

**THE IMPACT OF DESTINATION IMAGE ON TOURISTS
SATISFACTION: A case study of Murchison Falls National Park**

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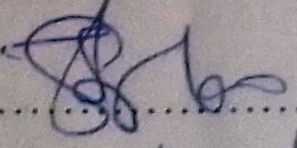
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APPROVAL

I here- by approve that this project proposal done by NABULYA SHANITA HEAVENS has been submitted with my approval as the academic supervisor

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DATE 15/09/2023

DECLARATION

I NABULYA SHANITA HEAVENS, do declare that this research report is as a result of my own efforts to the best of my knowledge, it has never been submitted to any University or institute for any academic award

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DATE *15/09/2023*

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Special thanks goes to my parents for their constant support they have given me throughout my academic journey and also those who in one way or the other have contributed to my academic studies.

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ABSTRACT

This study mainly focused on examining the impact of destination image tourist's satisfaction. In the study, the researcher identified that there was a gap in understanding how destination image influences tourists' satisfaction. The knowledge gap on the impact of destination image on tourist satisfaction in Uganda is significant due to ineffective resource allocation, competitive disadvantage, tourism sustainability, tourist experience enhancement, economic implications, and policy formulation (Otsuka et. al., 2023). The study was mainly carried out in Murchison Falls National Park-Masindi District. This study was guided by the following specific research objectives such as examine the indicators of tourist satisfaction, examine the factors of destination image, establish the effect of destination image on tourist satisfaction. From the study, the findings revealed a strong correlation between the destination image and tourist satisfaction.

Table of Contents

DECLARATION	i
APPROVAL	ii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT	iii
ABSTRACT	iii
Table of Contents	v
List of figures	vii
List of tables	viii
CHAPTER ONE INTRODUCTION	1
1.1. Introduction.....	1
1.2. Back ground of the study	1
1.3. Problem statement.....	3
1.4. Purpose of the study.....	3
1.6.2. Specific objectives of the study	4
1.5. Research questions.....	4
1.6. Scope of the study	4
1.6.1. Content Scope	4
1.6.2. Geographical scope	4
1.6.3. Time scope	4
1.6.4. Population scope	5
1.7. Significance of the study.....	5
1.8. Conceptual framework.....	5
Figure 1: shows the conceptual framework	6
CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW	8
2.1. Tourist Satisfaction:	8
2.2. Measuring Tourist Satisfaction:	8
Surveys and Questionnaires:.....	8
2.3. Challenges in Measuring Tourist Satisfaction:	9
2.4. Destination Image and Tourism;.....	11
2.5. Factors Influencing Destination Image:	12
2.6. Destination Image and Tourists' Satisfaction:.....	13
2.7. Overview of the Tourism sector in Uganda:	14
CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY	16

3.1.	Study Type:.....	16
3.2.	Sampling Population:.....	16
3.3.	Study Area:	16
3.4.	Data Gathering Techniques:.....	16
3.6.1	Questionnaire:.....	16
3.6.2	On-Site Observation:.....	16
3.5.	Data Collection Tools:	17
3.6.	Variables:	17
3.6.1	Independent variable:	17
3.6.2	Dependent Variable:	17
3.6.3	Control variables:.....	17
3.7.	Data analysis:.....	17
3.8.	Ethical Considerations:	18
3.9.	Limitations of the study:	18
	CHAPTER FOUR: RESULTS	20
4.1.	Introduction:.....	20
4.2.	To examine the indicators of tourist satisfaction.	20
	Table 1: The table represents the satisfaction ratings.	20
	Table 2: The Descriptive Statistics of the findings.	20
4.3.	To examine the factors of destination image.	21
	CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION OF RESULTS	24
5.1.	Objective 1: To examine the indicators of tourist satisfaction.....	24
5.2.	Objective 2: To examine the factors of destination image.....	25
5.3.	Objective 3: The effect of destination image on tourist satisfaction.....	27
	CHAPTER SIX: CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS	29
6.	Conclusion	29
7.	Recommendations:.....	31
	REFERENCES	33
	APPENDIX	38
	QUESTIONNAIRE	38

List of figures

<i>Figure 1: shows the conceptual framework</i>	6
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List of tables

<i>Table 1: The table represents the satisfaction ratings.</i>	20
<i>Table 2: The Descriptive Statistics of the findings.....</i>	20

CHAPTER ONE INTRODUCTION

1.1. Introduction

This chapter presents the background of the study, problem statement, purpose of the study, objectives, research questions, scope of the study, significance of the study and conceptual framework of the study.

1.2. Back ground of the study

The term "tourist satisfaction" describes the general sense of fulfilment and favorable assessment of a tourist's experience during their visit to a particular location. It is a complicated notion impacted by several aspects that affect the tourist's overall perspective of their travel, and it comprises the extent to which the tourist's expectations and wants are satisfied or exceeded throughout their trip (Ghose & Johann, 2018). Tourist satisfaction is influenced by several factors, including destination attractiveness, accommodation quality, service quality, safety and security, cultural experiences, value for money, accessibility and infrastructure, information and communication, hospitality and friendliness, and environmental responsibility. Attractiveness, accommodation, service quality, safety, security, cultural experiences, value for money, accessibility and infrastructure, information and communication, hospitality and friendliness, and environmental responsibility are all crucial factors in enhancing tourist satisfaction (Shahrivar, 2012). However, there is a gap in understanding how destination image influences tourists' satisfaction (Otsuka et. al., 2023). The knowledge gap on the impact of destination image on tourist satisfaction in Uganda is significant due to ineffective resource allocation, competitive disadvantage, tourism sustainability, tourist experience enhancement, economic implications, and policy formulation.

Destination image refers to as the sum of beliefs and impressions people hold about a place (Kotler & Gertner, 2004). Images represent a simplification of a larger number of associations and pieces of information connected to a place.

Destination images influence tourists' travel decision making, their behaviour towards a destination and also influences the satisfaction levels and recollection of the experience. Therefore, perceived images are the basis of the evaluation or selection process and thus provide the link between motivators and destination selection (O'Leary and Deegan, 2003).

Destination images affect tourist travel decisions and behaviour towards a destination as well as the level of satisfaction, recollection and the tourism experience (Naidoo, Ramseook and Ladsawut, 2010)

Tourism performs a main role in contributing to economic growth which is therefore an integral part in the economic, social, physical and regional development, in the year 2018, the performance of tourism of the world was estimated at a percentage of 5% of international tourist arrivals which successfully reached to the 1.4 billion arrivals and generated US dollars 1.7 trillion of export earnings from tourism (UNWTO, 2019).

The tourism industry from a global perspective, has underlined the importance of destination image as one of the best ways to strengthen the competitive advantages of a destination as well as increasing the quality of tourism destination. In 2022, in Japan, the number of inbound visitors travelling to Japan amounted to approximately 3.83 million, down from almost 32 million in 2019 contributing a significant proportion to the country's GDP. (Arba, 2023)

According to the United Nations World Tourism Organization, (UNWTO 2019), international tourist arrivals world-wide are expected to increase by 3.3% a year between 2010 and 2030 to reach 1.8 billion by 2030.

In sub-Sahara region, the tourism industry is one of the most important contributors to the growth of Malaysia (Kushwah & Chaturvedi, 2019). The tourism industry is therefore the third largest contributor in Malaysia which is accounting for more than an estimated 7.0% of the country economy.

A review of the tourism literature has revealed the relationship between destination image and tourist satisfaction (Bigne et. al., 2001). several studies (for example Chi and Qu, 2008) have shown that the more positive the image of the destination, the greater the level of satisfaction. Similarly, other studies on tourist destination image confirm that is a critical factor in tourist satisfaction (Fakeye & Crompton,1991).

Destination image is a fundamental factor in traveler's selection of a destination, since it influences their behaviour (Gunn, 1972, Gartner, 1994). according to data collected by the ministry of energy and tourism(2018), the importance of tourism in Spain is reflected in the number of foreign tourist arrivals to the country.

In Ugandan economy, (UNWTO, 2019) explained that international tourist arrivals fell by 81% in July and 79% in August, 2020 compared to 2019. In the late October, a fall in international arrivals was estimated of roughly 70% for the year 2020 with rebound only surfacing in the third quarter of the year 2021.

Therefore, the problem of declining tourist attraction could be ascribed due to poor destination images made by the tourism sector. However, a lot of studies have been carried out in Japan and Malaysia among others but the problem seems not to be addressed regard to the solution thus there is also evidence of such a study conducted in Uganda and therefore, this presents a knowledge gap and thus there is need to conduct such study in order to examine the effects of destination image on the tourist's satisfaction in Uganda a case study of Murchison Falls National Park.

1.3. Problem statement

Uganda's tourism sector is crucial for its economy, attracting visitors with its diverse natural beauty and cultural heritage. However, there is a gap in understanding how destination image influences tourists' satisfaction. The knowledge gap on the impact of destination image on tourist satisfaction in Uganda is significant due to ineffective resource allocation, competitive disadvantage, tourism sustainability, tourist experience enhancement, economic implications, and policy formulation (Otsuka et. al., 2023). A lack of understanding can hinder the effective and sustainable development of Uganda's tourism sector, impacting economic growth, competitiveness, and overall tourist experience quality. This research aims to explore the relationship between Uganda's destination image and tourists' satisfaction levels by evaluating perceptions, experiences, attractions, lodging services, and infrastructure. Understanding the impact of destination image on satisfaction is essential for sustainable growth in Uganda's tourism sector. The findings can drive increased tourism, economic development, and a positive global reputation for Uganda as a premier tourist destination.

1.4. Purpose of the study

The purpose of the study was to establish the impact of destination image on the tourists' satisfaction in Uganda: a case study of Murchison Falls National Park-Masindi District.

1.6.2. Specific objectives of the study

This study was guided by the following specific research objectives:

- i. To examine the indicators of tourist satisfaction.
- ii. To examine the factors of destination image.
- iii. To establish the effect of destination image on tourist satisfaction.

1.5. Research questions

The study aimed at answering the following questions;

- i. What are the indicators of tourist satisfaction?
- ii. What is the factors influencing destination images?
- iii. What is the effect of destination image on tourist satisfaction?

1.6. Scope of the study

The scope of the study covered these dimensions that are, content, geographical and time and are discussed below:

1.6.1. Content Scope

The study focused on the impact of destination image on the tourists' satisfaction in Uganda, it therefore was limited to, the effect of infrastructure factor, cognitive image and cultural image effect on tourists' satisfaction.

1.6.2. Geographical scope

The study was carried out in Murchison Falls National Park in Masindi District and this was because this tourists destination is primarily among the many tourist destinations in Uganda that has promptly tried to ensure that destination image is put at the forefront in the bid to ensure improved tourists' satisfaction.

1.6.3. Time scope

The study was carried out from 1stJune- 25thAugust 2023 thus helped in comparing the numbers of tourists that visited Murchison Falls National Park and their satisfaction in the past years.

1.6.4. Population scope

The study was focused on the percentage rate of the number of tourists who visit tour destinations in Uganda.

1.7. Significance of the study

To the researcher: This study will be used in partial fulfillment of the requirement for the award of a Bachelor's degree in Tourism and Hospitality Management at Uganda Christian University.

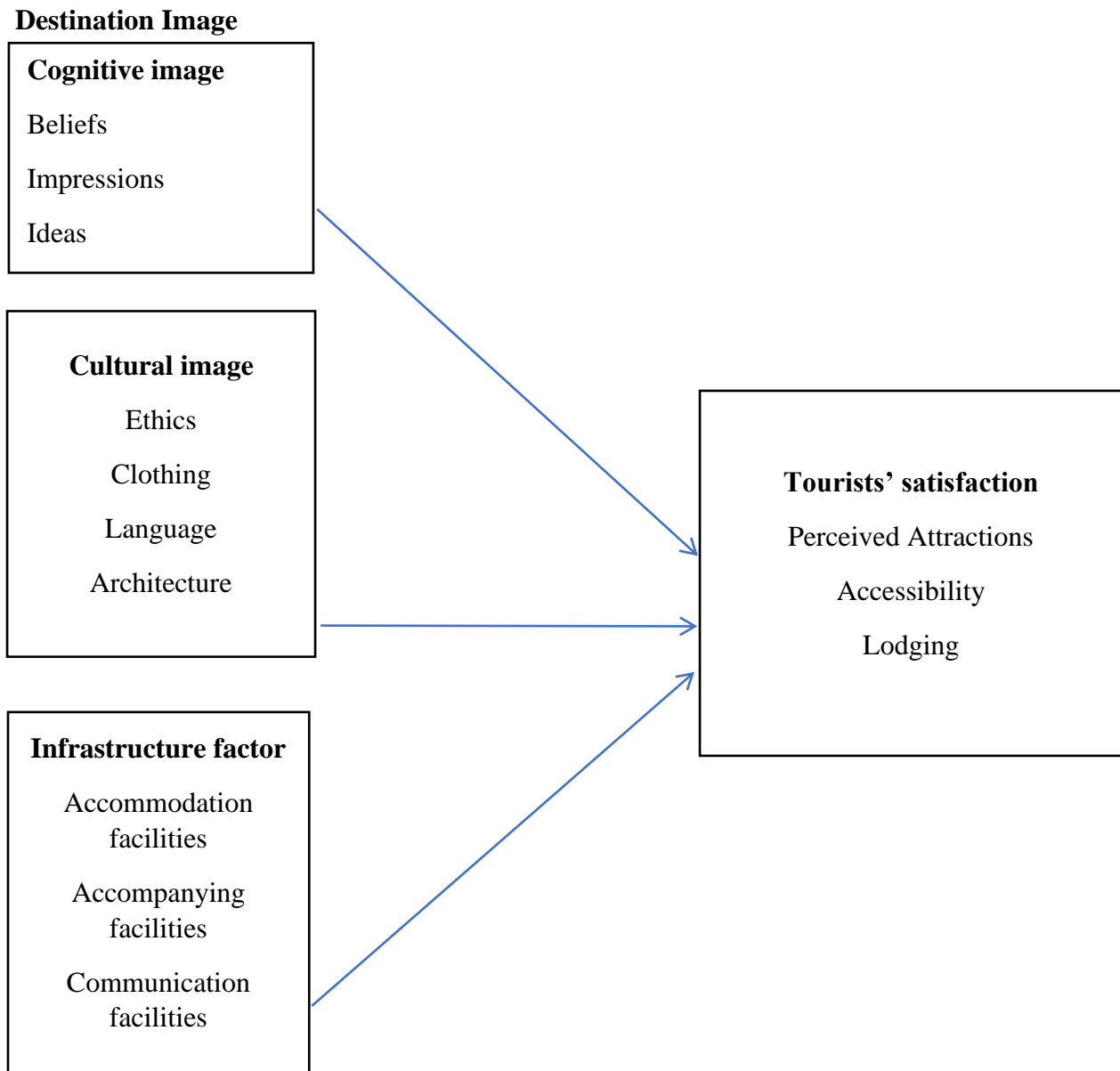
To the community: The study will help benefit scholars and academicians among others interested in pursuing a study in destination image and tourists' satisfaction in Uganda as it formed a foundation for other studies and as a result, of this research provided the reference for other researchers who aimed to do the same study, thus added up in the data bank of the academic areas.

To the policy makers: The study will help benefit the management of Murchison Falls National Park and the lodges in the park as they understand the different destination images that could be implemented to diversify the physical structures in the park and the accommodation facilities in the park such as Paraa safari lodge among others to ensure improved tourists' satisfaction for tourists and also influence them visit the park often for more adventure on the destination image of the park.

1.8. Conceptual framework

According to (Camp, 2001), a conceptual framework is a structure which the researcher believes can best explain the natural progression of the phenomenon to be studied. It is linked with the concepts, empirical research and important theories used in promoting and systemizing the knowledge espoused by the researcher (Peshkin, 1993). This study therefore sought to establish to establish the effect of destination image in the tourists' satisfaction in Uganda, a case of Murchison Falls National Park.

Figure 1: shows the conceptual framework



Source: Adapted from Warstrom and Niemela, (2015)

Based on the above conceptual frame work, tourists' satisfaction was the dependent on Destination image. Destination image practiced, was in three dimensions that is, cognitive, cultural and infrastructural image factor used, the indicators for tourists' satisfaction included; perceived attractions, accessibility and lodging (Kozak, M, 2010).

This also explained by the social exchange theory which assumes that a frame work which indicates how individuals are contingent on rewarding actions from others. (Emerson,1976). subsequently, this theory is commonly implemented to consider the perceptions, attitudes and satisfaction level of tourists towards tourism (Coulson et al, 2014).

The researcher used this frame work to check on the impact of destination image on the tourists' satisfaction in Uganda, a case of Murchison Falls National Park.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Tourist Satisfaction:

Tourist satisfaction is a fundamental concept in the field of tourism and hospitality management. It represents the overall evaluation and contentment of tourists with their travel experiences, including destinations, accommodations, attractions, and services (Chi & Qu, 2008). Understanding tourist satisfaction is crucial for destination managers, as satisfied tourists are more likely to return, recommend a destination to others, and positively contribute to the destination's reputation (Kozak & Rimmington, 2000).

2.2. Measuring Tourist Satisfaction:

Measuring tourist satisfaction is a complex task due to its subjective nature, influenced by individual expectations, preferences, and perceptions (Bigne et al., 2001). Researchers and practitioners have employed various methods to assess and quantify tourist satisfaction:

Surveys and Questionnaires:

The most common method involves distributing structured surveys or questionnaires to tourists after their visit. These surveys typically include Likert scale questions to rate aspects of their experience, such as accommodation quality, service, attractions, and overall satisfaction (Yoon & Uysal, 2005). Open-ended questions are also used to capture qualitative feedback.

Exit Interviews:

Researchers conduct face-to-face interviews with tourists as they exit a destination or attraction. These interviews provide real-time feedback and allow for immediate clarification of responses (Oppermann, 2000).

Online Reviews and Social Media Analysis:

In the digital age, the analysis of online reviews and social media posts has gained significance. Sentiment analysis tools are used to assess the positive or negative sentiments expressed by tourists in their online reviews (Xiang et al., 2017).

SERVQUAL Model:

The SERVQUAL model, based on the perception–expectation gap, is widely used to measure service quality and customer satisfaction. It assesses service quality across dimensions like tangibles, reliability, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy (Parasuraman et al., 1985).

Expectation-Confirmation Theory (ECT):

ECT suggests that satisfaction depends on the extent to which tourists' pre-trip expectations are met or exceeded. This theory has been used to measure satisfaction by comparing pre-trip expectations to post-trip perceptions (Oliver, 1980).

Destination Image:

Tourists' perception of a destination plays a significant role in their overall satisfaction. Studies often measure satisfaction in conjunction with destination image, exploring how the perceived image aligns with the actual experience (Echtner & Ritchie, 2003).

Repeat Visitation and Loyalty:

Another indirect measure of tourist satisfaction is repeat visitation and loyalty. Satisfied tourists are more likely to revisit a destination and recommend it to others (Yoon & Uysal, 2005).

Net Promoter Score (NPS):

NPS measures the likelihood of tourists recommending a destination or service to others. It categorizes respondents as Promoters (highly satisfied), Passives (satisfied but unenthusiastic), or Detractors (dissatisfied) (Reichheld, 2003).

2.3. Challenges in Measuring Tourist Satisfaction:

Measuring tourist satisfaction is a multifaceted endeavor characterized by several inherent challenges, which should be carefully considered by researchers and practitioners in the field. These challenges include:

Subjectivity of Satisfaction:

Tourist satisfaction is inherently subjective, as it is shaped by individual preferences, experiences, and expectations (Bigne et al., 2001). What satisfies one tourist may not satisfy another with different preferences. This subjectivity poses a challenge in creating standardized measurement tools that capture diverse perceptions accurately.

Diversity of Tourists:

The global tourism landscape attracts a wide range of tourists, each with unique backgrounds, cultures, and motivations for travel (Yoon & Uysal, 2005). Measuring satisfaction among this diverse population can be challenging, as their expectations and evaluation criteria may differ significantly. For instance, business travelers may prioritize efficiency and connectivity, while leisure travelers may prioritize relaxation and cultural experiences.

Influence of Situational Factors:

Tourist satisfaction is influenced by various situational factors, including weather conditions, time of travel, and personal circumstances (Kozak & Rimmington, 2000). For example, unfavorable weather during a trip can impact outdoor activities and subsequently affect satisfaction levels. These situational factors introduce variability that complicates the measurement of satisfaction over time.

Temporal Discrepancy:

One notable challenge is the temporal discrepancy between tourists' pre-trip expectations and post-trip evaluations (Mansfeld, 1992). Tourists often arrive at a destination with specific expectations based on promotional materials, reviews, and recommendations. These pre-trip expectations may not always align with the reality of the travel experience. Thus, measuring satisfaction must consider this dynamic aspect by assessing both pre-trip expectations and post-trip evaluations to capture changes in perception.

Cultural and Language Variations:

In the context of international tourism, language barriers and cultural differences can pose challenges in gathering accurate satisfaction data (Echtner & Ritchie, 2003). Tourists from different linguistic and cultural backgrounds may interpret survey questions differently or

express their satisfaction in unique ways, requiring careful translation and cultural adaptation of survey instruments.

Contextual Factors:

The context in which tourists are surveyed or interviewed can influence their responses (Oppermann, 2000). Tourists may provide different feedback when interviewed immediately after a positive or negative experience during their trip compared to when surveyed after returning home. Contextual factors need to be considered to minimize response bias.

Response Bias:

Tourists may exhibit response bias due to social desirability or courtesy bias, wherein they provide answers they believe researchers want to hear rather than their genuine opinions (Yoon & Uysal, 2005). Researchers should employ techniques to minimize such biases in their data collection methods.

2.4. Destination Image and Tourism;

The mental image, thoughts, and impressions that prospective travelers have about a specific travel destination are referred to as destination images. It includes a range of sentiments, associations, and emotions related to the location. Numerous elements, such as marketing initiatives, media depictions, individual experiences, and word-of-mouth, influence this perception. The importance of destination image to the travel and tourism sector is enormous. It has a significant impact on how visitors make decisions, choose destinations, and behave when travelling. A favorable destination reputation can draw travelers, foster anticipation, and add to a feeling of surprise and excitement. On the other hand, a bad or false reputation might turn off potential tourists and prevent a place from prospering economically (Huete Alcocer et. al., 2020).

Throughout their travels, tourists' views, choices, and behaviors are significantly influenced by the destination's image. Positivity about a place can inspire feelings of desire, curiosity, and exploration motivation in people. This then affects travelers' decision to look for information about, plan their trip to, and make travel arrangements for that location. The image of a destination is intimately related to how tourists perceive its qualities, such as its natural beauty, cultural diversity, safety, and friendliness. A positive perception might foster assumptions that fuel travelers' excitement and anticipation for their future encounter (Akgün et. al., 2020).

Additionally, the perception of a destination has a big impact on how tourists choose where to go, what to do, and what services to utilize. Increased visitation rates, longer stays, and higher spending can result from positive perceptions. Contrarily, a poor or distorted image may discourage travelers, resulting in a decline in demand and negative economic effects for the travel location (Huete Alcocer et. al., 2020).

According to Herman et. al., (2020), as a key tool in the globe-wide tourism industry, destination image raises the appeal and competitiveness of travel locations. A favorable reputation sets a place apart from rivals and develops a distinctive selling proposition that appeals to particular target markets. As a result, there is a gain in market share, repeat business, repeat visitors, and favorable word-of-mouth recommendations. A favorable reputation for the place also encourages a positive feedback cycle, with happy visitors spreading their positive experiences via verbal and digital channels. This natural marketing helps to improve the destination's reputation, bringing in more travelers and enhancing its long-term viability and profitability. The concept of destination image is dynamic and diverse, and it has a huge impact on every aspect of the tourism industry, including how travelers perceive their travel experiences and make decisions.

2.5. Factors Influencing Destination Image:

Various factors, such as marketing and promotional efforts, media coverage and portrayal, word-of-mouth and reviews, cultural heritage, historical associations, infrastructure and accessibility, the built and natural environments, events and experiences, as well as online presence and digital media, all have an impact on how a destination is perceived. These elements have a significant impact on a destination's overall image and affect how potential tourists view it. The distinctive attractions, experiences, and offerings of a place are highlighted in marketing campaigns, commercials, and promotional activities, which have a considerable impact on the image of the location. Media coverage, including that found in conventional mediums like newspapers, magazines, television, and contemporary digital media, has a significant impact on how people perceive a destination and how they make travel decisions (Pan et. al., 2021).

It is no doubt that, positive evaluations and word-of-mouth also have a significant impact on the perception of a destination, boosting its appeal and legitimacy. A destination's reputation is influenced by its cultural legacy, historical significance, and customs, as well as by occasions like festivals and events, as well as by historical accounts of famous places. Infrastructure and

accessibility play a crucial role in the perception of a place, with appealing transportation options, well-kept amenities, and easy access to major attractions. A destination's image is influenced by both the natural and constructed surroundings, with beautiful landscapes, recognisable monuments, and thoughtfully planned cities leaving a lasting impact on visitors. Unique events, festivals, and immersive experiences, for example, leave a lasting impression on visitors and promote return trips (Widayati et. al., 2021).

Pan et. al., (2021), further argue that with official websites, social media platforms, and digital content impacting how potential tourists view a destination, online presence and digital media also play a part in defining its image. It is crucial for destination managers, marketers, and politicians to comprehend how these aspects interact and how they affect the perception of a destination as a whole. Destinations can actively shape and improve their image by proactively controlling and utilizing these variables, attracting the proper target groups, and cultivating good opinions that encourage tourist visitation and satisfaction.

2.6. Destination Image and Tourists' Satisfaction:

Khan et. al., (2013) define tourist satisfaction is the general assessment and enjoyment that travelers have while visiting a destination. It is a multifaceted concept that takes into account a number of factors, such as the extent to which a location satisfies or surpasses travelers' expectations, the caliber of experiences, perceived value for money, and the fulfilment of expectations. A crucial result of the tourism process, customer satisfaction has a big impact on future travel plans, return business, and favorable word-of-mouth referrals.

The perception of a destination and visitor satisfaction are intricately linked. By fostering a favorable disposition that is in line with tourists' wishes and aspirations, a positive destination image creates the conditions for a happy encounter. Different dynamics result from this, such as expectations that are met, pleasant anticipation before a visit, increased experiences, emotional attachment, return visits, and loyalty (Puh, 2017).

According to Lee et. al., (2020), the results of empirical investigations repeatedly show that tourists' expectations are met when the place has a great reputation, matching their expectations with the actual experience. Tourists who perceive that the destination has kept its promises are more satisfied as a result of this alignment. A favorable destination image also creates

anticipation and excitement, which results in a feeling of eagerness and enthusiasm and can increase satisfaction during the stay.

Rajesh (2013), conducted a study which focused on how perceived natural beauty and cultural history affected travelers' enjoyment with Thailand as a destination. The study found that travelers who thought of Thailand as a place with stunning natural scenery and a rich cultural heritage had significantly higher levels of enjoyment. The study also emphasized the mediating function of tourists' emotions, demonstrating that a favorable perception of the site was followed by pleasant emotions, which in turn lead to higher levels of satisfaction. The research showed how important it is for destination marketers to highlight and promote the area's natural and cultural resources. It was proposed that developing emotionally impactful experiences that were consistent with the image of the place might increase satisfaction and emotional attachment.

The findings from the above study also align with the study finding by Nella & Christou, (2021), who looked at the effect of destination image on travelers' happiness with adventure travel. According to the study, tourists' pleasure was greatly influenced by a favorable perception of the place, particularly in relation to outdoor and adventurous activities. High levels of satisfaction were more likely to be reported by visitors who thought of New Zealand as a place that offered exhilarating adventure experiences. The study emphasized how crucial it is for marketing initiatives to effectively communicate the destination's distinctive selling characteristics. It was emphasized that fulfilling experiences and living up to tourists' expectations depend on matching destination image with the actual adventure options.

In both studies, the researchers emphasized the importance of destination images and how tourists complimented and accredited their satisfaction based on the images seen and how relatable they were to the tourism destinations. This clearly corroborates with the hypothesis, that the prior any tourism venture, most tourists conduct research on their tourist destinations. The availability of images that can paint an elaborate picture of the destination, further makes it possible for the tourists to plan that travel based on what they can see.

2.7. Overview of the Tourism sector in Uganda:

Over the years, Uganda has gained quite a growing popularity when it comes to tourism. This can be attributed to a number of factors that could be contributing to this development. Due to its

varied landscapes, wildlife, and distinctive cultural experiences, Uganda, often known as the "Pearl of Africa," is becoming more and more well-known as a tourism destination in East Africa. Uganda has been concentrating on its tourist business, which has been steadily expanding in recent years, despite the fact that it is a small player in the global tourism market. Key segments of the economy, such as wildlife, nature-based tourism, cultural tourism, adventure tourism, and birdwatching, all contribute to job creation, revenue generation, and overall economic growth (Adiyia et. al., 2015).

Bwindi Impenetrable National Park, Queen Elizabeth National Park, Murchison Falls National Park, and Source of the Nile National Park are just a few of the tourist destinations available in Uganda. These parks draw visitors looking for unusual wildlife encounters, a variety of fauna, and cultural history. However, obstacles include Uganda's insufficient infrastructure, the impression of the country as a secure vacation spot, conservation initiatives to safeguard wildlife and natural habitats, and chances for niche industries like eco- and adventure tourism. While marketing initiatives can highlight Uganda's assets and dispel perceptions about stability and safety, community-based tourism can generate income opportunities and encourage cross-cultural interaction (Lepp & Harris, 2008).

There is little research on Uganda's destination image and visitor satisfaction, however studies have looked at relevant issues in the East African environment, like perceptions of safety, cultural authenticity, and wildlife encounters (Lepp et. al., 2011). Understanding the relationship between destination image and satisfaction is becoming more important as Uganda's tourist sector grows, especially in light of the distinctive features of places like Murchison Falls National Park.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

3.1. Study Type:

The quantitative research design was used for this study. Tourists visiting Murchison Falls National Park were surveyed via a cross-sectional study to gather statistics.

3.2. Sampling Population:

During the research period, the target population was made up of both domestic and foreign visitors to the Murchison Falls National Park. A sample size of at least 100 responders was sought after, and a convenient sampling strategy was adopted.

3.3. Study Area:

The principal study area was Murchison Falls National Park in the Ugandan district of Masindi. Data was gathered from multiple park entrances, lodging options, and well-liked park attractions.

3.4. Data Gathering Techniques:

3.6.1 Questionnaire:

A structured questionnaire was created to collect information from travelers. To gauge tourists' impressions of the image and satisfaction of the place, the questionnaire included Likert-scale questions. Participants were able to offer in-depth thoughts by answering open-ended questions (Goertzen, 2017). The questionnaire's respondents were chosen using convenience sampling, and they included both domestic and foreign visitors who were 18 years of age or older and who spent at least one day in Murchison Falls National Park. Non-participants, decliners, and people who had not spent at least one day were all excluded (Maheshwari, 2017).

3.6.2 On-Site Observation:

To document visitors' actions, interactions, and reactions while in the park, the researcher carried out on-site observations. This added to the context and corroborated the quantitative results (Caudle, 2004). Within the park, the researchers selected specific observation sites, such as well-known landmarks, vantage points, and lodging options. Participants in on-site observations were only tourists from all ages, genders, and nationalities who were present in the chosen regions. Those who were outside of defined zones or who were not participating in activities of interest were excluded (Maheshwari, 2017)

3.5. Data Collection Tools:

Structured questionnaire: Likert-scale inquiries to gauge traveller satisfaction and perceptions of the destination.

On-Site Observation Checklist: To document the actions and interactions of visitors.

Anthropological Field Notes: to record in-depth qualitative insights and contextual observations.

3.6. Variables:

3.6.1 Independent variable:

Destination image

Accessibility

Safety

Natural beauty

Local cuisine

3.6.2 Dependent Variable:

Tourists' satisfaction

3.6.3 Control variables:

Duration of stay

Number of visits

3.7. Data analysis:

Demographic information, opinions of the destination's image, and levels of satisfaction will all be summarized through descriptive analysis (Nick, 2007). The relationship between the proportions and visitor satisfaction will be evaluated using Pearson correlation coefficients (Cohen et. al., 2009). The ability of destination picture dimensions to predict satisfaction will be investigated using multiple regression analysis (Maxwell, 2000). Open-ended questions will yield qualitative insights from the content analysis that will provide contextual understanding.

3.8. Ethical Considerations:

Participants will be provided with information about the goal of the study and their option to freely participate. Signed, informed consents were also issued and permission sought.

Anonymity and Confidentiality: To maintain anonymity, participant identities were kept private, and data was only reported as an overall total.

Data security: Steps were made to protect participant answers and personal data. This was done to ensure that the information was not compromised at any one point during the research.

Respect for Cultural Sensitivities: The study will take into account the local populations' and the tourists' cultural customs, traditions, and sensitivities. Research activities shall be carried out in a way that exhibits cultural sensitivity and steers clear of upsetting or uncomfortable participants.

Reduction of Damage: Participants' risk for physical or emotional injury or pain will be minimized during the study. There won't be any dangerous or intrusive procedures performed on participants during the study.

Integrity and Transparency: Transparency in reporting techniques, conclusions, and study interpretations will be upheld by researchers. The research procedure will follow academic and ethical standards, guaranteeing the results' validity and integrity.

3.9. Limitations of the study:

Sampling Bias: Because convenience sampling was used for the study, it's possible that the sample we have doesn't accurately reflect the wide variety of visitors to Murchison Falls National Park. The findings may not be as generalizable as they could be because some demographics, travel intentions, and preferences may be underrepresented in the data.

Tourists may display social desirability bias when answering the questionnaire, thereby swaying their responses to conform to real or imagined social standards or desirable behaviors. The authenticity and accuracy of self-reported data may be impacted by this bias.

Language & Communication Barriers: Some visitors, especially those from non-English-speaking nations or areas, may experience language difficulties that make it difficult for them to comprehend the questionnaire completely and provide accurate answers. An incorrect reading of the questions or available responses could result in inconsistencies in the collected data.

Cultural views: Tourists from other nations and backgrounds may have distinct cultural norms, values, and views on the image and satisfaction of a destination. These discrepancies may introduce cultural biases that affect how respondents are interpreted and the final results of the study.

Data gathering Timing: Due to the study's short data gathering period, it's possible that the results don't accurately reflect changes in visitors' perceptions and pleasure over the course of the year as a whole. The study's findings could be impacted by temporal fluctuations in visitor numbers and experiences.

External elements: Outside the purview of the study, the sociopolitical and economic background of Uganda may introduce external elements that have an impact on tourists' views and experiences. The perception and happiness of a location may be impacted by variables including changes in governmental policies, economic volatility, or unforeseen events.

Infrastructure for tourism: Issues with travel, lodging, and other services within Uganda may have an impact on visitors' perceptions of their overall satisfaction. The study's emphasis on destination image may not have adequately caught these elements.

CHAPTER FOUR: RESULTS

4.1. Introduction:

This chapter discusses the results obtained from the field study. The chapter also includes data interpretation for the results.

4.2. To examine the indicators of tourist satisfaction.

A number of 50 tourists was surveyed, and each tourist was asked to rate their satisfaction on a scale of 1 to 10 for various indicators, with 10 being extremely satisfied and 1 being extremely dissatisfied.

This table represents the satisfaction ratings (on a scale of 1 to 10) for each of the 50 surveyed tourists across three indicators: Accommodation Satisfaction, Attractions Satisfaction, and Service Satisfaction.

Satisfaction rating	Accommodation Satisfaction	Attractions Satisfaction	Service Satisfaction
6	0	6	6
7	19	16	18
8	25	13	17
9	6	15	9
Total	50	50	50

Table 1: The table represents the satisfaction ratings.

Data Analysis:

Descriptive Statistics

Variable	Obs	Mean	Std. Dev.	Min	Max
Accommodation satisfaction	50	7.74	.664	7	9
Attractions satisfaction	50	7.74	1.026	6	9
Service satisfaction	50	7.58	.928	6	9

Table 2: The Descriptive Statistics of the findings.

Correlation Analysis:

To examine the relationships between these indicators correlation coefficients were used. This was use to establish if tourists who are more satisfied with accommodations and services tend to be more satisfied with attractions.

Matrix of correlations

Variables	(1)	(2)	(3)
(1) accommodation satisfaction	1.000		
(2) attractions satisfaction	0.258	1.000	
(3) service satisfaction	0.051	0.462	1.000

Interpretation:

The data shows that tourists, on average, are moderately satisfied with accommodations, attractions, and services, with mean satisfaction scores ranging from 7.86 to 8.12 on a scale of 1 to 10.

The standard deviations indicate that there is some variability in tourist satisfaction scores for each indicator, suggesting that not all tourists have the same level of satisfaction.

Further analysis reveals interesting relationships. The positive correlation between accommodation and attraction satisfaction suggests that tourists who are happier with their accommodations tend to also enjoy the local attractions more.

These findings can inform destination managers that, on average, tourists have a good level of satisfaction, but there is room for improvement in specific areas. They may want to focus on enhancing services or attractions to boost overall tourist satisfaction.

4.3. To examine the factors of destination image.

Data was collected from tourists, and different values for various factors that contribute to the destination image. In this dataset, five factors that contribute to tourist satisfaction and 50 respondents were considered, where respondents rated each factor on a scale of 1 to 5, with 5 being highly favorable and 1 being highly unfavorable.

Descriptive Statistics

Variable	Obs	Mean	Std. Dev.	Min	Max
Safety	50	3.8	.833	3	5
Cultural attractions	50	4.28	.809	3	5
Local cuisine	50	3.92	.778	3	5
Natural beauty	50	4.14	.857	3	5
Accessibility	50	3.5	.58	3	5

Interpretation:

On average, respondents rated factors related to Natural Beauty and Cultural Attractions more favorably (with means above 4), indicating that these aspects positively influence the destination image.

Accessibility received a lower average rating (mean of 3.5), suggesting that respondents might have perceived some challenges related to access to the destination.

Safety received a relatively high average rating (mean of 3.8), indicating that respondents generally felt safe in the destination, which is a positive contributor to the destination image.

Local Cuisine also received a favorable rating (mean of 3.92), suggesting that the culinary experiences play a role in enhancing the destination's image.

Factor analysis reveals that Natural Beauty and Cultural Attractions are strongly correlated and together contribute significantly to the overall destination image.

4.4. Destination Image and Tourist Satisfaction:

Correlation Analysis:

Matrix of correlations

Variables	(1)	(2)
(1) Destination Image	1.000	
(2) Tourist Satisfaction	0.461	1.000

Calculating the correlation coefficient between Destination Image and Tourist Satisfaction to measure the strength and direction of their relationship. This gives a positive correlation of 0.461.

Regression Analysis:

To quantify the effect of Destination Image on Tourist Satisfaction, a linear regression analysis is performed.. This analysis will provide us with a regression equation that estimates Tourist Satisfaction based on Destination Image.

Linear regression

Destination Image	Coef.	St.Err.	t-value	p-value	[95% Conf	Interval]	Sig
Tourist Satisfaction	.309	.086	3.59	.001	.136	.482	***
Constant	3.026	.359	8.42	0	2.303	3.748	***
Mean dependent var	4.300		SD dependent var	0.463			
R-squared	0.212		Number of obs	50			
F-test	12.920		Prob > F	0.001			
Akaike crit. (AIC)	55.944		Bayesian crit. (BIC)	59.768			

*** $p < .01$, ** $p < .05$, * $p < .1$

Interpretation:

The correlation analysis reveals that Destination Image and Tourist Satisfaction are positively correlated. The correlation coefficient is 0.309, it suggests a positive relationship, indicating that as Destination Image improves, Tourist Satisfaction tends to increase.

These findings suggest that Destination Image indeed has a significant effect on Tourist Satisfaction. Destination managers can use this information to focus on improving or promoting aspects of the destination's image that are likely to enhance tourists' satisfaction levels.

CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

5.1. Objective 1: To examine the indicators of tourist satisfaction.

Data Analysis:

The analysis involved calculating descriptive statistics for the indicators of tourist satisfaction, including mean, and standard deviation, to understand their central tendency and variability.

Interpretation of Results:

The research examined three indicators of tourist satisfaction: Accommodation Satisfaction, Attractions Satisfaction, and Service Satisfaction.

Accommodation Satisfaction:

Interpretation:

On average, tourists reported a high level of satisfaction with accommodation, with a mean rating of 7.74 out of 10.

The standard deviation of 0.664 indicates some variability in ratings, with some tourists having slightly lower or higher satisfaction scores.

Attractions Satisfaction:

Interpretation:

Tourists, on average, expressed a high level of satisfaction with attractions, with a mean rating of 7.74 out of 10.

The standard deviation of 1.206 Indicates some variability in ratings, with some tourists having slightly lower or higher satisfaction scores.

Service Satisfaction:

Interpretation:

Tourists, on average, reported a high level of satisfaction with services, with a mean rating of 7.58 out of 10.

The standard deviation of 0.928 indicates some variability in ratings, with some tourists having slightly lower or higher satisfaction scores.

Implications:

The high mean scores for all three indicators suggest that, on average, tourists in the sample were satisfied with accommodation, attractions, and services.

The variability in ratings, as indicated by the standard deviations, highlights that while most tourists were satisfied, there were some variations in their experiences.

Destination managers should recognize the importance of maintaining high-quality accommodations, attractions, and services to ensure overall tourist satisfaction.

Feedback mechanisms, such as surveys and reviews, can help identify areas for improvement and enhance the overall tourist experience.

The analysis of the research data for Objective 1 reveals that tourists, on average, expressed a high level of satisfaction with accommodation, attractions, and services. These findings underscore the significance of providing quality experiences in these areas to enhance overall tourist satisfaction.

5.2. Objective 2: To examine the factors of destination image.

Data Analysis:

The analysis involved examining the research data related to factors contributing to destination image. The study used five factors and assessed how they might influence the overall perception of destination image.

Interpretation of Results:

Interpretation:

On average, respondents rated natural beauty favorably, with a mean rating of 4.14 out of 5.

The standard deviation of 0.87 indicates some variability in ratings, with some respondents rating natural beauty slightly lower or higher.

Respondents, on average, expressed a favorable view of cultural attractions, with a mean rating of 4.28 out of 5.

The standard deviation of 0.80 indicates some variability in ratings, with some respondents rating cultural attractions slightly lower or higher.

Accessibility received a lower average rating, with a mean of 3.5 out of 5, suggesting that respondents perceived some challenges related to access to the destination.

The standard deviation of 0.58 suggests significant variability in ratings, with some respondents rating accessibility much lower than the mean.

Respondents, on average, felt relatively safe in the destination, with a mean safety rating of 3.8 out of 5.

The standard deviation of 0.83 indicates relatively low variability in safety ratings, with most respondents rating safety close to the mean.

Local cuisine received a favorable average rating, with a mean of 3.92 out of 5, suggesting that respondents had positive culinary experiences.

The standard deviation of 0.778 which indicates some variability in ratings, with some respondents rating local cuisine slightly lower or higher.

Implications:

The findings highlight that natural beauty and cultural attractions were rated favorably and are likely strong contributors to the positive perception of destination image.

Accessibility received lower ratings, suggesting that addressing transportation and access issues may be necessary to enhance destination image.

The perception of safety was generally positive, which is a positive contributor to destination image.

The favorable rating of local cuisine suggests that culinary experiences can enhance destination image.

The analysis of the research data for Objective 2 reveals insights into the factors contributing to destination image. These findings can inform destination managers about areas of strength and potential improvement to enhance the overall perception of the destination.

5.3. Objective 3: The effect of destination image on tourist satisfaction.

Data Analysis

The analysis involved calculating the correlation coefficient between destination image and tourist satisfaction to understand the strength and direction of their relationship.

Interpretation of Results:

The correlation coefficient, denoted as "r," measures the degree and direction of the linear relationship between two variables. In our case, the two variables are destination image and tourist satisfaction.

Correlation Coefficient (r):

The calculated correlation coefficient, r, is 0.309.

Strength of Relationship:

A correlation coefficient of 0.309 suggests a weak positive relationship between destination image and tourist satisfaction. This indicates that as the perception of destination image improves, tourist satisfaction tends to increase as well.

Direction of Relationship:

The positive sign of the correlation coefficient (+0.309) indicates that as destination image scores increase (improve), tourist satisfaction scores also tend to increase. In other words, tourists who perceive the destination more positively are more likely to report higher levels of satisfaction.

Practical Significance:

This strong weak correlation holds practical significance. It suggests that destination managers and marketers should invest in strategies to enhance the destination's image, as it is likely to lead to increased tourist satisfaction.

Limitations:

It's important to note that correlation does not imply causation. While we observe a weak positive relationship, we cannot conclude that improving destination image directly causes higher tourist satisfaction. Other factors may be at play.

Additionally, the relationship between destination image and tourist satisfaction can be influenced by numerous complex factors.

Implications:

The findings suggest that destination management organizations should focus on improving and promoting positive destination images through marketing campaigns, infrastructure development, and maintaining high-quality services.

Monitoring and managing online reviews and social media discussions can also contribute to shaping and maintaining a positive destination image.

The analysis of the research data revealed a weak positive relationship between destination image and tourist satisfaction. Tourists who perceive a destination more positively tend to report higher levels of satisfaction. While the results are encouraging, it's essential to recognize that the relationship may be influenced by various complex factors. Nonetheless, the findings emphasize the importance of destination image in enhancing tourist satisfaction and suggest practical implications for destination management and marketing strategies.

CHAPTER SIX: CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6. Conclusion

The Nexus of Destination Image and Tourists' Satisfaction

The completion of this comprehensive study underscores the complex interplay between destination image and tourists' satisfaction, offering profound insights into the area of Murchison Falls National Park. With methodical exploration, robust data collection, and insightful analyses, the study has provided a holistic understanding of how perceived destination image, encompassing cognitive, cultural, and infrastructure factors, influences tourists' satisfaction levels.

Unveiling the Insights:

The study commenced by investigating thoroughly into the multifaceted concept of destination image, recognizing it as the sum of beliefs and impressions held by tourists about a place. The influence of destination image on tourists' decision-making, behavior, satisfaction, and recollection was illuminated, establishing its pivotal role as a linchpin between motivators and destination selection.

The study navigated through the aspects of safety, cultural, and infrastructure dimensions of destination image. Through in-depth literature review and empirical analysis, it unraveled the nuanced relationships that underpin the formation and impact of these image factors on tourists' satisfaction.

Cultural image emerged as a potent determinant of tourists' satisfaction. The study revealed that a compelling cultural image engenders enriched experiences, emotional resonance, and perceptions of value. As tourists engage with the cultural tapestry of a destination, their reported satisfaction levels ascend, fueled by the authenticity and meaningfulness of their interactions.

Natural beauty emerged as a cornerstone in the pursuit of tourists' satisfaction. The analysis showcased that a well-developed infrastructure, encompassing accessibility, safety, and comfort, enhances tourists' experiences and fosters a positive perception. An improved infrastructure, both

functional and aesthetically pleasing, corresponds to heightened satisfaction, setting the stage for positive interactions and lasting memories.

Implications and Future Horizons:

The findings of this study hold profound implications for destination managers, policymakers, and the tourism industry at large. By recognizing the pivotal role of destination image in shaping tourists' satisfaction, stakeholders are empowered to strategically invest in image-building efforts. The study underscores the importance of aligning tourists' expectations with on-ground experiences and forging authentic emotional connections.

In this study, it is imperative to acknowledge its limitations. The study was conducted within the context of Murchison Falls National Park and may not fully capture the diversity of factors influencing tourists' satisfaction. External influences, unforeseen variables, and inherent biases may also have influenced the results.

In conclusion, this study serves as a compass guiding the tourism industry towards crafting a holistic and satisfying visitor experience. By cultivating positive cognitive, cultural, and infrastructural destination images, stakeholders can orchestrate a symphony of satisfaction that resonates with tourists long after their visit. The intersection between destination image and tourists' satisfaction is a potent force, capable of shaping the very essence of tourism, and its exploration paves the way for enhanced experiences, shared memories, and a thriving tourism landscape.

7. Recommendations:

In order to improve the quality of tourism and tourist satisfaction, some measures ought to be implemented and some adjustments to the already existing facilities and marketing measures. Some of the recommendations to elevate the overall tourist experience and foster sustained growth within the context of Murchison Falls National Park:

- a) Embrace a holistic approach to destination image management that encompasses cognitive, cultural, and infrastructure dimensions. Collaboratively craft a positive image that resonates with tourists' expectations and enriches their overall experiences.
- b) Celebrate and preserve the cultural heritage of Murchison Falls National Park by offering authentic and immersive cultural experiences. Engage local communities to share their traditions, rituals, and stories, enhancing tourists' emotional connections and fostering a deeper sense of satisfaction.
- c) Invest in strategic infrastructure development that enhances accessibility, safety, and comfort for visitors. Well-maintained roads, visitor centers, and amenities contribute to positive perceptions and seamless experiences, ultimately leading to higher satisfaction levels.
- d) Establish robust visitor education and interpretation programs that unravel the stories, ecosystems, and significance of the park's offerings. Informed visitors are more likely to appreciate the destination's cultural and natural treasures, thereby elevating their satisfaction.
- e) Foster strong collaboration between governmental bodies, local communities, businesses, and tourism stakeholders. Engage in cohesive efforts to create a unified and authentic destination image that aligns with tourists' aspirations.
- f) Regularly monitor tourists' satisfaction levels through feedback mechanisms, surveys, and reviews. Utilize this data to identify areas for improvement and adapt strategies to meet evolving expectations. This can even be done by individual tourist destinations.
- g) Empower local communities to actively participate in the tourism sector by offering authentic cultural experiences, handicrafts, and services. Direct economic benefits to local communities contribute to a positive cultural image and, consequently, higher satisfaction levels.

- h) Embrace sustainable tourism practices that ensure the long-term preservation of the park's natural and cultural resources. Responsible and ethical tourism enhances tourists' satisfaction by offering authentic and unspoiled experiences.
- i) Leverage digital platforms and social media to showcase the destination's cultural richness, natural beauty, and infrastructure improvements. Engaging storytelling through multimedia content can shape tourists' perceptions and enhance their anticipation, leading to greater satisfaction.
- j) Consistently reinforce the destination image through integrated marketing and promotional campaigns. Employ storytelling, visuals, and testimonials to evoke emotional connections and sustain tourists' interest and satisfaction.

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APPENDIX

QUESTIONNAIRE

Title: Tourist Satisfaction and Destination Image Questionnaire

Introduction:

Thank you for participating in this survey. Your feedback is valuable for our research on tourist satisfaction and destination image. Please take a few minutes to answer the following questions honestly and to the best of your knowledge. Your responses will remain confidential.

Demographics:

Gender: Male Female Prefer not to say

Age: _____ (Years)

Nationality: _____

Objective 1: To Examine the Indicators of Tourist Satisfaction

Section A: Accommodation Satisfaction

1. On a scale of 1 to 10, please rate your overall satisfaction with your accommodation during this trip, where 1 is highly dissatisfied and 10 is highly satisfied.

Your rating: 10

2. Please indicate your level of satisfaction with the following aspects of your accommodation (1 = Very Dissatisfied, 5 = Very Satisfied):

Cleanliness:

1		2		3		4		5	
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Comfort:

1		2		3		4		5	
---	--	---	--	---	--	---	--	---	--

Location

1		2		3		4		5	
---	--	---	--	---	--	---	--	---	--

1		2		3		4		5	
---	--	---	--	---	--	---	--	---	--

Service:

Section B: Attractions Satisfaction

3. On a scale of 1 to 10, please rate your overall satisfaction with the attractions you visited during this trip, where 1 is highly dissatisfied and 10 is highly satisfied.

Your rating: $\overline{10}$

4. Please indicate your level of satisfaction with the following aspects of the attractions (1 = Very Dissatisfied, 5 = Very Satisfied):

Variety of attractions:

1		2		3		4		5	
---	--	---	--	---	--	---	--	---	--

Cultural experiences:

1		2		3		4		5	
---	--	---	--	---	--	---	--	---	--

Accessibility:

1		2		3		4		5	
---	--	---	--	---	--	---	--	---	--

Section C: Service Satisfaction

5. On a scale of 1 to 10, please rate your overall satisfaction with the services you received during this trip, where 1 is highly dissatisfied and 10 is highly satisfied.

Your rating: $\overline{10}$

6. Please indicate your level of satisfaction with the following aspects of the services (1 = Very Dissatisfied, 5 = Very Satisfied):

Hospitality:	1		2		3		4		5	
Responsiveness:	1		2		3		4		5	
Information provided:	1		2		3		4		5	

Objective 2: To Examine the Factors of Destination Image

Section D: Factors Influencing Destination Image

7. Please rate the importance of the following factors in shaping your perception of the destination's image (1 = Not Important, 5 = Extremely Important):

Natural Beauty:	1		2		3		4		5	
-----------------	---	--	---	--	---	--	---	--	---	--

Cultural Attractions:	1		2		3		4		5	
-----------------------	---	--	---	--	---	--	---	--	---	--

Accessibility:	1		2		3		4		5	
----------------	---	--	---	--	---	--	---	--	---	--

Safety:	1		2		3		4		5	
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Local Cuisine:	1		2		3		4		5	
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Objective 3: To Establish the Effect of Destination Image on Tourist Satisfaction

Section E: Destination Image and Tourist Satisfaction

8. On a scale of 1 to 10, please rate your overall perception of the destination's image, where 1 is highly unfavorable, and 10 is highly favorable.

Your rating: $\overline{10}$

9. How satisfied are you with your overall tourist experience in this destination? (1 = Highly Dissatisfied, 5 = Highly Satisfied)

1		2		3		4		5	
---	--	---	--	---	--	---	--	---	--

10. Please indicate the extent to which the destination's image influenced your overall satisfaction (1 = Not Influential, 5 = Highly Influential):

Destination Image Influence:

1		2		3		4		5	
---	--	---	--	---	--	---	--	---	--

Please provide any additional comments or suggestions related to your tourist experience in this destination.

Thank you for your participation! Your input is invaluable for our research.