

Tourism, Hospitality & Event Management

Michael Z. Ngoasong
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New Frontiers in Hospitality and Tourism Management in Africa

 Springer

Tourism, Hospitality & Event Management

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ISSN 2510-4993 ISSN 2510-5000 (electronic)
Tourism, Hospitality & Event Management
ISBN 978-3-030-70170-3 ISBN 978-3-030-70171-0 (eBook)
<https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-70171-0>

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The registered company address is: Gewerbestrasse 11, 6330 Cham, Switzerland

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Destination Personality as Predictor of Symbolic Consumption in Nigeria's Tourism Industry



Oladipupo F. Ajeyalemi and Adeniyi D. Olarewaju

1 Introduction

Tourists' willingness to visit and pay for a touristic destination is premised on the value attached to the destination. Just like products or brands, tourism destination consumption could be functional, experiential or symbolic (Ekinci et al. 2007). However, many tourist destinations are usually positioned with emphasis on functional characteristics or the experiential hedonic pleasures. Quite several studies have examined both functional and experiential consumption (Chen and Chen 2010; Jamal et al. 2011; Sanchez et al. 2006; Williams and Soutar 2009), while there has been less attention on symbolic consumption. In their study of the perceived value of the purchase of a tourism package in three selected Spanish cities, for instance, Sanchez et al. (2006) established that value is largely functional in terms of installations, professionalism, quality and price. Jamal et al. (2011) also found that the tourists were attracted to homestay villages with functional values such as establishment and price. Thus, it is not uncommon for destinations to focus on such functional attributes like beauty, aesthetics, scenery and staff responsiveness (Nam et al. 2011). Similarly, studies have found that apart from functional attributes, tourists tend to attach experiential and emotional meanings to destinations (Chen and Chen 2010; Williams and Soutar 2009). In their study of adventure tourism in Australia, for example, Williams and Soutar (2009) established that emotional value is a significant predictor of tourists' satisfaction and future intentions. It is not also unusual therefore for destinations to emphasize the experiential pleasure and value

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M. Z. Ngoasong et al. (eds.), *New Frontiers in Hospitality and Tourism Management in Africa*, Tourism, Hospitality & Event Management,
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-70171-0_3

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that comes with touristic visits. Trips to places like slave museums in Cape Coast, Ghana or Badagry, Nigeria are designed to evoke memory, sense of history, and emotive sensual attachment.

However, tourists do not just appreciate destinations for their functional utility or experiential pleasures alone but for other symbolic values they get which expresses and reflects their notion of social identity, lifestyle and self-concept (Chen et al. 2016). For example, a tourist who books and travels on First class to an African destination may not only be concerned about functional characteristics (such as travel date flexibility, limitless supply of food/wine during the trip, refund policies, frequent travel rewards, and extra luggage) or experiential hedonic pleasures (like faster boarding, private bathroom, and personalized entertainment); but may be more interested in the symbolic values which such travel class may mean for reputation and self-identity or convey to society about lifestyle and status. Symbolic consumption therefore occurs when tourists visit destinations that can create, confirm and communicate their identity. Hence, the poser: What determines a tourist's behaviour (visit and revisit intentions, satisfaction and loyalty) relating to the symbolic consumption of destinations, especially within the African context? This chapter argues that symbolic consumption is dependent on the personalities of touristic destinations. Every destination has its own unique personality and tourists can psychologically conduct an evaluation of alternative destinations with a view to cognitively choose destinations whose personality attributes closely matches with their own self-image, identity or lifestyle (Ekinici et al. 2013).

Although some studies employed symbolic consumption as predicting or mediating variables (Manthiou et al. 2018; Tangsupwattana and Liu 2018); we posit in this study that in the travel and destination industry, consumption is a construct that should depend on a factor such as destination personality. However, despite this seeming relationship, there has been sparse attention in literature concerning destination personality and symbolic consumption. The few studies that have examined this relationship employed just one measure of symbolic consumption (Chi et al. 2018; Usakli and Baloglu 2011). In both studies, self-congruity was employed as either direct or indirect representations of symbolic consumption, but it has been strongly suggested that symbolic consumption is a function of three distinct but related constructs—brand identification, lifestyle congruence and self-congruence (Ekinici et al. 2013; Nam et al. 2011). In measuring symbolic consumption therefore, we employed all three separate measures as recommended by Ekinici et al. (2013) and to the best of our knowledge; this will represent one of the first studies to propose and establish that destination personality dimensions do have predictive influence on symbolic consumption. Additionally, the study established that tourists can appreciate destinations based on the three distinct and related categories of symbolic consumption—brand identification, lifestyle congruence and self-congruence.

The rest of the chapter is structured thus: After analysing the theoretical background and developing the requisite hypotheses, the methodology employed was explained. This was followed by results and findings. Subsequently, discussions were elaborated upon. The study concludes with recommendations for Africa.

2 Theoretical Background and Hypotheses Development

2.1 Self-Congruity Theory

The theory which served as the bedrock upon which this chapter is built is the self-congruity theory as highlighted by Sirgy (1985). The argument of self-congruity as advanced by authors in the field of marketing and consumer behaviour (Kressmann et al. 2006; Sirgy et al. 2000; Sirgy 1985) is based on the concept of self-image, product or brand image and psychological comparison. The theory suggests that a consumer is likely to be attracted to and remain loyal to a product or brand if there is an accord or consonance between an evaluation of self and the product/brand. Consumers tend to do a psychological evaluation of products to determine if it has congruence with their own self-image. Association with the brand or product-purchase is only guaranteed when consumers are mentally convinced that there is a cognitive match between their own self-image and the product or brand's value. Self-congruity evaluation stems from consumer's self-concept match with a brand image. The self-congruity theory therefore posits that consumers decisively choose brands and products that they perceive are consistent with their own image of self-identity and congruent with their own personality (Kressmann et al. 2006; Sirgy 1985).

In the context of this study, self-congruity theory is very relevant and serve as the theoretical underpinning because research has shown that just like brands or products and human beings, touristic destinations also have their own unique personalities and characteristics (Ekinci et al. 2013; Usakli and Baloglu 2011). In selecting a destination, therefore, tourists are likely to choose one whose personality and value is congruent with their own self-image. Applying self-congruity theory within tourism destinations context, it could be inferred that if there is a greater match between a tourist's self-image and the destination personality, it will probably lead to a more favourable behaviour (such as visit and revisit intentions, satisfaction and loyalty) towards the destination by the tourist (Sirgy and Su 2000; Usakli and Baloglu 2011).

2.2 Destination Personality

Aaker (1997) developed a brand personality scale and argued that brands have their unique personality dimensions. Employing a similar methodology to tourism destinations, Ekinci and Hosany (2006) adopted Aaker's brand personality scale and established that, just like brands, destinations also have their own unique personality dimensions. They defined destination personality as the set of human characteristics associated with a destination (Ekinci and Hosany 2006, p. 127). Hitherto, just the significance of destination personality was acknowledged at a conceptual level, however, more recently, there has been many more empirical scholarly analyses of

destinations with a view to unravelling their personalities and dimensions associated with such destinations (Ajeyalemi and Dixon-Ogbechie 2017; Chi et al. 2018; Papadimitriou et al. 2015; Usakli and Baloglu 2011).

Understanding personalities of touristic destinations have become more crucial due to increase in tourists' awareness about available destinations and competitiveness of global tourism destinations (Chi et al. 2018; Ekinici and Hosany 2006). To ensure effective utilization of resources, destinations are becoming increasingly aware of their respective personalities and using such personalities to promote and increase patronage which and maximize returns. The importance of understanding destination personalities can therefore not be overemphasized, as scholars have empirically established that it positively influences revisit and return intention, destination loyalty, tourist-destination identification, recommendation intention, destination satisfaction, referral and word-of-mouth recommendation (Chen and Phou 2013; Ekinici et al. 2007; Hultman et al. 2015; Usakli and Baloglu 2011).

Destination personality dimensions appear to vary based on the touristic destination being studied. Scholars have confirmed dimensions from as little as two (2) to as many as seven (7) unique dimensions (Papadimitriou et al. 2015; Kim and Lehto 2013). From an African perspective, Pitt et al. (2007) employed secondary data to evaluate ten African countries based on five Aaker's (1997) brand personality dimensions while Ajeyalemi and Dixon-Ogbechie (2017) empirically confirmed four dimensions associated with destination personality in Lagos, Nigeria. However, in describing destination personality in this study, the authors adopted empirical methodologies of previous authors on the subject (Aaker 1997; Ajeyalemi and Dixon-Ogbechie 2017; Chen and Phou 2013; Ekinici and Hosany 2006).

2.3 Destination Personality and Symbolic Consumption

Majority of tourist destinations, including hotels and restaurants, are usually positioned based on either their functional characteristics such as physical quality, service quality, staff behaviour, scenery, location (Nam et al. 2011) or experiential consumption which is an intangible, sensual evaluation based on experience. However, tourists visit destinations not just for its functionality and experientialism but for the symbolic value they get which expresses and reflects their notion of social identity, lifestyle and self-concept (Chen et al. 2016; Ekinici et al. 2013). Symbolic consumption therefore occurs when tourists visit destinations that can create, confirm and communicate their identity. Studies have shown that symbolic consumption attributes are good and positive predictors of consumer and tourist satisfaction, destination attachment, as well as destination brand loyalty (Chen et al. 2016; Ekinici et al. 2013; Nam et al. 2011). However, there is a paucity of research concerning factors that predict or influence symbolic consumption. Since consumption of destinations confers symbolic value reflecting identity and lifestyle of tourists, it can be inferred that the personalities of such touristic destinations affect the propensity for tourists' symbolic consumption. This book chapter therefore

focused on destination personality and its predictive influence on symbolic consumption.

There is a plethora of literature concerning symbolic consumption, however, most of the studies either employed it as predicting or mediating variables (Manthiou et al. 2018; Tangsupwattana and Liu 2018). Additionally, in the destination and travel literature, the emphasis has largely been on one element of symbolic consumption (Kim et al. 2018; Manthiou et al. 2018; Su and Reynolds 2017). A few studies have either examined the relationship between destination personality and symbolic consumption or combined both as independent variables (Chi et al. 2018; Su and Reynolds 2017), however, all have largely emphasized self-congruity, which is just one element of symbolic consumption. But it has been strongly suggested that consideration of symbolic consumption is a function of three distinct and related elements, that is, brand identification, lifestyle congruence and self-congruence (Ekinici et al. 2013; Nam et al. 2011). A study of symbolic consumption particularly as it concerns the tourism industry therefore appears incomplete without the inclusion of all three related elements (Ekinici et al. 2013).

2.4 Destination Personality and Brand Identification

Consumers associate with brands that reinforce their social identity and add values to their reputation. Brand identification occurs when a brand has a relationship with the private self and the social self. In the tourism industry, the personality that tourists attach to a specific destination tends to have a connection with their brand identification (Kim et al. 2018). Similarly, tourists will likely match destination personalities and brands (destination) that reinforce their own social identity, adds reputational values, and integrates into their private and social selves. Dimensions of destination personality will therefore likely affect brand identification. Thus, we propose that:

H1: Destination personality dimensions is positively related to brand identification

2.5 Destination Personality and Lifestyle Congruence

Lifestyle reflects attitude to life and contains symbolic nuances which differentiate one individual from the other (Manthiou et al. 2018). Lifestyle-congruence, therefore, defines the extent to which there is a match between brands and consumer lifestyles as expressed by their interests, consumption patterns and opinions. Unlike brand identification and self-congruence where consumers use less conscious and less tangible comparison standards such as social groups and self-concept; lifestyle congruence employs more tangible reference yardsticks such as consumption goals,

interests, personal values and beliefs for comparison purposes (Ekinci et al. 2013; Nam et al. 2011). As a tourist, the authors argue that lifestyle congruence will occur when there is a match between a destination and his actual or desired lifestyle. We posit that tourists are therefore likely to embrace a destination whose personality fits their lifestyle. This suggests that there is a relationship between dimensions of destination personality and a tourist’s lifestyle. Hence, we advance that:

H2: Destination personality dimensions is positively related to lifestyle congruence

2.6 Destination Personality and Self-Congruence

Self-congruence evaluation stems from consumer’s self-concept match with a brand image. It posits that consumers decisively choose brands and products that they perceive are consistent with their own image of self-identity and congruent with their own personality (Kressmann et al. 2006). Association with the destination is only guaranteed when tourists are mentally convinced that there is a cognitive match between their own self-image and the value that the destination has to offer. A greater match between a tourist’s self-image and the destination’s personality will probably lead to more favourable behaviour (such as visit and revisit intentions, satisfaction and loyalty) towards the destination by the tourist (Usakli and Baloglu 2011). Since touristic destinations have their own unique personalities and characteristics, it is not unlikely that these personalities will influence an individual’s concept of actual or ideal self. Thus, we posit that:

H3: Destination personality dimensions is positively related to self-congruence

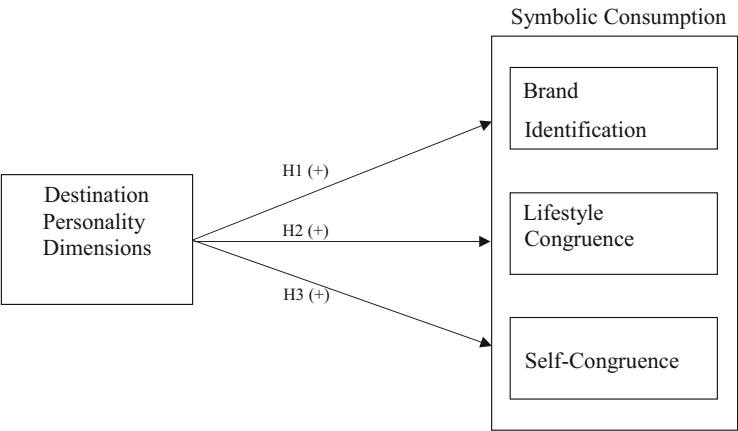


Fig. 1 Conceptual framework

From the above discussion, Fig. 1 provides a summary of our conceptual framework. Brand identification expresses a tourist's social identity. A tourist will identify with certain destinations (brands) if it reflects and communicates his social values to others. For example, rather than go to a beach, a tourist who is concerned about animal conservation may decide to visit Nyungwe National Park (Rwanda) to better understand Mountain Gorillas. Lifestyle congruence refers to tourists' present or desired lifestyles as expressed by their activities, attitudes and consumption patterns. For instance, a tourist with a luxurious lifestyle may prefer to travel to destinations on a private jet and stay in 5-star hotels only. Self-congruence reflects a tourist's self-image or self-identity. A tourist with an exciting, outdoorsy self-image will be attracted to exciting and exhilarating destinations such as Olumo Rock, Nigeria (Rock climbing) or Mount Kilimanjaro, Kenya (mountain climbing). However, unlike brand identification and self-congruence where consumers use less conscious and less tangible comparison standards such as social groups and self-concept; lifestyle congruence employs more tangible reference yardsticks such as consumption goals and interests for comparison purposes (Ekinici et al. 2013; Nam et al. 2011).

3 Methodology

3.1 Research and Study Setting

Africa is the world's second fastest growing destination for tourism (Adeola et al. 2018) and its complex, multi-core dimensions as an industry makes it ideal for more structured analyses, particularly to further capture value associated with the development of tourism in many of its emerging tourism destinations (Kimbu and Ngoasong 2013). Africa therefore represents a unique platform for the development of theoretical ideas that could advance knowledge in the hospitality and tourism management industry. However, due to Nigeria's economic size, huge tourism potential and her large population; a study of the country was deemed appropriate. With more than 250 homogenous ethnic groups and hundreds of indigenous languages, Nigeria has many nations within a country (Mustapha 2006). It also accounts for approximately 20% of Sub-Saharan Africa's population (195.87 million out of 1 billion) as at 2018 (World Bank 2019) and with a gross domestic product (GDP) of \$397.27 billion as at 2018, it is Africa's largest economy. Additionally, Nigeria is a country with huge touristic potential (Bankole and Odularu 2006) because of the availability of many natural and ecological attractions such as coastal beaches, mountains, and a rich cultural heritage. Moreover, the World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC) reported that travel and tourism grew more significantly in Nigeria at 3.5% than the average global growth rate of 2.5% while tourism contributed about 10.3% of the total GDP in 2019 (Knoema 2020).

3.2 Sample and Data Collection

The study was conducted in two distinct stages. First, in line with Muniz and Marchetti's (2012) use of volunteers in the measurement of brand personality, a non-probabilistic volunteer sampling procedure was used to retrieve information from 100 respondents made up of mature students drawn from a tertiary institution, who were self-identified tourists of various Nigerian destinations. Authors have employed the student demographics in the measurement of brand personality (Park and John 2012; Geuens et al. 2009). In this preliminary study, an open-ended questionnaire was used to elicit information from respondents concerning tourist destinations they had visited in the last 2 years. The data was analysed using descriptive statistics and all tourist locations in Nigeria that had above average frequencies were selected while those below average frequencies were dropped from the study. This resulted in six different tourist destinations, which are Elegushi Beach, Lagos; Olumo Rock, Abeokuta; Lekki Conservation Centre, Lagos; Badagry Slave Museum, Lagos; Obudu Cattle Ranch, Cross Rivers and Takwa Bay, Lagos.

Second, to ensure representation of all selected destinations, the authors employed a non-probabilistic quota sampling to select samples from the six most visited tourist destinations in Nigeria as obtained from the preliminary study. Africa's tourism endowments are largely underdeveloped and underutilized (Adeola et al. 2018) and the tourism sector in Nigeria particularly is still at a developmental stage (Bankole and Odularu 2006). A consequence of this is that tourist centres in Nigeria do not have a record for number of visitors they have monthly. To overcome this hurdle, the authors identified four previous studies on brand and destination personality (Aaker 1997; Ajeyalemi and Dixon-Ogbechie 2017; Hultman et al. 2015; Usakli and Baloglu 2011) and employed the average number of 807 respondents of these combined studies. Since there was no existing formal data to determine actual patronage of each destination, the sample size was distributed using quota sampling among the selected tourist destinations. This, according to Bryman and Bell (2011), allowed for a better representation of the total population as it ensured that each quota was proportionally represented in the sample. With the assistance of two well-trained research assistants, a total of 1200 copies of the questionnaire (an average of 200 per tourist destination) were administered. However only 831 responses were found useable for analysis after discarding those that had missing responses or were poorly filled.

3.3 Variables and Measures

Four key variables were employed in this study and items were measured employing a seven-point scale. The mean value of all items in each of the multi-item measure was used for analysis. The variables employed are brand identification, lifestyle congruity, self-congruity and destination personality.

3.4 *Dependent Variable*

The dependent variable employed in this study is symbolic consumption which has three distinct dimensions. Brand identification constructs comprised eight items adapted from literature (Nam et al. 2011). The construct had a Cronbach alpha of 0.90. Lifestyle congruity measure consisted three items adapted from Manthiou et al. (2018) and Nam et al. (2011). It had a Cronbach alpha of 0.89. Finally, based on adaptations from previous works on destination (Sirgy and Su 2000; Usakli and Baloglu 2011), the self-congruity construct was assessed using four items. A Cronbach alpha of 0.90 was obtained. All constructs showed high reliability and internal consistency as they were all above the recommended threshold of 0.70 (Hair et al. 2010).

3.5 *Independent Variable (Predictor)*

Destination personality in this study was defined based on the empirical methodologies of previous authors on the subject (Aaker 1997; Ekinci and Hosany 2006; Ajeyalemi and Dixon-Ogbechie 2017; Chen and Phou 2013). A total of 20 personality items which could describe a destination were included in the study and an exploratory factor analysis using principal component analysis was conducted to identify underlying dimensions. For significance, only factor loadings above 0.50 were considered ideal (Hair et al. 2010). The results confirmed a four-factor model of 19 personality items that explained 63.27% of the total variance (Table 1).

4 Results and Findings

In order to test the respective hypothesis, SPSS 21 was used to carry out a linear regression analysis by entering each destination personality factor into a separate model to determine individual effects as well as combining all four dimensions for aggregated effects.

H1: Destination personality dimensions is positively related to brand identification

Model Specification

$$x_{bi} = f(x_{se1a} + x_{ru1b} + x_{hi1c} + x_{ex1d} + \xi) \dots \quad (\text{Model 1})$$

where x_{bi} = brand identification factor, x_{se} = serenity factor, x_{ru} = ruggedness factor, x_{hi} = historic factor, x_{ex} = excitement factor and ξ = error term.

Table 1 Exploratory factor analysis of destination personality items^a

Factors	Factor loading	Eigenvalue	Explained variance (%)	Reliability (Cronbach alpha)
Excitement awesome colourful cool exciting friendly heart-warming memorable natural trendy		7.813	39.066	0.895
	0.765			
	0.573			
	0.754			
	0.830			
	0.607			
	0.578			
	0.706			
	0.686			
Serenity well-decorated feminine masculine quiet secure upper-class	0.599			
		2.174	10.868	0.796
	0.542			
	0.624			
	0.637			
	0.749			
	0.653			
Ruggedness tough rugged	0.526			
		1.500	7.501	0.774
	0.791			
Historic ancient historic	0.812			
		1.167	5.837	0.677
	0.774			
Total variance explained	0.799			
			63.272	

^aExtraction method: principal component analysis, rotation method: varimax with Kaiser normalization, Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy: 0.921. Bartlett's Test of Sphericity p-value 0.000 (chi-square: 7934.020, df: 190)

Table 2 Regression analysis: relationship between brand identification and destination personality dimensions

Variable(s)	X _{se1a}	X _{ru1b}	X _{hi1c}	X _{ex1d}	Model 1
Serenity	0.616***				0.362***
Ruggedness		0.281***			-0.016
Historic			0.218***		0.005
Excitement				0.614***	0.345***
R-Square	0.377	0.079	0.048	0.377	0.431
Constant (t-value)	19.946***	33.464***	33.026***	8.737***	9.146***
F-Value	482.16***	68.27***	39.83***	482.16***	150.71***
Durbin Watson	1.85	1.74	1.65	1.81	1.84

*p < 0.05; **p < 0.01; ***p < 0.001

Table 3 Regression analysis: relationship between lifestyle congruence and destination personality dimensions

Variable(s)	X _{sc2a}	X _{ru2b}	X _{hi2c}	X _{ex2d}	Model 2
Serenity	0.470***				0.381***
Ruggedness		0.288**			0.091*
Historic			0.141***		-0.008
Excitement				0.384***	0.065
R-Square	0.220	0.083	0.020	0.147	0.229
Constant (t-value)	6.126***	15.156***	17.681***	2.957***	2.850**
F-Value	225.65***	71.99***	16.23***	137.88***	58.96***
Durbin Watson	1.82	1.76	1.73	1.84	1.82

*p < 0.05; **p < 0.01; ***p < 0.001

Table 2 presents the results of the regression for brand identification and destination personality dimensions. The results of the test support the hypothesis that destination personality dimensions are positively related to brand identification. All dimensions had individually positive and significant relationship with the dependent variable, suggesting that they are significant individual predictors of brand identification. However, when all dimensions are jointly combined into a model, only *serenity* ($\beta = 0.362$, $p < 0.001$) and *excitement* ($\beta = 0.345$, $p < 0.001$) dimensions proved significant in predicting destination personality. Since the personality that tourists attach to a specific destination tends to have a connection with their brand identification, the findings appear to imply that tourists identify with destinations that reinforce their own social identity which essentially communicates serenity and excitement.

H2: Destination personality dimensions is positively related to lifestyle congruence

Model Specification

$$x_{lc} = f(x_{sc2a} + x_{ru2b} + x_{hi2c} + x_{ex2d} + \xi) \dots \quad (\text{Model 2})$$

where x_{lc} = lifestyle congruence, and all other parameters are as defined in Model 1 above.

Table 3 presents the results of the regression for lifestyle congruence and destination personality dimensions. The results of the test support the hypothesis that destination personality dimensions are positively related to lifestyle congruence. All dimensions had individually positive and significant relationship with the dependent variable, suggesting that they are significant individual predictors of lifestyle congruence. However, when all dimensions are jointly combined into a model, only *serenity* ($\beta = 0.381$, $p < 0.001$) and *ruggedness* ($\beta = 0.091$, $p < 0.05$) dimensions proved significant in predicting destination personality. Tourists are likely to embrace a destination whose personality fits their actual or desired lifestyle; hence, the findings seem to infer that tourists embrace destinations that reinforce their

Table 4 Regression analysis: relationship between self-congruence and destination personality dimensions

Variable(s)	X _{se3a}	X _{ru3b}	X _{hi3c}	X _{ex3d}	Model 3
Serenity	0.460***				0.330***
Ruggedness		0.270**			0.069 ^a
Historic			0.159***		0.007
Excitement				0.405***	0.127*
R-Square	0.211	0.073	0.025	0.164	0.223
Constant (t-value)	10.104***	19.748***	21.194***	5.020***	4.797***
F-Value	213.87***	62.72***	20.57***	156.18***	57.04***
Durbin Watson	1.95	1.83	1.76	1.97	1.96

^ap < 0.10

*p < 0.05; **p < 0.01; ***p < 0.001

interests, personal values, consumption patterns and opinions. Tourists' lifestyles appear to match destinations considered serene and rugged.

H3: Destination personality dimensions is positively related to self-congruence

Model Specification

$$x_{sc} = f(x_{se3a} + x_{ru3b} + x_{hi3c} + x_{ex3d} + \xi) \dots \quad (\text{Model 3})$$

where x_{sc} = self-congruence, and all other parameters are as defined in Model 1 above.

Table 4 presents the results of the regression for self-congruence and destination personality dimensions. The results of the test support the hypothesis that destination personality dimensions are positively related to self-congruence. Just like the first two regressions, all dimensions in this analysis had individually positive and significant relationship with the dependent variable, suggesting that they are significant individual predictors of self-congruence. Similarly, when all dimensions are jointly combined into a model, they all proved significant in predicting destination personality except *ruggedness* dimension. The results showed interesting implication. Based on psychological comparison, tourists decisively choose destinations that they perceive are consistent with their own image of self-identity and congruent with their own personality. The tendency to be attracted to destinations that are considered *serene*, *exciting* and *rugged* reveals that tourists find a cognitive consonance with such destinations.

5 Discussion

Findings showed that for tourists, symbolic consumption of destinations may be just as important, if not more important, as functional and experiential consumption of destinations. When evaluating destinations to visit, revisit, or recommend, tourists

do a psychological comparison and evaluation of possible destinations. Such evaluations ultimately lead to a cognitive match between a tourist's self-definition and the preferred destination, thus, identifying with destinations that reinforces their own identity. The willingness of tourists to pay for and their demand for a destination is therefore premised on the value attached to their symbolic consumption of the destination. This is in line with previous studies that had highlighted the importance of symbolic consumption attributes as good and positive predictors of consumer and tourist satisfaction, destination attachment, as well as destination brand loyalty (Chen et al. 2016; Nam et al. 2011).

Furthermore, findings from this study revealed that destination personality dimensions have predictive influence on symbolic consumption. Previous studies had employed symbolic consumption as predicting or mediating variables (Manthiou et al. 2018; Tangsupwattana and Liu 2018). However, we argue that in the travel and destination industry, symbolic consumption is a construct that depends on a factor such as destination personality. There has been sparse attention in literature to the relationship between destination personality and symbolic consumption (Chi et al. 2018; Usakli and Baloglu 2011). Most studies however employed just one measure of symbolic consumption, which appears inadequate considering that symbolic consumption is a function of three distinct but related measures (Ekinci et al. 2013). This study is few among other studies to establish that destination personality dimensions do predict symbolic consumption. It also revealed that tourists can appreciate destinations based on the three distinct and related categories of symbolic consumption—brand identification, lifestyle congruence and self-congruence.

Additionally, four distinct dimensions of destination personality (*serenity, ruggedness, historic* and *excitement*) were established in the context of this study and in line with the findings of Ajeyalemi and Dixon-Ogbechie (2017). However, this study went further and confirmed all four destination personality dimensions have varying significant individual predictive influences on a tourist's symbolic consumption. Although when aggregated, not all destination personality dimensions have a significant effect on each symbolic consumption element. A practical implication is that destination personality dimensions may need to be individually considered and assessed when predicting symbolic consumption.

The *Serenity* factor showed the strongest significant effect on all three symbolic consumption variables, indicating that tourists are likely to show strong affinity for destinations that feel secure, quiet, safe and calm. It therefore seems that if faced with the extreme option of choosing only one dimension of destination personality that could be considered for decision-making, it will have to be the *Serenity* dimension. Nevertheless, a holistic consideration for all destination personality dimension is recommended. This finding offers a significant implication for tourist destination operators as it suggests that they should promote the peaceful and tranquil features of their destinations using some of the traits within the factor for improved symbolic consumption of their destination.

The *Excitement* factor proved significant in explaining only tourists' brand identification and self-congruence, but it had no significant relationship with lifestyle

congruence. A few deductions may be drawn from the foregoing. It may imply that the tourist destinations studied may be perceived as unexciting, thus making the factor a weak predictor of lifestyle congruence. Alternatively, it could be inferred that although tourists would like to identify with an exciting destination, perhaps there is the plausibility that they do not consider their lifestyle or ideal self to be exciting. Operators of these destinations may consider introducing more colourful, trendy and attractive offerings in order to drive higher self and lifestyle congruity.

As a dimension, the *Ruggedness* construct showed significant predictive influence on tourists' lifestyle congruence and self-congruence, but it had no significant relationship with brand identification. This appears to suggest that although there may be congruence between a tourist's self-image, lifestyle, and ideal self on the one hand, and rugged attributes of a destination, on the other hand, nonetheless, tourists are not able to identify with brands that are considered as rugged or tough.

Out of the four destination personality dimensions, the *Historic* factor performed the least in all three aggregated models, as it showed no significant predictive influence whatsoever with measures of symbolic consumption. There was lack of cognitive match between tourists' self-image and destinations with historic importance. This seems to suggest that tourists do not place relative importance on destinations with historic attachment or such destinations have not managed to resonate with them subconsciously. *Historic* destination personality is therefore unable to reinforce tourists' self-identity.

Interestingly, out of the three measures of symbolic consumption, only self-congruence was predicted by at least three destination personality dimensions—*Serenity*, *Excitement* and *Ruggedness*. As posited by Usakli and Baloglu (2011), if there is a greater match between a tourist's self-image and the destination's personality, it will probably lead to a more favourable behaviour (such as visit and revisit intentions, satisfaction and loyalty) towards the destination by the tourist. Thus, it can be argued that a very important aspect of tourists' symbolic consumption is self-congruence, which explains the match between their self-image and destination's personality. Based on the findings of this study therefore, the significance of self-congruence as a construct of symbolic consumption is further underscored, which is in line with the postulations of previous studies (Chi et al. 2018; Su and Reynolds 2017; Usakli and Baloglu 2011).

Consequent upon the findings, the chapter has a few contributions to literature. First, tourists in Africa are interested in destinations that have congruence with their lifestyle, match with their self-identity and appeal to their subconscious desires. This suggests that symbolic consumption may be just as important as functional and experiential consumption of destinations. Second, destination personality dimensions are positively related to symbolic consumption. This implies a deeper understanding of the personalities of African touristic destinations is necessary. Only when this understanding is achieved can there be a conscious attempt to match destinations with a tourist's self-image, lifestyle or identity. Three, in line with Ajeyalemi and Dixon-Ogbechie (2017), we also found and confirmed four separate dimensions of destination personality in the context of African tourism industry—*Serenity*, *Excitement*, *Ruggedness* and *Historic*, however, this study went further and

established that *Serenity* factor appears to be the most cherished of all destination personality dimensions because of its significance in all aggregated models. This indicates a likeness for destinations that are quiet, secure, calm and tranquil.

6 Recommendations

Understanding Nigeria's destination personality composition, as well as tourists' symbolic consumption intentions can lead to or significantly improve consumer engagement. This should prove an invaluable resource in developing many tourist destinations, which could represent a step toward attracting and benefiting from tourists. Only a few African countries such as South Africa and Kenya have managed to harness their tourism potential to generate sustainable income flow, which has contributed significantly to their various economies (Riti et al. 2017). Unsparringly, they are classified as established tourist destinations, whereas countries such as Nigeria as still emerging destinations. It appears Nigeria can do more to promote the various touristic destinations. For instance, South Africa's portrayal of a vibrant city experience can be likened to fast moving pace of Lagos State. This study provided empirical evidence for the importance of symbolic consumption within the African context, which has been suggested, can greatly improve engagement in the tourism sector. Also, the influence of destination personality dimensions in predicting symbolic consumption was established and this provides justification for further research within the destination personality domain in Africa with a view to developing the tourism industry of the continent.

Leaders of African countries and the respective agencies in charge of tourism should be aware that tourists' destinations relying on their historic relevance alone might not be adequate to endear consumers to such destinations, particularly because of the insignificant effect that the *Historic* personality factor had in predicting measures of symbolic consumption in all aggregate models. Hence, it is recommended that African destinations should be promoted based on their serene, exciting and rugged appeal. For instance, Kenya promotes their serene, lush conservatories with wildlife running free creating appeal to nature lovers and excitement seekers. Also, destinations can achieve congruence with prospective tourists by using celebrities and other social influencers as brand representatives. Furthermore, destinations and their respective personalities should be specially marketed on various social media platforms in order to increase visibility and attract potential tourists.

7 Conclusion

This chapter has established that destination personality dimensions have predictive influences on symbolic consumption in Africa's tourism industry. The findings provide new insights on destination branding in several ways. One, symbolic consumption is just as important as functional and experiential consumption of destinations because tourists are also interested in destinations that have a congruence with their lifestyle, match with their self-identity and appeal to their subconscious desires. Two, destination personality dimensions are positively related to symbolic consumption. This relationship imply managers of tourists' destinations can focus on a deeper understanding of their respective destinations' personalities and how it influences a prospective tourist's self-image and symbolic values obtained. To the best of the authors' knowledge, this relationship has not been previously explored in literature, particularly with emphasis on three distinct but related measures of symbolic consumption—brand identification, lifestyle congruence and self-congruence.

Three, as it concerns African destinations, the serenity factor appears to be most cherished of all destination personality dimensions. This is an indicator for operators of destinations that emphasis must be on calm, tranquil, quiet and serene environment, if they are to attract tourists who are symbolic consumers. Additionally, since the average African tourist would strongly cherish destinations that are serene and tranquil, it behoves on such destinations to be so appropriately positioned. Four, this study established the significance of self-congruence as an important construct of symbolic consumption, because it was influenced by three destination personality dimensions. All three measures of symbolic consumption proved relevant and should be thoroughly examined when making decisions concerning destinations, however, if destination managers desire to concentrate on one construct before others, they should focus more on self-congruence evaluation and achieving a greater match between a tourist's self-image, actual self, ideal self and the destination's personality. Five, in line with Ajeyalemi and Dixon-Ogbechie (2017), this study found and confirmed four separate dimensions of destination personality in the context of African tourism industry.

Rather than functional or utilitarian reasons, African touristic destinations can begin to focus on symbolic values that attract prospective tourists, with a view to increasing patronage, loyalty and recommendation. There is a lot Africa can benefit from a more reflective understanding of the tourism industry. The continent's tourism endowments remain largely underdeveloped and underutilized, but this could be a changed narrative if heads of governments and touristic destination managers apply concerted effort in tapping its huge potential, especially since the continent is the second fastest growing destination for tourism in the world. If value associated with the development of tourism in Africa is further captured through an appreciation of its numerous destinations' personalities, then steady economic growth through increased consumption may be guaranteed.

8 Limitation and Future Research Direction

Regardless of findings by this study, there are a few limitations which may present an avenue for further researches. One, the study focused on a single African country. Even though this may permit specific findings unique to Nigeria, however, findings may not be easily generalized for other African countries, which may have their own peculiar destination personalities. This paves the way for future studies to consider other tourism destinations in other African nations. Two, this study did not consider tourists' countries of origin and did not delineate whether respondents were local or foreign tourists. It should present an interesting perspective to investigate the significance and perception of destinations based on tourists' countries of origin. Three, since it has been argued that symbolic consumption positively affects tourist satisfaction, tourist loyalty and revisit intention, it presents an exciting challenge to explore the relationship between destination personality and these outcome variables, and the extent to which the relationship is mediated by symbolic consumption. Additionally, future studies may accommodate other forms of tourism consumption.

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