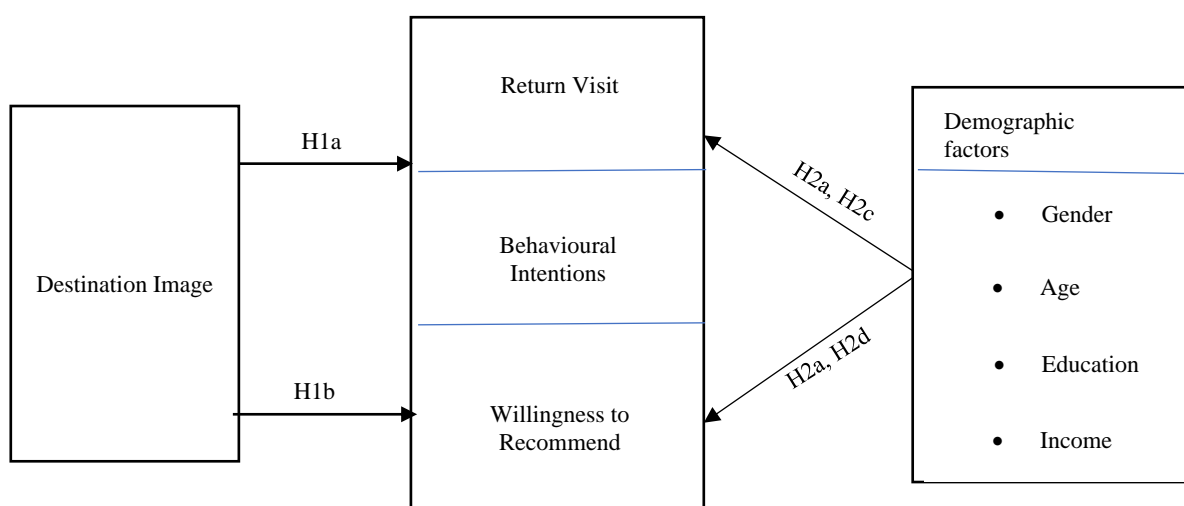


Figure 1: Conceptual model

### Hypothesis development

#### *Destination image and behaviour intentions (return visit and willingness to recommend)*

Images serves as the basis upon which tourist make decision. The literature has revealed that there is a positive relationship between destination image and behaviour intention. And that destination image positively affects future tourist behaviours directly and indirectly (Zhang et al., 2014; Chen et al., 2013; Wang & Hsu, 2010; Chen & Tsai, 2007). But, none of such studies have been conducted in the Volta region. Some studies by researchers Kim et al. (2014) and Zahra (2012) found destination as an antecedent of tourist behavioural intentions towards Asian locations. In a meta-analysis Zhang et al. (2014) found destination image directly affects behavioural intentions. However, Bigne et al. (2001) assert that destination image positively affects revisit intention and willingness to recommend to others through quality and tourist satisfaction (Kani et al., 2017). Similarly, Sharma & Nayk (2018) empirically reaffirm that a positive destination image significantly influences tourist to revisit and recommend the destination to others. This means destination affects tourist decision to revisit and recommend destination sites to others. Based on the above, the following hypothesis are formulated:

H<sub>1a</sub>: Destination image influences tourist to revisit intentions; and

H<sub>1b</sub>: Destination image influences tourist willingness to recommend the destination site to others.

#### *Demographic variables*

The literature has revealed that demographics variables affect tourists' decisions regarding their destination and behavioural intentions. For instance, Beerli & Martin (2004a/b) found the country of origin to have the greatest influence on tourist destinations from the cognitive and affective perspective. Also, a report from Royal Caribbean International found that



mainland China's cruise passengers are highly educated, young and middle-class customers (Sun et al., 2014). Individual age has also influenced the perceived image of some destinations (Dündar & Güçer 2015). And gender is also found to influence the perceived image of tourists (Ragavan et al., 2014). Even though it is an area that is very important and used to segment the tourism market, few studies have been conducted to find the link between tourism behaviour and gender (Huang & Veen 2019). For instance, few studies have been conducted to find the differences between gender groups and how they perceive destination images. For example, (Beerli & Martin 2004b) researched first-time international tourists to Lanzarote, Spain. It was revealed that the cognitive domain of the destination of females was rated based on the natural/cultural resources and the general tourist infrastructure. In addition, their affective image of the island was significantly higher than their male counterparts. In a different study, Wang et al. (2016) also confirmed the moderating role linking the affective image and tourist expectation. The female tourist's affective image effect on tourist expectation was found to be significantly stronger than that of male tourists. Moreover, the effect of affective image on tourist expectation was found to be significantly stronger for female tourists than for male tourists. Gender has also been found in the extant literature to moderate the relationships among behavioural constructs (e.g. Jin et al., 2013; Beauregard, 2012; Karatepe, 2011). Though there have been several studies showing the significance of gender on destination, there was no statistically significant difference between perceived image and income, education and the demographic variables of gender in a study conducted by Baloglu (1999) in an attempt to find out German tourists view on the image of US. The literature has shown the positive relationship between destination image and future behavioural intentions. Still, it has also revealed that in some cases, the past experiences of tourists can affect their assessment of a destination. For instance, Tian-Cole & Crompton (2003) argued that a tourist forms an attitude after visiting a destination. Based on the above, it is therefore hypothesised that:

- H<sub>2a</sub>: gender, age, education, income have a moderating effect on the relationship between destination image and return visit.
- H<sub>2b</sub>: gender, age, education, income have a moderating effect on the relationship between destination image and recommendation to others.
- H<sub>2c</sub>: gender, age, education, income have a moderating effect on the relationship between destination image and return visit.
- H<sub>2d</sub>: gender, age, education, income have a moderating effect on the relationship between destination image and recommendation to others.

## Methodology

The research adopted a quantitative method to moderate the variables using statistical techniques. It also tested a hypothesis and a descriptive survey was used to collect data for the analysis. Data was collected from international tourists that had visited the key destination and tourist's sites from January 2021 to July 2021. This was during the Covid-19 lockdown period when international tourists were restricted from visiting tourist sites. In all, 403 respondents were used for the analysis. A questionnaire with Five-Point Likert Scale was developed which contain the demographic information, key destination and tourist sites and the key constructs. Destination image was made up of questions adapted from different sources; 16 questions adapted from Chen & Tsai (2007), 12 questions selected from 28 items scale by Stylos & Andronikidis (2013) which is developed by aggregating items from scale in studies by Beerli & Martin (2004b), Pike & Ryan (2004), Baloglu & McCleary (1999) and Chen & Kerstetter (1999). Affective image has 5 questions from Stylos & Andronikidis (2013) which can also be found in studies of Baloglu & Brinberg (1997), Baloglu & Mangaloglu (2001) and Russel et al. (1981). Conative image developed from Stylos & Andronikidis (2013) which was based on extensive literature review. Holistic-image is a single item from Stylos & Andronikidis based in accordance with Echtner & Ritchie (1993, 2003). Behavioural intentions measures used two items – willingness to recommend and intention to revisit. 6 questions were adapted from Arteguer et al. (2013). The study used a probability (non-proportional stratified) and purposively sample international tourists. Moderation and multi-group analysis was conducted to assess the effect of demographic variable influence on destination image and tourist future behavioural intentions. Behavioural intention was used as a dependent variable and destination image used as the independent variable. Demographic factors were used as the moderating variable.

## Results

### *Descriptive analysis*

The results indicate that majority of the respondents were females (60.3%) while 39.7% were males. Thus, most of the international tourists were females as compared to males. In terms of age, most (42.7%) were in the 25 to 34 age brackets, followed by 35 to 44 (28.5%), 45 to 54 (12.7%) and 18 to 24 (11.9%). This suggests most international tourists were youths. Furthermore, regarding marital status, most of them were single (43.4%) as compared to those married (31.5%), divorced (13.4%), separated (6.7%) and widowers (5%). In terms of education, 46.2% were college or degree holders, 30% were postgraduates, 22.6% reached high school while only 1.2% reached primary level of education. Concerning their income levels, most (40%) were under US\$20,000, 26.8% belonged to US\$20,000 to US\$49,000 bracket, 17.1% belonged to US\$50,000 to US\$74,000 bracket, 9.2% were earning US\$75,000 to US\$99,000. Further, 5% and 2% were earning US\$100,000 to US\$199,000 and US\$200,000 and higher, respectively. Regarding whom the respondents travelled with, most (34.7%) travelled with their families, 33% travelled alone, 23.1% travelled with their friends, and 9.2% travelled with tour groups. In



addition, 52.9% of the international tourists were on their first-time visit to the Volta Region whereas 47.1% were on repeated visit to the region. Lastly, the respondents came from various continents. Specifically, most of the tourists were from America (31.5%), followed by Africa (30.8%), Europe (26.3%), Asia (10.2%) and the rest were from Oceania (1.2%).

**Destination image**

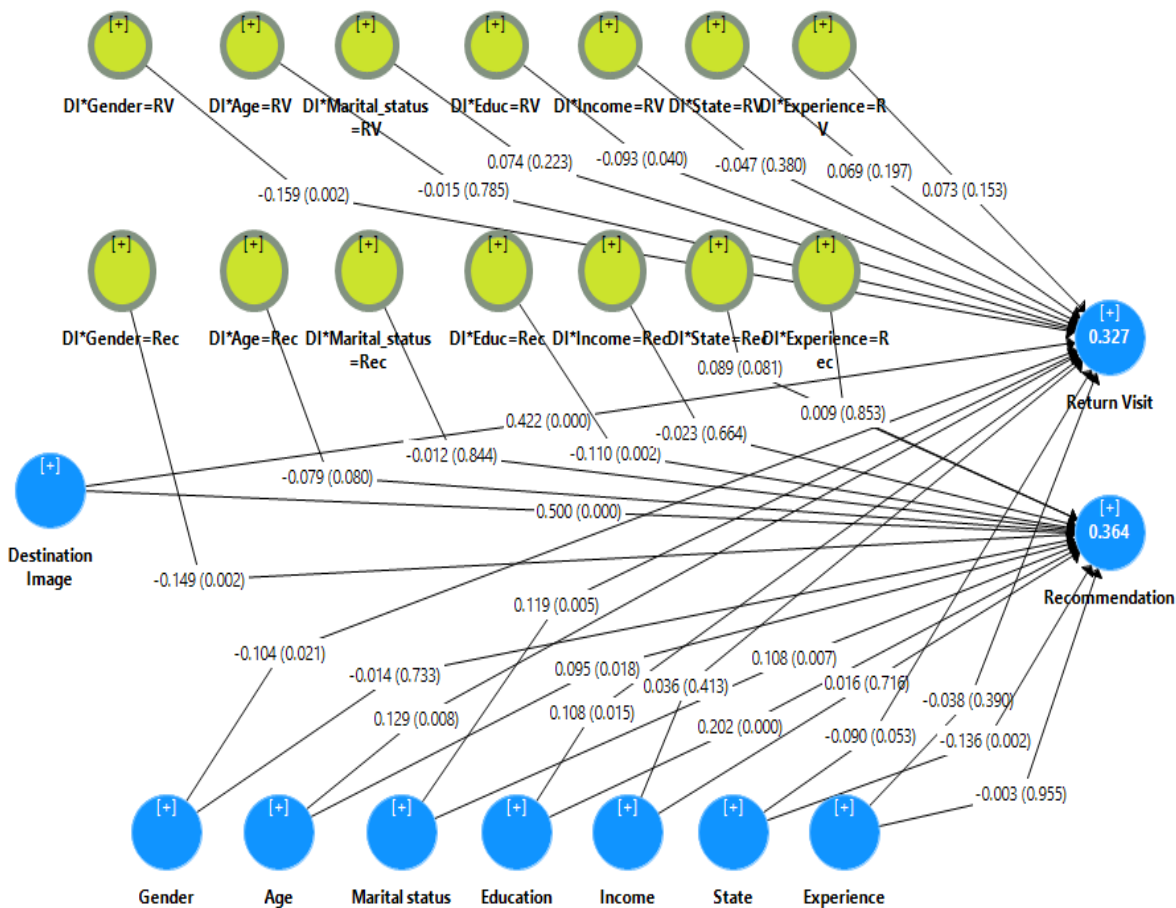
The statistics indicates that all the items have means greater than the average of 3.2. This suggests that most of the respondents had positive perceptions of all the items measuring destination image. Further, the composite mean values range from 3.76 to 3.88, suggesting positive perception of the constructs. Specifically, among the three facets of destination image, cognitive and affective images were rated higher (M = 3.86; SD = 0.991), followed by conative image (M = 3.76; SD = 1.031). The holistic image yielded mean of 3.88 (SD = 0.930), implying that most of the respondents had positive perceptions about the destination image.

**Behavioural intentions**

The results specifies that all the items have means greater than the average of 3.2. This suggests that most of the respondents had positive perceptions of all the items measuring future behavioural intentions characterized by intentions to revisit and recommend. More, the composite mean values are 3.99 and 4.06 for intention to revisit and intention to recommend, respectively. Comparatively, most of the tourists are more likely to recommend the destinations than to repeat their visits.

**Moderation and Multi-group analysis and results**

To analyze the moderating effect of demographics on destination image and behavioural intentions a multi-group analysis was carried out.



**Figure 1: Structural model for moderating effects of demographic and familial factors**

As revealed in Table 1, the results indicate that destination image significantly positively influenced return visit ( $\beta = 0.215$ ;  $SE = 0.057$ ;  $CI = 0.107, 0.333$ ;  $t = 3.744$ ;  $p = 0.000$ ), recommendation ( $\beta = 0.336$ ;  $SE = 0.061$ ;  $CI = 0.218, 0.458$ ;  $t = 5.529$ ;  $p = 0.000$ ). Also, out of the fourteen (14) moderating effects, only four are significant. Specifically, gender had significant moderating effects on relationship between destination image and return visit ( $\beta = -0.159$ ;  $SE = 0.051$ ;  $t = 3.126$ ;  $p = 0.002$ )



and recommendation ( $\beta = -0.149$ ;  $SE = 0.048$ ;  $t = 3.081$ ;  $p = 0.002$ ). Similarly, educational level had significant moderating effects on relationship between destination image and return visit ( $\beta = -0.093$ ;  $SE = 0.045$ ;  $t = 2.054$ ;  $p = 0.040$ ) and recommendation ( $\beta = -0.110$ ;  $SE = 0.036$ ;  $t = 3.063$ ;  $p = 0.002$ ). Surprisingly, the nexus between destination image and future behavioural intentions was not moderated by age, marital status, income level, whom the tourists were traveling with (state) and past travelling experience ( $p > 0.05$ ). Nonetheless, the moderation model as depicted in Figure 1.0 significantly accounted for 32.7% ( $R^2 = 0.327$ ) and 36.4% ( $R^2 = 0.364$ ) variance in return visit and recommendation, respectively.

**Table 1: Moderating effect of demographic factors**

Paths	$\beta$	SE	t-statistics	p-values
Destination image => return visit	0.215	0.057	3.744	0.000
Destination image => recommendation	0.336	0.061	5.529	0.000
Di*gender => return visit	-0.159	0.051	3.126	0.002
Di*gender => recommendation	-0.149	0.048	3.081	0.002
Di*age => return visit	-0.015	0.056	0.272	0.785
Di*age => recommendation	-0.079	0.045	1.750	0.080
Di*Marital status => return Visit	0.074	0.061	1.217	0.223
Di*Marital status => recommendation	-0.012	0.060	0.197	0.844
Di*educ => return visit	-0.093	0.045	2.054	0.040
Di*educ => recommendation	-0.110	0.036	3.063	0.002
Di*income => return visit	-0.047	0.053	0.878	0.380
Di*income => recommendation	-0.023	0.053	0.434	0.664
Di*state => return visit	0.069	0.053	1.291	0.197
Di*state => recommendation	0.089	0.051	1.743	0.081
Di*experience => return visit	0.073	0.051	1.430	0.153
Di*experience => recommendation	0.009	0.050	0.186	0.853

Considering the significant moderating effects of gender and educational levels, a further analysis known as multi-group analysis was conducted to determine significant differences in the path coefficients. The results of are depicted in Table 2 and Table 3.

**Table 2: PLS-MGA results based on gender**

Path	B	$\beta$	p-Value	p-Value	p-Value (G1 vs G2)
	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female vs Male
DI => Return Visit	0.321	0.048	0.000	0.428	0.003
DI => Rec	0.442	0.166	0.000	0.005	0.004

The results in Table 2 revealed that the positive effect of destination image on return visit was significant for females ( $\beta = 0.321$ ;  $p = 0.000$ ) but insignificant for males ( $\beta = 0.048$ ;  $p = 0.428$ ). Additionally, the positive effect of destination image on recommendation was significant for both females ( $\beta = 0.442$ ;  $p = 0.000$ ) and males ( $\beta = 0.166$ ;  $p = 0.005$ ). Thus, the positive effects of destination image on future behavioural intentions characterized by return visit and recommendations significantly vary in that the positive effect is higher for females than males.

**Table 3: PLS-MGA results based on educational level**

Path	$\beta$	B	$\beta$	p-Value	p-Value	p-Value	p-Value	p-Value	p-Value
	HS	C/D	PG	HS	C/D	PG	HS vs C/D	HS vs PG	C/D vs PG
DI => Return Visit	0.523	0.012	0.191	0.000	0.814	0.010	0.000	0.006	0.981
DI => Rec	0.420	0.316	0.282	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.233	0.146	0.376

The results in Table 3 revealed that the positive effect of destination image on return visit was significant for tourists with high school ( $\beta = 0.523$ ;  $p = 0.000$ ) and post-graduate ( $\beta = 0.191$ ;  $p = 0.010$ ) but insignificant for tourists with college or degree qualifications ( $\beta = 0.012$ ;  $p = 0.814$ ). Additionally, the positive effect of destination image on recommendation was significant for all the three educational categories of tourists ( $p = 0.000$ ). Comparatively, the positive effects of destination image on return visit significantly vary among the three educational categories of tourists in that the positive effects are higher for tourists with high school followed by post-graduates and then tourists with college or degree qualifications. However, even though the positive effects of destination image on recommendation vary among the three educational categories of tourists in that tourists with high school rated highest followed by college or degree qualification holders and then tourists with post-graduate qualifications, the difference is statistically insignificant ( $p > 0.05$ ).

**Destination image and behavioural intention**

The study examined and tested the hypotheses that empirically, H<sub>1</sub>: destination image positively influences tourists' revisit intention; H<sub>2</sub>: Destination image positively influences tourists' recommendation to others. The results for H<sub>1</sub> ( $\beta = 0.215$ ;  $SE = 0.057$ ;  $CI = 0.107, 0.333$ ;  $t = 3.744$ ;  $p = 0.000$ ), H<sub>2</sub> ( $\beta = 0.336$ ;  $SE = 0.061$ ;  $CI = 0.218, 0.458$ ;  $t = 5.529$ ;  $p = 0.000$ ), shows that destination image significantly positively influences revisit intention and recommendation to others. Therefore, these hypotheses H<sub>1</sub> and H<sub>2</sub> are significant. This implies that the tourist considers the attributes and attractions associated with the destination and they have a positive attitude towards it. The attributes and attractions constitute the tourists' overall impression (Fu et al., 2016). Scholars have come out with different forms of attributes, but Chi & Qu (2008) classify attributes into the following: travel environment, natural attraction, entertainment and events, historical attraction, infrastructure, accessibility relaxation, outdoor activities and price and value. The study also confirms that tourists with a positive attitude towards the destination will likely revisit and recommend it to others. This finding of the study (H<sub>1</sub> and H<sub>2</sub>) is consistent with the empirical



studies that have shown that destination image positively affects future behaviour directly and indirectly (Kani et al., 2017; Zhang et al., 2014). Regarding the direct positive influence, the literature has revealed that destination image directly affects revisit intention (Kani et al., 2017; Byon & Zhang, (2010). For instance, a study conducted by Song et al. (2017) among golf tourists in the Hainan area, China, found that a destination image significantly impacts tourists' revisit to a destination. Also, a study by Hallman et al. (2015), with 795 tourists visiting the destination of Obsertdof, Germany and Hininterglemm in Austria, shows that destination image impacts the intention to revisit. A study by Sharman & Nayak (2018) also revealed that a positive overall image by tourists significantly influences the intention to revisit and recommend the visited destination to others.

### **Demographic factor**

To determine the effect of demographics on destination image and behavioural, only four (4) out of the fourteen (14) moderating effects are significant. The results of this four are as follows:

- H<sub>2a</sub>: Gender had a significant moderation effect on destination image and return visit;
- H<sub>2b</sub>: Gender had a significant effect on destination image and recommendation to others
- H<sub>2c</sub>: Education had a significant effect on destination image and return visit; and
- H<sub>2d</sub>: Education had a significant effect on destination image and recommendation to others.

A further multi-group analysis on these four reveals the following:

The results for gender showed a positive effect of destination image on return visit was significant for females ( $\beta = 0.321$ ;  $p = 0.000$ ) but insignificant for males ( $\beta = 0.048$ ;  $p = 0.428$ ). And also, the positive effect of destination image on recommendation was significant for both females ( $\beta = 0.442$ ;  $p = 0.000$ ) and males ( $\beta = 0.166$ ;  $p = 0.005$ ). This is an indication that the positive effects of destination image on return visit and recommendation significantly vary in that the positive effect is higher for females than males. This result is in agreement with studies by Beerli & Martin (2004b) on research in Lanzarote, an island in Spain that found that female tourists rated natural/cultural resources and general tourist leisure infrastructure in the cognitive domain of destination as well as the affective image significantly higher than their male counterparts. Also, in a study to moderate role of relationship between affective image and tourist expectation, Wang et al. (2016) found the effect to be significantly stronger for female tourists than for male tourists. This implies that females tend to have a positive image than males in their visit to the destination. From the empirical results it could be seen that there are more females than males visiting the destination. Females constitute a whopping 60.3% of the total international tourists as against males making up 39.7%. The results for education on destination image on behavioural intention shows a significant positive effect for high school ( $\beta = 0.523$ ;  $p = 0.000$ ) and postgraduate ( $\beta = 0.191$ ;  $p = 0.010$ ) but insignificant for tourists with college or degree qualification ( $\beta = 0.012$ ;  $p = 0.814$ ). In terms of the effect on recommendation, the positive effect was significant for all the three education categories (higher school, postgraduate and college or degree). But also, the positive effect of destination image on return visit varies among the three categories; the positive effect is higher for those with high school, followed by postgraduates and those with college or degree qualification in that order. On the other hand, the positive effect of destination image on recommendation also varies. Those with high school are rated highest followed by college or degree qualification and then those with postgraduate qualification. This is in line with a study from the Royal Carribean International (2013) that found China's cruise passengers to be highly educated young and middle-class (Sun et al., 2014). Gender has been found to affect destination image and intention as revealed by the literature. It was revealed from the studies that female tend to offer a more positive evaluation of the destination on return visits than males. But in terms of recommending the destination both females and males made positive recommendations. The results for education also show that high school leavers and those with postgraduate certificates had a positive evaluation than those with college or degree qualification on their return visits. But on the other hand, all levels of education (high school, postgraduate and college or degree holders) had a positive evaluation on recommendation to others. Whilst the positive evaluation on the return visit varied among the tourists, those with high school certificates had a higher positive evaluation than the rest though the difference was insignificant. These analyses reveal that gender and education had an effect on tourist decisions on destination image and behavioural intentions (return visits and recommendation to others).

### **Recommendations and conclusion**

The results of the descriptive analysis shows that majority of the tourists were females (60.3%) and males (31.7%). Also, 46.2% of those who visited had a college degree with 30% having postgraduate degree, 22.6% reached high school with just 1.2% having primary education. All in all, the youth (between 25-34 of age) made up of 42.7% that visited the destination. The moderation also reveals that female tend to offer a more positive evaluation of the destination on return visits than males. But in terms of recommending the destination both females and males made positive recommendations. These results can help facilitate segmentation and positioning strategies. The socio-demographic variables like age, gender, education and the differences in culture as a result of tourist coming from places like Europe, America and other African countries can be used to develop tourism products and tailored to the specific needs of groups that visit the destination. The destination marketers and tour operators could develop promotional campaign which can be used to target different groups and also use to distinguish the destination from other destinations to gain a sustainable competitive advantage. It could also lead to the development of right messages for the target market in promotional and advertising materials. being used for promotional materials and advert. In terms of policy perspectives, the destination managers, tourism stakeholders should focus on singles, young adults and visitors from U.S.A and other parts of Africans. This will enable them make appropriate provision for developing key tourist sites and



effective promotional campaigns. This study could be concluded that demographic variables had effect on the destination image and behaviour intention. It was found that gender and education had a significant positive effect on destination image and behaviour intention. The study provides insight to the relevant socio-demographic variables that can be used in the development of marketing and branding strategies for the region. It will help the region and Ghana in particular to achieve economic growth through sound tourism practice.

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