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Hospitality and Tourism Management Association of Nigeria. (HATMAN)

Floor 5, Suit 99, Turaki Ali House (NNDC) 3 Kanta Road, Kaduna, Nigeria.

Website: [www.hatman2010.org](http://www.hatman2010.org)

Telephone: +2348034072296 +2348067992234

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## EFFECT OF DESTINATION IMAGE ON TOURIST SATISFACTION AND LOYALTY IN TOURIST CENTERS IN ABIA STATE, NIGERIA

Cletus Okechukwu Obinwanne<sup>1\*</sup>  
Obed Luka Kpaji<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Michael Okpara University of Agriculture, Abia State, Nigeria.

<sup>2</sup>Isa Mustapher Agwai Polytechnic, Nasarawa State, Nigeria.

\*Corresponding author: obinwanne.cletus@mouau.edu.ng

### ABSTRACT

*This study was aimed at ascertaining the effect of destination image on tourist satisfaction and loyalty in tourist centers in Abia state. Descriptive survey research design was adopted of which data were sourced primarily through questionnaire. A sample size of 384 was statistically determined using Cochran formula. A total of 384 copies of questionnaire were administered to 384 tourist that visited the three selected tourist centers of the study - Ojukwu Bunker at Umuahia, the National war Museum, Umuahia and Arochukwu cave within a period of one month. The data collected were analyzed using mean and SD while hypothesis was tested using Chi-square ( $X^2$ ). The study revealed that destination image has effect on the satisfaction of tourists that visit those tourist centers. This is revealed by the grand mean of 3.60 which is above the bench mark of 3.0 for decision taking. Secondly, that destination image has influence on destination loyalty towards the Study areas. This is revealed by the grand mean of 3.52 which is above the bench mark of 3.0 for decision taking. The result revealed that Chi-square calculated ( $X^2_c$ ) with the value of 3.321 > critical value ( $X^2_{0.05}$ ) of 0.039. It is concluded that destination image has influences on tourist satisfaction and loyalty in the Study area. It is recommended that management of tourist centers design a good destination image that can attract and retain customers, that designed tourist centers should be properly managed to meet up customers' expectations so as to influence customers loyalty and that customer's relationship management should be properly maintained through proper description of tourist center activities so as to increase the level of satisfaction thereof.*

**Keywords:** Destination image, tourist satisfaction, tourist loyalty, tourist centers, perceived value

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### INTRODUCTION

Destination image is an intellectual demonstration of the understanding, mind-set, and on the whole opinion of a particular destination. According to Tasci, Gartner, and Cavusgi (2017), destination image is an interactive system of thoughts, opinions, feelings, visualizations, and intentions toward a destination. Okoronkwo (2017) describes destination image as the perception of destination features or attributes that is known as cognitive images. Adenji (2016) stated that image is a key factor in destination choice for first-timers. It refers to mental pictures formed about a place concerning how safe, aesthetic, and attractive; and whether the experience would be an enjoyable one. Chiori (2014) and Onyekwere (2017) describe destination image as the people's belief, idea or impression about a place. Okafor (2016) defined destination image as an interactive system of thoughts, opinions, feelings, visualizations, and intentions toward destination. Chi and Qu (2008)

define destination image as an individual's mental representation of the knowledge, feelings, and overall perception of a particular destination. It is formed as a result of interactions between cognitive and affective elements (Ishie and Ocha, 2016). Okon (2015) describes destination image as the perception of destination features or attributes known as cognitive images, while the combination of cognitive and affective images refers to mental pictures or place imagery such as a safe and enjoyable experience for the family.

Udoh (2019) views image of tourism destination as having a significant positive relationship on tourism destination attractiveness. It is important in terms of its effects on tourist behavior such as destination choice, decision making and satisfaction (Okoro, 2014). A few destination image studies have investigated destination image as an independent variable influencing several consumer behaviour variables concerning not only before, but also during and after visiting a destination (Okonkwo, 2015).

Tourists may form a positive or negative image towards a destination; but, Oko (2016) claims that they will choose one destination over another only when its positive image aspects exceed its negative image aspects. In another approach, Prebensen (2017) argues that the image of a tourist destination can be influenced by three sources of information like the organic image, the induced image and the modified-induced image. However, other researchers insist that destination image must not only be positive but also be strong in order to be chosen by travelers (Ross, 2013; Hunt 2015). In order to fully evaluate the image of a destination, that destination has to be studied from the tourists' point of view, as well as the image that the residents have regarding a particular destination. Destination image may directly or indirectly affect tourist satisfaction through tourist expectations, perceived quality and perceived value. The positive relationship between destination image and satisfaction is well established in the tourism literature for different types of destinations, including island destinations (Prayag and Ryan, 2012). Mohamad and Dehgan, (2011) indicate that Malaysia is perceived as offering natural scenic beauty supported by good facilities for food and accommodation. In the same vein, Leong and Acosta (2010) and Mohamad and Dehgan, (2012) found that destination image is the antecedent to satisfaction for tourists visiting Malaysia.

Today, with the strong increase in world tourism, several new destinations have emerged in addition to the established favorite attractions in Nigeria. This has created a lot of challenges in marketing of tourism destinations. The more places in the world are developed for tourism exploitation, the more destination choices are available to visitors. Accordingly, a large number of existing and new destinations are competing with each other to attract tourists as well as to gain a better position in the international tourism market. This globally competitive environment requires dedicated efforts in destination management and promotion in order to create an attractive portfolio of tourism products and services at the local level. Creating and managing destination image is becoming one of the key sources of competitive advantage and one of the important elements in the process of tourist destination choice (Okafor, 2018, Okonkwo, 2015, Onuoha, 2016 and Offor, 2016). Besides, tourist satisfaction with a destination is another important point that should be focused on by the destination because if a destination is able to identify and satisfy

the needs and wants of tourists, these tourists will possibly make repeat visits and spread positive word of mouth publicly, which is so-called destination loyalty (Udo, 2014, Okezie, 2017 and Anyanwu, 2015). Essentially, it has been proved by a number of tourism researches that tourists' destination loyalty is increased by positive destination image and high satisfaction (Enyeiribe, 2018). Therefore, creating a distinctive and appealing destination image and maximizing tourist satisfaction are the key missions of any destinations in order to win in this on-going globally intensive competition.

Conversely, tourist destinations with better diverse attractions have become more significant than individual attractions due to better highways over the past few years in the world. In destination image, tourist satisfaction and destination loyalty are vital factors which are used to explain visitor motivation or their intention to revisit a tourist destination (Okoro, 2015). Tourist satisfaction is a post consumption assessment of the service received and is entirely dependent on destination image. As the number of areas developed for tourism increase, the choice of destinations available to consumers' drastically expands.

Furthermore, today's tourists, encouraged by increased time devoted for leisure, increasing disposable income, and highly efficient transport networks, have ability and capacity to choose from various destinations available to them. As such, tourism marketing faces issues of influencing the consumer decisions in an ever increasing complex and competitive market place (Alexandris, Kouthouris, and Meligidis, 2016). One of the most striking challenges in tourism marketing is a need to effectively position a destination. In order to successfully encourage tourism in the targeted market, destination should be differentiated from its competitors, or otherwise positively positioned in consumers' minds (Ekinici, and Hosany, 2016). A key strategic component in this instance is creation and enhancement of distinct, unique and appealing perception, or image, of that particular destination (Pike, 2013).

There exist negative and positive associations with a destination, its products, people, which are somewhat difficult to alter (Eberechi, (2018). Destination images affect tourists travel decisions and behavior towards that destination as well as the level of satisfaction, recollection and the tourism experience (Naidoo, Ramseook and Ladsawut, 2010). Therefore, perceived images of the destination form a backbone of evaluation and

selection process thereby giving a link between motivation and destination selection.

Meanwhile, to comprehend the range of perceptions, images, and level of satisfaction through motivation is a key to the understanding and prediction of tourism demand and its effects on local tourism destination. Simply put, the understanding of destination image and consumers' perception is important to a destination and acts as a basis of more efficient and effective future strategic planning and decision making. Practically, it implies that image studies are necessary conditions for successful marketing strategy (Lai, Griffin, and Babin, 2014). This way, it is essential to understand timings of image formation, and the exact time when that image influences tourist satisfaction and hence motivation to revisit (Sirakaya, 2016). Essentially, those destinations with strong, positive images are likely to be chosen in making travel decisions (Heung, Qu, and Chu, 2010). Thus, destination image has a critical role in various travel models of making travelling decisions (Yoon, and Uysal, 2015). Once at the destination, tourists' satisfaction entirely depends upon evaluation of expectations on previously perceived images and the actual reality the destination portrays (Prayang, 2008).

Instructively, Anyanwu (2015) defines tourist satisfaction as the extent of the tourist's fulfillment pleasure which occurred from the trip experience about a product or service feature that fulfills the tourist's desires, expectations and wants in association with the trip. Satisfaction is created by the comparison of the customer's expectation before and after consumption. In tourism context, satisfaction is primarily referred to as a function of pre-travel expectations and post-travel experiences. The tourist is satisfied when experiences go beyond the expectations. However, if the tourist feels displeasure, dissatisfaction will be the expected outcome (Chen and Chen, 2013; Reisinger and Turner, 2016). From the foregoing discussion, it is understood that satisfaction of tourists is caused by two different dimensions: firstly, it is related to the pre-expectation of the tourist before they travel; and secondly, it is referred to the justification of the tourist on the delivered services after the travel, and based on the real experiences. Thus, the important role of destination image, both in understanding tourist travel behavior and designing of efficient and effective tourism marketing strategies, emphasizes the need to create tactics so as to comprehensively and accurately measure this concept.

To achieve this task, tourism scholars have the benefit of assessing the methods which have been created to measure destination image in general. However, since tourism destinations are complicated and vary in their diversity, it is important to develop more accurate, specific and complex conceptual frameworks so as to accurately measure destination image

Conclusively, a number of studies have already been done to measure image destinations, such as regions, states and countries. However, to date, no serious effort has been put to fully examine this study in terms of its efficiency and effectiveness in measuring and defining destination image concepts. As such, the bedrock of this research is to ascertain the effect of destination image on tourist satisfaction and loyalty in tourist centers in Abia state.

There is a strong indication that strong interdependences and relationship between destination image and tourist satisfaction has bloomed in the last decades. Okafor (2018) explains the relationship among image and satisfaction. Previous studies show that the image of a destination has positive influences on the overall tourist satisfaction (Castro, Atila and Fisun, 2017; Hernandez, Jang, and Feng, 2006) and that image is a critical factor in influencing tourism satisfaction (Castro, Atila and Fisun 2017).

Tourism studies also confirm that a positive evaluation of the destination image would bring about higher level of loyalty demonstrated by the tourists (Zhang and Dean, 2014). The relation between customer satisfaction and loyalty has been well established by former literature (Okeke, 2017). The loyalty of a tourist is dependent on tourist satisfaction. In tourism, there are lots of empirical proofs that tourist satisfaction is a strong indicator of their intentions to revisit and recommend the destination to other people (Okon, 2017). It is normally supposed that satisfaction leads to repeat purchase and positive word-of-mouth recommendation. This means that if tourists are satisfied with the product or service, they are more likely to continue purchasing and more willing to spread positive word-of-mouth.

There is a serious concern that tourism in Abia State is not growing despite numerous attractions which the State has been endowed with both natural and man-made. Tourism industry has witnessed a noticeable steady decline in the State. In the contrast, there is noticeable growth worldwide due to the economic growth and subsequent improvement

of the quality of life of people (Badulescu, Badulescu, Simut, and Dzitac, 2020). The decline in the tourist inflow to the State could be either that tourists do not return to the attractions or that they do not recommend the attractions to others. When tourists get a wrong impression, it is possible that these tourists will not return to tourist attractions and may not recommend tourist. Erawan (2019) states that the appearance of a destination affects tourist loyalty, where tourist loyalty can be assessed by revisiting tourist attractions and recommending tourist attractions to others or what is called word of mouth. Tourism industry in Abia State is not growing along with the tourism growth witnessed globally. Tourists that visited the attractions in the State are likely not repeating their visits and also not recommending the attractions they visited to others due to the fact that they were not satisfied - their expectations were not met thereby leaving them with a bad impression of the destination. Based on the foregoing, there is need to examine the effect of destination image on tourist satisfaction and loyalty in tourist centers in Abia State, Nigeria.

### Objectives of Study

The specific objectives of the study are to:

- i. Determine effect of destination image on tourist satisfaction in tourist centers in Abia State.
- ii. Ascertain the effect of destination image on tourist loyalty among tourists in the Study areas.
- iii. Examine the influence of tourist satisfaction on destination loyalty in the study areas

### Research Questions

- i. What is the effect of destination image on tourist satisfaction towards the Study areas?
- ii. What effect does destination image have on tourist loyalty among tourists in the Study areas?
- iii. How does tourist satisfaction influence destination loyalty in the study areas?

### Statement of Hypothesis

The researcher formulated the following Null Hypothesis (Ho) which was subjected to test to ascertain the effect of destination image on tourist satisfaction and loyalty.

Null Hypothesis (Ho):

There is no significant relationship between destination image and tourist satisfaction and loyalty in tourist centers in Abia State.

### METHODOLOGY

The researcher adopted the survey research design which suits the research due its descriptive and interactive measure to harness information from a given population respondent. The study area, Abia State is located in South East, Nigeria. The capital city is situated in Umuahia, and the major commercial city is Aba, which was formerly a British Colonial government outpost in the region, and is also one of the most populated areas in Nigeria.

Abia State has many tourist sites such as Azumini Blue River in Aba, Ojukwu Bunker at Umuahia, the long Juju of Arochukwu, the National Museum in Aba, Arochukwu cave and so many other areas of wonderful tourist attractions which can aid in ascertaining the exact destinations image on tourist satisfaction and loyalty in tourist centers in the State.

Primary data were used for this work. The research instrument used in this research was questionnaire which was administered to the tourists of the selected tourism centers in Abia State which include Ojukwu Bunker at Umuahia, the National Museum in Aba and Arochukwu cave. The tourist centers used for the study were purposively selected on the basis of their popularity. These tourist centers were popular and more visited among other tourist centers in the State. The questionnaire was structured using 5-point Likert Scale rated as - Very High Extent (VHE) = 5, High Extent (VE) = 4, Undecided (U) = 3, Little Extent (LE) = 2 and Very Little (VLE) = 1

However, the research questions have the cut off mark of 3.0 (5+4 + 3 + 2 + 1 /5) which was used as benchmark for taking decisions. Hence, items with 3.0 and above were accepted while items with mean score less than 3.0 were rejected. The population of the study constituted of all the tourists that visited the selected tourism centers in Abia. The proportion of the population is infinite. The sample size was statistically determined using the Cochran formula. The Cochran sampling technique (1977) sample size determination formula is stated thus;

$$n = \frac{Z^2 pq}{e^2}$$

Where

n = required sample size

Z = the value of Z table at 95% confidence level (i.e. 1.96 given)

P = proportion of the population at 50% (since the population is unknown, we use

p= 0.5 which assumes maximum heterogeneity (i.e. a 50/50 split)

q = 1 - p i.e. 1 - 0.5 = 0.5

e = margin of error at 5%

$$n = \frac{(1.96)^2 \times 0.5 \times 0.5}{(0.05)^2}$$

$$n = \frac{3.8416 \times 0.5 \times 0.5}{0.0025}$$

$$= \frac{0.9604}{0.0025}$$

$$n = 384$$

The researcher adopted purposive sampling technique which guided in selecting participants who were very informed, enlightened and can read and write to give accurate information when responding to the questionnaire for the study.

The researcher used test-retest reliability to test the consistency of different administrations and also to determine the coefficient reliability of the instrument. A sample group of ten persons was used for the test. The test was administered to same group of ten persons at two separate occasions. This measured the score of the consistency of the test-retest. Cronbach Alpha was applied in which the value of 0.85 was obtained. To ensure the research instrument is valid, the researcher made use of content validity and this ensured that the research instrument covers the research objectives and research questions. The researcher structured the questionnaire in a simple way so that the respondents could not find it difficult to select their favored/preferred option. The research instrument was given to five experts in Hospitality Management and Tourism Department of Micheal Okpara University of Agriculture, Umudike, Abia State to make necessary corrections. Through this, the researcher achieved some level of reliability and validity through the various methods and techniques that were employed in collecting and analyzing data. The study made use of descriptive statistics such as table, frequency, percentages, mean and standard deviation. Chi-square ( $X^2$ ) statistical analytical technique was used to test the null hypothesis to determine its acceptance or rejection. The study was carried out at 95% confidence level with critical value ( $X^2_{0.05}$ ). Decision rule is to reject  $H_0$  and accept the  $H_A$  if Chi-square calculated ( $X^2_c$ ) > critical value ( $X^2_{0.05}$ ), and accept  $H_0$  and reject  $H_A$  if Chi-square ( $X^2_c$ ) < critical value ( $X^2_{0.05}$ ).

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1 shows the effect of destination image on tourist satisfaction among tourists in selected tourist centers in Abia State with criterion mean score of

3.00 and six item statements. The mean scores of the six items in the table were seen to be above the bench mark mean score of 3.00 which implies that the respondents agreed to the statement above. It has been accepted that destination image has effect on tourist satisfaction in tourist centers in Abia State.

**Table 1:** Effect of destination image on tourist satisfaction in the area.

Item Statement	VHE	HE	U	LE	VLE	$\bar{X}$	SD	Remark
1 The image of a destination influences your demand as a tourist	38 16.8%	162 71.68%	2 0.88%	12 5.31%	12 5.31%	3.48	1.425	Accept
2 The images of a destination influence the tourist travel choices	92 40.71%	121 53.54%	3 1.33%	8 3.33%	2 0.88%	3.96	1.377	Accept
3 Destination image promotes customer referrals	80 35.40%	138 61.06%	1 0.44%	6 2.65%	1 0.44%	3.51	1.418	Accept
4 Destination image makes a tourist to revisit the destination	64 28.32%	106 46.90%	2 0.88%	41 18.14%	13 5.75%	3.67	1.378	Accept
5 Destination image makes the tourist loyal to the destination	65 28.76%	38 16.81%	5 2.21%	89 39.38%	29 12.83%	3.48	1.432	Accept
6 Destination image motivates the tourist to travel.	59 12.83%	147 65.04%	1 0.44%	17 7.52%	2 0.88%	3.48	1.425	Accept
<b>Grand mean</b>						<b>3.60</b>		<b>Accept</b>

Source: Field Survey, 2021

Key  $\bar{X}$  = Mean

SD = Standard Deviation

This is revealed by the grand mean of 3.60 which is above the bench mark of 3.0 for decision taking. Hence, it was confirmed that destination image has effect on tourist satisfaction towards the Study areas. The mean responses in table 1 revealed that destination image has an effect on tourist satisfaction towards the study areas. This finding agrees with reviewed literatures on consumer behaviors which established relationships among image, perceived value, satisfaction, and loyalty. Erawan (2019) says that the destination image has a considerable influence on tourist satisfaction. Jeong and Kim (2019) state that image destination is a variable that can increase tourist satisfaction. The finding also agrees with Tigre Moura, Gnoth, and Deans (2015) in their study that tourist satisfaction affects the intention to return and recommend tourist destinations to others. Lai, Griffin, and Babin, 2009 maintains that images also have been found to have significant direct and indirect effects on customer satisfaction.

The effect of destination image on tourist satisfaction towards the study areas was examined in table 2. This revealed a criterion mean score of 3.0 and seven item statement. The mean scores of the seven statements were seen to be above the bench mark mean of 3.0 which means that the respondents affirmed the statement. The implication is that the destination image has influence on the destination

**Table 2: Effect of destination image on destination loyalty towards the Study areas.**

Item Statement	VHE	HE	U	LE	VLE	$\bar{X}$	SD	Remark
1 Service quality at destination increases the nature of services rendered	126 55.8%	68 30.1%	7 3.1%	20 8.8%	5 2.2%	3.53	1.226	Accept
2 Service/product quality at the destination promulgate tourist loyalty	108 47.8%	95 42%	4 1.8%	14 6.2%	5 2.2%	3.51	1.453	Accept
3 Provision of customers need at destination creates tourist loyalty	167 73.9%	48 21.2%	4 1.8%	4 1.8%	3 1.3%	3.01	1.543	Accept
4 Variety of services rendered at destination increases tourist loyalty	96 42.5%	95 42%	5 2.2%	20 8.9%	10 4.4%	3.60	1.504	Accept
5 Tourism destination accessibility increases tourist loyalty	112 49.6%	79 33.9%	2 0.9%	30 13.3%	3 1.3%	3.71	1.486	Accept
6 Perceived Organizational Image Increases Tourist Loyalty	142 62.8%	54 23.9%	7 3.1%	13 5.8%	10 4.4%	3.60	1.504	Accept
7 Destination image increases the nature of services rendered	112 49.6%	79 33.9%	2 0.9%	30 13.3%	3 1.3%	3.71	1.486	Accept
<b>Grand Mean</b>						<b>3.52</b>		<b>Accept</b>

Source: Field Survey, 2021

Key  $\bar{X}$  = Mean

SD = Standard Deviation

It is accepted that destination image has effect on destination loyalty towards the Study areas. This is revealed by the grand mean of 3.52 which is above the bench mark of 3.0 for decision taking. Hence, it was confirmed that destination image has effect on destination loyalty towards the Study areas.

The finding is in support of the research carried out by Herle (2018) who stated that due to the fact that people are daily exposed to a multitude of influential factors, their perceptions can easily change. Manhas *et al.*, (2016) states that an important role in the formation of the image is played by the word-of-mouth promotion; which can influence the perceptions of potential tourists. Intentions of recommendation to family or friends are parts of the attitudinal loyalty tourists might manifest towards a destination they have visited and for that matter gaining their loyalty should be a priority for every destination. In another approach, Prebensen (2007 cited in Schaar, 2013) argues that the image of a tourist destination can be influenced by three sources of information which is the organic image, the induced image and the modified-induced image. Organic image refers to what people learn about a particular place at school or from mass-media, books or internet and highlights the fact that people have knowledge of one certain place not only in terms of a tourist experience. All the information about a place people have from external sources may play a role in a tourist deciding to visit or not to visit a destination. Induced image is, instead, the result of marketing efforts and promotional materials presented to potential tourists, aimed at informing and convincing them to visit a destination. Modified-induced image is the one formed as a result of an actual experience within the destination.

Table 3 shows the level of tourist satisfaction and destination loyalty in tourist centers in Abia State with a criterion mean score above 3.0 on seven item statements. The mean scores of the seven variables were seen to be above the bench mark mean of 3.0 which implies that the respondents agreed to the statement below.

Questions	VHE	HE	U	LE	VLE	$\bar{X}$	SD	Remark
1 Good customer relationship management leads to destination loyalty.	77 34.1%	113 50%	3 1.3%	24 10.6%	9 4%	3.41	1.498	Accept
2 Feeling satisfied on behaviour of the service providers at the destination leads to destination loyalty.	52 23%	151 66.8%	4 1.8%	10 4.4%	9 4%	3.49	1.501	Accept
3 Affordability of accommodation facilities at the destination leads to destination loyalty.	76 33.6%	105 46.5%	5 2.2%	24 10.6%	16 7.1%	3.26	1.433	Accept
4 Feeling satisfied with general cleanliness and Hygiene status of a tourist center leads to destination loyalty.	80 35.4%	109 48.2%	3 1.3%	30 13.3%	4 1.8%	3.34	1.430	Accept
5 Good access road to the destination increases tourist destination loyalty.	86 38.1%	102 45.1%	4 1.8%	22 9.7%	12 5.3%	3.07	1.402	Accept
6 Feeling satisfied on safety and security condition at the destination leads to destination loyalty.	89 39.4%	108 47.8%	7 3.1%	14 6.2%	8 3.5%	3.53	1.226	Accept
7 Quality services provided at the destination leads to destination loyalty.	105 46.5%	76 33.6%	5 2.2%	24 10.6%	16 7.1%	3.51	1.453	Accept
<b>Grand mean</b>						<b>3.37</b>		<b>Accept</b>

Source: Field Survey, 2021

Key  $\bar{X}$  = Mean

SD = Standard Deviation

It is accepted that there is a high level of tourist satisfaction and destination loyalty towards the Study areas. This is revealed by the grand mean of 3.37 which is above the bench mark of 3.0 for decision taking. Hence, it was confirmed that there is a high level of tourist satisfaction and destination loyalty towards the Study areas.

This implies that there is a high level of tourist satisfaction and destination loyalty towards the Study area. This supports the finding of Herle (2018), who regarding the relationship between destination image, tourist satisfaction and loyalty, said some authors sustained that there is a direct link between the destination image and visiting decisions of tourists, given that satisfaction or dissatisfaction felt as a result of tourism consumption depends on consumption expectations (reflecting the destination image in the mind of the tourist) and the discrepancies between them and the actual experience (Hassan *et al.*, 2010). Javier and Bign (2011) also states that there is a direct relationship between the image, the perceived quality, level of satisfaction and intentions to return or recommend to others. Moreover, Gengqing (2002 cited in Rajesh,

2013) in his studies developed a theoretical model for building destination loyalty based on destination image and satisfaction.

The result of the study revealed critical value ( $X^2_{0.05}$ ) of 0.039 and Chi-square calculated ( $X^2_c$ ) value of 3.321. The result showed that the Chi-square calculated ( $X^2_c$ ) with the value 3.321 > critical value ( $X^2_{0.05}$ ) with the value of 0.039. From this result, the Null Hypothesis ( $H_0$ ) which postulated that "There is no significant relationship between destination image and tourist satisfaction and loyalty in tourist centers in Abia State" was rejected and Alternative Hypothesis ( $H_A$ ) accepted which stated that "There is significant relationship between destination image and tourist satisfaction and loyalty in tourist centers in Abia State". This implies that destination image has effect on tourist satisfaction and loyalty in tourist centers in Abia State. The finding of the study collaborates with the views of Castro, Atila and Fisun, 2017 and Erawan, 2019 that destination image has influences on the overall of both tourist satisfaction and loyalty. The study conducted by Okoro (2015) put in plain words that tourist satisfaction and destination loyalty are important factors which give credence to visitor motivation and their intention to revisit a tourist destination.

### CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

In conclusion, it can be said that destination image has effect on tourist satisfaction and destination loyalty of tourists that visit the tourist centers in Abia State. This confirms that destination image of a tourist center is a factor that determines the level of tourist satisfaction and destination loyalty. Therefore, management of tourist centers should design a good destination image that can attract tourists, meet up tourist's expectations and retain them by influencing their loyalty.

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### Aims and Coverage:

The Journal is designed to encourage and promote applied research and adaptive technology in all aspects of Hospitality and tourism. It is dedicated to encouraging and promoting practical technologies necessary and relevant for improving occupational, technical and scientific practices in Nigeria's hospitality and tourism sector.

The Journal covers all areas of hospitality and tourism including planning, development, policy matters, private sector activities, practical processes and procedures, culture, the environment, food technology and food processing systems, etc. Sciences.

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The main headings listed above should be capitalized and left justified.

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