Assessment of Tourists Perception and Satisfaction of Tanzania Destination

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Abstract

Tourism industry is very much affected with perception the tourists carry with them about a destination. This study aimed at assessing international tourists' perception of various attributes in Tanzania and examining their general satisfaction with Tanzania destination. It is quantitative in nature and utilized a survey research design. A total of 286 self-administered questionnaires were used in collecting primary data from all tourism circuits in Tanzania. The circuits are the Northern circuit (N), The Southern circuit (S), the Western Circuit (W), Coastal circuit(C) and Zanzibar. Descriptive statistics (Frequencies, Percentages, Means, and Standard Deviations) and inferential statistics (t-test) were conducted to assess tourists' perception and satisfaction with Tanzania destination on culture, wildlife, landscape, accommodation, restaurants, security and safety, infrastructure and tour guidance. Conclusions and recommendations are drawn from the findings and discussions thereof.

Key words: Perception, Satisfaction, International Tourists, Destination, Factor Conditions

Introduction

Despite the now well developed literature from western world and emerging economies on tourists' perception and satisfaction, there seems to be inconclusive findings regarding what satisfies tourists on each destination.

Each destination is unique and as a result, what dissatisfies or satisfies a tourist in one destination is different from what satisfies the same in another destination. For instance, while Alegre and Garau (2010) found that tourists complained about overdevelopment, congestion and dilapidation of the environment in Spain, Meng et al. (2008) found that employees' friendliness and quality accommodations were more important to tourist satisfaction than the unique natural environment in USA. Studying the cause for decreasing tourists to Kenya, Akama and Kieti (2003) related the decline in number of tourists to bad transportation and political unrest. There is paucity of research in the area in developing countries in general and Tanzania, in particular, and thus far, a significant research gap exists on what would explain international tourists' perception towards a destination and their subsequent satisfaction or dissatisfaction. Only a few studies have been conducted in Tanzania on international tourists' perception in the country. Gössling, Bredberg, Randow, Sandström and Svensson (2006) focused on international tourists' perception on importance of climate for travel decisions in Zanzibar. It is in this context that this study sought to examine international tourists' perceptions and satisfaction level with attributes provided by the Tanzania tourism sector. The study also intends to understand the tourists' perceptual differences along demographic features and countries of origin.

Tourism, especially international tourism is critical to Tanzania's economy and is one of the fastest-growing activities in the world (Bashagi and Muchapondwa, 2009). International tourism incorporates activities of persons travelling to and staying in places outside their usual environment, for not more than one consecutive year, for leisure, business or other purposes (WTO, 2007). The sector is a major source of foreign exchange and plays a pivotal role in the country's economic growth and development estimated to account for 12% of the country's GDP (Kahyarara and Mchallo, 2008). In 2007, Tanzania tourism sector directly and indirectly

contributed US$1.6 billion to the economy, while in 2008, the contribution declined to US $1.1 billion (Mitchell, Keane and Laidlaw, 2009). Shitundu and Luvanga (2003) stated other advantages of the sector as boosting sales of different goods and services as well as cultural entertainment. It is in recognition of its importance that the Government of Tanzania came up with the National Tourism Policy in 1991(Revised in 1999) that aimed at encouraging development of sustainable and quality tourism that is culturally and socially acceptable, ecologically friendly, environmentally sustainable and economically viable. While the policy is focused on addressing the national tourism challenges (supply side constraints), it is the thesis of this study to examine international tourists perception with regard to basic and advanced touristic factor endowments.

Destination attributes are commonly used in empirical research to measure tourists' perception of a destination (Turner and Reisinger, 1999). According to Goeldner, Ritchie and Mcintosh (2000), attraction, accommodation, and transportation are the three destination attributes against which international tourists make evaluation of the quality of experiences and extent of satisfaction. On the attraction front, Tanzania's tourism sector is built around abundant wildlife and diverse natural attractions. Tanzania has magnificent natural resources, with several world heritage natural sites, rich fauna and much protected land area. Tanzania also boasts of shimmering natural beaches and a variety of cultural heritage sites (Bashagi and Muchapondwa, 2009). While Tanzania is endowed with unique tourist attractions favourable for growth of the sector, poor roads, underdeveloped air travel and generally, inadequate infrastructure including accommodation facilities have acted as deterrents to efforts to satisfy international tourists. It is indisputably a known fact that Tanzania bears unparalleled tourism potential both in terms of abundance and variety of its attractions coming only second after Brazil (Kijazi, 2010. Strangely though, the country is ranking 109th out of 133 countries globally and 12th

in Africa in terms of competition (WEF, 2013) -a rank higher than previous year's global rankings.

Literature Review

Tourists' Perception of Destination

Tourism industry is very much affected with perception the tourists carry with them about a destination. When international tourists carry positive perceptions about a destination, they will be encouraged to re-visit the destination otherwise they may be deterred from visiting and encouraging others to visit. It is worth noting that tourists' evaluation of quality and satisfaction is based on this perception of an experience. Expectations-Confirmation Theory is commonly adopted in evaluating satisfaction in the tourism industry (Oliver, 1980) and posits that expectations, coupled with perceived performance, lead to post-purchase satisfaction. The theory was used by Parasuraman and Zeithaml (1988) to develop a popularly and frequently used SERVQUAL instrument to measure perceived service quality. Given a plethora of flaws and criticisms leveled against the Expectations-Confirmation Theory, this study, however, adopts the perceived-performance model as advanced and maintained by Tse and Wilton (1988) who argued that satisfaction or lack of it can be assessed only by examining products/services actual performance and that regardless of previous expectations, customer is likely to be satisfied when a product or service performs at a desired level. Supporting this view, Cronin and Taylor (1994) purport that expectations are left out of the evaluation of customer satisfaction as they are inherent in perceptions, do not need to be measured separately and that customers are not conscious about them. Cronin and Taylor (1994) acknowledge that it is possible for researchers to infer consumers' disconfirmation through arithmetic means (the $P - E$ gap) but that "consumer perceptions, not calculations, govern behavior".

Churchill and Suprenant (1982) conclude that for some products with high credence attributes, perception was the only accurate measure of satisfaction. Tourism products fit well the high credence bill.

Research Methodology

This study was quantitative in nature and utilized a survey research design. A self-administered questionnaire was developed and used to measure international tourists' perceptions with eight items of Tanzania destination. Use of questionnaires is believed to get the most reliable responses (Hurst, 1994). The Eight (8) items were measured on a 5-point Likert Scale from 5= Strongly Agree to 1= Strongly Disagree. These items are culture, wildlife, landscape, accommodation, restaurants, security and safety, infrastructure and tour guidance. A one item 5-point scale was used to examine respondents' satisfaction level. The scale was from 1= Lowly Satisfied to 5=Highly Satisfied. Likelihood to recommend Tanzania to others was examined on a 5-point scale from 1=Not likely to 5=Most likely as adopted from Cronin et al., (2000) and Duman (2002). Respondents were also asked to list three aspects which represent the best and worst experiences while in Tanzania. Demographic information such as Country of Residence, Age, Gender, Education, and, Average Monthly Income, and Frequency of Visits, and Occupational Status were also measured. A survey was conducted from January to April 2013 in Zanzibar, Arusha, Iringa, Manyara, Kilimanjaro, Kigoma, Katavi, Tanga, Morogoro, Pwani and Mbeya regions of Tanzania. Specifically, the survey covered 276 respondents. Data were analyzed using both descriptive statistics (Frequencies, Mean and Standard Deviations) and Inferential Statistics (T-Tests) were used in the analysis of the collected data.

Study Findings and Discussions

Profile of Respondents

A sample profile indicates that out of the 286 surveyed international tourists whose average age was 38.7 years, 50.5% were females. Findings indicate that the tourists are relatively highly educated with 47% and 36.2% having a university degree and postgraduate degree respectively. Majority (41.2%) of the international tourists were earning less than 25,000 USD annually with most of them originating from Europe(64.3%), America(21.3%), Africa(5.9%) , Asia (5.2%) and Australia and New Zealand(3.1).

Table 1: *International Tourists Profile*

Gender (n=285)		*Frequency (N)*	*Percent (%)*
	Female	144	50.5
	Male	141	49.5
Level of education(n=279)			
	Non degree	47	16.8
	Graduate degree	131	47.0
	Postgraduate degree	101	36.2
Annual income in US$(n=250)			
	Less than $25,000	103	41.2
	$25,000-$49,000	72	28.8
	$50,000-$99,000	49	19.6
	$100,000 and above	26	10.4
Nationality (n=286)			
	European	184	64.3
	Americas	61	21.3
	Asian	15	5.2
	Australia/new Zealand	9	3.1
	Africa	17	5.9
Age (n=281)	Minimum	Maximum	Mean (Std Dev.)
	13	75	38.73(15.919)

Tourist Satisfaction with Tourism Elements and Overall Satisfaction

International tourists who were surveyed and included in this study were moderately satisfied with their trip to Tanzania for virtually all aspects but three. The study revealed that the first three key tourist components tourists were highly satisfied with are landscape (Mean=4.10, SD=1.569), followed by wildlife (Mean=3.82, SD=1.818), and culture (Mean=3.55, SD=1.596). Landscapes are noted to have high potential as a leading tourist attraction, especially in Northern Tanzania consisting of the highest mountain in Africa-Mt. Kilimanjaro, Mt. Meru, Olduvai Gorge, and the Rift Valley. Critically, the tourists' components that tourists were satisfied with are those a country does not do anything to bring them into being. Borrowing from Porter's Diamond, one would argue that Tanzania is endowed with basic factor conditions such as natural resources, climate, geographical location and demographics, which requires a few or little investments. These findings are supported by WEF (2013) reports, which revealed that performed well in terms of human, cultural and natural resources where they emerged 49 in the world followed by Kenya at 60 and Uganda at 79. However, the country is constrained with advanced factor conditions (communication, infrastructure, skilled labour, and research facilities), which are created and upgraded through reinvestment. Porter (1990) argues that it is the second set of factor conditions which are the most significant for competitive advantage of a country.

However, Tanzania falls in terms of infrastructure category, emerging in the 125th position while Kenya was ranked in 105th (WEF, 2013). The WEF report findings are supported by these study findings in that specifically, tourists were disatisfied with infrastructure (e.g., transport, health care system, and sewerage), tour guidance and restaurants. According to Okello and Yerian (2009), for majority of tourists who travel through tour operators, the quality of an individual experience largely depends on competency of

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the tour guide. Likewise, it is known that food constitutes an important component of international tourists. However, it is noted that in many African tourist destinations restaurants do not offer the kind of services that meet expectations of the tourists. The observed shortcomings, according to Mabunda (2004), are with regard to unattractive menus, improper presentation, and lack of meals variety, unhygienic conditions, interior decor, service and ridiculously high prices. The sentiments were equally shared with an additional of filthy toilets and washrooms in the restaurants.

Safety and security are some of the aspects, which are highly prioritized by the tourists when it comes to choosing a destination. However, in this study, tourists indicated that they were generally neither satisfied nor dissatisfied with Tanzania's safety and security with a Mean of 3.17, making it a fifth ranking out of 8 tourism elements. Mansfeld and Pizam (2006) argue that "so far, the literature dealing with these interrelations identified four major types of security incidents that triggered some form of negative impact on tourists. The four types in this context are "crime-related incidents, terrorism, war and civil/political unrest" (Mansfeld and Pizam, 2006). The tourist gives high priority on safety and security issues when selecting thus making the question of adequate security to the tourists during their visit is also very important (Nurunnabi, 1995).

Tourists were generally satisfied with Tanzania as a destination with a Mean of 3.86 and the likelihood of them recommending the destination was high with a Mean of 4.01. Given that tourists rely heavily on non-commercial sources of information, such as recommendations from friends and family when choosing a holiday (Klenosky and Gitelson, 1998), these findings augur well with the Tanzania drive to promote the sector as tourists with higher satisfaction are influential in generating positive word of mouth. As table 2 displays, the lowest value of the standard deviation is 1.38 and the highest 1.845, which means that the values are not equally distributed

and therefore the respondents really differed in their responses. These results are not surprising, as the different tourists were subject to different destinations in Tanzania from Zanzibar to Kigoma, Arusha to Katavi.

Table 2: *Tourist Satisfaction with Tourism Elements and Overall Satisfaction*

	N	*Mean*	*Std. Deviation*	*Mean Rank*
Culture	275	3.55	1.596	3
Wildlife	277	3.82	1.818	2
Landscape	277	4.10	1.569	1
Accommodation	276	3.31	1.539	4
Restaurants	**276**	**2.99**	**1.497**	**6**
Security and Safety	276	3.17	1.544	5
Infrastructure	**273**	**2.65**	**1.380**	**8**
Tour guidance	**270**	**2.98**	**1.845**	**7**
Overall satisfaction	271	3.86	1.476	NA
Likely to recommend	274	4.01	1.508	NA

Tourists' General Satisfaction with Tanzania as a Destination

International tourists were asked to rate their satisfaction level with Tanzania as a destination on a five point Likert scale from 1=Lowly Satisfied to 5=Highly Satisfied. The mean score of satisfaction is 3.86 with a standard deviation of 1.497. The descriptive measures show that tourists were satisfied with tourist products consumed in Tanzania. Further analysis was conducted to confirm the findings. A one sample t-test revealed the findings as indicated on Table 3. The p-value < 0.05, hence leads to conclude that the tourists satisfaction rating for Tanzania as a destination is greater than the test value of 3.

Table 3: *Tourists' Overall Satisfaction with Tanzania as a Destination*

	t	*df*	*Sig. (2-tailed)*	*Mean Difference*	*95% Confidence Interval*	
					Lower	Upper
Overall satisfaction with Tanzania	9.300	260	.000	.86	.68	1.04

(Test Value = 3)

Conclusions

Tanzania is doing relatively well on the basic factor endowments such as culture, wildlife, landscape and accommodation facilities. These factors require just sustainable utilization and conservation so that they can benefit this generation and be maintained for future generations' needs. The great international tourists' concerns are on advanced factor conditions (restaurants, infrastructure, tour guidance, security and safety) which requires a lot of concerted efforts and investments to make them appeal to the international tourists and meet their expectations.

Recommendations

From a marketing managerial perspective, findings should assist the tourism policy makers and practitioners to guide or develop tourists' products by addressing areas where Tanzania as a destination has proved to be weak while improving further areas of strength which are the basic factor endowments. The researcher would wish to support Bashagi and Muchapondwa's (2009) recommendations that to improve international tourist satisfaction, Tanzania would do well by training staff in the tourism industry such as tour guides and other service providers in the hospitality industry. Other areas that need further improvements are such as infrastructures like road, airport facilities, toilets, and water supply, electricity

and air conditioning facilities at airport terminals. These recommendations are however not new. They have repeatedly been expressed in various studies including the annual international visitors' exit survey report conducted by Bank of Tanzania and the National Bureau of Statistics on behalf of the government. It is thus being again being emphasized that the government and other stakeholders in the tourism industry should continue to improve infrastructure if it were to increase the number of international visitors, particularly the senior citizens who are more risk averse as was recommended in (URT, 2009, 2010, and 2011).

Acknowledgements

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