Moderating Role of Affective Destination Image on the Relationship between Tourists Satisfaction and Behavioural Intention: Evidence from Obudu Mountain Resort

Mohammed Bala Banki[1*] Hairul Nizam Ismail[2] Musa Dalil[3] Aliyu Kawu[4]

1. Faculty of Built Environment, Universiti Teknologi Malaysia, P.O.Box 81310, Johor Bahru, Malaysia
2. Faculty of Built Environment, Universiti Teknologi Malaysia, P.O.Box 81310, Johor Bahru, Malaysia
3. School of Environmental Technology, Federal University of Technology Minna, P.M.B 65, Niger State, Nigeria
4. School of Environmental Technology, Federal University of Technology Minna, P.M.B 65, Niger State, Nigeria
Email: *mohdbanki33@gmail.com, b-hairul@utm.my, dalilmusa@gmail.com & aliyukawu@gmail.com

Abstract

The aim of this study is to ascertain the moderating effect that affective destination image has on the relationship between tourist satisfaction and behavioural intention in a mountain tourism destination: Obudu Mountain Resort. Using a sample of 217 tourists who were very much first-time visitors, structural equation modelling (SEM) and hierarchical multiple regression were used to perform the analysis. Our findings provide support for the entire hypothesis developed except for the direct relationship between cognitive image and behavioural intention. The result of the hierarchical multiple regressions revealed that affective destination image has a significant moderating effect on the relationship between tourist satisfaction and behavioural intention.

Keywords: Cognitive image, Affective image, Tourists satisfaction, Behavioural intention, Mountain tourism

1. Introduction

In the last two decades, the need to develop rural communities necessary for rural empowerment and increased leisure activities as a way of relieving people of the stress associated with the struggle to meet the demands of conducive healthy living has brought about various forms of tourism such as ecotourism, nature tourism, slum tourism, dark tourism, disaster tourism, sustainable tourism, mountain tourism and many others. Among all these forms of tourism, mountain tourism stands out because it is more advantageous to others since it can be considered as mass tourism and alternative tourism (Maroudas *et al.* 2004).

Mountains are one of humankind's most profound archetypal symbols (Smethurst 2000), being frequently associated to extraordinary, dramatic and exotic landscapes, nature and culture features (Nepal & Chipeniuk 2005). Mountain destinations are places with powerful symbolic features that exert a strong influence on destination image formation and their attractiveness leads to a tourism demand corresponding to about 20% of global tourist flows, mostly due to their appealing symbolic image (Silva *et al.* 2013). Mountain destination image is therefore a crucial element worthy of proper packaging by destination management organizations in order to provide a fulfilling experience for domestic and international tourists pertinent for increased patronage and the long-term sustainability of

mountain resorts. Tourism destination image is important because it is presumed to have direct consequences for variables such as the satisfaction felt by the tourist or loyalty to the tourism destination. Loyalty is a concept related closely to customer satisfaction, and there is even a consensus that a high degree of satisfaction results in loyal customers. This makes loyalty the central concept of marketing and any discussion of it must take into account the elements involved in the process of its formation, such as customer satisfaction (Petrick & Backman 2002; Baker & Crompton 2000) and brand image (Bigné *et al.* 2001). The success of many tourist destinations around the world largely depends on the images held by potential tourists and their effective management (Sönmez & Sirakaya 2002).

The tourism industry is highly competitive due to the globalization of markets and the rapid changes demanded by consumers (San Martín 2005). In order to compete effectively, destinations must design and implement appropriate strategies and marketing initiatives to position themselves in their target markets (Hawkes & Kwortnik 2006; San Martín 2005). Destinations should distinguish themselves from their competitors, increase their aptitude to attract new tourists and give more importance to maintaining and cultivating the loyalty of tourists who have already visited the destination (Alegre & Cladera 2006). Such differentiation has to be perceived by tourists, because a consumer's behaviour is the result of his or her perceptions (Molina *et al.* 2012). One of the key elements of successful destination marketing is tourist satisfaction, which influences the choice of destination and the decision to return (Yoon & Uysal 2005). Furthermore, a key challenge for destination

marketers is to provide a differentiated product for the sophisticated traveller in search of new and exotic destinations (Ramkissoon *et al.* 2011)

Destinations have become more important than individual attractions as a result of increases over the past two decades in tourism demand for package holidays. As a result, when tourists visit a destination, they seek more than one experience at that destination. They stay at a hotel, go outside the hotel to eat and drink, communicate with local people, shop, and visit cultural and historical venues (Ozturk & Qu 2008). Thus, a trip becomes not a single product, but rather consists of different service components often provided by multiple organizations with different objectives (Kozak, 2003). Such is the case for trips to Obudu Mountain Resort in Nigeria which arguably has very fascinating natural and man-made endowments providing a bundle of attractions. Obudu Mountain Resort is located in Cross River State of Nigeria and was formerly called Obudu Cattle Ranch. Obudu Mountain Resort is one of the loveliest and most wonderful places in the world because of its topography. The resort was described by a foreigner as "Nigeria's best kept secret". Its recognition nationally and internationally has increased as it offers both leisure and business tourism experiences. The resort is seated at an altitude of 1,575.76m above sea level. Temperature levels vary with the season. In the months from November to January the temperature range is 26˚c to 32˚c. In the months from June to September the temperature level is 4˚c to 10˚c (Esu & Arrey 2011). It is bounded to the north by Benue State, to the south by the Ogoja local government area and the east by the Republic of Cameroon and lies within latitude 640N and longitude 910E (Nwahia *et al.* 2012).

Previous research studies show that destination image can influence tourist satisfaction and their behaviours such as the choice of a destination, the subsequent evaluations, and their future behavioural intentions (Bigné *et al.* 2001; Chon, 1990; Court & Upton, 1997). A favourable image in terms of the cognitive and effective dimension of a particular tourism destination is likely to result in a positive evaluation of the destination and to increase the possibility of revisiting. Surprisingly, most destination image research studies are conducted in Western countries and very few are done in developing countries. According to Baloglu & McCleary (1999) and Sönmez & Sirakaya (2002), the body of knowledge regarding destination image has been largely based on data collected from Western tourists visiting destinations in Western countries and very little attention has been given to studies on how travellers from Western countries and Sub-Saharan African countries develop images of mountain tourism destinations in Sub-Saharan African countries. To the best of our knowledge, no study has been conducted in Western countries, and particularly in Sub-Saharan developing African countries, that seeks to investigate the moderating effect of the affective dimension of destination image on the relationship between tourist satisfaction and behavioural intention in the context of a mountain tourism destination. It is on this basis that this study will provide an insight into the influence of the affective dimension of destination image in shaping tourist behaviour and contribute to the existing literature.

2.0 Development of Research Hypothesis
2.1 Cognitive and Affective Destination Image

The idea of destination image was introduced into tourism studies in the early 1970s by Hunt (1975), Gunn (1972) and Mayo (1973), and has since become one of the most researched topics in tourism-related research (Stepchenkova & Mills 2010). When tourists have a generally positive perception of a destination, the likelihood of their selecting that destination is increased (Birgit 2001). It has been shown that cognitive and affective destination images are critical dimensions that have a significant influence on tourist satisfaction (Kandampully & Suharatanto 2000; Loureiro & Gonzalez 2008; O'Leary & Deegan 2005) and the future visiting behaviour of tourists (Kandampully & Suharatanto 2000; Garau & Martínez 2010; Chen & Tsai 2007; Lee, Lee *et al.* 2005; Bigné *et al.* 2001; Chen & Tsai 2007; Prayag 2009). In general, past findings confirm that destination image is a direct antecedent of satisfaction. Additionally, it should be noted that tourists' intentions to revisit destinations largely depend on their positive perception of the destination (Bojanic 1991; Chi & Qu 2008). Destination image has been recognized as one of the influential concepts in tourists' destination choice process because image affects the individual's subjective perception, subsequent behaviour and destination choice (Chon 1990; Etchner & Ritchie 1991; Jeong & Holland 2012). More recently, Lee (2009) studied wetlands tourism in Taiwan and found that "destination image directly affects satisfaction and indirectly affects future behaviour".

Many tourism scholars focus their attention on the holistic nature of the image, defining destination image as the expression of all the knowledge, impressions, prejudices and emotional thoughts that an individual or group has of a particular object or place (Alcaniz *et al.* 2008; Calantone *et al.* 1989; Fakeye & Crompton 1991). Because of this holistic nature, image plays an integral role in successful destination marketing (Tasci & Gartner 2007), and thus, destinations with strong positive images are more likely to be considered and selected by consumers (Echtner & Ritchie 2003; Prayag 2009). Therefore, destination marketers have sought to identify

the most effective factors that influence a destination image. Thus, the image of a destination becomes significantly effective for the decisions of tourists (Yilmaz *et al.* 2009).

In tourism, measuring only cognitive image by attribute lists, however, does not capture affective image domains such as fun, excitement and atmosphere (Murphy 1999; Tasci *et al.* 2007). Woodside & Lysonski (1989) argue that affective associations such as positive, negative and neutral feelings are necessary to know global attitudes concerning whether tourists like, dislike, or have no opinion about a destination, and that they greatly influence destination choice (Lin *et al.* 2007; Walmsley & Young 1998; Woodside & Lysonski 1989). However, the cognitive image refers to the beliefs or knowledge a person has of the characteristics or attributes of a tourism destination (Boo & Busser 2006; Govers *et al.* 2007; Pike & Ryan 2004). Those attributes are the elements of a destination that attract tourists such as attractions to be seen, environments to be perceived (e.g. weather, public hygiene) and experiences to remember underlying the cognitive structure of destination image. The affective image, on the other hand, represents a tourist's feelings toward a destination (Baloglu & Brinberg 1997; Walmsley & Jenkins 1993). A common agreement among researchers seems to point out that affective evaluation depends on cognitive assessment while affective responses are formed as a function of cognitive ones (Gartner 1993; Ryan & Cave 2005; Vogt & Andereck 2003). It is also paramount to note that the cognitive component of the image has a considerable impact on the affective component (Holdbrook 1978; Russell & Pratt 1980; Anand *et al.* 1988; Stern & Krakover 1993; Lin *et al.* 2007; Ryan & Cave 2007). The distinction and direction of the relationship between cognitive and affective components have been emphasized in a number of tourism decision-making models (Lin *et al.* 2007).

2.2 Tourist Satisfaction

In the consumer behaviour literature, satisfaction is defined as consumer fulfilment responses to attitudes that include such things as judgments following a purchase or a series of consumer product interactions (Lovelock & Wirthz 2007). Satisfaction is "one of the objectives of marketing activity, linking the processes of purchasing and consumption with post-purchase phenomena" (Kandampully & Suharatanto 2003). It is a psychological outcome derived from experience (Lee *et al.* 2007). Product and service quality evaluations are predominantly based on a cognitive processing mechanism (Vida & Reardon 2008). In the case of satisfaction with a destination, tourists value the degree of pleasurable fulfilment of their needs and wishes, including the full range of services and activities offered by the destination. Satisfaction depends on the experience of using the services (Hernández-Lobato *et al.* 2006). Satisfaction can be seen as a tourist's post-purchase assessment of the destination (Oliver 1980) and it is considered a valuable concept in understanding the performance of destinations. In the tourism literature, destination satisfaction refers to the emotional state reflected in a tourist's post-exposure assessment of a destination (Baker & Crompton 2000; Su *et al.* 2011). Destinations that can identify attributes that satisfy tourists increase their chances of having loyal tourists (McDowall 2010).

Researches in the service industry have shown satisfaction to be a direct antecedent of behavioural intentions (Cronin *et al.* 2000; Petrick & Bachman 2002; Tam 2000). In the tourism literature, previous research findings suggest a significant relationship between tourist satisfaction, intention to return, and positive word-of-mouth communication (Beeho & Prentice 1997; Hallowell 1996). Satisfied tourists are most likely to recommend destinations they have visited to their friends and relatives or express favourable comments about the destination (Beeho & Prentice 1997; Ross 1993). In contrast, dissatisfied tourists may not return to the same destination and may not recommend it to other tourists (Chen & Chen 2010). Even worse, dissatisfied tourists may express negative comments about a destination and damage its market reputation (Reisinger & Turner 2003). In a study of tourists visiting Mallorca, Spain, Kozak & Remington (2000) reported that the more satisfied the tourists were with their visits, the more likely they were to return and recommend the destination to others. Tourist satisfaction is defined as a positive perception or feeling that tourists develop by engaging in a certain recreational activity (Beard & Ragheb 1980). Tourist satisfaction influences destination choices (Cole & Crompton 2003) and future behaviours (Bigné *et al.* 2001; Cole *et al.* 2002; Lee 2007).

2.3 Tourist Behavioural Intention

Generally, previous studies in numerous service disciplines have shown that customer satisfaction measures how well a customer's expectations are met and customer loyalty measures how likely customers are to return and to spread positive words about destinations to others. Therefore, customer expectations must be met or exceeded to create loyalty as an aspect of behavioural intention (Kotler *et al.* 2006). Behavioural intention, defined as an individual's anticipated or planned future behaviour (Oliver & Swan 1989), represents the expectations of a particular form of behaviour in a given setting and can be operationalized as the likelihood to act (Fishbein & Ajzen 1975). Zeithaml *et al.* (1996) suggested that favourable behavioural intentions are

associated with a service provider's ability to get its customers to: (1) say positive things about them, (2) recommend them to other customers, (3) remain loyal to them (i.e. repurchase from them), (4) spend more with them, and (5) pay price premiums. In recent studies, behavioural intentions have usually been explored within the cognitive-affective-conative framework (e.g. Lam *et al.* 2004; Oliver 1999), which is theoretically justified by Bagozzi's (1992) self-regulatory mechanisms model. The cognitive component (attribute appraisal) normally precedes emotional responses (Chiou & Droge 2006), which ultimately lead to behavioural intention. Empirical research offers strong support for such causality. For example, Dabholkar *et al.* (2000) as well as Cole & Illum (2006) found that satisfaction (affective component) mediates the effect of service quality (cognitive component) on behavioural intentions (conative component).

Behavioural intentions in tourism have been studied by examining two variables: word-of-mouth behaviour and intention to return (Severt *et al.* 2007). The degree of destination loyalty is frequently reflected in tourists' intentions to revisit the destination and in their willingness to recommend it (Chen & Tsai 2007; Oppermann 2000). Studies of tourists' behavioural intention mainly focus on two topics, destination choice intention (Lam & Hsu 2006) and post-purchase behavioural intention (Kozak 2002), with the latter receiving the majority of attention. A positive word of mouth is not only an indicator of a tourist's intention to continue the relationship with the destination, but also a reliable source of information for potential tourists (Yoon & Uysal 2005). Thus, behavioural intentions have become a fundamental strategic metric to evaluate the success of a tourism destination. The relationship between destination image and behavioural intentions has been well established in the tourism literature (Bao *et al.* 2008; Bigné *et al.* 2001; Fakeye & Crompton 1991; Lee *et al.* 2005). Supportive evidence exists for tourists' satisfaction being reflected in their behavioural intentions (Alexandris *et al.* 2006; Beeho & Prentice 1997; Bramwell 1998; Hallowell 1996; Kozak & Rimmington 2000; Oppermann 2000; Yoon & Uysal 2005). Bian (2005) and Castro *et al.* (2007) suggest that tourists' intention to revisit and recommend is both directly and indirectly affected by destination image. Lee (2009) examines a behavioural model of an eco-village in Taiwan and argues that destination image indirectly affects visitors' future behaviour through satisfaction. Thus, it would not be out of place to say that cognitive and affective destination image and satisfaction are antecedents of behavioural intention. Given the empirical evidences in the existing literature and the discussion above, we put forward the following hypothesis:

> **H1:** Cognitive destination image directly and positively influences behavioural intention
>
> **H2:** Cognitive destination image directly and positively influences tourist satisfaction
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> **H3:** Tourist satisfaction has a positive influence on behavioural intention
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> **H4:** Cognitive destination image positively influences affective destination image
>
> **H5:** Affective destination image directly and positively influences tourist satisfaction
>
> **H6:** Affective destination image directly and positively influences behavioural intention
>
> **H7:** Affective destination image moderates the relationship between tourist satisfaction and their behavioural intention

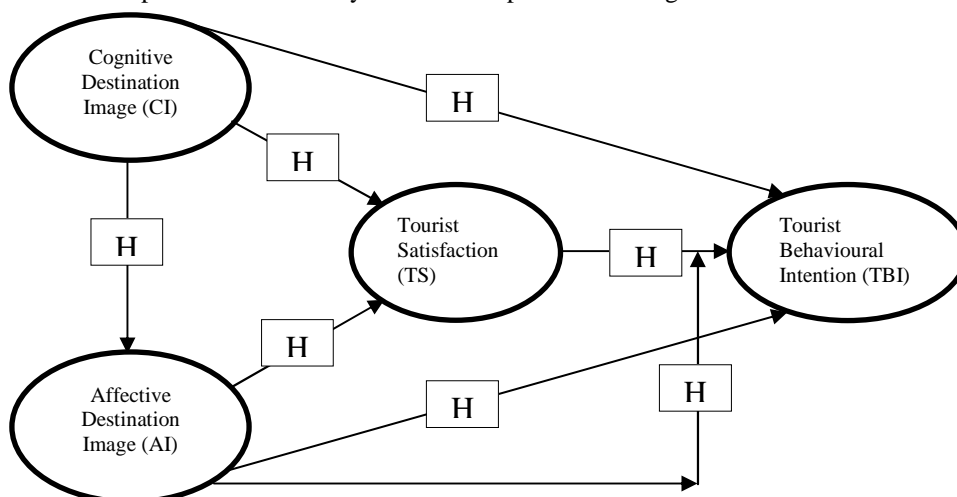The research framework upon which this study is based is represented in Fig. 1 below.

Figure 1: Research Conceptual Model

3.0 Research Methods

3.1 Research Instrument Development

The study instrument was a self-administered questionnaire which consisted of two sections. The first section contained questions relating to demographic information about the participant, in this case the tourist. The second section of the questionnaire included 24 items on a five-point Likert scale covering variables measuring cognitive destination image, affective destination image, tourist satisfaction and behavioural intention. Of these 24 items, 12 items measuring cognitive image were obtained from the study of Lin *et al.* (2007). Adopting a description of an affective quality attributed to environment, Russell & Pratt (1980), Baloglu & McCleary (1999) and Pike & Ryan (2004) demonstrated that four semantic differential scales (arousing—sleepy, pleasant-unpleasant, exciting-gloomy, and relaxing-distressing) could be applied to investigate the affective component of destination image. Thus, this four-item semantic differential scale was adapted to measure affective destination image in this study. Measurement items for tourist satisfaction and behavioural intention were based on the work of Z̆abkar *et al.* (2010) and Hernández-Lobato *et al.* (2006) and four items were also used to measure them.

The adopted items in the research instrument were confirmed as reliable by previous researchers, but in order to ensure that they provided an adequate measure of the construct they were meant to measure since it was to be used in the context of a mountain tourism destination, a pretest of the questionnaire was conducted with a convenience sample of 35 tourists who visited Obudu Mountain Resort in January, 2013. An exploratory factor analysis (EFA) was conducted for the purpose of identifying subdimensions in the entire construct. Using a principal component method and varimax rotation, all the items adopted had factor loadings of 0.5 or greater and all of them were retained for the actual field survey. All of these procedures were performed using SPSS 16. The resulting factors were treated as indicators to measure the entire construct.

3.2 Actual Data Collection

The data for this study were collected over a period of four months from 14th February 2013 to 27th May 2013 in a mountain tourism destination: Obudu Mountain Resort in Nigeria. The choice of the beginning of data collection was slated for February as it is within the number months when tourists visit Obudu Mountain Resort the most because of the favourable weather condition experience in the area between Septembers to Aprils every year. Considering the seasonal nature of tourism destinations, the questionnaires which were the valuable instruments for data collection used for this study were given to the tourism officer of the resort and some were given to the tour guides who at best are in close contact with the tourists who visit the resort and who are trusted and also agreed to assist in the process of data gathering, thus they served as research assistants. In February 2013, 600 questionnaires were given to the research assistants who in turn administered them to first-time visitors (tourists) they happened to be in contact with, and in May 2013 a total of 217 questionnaires were received completely filled in by the tourists yielding a response rate of 36%. The response rate was considered low, but given the fact that the minimum required sample for structural equation modelling (SEM) is 200, we considered the available completed questionnaires appropriate for our SEM analysis.

3.3 Data Analysis

3.3.1 Estimating Measurement Model

The proposed framework was tested through the use of confirmatory factor analysis and structural equation modelling analysis using AMOS 21. Following Anderson and Gerbing's (1988) two-step approach, a confirmatory factor analysis was selected to evaluate how well the theoretical model fitted the data. CFA is a method used for analysing the validity of the factor structure of measurement variables, carried out before examining the causality of a developed theoretical model (Jung *et al.* 2012).The first attempt at getting a good model fit did not yield acceptable results because six indicators of cognitive and one of affective destination image had factor loadings less than the acceptable value of 0.5. The items which included "this destination has varied and unique flora and fauna", "the environment in this destination is clean", "this destination has many sites to visit", "excursions at this destination are pleasant", "this destination has a variety of festivals, concerts and events", "this destination provides opportunities to learn ethnic customs" and "arousing-sleepy" were deleted. A summary of the confirmatory factor analysis results is given in Table 1. Our CFA results as shown in Table 1 indicate that the ratio (χ2/df, CMIN = 186.290, df = 98) of 1.90 is below the desired value of 3.0 as recommended by Chau (1997), and the goodness-of-fit index (GFI) values are 0.91, indicating an acceptable fit. Other index obtained such as the normed fit index (NFI) (0.90), comparative fit index (CFI (0.93), root mean

square residual (RMR) (0.034) and root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA) (0.05) are within the acceptable levels.

Composite reliability (CR) and average variance extracted (AVE) were used to measure the internal consistency of the measurement instrument and evaluate the convergent and discriminant validity (Fornell & Larcker 1981). Composite reliability for each construct was higher than the recommended value of 0.7 (Hair *et al.* 1998), all of the factor loadings for the indicators exceeded the minimum value of 0.5 and the AVE for all the latent variables were greater than 0.5 (Table 2). These results provide the evidence to conclude that the study measures have adequate convergent and discriminant validity.

Table 1. Overall fit indices of confirmatory factor analysis

	Obtained Values	Recommended Values
X^2	186.29	–
Degrees of freedom	98	–
X^2/df	1.90	≤ 3.00
RMSEA	0.05	≤ 0.08
RMR	0.03	≤ 0.08
NFI	0.90	≥ 0.90
CFI	0.93	≥ 0.90
GFI	0.91	≥ 0.90

Table 2

Factor loadings, average variance extracted and composite reliability of the measurement model

Construct/Variables	Factor loadings	AVE	CR
Cognitive Destination Image		0.59	0.88
This destination offers a lot in terms of natural scenic beauty	0.79		
The weather in this destination is nice	0.77		
The quality of accommodation is good	0.81		
This destination has good restaurants	0.78		
This destination provides a variety of recreational activities	0.68		
Affective Destination Image		0.62	0.83
Pleasant – Unpleasant	0.74		
Exiting – Gloomy	0.75		
Relaxing – Distressing	0.87		
Tourist Satisfaction		0.63	0.87
Delighted about the destination	0.83		
Satisfied with the hotel services	0.84		
Pleased that I decided to visit this tourist destination	0.80		
Visit to this tourist destination exceeded my expectation	0.70		
Tourist Behavioural Intention		0.54	0.82
If I had to decide again, i would choose this destination	0.74		
I will recommend this destination to friends and family	0.69		
I intend to holiday in this destination within the next 3 month	0.63		
I will speak highly of this destination to friends and relatives	0.84		

3.3.2 Testing the Structural Model

SEM was conducted to test the validity of the proposed model and the hypotheses. To verify the established hypotheses through the path coefficients acquired from the SEM, the suitability of the model regarding the relation of variables first had to be evaluated (Bagozzi & Yi 1988). To test the proposed

hypotheses, the structural model was fitted using the full sample. Assessment of the structural model involves estimating the path loadings and the R^2 values. Path loadings indicate the strengths of the relationships between the independent variables and dependent variables, while R^2 values measure the predictive power of the structural models. Interpreted like multiple regression results, the R^2 indicates the amount of variance explained by the exogenous variables (Hutchinson *et al.* 2009). For this study, the affective destination image, tourist satisfaction and tourist behavioural intention have an R^2 value of 0.543, 0.814 and 0.782 respectively, indicating that the predictive power is fairly good. This value signifies that cognitive destination image accounted for 54.30% of the variance in affective image. Combined together, the two dimensions of destination image (cognitive and affective) explained 81.40% of the variance in tourist satisfaction. Our results also indicate that collectively cognitive image, affective image and tourist satisfaction accounted for a significant 78.20% of the variance in tourist behavioural intention.

Figure 2 presents the estimated model, illustrating the direction and magnitude of the standardized path coefficients. The value of the normed Chi-square was 1.90, which was below the cut-off criterion of three (Hair *et al.* 2006) and signified that the model fitted the data well. Other index results proved that the structural model fitted the data reasonably well (GFI = 0.91; NFI = 0.90; CFI = 0.93; RMSEA = 0.05). The model's fit, as indicated by these indices was deemed satisfactory; thus, it provided a good basis for testing the hypothesized paths. As shown in Figure 1, the SEM analysis revealed that only one hypothesis was not accepted out of the seven hypotheses that were tested in this study. The result indicates that cognitive destination image does not have a significant effect on tourist behavioural intention ($\beta = 0.23$, $p > 0.005$), but has a positive and direct effect on tourist satisfaction ($\beta = 0.66$, $p < 0.001$), leading to the rejection of *H1* and acceptance of *H2*. The path between tourist satisfaction and tourist behavioural intention and the path between cognitive destination image and affective image are positive and significant with a standardized estimate and p-value of $\beta = 0.84$, $p < 0.001$; $\beta = 0.75$, $p < 0.001$. Therefore, *H3* and *H4* are supported. Additionally, the relationship between affective destination image and tourist satisfaction is positive and significant ($\beta = 0.36$, $p < 0.001$), thus H5 is supported. Equally the direct relationship between affective image and tourist behavioural intention is also significant as β is 0.34 and p is < 0.001, which leads us to accept *H6*.
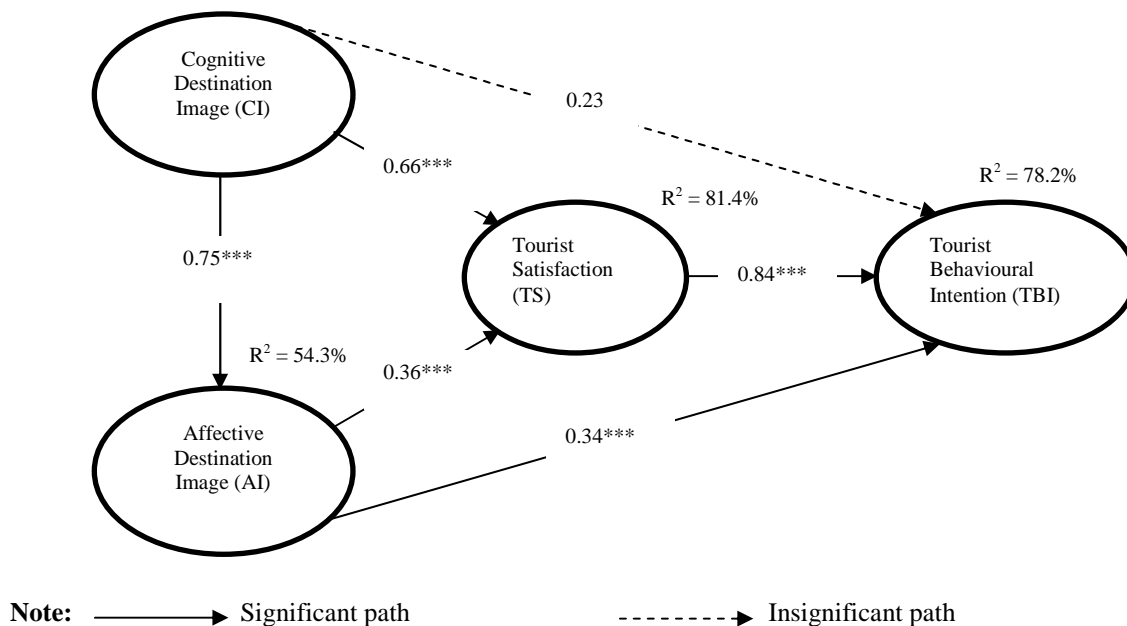

Figure 2: Tested Structural Model

Table 3. Structural model: standardised coefficient estimates and p-values.

Hypothesized Path	Standardised estimates	P-value	Result
H1 (CI $\longrightarrow$ TBI)	0.23	0.496	Not Supported
H2 (CI $\longrightarrow$ TS)	0.66	***	Supported
H3 (TS $\longrightarrow$ TBI)	0.84	***	Supported
H4 (CI $\longrightarrow$ AI)	0.75	***	Supported
H5 (AI $\longrightarrow$ TS)	0.36	***	Supported
H6 (AI $\longrightarrow$ TBI)	0.34	***	Supported

Note that CI: Cognitive Image, AI: Affective Image, TS: Tourist Satisfaction, TBS; Tourist Behavioural Intention and * $P < 0.05$, ** $P < 0.01$, *** $P < 0.001$

3.3.3 Moderating Effect of Affective Image

A moderator is a qualitative or quantitative variable that affects the direction and/or strength of the relationship between an independent (or predictor) and dependent (or criterion) variable (James & Brett 1984). Zedeck (1971) described the moderating effect by stating that Z is a moderator of the relationship between variable X and Y when the nature (i.e. magnitude) of this relationship varies across levels of Z. The most widely used statistical procedure to estimate moderating effects is hierarchical multiple regression (HMR). HMR can detect the moderating effects for moderator variables that are measured on both continuous and dichotomous scales (Cohen & Cohen 1983). HMR is favoured by researchers over other statistical techniques, such as the comparison of subgroup-based correlation coefficients for two or more subgroups, and HMR analysis provides researchers with important information about slope differences for various subgroups (Aguinis &Stone-Romero, 1997).

To test the moderating effect of affective destination image on the relationship between tourist satisfaction and tourist behavioural intention, we use the hierarchical multiple regression techniques. In doing this, we consider tourist behavioural intention as a dependent variable and affective destination image, tourist satisfaction and interaction effects between them as independent variables. As reported in Table 4, tourist satisfaction accounted for 56% of the variance in tourist behavioural intention. When the variable of affective destination image was added into the regression, the independent variable increased to 63% of the variance in tourist behavioural intention. Finally, when we added the interaction variables (affective image with tourist satisfaction) into the regression, the two independent variables (affective image and tourist satisfaction) became insignificant and the interaction variable had significant effects in the regression model. The result shows a strong moderating effect of the affective destination effect in the relationship between tourist satisfaction and behavioural intention.

Furthermore, Table 4 shows the hierarchical multiple regression results of the analyses for affective destination image, tourist satisfaction and behavioural intention. Model 1, which is the association between tourist satisfaction and behavioural intention, yielded a high significant positive relationship ($\beta_1 = 0.792$, t = 20.37, $P < 0.001$). The second model (model 2) is an addition of affective destination image into the regression, the result of which indicates that tourist satisfaction and affective destination positively and significantly influence tourist behavioural intention. In this case, $\beta_1 = 0.47$, t = 8.76, $P < 0.01$; $\beta_2 = 0.41$, t = 7.86, $P < 0.01$. When we put the interaction effect of affective destination image into the model, the parameter estimate for the main effect of affective destination image on behavioural intention became insignificant ($\beta_1 = 0.09$, t = 0.99, $P > 0.005$; $\beta_2 = -0.03$, t = -0.27, $P > 0.005$), but the parameter estimate for the interaction term (tourist satisfaction with affective image) was significantly positive ($\beta_1 = 0.09$, t = 23.58, $P < 0.001$). This signifies that perceived affective destination image positively moderates the relationship between tourist satisfaction and behavioural intention and thus H7 was supported.

Table 4: Hierarchical Multiple Regression Analysis of Tourist Satisfaction, Affective Destination Image and Tourist Behavioural Intention

Dependent Variable (Tourist Behavioural Intention)	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
Constant Value	0.70	0.26	2.44
	(3.48*)	(1.33)	(23.72***)
Tourist Satisfaction	0.792	0.47	0.09
	(20.37***)	(8.76**)	(0.99)
Perceived Affective Image		0.41	- 0.03
		(7.86**)	(- 0.27)
(Tourist Satisfaction) (Perceived Affective Image)			0.09
			(23.58***)
R^2	0.56	0.63	0.63
$\triangle R^2$ (R square change)		0.67	0.00

Note that * $P < 0.05$; ** $P < 0.01$; *** $P < 0.001$

To further examine the moderating effect in the relationship between tourist satisfaction and behavioural intention, we divided the tourists into two groups of affective image using cluster analysis, with the first group being called 'high perceived affective destination image' while the second was named 'low perceived affective destination image'. In the first group there were 124 tourists (n = 124) and 93 tourists (n = 93) fell into the second group. In the two groups, tourist satisfaction was used as the independent variable and tourist behavioural intention was the dependent variable that formed two regression models as shown in Table 5. A Chow test, which is an econometric test to determine whether the coefficients in a regression model are the same in separate subsamples (Davidson & MacKinnon 1993), was used to determine whether the coefficients in a regression model were the same in separate perceived affective image groups (groups 1 and 2). The results from the Chow test (Table 5) showed a significant difference between the two regressions (F = 40.68, p < 0.001). Most importantly, the results show that tourist satisfaction has a higher influence on tourist behavioural intention at higher levels of tourist perceived affective image (β = 0:70, t = 9.92, P < 0.01) than at lower tourist perceived affective image (β = 0:57, t = 8.78, P < 0.05). This result signifies that tourists with high perceived affective image who felt highly pleased with their experience in Obudu Mountain Resort displayed more positive behaviour towards the resort than those who perceived low affective image of the destination when they felt satisfaction with the destination, thereby confirming our initial findings and proposition that affective destination image does indeed moderate the relationship between tourist satisfaction and their behaviour.

Table 5: Difference in Perceived Affective Image between Tourist Satisfaction and Behavioural Intention Using Chow Test

Dependent Variable (Tourist Behavioural Intention)	High Perceived Affective Destination Image (n = 124)	Low Perceived Affective Destination Image (n = 93)	Chow Test
Constant	138	153	$F = 40.68$***
	3.45*	5.18*	
Satisfaction	0.70	0.57	
	9.92**	8.78*	
R^2	0.37	0.33	

Note that * $P < 0.05$; ** $P < 0.01$; *** $P < 0.001$

4.0 Discussion and Conclusion

The current investigation in this study was carried out in a mountain tourism destination on the construct of cognitive image, affective image, tourist satisfaction and behavioural intention. This was embarked on after establishing that there are few behavioural models for mountain tourism destinations particularly in the context of developing Sub- Saharan African countries. Realizing this gap in the tourism literature called for the need to bridge it. Therefore, this study represents one of the earliest attempts at examining the relationship

among the aforementioned latent variables. In particular, the actual focus of the study is to ascertain whether the affective destination image dimension moderates the relationship between tourist satisfaction and behavioural intention.

The findings of our study agree and disagree with those of many tourism researchers on the standardized path taking into cognizance the hypothesis that were supported and rejected. Hypothesis 1 (H1) of this study which posits that cognitive destination image directly and positively influences behavioural intention which was not supported goes against the findings of previous studies (Castro *et al.* 2007; Chen & Tsai, 2007; Chi & Qu, 2008; Prayag, 2009) as their results supported our hypothesis. Although in the previous studies destination image was not clearly expressed as cognitive and affective image, the element that measures it is that is that of the cognitive image dimension, thus this provides sufficient grounds to justify our comparison. Our finding on this path also implies that cognitive destination image alone cannot directly drive a traveller's future behavioural intention. Tourist satisfaction and perhaps affective image are required to force the action of revisiting intention and recommendation, validating previous studies by Hui *et al.* (2007), Lee *et al.* (2007), Kozak & Rimmington (2000), and Rittichainuwat *et al.* (2003).

The result of hypothesis 2 in this study confirms the direct and positive relationship between cognitive image and tourist satisfaction and agrees with related studies carried out by Park & Njite (2010), Bigné *et al.* (2001), Kozak (2001), Chen & Tsai (2007), Chi & Qu (2008) and Prayag (2009). The result of this study is not surprising in any way given that previous studies lent support to it by noting the same relationship, thereby suggesting that it would be very pertinent and beneficial to the sustainability of all tourism destinations and in particular mountain tourism destinations if their managers invested hugely in improving various aspects that make up the cognitive image dimension since this contributes to tourist satisfaction.

In addition, the research findings on the standardized path (hypothesis 3) show that tourist satisfaction can effectively predict future visiting behaviour in mountain tourism destinations, consistent with the findings of earlier studies of tourists who visit nature-based areas (Park & Njite 2010; Chen & Tsai 2007; Cole *et al.* 2002; Lee 2007; Lin *et al.* 2003; Baloglu *et al.* 2003). This disagrees with the result of Prayag's (2009) study which does not indicate a positive and direct relationship between tourist satisfaction and behavioural intention. This discrepancy is actually not surprising and could be explained by the fact that the majority of tourists who made up the sample for Prayag's (2009) study were tourists on repeat visits while the majority of tourists that constituted the sample for our study were first-time visitors to Obudu Mountain Resort. According to Beerli & Martin (2004), for tourists enjoying a repeat visit to a destination, the level of experience gathered by travelling results in tourists being more tolerant when assessing the destination because they know other realities of tourism that serve as a basis for comparison. Therefore, tourists' future behaviour is not so much determined by the level of satisfaction with the attributes of the destination but rather by social relationships developed within the place and affective images (Prayag 2009).

Moreover, one very important finding of this study is the support for the path between cognitive image and affective image (hypothesis 4) which indicates a positive and significant relationship between cognitive image and affective image and also suggests that cognitive image is indeed an antecedent of affective image. This position is similar to the empirical findings of some studies (Holdbrook 1978; Russell & Pratt 1980; Anand *et al.* 1988; Stern & Krakover 1993; Lin *et al.* 2007; Ryan & Cave 2007; Wang & Hsu 2010; Lin *et al.* 2007) that have made attempts to understand the relationship between the two main dimensions of destination image. This established relationship in our research implies that elements that really drive the feelings of tourists towards a mountain tourism destination are explained by the level and quality of the cognitive attributes of the destination, suggesting that it has become imperative for destination management organizations to take every aspect of the tangible components of a destination very seriously by harnessing them to be as attractive as possible to meet the expectations and positive fulfilment of the tourism experience of visiting tourists.

Existing empirical findings on the direct relationship between affective destination image and behavioural intention have been inclusive but our study indicates a positive and direct relationship between the construct which connotes that when tourists have positive feelings towards a mountain destination there is every probability that it will shape an intention to revisit and positive word of mouth. The finding that the affective destination image influences the relationship between tourist satisfaction and behavioural intention is fundamental in this study. This finding provides sufficient grounds to conclude that tourists who are pleased and excited, who feel relaxed with the mountain destination they visit as a result of the attractive tangible attributes of the destination, will surely feel satisfied and this will in turn enhance their positive behaviour towards that destination. It has become very important and also a matter of responsibility for destination managers to find out those components that make tourists most relaxed, excited and pleased with mountain and other destinations and focus on them to enhance the patronage and long-term sustainability of mountain tourism.

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