

The Influence of Destination Image on Tourists' Experience at Osun Osogbo World Heritage Site

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Abstract : Heritage sites have evolved to preserve culture and heritage and also to educate and entertain tourists. Tourist travel decisions and behavior are influenced by destination image and value of the experience of tourists. Perceived value is one of the important tools for securing a competitive edge in tourism destinations. The model of Ritchie and Crouch distinguished 36 attributes of competitiveness which are classified into five factors which are quality of experience, touristic attractiveness, environment and infrastructure, entertainment/outdoor activities and cultural traditions. The study extended this model with a different grouping of the determinants of destination competitiveness. The theoretical framework used for this study assumes that apart from attractions already situated in the grove, satisfaction with destination common service, and entertainment and events, can all be used in creating a positive image for/and in attracting customers (destination selection) to visit Osun Sacred Osogbo Grove during and after annual celebrations. All these will impact positively on travel experience of customers as well as their spiritual fulfillment. Destination image has a direct impact on tourists' satisfaction which consequently impacts on tourists' likely future behavior on whether to revisit a cultural destination or not. The study investigated the variables responsible for destination image competitiveness of the Heritage Site; assessed the factors enhancing the destination image; and evaluated the perceived value realized by tourists from their cultural experience at the grove. A complete enumeration of tourists above 18 years of age who visited the Heritage Site within the month of March and April 2017 was taken. 240 respondents, therefore, were used for the study. The structured questionnaire with 5 Likert scales was administered. Five factors comprising 63 variables were used to determine the destination image competitiveness through principal component analysis, while multiple regressions were used to evaluate perceived value of tourists at the grove. Results revealed that 11 out of the 12 variables determining the destination image competitiveness were significant in attracting tourists to the grove. From the R-value, all factors predicted tourists' value of experience strongly ($R = 0.936$). The percentage variance of customer value was explained by 87.70% of the variance of destination common service, entertainment and event satisfaction, travel environment satisfaction and spiritual satisfaction, with F-value being significant at 0.00. Factors with high alpha value contributed greatly to adding value to enhancing destination and tourists' experience. 11 variables positively predicted tourist value with significance. Managers of Osun World Heritage Site should improve on variables critical to adding values to tourists' experience.

Keywords : competitiveness, destination image, Osun Osogbo world heritage site, tourists

Conference Title : ICCTOM 2019 : International Conference on Creative Tourism and Management

Conference Location : Berlin, Germany

Conference Dates : July 22-23, 2019