



# Destination Image of Selected Tourist's Sites in the Volta Region of Ghana and Future Behavioural Intentions of International Tourists

## Abstract

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This study conducted an analysis of certain tourism hotspots to assess their reputation and its impact on the probability of international visitors choosing to visit the Volta Region in Ghana. This study employed the theory of planned behaviour, quantitative method and utilised statistical methods to collect data through a survey. Respondents were given a structured questionnaire utilising a non-proportional stratified sample method, which is a probability sampling methodology. A total of 403 responses were gathered from overseas tourists who visited the designated research sites in the Volta region using this methodology. The data gathered were analysed using partial least squares structural equation modelling (PLS-SEM). The findings revealed a statistically significant association between several aspects of the destination's image and the studied elements of behavioural intentions. The findings further provide indications of satisfaction and positive attitude among foreign travellers. The study reveals that in order to increase the number of international tourists visiting the Volta Region, it is essential to prioritise the perception of the destination image as a critical element in destination marketing and tourism development. It contributes empirically to the understanding of the multi-dimensional nature of destination image and its impact on destination image and recommendation.

**Keywords** destination image, behaviour intention, positioning, tourism marketing, consumer behaviour

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## Introduction

A destination is a significant element of the tourism system and is categorised in the literature as a defined geographical region. A destination is considered a geographical place that possesses specific qualities that make it appealing to travellers (Komilova et al., 2021). Additionally, it should have the essential infrastructure to cater to travellers, captivating attractions and landmarks, and comprehensive information. Attracting international tourist to visit specific tourist destination is very competitive with numerous destination tourism offering to choose from. The use of consumer behaviour theory has played an important role in destination marketing and branding utilizing appropriate marketing principle to develop tourism marketing offering that sway tourist attention and gain their patronage (Mukherjee & Banerjee 2017). Internationally, tourism is well recognised as a substantial driver of economic activity (Dogru et al., 2020; Tohmo, 2018). In 2018, the sector reached its highest point, contributing to more than 10.4% of the global domestic product (GDP). However, it experienced a decrease to 7.6% in 2022 as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic (WTTC, 2022). Notably, the year 2022 saw the creation of 22 million employment, which is a 7.9% increase compared to 2021 (WTTC, 2022). Tourism revenue has been advantageous for several countries (Odunga et al., 2019; Cavagnaro & Staffieri, 2015). In 2018, Africa had a 7% rise in foreign arrivals, totaling 67 million visitors. This influx of tourists produced USD 38 billion, according to the UNWTO 2019 report. According to the UNWTO (2020), Sub-Saharan Africa received a total of 44.9 million foreign tourists. Ghana and Gambia were identified as very popular destinations in the region. Tourism in Ghana is the third most lucrative industry in terms of producing cash, according to Motac (2022). It plays a crucial role in supplying foreign exchange and job opportunities. In 2022, the Ministry of Tourism, Arts and Culture (MoTAC) reported that the industry yielded more than \$2.5 billion from a total of 914,892 international travellers. The Volta region is one of the 16 regions in the Republic of Ghana. The region has 18 administrative districts and boast of some of the fascinating tourist sites. According to the Ghana Tourism Authority 27,755 tourists visited the Volta region in 2021 generated GHC281, 527. In 2022 the number of international tourists surged to 7,834 out of 36,839 tourists. The increase has been attributed to awareness creation at regional, national and individual level with a focus on the region's natural beauty, cultural heritage and improved tourism infrastructure. But how international tourists perceive the destination has not been researched. It is therefore imperative to assess international tourists' perception of the destination image and its attraction sites. Image is defined as a mental concept formed from a set of impression (Beerli & Martin, 2004).

## Literature review

### *Destination image*

Destination image studies in tourism have been a trendy subject since the 1970s (Pike et al., 2018). Its conceptualization is a relevant domain of research in tourism literature because of its significance in the branding and marketing of destinations (Lee



& Jeong, 2018). According to Zhang et al. (2014), it is an area worthy to look at, because of its great impact on destination choice, satisfaction and post-purchase behaviour. It is also used to understand the actual and future behaviour intention of tourists towards a destination (Lin & Kuo, 2018). According to Loi et al. (2017) destination image is a concept with vague and shifting meanings, used in a large number of contexts and discipline such as psychology, behavioral geography and marketing. From brand image perspective, it refers to “a set of beliefs associated with a particular brand widely studied in marketing and consumer behaviour perspectives” (Moreira & Iao, 2014: 95). Although destination image can be conceptualized in various ways it is frequently approached from different perspectives (holistic, cognition or image as a knowledge structure, the affectivity and the subjective function of behavioural outcome) (Kastenholz, 2012). It is commonly defined as “a mental expression of a tourist’s knowledge, feelings, thoughts, opinions, and overall perception of a particular destination, which results from the evaluation of destination elements and attributes” (Park et al., 2017: 5) or “of rational and emotional interpretations” (Park et al., 2017:5). The three-component approach has since been used in destination image research as a theoretical framework (Lin et al., 2007; Sönmez & Sirakaya, 2002) and cited in (Xu et al., 2018). These components are the affective, cognitive, and conative attributes. The cognitive dimensions are linked to the attributes and functional features. The affective is linked to the holistic and psychological whiles common and unique features are associated with both dimensions. Destination image is seen as an important aspect of the tourist decision (Beerli & Martin, 2004; Chen & Tsai, 2007). Tourist are more likely to select a destination if they have a positive perception towards that (Echtner & Ritchie, 1993).

### ***Tourist perception of a destination***

Perception is defined as “the process by which an individual select, organises and interprets stimuli into a meaningful and coherent picture of the destination” (Cant et al., 2009:79; Jordaan & Prinsloo, 2004: 177). Other scholars also define perception as the process by which the individual selects, organizes and interprets their sensory impressions to give meaning to their environment (Robins 2005; Reisinger & Turner 2003). Both Solomon (2001) and Robins (2005) stress on how the tourists uses their sensory receptors, i.e. nose, mouth, eyes, and skin to the basic stimuli such as smells, sights, taste, sound and feelings in making meaning to the environment. Before the tourist embark on a travel, perception is developed which is based on information searched, their past experiences and consultations with other groups. Hence their perception will be positive if the attributes of the destination image is in line with their expectations and preferences. Once evaluation of the various destinations is made, they move on to make choices of their preferred image (Reisinger & Turner, 2003).

### ***Satisfaction***

In tourism context, satisfaction is the evaluation of the service received from providers which is used by the customers to predict their future experience (Crosby et al., 1990). The customer satisfaction concept can be seen as "either an outcome or as a process" (Yi, 1990: 68). It is defined as the outcome of consumer’s attitude after the purchase of a product (Lovelock & Wirtz 2004). Oliver (1997: 13) proposes that satisfaction is "the consumer’s fulfilment response. It is a judgement that a product or service feature, or the product or service itself, provided (or is providing) a *pleasurable* level of consumption-related fulfilment, including the levels of under-or-over fulfilment". Tourists are satisfied when comparison of the destination and their expectation of experience is favourable and dissatisfied when the outcome of the “expectation-actual experience” is negative (Cong, 2016; Chen & Chen, 2010; Chi & Qu, 2008). It is the expectation of pre-travel and experiences of post-travel that results in satisfaction (Moutinho, 1987). For instance, if international tourists can meet their expectation during their stay they will be satisfied. But if they experience any hiccups or negative feelings in their stay they will be dissatisfied.

### ***Tourist attitude towards a destination***

The consumer attitude is found to play a significant role in determining consumer behavior. Schiffman and Kanuk (2010) posits that consumer behavior is carried by attitude, that is, consumers consistency of purchase, recommendation to others, evaluations and intentions are all interplayed by attitude. This has resulted in consumer attitude assisting in predicting or influencing behavior (Ajzen, 2001). In order to ascertain what tourist’s hold, it is best to first explain attitude. This paper examined tourists’ attitudes towards the key destinations and tourist sites in the Volta region to ascertain whether they have the intention of revisiting the destination in future and recommending it to others.

### ***Behavioural intentions***

The term is widely used in different fields and the definition commonly agreed on is that it is an individual’s future likelihood for fulfilling a particular action (Chua et al., 2019; Moon & Han, 2019). Spears & Singh (2004), and as cited by Koo et al. (2014:129) defined it as “an individual’s tendency to behave according to his or her feelings, knowledge, or evaluations of previous experiences.” This definition is profound because tourists’ intentions are multi-dimensional involving attitude and behaviour, (Prayag & Ryan, 2012). Some researchers report that repurchases and recommendation are the measure of positive behavioural intentions (Alin & Amin, 2014; Oliver 1997). And, it is also realised that tourist loyalty is measured by revisit intentions and recommendations to others by tourists (Huang 2019; Yen et al., 2018; Horng et al., 2012; Oppermann, 2000; Um et al., 2006). Tourist intention to revisit and word-of-mouth behaviour (recommendation) help to predict whether a tourist will become a long-term customer (Fan, 2009). Both revisit intention and recommendations to others will, therefore, serve as a measure to determine international tourists’ intentions to visit the selected destinations and tourist sites in the Volta region.

## Theoretical framework

This work hinges on the theory of planned behaviour (TPB) which have been widely adopted for predicting human behaviour in social psychological studies (Han & Ryu, 2012). In discussing TPB it is appropriate to introduce its progenitor the Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA) which explains the relationship between attitude and behaviour within human action and mainly used to predict how individuals will behave based on their pre-existing attitudes, behaviour and intentions. TPB which predicts human behavioural intentions represent individuals' willingness to behave in certain way (Ajzen, 1985). And according to Ajzen (1991) construction (i) behavioural intention refers to an indication of an individual's readiness to perform a given behaviour; (ii) intention is determined by three conceptually independent constructs, namely attitude, subjective norms and perceived behavioural control; (iii) attitude refers to an individual's positive (negative) evaluation of self-performance of the particular behaviour. For example, tourists' attitudes could be influenced by the destination's image, which could be shaped by factors like natural beauty, culture, safety, cleanliness, and friendliness of locals. If the destination image is positive, then tourists might have a positive attitude towards visiting; (iv) subjective norms are an individual's perception of social normative pressures that they should (should not) perform such behaviour. It involves how much an individual feel that they should perform a particular behaviour. These norms would be the social pressures perceived by tourists about visiting the Volta Region. (v) perceived behavioural control is an individual's beliefs about the presence of factors that may facilitate (impede) performance of the behaviour. For example, tourists' perceived ability to visit the Volta Region might be influenced by factors like financial capability, availability of time, ease of obtaining a visa, availability of direct flights, or understanding of the local language. If tourists perceive high control over these factors, they are more likely to visit. The conceptual model on the relationship between the study is shown in figure 1:

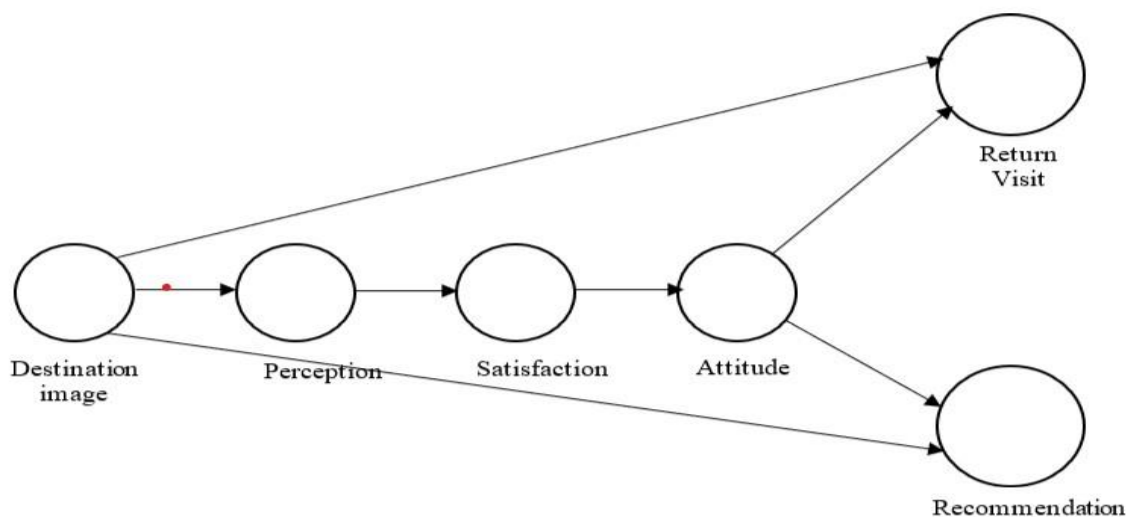


Figure 1: Conceptual framework

## Hypothesis development

While a plethora of empirical studies have indicated that the destination image positively affects future tourist behaviours directly and indirectly (Zhang et al., 2014; Chen et al., 2013; Wang & Hsu, 2010), it needs to be pointed out that none of these have been in the study under context. For instance, it has been found that destination image directly affects behavioural intentions in a meta-analysis by Zhang et al. (2014). In another study by Ragab et al. (2020) destination image indirectly affect's tourist future behavioural intentions. But other scholars have also argued destination image has a direct and indirect effect on tourist future behavioural intentions at the same time. For instance, Sadeh et al. (2012) identified the tourist loyalty model by using tourist satisfaction, destination image, perceived value and tourist satisfaction in the context of Iran. Also, results from a study on tourists by Allameh et al. (2015) in Iran found that destination image positively influences tourist revisit intention to the place as a sports tourism destination. In the same vein, Sharmam & Nayk (2018) empirically reaffirms that a positive destination's image has a significant influence on tourist to revisit and recommend the destination to others. Destinations with known images and tourist's positive perceptions have the higher chance of being selected by tourist's, therefore there is the need to pay proper attention and manage such destinations well. The destination image tourists perceive after visiting influences their satisfaction and their intentions to revisit in future. In formulating their choices of destination, travelers' group them into facilitators and inhibitors and expound on the perception of the destination attributes. As pointed out by Assaker & Hallak (2013), perceptions of tourist destination image and preferences of tourism product are mostly associated with the affective responses and visitation behaviours. It has also been revealed that tourist perception affects the satisfaction that they receive. For instance, in an investigation of tourist perception and satisfaction of Asian and Western tourists that used Malaysian hotels facilities, Poon & Low (2005) found that the tourists were satisfied with factors like host hospitality, recreational and



entertainment, location, security and safety, accommodation facilities, food beverages and Western travelers were also satisfied with the hotel factors like host hospitality, accommodation facilities, location, transportation and payment, security.

The tourism literature has established that there is a positive relationship between satisfaction and loyalty (Coban, 2012) but little attention has been paid to tourist satisfaction, their attitude and behavioural intentions. And this assertion is not different from the context under study. This has led to a controversy among some researchers. But according to Oliver, the disconfirmation of expectation satisfaction makes is different from attitude. And it has been found that the higher positive attitude makes customers have a higher level of satisfaction that leads to higher behavioural intention and loyalty (Hasan et al., 2017; Hasan et al., 2019). Huang & Hsu (2009) found that Chinese visitors' satisfaction positively affect their attitudes and revisit intention towards Hong Kong. The tourism literature has revealed the significant positive relationship between tourist attitude and their intentions in the leisure (Teng et al., 2015; Hsu & Huang, 2012; Ajzen & Driver, 1992). But attitude has been seen broadly as relating to an object, with few studies investigating attitude as the behaviour concept and its effect on tourist behaviour intentions. There are no studies leading to the investigation of the relationship between tourist attitude and behaviour intentions in the Volta region of Ghana. But Studies have found the significant positive relationship between tourist attitude to a destination and their intentions (Hasan et al., 2019; Bianchi et al., 2017; Hasan et al., 2017). Whilst other studies have found attitude to be a predictor of tourist revisit (Hasan et al., 2017). Based on the above, the hypotheses are formulated as follows:

- H<sub>1a</sub>: Destination image positively influences tourists' revisit intention.
- H<sub>1b</sub>: Destination image positively influence tourist recommendation to others.
- H<sub>2</sub>: Destination image significantly influences tourists' perception.
- H<sub>3</sub>: Perception positively influence tourists' satisfaction
- H<sub>4</sub>: Satisfaction has a positive influence on attitude towards a destination.
- H<sub>5a</sub>: Attitude towards a destination positively influence tourists return visit.
- H<sub>5b</sub>: Attitude towards a destination positively influences recommendation to others.

## Methodology

A quantitative method was employed to examine the relationship between the variables by using statistical techniques. It was also used to test hypothesis and the perception of international tourists towards the key destinations and sites. Because the study is more descriptive a survey strategy was adopted to allow for the use of questionnaires to collect data and analyze. A seven-page questionnaire of 5 sections with Five-point Likert Scale was developed. Section A contained the demographic and family information of respondents. Section B identified the key tourist destinations and sites in the Volta region namely Ho Municipal, Afadjato South district, Hohoe Municipal, Adaklu district, Agotime-Ziope district and Keta Municipal. Section C; the perception of international tourist of key destinations and sites. Destination image was made up of 42 questions adapted from different sources; 16 questions adopted from Chen & Tsai (2007), 12 questions selected from 28 item scale by Stylos & Andronikidis (2013) which is developed by aggregating items from four scale in studies by Beerli & Martin (2004), 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). Conative image-developed from Stylos & Andronikidis (2013) which was based on extensive literature review. Holistic image – is a single item from Stylos and Andronikidis (2013) based in accordance with Echtner & Ritchie (1993, 2003). Satisfaction – 4 questions adapted from Lee et al. (2005) were used. Attitude – 5 questions were adapted from Jalivand et al. (2012). Behaviour intentions- 2 items were measured, willingness to recommend and intentions to visit. 6 questions were adapted from Artuger et al. (2013). The study used a probability non-proportional stratified to select international tourists that visited the key destination and sites. Sites within the key destinations of Ho Municipal, Ho West district, Keta Municipal, Agotime Ziope districts, Hohoe district and Afadjato south district were selected and international tourists selected. A survey questionnaire designed with a Five-point Likert Scale was used; the questionnaire is described in the instrument and was sent to the sites and destinations. The survey exercise was performed from January 2021 to August 2021. This was during the covid-19 lockdown period when international tourists were restricted from entering the country. In all, 403 respondents were used for the analysis. This study adopted descriptive and quantitative analysis so that data distribution on each variable can be presented. Partial Least Squares-Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) method and SmartPLS 3.3.6 (Ringle et al., 2015) was used to test hypotheses. The proposed model was examined using SEM to test both the theoretical relationships in the model (measurement and structural model) and the overall model fit of the survey data. The PLS-SEM was chosen because it was able to provide the relationship between the variables.

## Results

### *Descriptive analysis of respondents*

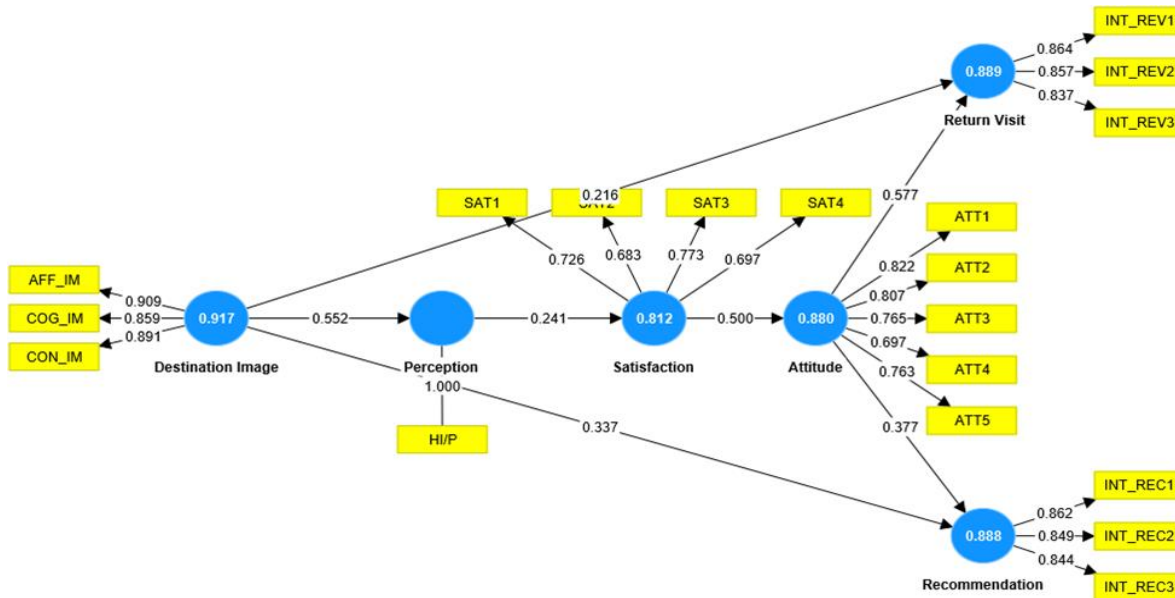
The demographic characteristics of the respondents surveyed in the study on the Volta region's tourist sites shows that female visitors slightly outnumber males, representing 60.3% of the sample. The majority of tourists fall within the age range of 25-44 years, accounting for 71.2% of respondents. While single individuals form the largest group based on marital status (43.4%), the educational data indicates a trend towards higher education, with 76.2% having achieved college-level education or beyond. Income distribution reveals that 40% earn below USD 20,000 annually. The travel patterns vary, with a majority journeying with family or alone. Notably, there is an almost even split between first-time and repeat visitors to the region. The global



appeal of the Volta region is evident, drawing tourists primarily from America, Africa, and Europe. In sum, the Volta region attracts a broad spectrum of tourists, offering a comprehensive view of its appeal and potential areas for tourism development.

**Measurement model assessment**

In the realm of structural equation modeling (SEM), the validation process is bifurcated into two integral stages: the measurement model assessment and the structural model assessment. The former pertains to the meticulous examination of the relationships between observed variables (indicators) and their respective latent constructs. This stage is pivotal as it ensures that the constructs under study are measured reliably and validly, setting a robust foundation for subsequent analyses. Key metrics such as reliability, convergent validity, and discriminant validity are assessed to ascertain the adequacy of the measurement models. Figure 1 shows the measurement model.



**Figure 1: Measurement model**

Table 1 details the assessment of measurement model reliability and convergent validity for the study’s constructs. For the ‘Attitude’ construct, all indicators (ATT1-ATT5) have loadings exceeding the recommended threshold of 0.7 (Hair et al., 2010), with t-statistics being statistically significant at the 0.000 level. The CA of 0.830, rho\_A of 0.839, CR of 0.880, and AVE of 0.596 collectively affirm the reliability and convergent validity of this construct. The subsequent construct, represented by AFF\_IM, COG\_IM, and CON\_IM, pertains to various facets of ‘Destination Image’. These indicators also exhibit high loadings, with a CR of 0.917 and an AVE of 0.786, confirming both reliability and convergent validity (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). ‘Perception’ has a loading of 1.000, suggesting it is a single-item construct. Furthermore, the constructs ‘Recommendation’ and ‘Return Visit’ both display robust loadings for their respective indicators, showcasing strong convergent validity. Their reliability is corroborated by CA, rho\_A, and CR values that all surpass the recommended benchmarks (Hair et al., 2010). Lastly, ‘Satisfaction’ indicators (SAT1-SAT4) all have loadings above 0.7, with an AVE of 0.519, validating its convergent validity. Although the CA and rho\_A values are slightly below the preferred threshold of 0.7, the CR value of 0.812 indicates satisfactory reliability (Hair et al., 2010).

**Table 1: Results on reliability and convergent validity**

Indicator	Loadings	t-statistics	p-value	VIF	CA	rho_A	CR	AVE
ATT1	0.822	52.899	0.000	1.908	0.830	0.839	0.880	0.596
ATT2	0.807	47.180	0.000	1.808				
ATT3	0.765	27.711	0.000	1.744				
ATT4	0.697	21.341	0.000	1.472				
ATT5	0.763	33.875	0.000	1.579				
AFF_IM	0.909	83.262	0.000	2.480	0.864	0.871	0.917	0.786
COG_IM	0.859	45.407	0.000	2.038				
CON_IM	0.891	51.713	0.000	2.274				
Perception	1.000	n/a	n/a	1.000	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
INT_REC1	0.862	56.030	0.000	1.961	0.811	0.813	0.888	0.726
INT_REC2	0.850	47.490	0.000	1.815				
INT_REC3	0.844	53.385	0.000	1.645				
INT_REV1	0.865	58.473	0.000	1.921	0.813	0.814	0.889	0.727
INT_REV2	0.859	66.047	0.000	1.759				
INT_REV3	0.833	32.586	0.000	1.716				
SAT1	0.726	18.190	0.000	1.387	0.695	0.697	0.812	0.519
SAT2	0.683	13.222	0.000	1.448				
SAT3	0.773	22.370	0.000	1.486				
SAT4	0.697	13.956	0.000	1.188				



Again, the results in Figure 1 and Table 1 illustrate that all the constructs' measures have acceptable construct reliability and convergent validity. In other words, all the items have significant loadings; the AVEs are higher than 0.50, and all the composite reliabilities are over 0.7 (Hair et al., 2019; Shmueli et al., 2019). Therefore, all the latent variables at the second order level were shown to have high levels of construct reliability and convergent validity. Table 2 shifts the focus to discriminant validity, assessed using the Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio (HTMT). Discriminant validity is established if the HTMT values are below the threshold of 0.85 (Henseler et al., 2015). As evidenced, all HTMT values fall below this threshold, confirming discriminant validity across all constructs. For instance, the HTMT value between 'Attitude' and 'Destination Image' is 0.505, indicating that these are distinct constructs. Thus, the measurement model exhibits satisfactory reliability and validity, both convergent and discriminant, for the constructs under study.

**Table 2: Discriminant validity based on HTMT**

Variables	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. Attitude						
2. Destination image	0.505					
3. Perception	0.397	0.590				
4. Recommendation	0.630	0.592	0.517			
5. Return visit	0.804	0.553	0.388	0.881		
6. Satisfaction	0.633	0.354	0.293	0.457	0.535	

### Structural model assessment

An evaluation of the structural model was conducted to determine the relationships between the various constructs and evaluate the study's hypotheses. It was determined whether or not each structural path was substantial and headed in the predicted direction (Hair et al., 2019). Among other things, the results show the VIF (i.e., collinearity check), path coefficients, standard errors, *t*-statistics, and *p*-values,  $R^2$  (i.e., predictive power), and  $Q^2$  (i.e., predictive relevance) and the SRMR (i.e., the model fit). Henseler et al. (2016) recommended that the standardized root mean square residual (SRMR) be less than 0.08 in order to evaluate model fit (Hu & Bentler, 1998). There must be a satisfactory fit index before the proposed model's hypotheses may be tested (Findikli et al., 2015). Further, the  $R^2$  and  $Q^2$  criteria were used to evaluate the predictive power and predictive relevance of the structural model (Chin, 1998). As a rule of thumb,  $R^2$  values of 0.75, 0.5, 0.25 may be considered substantial, moderate and weak, respectively (Hair et al., 2012). Blindfolding was used to cross-validate the model's predictive relevance for each of the individual endogenous variables, the Stone-Geisser  $Q^2$  value (Hair et al., 2019). Table 3 displays the model fit, predictive power and predictive relevance of the structural model.

Starting with the tourists' attitude, the model accounts for 25% ( $R^2 = 0.250$ ) of the variance, and after adjusting for potential predictors, this value marginally reduces to 24.8% (Adjusted  $R^2 = 0.248$ ). Its predictive relevance, denoted by  $Q^2$ , is 0.052, suggesting a small but relevant ability of the model to predict out-of-sample observations for this variable. Tourists' perception, a crucial factor in tourism studies, shows a substantial explained variance of 30.4% ( $R^2 = 0.304$ ). The adjustment barely impacts this value, keeping it at 30.3% (Adjusted  $R^2 = 0.303$ ). Impressively, the predictive relevance score for tourists' perception is substantial at 0.298, indicating the model's robust capability to predict unseen data for this variable. For tourists' intentions to recommend, the model elucidates 36.5% ( $R^2 = 0.365$ ) of its variance. Once adjusted, this predictive power remains strong at 36.2% (Adjusted  $R^2 = 0.362$ ). Its predictive relevance is also commendable, standing at 0.225, showcasing the model's aptitude in forecasting out-of-sample points for recommendation tendencies. Regarding the tourists' intention for a return visit, the model demonstrates its strongest predictive power, accounting for a remarkable 48.7% ( $R^2 = 0.487$ ) of variance. Even after adjustments, the value holds firm at 48.4% (Adjusted  $R^2 = 0.484$ ). With a  $Q^2$  of 0.163, it's evident that the model is considerably adept at predicting future behaviors concerning return visits. However, the model's ability to elucidate the variance in tourists' satisfaction is notably lower. It only accounts for 5.8% ( $R^2 = 0.058$ ) of the variance, which slightly dwindles to 5.6% post-adjustment (Adjusted  $R^2 = 0.056$ ). The predictive relevance is just above the borderline, standing at 0.054, suggesting that while the model has some predictive power for satisfaction, it is relatively limited compared to other variables. Lastly, the overall model fit, as indicated by the Standardized Root Mean Square Residual (SRMR), is 0.071. This value, being close to zero, affirms that the model's estimated values are in close proximity to the observed values, signifying a good fit.

**Table 3: Model fit, predictive power and predictive relevance**

Variables	$R^2$	Adjusted $R^2$	$Q^2$	Model fit (SRMR)
Attitude	0.250	0.248	0.052	0.071
Perception	0.304	0.303	0.298	
Recommendation	0.365	0.362	0.225	
Return visit	0.487	0.484	0.163	
Satisfaction	0.058	0.056	0.054	

After establishing the predictive power, predictive relevance and model of fit, the hypothesis of the proposed model is revealed in this part and results of the direct effect shown in Table 4 and Figure 3. From the Table 4 and Figure 3, the positive connection between the destination image and tourists' intentions to revisit the region is apparent, with a statistically significant beta coefficient underlining this link ( $\beta = 0.215$ ; SE = 0.057; CI = 0.110, 0.334;  $t = 3.747$ ;  $p = 0.000$ ). This is complemented by the equally significant relationship between the destination image and tourists' propensity to recommend the destination to peers ( $\beta = 0.337$ ; SE = 0.060; CI = 0.223, 0.457;  $t = 5.625$ ;  $p = 0.000$ ). Likewise, the destination image seems to be a potent influencer of tourist perception. This is evidenced by a strong positive correlation, confirmed by its significant beta coefficient ( $\beta = 0.552$ ;

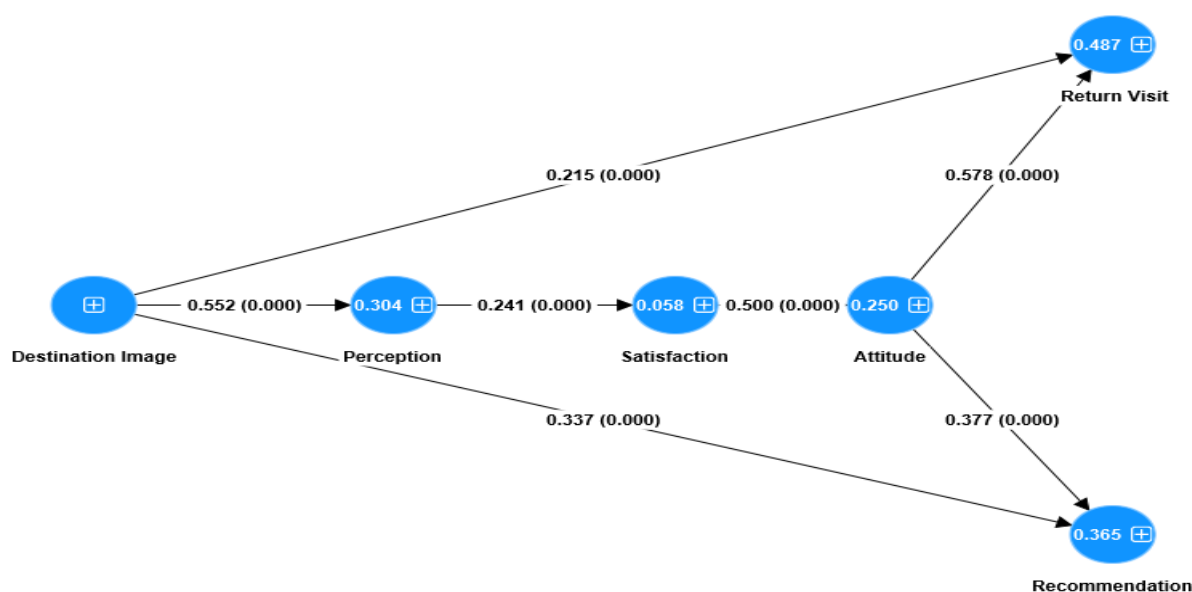


SE = 0.047; CI = 0.454, 0.638;  $t = 11.682$ ;  $p = 0.000$ ). Such an image further cascades down to tourist satisfaction, as demonstrated by the positive relationship between perception and satisfaction ( $\beta = 0.241$ ; SE = 0.053; CI = 0.135, 0.344;  $t = 4.513$ ;  $p = 0.000$ ). Furthermore, the satisfaction tourists derive seems instrumental in shaping their attitude toward the destination, as indicated by the notable positive association ( $\beta = 0.500$ ; SE = 0.037; CI = 0.418, 0.566;  $t = 13.439$ ;  $p = 0.000$ ). Such attitudes, in turn, are pivotal in informing tourists' behaviours. The robust association between attitude and the intention to return to the destination corroborates this claim ( $\beta = 0.578$ ; SE = 0.050; CI = 0.471, 0.669;  $t = 11.502$ ;  $p = 0.000$ ). Similarly, a favourable attitude significantly bolsters tourists' likelihood to recommend the region to others ( $\beta = 0.377$ ; SE = 0.057; CI = 0.266, 0.488;  $t = 6.637$ ;  $p = 0.000$ ). Overall, the results unequivocally confirm the integral role that destination image, perception, satisfaction, and attitude play in moulding tourists' future behavioural intentions concerning the Volta region of Ghana.

**Table 4: Hypotheses testing results**

Paths	VIF	$\beta$	SE	Confidence Interval (Bias Corrected)		$t$ -statistics	$p$ -values
				2.50%	97.50%		
Destination image => return Visit	1.226	0.215	0.057	0.110	0.334	3.747	0.000
Destination image => recommendation	1.226	0.337	0.060	0.223	0.457	5.625	0.000
Destination image => perception	1.000	0.552	0.047	0.454	0.638	11.682	0.000
Perception => satisfaction	1.000	0.241	0.053	0.135	0.344	4.513	0.000
Satisfaction => attitude	1.000	0.500	0.037	0.418	0.566	13.439	0.000
Attitude => return visit	1.226	0.578	0.050	0.471	0.669	11.502	0.000
Attitude => recommendation	1.226	0.377	0.057	0.266	0.488	6.637	0.000

The hypotheses 1<sub>a</sub> and 1<sub>b</sub> that H<sub>1a</sub>: destination image positively influences tourist revisit intention; H<sub>2</sub>: Destination image positively influence tourist recommendation to others. The results for H<sub>1a</sub> ( $\beta = 0.215$ ; SE = 0.057; CI = 0.110, 0.334;  $t = 3.747$ ;  $p = 0.000$ ), H<sub>1b</sub> ( $\beta = 0.337$ ; SE = 0.060; CI = 0.223, 0.457;  $t = 5.625$ ;  $p = 0.000$ ), shows that destination image significantly positively influences revisit intention and recommendation to others. Therefore, these hypotheses H<sub>1a</sub> and H<sub>1b</sub> are significant. The hypothesis 2 that; H<sub>2</sub>: destination image significantly influences tourist perception. The results H<sub>2</sub> ( $\beta = 0.552$ ; SE = 0.047; CI = 0.454, 0.638;  $t = 11.682$ ;  $p = 0.000$ ), shows that destination image significantly positively influences tourist perception; therefore, this hypothesis is significant. This implies that the three component attributes namely affective, cognitive and conative used to assess destination image affect the way tourist perceive the destination. The hypothesis 3 that H<sub>3</sub>: perception positively influence tourist satisfaction, the results H<sub>3</sub> ( $\beta = 0.241$ ; SE = 0.053; CI = -0.135, 0.344;  $t = 4.513$ ;  $p = 0.169$ ) shows that the perception of tourist on satisfaction is significantly positive hence the hypothesis is significant. The hypothesis 4 tested the hypothesis, H<sub>4</sub>: Satisfaction has a positive influence on attitude towards a destination. The results for H<sub>4</sub>: ( $\beta = 0.500$ ; SE = 0.037; CI = 0.418, 0.566;  $t = 13.439$ ;  $p = 0.000$ ) shows that satisfaction has significant positive influence on attitude hence, the hypothesis is significant. Final direct hypotheses 5<sub>a</sub> and 5<sub>b</sub> tested H<sub>5a</sub>: Attitude towards a destination positively influence tourist return visit and H<sub>5b</sub>: Attitude towards a destination positively influence recommendation to others. The results for H<sub>5a</sub>: ( $\beta = 0.578$ ; SE = 0.050; CI = 0.471, 0.669;  $t = 11.502$ ;  $p = 0.000$ ) shows that attitude significantly positively influence tourist return visit, therefore H<sub>5a</sub> is statistically supported hence significant. The results for H<sub>5b</sub>: ( $\beta = 0.377$ ; SE = 0.057; CI = 0.266, 0.488;  $t = 6.637$ ;  $p = 0.000$ ) shows that attitude significantly positively influence recommendations to others, therefore H<sub>5b</sub> is statistically supported, hence significant.



**Figure 2: Structural model**



## Discussion and conclusion

The literature has revealed that tourists who have positive attitude towards the destination are likely to revisit and recommend it to others. The findings ( $H_{1a}$ - $H_{1b}$ ) are consistent with the empirical studies that have shown that destination image positively affects future behavior directly and indirectly (Kani et al., 2017, Zhang et al., 2014). The result of the study show that tourists had a positive intention towards the destination and key sites. They had intentions of revisiting the destination and also willing to recommend to others than to repeat their visit. Also, the literature shows that individual perception is associated with destination characteristics. The results show that tourists have a positive perception of all the measuring items of the destination. This is supported by Valeck & Williams (2018) which found destination image has been widely studied and researchers have found that image influences tourist choice and intention to revisit a destination. The results show that tourists were satisfied with the cognitive and affective attributes leading to a positive attitude towards the destination. The results show that tourists had a positive attitude towards the destination and see it to be interesting, very good and pleasant. Again, attitude significantly positively influence recommendation to others ( $H_{5a}$ ). It has been revealed in the literature that attitude significantly influences behavior intentions (Hasan et al., 2019). The results show that tourists were more willing to recommend the destination to others than to revisit. The tourist positive perception of the holistic image was higher than the cognitive, affective and conative elements. The elements like beaches, natural resources couldn't satisfy tourists. The destination authorities should put in place measures and programmes that can improve the image of the communities and the region. There should be regular beach cleaning, enforcement of byelaws at the beaches, waterfalls etc. to deter people from littering. The destination image could be improved by training tour guides and other service providers in the hospitality industry to deliver quality service to tourists. The Ghana Tourism Authority should partner the Municipal Assembly and other organisations to help in the development of key sites and destinations. Following the analysis of tourist perception of destination image, the paper concludes with an improved understanding of marketing relevance of tourist perception and the marketing of destination image to international tourist as good for sustainable tourism and the development of tourism marketing. This conclusion relied on strong statistically significance relationship that become evident based on the assessment of tourist perception of destination image. The Volta region and indeed tourism development in Ghana would benefit from the application of destination brand and marketing that incorporate tourist perception.

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