ORIGINAL ARTICLE

EVALUATING THE ROLE OF DESTINATION IMAGE, TOURIST PERCEPTION, AND SATISFACTION IN BUILDING DESTINATION LOYALTY AT IDANRE HILLS, ONDO STATE, NIGERIA

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Abstract

Tourists' satisfaction with a destination not only influences the tourists' willingness to revisit but also shapes the destination's reputation. This study aims to assess the impact of destination image on tourist perception and satisfaction at Idanre Hills, with the objective of evaluating the Tourists' potential for revisits and recommending strategies to enhance the destination's competitive edge. Primary data were collected using structured questionnaires from 160 tourists during the period of the study. Descriptive and inferential statistics were employed for data analysis. Results are presented using frequency tables, percentages, and charts. Findings reveal that significant proportions (41.90%) of respondents were young adults aged 26 to 45 years. Overall, 92.6% of tourists expressed satisfaction with their Idanre Hills experience, with 58.8% indicating a willingness to revisit. Positive word-of-mouth endorsements were a key factor influencing satisfaction, with 4.63 as the highest mean score. Additionally, 60.0% of tourists expressed intent to promote the destination. Recommendations for enhancing satisfaction and loyalty included implementing multi-channel support such as WhatsApp and Facebook to measure tourist satisfaction and loyalty. Furthermore, demographic characteristics such as age, employment status, income, and residence significantly associated with tourists' satisfaction with Idanre Hills (p < 0.05). Improvements in facilities, accommodation availability for distant travelers, and accessibility to all attractions were suggested to enhance the destination's image, thus fostering greater tourist satisfaction and loyalty.

Keywords: Tourists, satisfaction, revisit, Idanre Hills, destination image.

Introduction

Tourism serves as an important contributor to economic growth, playing a significant role in economic, social, regional, and physical development (Hwang and Lee, 2019). In recent years, the global tourism sector has witnessed substantial growth, with international tourist arrivals reaching 1.4 billion in 2018, generating USD 1.7 trillion in export earnings (UNWTO, 2019). Acknowledging this, the tourism industry stands as one of the foremost drivers of economic progress (Kushwah and Chaturvedi, 2019). However, due to its complex nature, the tourism industry relies on the collaboration of governmental institutions and private enterprises. Tourist satisfaction stands as a pivotal factor guaranteeing future profitability of the industry (Anaya-Aguilar *et al*., 2021). The correlation between tourist perception, destination image, satisfaction, and loyalty has gathered attention as a trending research topic in tourism studies. Understanding destination image is crucial for strategic destination marketing decisions, as it is assumed to positively influence destination loyalty and satisfaction (Coban, 2012).

Destination image, defined as an individual's mental representation of a destination, significantly influences tourist behaviors, including destination choice and future behavioral intentions (Patwardhan *et al.,* 2020). Low levels of tourist satisfaction in nations often lead to significant declines in tourism-related businesses. Dissatisfied tourists are unlikely to return to the same destination, resulting in a substantial blow to the tourism economy (Yazdi *et al*., 2017). The global competitiveness of the tourism industry underscores the importance of destination image in strengthening a destination's competitive advantage

and improving tourism quality (Park *et al.,* 2019). Understanding the factors influencing tourist satisfaction and return intentions is crucial for fostering a favorable destination environment (Zainuddin *et al.,* 2016).

Tourist satisfaction is achieved through careful planning to ensure that services meet tourist expectations. Satisfied tourists are more likely to revisit or recommend a destination to others, making tourist satisfaction a significant aspect of destination selection (Avgeli *et al.*, 2020). Destination loyalty, defined as tourists' perceptions of a destination as recommendable, is influenced by satisfactory travel experiences and destination attributes (Sanjaya *et al.*, 2020). Understanding the nature and antecedents of tourist perception and satisfaction is paramount in sustaining patronage in tourism business (Matos and Bederneh, 2011). Therefore, this study seeks to address the gap in research regarding the influence of destination image on tourist perception, satisfaction, and loyalty, particularly in historical and cultural attraction sites such as Idanre Hills.

This research contributes to the field by offering insights into the relationship between Idanre Hills' image and tourist perception, satisfaction, and loyalty, thereby informing strategic decisions aimed at improving tourist experiences and destination competitiveness. Furthermore, this study will provide valuable recommendations for Idanre Hills' tourism board to enhance tourist perception, satisfaction, and destination loyalty. By understanding the factors influencing these aspects, destination management organizations can develop targeted marketing strategies and initiatives to attract more visitors and foster long-term relationships with them. Ultimately, the findings of this research will contribute to the sustainable development of tourism in Idanre Hills and similar historical and cultural destinations.

Destination Image

Destination image refers to an individual's mental representation of a destination, encompassing knowledge, beliefs, feelings, and overall perception (Patwardhan *et al.,* 2020). It plays a pivotal role in influencing tourists' destination choice and subsequent behaviors, including satisfaction and loyalty (Echtner and Ritchie, 1991). A positive destination image is essential for attracting tourists and fostering long-term relationships with them (Coban, 2012). In the context of Idanre Hills, the destination image encompasses its historical significance, cultural heritage, natural beauty, and recreational offerings. Studies on destination image have highlighted its influence on tourist perception, satisfaction, and loyalty, underscoring the importance of managing and promoting a positive image to enhance tourism competitiveness (Zhang *et al.*, 2018).

Tourist Perception

Tourist perception refers to tourists' subjective judgments and interpretations of a destination based on their experiences, expectations, and interactions (Sanjaya *et al.*, 2020). It is shaped by various factors, including destination image, personal preferences, and socio-cultural background (Zainuddin *et al.,* 2016). Positive perceptions of a destination contribute to tourists' overall satisfaction and likelihood of revisitation (Ba *et al.*, 2020). Understanding tourists' perceptions of Idanre Hills involves examining their experiences with its attractions, amenities, hospitality, and cultural authenticity. Research on tourist perception provides insights into the factors influencing visitors' satisfaction and loyalty, guiding destination management efforts to improve the tourist experience (Zabkar *et al.,* 2010).

Tourist Satisfaction

Tourist satisfaction refers to tourists' overall assessment of their travel experiences based on their expectations and perceptions of a destination (Avgeli *et al.*, 2020). It encompasses various aspects, including service quality, amenities, cleanliness, and value for money (Anaya-Aguilar *et al.*, 2021). High levels of tourist satisfaction are associated with repeat visitation and positive word-of-mouth recommendations (Park *et al.,* 2019). Studies on tourist satisfaction at Idanre Hills evaluate visitors' perceptions of its attractions, facilities, and services. These studies identify factors contributing to tourist satisfaction and suggest strategies for enhancing the destination's appeal and competitiveness (Yazdi *et al.,* 2017).

Destination Loyalty

Destination loyalty refers to tourists' intentions to revisit a destination and recommend it to others based on their satisfaction and perceived value (Sanjaya *et al*., 2020). It is influenced by factors such as satisfaction, perceived image, destination attributes, and emotional attachment (Patwardhan *et al.,* 2020). Building destination loyalty is essential for sustaining tourism growth and fostering destination competitiveness (Ba *et al.,* 2020). Research on destination loyalty at Idanre Hills explores tourists' intentions to revisit and recommend the destination. It investigates the relationship between satisfaction, perception, and loyalty, highlighting the importance of managing destination image and delivering exceptional visitor experiences (Zhang *et al.,* 2014).

Destination Marketing and Management

Destination marketing and management strategies play a crucial role in shaping destination image, tourist perception, satisfaction, and loyalty (Ba *et al.,* 2020). Effective destination marketing involves promoting the unique attributes and experiences offered by a destination to target markets (Patwardhan *et al.,* 2020). Management efforts focus on enhancing infrastructure, services, and visitor experiences to meet or exceed tourist expectations (Zainuddin *et al.,* 2016). In the case of Idanre Hills, destination marketing initiatives should emphasize its rich cultural heritage, scenic landscapes, and recreational opportunities. By highlighting these unique selling points through various marketing channels, destination management organizations can attract more tourists and enhance destination competitiveness (Coban, 2012).

Sustainable Tourism Development

Sustainable tourism development is essential for preserving the natural and cultural assets of destinations like Idanre Hills while maximizing socio-economic benefits for local communities (Zhang *et al.,* 2014). Sustainable tourism practices aim to minimize negative environmental and socio-cultural impacts while promoting positive visitor experiences (Patwardhan *et al.,* 2020). Research on sustainable tourism development at Idanre Hills evaluates the effectiveness of conservation efforts, community involvement, and tourism planning initiatives. These studies provide insights into balancing tourism development with environmental and cultural preservation, ensuring the long-term viability of the destination (Ba *et al.,* 2020).

Cultural Tourism and Heritage Management

Cultural tourism and heritage management are integral components of destination identity and appeal (Patwardhan *et al*., 2020). Idanre Hills, with its rich cultural heritage and historical significance, offers unique opportunities for cultural tourism experiences (Coban, 2012). Effective heritage management involves preserving and promoting cultural assets while providing authentic and meaningful visitor experiences (Zainuddin *et al.,* 2016).

Studies on cultural tourism and heritage management at Idanre Hills explore the significance of cultural attractions, heritage interpretation, and community engagement in tourism development. These studies inform strategies for leveraging cultural resources to enhance destination attractiveness and visitor satisfaction (Zhang *et al.,* 2018).

Methodology

Research Design

The research design chosen for this study is a descriptive survey. Descriptive research aims to collect data that describe the current status of a phenomenon or population without manipulating variables. This design is appropriate for examining relationships and characteristics within a population, providing valuable insights into existing conditions and perceptions (Creswell, 2014).

Data Collection

Data collection for this study involved both primary and secondary sources

Reconnaissance and Direct Observation: A reconnaissance survey was conducted to gather preliminary information about the facilities and services available at Idanre Hills. This involved on-site visits to assess the infrastructure, amenities, and overall environment.

Administration of Questionnaires: A structured questionnaire was designed to gather information on tourists' preferences and satisfaction with Idanre Hills. The questionnaire comprised two sections:

Demographic Information: This section gathered relevant demographic data from respondents, including gender, age, educational status, religion, occupation, marital status, and monthly income. Factors Affecting Satisfaction: The second section focused on factors influencing tourist satisfaction and perception of Idanre Hills, using a Likert scale format to measure responses.

The Structured questionnaires were distributed to tourists who had visited Idanre Hills within the study period especially during weekends and peak periods. The questionnaires were administered on-site to visitors willing to participate, with a total of 210 questionnaires distributed but only 160 could be used in the final analysis as some were not properly filled and returned. A comprehensive review of existing literature, research studies, and articles related to destination image, tourist satisfaction, and loyalty was undertaken to inform the theoretical framework and research methodology.

Data Analysis

Quantitative data collected from the questionnaires were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistical methods. Descriptive statistics, such as frequencies and percentages were used to summarize demographic information and satisfaction levels. Inferential statistics, such as chi-square tests, were employed to examine relationships between demographic variables and overall satisfaction levels.

Ethical Considerations: Prior to data collection, ethical considerations were addressed by obtaining informed consent from participants. The research adhered to principles of confidentiality, anonymity, and voluntary participation to ensure the ethical integrity of the study.

Results and Discussion

The Demographic Characteristics of Tourists Visiting Idanre Hills

The demographic characteristics of tourists visiting Idanre Hills presented in Table 1, provides valuable insights into the composition of the visitor population and their preferences. The majority of tourists fall within the age range of 18-45 years, with 35.6% aged 18-25 years and 41.9% aged 26-45 years. This demographic trend aligns with findings from similar studies, which have reported a younger demographic profile among tourists visiting cultural and historical attractions (Ba *et al.,* 2020; Park *et al.,* 2019).

In terms of gender distribution, female tourists constitute a higher percentage (59.4%) compared to male tourists (40.6%). This gender distribution is consistent with the broader tourism industry trends, where women often comprise a larger portion of cultural and heritage tourists (Zainuddin *et al.,* 2016). The majority of tourists (62.5%) have tertiary education, indicating a well-educated visitor base. This finding is consistent with research highlighting the correlation between higher education levels and cultural tourism participation (Anaya-Aguilar *et al*., 2021).

The data show a fairly balanced distribution across marital status categories, with single and married individuals comprising the largest proportions. This diversity in marital status reflects the varied preferences and motivations of tourists visiting cultural destinations (Yazdi *et al*., 2017). Christianity is the dominant religion among tourists visiting Idanre Hills, with 74.4% of respondents identifying as Christians. This religious composition may influence visitors' perceptions and interactions with cultural and religious sites within the destination (Coban, 2012). The majority of tourists are either students (30.6%) or self-employed (40.0%), indicating a mix of leisure and professional motivations for visiting the site. This finding underscores the importance of understanding the diverse needs and preferences of tourist segments (Patwardhan *et al.,* 2020).

Table 1: Socio-demographic characteristics of Respondents

Variables	Frequency (N=160)	Percentage
Age		
18-25 years	57	35.6
26-45 years	67	41.9
46-65 years	26	16.3
66 and above years	10	6.3
Gender		
Male	65	40.6
Female	95	59.4
Educational status		
Primary	19	11.9
Secondary	33	20.6
Tertiary	100	62.5
None	8	5
Marital status		
Single	75	46.9
Married	73	45.6
Divorced	7	4.4
Widow(er)	5	3.1
Religion		
Christianity	119	74.4
Islamic	34	21.3
Traditional	7	4.4
Employment status		
Student	49	30.6
Dependent	4	2.5
Self employed	64	40
Employed	21	13.1
Others	22	13.8
Income (Monthly)		
Below 50,000	99	61.9
51,000-100,000	54	33.8
101,000-500,000	5	3.1
501,000 and above	2	1.3
Residence		
Idanre	73	45.6
Outside Idanre	87	54.4

Field survey (2024)

The data show that a significant portion of tourists (61.9%) have incomes below 50,000, reflecting a diverse socioeconomic profile among visitors. This income distribution highlights the accessibility of Idanre Hills as a cultural attraction to a wide range of income. Nearly half of the tourists (45.6%) are residents of Idanre, while the remaining 54.4% are from outside the area. This distribution suggests both local and non-local interest in visiting Idanre Hills, emphasizing its significance as a cultural and recreational destination beyond the immediate vicinity (Ba *et al.,* 2020).

Table 2 shows that majority of tourists expressed high levels of satisfaction with the cultural features of Idanre Hills, with 53.8% reporting being highly satisfied and 38.1% satisfied. This indicates a positive perception of the cultural heritage and historical significance of the site, which aligns with findings from similar studies on cultural tourism destinations (Coban, 2012). The satisfaction levels regarding tour

guiding services are also notably high, with 50.0% of tourists being highly satisfied and 38.8% satisfied. This suggests that the quality of tour guiding at Idanre Hills contributes significantly to the overall visitor experience, facilitating engagement with the site's cultural and natural attractions (Park *et al.,* 2019).

Table 2: Satisfaction level of tourist who had visited Idanre hills

Variables	Frequency	Percentage
Cultural Features		
Highly satisfied	86	53.8
Satisfied	61	38.1
Undecided	3	1.9
Dissatisfied	3	1.9
Highly dissatisfied	7	4.4
Tour Guiding		
Highly satisfied	80	50
Satisfied	62	38.8
Undecided	8	5
Dissatisfied	6	3.8
Highly dissatisfied	4	2.5
Hill climbing/natural features		
Highly satisfied	102	63.8
Satisfied	49	30.6
Undecided	2	1.3
Dissatisfied	3	1.9
Highly dissatisfied	4	2.5
Overall activities at the site		
Highly satisfied	78	48.8
Satisfied	70	43.8
Undecided	6	3.8
Dissatisfied	2	1.3
Highly dissatisfied	4	2.5

Source: Field survey (2024)

A significant majority of tourists expressed satisfaction with the hill climbing and natural features of Idanre Hills, with 63.8% being highly satisfied and 30.6% satisfied as presented in table 2. This indicates that the scenic beauty and opportunities for outdoor activities contribute positively to tourists' enjoyment and appreciation of the destination (Yazdi *et al.,* 2017). The overall satisfaction levels with activities at Idanre Hills are high, with 48.8% of tourists being highly satisfied and 43.8% satisfied. This suggests that the diverse range of activities available at the site, including cultural tours, hill climbing, and nature walks, caters to the varied interests and preferences of visitors (Ba *et al.,* 2020).

Factors of Destination Image Influencing Tourist Satisfaction at Idanre Hills

Table 3 presents the distribution of factors influencing tourist satisfaction at Idanre Hills, findings revealed that the high satisfaction level (50.6%) with the visual appeal of facilities at Idanre hills aligns with findings from previous research. For instance, studies by Lee and Lee (2019) and Kim *et al.* (2020) emphasized the importance of aesthetically pleasing facilities in enhancing tourist satisfaction and overall destination experience. These findings suggest that investments in maintaining and improving the visual appeal of facilities can positively influence tourist perceptions and satisfaction.

Also shown in the result is the high satisfaction level (53.8%) with the safety and security of the environment at Idanre hills is consistent with research by Miao and Huang (2018) and Gursoy *et al.* (2019). These studies highlighted the significant role of safety perceptions in influencing tourist satisfaction and destination loyalty. The findings emphasize the importance of destination management efforts in ensuring a safe and secure environment to enhance tourist experiences.

Table 3: Factors of destination image influencing tourist satisfaction at site

Variables	SA	A	N	D	SD	Mean	SD	Chi-square(p-value)
Facilities at Idanre hills are visually appealing	81 (50.6%)	66 (41.3%)	7 (4.4%)	4 (2.5%)	2 (1.3%)	4.38	0.79	$\chi^2(4) = 23.56$, $p < 0.001$
Idanre hills have a safe and secure environment	86 (53.8%)	71 (44.4%)	3 (1.9%)	0	0	4.52	0.54	$\chi^2(4) = 18.21$, $p < 0.01$
Clean environment	95 (59.4%)	59 (36.9%)	3 (1.9%)	1 (0.6%)	2 (1.3%)	4.53	0.69	$\chi^2(4) = 28.73$, $p < 0.001$
Idanre has friendly and helpful locals	68 (42.5%)	66 (41.3%)	22 (13.8%)	4 (2.5%)	0	4.23	0.78	$\chi^2(4) = 14.92$, $p < 0.05$
There are varieties of shop facilities, restaurants and different choice of accommodation available	44 (27.5%)	29 (18.1%)	26 (16.3%)	53 (33.1%)	8 (5.0%)	3.3	1.32	$\chi^2(4) = 42.18$, $p < 0.001$

Source: Field survey (2024)

The majority of tourists (59.4%) expressing high satisfaction with the cleanliness of the environment at Idanre hills resonates with findings by Han *et al.* (2021) as well as Chi and Qu (2017). These studies emphasized that cleanliness significantly contributes to tourist satisfaction and positively influences destination image. Therefore, maintaining cleanliness should remain a priority for destination management to uphold positive perceptions among tourists.

Although a significant proportion of tourists (42.5%) expressed satisfaction with the friendliness and helpfulness of locals, the satisfaction level was not as high compared to other factors. This finding contrasts with studies by Jamal and Tan (2019) and Wang *et al.* (2020), which underscored the importance of local hospitality in shaping tourist perceptions and satisfaction. Destination stakeholders could explore initiatives to enhance interactions between tourists and locals to improve satisfaction in this aspect. The relatively lower satisfaction ratings in this area of varieties of shop facilities, restaurants and different choice of accommodation (27.5%) aligns with researches by Li and Cai (2018) and Huang *et al.* (2020), which emphasized the significance of diverse amenities in meeting tourists' varied preferences and enhancing satisfaction. The findings suggest a need for destination development strategies aimed at diversifying amenities to cater to tourists' needs.

Determinants of Tourist Loyalty towards Idanre Hills

Table 4 presents the determinants of tourist loyalty towards Idanre Hills, expressed as percentages of respondents categorized by their level of certainty. The findings showed that 60.0% of respondents are absolutely sure about saying positive WOM about Idanre hills, indicating a strong inclination towards promoting the destination to others.

This aligns with findings from studies by Lee and Kim (2019), which emphasize the influential role of WOM in shaping destination perceptions and attracting future visitors. Similarly, a significant proportion of respondents (56.9%) express certainty in suggesting Idanre hills to friends and relatives.

Table 4: Determinants of Tourist Loyalty towards Idanre Hills

Variables	Absolutely sure	Sure	Not sure
Say positive WOM about Idanre hills	96 (60.0%)	63 (39.4%)	1 (0.6%)
Suggest Idanre hills to friends and relatives	91 (56.9%)	68 (42.5%)	1 (0.6%)
Encourage friends and relatives to visit Idanre hills	98 (61.3%)	57 (35.6%)	5 (3.1%)
Revisit Idanre hills in the future	94 (58.8%)	55 (34.4%)	11 (6.9%)

Field survey (2024) WOM: Word of mouth)

This finding is consistent with research by Wang *et al.* (2020), highlighting the importance of personal recommendations in influencing destination choice and visitation patterns. Furthermore, over 60% of respondents are confident in encouraging friends and relatives to visit Idanre hills, indicating a strong advocacy for the destination, this may be as a result of the high level of satisfaction experienced during their visit. This agrees with the findings of studies by Jamal and Tan (2019) and Gursoy *et al.* (2018), which emphasize the role of social influence in destination loyalty and repeat visitations. Results show that majority which is 60% of respondents expressed certainty in revisiting Idanre hills in the future. This underscores the positive experiences and satisfaction levels of tourists, which are crucial determinants of destination loyalty as indicated in findings of Miao and Huang (2018).

Table 5: Strategies Recommended for Achieving High Level of Tourist Satisfaction and Loyalty

Variable	Highly Agree (%)	Agree (%)	Not Sure (%)	Disagree (%)	Highly Disagree (%)	Mean Score	Standard Deviation
Multi-channel support	91 (56.9%)	54 (33.8%)	11 (6.9%)	4 (2.5%)	0	4.45	0.73
Customer satisfaction to be measured regularly	64 (40.0%)	94 (58.8%)	2 (1.3%)	0	0	4.39	0.51
Customer feedback to be actively asked	100 (62.5%)	55 (34.4%)	3 (1.9%)	1 (0.6%)	1 (0.6%)	4.58	0.63
All feedback to be replied	77 (48.1%)	68 (42.5%)	10 (6.3%)	4 (2.5%)	1 (0.6%)	4.35	0.63
Price should be increased for better services	27 (16.9%)	40 (25.0%)	29 (18.1%)	26 (16.3%)	38 (23.8%)	2.95	1.43
Lodging, accommodation to be provided on site	99 (61.9%)	40 (25.0%)	16 (10.0%)	2 (1.3%)	3 (1.9%)	4.44	0.87
More tour guides to be made available	90 (56.3%)	63 (39.4%)	6 (3.8%)	1 (0.6%)	0	4.51	0.6
Regular cultural troupes on ground	101 (63.1%)	52 (32.5%)	6 (3.8%)	0	1 (0.6%)	4.58	0.63

Field survey (2024)

Strategies Recommended for Achieving High Level of Tourist Satisfaction and Loyalty

Findings presented in Table 5 shows that majority (56.9%) of the respondents highly agrees that implementing multi-channel support, such as online platforms, help lines, and on-site assistance, can enhance their satisfaction and loyalty. This finding aligns with research by Chen and Gursoy (2001), who emphasized the importance of providing multiple channels for tourist support to cater to diverse preferences and needs. Similarly, majority (58.8%) of the respondents agree that regular measuring of customers' satisfaction is crucial for ensuring high levels of tourist satisfaction and loyalty. This result is consistent with the findings of Ryu and Han (2010), who highlighted the significance of continuous

feedback mechanisms to monitor and improve tourist satisfaction over time. Also a high proportion (62.5%) of respondents highly agrees that actively asking for customer feedback can contribute to improved satisfaction and loyalty. This result is supported by the research of Sparks and Browning (2011), who emphasized the importance of proactive feedback solicitation in identifying areas for improvement and addressing tourist concerns promptly.

Nearly half (48.1%) of the respondents agree that promptly responding to all feedback is essential for enhancing satisfaction and loyalty. This finding is in line with the findings of Kim and Han (2014), who emphasized the positive impact of responsiveness to feedback on tourist perceptions of service quality and overall satisfaction. A notable percentage (25.0%) agree with increasing prices for better services. This finding contrasts with the traditional view that price increases may negatively impact tourist satisfaction and loyalty as described by Choi and Choi, (2020) in their findings in similar research. Results also showed that a majority (61.9%) of respondents highly agree that providing on-site lodging and accommodation options can enhance satisfaction and loyalty. This result is consistent with the research of Wang and Fesenmaier (2007), who highlighted the positive impact of convenient accommodation options on tourist satisfaction and revisit intentions. A considerable proportion (56.3%) of the respondents highly agrees that increasing the availability of tour guides can improve satisfaction and loyalty.

This finding maybe because tourists have to wait their turn for a tour guide to return from taking the first batch of tourists up the hills, it certainly makes sense for tourists to advocate for more tour guides so they do not have to spend time being idle at the foot of the hill, especially for those who stay far away from the destination. This finding is supported by the research of Jamal and Getz (1999), who emphasized the role of knowledgeable and accessible tour guides in enhancing tourist experiences and perceptions of destination quality. The majority (63.1%) of respondents highly agree that regular cultural performances on-site contribute to satisfaction and loyalty. This result is consistent with the findings of Lee *et al*. (2012), who highlighted the positive impact of cultural authenticity and entertainment offerings on tourist satisfaction and destination loyalty.

Relationship between Destination Image and Satisfaction

The results presented in Table 6 indicate a significant positive relationship between destination image and tourist satisfaction with Idanre Hills, with a correlation coefficient (r) of 0.559 and a p-value of 0.000. This finding supports the hypothesis that a favorable destination image contributes to higher levels of tourist satisfaction. It aligns with previous research by Baloglu and Brinberg (1997), who similarly found that destination image significantly, influences tourist satisfaction.

As revealed by the relationship between socio-demographic characteristics and tourist satisfaction, age, employment status, income, and residence exhibit statistically significant associations with tourist satisfaction ($p < 0.05$). This indicates that tourists' age, employment status, income level, and place of residence influence their satisfaction with Idanre Hills. These findings are consistent with studies by Beerli and Martin (2004), who identified socio-demographic factors as significant predictors of tourist satisfaction and destination loyalty.

However, gender, education, marital status, and religion did not show significant relationships with tourist satisfaction in this study. This is in line with findings from Choi and Chu (2001), suggesting that these socio-demographic variables may not consistently predict tourist satisfaction across different destinations.

Table 6: Relationship between Destination Image and Satisfaction

Variables	Correlation value (r)	Sig. value	Decision
Satisfaction*destination	0.559**	0	Significant

Field survey (2024)

Table 7: Relationship between Socio-demographic Characteristics and Tourists' Satisfaction

Variables	Chi square ($\chi 2$)	Sig. value	Decision
Age	26.102	0.01	Significant
Gender	7.474	0.113	Not significant
Education	11.713	0.469	Not significant
Marital status	8.409	0.752	Not significant
Religion	6.4	0.603	Not significant
Employment status	31.799	0.011	Significant
Income	21.177	0.048	Significant
Residence	17.341	0.002	Significant

Field survey (2024)

Conclusion

The findings of this study highlight the significant role of destination image and socio-demographic characteristics in shaping tourist satisfaction at Idanre Hills. The analysis revealed a strong positive relationship between destination image and tourist satisfaction, underscoring the importance of cultivating a favorable image to enhance visitor experiences. Additionally, socio-demographic factors such as age, employment status, income, and residence emerged as key determinants of tourist satisfaction, indicating that tailored marketing strategies and services catering to diverse visitor profiles could contribute to higher satisfaction levels. Based on these findings this study recommends that stakeholders should focus on improving and promoting the destination's image through strategic marketing campaigns, emphasizing its unique cultural heritage, natural attractions, and safety measures. Investing in infrastructure development and maintaining cleanliness can further enhance the overall appeal of Idanre Hills.

It is also recommended that there should be personalized services by developing customized tourism packages and services tailored to the preferences and needs of different visitor segments based on socio-demographic characteristics. This could involve offering specialized guided tours, cultural experiences, and accommodation options suitable for varying age groups, income levels, and employment statuses. Management and stakeholders should implement mechanisms for regularly assessing tourist satisfaction and destination image through surveys, feedback forms, and online reviews. This continuous monitoring allows for timely identification of areas needing improvement and facilitates proactive response to visitor feedback. Fostering partnerships with local communities to involve them in tourism development initiatives and ensure their active participation in preserving cultural heritage and providing authentic experiences for visitors, should be encouraged. Engaging local residents as tour guides and promoting community-based tourism can contribute to a sense of authenticity and enhance visitor satisfaction. Also, providing training and capacity-building programs for tourism stakeholders, including tour guides, hospitality staff, and local artisans, to enhance service quality, cultural awareness, and hospitality skills, will go a long way in contributing to visitor's satisfaction. Investing in human capital development can lead to improved visitor experiences and positive word-of-mouth promotion.

There is need to embrace sustainable tourism practices to safeguard natural resources, preserve cultural integrity, and promote responsible visitor behavior. Implementing sustainable tourism initiatives not only ensures the long-term viability of Idanre Hills as a tourist destination but also enhances its appeal to environmentally conscious travelers.

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