



INFLUENCE OF DESTINATION IMAGE AND SERVICE QUALITY ON INTERNATIONAL TOURISTS' PERCEIVED VALUE IN SERENGETI NATIONAL PARK, TANZANIA

Richard J. Matolo

PhD candidate

Moshi Co-operative University, Moshi, Tanzania

Email: rmatolo2001@gmail.com

Paul J. Salia

Institute of Accountancy Arusha, Tanzania

Email: saliapaul75@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

Perceived value, which is an outcome of tourists' evaluation of costs and benefits of a trip, is crucial for sustained destination performance. This study examined the influence of destination image and service quality on the international tourists' perceived value. The study involved 1,148 tourists who visited Serengeti National Park between March and September 2019. A survey questionnaire was used to collect data at the park's exit gates. Using a Structural Equation Modelling as a major analytical technique, the findings revealed that destination image had positive and significant effect on perceived value. This implied that tourists' perceived image of destination played a decisive role in tourists' perceived value. Similarly, service quality had positive and statistically significant effect on perceived value. Tourists' perceived value was contributed by both perceived image and quality of services offered to them while in the park. The study calls for continued efforts to maintain the good image of the park through advertisements of its attractive features to the international communities. SENAPA administration in collaboration with owners of hotels and lodges in the park should improve quality of services in order to make tourists realize value for their trips.

Key words: Destination Image, Service Quality, Perceived Value, Serengeti

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1. INTRODUCTION

Travel and Tourism is among the world's leading industry in terms of contribution to economic growth. Evidences from the World Travel and Tourism Council show that the sector accounts for 10.3% of global Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and 10.4% of the world's total employment (WTTC, 2020). Largely, the contribution of tourism in the economic growth was realized through employment creation, improved currency exchange earnings, stimulation of capital investment and increased revenue (WTTC, 2020). In Tanzania, evidences from Bank of Tanzania (BOT) and National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) show that tourism sector contributed to 17% of GDP while accounting for 25% of total export revenue (NBS & BOT, 2017).



Mostly, tourism in Tanzania is based on wildlife viewing (Okello *et al.*, 2009). A large proportion of international tourists to Tanzania visited Serengeti National Park (SENAPA), which is located in the Northern part of Tanzania. For example, in 2019, SENAPA received 34% of all international tourists to Tanzania while Manyara and Tarangire national parks received 19.2% and 24.9% respectively (MNRT, 2019). Nevertheless, some evidences suggest that SENAPA performs poorer than other similar destinations in the East African region like Maasai Mara National Park in Kenya in terms of tourists' density (TANAPA, 2017; KBS, 2017). Given this background, one question that should be answered is whether or not tourists who visit Serengeti National Park obtain value for money for their trips. This question is imperative because tourists' propensity to visit a specific destination may be affected by perceived value; among other factors.

Perceived value, which refers to the overall assessment of benefits enjoyed by visiting specific destination compared to costs (Kotler & Keller, 2012), is influenced by destination image and service quality (Terblanche, & Taljaard, 2018). Destination image is crucial for marketing. According to Assaker and Hallack (2013), destination image constitutes beliefs, ideas and impressions held by a tourist towards a certain place. Image of destination influences tourists' decision to choose specific place to visit and in turn may influence future behavioural intention in terms of re-visit intention (Pike *et al.*, 2010). Thus, given the competitive nature of tourists' destinations, maintaining good image of a tourist destination is vital. Effective destination marketing aimed at transmitting favourable image to the target market is important for sustained tourism performance (Las-Casas & Silverio, 2015).

Quality of services offered at specific destination may decisively influence perceived value (Chang and Wang, 2011). In the tourism industry, service quality is the difference between tourists' expectations prior to a visit and perceived experience after visit (Parasuraman *et al.*, 1985). Provision of services of good quality is important since it may positively influence tourists' perceived value and eventually their future behavioural intentions. It is of interest to note that effective marketing of a tourist destination cannot be separated from provision of high-quality services. Tourists who enjoy quality of services provided are expected to perceive more benefits of their visit to Serengeti National Park compared to cost incurred.

It is clear that the importance of perceived value in the performance of a tourist destination cannot be overstated. Nonetheless, it is worth noting that previous studies in the tourism sector in Tanzania (Matolo & Salia, 2017; Kazururu, 2014; Kazururu, 2018; Mallya, 2013; Mlozi and Pesämaa, 2013; Mlozi *et al.*, 2011) scantily addressed relationships among perceived value, destination image and service quality. Previous studies focused on determinants of destination choices (Mlozi & Pesämaa, 2013), determinants of place identity and dependence among international tourists (Mlozi *et al.*, 2012), determinants of tourists' length of stay (Kazururu, 2014), predictors of tourist spending (Kazururu, 2018) and dimensions for positioning tourists' destination (Mallya, 2013). Yet, another rather recent study compared tourists' expectations with actual experiences at Serengeti National Park (Matolo & Salia, 2017) but did not address the antecedents of perceived value. The need to understand tourist's perceived value was based on the fact that all endeavours to market or improve quality of services at the park may be futile if visitors did not realize value for money after completion of their trips. Thus, this study aimed at assessing the influence of service quality and destination image on the international tourists' perceived value while focusing at SENAPA.

2. THEORETICAL GUIDE

This paper adopted the 'means-end theory'. This theory assumes that consumers associate their decision and behaviour with goal achieved that is derived by multiple consumption values (Huber et al., 2001). Those value can be social, emotional, functional or financial (Sheth et al., 1991). In this theory, value is viewed from both net-gain perspective and multi-value perspective. Those value can be tangible attributed of a product or service referred to as 'the means' or intangible personal emotions which are referred to as 'the ends' (Olson & Reynolds, 2001). In the context of this study, perceived value is a trade-off between perceived benefits and cost incurred (Kotler & Keller, 2009). Thus, the theory was adopted because the costs incurred by tourists in terms of time, money and efforts can be grouped as tangible attributes (or 'the means') while the outcome of value evaluation based on actual tourists' experience in the park constitute an intangible and emotional aspect which may be referred to as 'the ends'. Thus, the theory provided good grounds for assessing the determinants of perceived value from perspective of attributes of service quality and destination image.

3. EMPIRICAL LITERATURE AND HYPOTHESES

Relationship between destination image and perceived value in the tourism sector is addressed by a number of studies (Kim & Park, 2017; Lin & Wang, 2012; Phillips *et al.*, 2011; Özturk & Qu, 2008). A study conducted at Maiden's Tower in Istanbul revealed that destination image positively influenced perceived value (Özturk & Qu, 2008). Another study conducted in China found that destination image positively influenced perceived value of international tourists who visited Macau region (Joseph, 2018). Similar findings were obtained from a study conducted in North Dakota Midwestern United States which showed that destination image positively affected visitors' perception of value and re-visit intention (Phillips *et al.*, (2013). This study also showed that destination image influenced satisfaction and loyalty in terms of positive recommendations. Similar evidences were also obtained from studies conducted in Green Island of Taiwan (Cheng & Lu, 2013), in Orlando Islan in the USA (Kim et al., 2013). Further empirical evidences from the hospitality industry revealed that there was positive correlation between perceived value and destination image (Sun *et al.*, 2013). In the festival research context, event attributes and perceived benefits influenced perceived value among participants of historical re-enactment festival in the Midwestern United States (Fu *et al.*, 2018). Some further studies confirmed that destination image had significant positive effect on perceived value among student travellers (Kim & Park, 2017; Lin & Wang, 2012). Considering the above empirical evidences, this study hypothesized that:

H₀₁: SENAPA destination image does not influence tourists perceive value

Tourism literature shows that service quality is one of the common positive predictors of perceived value (; Xiaoting *et al.*, 2020; Suhartanto *et al.*, 2019; Al-Ansi and Han, 2019; Oriade & Schofield, 2019; García-Fernández *et al.*, 2018). For example, evidences from a Chinese study revealed that service quality had a positive and significant influence on tourists' perceived value (Xiaoting et al., 2020). In another study conducted in the Midland region in United Kingdom, Oriade and Schofield (2019) found that perceived quality of services and perceived value were positively related. Similar empirical evidences were obtained from a Mauritius study which, among other things, revealed that service quality positively influenced perceived value (Hu *et al.*, 2009). Furthermore, evidences from two other studies by Chen and Chen (2010) and by García-Fernández et al. (2018) revealed that service quality influenced perceived value among heritage tourists Based on the above evidences, this study hypothesized that:

H₀₂: Service quality at SENAPA does not influence tourists' perceived value

4. METHODOLOGY

A cross-sectional research design guided this study. Target population comprised international tourists who visited SENAPA between March and September 2019. Participants in this study were obtained from the parks exit gates using a non-probability convenience sampling technique. Respondents picked were only those who were willing to fill the questionnaire. The study intended to use Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) as the main data analysis technique and thus there was a need to involve a relatively large sample size. Although there was no consensus about what constitutes large sample size, some scholars recommended use of observation to estimated parameter (n:q) ratio (Kline, 2015; Schreiber *et al.*, 2006). Some of suggested n:q ratios were 20:1, (Kline,2015), 10:1 (Schreiber *et al.*, 2006) and 5:1 (Bentler & Chou, 1987). This study adopted a recommendation made by Kline (2015) of using a ratio of 20:1 with the intention of having as many respondents as possible. The study involved a total of 44 parameters including 22 for service quality, 16 for destination image and six for perceived value were used. Using the suggestion by Kline (2015) the minimum required sample size would be 880. However, the study managed to obtain 1,148 respondents.

4.1 Data Collection

Data were collected by using a structured questionnaire. Service quality was measured using a standard SERVQUAL questionnaire suggested by Parasuraman (1988). This tool contained 22 items placed under five dimensions which are tangibility, reliability, responsiveness, assurance and empathy. Six items were involved in the collection of information about perceived value. Those items were grouped into two dimensions representing financial and overall values. Overall value involved three items aim at determining extent to which visitors considered their experience at the park to be uniquely rewarding. Three statements grouped under financial value intended to determine extent to which prices incurred by individual tourists matched with the value of services (enjoyment) experienced. It is important to note that similar items had been used in several previous similar studies (Dedeoğlu 2019; Chaulagain *et al.*, 2019; Wu, 2016; Tosun *et al.*, 2015; Kim *et al.*, 2013).

Various scholars have operationalized destination image differently depending on the contexts of specific studies (Dedeoğlu 2019; Chaulagain *et al.*, 2019; Wu, 2016; Tosun *et al.*, 2015; Chi & Qu, 2008). Variables used in those studies were accommodation, travel environment, natural attractions, entertainment and events, historic attractions, infrastructure, accessibility, relaxation, leisure activities, price and value, cleanliness, language of communication (Chi & Qu, 2008); natural attraction, entertainment, accessibility to the destination, level of service quality and cultural attraction (Wu, 2016); accommodation, local transport, cleanliness, hospitality, leisure activities, language of communication and airport services (Tosun *et al.*, 2015); and transport, cleanliness, amenities, language of local people, hospitality, and leisure activities (Dedeoğlu, 2019). This study used a total of 16 items selected from several previous studies (Dedeoğlu 2019; Chaulagain *et al.*, 2019; Wu, 2016; Tosun *et al.*, 2015; Chi & Qu, 2008). Those items were categorised as social setting (four items), cultural attractions (four items), natural attractions (three items), amenities (three items), and accessibility (two items). Respondents' responses were recorded using a 7-point scale ranging from 'very strongly disagree' (1) to 'very strongly agree' (7). According to Gallarza & Saura (2006), that kind of scale would provide respondents with wider range of choices that best described their opinions.

4.2 Data Analysis

An exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) was conducted as part of preliminary factor reduction mechanism. The aim was to retain factors with loading above 0.6 which could be included in further analysis (Hair et

al., 2010). Based on the EFA results, items used to measure service quality were reduced from 22 to 16. Similarly, items used to measure destination image were reduced from 24 to 16. Factor loadings for all items used to measure perceived value were above the required threshold and thus the six items were maintained. Therefore a total of 38 items were considered for Confirmatory Factors Analysis (CFA) which resulted into the construction of measurement model. This model was assessed based on the computed values of discriminant validity, convergent validity and composite reliability (Brunner & Süß, 2005; Netemeyer *et al.*, 2003; Fornell & Lacker, 1981). Based on model fit indices and other properties mentioned above, measurement model was evaluated to be acceptable.

Covariance-Based Structural Equation Modelling (CB-SEM) technique using Analysis of Moment Structure software (AMOS) was used in the construction of structural model. Maximum Likelihood (ML) estimation algorithm was employed to test the model constructs since the data were assumed continuous and multivariate normal for a large data set. Promax rotation method was used due to its speed and suitability for large data set (Gorsuch, 1983). In order to establish goodness of model fit, the study involved at least one index from each of three categories of indices namely absolute fit, incremental fit and parsimonious fit indices (Shi *et al.*, 2018; Awang, 2015). Absolute fit indices were chi-square with p-value (χ^2), root mean square approximation (RMSEA) and goodness of fit index (GFI). Incremental fit indices included average goodness of fit index (AGFI) and comparative fit index (CFI). One parsimonious fit index called normed chi-square (χ^2/df) was used.

5. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

As explained in section 4, data were collected using Likert scale seven-points. Results in Table 1 present summated mean scores on dimensions used to assess service quality, destination image and perceived value. Scores above 4.0 indicated that respondents agreed while those below 4.0 indicated that the generally disagreed with given statements (constructs). Summated mean scores around 4.0 indicated that respondents held neutral opinions.

Table 1: Descriptive statistics for constructs involved in the study

Variable/dimension	Summated mean	SD
<i>Service quality</i>		
Empathy (4 items)	4.283	2.291
Tangibility (4 items)	5.435	1.780
Reliability (3 items)	5.313	1.675
Assurance (3 items)	5.020	2.095
Responsiveness (2 items)	5.165	1.851
<i>Destination image</i>		
Social Setting (4 items)	4.545	2.167
Cultural Attractions (4 items)	4.985	2.015
Natural Attractions (3 items)	5.290	1.912
Amenities (3 items)	5.220	2.005
Accessibility (2 items)	5.375	1.872
<i>Perceived value</i>		
Overall value (3 items)	6.210	1.241
Financial value (3 items)	5.477	1.435

Findings on Table 1 showed that generally respondents agreed with statements used to assess tangibility, reliability, assurance and responsiveness. Score on empathy dimension of service quality was around 4 indicating that they held neutral opinion. It was further revealed that respondents agreed with all statements used measure the dimensions of destination image and perceived value. This was evidenced in summated mean scores of 4.5 and above. More specifically, respondents strongly agreed with the three statements used to assess tourists overall value as indicated by a mean score above 6.

5.1 Effects of Destination Image and Service Quality on Perceived Value

The relationships among perceived value, service quality and destination image were established through Structural Equation Modelling (SEM). This process was preceded by validation of hypothesized (measurement) model. Value for Average Variance Extracted (EVA) was higher than 0.50 showing that those constructs exhibited convergent validity (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). Internal reliability was achieved by obtaining Cronbach's Alpha value higher than 0.70 (Brunner & Süß, 2005). The results thus indicated that latent constructs used had attained internal consistency. Reliability of measurement model was assessed using composite reliability (CR). All CR value were greater than threshold of 0.60 meaning that the measurement model was reliable (Hair *et al.*, 2010). Table 2 presents the results.

Table 2: Psychometric properties of measurement model

Variable/dimension	Cronbach's α	Composite Reliability (CR)	Average Variance Extracted (AVE)
<i>Service quality</i>			
Empathy (4 items)	0.917	0.930	0.710
Tangibility (4 items)	0.895	0.910	0.655
Reliability (3 items)	0.873	0.880	0.712
Assurance (3 items)	0.85	0.860	0.675
Responsiveness (2 items)	0.838	0.841	0.726
<i>Destination image</i>			
Social Setting (4 items)	0.910	0.926	0.697
Cultural Attractions (4 items)	0.913	0.943	0.715
Natural Attractions (3 items)	0.885	0.894	0.739
Amenities (3 items)	0.837	0.847	0.651
Accessibility (2 items)	0.857	0.859	0.859
<i>Perceived value</i>			
Overall value (3 items)	0.892	0.892	0.735
Financial value (3 items)	0.866	0.869	0.690

In line with findings in Table 2, a measurement model [$\chi^2 = 4259.218$, $p < 0.001$; ($\chi^2/df = 4.775$; RMSEA = 0.059; GFI = 0.922; AGFI = 0.935; CFI = 0.962)] was developed. Diagrammatically, the measurement model is presented in Fig.1.

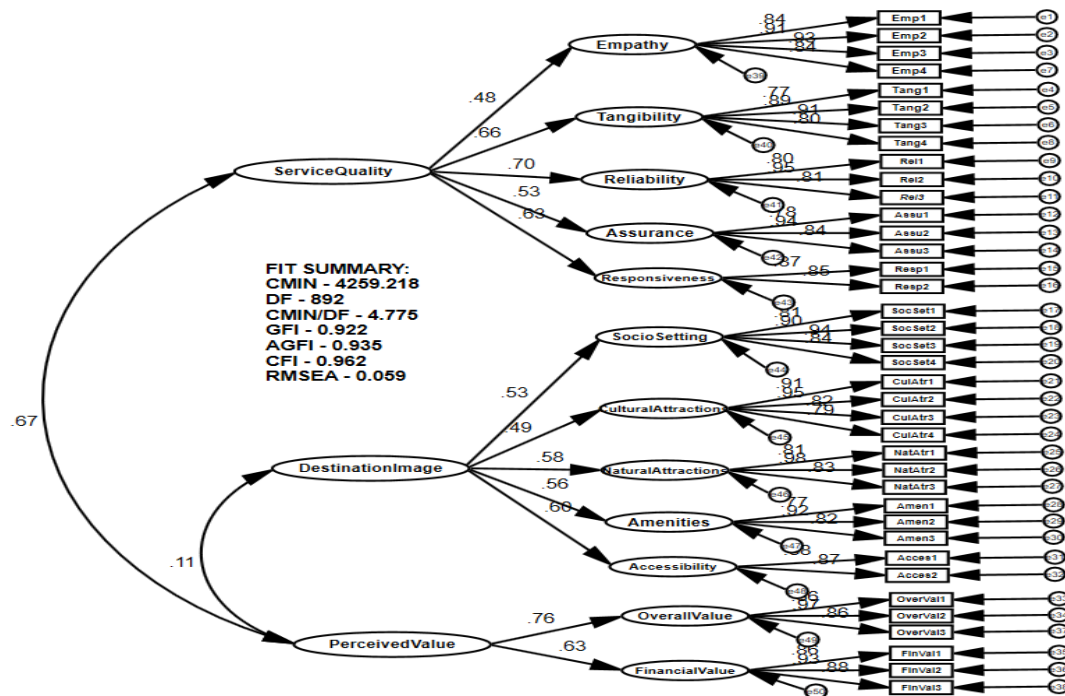


Figure 1: Measurement model on destination image, service quality and perceived value

This model was acceptable given that the selected indices were within the required margins. For instance, Chi-square/degree of freedom (χ^2/df) was less than 5.0 and thus acceptable (Schumacker & Lomax, 2004). Root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA) value was less than 0.08 and thus was acceptable (McDonald & Ho, 2002). Accordingly, values of Comparative Fit Index (CFI) and Average Comparative Index (AGFI) were greater than the threshold of 0.90 and thus were acceptable (Schreiber *et al.*, 2006).

Given that measurement model (Fig.1) was appropriate, Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) technique was applied to establish the following structural relationships among destination image, service quality and perceived value. Results of SEM analysis revealed that the structural model was acceptable [$\chi^2 = 3298.887$ ($p < 0.001$, $\chi^2/df = 3.588$; RMSEA = 0.054; GFI = 0.931; AGFI = 0.917; CFI = 0.943)]. The structural relationships among destination image, service quality and perceived value are presented in Fig.2. Findings in Fig. 2 showed that destination image and service quality were predictors of perceived value. The details about nature and sizes of effects are presented.

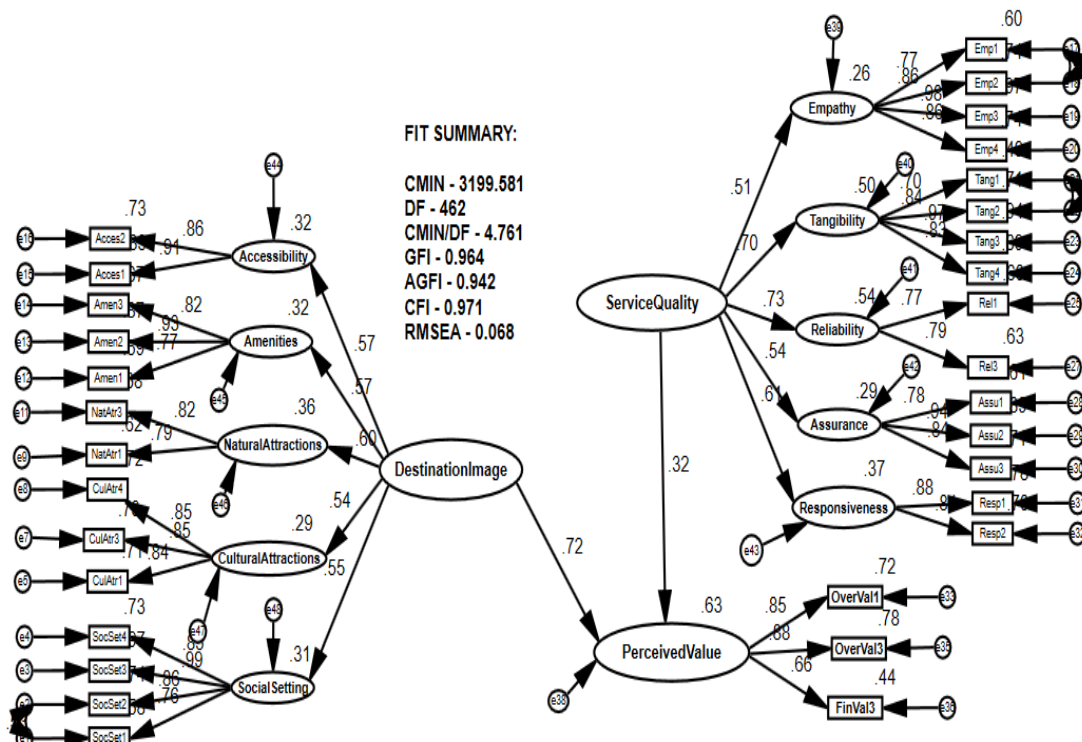


Figure 2: Structural relationships among service quality, perceived value and destination image

Table 3: Summary of SEM results on variable relationships

Hypothesis	Path	Estimate	S.E.	C.R.	R ²	P	Label
H ₁	DI @ PV	0.724	0.037	19.567	0.630	0.000***	Accept
H ₂	SQ @ PV	0.325	0.023	14.130	0.630	0.000***	Accept

*** Significant at $p < 0.001$

Findings on Fig 2 and Table 3 revealed that destination image (DI) positively influenced perceived value (PV) ($\beta = 0.724$, $p < 0.001$). This variable (DI) accounted for a variance of 63% PV. The finding leads to rejection of the first null hypothesis (H₁) which stated that “SENAPA destination image does not influence perceived value”. In other words, the image created by tourist about SENAPA contributed to making them realize value for money for cost incurred in their trips. This happened when tourist evaluation of benefits obtained exceeded money and efforts spent. The finding supported previous empirical evidences which also indicated that destination image had positive effect on perceive value (Phillips *et al.*, 2011; Bigne *et al.*, 2009; Özturk and Qu, 2008).

As indicated in Fig.1, DI was assessed using five dimensions which were accessibility, amenities, natural attraction, cultural setting and social setting. It is observed that all those five dimensions had positive effect on destination image (i.e., had positive and significant beta values). In other words, tourists realized value because of appreciable social and cultural setting as well as natural attraction due to the beautiful natural scenery. Social setting involved such aspects as friendliness of local people, cleanness of environment, hospitality and personal safety. The cultural aspects that were of interest in this study

included local foods, variety of local products that promoted culture and unique customs and traditions of local people.

Findings further showed that service quality (SQ) had positive and statistically significant effect on perceived value ($\beta = 0.325$, $p < 0.001$, $R^2 = 0.63$). The results, therefore, lead to rejection of the second null hypothesis (H_2) which stated that "service quality at SENAPA does not influence tourists' perceived value". The results imply that services of good quality made tourists realize value for money for their trips. The results are in line with those of other previous studies which also showed that SQ was a positive predictor of PV (Chang & Wang, 2011; Edward & Sahadev, 2011). It is worth noting that SQ was assessed by five dimensions including empathy, responsiveness, assurance, reliability and tangibility. As shown in Fig.1, all those five dimensions were positive predictors of SQ by having significant and positive beta values. Impliedly tourists' perceived value was due to quality of tangibles like physical facilities, equipment, and appearance of personnel in terms of neatness. Value was also achieved because service providers were reliable. Accordingly, tourists realized value due to service providers' responsiveness, assurance and empathy

6. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The findings showed that tourists' perceived value was influenced by destination image and service quality. Impliedly, tourists' evaluation of benefits enjoyed by visiting Serengeti National Park was influenced by the pre-conceived image of the park as well as quality of services offered. In other words, tourists realized value for their trips when their experiences in the park were met with services of good quality. They too realized value when they ended up with positive confirmation of their pre-conceived image about the park which was conveyed to them through various advertisement channels. Given that tourism is a very competitive business which requires continuous marketing and infrastructure improvement, SENAPA should strive to maintain its good image through marketing. This can be achieved through advertisements and promotions of attractive features found in the park in the international media like British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC), ALJAZEERA and Cable News Network (CNN); among others. Related to that, SENAPA and owners of lodges and hotels in the park should jointly strive to improve quality of services so as to make visitors realize value for their trips. This can be achieved by improving quality tangible features like equipment, physical facilities and appearance of personnel; among other things. There is also a need to improve customer care services focusing on courtesy of service providers.

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