

People-related Destination Image Factors Influencing Length of Stay of Foreign Tourists: A Study in North Shewa Zone of the Amhara Region, Ethiopia

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Abstract

Income generated from the tourism sector depends largely on tourists' spending in the form of payment for goods and services. The longer the length of stay of tourists the more activities they undertake and the more they spend. In other words, tourists' length of stay is a key variable for any tourism destination as it impacts the overall tourism expenditure and has strong correlations with tourists' destination image. Thus, it is critical to identify the factors that determine the length of stay of tourists to look for alternative policies aimed at maximizing the length of stay of tourists in destination sites. This paper attempted to uncover the relationship between people-related factors of image of destination and length of stay in North Shewa Zone, Amhara Region of Ethiopia. Multiple-linear regression analysis was employed to see the effects of people-related destination image factors on length of stay on a sample of 73 foreign tourists who stayed in the study area for at least one day. The findings of the study revealed that customer service most strongly influenced length of stay of tourists followed by physical risk related factors, health related risk factors and attitude of locals to tourists.

Keywords: Tourism, length of stay, destination image, North Shewa, Ethiopia

1. Introduction

Though Ethiopia is known for its immense historical, cultural and natural tourist attractions, the tourism sector's contribution to the country's current effort to eliminate poverty is not yet fully realized. The annual research report by the World Travel and Tourism Council (Travel & Tourism: Economic Impact 2015 Ethiopia, 2015) on the economic impact of tourism for Ethiopia has documented interesting facts on tourism in the country. Travel and tourism directly contributed only 4.1% to the country's GDP, and 3.6% of total employment. It has been acknowledged that a number of factors have limited the performance of the sector including: shortfalls in basic tourism supply, shortage in number and type of tourist facilities shortage of highly trained and moderately trained manpower. Thus, Tourism Development Policy has been formulated in order to realize the development of tourism and to enable the sector to effectively contribute to the country's current endeavor to eliminate poverty. Lengthening the tourist's stay by solving observed limitations of the sector is one of the many objectives of the policy. Menezes, Moniz & Viera (2008) noted that length of stay is an important tourist behavior that conditions the overall socio-economic impact of tourism in a given economy. It increases trip

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expenditure and it has strong correlations with tourists' destination image. However, according to an earlier study by The World Bank (2006), the length of stay of foreign tourists in Ethiopia (7-8 Days) is below the regional averages (Kenya 12.8 days, Tanzania 14.1 days, Uganda 9.7 days). Since the per capita expenditure is above the regional average (USD 109) compared to (Kenya USD 62, Tanzania, USD 104, Uganda, USD 71, South Africa USD 47), Ethiopia can earn more if it continually build destination images.

Like many parts of Ethiopia, North Shewa Zone of the Amhara Region is blessed with abundant tourism potential owing to its natural, historical and cultural endowments. Located in the central highlands of Ethiopia, North Shewa Zone is well placed to integrate with wider tourism development trends on a national scale. The tourist destinations like Menz Guassa where the endemic red fox is found and Ankober which is known for its historical significance as it was once the center of the Ethiopian state until Emperor Minilik moved the capital to the current location in Addis Ababa and many exciting and famous religious buildings appeal to visitors. Despite its considerable potential attractions, tourism development in North Shewa is not yet to a level that the country needs. It has been recognized by the government of Ethiopia that a lot of work is needed in building destination images of attractions so as to lengthen the stay and increase the spending of visitors at every destination in order to increase the tourism sector's contribution in tackling poverty (FDRE Ministry of Culture & Tourism, 2009). One policy option is, therefore, maximizing the duration of stay of tourists. Thus, it is very important to identify the factors that explain the length of stay and destination image attributes. However, as to the knowledge of this author, the factors that affect length of stay and its relationship with destination image attributes have not been studied in the study area. This study is, therefore, conducted in North Shewa Zone of the Amhara Region of Ethiopia, to investigate destination image attributes that affect the length of stay of foreign tourists. In behavioural geography the concept of `image' is more holistic and it includes all of the associated impressions, knowledge, emotions, values and beliefs (Jenkins, 1999). Though several attributes of destination image affect the length of stay of tourists, the study focused only on people-related factors. Peoplerelated factors, in this context, are those factors related to the social interaction between the tourists and the local people (Smith, 2000).

2. Destination Image and Length of Stay of Tourists

It has been defined in the previous section that tourist destination image is the subjective interpretation of the reality created by a tourist (Moutinho, 1987). However, the most often cited definition of the image of a tourism destination is that given by Crompton (1979). It is a 'set of ideas, beliefs and impressions that the person has of a destination.' Studies on tourist destination images tend to consider image as a concept formed by the mental perception of reality obtained from two interrelated dimensions: perceptual and cognitive: there is a primacy of the importance and value given to each attribute of tourist destinations. Affective: referring to feelings and emotions raised by tourist destination image formation. The first phase of image formation is based primarily upon information assimilated from non-touristic, non-commercial sources, such as the media and the opinions of family or friends. In the second phase, more commercial sources of information, such as travel brochures, travel agents and travel guidebooks, are involved. The final phase of destination, the actual experience of individuals, is used to modify

the destination's image created by secondary sources of phase one and two. The last stage of image formation is particularly important for this study because, in addition to the personal characteristics of travelers, destination image created after visit is realistic and influence length of stay greatly (Machado, 2010).

The importance of destination attributes in developing positive destination images have been highlighted in a number of studies. Actually, despite the basic problems associated with it, destination image research is still influenced by structured methods which requires an individual to rate a set of pre-determined attributes (Jenkins, 1999). After extensive literature review Echtner, & Ritchie (2003), identified 34 attributes used by researchers to measure destination image. Jenkins (1999, p.5) further identified several types of attributes under common/unique dimensions of destination image. Common functional attributes include traits by which most destinations can be compared (e.g. price, climate, types of accommodation). Unique functional attributes consist of the icons and special events that form part of a destination image. Common psychological or abstract attributes consist of the friendliness of the locals, notoriety or beauty of the landscape, whereas unique psychological attributes include feelings associated with places of religious pilgrimage or places associated with some historic event. Ferrario (1979, cited in Vengesayi, Mavondo, and Reisinger, 2009) have categorized destination attributes into three groups: destination attractions which are the primary pull factors, destination support services and people-related factors. People-related factors are similar to common psychological/abstract attributes in Jenkin's (2009) categorization. People-related attributes are so important that they build destination image by adding value to attractions and tourist facilities. Vengesayi, Mavondo, and Reisinger (2009), in their study, grouped people-related attributes into four: attitudes of locals to tourists, attitudes related to physical risk, health related attributes and customer service related attributes.

3. Design of the study and Methods

3.1. The Study Area

North Shewa Administrative Zone, which is one of the eleven Administrative Zones (including Bahir Dar Special Zone) of the Amhara Region, is located roughly between 8° , 40', 00" - 10° , 40', 00"N latitude and 38° , 44', 00" E- 40^{\circ}, 05', 00" E longitude. The altitude of the area ranges from 688 to 4000 meters amsl. Accordingly, four agro- ecological zones are distinct namely *Wurch*, *Dega*, *Woina Dega* and *Kola*²; each with their own distinct natural resource bases (soil, water, climate, etc.), farming systems and economic and social settings.

² These are traditional climate classifications of Ethiopia.





According to the last census, the Zone has a population of 1,839,089 (929,445 males and 909,644 females) (CSA, 2008). Majority of the population (88.31%) live in rural areas and depends on agriculture practicing mixed farming, livestock husbandry and crop production simultaneously. Small business and manufacturing are the major economic activities in the urban areas.

In terms of tourism, even though Norh Shewa has immense historical and natural attractions, several challenges including lack of promotion, lack of physical infrastructure (road, transportation system, network facility, availability of hotel accommodations, have not been fully benefited from the tourism sector.

3.2. Methods of Data collection and Analysis

As the purpose of the study was to investigate the factors which affect tourists' length of stay and the relationship between length of stay of tourists and destination mage, the approach for this study is mainly quantitative. As the number of foreign tourists vary from time to time it is obviously difficult to determine the sampling frame. Thus, a convenience sampling method was followed. Data was collected using a structured questionnaire from 73 foreign tourists who visited tourist attractions of North Shewa. As it was not manageable to collect data at all destination sites, data collection took place at the most important rest town of foreign tourists of North Shewa, Debre Birhan, which is actually the zonal center. It was undertaken between January 1 and June 30, 2018. The survey questionnaire included data pertaining sex, age, and nationality, length of stay (planned and actual) and on people-related destination attributes. The destination attributes were adopted from a previous study (Vengesayi, Mavondo, & Reisinger, 2009) who grouped people-related attributes into four dimensions (Table 1). The attributes were set as statements to which respondents were asked to rate on a seven-point Likert scale with '1' being strongly disagree, '2' (disagree), '3' (slightly disagree), '4' (undecided), '5' (slightly agree), '6' (agree) and with '7' being strongly disagree (Table 2).

Dimensions of people-related factors of	Destination attributes		
destination image			
Attitude of locals to tourists (ATTLOC)	Willingness of locals to help		
	Attitude of employees to tourists		
	Attitude of locals to tourists		
	Friendliness of locals		
Physical risk (PHYRISK)	Peaceful environment		
	Availability of police patrols		
	Safe/secure parks		
	Political stability		
Health risk (HEALTHRISK)	Hygiene standard		
	Risk of illness		
	Personal health safety		
	Modern medical facilities		
Customer service (CUSTSERV)	Appearance of employees		
	Ability to speak English		
	Other foreign languages skills		
	Tour guiding skills		
	Employees' knowledge of local attractions		

Table 1:	Dimensions	of people-rel	ated factors	of destination	images

The four people-related destination image factor dimensions have several attributes and their values were obtained by calculating the arithmetic mean of the respective attributes based on the ratings of respondents. Multiple-linear regression was used to identify the major factors affecting length of stay of tourists. The decision by foreign tourists to lengthen or shorten their stay in a destination is related to destination site attributes. Yabibal (2010), for instance, found that bad roads and language difficulties, which are among destination attributes identified by Vengesayi, Mavondo, & Reisinger (2009), have made some foreign tourists in Ethiopia to shorten their stay.

Statements	1(Strongly disagree)	2 (Disagree0	3 (Slightly disagree)	4 (Undecided)	5 (Slightly agree)	6 (Agree)	7 (Strongly agree)
Local people have the willingness to help foreign tourists.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Destination site employees have positive attitudes towards foreign tourists.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Local people have positive attitudes towards foreign tourists.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Local people's approaches friendliness to foreign tourists is appreciated.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
The local environment is peaceful.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Police patrols in and near destination sites are available.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Destination sites have safe/secure parks.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
The political situation of the destination sites is stable.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Hygiene of the destination sites lives up to the standard.		2	3	4	5	6	7
Risk of illness in the destination sites is unlikely.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Personal health of foreign tourists is safe.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Modern medical facilities in the destination sites are in place.		2	3	4	5	6	7
Appearance of employees is good-looking.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Destination site employees are good in English language.		2	3	4	5	6	7
Destination site employees have good foreign language skills other than English.		2	3	4	5	6	7
Destination site employees have good guiding skills.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Destination site employees have good knowledge of local attractions	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Table 2: Measures of destination image

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The regression model was specified as:

$$Y_{i} = {}^{\beta}0 + {}^{\beta}_{1}X_{1} + {}^{\beta}_{2}X_{2} + {}^{\beta}_{3}X_{3} + \dots + {}^{\beta}_{N}X_{N}$$
(Equ. 1)

Where, Y_i is the dependent variable (length of stay is represented here by changed planned number of days (CHAPLANDAY) obtained by subtracting actual number of days of stay from planned number of days), β_0 is the Y- intercept; whereas $\beta_1 - \beta_N$ is a set of coefficients to be estimated. $X_1 - X_N$ are explanatory variables identified through literature review. The explanatory variables entered into the model are attitude of locals to tourists (ATTLOC), physical risk (PHYRISK), health risk (HEALTHRISK) and customer service (CUSTSERV).

4. Results and Discussion

The descriptive analysis showed a considerable variation in terms of gender of respondents. There were 76.7% male and 23.3% female respondents. The average age of the respondents was 42.3 years. The majority of the respondents (75%) are below the age of 45 suggesting that many of the visitors are young. Respondents were found to be nationals of 12 countries including The Netherlands, Germany and Denmark. Surprisingly, the majority of tourists (52.1%) came from the Netherlands followed by Germany (9.6%) and Denmark (8.2%). This suggests the need to conduct another study on such unfair representation of foreign tourists. The finding of this study also deviates from the result of a previous study that Germany, USA, UK, France and Denmark are the top five sending countries to Ethiopia (Yabibal, 2010).

Destinations' characteristics are among several factors which contribute to the image that a tourist perceives of a destination and are related directly to the length of stay that the tourist plans and actually stays in that destination (Machado, 2010). Data from the sampled tourists revealed that the average number of days foreign tourists planned to stay in North Shewa was 4.67 days. The study further showed that tourists stayed 0.59 longer than their planned length of stay. The average number of days tourists actually stayed is 5.6 days. This is a good indicator that a lot have to be done in improving the length of stay of tourists so that the objective of increasing the length of stay of tourists as a policy objective is to be achieved.

Multiple-linear regression was performed with four dimensions of destination image factors explained earlier in this paper as independent variables. As discussed in the 'Methods' section, the values of the four dimensions were obtained by calculating the averages of the attributes corresponding to each of the dimensions. Before running the regression, the multicollinearity of the explanatory variables was considered. Since the tolerances of all the predictor variables were far in excess of 0.1, multicollinearity was not a problem (Landau and Everitt, 2004). Thus, all the variables were entered into the regression model. Customer service and physical risk factors predicted length of stay significantly (P < 0.05).

The multiple regression model was statistically significant, F(4, 68) = 13.35), P = 0.001 (Table 4). With an R^2 value of 0.44 (Table 3), the model explained 44% of the total variance in length of stay. Yet, substantial amount of variance (56%) is not explained by the model indicating that a considerable number of potential predictors of length of stay of tourists are not included to the

model. Nevertheless, this is expected in the study of the relationship between tourist length of stay and destination image which are naturally multifaceted.

Table 3: Model Summary

Model Summarv^b

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	
1	.663 ^a	.440	.407	.87844	

a. Predictors: (Constant), Customer service, Physical risk, Health risk, Attitude of locals to tourists

b. Dependent Variable: Changed planned number of days

Table 4: ANOVA

ANOVA ^a							
Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	
	Regression	41.199	4	10.300	13.348	.000 ^b	
1	Residual	52.472	68	.772			
	Total	93.671	72				

a. Dependent Variable: Changed planned number of days

b. Predictors: (Constant), Customer service, Physical risk, Health risk, Attitude of locals to tourists

Table 5: People-related factors influencing the length of stay of foreign tourists

	Coefficients ^a								
Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	Collinearity Statistics		
		В	Std. Error	Beta			Tolerance	VIF	
1	(Constant)	-5.949	1.079		-5.512	.000		-	
	Attitude of locals to tourists	.181	.116	.147	1.562	.123	.934	1.071	
	Physical risk	.267	.126	.196	2.130	.037	.977	1.023	
	Health risk	.371	.194	.178	1.908	.061	.942	1.062	
	Customer service	1.024	.159	.588	6.443	.000	.989	1.011	

a. Dependent Variable: Changed planned number of days

The standardized regression coefficients showed that customer service most strongly influenced length of stay of tourists as represented by the number of changed planned number of days (0.58, t = 6.43, p < 0.001) (Table 5). It was followed by physical risk related factors (0.196, t = 2.13, p < 0.05), health related risk factors (0.18, t = 1.91, NS) and attitude of locals to tourists (0.15, t =1.56, NS).

The result of this study implies that increasing the stay of tourists requires developing destinations through integrating activities related to local peoples' attitudes towards foreign visitors with actions related to improving the physical, health and customer service related activities.

5. Conclusion

The study analyzed the effects of people-related destination image factors on length of stay. The results of the study showed that customer service most strongly influenced length of stay of tourists followed by physical risk related factors, health related risk factors and attitude of locals to tourists. However, as length of stay may differ across destinations, it is recommended that similar studies are conducted that cover more destination areas and larger samples. This study further recommends that in order to maximize length of stay of foreign tourists and maintain tourism sustainability, destination site managers should be able to establish positive images on visitors.

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