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INFLUENCE OF DESTINATION BRAND IMAGE AND STAKEHOLDERS' ROLE ON WILDLIFE PARKS' ATTRACTIVENESS IN THE AMBOSELI-TSAVO ECOSYSTEM, KENYA

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ABSTRACT

Wildlife-based tourism significantly contributes to Kenya's tourism industry, particularly through attractions like the Big Five: elephant, lion, rhino, buffalo, and leopard. In 2019, the tourism sector directly contributed 8.8% to Kenya's GDP, amounting to KES 790 billion (USD 7.9 billion), and created over 1.1 million jobs, representing 8.3% of the national job market. Despite the extensive protected areas in the Amboseli-Tsavo Ecosystem, visitor numbers remain suboptimal, limiting its socio-economic potential. This study explores how destination brand image and stakeholder roles influence the attractiveness of wildlife parks in this ecosystem. Using an embedded mixed-method research design, data were collected from 440 park visitors, 54 tourism managers, and 28 tourism experts through stratified, convenience, and purposive sampling. Reliability was tested using Cronbach's Alpha, and data analysis involved descriptive statistics, regression analyses, and thematic analysis. Findings showed that cognitive, affective, and conative images significantly influence park attractiveness, explaining 49.9% of the variance. Park visitors rated the parks highly in terms of beauty, likelihood of revisiting, attractiveness, and overall satisfaction. The study recommends robust monitoring and evaluation to enhance marketing efforts and suggests further research on destination competitiveness and stakeholder collaboration.

Key Words: Destination Brand Image Cognitive Image, Affective Image, And Conative Image Stakeholder Roles, Attractiveness Wildlife Parks

Background Information

Traditionally, Kenya is known for providing tourists with beach holiday products, wildlife and cultural experiences. This has made the country to be categorized as a must-visit destination for many holidaymakers visiting Africa (Sindiga, 2019). The tourism sector remains vital to the socio-economic development of Kenya as envisioned in Vision 2030 (Government of the Republic of Kenya, 2007; Maingi, 2014). The tourism and travel sector contribute to the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of a country, and according to Kenya Economic Impact (2019), the industry contributed to GDP by 8.8%, equivalent to USD 7.9 Billion (World Travel and Tourism Council [WTTC], 2019).

In addition, the tourism and travel industry have also contributed to creating over 1.1 million employment opportunities in Kenya, equivalent to 8.3% of the job market in the country in 2019. In a Statista.com publication by Kamer (2022), Kenya's accommodation and restaurant services picked up well after the COVID-19 pandemic, with a 56% growth rate in the first quarter of 2022. The same study revealed that the travel and tourism industry contributed 5.4 million US dollars to Kenya's GDP. According to Kenya's Economic Survey report, the number of visitors to national parks and game reserves in Kenya rose by 50% from 1.0 million in 2020 to 1.5 million in 2021 (Kenya National Bureau of Statistics [KNBS], 2023). During the same period, the bed-night occupancy in accommodation facilities within the national and game reserves rose by 74.2%, from 251,500 in 2020 to 438,000 in 2022 (KNBS, 2023).

Ndivo et al. (2012) maintain that wildlife-based tourism forms the backbone of Kenya's tourism industry as the Big Five wildlife attracts most visitors. Therefore, wildlife tourism is the focus of this study as it contributes to about 70% of the overall tourism revenue in Kenya (Korir et al., 2013). Furthermore, Kenya's wildlife parks became popular from the early days of wildlife hunting, which according to Chongwa (2012), led to the development of accommodation and accessibility infrastructure at wildlife destinations.

Kenya has presented a unique destination brand image, having leading wildlife parks with premium parks offering high-end tourists unique experiences in popular destinations such as; - Lake Nakuru National Park, Nairobi National Park, Maasai Mara National Reserve and Amboseli National Park (Maingi et al., 2014). However, Kenya faces stiff competition from international tourists from other African countries offering similar tourist products, like the Republic of South Africa, Egypt, Morocco, Namibia and Botswana (Stroebel, 2016). According to Kenya Wildlife Service (KWS), Kenya boasts 23 national parks, four (4) national sanctuaries, four (4) marine national parks, six (6) marine national reserves and 28 national reserves, which cover about 8% of Kenya's land mass. They are Kenya's most extensive protected areas, and many are managed by KWS (Muhumuza & Balkwill, 2013). Due to the value that wildlife parks contribute to the country's socio-economic status, these can be facilitated by the enhanced role of stakeholders and branding strategies.

Due to the fast-changing economic environment, the destination is left to compete for visitors to maintain or increase revenue and market share. Therefore, the stakeholders need to offer products and services that meet the needs of the target visitors by making the parks attractive (Buul & Omundi, 2017). Branded national parks within the Amboseli-Tsavo Ecosystem need to critically perform an attractiveness analysis where the competitors for the same target market may be categorized and evaluated to know their strengths and weaknesses. Once competitors are known, there is a better chance of developing better strategies to beat them in the market. Therefore, building a strong destination brand image becomes recommendable.

According to Dupeyras and MacCallum (2013), the attractiveness of a tourist destination needs to examine the past, present and future. Each touristic circuit competes for potential visitors in Kenya, with wildlife safaris being the much-needed holiday choice. The destination brand image and stakeholders' approach have the potential to create room for policy responses and economic opportunities, which finally lead to the attractiveness of a tourist destination. The performance indicators of good application of marketing strategies at a destination can also be noticed in tourism contribution to GDP, the number of overnight stays in accommodation facilities, increased customer satisfaction and offering of quality and competitive tourism services to the tourists. Kaliappen and Hilman (2017) argue that ideas of enhancing performance at a destination should be sustainable, which happens when a degree of value is generated for the stakeholders. The branded parks, therefore, must offer products and services with a Unique Selling Proposition (USP).

Out of the 23 protected wildlife parks in Kenya, KWS has branded 20 parks to give each a unique destination brand image in the competitive holiday market (KWS, 2019). The park branding as a promotional strategy was initiated in 2005 to increase park revenue, improve the KWS parks' corporate image, increase visitor numbers, strengthen partnerships with communities next to protected areas, and improve staff welfare (KWS, 2019). This study focused on branded parks where stakeholders pay much attention to the destination brand image.

In consumers' thoughts, a destination brand image refers to giving meaning to a certain business, organization, line of goods, or service (Souiden et al., 2017). It is a strategy created by businesses to aid consumers to recognize and experience their brand and provide them with a cause to prefer their products over those of rivals by outlining the brand's benefits (Pedeliento & Kavaratzis, 2019). Creating a brand image of parks will likely contribute to tourists' satisfaction with the wildlife products by increasing loyalty through repeat visits and recommendations to others. Munyoki and Mwai (2018) noted that branding positively creates product awareness and attitudes towards the products. However, limited studies show the influence destination brand image has on wildlife parks 'attractiveness in the Amboseli-Tsavo Ecosystem, underlining the need for this study. Additionally, literature is rare about the moderation effect of stakeholders' involvement (i.e., National Government, County Governments, tourism enterprises, visitors, and tourism associations) on the relationship between destination brand image and parks' attractiveness in the Amboseli-Tsavo ecosystem, further underlining the rationale for the current study.

Destination Brand Image

Destination brand image is crucial in advertising tourism destinations, as it helps distinguish one place from another, contributing to its success (Carballo et al., 2015). Onatski et al. (2012) highlight its importance in influencing travel behavior, such as destination selection, desire to return, and intent to spread word of mouth. Moreno-Gil and Martín-Santana (2015) emphasize that destination brand image significantly impacts travelers' behavior and destination selection.

Jebbouri et al. (2022) define destination image as the impression people develop of a holiday destination, encompassing beliefs, feelings, impressions, and knowledge, as well as information from various sources like associations, tourism channels, social platforms, and the Internet. Gartner (1994) categorizes destination image into cognitive, affective, and conative components, which Yi et al. (2020) explain as follows: cognitive image involves tourists' perceptions of a destination's attributes, affective image relates to personal values and emotional responses, and conative image pertains to tourists' behavioral intentions and likelihood to visit or recommend the destination.

Research underscores the importance of maintaining positive images of destinations due to the intense competition in the tourism industry (Benesbordi et al., 2013). Abodeeb et al. (2015) found that people are more influenced by their emotions and impressions of a location than by factual information. Marketing strategies are essential for influencing destination brand preferences, inducing brand switching, and achieving brand loyalty (Prendergast et al., 2010; Dastidar, 2020). Effective branding can lead to premium pricing and business growth (Xara-Brasil et al., 2018).

Anderson et al. (2022) stress that dynamic market conditions require destinations to adapt their branding strategies to meet changing tastes and preferences. Qu et al. (2011) argue that destinations need to showcase their unique features through branding to stand out. In the Amboseli-Tsavo Ecosystem, branding has created a unique destination brand image, highlighting excellent customer service, quality accommodation, unique attractions, exceptional activities, responsible tourism, and safety and security.

Problem Statement

As Kenya strategizes to be among the top long-haul holiday destinations in Africa, there is a need to continue transforming wildlife parks as unique tourism destination products to meet the high-end and diverse visitor experience. The desire to experience the wild drives wildlife tourism the most (Suntikul et al., 2016). Similarly, Maingi et al. (2014) stated that branded parks in Kenya have received much attention for their wildlife-based tourism offerings but have not yet reached their full potential. According to Jin and Sparks (2017), travel trade partners, who form the backbone of the tourism products' distribution channel, concentrate more on branded parks in their tour itineraries with limited attention to the unbranded parks. Further, the branded parks become more appealing because of the brand image within the Amboseli-Tsavo Ecosystem. However, not all parks can secure enough visitors and generate the projected revenue.

Wildlife-based tourism is a key pillar of the tourism industry development in Kenya. According to the WTTC report of 2019, the tourism and travel sector's direct contribution to Kenya's GDP was about 8.8%, worth KES 790 billion (or USD 7.9 Billion) in 2019. Tourist destinations wield enormous influence over a person's destination of choice, satisfaction expectations, intents to return, perceptions of benefits and incentives, good perceptions of opinion leaders, the amount of money spent, and the length of stay (Ariya et al., 2021). The GoK has made tremendous efforts to improve national park performance, including creating a positive brand image by branding these unique safari destinations in the Amboseli-Tsavo Ecosystem, which has the highest number of branded parks in Kenya. Nevertheless, in terms of the number of tourists, yield, and diversity of experience, the industry remains relatively underdeveloped compared to other tourist sites. For instance, the National Tourism Strategy recorded only 1.5 million tourists visiting Kenya annually, while South Africa receives 8.3 million (Government of Kenya, 2013). The Amboseli-Tsavo Ecosystem under study has the largest coverage of protected areas of wildlife conservation; however, its performance is still below the optimum level due to the low number of visitors despite having the potential for socio-economic contribution.

This study explores the influence of destination brand image on wildlife parks' attractiveness in the Amboseli-Tsavo Ecosystem in Kenya. Despite being within the same ecosystem, Amboseli is classified as a premium park and Tsavo West and Tsavo East as under-utilized parks based on visitor numbers and revenue. According to GoK (2022), visitor numbers recorded at Amboseli National Park were 175,800; 191,700; 55,100 and 90,900 for 2018, 2019, 2020 and 2021, respectively. Further, within the same period, Tsavo West recorded 74100; 61300; 25,000 and 28,600 tourists, respectively, while Tsavo East reported 167000, 177900, 75100 and 76,200 for a similar period, respectively. Therefore, these branded parks have the potential to attract more visitors for better performance results. The low figures for 2020 and 2021 were due to the negative

effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. Improved marketing activities can create awareness of these branded parks' attractiveness thereby enhancing the performance in terms of improved visitor numbers and revenue. The stakeholders involved in tourism activities within the area under study have a huge responsibility to ensure attractiveness objective is achieved. A clear policy on the role of key stakeholders can be instrumental.

Proper infrastructure, quality accommodation, and improved attractions and activities can enhance the wildlife parks' attractiveness. The role of stakeholders in park attractiveness is to ensure that the park is attractive to all who visit it. This includes the public and private individuals and organizations interested in investing time and money into creating or extending a presence in the park. The participation from the branded national parks' stakeholders is critical for the future success of these conservation areas. The stakeholders can also provide incentives to increase attractiveness. Since the branded parks within the Amboseli-Tsavo Ecosystem cannot offer an optimum level of their potential, there is a need to explore how destination brand image and the mediating role of stakeholders can be used to enable investors in these parks to enjoy returns on their investment. Making the wildlife parks attractive can help create a competitive advantage and sustainable products and services for the branded parks under study.

The parks under study perform below par compared to other conservation areas like Nakuru National Park or Maasai Mara National Reserve (GoK, 2022), yet they have the potential. However, market diversification must be created to re-position the ecosystem as a leading tourism destination. The low performance of tourism destinations can be attributed to high charges, failure in product differentiation and failure by the stakeholders to focus on the right market that can enjoy the available products and services, as illustrated by Oklevik et al. (2019). Therefore, a critical analysis of the influence of destination brand image concept and the mediating effect of stakeholders' role on the attractiveness of the branded parks in the Amboseli-Tsavo Ecosystem is necessary, hence the subject of the study.

General Objective

This study aimed to explore the influence of destination brand image and stakeholder role on wildlife parks' attractiveness in the Amboseli-Tsavo Ecosystem in Kenya.

Specific Objectives

i. To determine the influence of cognitive destination brand image on the attractiveness of wildlife parks in the Amboseli-Tsavo Ecosystem.
ii. To assess the influence of affective destination brand image on the attractiveness of wildlife parks in the Amboseli-Tsavo Ecosystem.
iii. To examine the influence of conative destination brand image on the attractiveness of wildlife parks in the Amboseli-Tsavo Ecosystem.
iv. To evaluate the moderating effect of stakeholders' role on the relationship between destination brand image and wildlife park attractiveness in the Amboseli-Tsavo Ecosystem

Hypotheses

i. H_{01}: Destination cognitive brand image has no significant influence on the attractiveness of wildlife parks within the Amboseli-Tsavo Ecosystem.
ii. H_{02}: Destination-effective brand image has no significant influence on the attractiveness of wildlife parks in the Amboseli -Tsavo Ecosystem
iii. H_{03}: There is no significant influence of conative destination brand image on the attractiveness of wildlife parks in the Amboseli-Tsavo Ecosystem

iv. ***H_{04}***: There is no significant moderating effect of stakeholders' role on the relationship between destination brand image and the attractiveness of wildlife parks within the Amboseli-Tsavo Ecosystem

Conceptual Framework

Figure 1.1 illustrates the study's conceptual framework, showing the independent variables (destination brand image) and the dependent variables (park attractiveness), with stakeholders' involvement as the moderating variable. The stakeholders are responsible for ensuring that a destination provides a conducive and appealing environment by providing favorable and sustainable products and services. The conceptual framework suggests direct relationships between destination brand image and park attractiveness. In addition, the model theorizes the relationship between stakeholders' roles and park attractiveness.

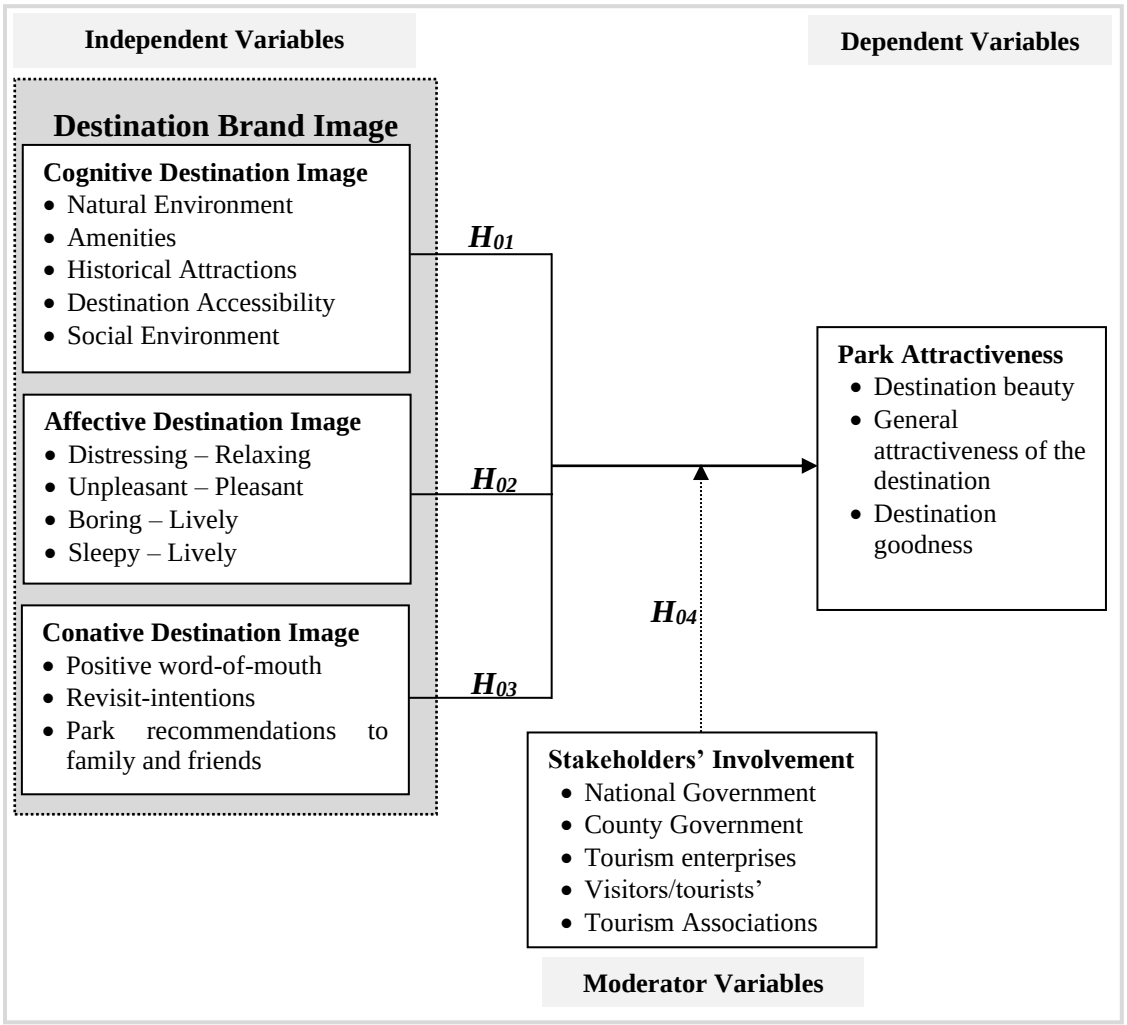


Figure 1.1: Conceptual Framework

Theoretical Framework

Behavioral Learning Theory

Behavioral Learning Theory explains how repeated behaviors help buyers learn about a product. Initially introduced by Nord and Peter in 1980 and later elaborated by Rothschild in 1981, this theory emphasizes behavior modification perspectives on marketing (Peter & Nord, 1982; R. Harrison & Jara-Moroni, 2015). Key elements of this theory pertinent to marketing include

reinforcement plans, shaping, and intermediate versus delayed reinforcement. The theory suggests that positive reinforcement promotes behavioral learning, such as using advertising tools to encourage trial and repeat behaviors (Ray, 1975; Kotler & Keller, 2012). This approach is crucial for understanding how tourists perceive and engage with wildlife parks, reinforcing the attractiveness of a destination through repeated positive experiences and effective marketing strategies (Lind, 2018; Shin et al., 2021).

Aaker's Brand Value Model

David Aaker's Brand Value Model, introduced in 1991, highlights that brand equity results from brand recognition, customer loyalty, and perceived value (Aaker, 2018). Aaker's model emphasizes brand loyalty, awareness, perceived quality, associations, and proprietary brand assets. It suggests that strong brand equity can increase customer confidence in purchase decisions, enhance satisfaction levels, and improve revenue for organizations (Sarwar & Siddiqui, 2021). The model has been extensively validated and applied to various contexts, including tourism, where brand equity influences tourists' perceptions and decisions regarding travel destinations (Stukalina & Pavlyuk, 2021; Chi et al., 2020).

Expectancy Theory on Stakeholder's Role

Victor Vroom's Expectancy Theory of motivation, proposed in 1964, describes how individuals choose between behavioral options based on perceived rewards and outcomes (Pacesila, 2014; Purvis et al., 2015). This theory highlights the significance of expectancy, instrumentality, and valence in motivating behavior. It has been applied to understand stakeholder involvement in promoting destinations, suggesting that stakeholders' belief in the benefits of branding and improving a park's attractiveness can drive their motivation and efforts (Candela et al., 2015; Freeman, 2019). The theory also underscores the importance of aligning stakeholders' expectations with organizational goals to enhance destination performance (Parijat & Bagga, 2014).

Stakeholders' Theory

Stakeholders' Theory posits that organizations have relationships with various stakeholders, who are crucial for achieving organizational goals (Susniene & Povilas, 2007; Jamali, 2008). Freeman's original work on this theory identifies three components: normative, instrumental, and descriptive/empirical (Donaldson & Preston, 1995). The theory emphasizes the need for organizations to consider stakeholders' expectations and contributions, particularly in the tourism industry, where stakeholder collaboration is vital for destination branding and development (Bridoux & Stoelhorst, 2022; Phillips, 2003). Successful stakeholder engagement can lead to enhanced brand image, awareness, and loyalty, ultimately improving a destination's attractiveness (Zenker & Beckmann, 2013; Williams et al., 2013).

Motivation Theory

Maslow's Motivation Theory, introduced in 1954, outlines a hierarchy of needs that drive individuals' behavior (Kotler & Keller, 2012). In the context of tourism, motivation is a key factor influencing travel decisions. Tourists' motivations can be categorized into push factors (internal psychological needs) and pull factors (external attractions of a destination) (Echtner & Ritchie, 2003). Understanding these motivations helps in developing marketing strategies that align with tourists' desires and enhance their travel experience (Šimková & Holzner, 2014; Morgan et al., 2003). Effective motivation strategies can lead to higher tourist satisfaction, repeat visits, and positive word-of-mouth recommendations (Frias et al., 2020; Osabiya, 2015).

Competition Theory

Competition Theory, rooted in Michael Porter's competitiveness analysis framework from 1979, identifies five forces that determine an organization's competitive position: threats of new entrants, substitution threats, industry rivalry, supplier power, and buyer power (Porter & Millar, 2005). In tourism, models like the Crouch-Ritchie model, Kim's model, and Dwyer-Kim's model build on this theory to assess destination competitiveness (Crouch & Ritchie, 1999; Kim & Lee, 2005; Dwyer & Kim, 2003). These models consider factors such as resources, local conditions, infrastructure, and demand. A competitive destination leverages these factors to attract tourists, enhance their experience, and achieve socioeconomic prosperity (Mazanec et al., 2007; Nguyen et al., 2022).

Review of Empirical Studies

Influence of Cognitive Destination Brand Image on Parks' Attractiveness

The cognitive component of the brand image is primarily formed in the minds of tourists and depends significantly on the quality and quantity of information available. This component allows tourists to make a general assessment of the destination based on prior beliefs. Gartner (1994) categorized destination image into three components: cognitive, affective, and conative. Yi et al. (2020) elaborated that a tourist's perception of a destination's traits, including attractions, infrastructure, and the surrounding environment, constitutes the cognitive image. Setiawan et al. (2021) explored the destination brand image of Jakarta, highlighting that cognitive aspects refer to the beliefs and knowledge of physical attributes of a destination. Their study emphasized that cognitive image influences brand equity, and ultimately, consumer purchase behavior. Zhang (2015) argued that brand image significantly impacts consumer behavior, which can explain why governments, such as the Government of Kenya, have invested in branding wildlife parks. Similarly, Wu and Chen (2019) demonstrated that customers develop strong attachments to certain brands, often preferring to wait for availability rather than switching to alternatives. Weru (2021) conducted a study on foreign MICE (Meetings, Incentives, Conferences, and Exhibitions) travelers in Nairobi. The study involved 335 participants using convenience sampling to test a model linking destination image and post-visit behavior. The results indicated that the cognitive image component positively and significantly influenced affective image, overall image, and post-visit behavior. The overall perception of the destination had the most substantial impact on post-visit behavior, underscoring the importance of cognitive images in shaping tourists' experiences and future travel intentions.

Influence of Affective Destination Brand Image on Parks' Attractiveness

The affective component of the brand image is based on individual emotional responses to a destination's attributes. Although it has received less emphasis in research, it is crucial in shaping tourists' perceptions. Woosnam et al. (2020) found that tourists' emotional experiences at historical sites significantly influenced their satisfaction and perception of the destination. However, they noted that while emotions like joy and love impacted satisfaction, pleasant surprise did not. Huete-Alcocer et al. (2019) focused on an archaeological heritage location in Spain, using Partial Least Square-Structural Equation Model (PLS-SEM) analysis to show that the affective component of destination image was more influential than the cognitive component in shaping tourist satisfaction. Similarly, Ćulić et al. (2021) concluded that visitors' emotional connections with a destination heavily influenced their overall satisfaction and intentions to return. Ariya et al. (2017) studied the attractiveness of Lake Nakuru National Park using a sample of 402 tourists. Their findings revealed that safety, security, and unique natural features were highly appealing. The study underscored that tourist satisfaction with these affective components directly impacted their

overall experience and likelihood of recommending the destination. This aligns with Ranasinghe et al. (2019), who highlighted that visitor satisfaction is a critical factor in enhancing the overall park experience.

Influence of Conative Destination Brand Image on Parks' Attractiveness

The conative component of the destination image pertains to tourists' behavioral intentions, such as their propensity to return to a location or recommend it to others. Stylos et al. (2016) emphasized that the conative image is crucial for predicting tourists' future behaviors. This component involves the intention to refer, favorable word of mouth, and intent to revisit. Afsar et al. (2019) investigated the destination image of Jordan, finding moderate correlations between conative image and the unique, affective, and cognitive images. Their study used structured questionnaires with 250 visitors and demonstrated that positive conative images significantly influenced tourists' intentions to revisit and recommend the destination. Cheng et al. (2016) used Hangzhou Songcheng, a historical and cultural theme park, to study brand loyalty. Their research, based on structural equation modeling, showed that perceived value and brand satisfaction were linked to brand loyalty through brand attachment. The study suggested that enhancing conative images through targeted marketing and improved services could increase visitors' loyalty and intention to revisit. Stylos et al. (2016) aimed to understand the factors influencing tourists' intentions to return to a destination. They highlighted that conative destination images are significantly affected by the overall attractiveness of the destination. Their findings suggest that marketing strategies should focus on enhancing word-of-mouth communication to boost tourists' desire to return.

Mediating Effect of Stakeholders' Role on the Relationship Between Destination Brand Image and Park Attractiveness

Stakeholders play a vital role in ensuring the attractiveness of parks by investing time and resources into creating or enhancing their appeal. Perkins et al. (2020) examined destination branding for small tourism firms in regional locations and highlighted the challenges and benefits of stakeholder collaboration in building sustainable tourism brands. Their systematic review demonstrated that effective stakeholder collaboration is crucial for successful destination branding.

Saraniemi and Komppula (2019) investigated the roles of internal and external stakeholders in forming destination brand identities. Their findings suggested that informal stakeholder groups could lead the branding process, often proving more effective than formal destination marketing organizations in developing and promoting destination brands.

Akel and Cakir (2022) studied the influence of various theme park experiences on visitor satisfaction and behavioral intentions, emphasizing the need for stakeholder collaboration in creating unique and appealing tourist experiences. They found that diverse stakeholder groups could significantly enhance a destination's brand by offering varied and culturally enriched experiences, thereby improving visitor satisfaction and loyalty.

Research Methodology

This study adopted a positivist philosophical approach, which is rooted in the idea that legitimate knowledge is derived from experience, a concept introduced by Auguste Comte. Positivism supports both quantitative and qualitative methods, asserting that knowledge comes from human experience and that researchers must remain independent observers. This approach was suitable for the study due to the large sample size and the combined use of quantitative and qualitative data. An embedded research design was used, where qualitative data played a supportive role within a primarily quantitative framework. This study was conducted in the Amboseli-Tsavo Ecosystem in

Southern Kenya, targeting visitors to branded parks, tourism business managers, and tourism experts.

The target population included 334,334 park visitors, averaged over three years (2018-2020), 54 managers of tourism enterprises, and 28 tourism experts. Using Yamane's formula, the required sample size was calculated to be 400 park visitors, but the final sample size included 440 visitors. All 54 managers were targeted, with 12 used for pretesting, leaving 42 for data collection. Similarly, 28 tourism experts were targeted, with four used for pretesting, leaving 24 for interviews. Sampling techniques included stratified sampling for park visitors, convenience sampling for tourism managers, and purposive sampling for tourism experts. Data collection involved distributing semi-structured questionnaires to park visitors and managers, and conducting in-depth interviews with tourism experts.

Quantitative data analysis was conducted using SPSS v.25.0. The process included downloading survey data from Google Forms into Excel, checking for completeness, cleaning data, transforming data by computing new variables, and conducting descriptive analysis using frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations. Univariable and multivariable linear regression analyses were performed to examine the influence of destination brand image and stakeholders' involvement on the performance and attractiveness of branded parks.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Tourists' Perceptions of Destination Brand Image

Cognitive Destination Image

The respondents were requested to specify their level of agreement or disagreement with several characteristics used to describe the Amboseli-Tsavo ecosystem as a tourist destination (Table 1).

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics of Cognitive Destination Image

Manifest Variables	M±SD	Interpretation
Cognitive destination image	**3.74±0.61**	**Positive**
Natural Environment		
Scenic beauty	4.44±0.61	Admirable
Enjoyable weather and climate	4.16±0.74	Positive
Breath-taking water attractions	4.04±0.87	Positive
Tourist Infrastructure		
Appealing restaurants in the lodges and camps	4.23±0.63	Admirable
Quality accommodation facilities	4.31±0.68	Admirable
Good shopping opportunities	3.89±0.94	Positive
Outstanding service quality	3.89±0.80	Positive
Attractions		
Interesting historical attractions	4.14±0.69	Positive
Well-known attractions	3.53±0.85	Positive
Variety of tourist activities	3.70±0.76	Positive
Accessibility		
Convenient transportation	3.04±0.94	Modest
Developed infrastructure	3.26±0.85	Modest
The parks are easily accessible	3.24±1.08	Modest
Social Environment		
Personal safety and security	3.80±0.75	Positive
Hospitable local people	3.84±0.81	Positive
Good value for money	3.52±0.91	Positive
Clean environment	3.81±0.84	Positive

Notes: *n* = 275. M-Mean. SD-Standard Deviation. *Scale*: *Likert-type* (Mean Classification): 1= *Strongly Disagree* (1.00 – 1.80), 2=*Disagree* (1.80 – 2.60), 3=n*either Agree nor Disagree* (2.60 – 3.40), 4=*Agree* (3.40 – 4.20), 5=*Strongly Agree* (4.20 – 5.00)

As shown, the tourists reported favorable opinions (mean score over 3.00) of the parks in the Amboseli-Tsavo ecosystem. Concerning the natural environment, the respondents reported positive opinions (mean scores of over 3.00) of the parks in the Amboseli-Tsavo ecosystem, including scenic beauty (M = 4.44, SD = 0.61), enjoyable weather and climate (M = 4.16, SD = 0.74), and breath-taking water attractions (M = 4.04, SD = 0.87).

In addition, most respondents had comparatively favorable opinions of the parks in the Amboseli-Tsavo ecosystem concerning several aspects of tourist infrastructure, including appealing restaurants in lodges and tented camps (M = 4.23, SD = 0.63), quality accommodation facilities (M = 4.31, SD = 0.68), good shopping opportunities (M = 3.89, SD = 0.94), and outstanding service quality (M = 3.89, SD = 0.80). However, most respondents had relatively modest images of the parks in the Amboseli-Tsavo ecosystem comprising various observable aspects of accessibility consisting of convenient transportation (M = 3.04, SD = 0.94), developed infrastructure (M = 3.26, SD = 0.85), and ease of access (M = 3.24, SD = 1.08).

Nonetheless, the respondents reported positive opinions of the parks in the Amboseli-Tsavo ecosystem regarding several aspects of the social environment, including feelings of personal safety and security (M = 3.80, SD = 0.75), hospitable local people (M = 3.84, SD = 0.81), good value for money (M = 3.52, SD = 0.91), and clean and tidy environment (M = 3.81, SD = 0.84). Moreover, the overall cognitive destination image of national parks in the Amboseli-Tsavo ecosystem was positive (M = 3.74, SD = 0.44).

Results of the analysis of qualitative data collected from tourism experts supported tourists' viewpoints regarding the cognitive brand image of the Amboseli-Tsavo Ecosystem. For example, one interviewee reported:

> "*[…] the parks are full of attractions. Each national park has unique tourist attraction sites that compel tourists to visit. It does not matter whether one is a domestic or an international visitor. Various attractions in each park entice most tourists […].*" Participant #7, NGTE

Furthermore, another participant indicated that "*tourist facilities in the parks hire employees with enthusiasm to serve clients at all times, and who put clients at the far-front in all operations […]*" (Participant #14, TATE). Additionally, another participant responded, *"[…], when it comes to hiring employees, establishments operating in the national parks are encouraged to higher qualified employees to ascertain provision of quality services to tourists*" (Participant #10, NGTE).

Along similar lines, another participant retorted:

> "*Amboseli national park is more famous with visitors than Tsavo East and West national parks. However, all these national parks have a positive image in the eyes of tourists because of their numerous quality accommodation facilities equipped with the necessary technologies to provide excellent guest services. Through the KWS, the County governments urge the facilities to practice responsible tourism at all times to ensure the parks and business sustainability.*" Participant #8, CGTE

Affective Destination Image

The respondents were asked to indicate their level of agreement or disagreement with several characteristics used to describe the affective destination of the Amboseli-Tsavo ecosystem as a tourist destination (Table 2).

Table 2: Descriptive Statistics of Affective Destination Image

Observed Variables	M±SD	Interpretation
Affective destination image	**3.94±0.60**	**Positive**
Distressing – Relaxing	3.72±0.85	Positive
Unpleasant – Pleasant	4.23±0.78	Admirable
Boring – Exciting	3.47±0.87	Positive
Sleepy – Lively	4.10±0.89	Positive

Notes: *n* = 275. M-Mean. SD-Standard Deviation. *Scale*: *Likert-type* (Mean Classification): 1 = Strongly *Disagree* (1.00 – 1.80), 2=*Disagree* (1.80 – 2.60), 3=n*either Agree nor Disagree* (2.60 – 3.40), 4=*Agree* (3.40 – 4.20), 5=*Strongly Agree* (4.20 – 5.00)

As shown in Table 4.6, the respondents assessed the parks in the Amboseli-Tsavo ecosystem as relaxing (*M* = 3.72, *SD* = 0.85), pleasant (*M* = 4.23, SD = 0.78), exciting (*M* = 3.47, *SD* = 0.87), and lively (*M* = 4.10, *SD* = 0.89). The overall affective destination image among the respondents was positive (*M* = 3.94, *SD* = 0.60).

Conative Destination Image

The respondents were asked to indicate their level of agreement or disagreement with several characteristics used to describe the conative destination of the Amboseli-Tsavo ecosystem as a tourist destination (Table 3).

Table 3: Descriptive Statistics of Conative Destination Image

Observed Variables	M±SD	Interpretation
Conative destination image	**4.14±0.84**	**Positive**
Intention to spread positive word-of-mouth	4.22±1.01	Admirable
Open intention to revisit at a time in the future	4.01±0.97	Positive
Intention to recommend the destination to family and friends	4.39±0.88	Admirable

Notes: *n* = 275. M-Mean. SD-Standard Deviation. *Scale*: *Likert-type* (Mean Classification): 1= *Strongly Disagree* (1.00 – 1.80), 2 = *Disagree* (1.80 – 2.60), 3 = N*either Agree nor Disagree* (2.60 – 3.40), 4 = *Agree* (3.40 – 4.20), 5 = *Strongly Agree* (4.20 – 5.00)

As reported in Table 4.7, tourists exhibited a positive intention to spread positive word of mouth concerning the wildlife parks in the Amboseli-Tsavo ecosystem (*M* = 4.22, *SD* = 1.01), revisit the destination at a time in the future (*M* = 4.01, *SD* = 0.97), and recommend the destination to family and friends (*M* = 4.39, *SD* = 0.88). Inferring from the results reported, the overall conative image of the wildlife parks in the Amboseli-Tsavo ecosystem was favorable (*M* = 4.14, *SD* = 0.84).

The results of the qualitative analysis of data collected from tourism experts indicated that most tourists perceive the parks in the Amboseli-Tsavo ecosystem as attractive and prefer to visit them to many other parks in Kenya. On this note, one participant noted that "*the parks are generally attractive because of their unique scenic attractions, availability of accommodation, and the affordability of many products and services available to guests […]*" (Participant #6, PWTE). Additionally, another participant indicated that "*[…] the parks in the Amboseli-Tsavo Ecosystem attract guests worldwide. They are known for their attractions, excellent accommodation, good road infrastructure, and proximity to Mombasa—Kenya's tourism hub*" (Participant #19, TATE). Similarly, another participant reported that "*[…] many guests make good comments about the branded parks and express their willingness to visit the destination in the future*" (Participant #3, TATE).

Hypotheses Testing

A multiple linear regression analysis was conducted to predict park attractiveness based on destination brand image. The results are reported in (Table 4). As shown in Table 4 (*i* and *ii*), the regression model had a significant effect on park attractiveness [F (3,271) = 315.88, p = .000). Additionally, cognitive image, affective image, and conative image were found to explain 49.9% (R^2 = .499) proportion of variance in park attractiveness. Moreover, Table 4 (*iii*) revealed a significant positive relationship between cognitive image and park attractiveness (β = 0.446, t = 6.661, p = .001). Furthermore, a significant positive relationship was revealed between affective destination image and park attractiveness (β = 0.653, t = 12.792, p = .000). Similarly, conative destination image was found to have a significant positive effect on park attractiveness (β = 0.367, t = 4.110, p = .000).

Table 4: Park Attractiveness Regressed on Destination Brand Image

i) Model Summary

					Change Statistics				
Model	R	R^2	Adjusted R^2	Std. Error of the Estimate	R^2 Change	F Change	df1	df2	Sig. F Change
1	.706[a]	.499	.492	.70313	.499	315.88	3	271	.000

Note. a. Predictors: (Constant), Cognitive destination image, Affective destination image, Conative destination image

ii) ANOVA[a]

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	38.853	3	12.951	315.88	.000[b]
	Residual	11.165	271	0.041		
	Total	55.018	274			

Note. a. Dependent Variable: Park Attractiveness

iii) Coefficients[a]

		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		
Model		B	Std. Error	β	t	Sig.
1	(Constant)	-1.016	0.282		-3.602[Ns]	.212
	Cognitive destination image	0.473	0.071	0.446	6.661[**]	.001
	Affective destination image	0.678	0.053	0.653	12.792[***]	.000
	Conative destination image	0.374	0.091	0.367	4.110[***]	.000

Notes. a. Dependent Variable: Park Attractiveness. [*]p<.05. [**]p<.01. [***]p<.001. *Ns*-Not significant.

Consequently, one standard deviation (SD) increase in cognitive destination image was associated with a 0.446 SD increase in parks' attractiveness, holding other variables (i.e., affective and conative image) constant. Likewise, one SD increase in the affective image was associated with a 0.653 SDs increase in parks' attractiveness, holding other variables (i.e., cognitive and conative image) constant. Along similar lines, one SD increase in the conative image was associated with a 0.367 SDs increase in parks' attractiveness, holding other variables (i.e., cognitive and affective image) constant. Thus, the prediction equation for the regression model is as follows:

$$\text{y (Park } \widehat{\text{Attractiveness}}) = -1.016 + 0.473(\text{cognitive image}) + 0.678(\text{affective image}) + 0.374(\text{conative image})$$

Objective One: Cognitive Destination Image and Park Attractiveness

The first objective of the current study sought to determine the influence of cognitive destination image on park attractiveness, which was addressed through H_{01}. As reported in Table 4.13(iii), a significant positive relationship was established between cognitive destination image and park

attractiveness (β = 0.446, t = 6.661, p = .001). Consequently, H_{01} was rejected. Consistent with previous research (S. Kim et al., 2019; Setiawan et al., 2021; Weru, 2021; Xu et al., 2018), based on the results of the current study, tourists exhibiting higher levels of cognitive destination image are more likely to perceive a tourist destination as being attractive.

Objective Two: Affective Destination Image and Park Attractiveness

The second objective of the current study sought to assess the influence of affective destination image on park attractiveness, which was addressed through H_{02}. As indicated in Table 4.13(iii), a significant positive relationship was established between affective destination image and park attractiveness (β = 0.653, t = 12.792, p = .000). Therefore, H_{02} was rejected. Inferring from the results, tourists experiencing higher

levels of the affective destination image are more likely to perceive the tourist destination as attractive, and vice versa. These results were consistent with previous studies (Ćulić et al., 2021); Ariya et al., 2021; Ranasinghe et al., 2019). The study's results also concurred with the findings of Vuuren and Slabbert (2012) that attitude as a behavioral factor of the customers influences certain products and services.

Objective Three: Conative Destination Image and Park Attractiveness

The third objective of the current study sought to examine the influence of affective destination image on park attractiveness, which was addressed through H_{03}. As indicated in Table 4.13(iii), a significant positive relationship was established between conative destination image and park attractiveness (β = 0.367, t = 4.110, p = .000). Therefore, H_{03} was rejected. The results of the current study resonated well with previous research (i.e., J. H. Wang, Choe, et al., 2020; Asfar, 2019; Gómez & Pérez, 2015) and suggested that tourists who exhibit higher levels of the conative image are more likely to perceive a tourist destination as attractive, and vice versa.

Role of Stakeholders' Involvement in Destination Brand Image – Park Attractiveness Relationship

A hierarchical linear regression was performed to examine the moderation effect of stakeholders' involvement on the relationship between destination brand image and park attractiveness. In the current study, five separate hierarchical regressions were performed to examine the role of each stakeholder (i.e., National government, County government, tourism enterprises, visitors, and tourism associations) on the relationship between destination brand image and park attractiveness.

According to Baron and Kenny (1986), statistical moderation arises if the strength and direction of the relationship between a predictor and an outcome variable depend on a third variable. To ascertain moderation, three fundamental paths are measured: (1) the effect of the predictor variable (Destination Brand Image) on the outcome variable (Park Attractiveness), (2) the effect of the moderator variable (Role of a Stakeholder) on the outcome variable, and (3) the effect of the interaction term (a product of the predictor and the moderator variables on the outcome variable.

Statistical moderation arises if the effect of the interaction term on the outcome variable is statistically significant, controlling for the effects of the predictor and moderator variables. To perform the regression analyses, the predictor and moderator variables were mean-centred to lessen multicollinearity resulting in more interpretable regression slopes (Astivia & Zumbo, 2019; Iacobucci et al., 2017). Significant effects of the interaction terms on the outcome variable were further probed at low (−1SD) and high (above +1SD) of the moderator and predictor variables using conditional plots.

Moderation Effect of National Government Involvement on Destination Brand Image – Park Attractiveness Relationship

A hierarchical regression analysis was performed to examine the moderation effect of the National government involvement on the relationship between destination brand image and park attractiveness. The results are reported in Table 5. The interaction term (DBI x NGI) significantly influenced park attractiveness in model 3 (β = 0.202, t = 3.18, p = .002). Additionally, model 3 explained 51.0% (R^2 = 0.510) of variation in park attractiveness from 45.9% (R^2 = 0.459) in Model 2, an increment of 5.1% (R^2 change = 0.051).

Table 5: Effect of National Government Involvement on Destination Image – Park Attractiveness Relationship

Variable(s) in each regression step	β (t, Sig.)	R^2	F change	Sig. F change
Model 1		0.415	71.07***	.000
DBI	0.645*** (8.43, .000)			
Model 2		0.459	41.97***	.000
DBI	0.672*** (9.01, .000)			
NGI	0.210** (2.82, .006)			
Model 3		0.510	33.93***	.000
DBI	0.726*** (3.95, .000)			
NGI	0.234** (3.53, .001)			
DBI x NGI	0.202** (3.18, .002)			

Notes: DBI = Destination Brand Image. NGI = National Government Involvement. R^2 = Coefficient of Determination. β = Standardized coefficient. t = t-test value associated with β. *p<.05. **p<.01. ***p<.001. *Ns*-Not significant.

Consequently, the National Government's involvement in the branded parks significantly moderated the relationship between destination brand image and park attractiveness. Thus, $H_{04}a$ was rejected. Additionally, to examine the moderation effect of the interaction term, the relationship between destination brand image and park attractiveness was drawn separately for low and high values of National Government involvement in the branded parks (Figure 1). As can be seen, branded parks experiencing higher levels of National Government involvement experienced a greater effect of destination brand image on park attractiveness. In other words, the effect of destination brand image on branded parks' attractiveness in the Amboseli-Tsavo ecosystem was stronger with higher levels of National Government involvement. These results underline the importance of the National Government in strengthening the relationship between destination image and park attractiveness.

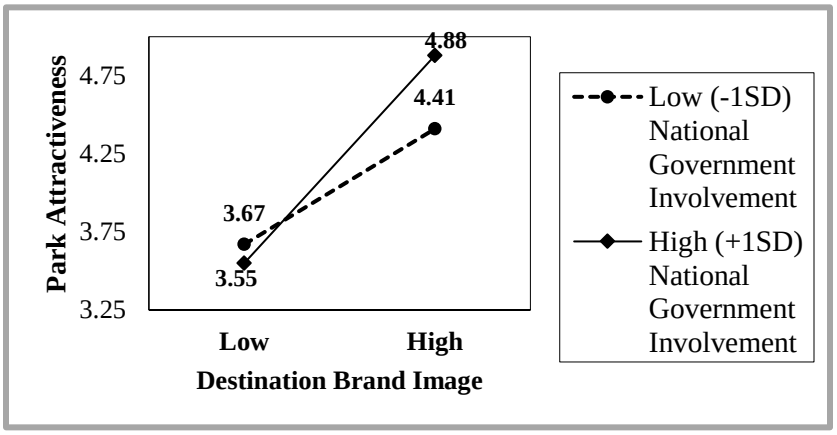


Figure 1: Effect of Destination Brand Image on Park Attractiveness at Low (−1SD) and High (+1SD) Values of the National Government Involvement

Moderation Effect of County Government Involvement on Destination Brand Image – Park Attractiveness Relationship

A hierarchical regression analysis was performed to examine the moderation effect of the County Government Involvement on the relationship between destination brand image and park attractiveness. The results are reported in Table 6. As shown, the effect of the interaction term (DBI x CGI) on the relationship between destination brand image and park attractiveness in model 3 was statistically non-significant ($\beta = -0.013$, $t = 0.18$, $p = .423$). Thus, $H_{04}b$ was supported, demonstrating that the County Government's role did not moderate the relationship between destination brand image and park attractiveness. A plausible reason for this finding is that the involvement of County Governments in the Amboseli-Tsavo ecosystem was found to be moderate in the current study, or the role played by the National Government was relatively superior. More likely, the National Government is more involved in the branded parks than the County Governments hosting the parks.

Table 6: Effect of County Government Involvement on Destination Image – Park Attractiveness Relationship

Variable(s) in each regression step	β (t, Sig.)	R^2	F change	Sig. F change
Model 1		0.415	71.07^{***}	.000
DBI	0.645^{***} (8.43, .000)			
Model 2		0.482	43.32^{***}	.000
DBI	0.678^{***} (9.11, .000)			
CGI	-0.212^{**} (−2.94, .003)			
Model 3		0.487	2.88^{Ns}	.000
DBI	0.699^{***} (3.14, .000)			
CGI	-0.031^{Ns} (0.93, .321)			
DBI x CGI	-0.013^{Ns} (−0.18, .423)			

Notes: DBI = Destination Brand Image. CGI = County Government Involvement. R^2 = Coefficient of Determination. β = Standardized coefficient. t = t-test value associated with β. $^{*}p<.05$. $^{**}p<.01$. $^{***}p<.001$. *Ns*-Not significant.

Moderation Effect of Tourism Enterprises' Involvement on Destination Brand Image – Park Attractiveness Relationship

A hierarchical regression analysis was performed to examine the moderation effect of the National government involvement on the relationship between destination brand image and park attractiveness (Table 7).

Table 7: Effect of Tourism Enterprises Involvement on Destination Image – Park Attractiveness Relationship

Variable(s) in each regression step	β (t, Sig.)	R^2	F change	Sig. F change
Model 1		0.415	71.07^{***}	.000
DBI	0.645 (8.43^{***}, .000)			
Model 2		0.468	35.51^{***}	.000
DBI	0.647 (8.43^{***}, .000)			
TEI	0.110(2.23^{*}, .013)			
Model 3		0.522	23.45^{***}	.000
DBI	0.504(4.04^{***}, .000)			
TEI	0.174 (2.88^{**}, .001)			
DBI x TEI	0.194 (2.94^{**}, .001)			

Notes: DBI = Destination Brand Image. TEI = Tourism Enterprises Involvement. R^2 = Coefficient of Determination. β = Standardized coefficient. t = t-test value associated with β. $^{*}p<.05$. $^{**}p<.01$. $^{***}p<.001$. *Ns*-Not significant.

As shown in Table 7, the effect of the interaction term (DBI x TEI) on the relationship between destination image and park attractiveness in Model 3 was significant ($\beta = 0.194$, $t = 2.94$, $p = .001$). Besides, model 3 explained a 52.2% ($R^2 = 0.522$) proportion of variance in park attractiveness from 46.8% ($R^2 = 0.468$) in model 2, an increase of 5.4% (R^2 change = 0.054). Consequently, tourism enterprises' involvement in branded parks significantly moderated the relationship between destination brand image and attractiveness. Thus, $H_{04}c$ was rejected. Additionally, to examine the moderation effect of the interaction term, the relationship between destination brand image and park attractiveness was drawn separately for low and high values of tourism enterprises' involvement in the branded parks (Figure 4.16). As illustrated in Figure 2, branded parks experiencing higher levels of tourism enterprises' involvement reported a greater effect of destination brand image on park attractiveness. In other words, the effect of destination brand image on branded parks' attractiveness in the Amboseli-Tsavo ecosystem was stronger with higher levels of tourism enterprises' involvement.

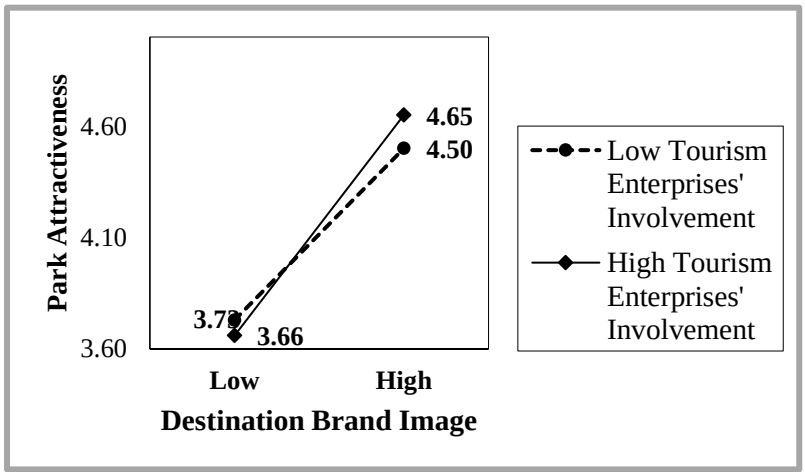


Figure 2: Effect of Destination Brand Image on Park Attractiveness at Low (−1SD) and High (+1SD) Values of the Tourism Enterprises Involvement

Moderation Effect of Visitors' Involvement on Destination Brand Image – Park Attractiveness Relationship

A hierarchical regression analysis was performed to examine the moderation effect of the visitors' involvement on the relationship between destination brand image and park attractiveness. The results are reported in Table 8.

Table 8: Effect of Visitors' Involvement on Destination Image – Park Attractiveness Relationship

Variable(s) in each regression step	β (t, Sig.)	R^2	F change	Sig. F change
Model 1		0.415	71.07^{***}	.000
DBI	0.645 (8.43^{***}, .000)			
Model 2		0.482	37.69^{***}	.000
DBI	0.636 (8.39^{***}, .000)			
VI	0.380 (4.78^{**}, .009)			
Model 3		0.521	24.88^{***}	.000
DBI	0.660 (8.57^{***}, .000)			
VI	0.216 (2.84^{**}, .001)			
DBI x VI	0.091 (2.32^{**}, .001)			

Notes: DBI = Destination Brand Image. VI = Visitors' Involvement. R^2 = Coefficient of Determination. β = Standardized coefficient. t = t-test value associated with β. $^{*}p<.05$. $^{**}p<.01$. $^{***}p<.001$. *Ns*-Not significant.

As shown in Table 8, the effect of the interaction term (DBI x VI) on the relationship between destination image and park attractiveness in model 3 was statistically significant (β = 0.091, t = 2.32, p = .001). Besides, Model 3 explained a 52.1% (R^2 = 0.521) proportion of variance in park attractiveness from 48.2% (R^2 = 0.482) in Model 2, an increase of 3.9% (R^2 change = 0.039). Thus, visitors' involvement in the branded parks significantly moderated the relationship between destination brand image and park attractiveness. Thus, $H_{04}d$ was rejected. Furthermore, to examine the moderation effect of the interaction term, the relationship between destination brand image and park attractiveness was drawn separately for low and high values of visitors' involvement in the branded parks (Figure 4.17). As demonstrated in Figure 3, branded parks experiencing higher levels of visitors' involvement exhibited a greater effect of destination brand image on park attractiveness. Thus, it is more likely that the effect of destination brand image on branded parks' attractiveness in the Amboseli-Tsavo ecosystem might be stronger with higher levels of visitors' involvement.

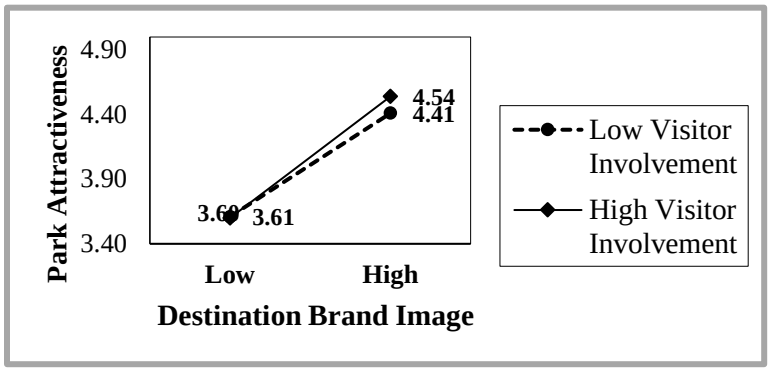


Figure 3: Effect of Destination Brand Image on Park Attractiveness at Low (−1SD) and High (+1SD) Values of the Visitors' Involvement

Moderation Effect of Tourism Associations' Involvement on Destination Brand Image – Park Attractiveness Relationship

A hierarchical regression analysis was performed to examine the moderation effect of the tourism associations' involvement on the relationship between destination brand image and park attractiveness. The results are reported in Table 9. As reported in Table 4.18, the effect of the interaction term (DBI x TAI) on the relationship between destination image and park attractiveness in model 3 was statistically significant (β = 0.348, t = 3.23, p = .000).

Table 9: Effect of Tourism Associations' Involvement on Destination Image – Park Attractiveness Relationship

Variable(s) in each regression step	β (t, Sig.)	R^2	F change	Sig. F change
Model 1		0.415	71.07^{***}	.000
DBI	0.645 (8.43^{***}, .000)			
Model 2		0.482	36.54^{***}	.000
DBI	0.664 (8.54^{***}, .000)			
TAI	0.298 (4.88^{**}, .001)			
Model 3		0.531	24.49^{***}	.000
DBI	0.559 (7.44^{***}, .000)			
TAI	0.462 (4.33^{***}, .000)			
DBI x TAI	0.348(3.23^{***}, .000)			

Notes: DBI = Destination Brand Image. TAI = Tourism Associations' Involvement. R^2 = Coefficient of Determination. β = Standardized coefficient. t = t-test value associated with β. $^{*}p$<.05. $^{**}p$<.01. $^{***}p$<.001. *Ns*-Not significant.

Furthermore, model 3 explained a 53.1% (R^2 = 0.531) proportion of variance in park attractiveness from 48.2% (R^2 = 0.482) in Model 2, an increase of 4.9% (R^2 change = 0.049). Therefore, tourism associations' involvement in branded parks significantly moderated the relationship between destination brand image and park attractiveness. Thus, $H_{04}e$ was rejected. Besides, to examine the moderation effect of the interaction term, the relationship between destination brand image and park attractiveness was drawn separately for low and high values of tourism associations' involvement in the branded parks (Figure 4).

As illustrated in Figure 4, branded parks experiencing higher levels of tourism associations' involvement presented a greater effect of destination brand image on park attractiveness. Thus, it is more likely that the effect of destination brand image on branded parks' attractiveness in the Amboseli-Tsavo ecosystem might be stronger with higher levels of tourism associations' involvement.

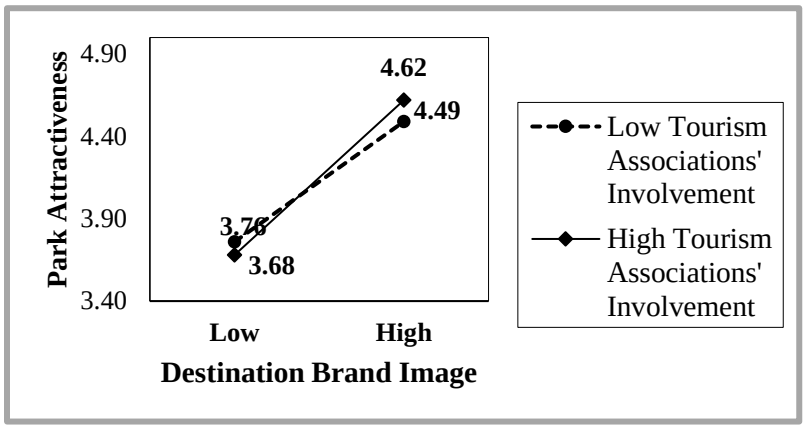


Figure 4: Effect of Destination Brand Image on Park Attractiveness at Low (−1SD) and High (+1SD) Values of the Visitors' Involvement

This study's results revealed that the destination's attractiveness is determined by the excellent availability of the 5As (Accommodation, Accessibility, Attractions, Activities and Amenities). The study helped to understand that Marketing Mix principles, which include Product, Price, Place and Promotion, are influential in making a destination become attractive.

The findings of this study confirm that the participation of any organization's stakeholders has significant importance in the success of an organization and the environment on which it depends in addition to generating profit, as stated by Galant (2017). According to the results, the stakeholders offer essential services enabling visitors to the wildlife parks under study to enjoy a fulfilling and satisfying experience during their visits. The study results emphasize that the stakeholders' involvement is critical in offering suitable accommodation facilities of various standards or gradings, enabling access to the study area through the provision of necessary transport services, and ensuring the visitors enjoy utmost safety and security during their holiday period. The stakeholders enhance park attractiveness by ensuring that the attractions and amenities are available and well-maintained. Consistent with Xu et al. (2018), the results of this study underlined the importance of brand image in park attractiveness and tourists' choice of a destination. The study's results also painted a gloomy picture of the county government's involvement in enhancing the destination's attractiveness. At the local level of the central governance system, the local government authorities would be expected to play a key role in promotion and injecting resources to make the destination appealing.

In addition, the study's results concurred with Hedlund (2021), citing motivation, perception, learning, beliefs, and attitude as impacting an individual's purchasing behavior because these elements influence consumers psychologically and impact their general purchasing habits. The study's results also support previous research by Morrison (2018) that destination branding creates destination competitiveness. The national and country governments are key players in enhancing the park's performance as study reveals they offer huge assistance to service providers in the parks and create a conducive holiday environment. Stylidis et al. (2017) demonstrated that cognitive, affective, and conative images are interrelated and all contribute to psychological tourist buying behavior. The study outcome also concurred with Tran et al. (2019), which showed that destination brand image plays a key role in destination brand loyalty and perceived quality products and services that visitors are likely to enjoy. Naturally, people want to be associated with good things; hence, customers would be attracted by a positive image of a product or service.

Conclusion

To determine the influence of cognitive destination brand image on the attractiveness of wildlife parks in the Amboseli-Tsavo Ecosystem

The current study sought to determine the influence of cognitive destination image on park attractiveness. The results showed a significant positive relationship between cognitive destination image and park attractiveness.

According to the study's findings, the presence of sufficient lodging, accessibility, attractions, amenities, and activities demonstrates a positive destination brand image. Friendly service fees and persuasive promotional efforts are important factors in travelers' choice of destinations. According to the study, most visitors believe that the parks have strong infrastructure and road signage that prevent them from getting lost in the wilderness and that they have a high perception of the destination brand image of the parks under consideration. Additionally, the findings showed that park visitors thought they were getting their money's worth. Providing high-quality goods and services encourages visitors to have favorable opinions of the parks.

To assess the influence of affective destination brand image on the attractiveness of wildlife parks in the Amboseli-Tsavo Ecosystem

The above objective of the study sought to assess the influence of affective destination image on park attractiveness. Inferring from the results, tourists experiencing higher levels of the affective destination image are more likely to perceive the tourist destination as attractive, and vice versa. The destination offers attractive product attributes making the study area positively considered by potential visitors both locally and internationally. The stakeholders, especially accommodation providers need to ensure that they put up properties offering relaxation and pleasant services to visitors

To examine the influence of conative destination brand image on the attractiveness of wildlife parks in the Amboseli-Tsavo Ecosystem

The current study's goal was to investigate the impact of affective destination image on park attractiveness. The findings indicated that tourists with higher levels of the conative image are more likely to perceive a tourist destination as attractive, and vice versa. The research was based on the conative components of the destination brand

image, which considers the visitor's desire to act or potential to visit or revisit as relevant. The image of the destination brand determines the attraction of wildlife parks. A positive conative destination brand image is demonstrated by a positive intention to spread positive Word of Mouth, an open intention to revisit at a time in the future and recommend the destination to family and friends. Results of the analysis of qualitative data collected from tourism experts supported

visitors' viewpoints regarding the brand image of the Amboseli-Tsavo Ecosystem. Visitors' confidence should be maintained through excellent products and services so that they come again and recommend the destination to others. Satisfied customers help to market the product.

To evaluate the moderating effect of stakeholders' role on the relationship between destination brand image and wildlife park attractiveness in the Amboseli-Tsavo Ecosystem

This study concludes that stakeholders provide crucial services that allow visitors to the wildlife parks under study to have a positive and gratifying experience. Their involvement in providing appropriate lodging facilities of various standards or gradings, facilitating access to the study area through the provision of necessary transportation services, and ensuring the visitors experience the highest levels of safety and security while on vacation are important. By ensuring that the amenities and attractions are accessible and well-maintained, the stakeholders increase the park's attractiveness. Furthermore, tourists perceive wildlife parks to be more appealing due to the extensive support provided by tour operators handling holiday bookings, while accommodation partners also provide enough accommodation information, making online bookings simple. The county government needs to improve involvement in tourism activities as they perform below par in some expected responsibilities. When a tourist destination is attractive, the investors develop more confidence as they will expect good returns on their investment.

Recommendations

Recommendations for Industry Practice

Based on the results of the study and the discussions on the specific objectives and hypothesis, the following recommendations are made:

1. Based on the results of the study and the discussions on the specific objectives, it is observable that tourism products are created to attract potential visitors to the destination. Amboseli Tsavo Ecosystem as a tourist destination becomes attractive for holidays if it can increase the level of its tourists' cognitive destination image in the following key components of tourism; - suitable natural environment, tourist infrastructure, accessibility, attraction, and social environment. Since potential tourists gain more information about a site, which develops familiarity and competence, this study recommends communicating the potential benefits of the Amboseli Tsavo Ecosystem to potential tourists as the most important concept of strategic destination marketing.
2. Various variables can be used to assess attractiveness. This study suggests a thorough monitoring and assessment mechanism that stakeholders of wildlife-branded parks can use to track the destination's attractiveness. The respective players participating in monitoring and evaluation should have their major duties outlined in the policy. The respondents offered valuable information, which enabled the study to achieve its objectives. However, further research should be conducted to determine the factors influencing the choice of different wildlife parks within the Amboseli-Tsavo Ecosystem

Recommendations for Policy-making

1. According to the study results and discussions on the specific objective, tourism products are created to attract potential visitors. The destination becomes favorable for holidays if it can offer the five key components of tourism: suitable accommodation, accessibility, attraction, activities and amenities at an affordable price for the target market.
2. Stakeholders give incentives to improve a destination's appeal and performance. Because the branded parks within the Amboseli-Tsavo Ecosystem are yet to reach their full potential, there is a need to investigate how destination brand image and stakeholders' roles may be exploited to enable investors in these parks to experience returns on their investment. Tourism stakeholders like County Governments should also continuously urge tourism facilities to practice responsible tourism. Wildlife tourism is a key contributor to

tourism development in the country. The tourism industry supports several livelihoods; hence there is a need to safeguard wildlife for future posterity. The study recommends establishing a policy framework that would give stakeholders more influence in making the destinations attractive.

Similarly, the sustainability of the ecosystem is equally important to ensure we conserve the physical and social environment for posterity. Each stakeholder has a role to play to ensure this dream is achieved successfully and will be a fulfillment of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) as designed by the United Nations. Therefore, the study recommends a policy that will handle matters relating to the sustainability of the Amboseli-Tsavo ecosystem.

3. The study contributes to the body of knowledge and policy-making on matters related to destination brand image as the study reveals that the three categories of brand image – cognitive image, affective image and conative image work together for better success. The findings also revealed that tourism stakeholders play different roles which collectively enhance a visitor's experience.

Recommendations for Further Research

This study comprehensively touched on many aspects of the stakeholders' role and destination brand image in enhancing the attractiveness and performance of the wildlife parks. The respondents offered valuable information, which enabled the study to achieve its objectives. However, some areas remain unclear, requiring further research. Therefore, the following areas may require further study:

1) To investigate the role of competitive strategies in enhancing the performance of branded wildlife parks in Kenya.
2) To explore the influence of stakeholders' collaboration and involvement in promoting Kenya as a touristic destination.
3) To determine the factors influencing the choice of different wildlife parks in Kenya for holidays.
4) To explore policies on controlling the provision of accommodation and attractions or activities within the protected parks to safeguard the ecosystem.

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