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Original Article

### Mediation Role of Tourists' Perceptions on the Relationship between Pull Motivation Factors and Destination Loyalty, in the Lake Victoria Region Tourist Circuit, Kenya

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Loyalty.

To enhance competitiveness, destination managers need to understand the link between tourists' motivation factors, perceptions, and destination loyalty. This study aimed to investigate the mediating effect of tourists' perceptions on the relationship between pull motivation factors and destination loyalty. A cross-sectional survey using a self-administered questionnaire was used to collect quantitative primary data from 299 tourists in 26 hotels in the Lake Victoria Tourist Circuit, Kenya. Partial least squares structural equation modelling (PLS-SEM) in Smart PLS 3.2.7 was used for modelling and hypothesis testing. Perceived destination awareness fully mediates the relationship between destination management factors/core resources and destination loyalty, but only partially mediates the link between support resources and loyalty. Perceived destination image and perceived destination value both partially mediate the relationships between destination support resources, core resources, qualifying/amplifying resources, and management factors, and destination loyalty. The study outcome suggests that destination managers with a focus on improving tourists' destination loyalty should focus on tourists' perceived destination awareness, perceived destination image, perceived destination quality, and perceived destination value.

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**INTRODUCTION**

This study investigates the crucial link between tourists' motivation, perceptions, and destination loyalty, with the aim of understanding the mediating role of perceptions. Based on a survey of 299 tourists in Kenya's Lake Victoria Tourist Circuit, the research utilises PLS-SEM to analyse how perceived destination awareness, destination image, perceived destination quality, and perceived destination value influence the relationship between various pull motivation factors and loyalty.

**LITERATURE REVIEW****Pull Motivation Factors**

Pull factors are external forces tied to a destination's characteristics that influence an individual's choice to visit (Klenosky, 2002). These include tangible assets like beaches and historical sites, and intangible aspects such as perceptions of novelty and marketing image. A destination's image, formed by attributes like scenic beauty, shopping, and culture, significantly impacts choices, and attribute performance affects visitor satisfaction and future behaviour like revisits (Chi & Qu, 2008; Ozdemir *et al.*, 2012).

Researchers have extensively studied destination attributes, developing models like Crouch & Ritchie's (1999) comprehensive framework for destination competitiveness. Despite this, there's a research gap in understanding the relationship between destination attributes, tourism perceptions, and future behaviour (Assaf & Josiassen, 2012). This is critical, as loyalty is linked to delivering

pleasant experiences (Dwyer & Kim, 2003; Crouch & Ritchie, 2005).

Previous studies haven't identified specific attributes appealing to individual tourists. Instead, they have bundled all attributes regardless of market segments in assessing competitiveness. This study aims to bridge these gaps by incorporating pull factors to determine destination loyalty, helping destinations identify valued attributes and predict tourist behaviour based on the role of tourists' perceptions. The study uses Abreu-Novais *et al.* (2015) as a basis due to its comprehensive and validated list of destination attributes. For context, the study classifies pull motivation factors as: destination management factors, core resources factors, qualifying and amplifying determinants factors, and support resources factors.

**Tourists' Perceptions about Destinations**

Previous studies on perceptions have been founded on the constructs of awareness, perceived image, perceived value, and perceived quality (Aaker, 1996; Keller, 1993). The work by Keller (1993) has been the foundation of many conceptual and theoretical frameworks in hospitality and tourism (Boo *et al.*, 2009; Konecnik & Gartner, 2007; Lee & Back, 2008; Pike *et al.*, 2010; Kim & Kim, 2004). Some authors have gone further and tested the applicability of consumer-based brand equity models using the four constructs. Specifically, the study by Konecnik & Gartner (2007) has been cited as the best example of the destination brand model. As such, the current study pursues perceptions in the four dimensions of awareness, image, quality, and value.

## Destination Awareness

Awareness is the strength of a brand's presence in the consumer's mind (Aaker, 1996). Creating awareness is considered the initial step in attaining brand equity and enhancing the value of a particular brand (Gartner & Konecnik Ruzzier, 2011). Um & Crompton (1990) consider awareness as the largest source of destination choice decisions. Studies by Boo *et al.* (2009), Konecnik & Gartner (2007), Lee & Back (2008), and Pike *et al.* (2010) identify awareness as one of the critical dimensions of destination branding theory. The current study conceptualises destination awareness as; 'knowledge about the destination', 'ability to recall the destination and its attributes', and 'the ease of recognising the destination amongst other destinations', based on the studies by Pappu *et al.* (2005) and Yoo & Donthu (2002). Therefore, this study proposes that the constant presence of a destination in a tourist's mind all the time while faced with a travel decision is a critical factor in the decision-making process.

## Perceived Destination Image

Destination image implies the 'overall mental picture (imagery) of a destination' held by a tourist at a given time (Crompton, 1979; Phelps, 1986; Gartner & Hunt, 1987). Destination image, therefore, is a constituent of someone's beliefs, ideas, and mental representations about the attributes of the destination. The attitude of tourists towards a destination has been noted to be influenced by the cognitive, affective, and conative aspects of destination image (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1974). Further, studies by Goodall (1988), Lin *et al.* (2007), and Prayag (2009) suggest that matching the destination image with tourists' perceptions promotes the likelihood of destination choice and that a favourable destination image helps shape consumer preferences. Thus, evaluating the perceived destination image across time is critical for the successful management of destinations

(Gartner & Konecnik Ruzzier, 2011; Gnoth, 2002; Qu *et al.*, 2011).

## Perceived Destination Quality

Keller (2003) describes perceived quality as 'the perception of the overall quality or superiority of a product or service compared to relevant alternatives and about its intended purpose'. The concept of perceived quality in the tourism sector has been researched over the years (Boo *et al.*, 2009; Gartner & Konecnik Ruzzier, 2011; Konecnik & Gartner, 2007; Pike *et al.*, 2010). The current study conceptualises perceived destination quality as the tourists' perceptions of the quality of the destination attributes and the entire destination as a whole. This is in line with the study by Buhalis (2000), who established that the quality of a destination's infrastructure influenced the performance of the destination as well as loyalty towards the destination.

## Perceived Destination Value

Perceived value implies the benefits that consumers believe they will receive after consuming the product or service relative to the cost they paid for the product or service (McDougall & Levesque, 2000). In describing perceived value, Zithaml & Bitner (2000) add that perceived value implies the general evaluation of the benefit that a service or a product offers the consumer, subject to the consumer's perceptions of the product or service and the cost of obtaining it. Zeithaml (1988) considers value as the general feeling of consumers about the efficacy of a product as determined by their perceptions of the price they pay and what they are offered. Several other scholars (Bradley & Sparks, 2012; Gallarza & Saura, 2006; Sweeney & Soutar, 2001; Woodruff, 1997) have expressed interest in the conceptualisation of perceived value as the tradeoff between the cost of something and what is received. Following this line of argument, the current study conceptualises destination perceived value as the evaluation by the tourist of

the destination offerings, subject to the costs paid to be at the destination, including the cost of travel, time as well and the opportunity cost.

### Destination Loyalty

Destination loyalty is a crucial concept in tourism, conceptualised as either attitudinal loyalty or behavioural loyalty (Jones & Taylor, 2007). Attitudinal loyalty reflects a consumer's willingness to make repeat purchases and identify with a product or service in the future, encompassing their attitude toward a destination and their readiness to recommend it (Atilgan *et al.*, 2005). In contrast, behavioural loyalty refers to actual repeat purchase behaviour, measured by the frequency or volume of repeat purchases (Pappu *et al.*, 2005).

While loyalty is extensively researched in general marketing, its study within tourism is more limited (Konecnik & Gartner, 2007). However, destination branding frameworks often incorporate both attitudinal and behavioural dimensions of loyalty (Boo *et al.*, 2009). Destination loyalty also influences tourist behaviour during the destination choice process (Chon, 1992). Indicators like "intention to visit" and "likelihood to recommend" are often used to measure it (Baker & Crompton, 2000).

However, repeat purchase alone is insufficient to fully account for loyalty; tourist satisfaction is a better predictor of future behaviour (Bigne *et al.*, 2001). This study posits loyalty as a key indicator of future behaviour, directly translating to destination competitiveness. Many studies confirm that destination loyalty is a core factor in predicting future travel demand and enhancing a destination's competitiveness (Chen & Gursoy, 2001). Therefore, retaining existing clients through loyalty is vital for success. This study defines loyalty as the likelihood of revisiting and willingness to recommend a destination (Huddleston *et al.*, 2004). Loyalty leads to repeat visitation and positive word-of-mouth,

which are more cost-effective than attracting new customers (Reichheld *et al.*, 2000). Despite these benefits, few studies investigate the role of travellers' motivations on destination loyalty. This study aims to address this gap by examining both behavioural and attitudinal dimensions of loyalty as dependent variables, given their significance in measuring initial destination choice and future travel intent (Riley *et al.*, 2001).

### Tourists' Perceptions, Motivations, and Destination Loyalty

Several previous studies have established the existence of a positive relationship between tourists' perceptions and destination loyalty (Atilgan *et al.*, 2005; Russell-Bennett *et al.*, 2007; Boo *et al.*, 2009; Konecnik & Gartner, 2007; Pike, 2010; Qu *et al.*, 2011). However, even though destination attributes are considered critical pull motivation factors, there is a research gap in establishing the mediation role of tourists' perceptions in the relationship between tourist destination attributes and destination loyalty (Buhalis, 2000; Ritchie & Crouch, 2000; Yoon & Uysal, 2005). As such, there is a need to explore the extent to which tourists' perceptions influence the relationship between the destination's attributes and loyalty.

Literature also shows that destination loyalty is an indicator of tourists' destination awareness (Boo *et al.*, 2009; Nguyen *et al.*, 2011; Pike *et al.*, 2010). However, most of these studies have focused on establishing the link between perceived awareness, image, quality, and destination loyalty, with perceived image being the mediating variable. As such, the mediation relationship between destination awareness and destination loyalty is yet to be explored adequately and in the study context.

Perceived destination image is another critical dimension of tourists' perceptions besides perceived destination awareness (Boo *et al.*, 2009; Gartner & Konecnik, 2011; Konecnik & Gartner,

2007). Similarly, a number of previous studies point to the existence of positive effects of perceived destination image on future tourist behaviours (Court & Lupton, 1997; Rittichainuwat *et al.*, 2001). Notably, some tourism studies on perceived destination image have focused on either the cognitive image or the affective image of a destination (Chon, 1991; Echtner & Ritchie, 1993; Fakeye & Crompton, 1991; Gartner & Shen, 1992). However, other studies have measured the perceived destination image based on both the cognitive and affective attributes of the perceived destination image (Baloglu, 2001; Beerli & Martí'n, 2004; Kim & Richardson, 2003). Nevertheless, even with the inclusion of both cognitive and affective components, there still lacks empirical evidence linking tourists' motivations and perceived destination image to project tourists' loyalty towards the destination. The current study aimed to address this gap by exploring the mediating role of tourists' perceived destination image in the relationship between tourists' motivations and their future behaviour towards the destination.

Regarding perceived destination quality, previous research confirms a positive relationship between perceived quality and destination loyalty (Jayanti & Ghosh, 1996). Further, perceived quality is considered an antecedent of satisfaction (Baker & Crompton, 2000) and the perceived value (Baker *et al.*, 2002; Cronin *et al.*, 2000; Grewal *et al.*, 1998; Parasuraman & Grewal, 2000; Petrick, 2002; Zeithaml, 1988). Moreover, the study by Baker & Crompton (2000) confirms that perceived quality is a significant predictor of return-purchase decisions. A gap, therefore, exists in the role that perceived quality plays in the relationship between tourist motivations and their future behaviour. This study, therefore, sought to establish if perceived destination quality independently plays any mediation role in the relationship between tourist motivations and destination loyalty, rather than being embedded in perceived value.

Unlike, perceived awareness, perceived image and perceived quality, the concept of perceived value has been studied to a great extent (Bradley & Sparks, 2012; Chen & Chen, 2010; Chen & Tsai, 2008; Gallarza & Saura, 2006; Hutchinson *et al.*, 2009; Petrick & Backman, 2001; Petrick, 2004; Williams & Soutar, 2009). A majority of these studies have established that perceived value is an important precursor of customer satisfaction and loyalty. As such, destination managers should acknowledge the significant role of perceived value in the ultimate competitiveness of their destinations (Pechlaner *et al.*, 2002). Furthermore, to accurately predict destination loyalty, destination managers should establish and recognise the relationship between perceived destination value and tourist motivations. Most critically, destination managers should establish if perceived value mediates the relationship between the tourists' perceptions and destination loyalty (Duman & Mattila, 2005). Since the quality of destination attributes is critical in the formation of favourable perceived destination value, the current study also considers the quality of destination attributes as part of pull motivation factors. Therefore, the current study proposed pull motivation factors as antecedents of perceived value. The study also postulated that perceived destination value is an antecedent of the destination's loyalty. Further, the current study postulates that perceived destination value mediates the relationship between tourists' motivations and destination loyalty.

In conclusion, it is evident from the literature that tourists' perceptions influence destination loyalty (Baker *et al.*, 2002; Cronin *et al.*, 2000; Boo *et al.*, 2009; Pike, 2010; Qu *et al.*, 2011). However, empirical studies emphasising the mediation role of tourists' perceptions on the relationship between pull motivational factors and destination loyalty are scarce, particularly in the study context. The current study, therefore, sought to explore the extent to which tourists' perceptions mediate the relationship



between tourists' motivations and loyalty towards a destination.

### Study Hypotheses

The hypotheses to be tested in this case included:

H<sub>1</sub>: Tourists' perceptions mediate the relationship between pull motivation factors and destination loyalty among tourists in the Lake Victoria Region Tourism Circuit, Kenya.

To address the four distinct tourist perceptions identified in literature, this hypothesis was disintegrated and stated as follows;

H<sub>1a</sub>: Tourists' perceived destination image mediates the relationship between pull motivation factors and destination loyalty among tourists in the Lake Victoria Region Tourism Circuit, Kenya.

Further, given that pull motivation factors are grouped into four categories, the hypothesis was further disintegrated and stated as follows;

H<sub>1ai</sub>: Tourists perceived destination image mediates the relationship between destination core resources factor and destination loyalty among tourists in the Lake Victoria Region Tourism Circuit, Kenya.

H<sub>1aii</sub>: Tourists perceived destination image mediates the relationship between destination support resources factor and destination loyalty among tourists in the Lake Victoria Region Tourism Circuit, Kenya.

H<sub>1aiii</sub>: Tourists perceived destination image mediates the relationship between destination qualifying and amplifying resources factor and destination loyalty among tourists in the Lake Victoria Region Tourism Circuit, Kenya.

H<sub>1aiv</sub>: Tourists perceived destination image mediates the relationship between destination management

factors and destination loyalty among tourists in the Lake Victoria Region Tourism Circuit, Kenya.

H<sub>1b</sub>: Tourists' perceived destination awareness mediates the relationship between pull motivation factors and destination loyalty among tourists in the Lake Victoria Region Tourism Circuit, Kenya.

Further, to address all the pull motivation factors, this hypothesis was disintegrated as stated as follows;

H<sub>1bi</sub>: Tourists perceived destination awareness mediates the relationship between the destination core resources factor and destination loyalty among tourists in the Lake Victoria Region Tourism Circuit, Kenya.

H<sub>1bii</sub>: Tourists perceived destination awareness mediates the relationship between destination support resources factor and destination loyalty among tourists in the Lake Victoria Region Tourism Circuit, Kenya.

H<sub>1biii</sub>: Tourists perceived destination awareness mediates the relationship between destination qualifying and amplifying resources factor and destination loyalty among tourists in the Lake Victoria Region Tourism Circuit, Kenya.

H<sub>1biv</sub>: Tourists perceived destination awareness mediates the relationship between destination management factors and destination loyalty among tourists in the Lake Victoria Region Tourism Circuit, Kenya.

H<sub>1c</sub>: Tourists' perceived destination quality mediates the relationship between pull motivation factors and destination loyalty among tourists in the Lake Victoria Region Tourism Circuit, Kenya.

This hypothesis was further disintegrated to address all the pull motivation factors and stated as follows;

H<sub>1ci</sub>: Tourists perceived destination quality mediates the relationship between destination core resources factor and destination loyalty among tourists in the Lake Victoria Region Tourism Circuit, Kenya.

H<sub>1cii</sub>: Tourists perceived destination quality mediates the relationship between destination support resources factor and destination loyalty among tourists in the Lake Victoria Region Tourism Circuit, Kenya.

H<sub>1ciii</sub>: Tourists perceived destination quality mediates the relationship between destination qualifying and amplifying resources factor and destination loyalty among tourists in the Lake Victoria Region Tourism Circuit, Kenya.

H<sub>1civ</sub>: Tourists perceived destination quality mediates the relationship between destination management factors and destination loyalty among tourists in the Lake Victoria Region Tourism Circuit, Kenya.

H<sub>1d</sub>: Tourists' perceived destination value mediates the relationship between pull motivation factors and destination loyalty among tourists in the Lake Victoria Region Tourism Circuit, Kenya.

To address all pull motivation factors, the hypothesis was further disintegrated and stated as follows;

H<sub>1di</sub>: Tourists perceived destination value mediates the relationship between destination core resources factor and destination loyalty among tourists in the Lake Victoria Region Tourism Circuit, Kenya.

H<sub>1dii</sub>: Tourists perceived destination value mediates the relationship between destination support resources factor and destination loyalty among tourists in the Lake Victoria Region Tourism Circuit, Kenya.

H<sub>1diii</sub>: Tourists perceived destination value mediates the relationship between destination qualifying and amplifying resources factor and destination loyalty among tourists in the Lake Victoria Region Tourism Circuit, Kenya.

H<sub>1div</sub>: Tourists perceived destination value mediates the relationship between destination management factors and destination loyalty among tourists in the Lake Victoria Region Tourism Circuit, Kenya.

## METHODOLOGY

### Study Area

The study area was the Lake Victoria Region tourism circuit in Western Kenya. This region is home to over 10 million people with diverse ethnic and cultural backgrounds. It lies between latitudes 1°16'N and 1°54'S and longitudes 33°55' and 35°51'E. The climate is generally mild (19-25°C year-round) with a modified equatorial rainfall pattern of long rains (March-June) and short rains (September-November), averaging 700mm to 2000mm annually.

The Lake Victoria Region offers diverse tourism attractions, including freshwater resources, mountains, indigenous forests, caves, national parks, beaches, waterfalls, hot springs, islands, and cultural shrines. Despite this potential, the region's natural and cultural capital is underexploited, hindering tourism development. Inadequate branding and marketing contribute to its low visibility domestically and internationally, necessitating such a study.

### Research Approach

This study employed a quantitative research approach through a cross-sectional survey, acknowledging its limitations, to investigate the influence of tourist motivations on destination loyalty in the Lake Victoria Region tourism circuit, Kenya.

**Population and Sample**

The study population comprised tourists visiting hotels and attractions in the Lake Victoria Region tourism circuit between August and October 2018 (estimated n=1317, based on Kenya Gazette, 2018). To generate a representative sample size from the population of tourists, Creative Research Systems (2003) was used alongside multistage and convenience sampling to select 299 respondents.

**Data Collection**

Self-administered questionnaires were used for data collection. The questionnaire covered tourists' pull motivations and destination loyalty. A seven-point Likert scale was used for responses, facilitating nuanced data and suitability for linear statistical analysis.

**Variable Measurement****Table 1: Tourists Pull Motivation Measures**

<b>Pull Motivation factor</b>		<b>Measured Items</b>
Support resource attributes		1. Gastronomy is offered in the area.
		2. Entertainment
		3. Festivals and events in the area
		4. Attractions of cultural heritage
		5. Availability of conference and business meeting facilities
		6. Sport-recreation activities available
		7. Climate of the region
		8. Availability of up-to-date audio-visual equipment
		9. Unspoiled nature
		10. Shopping opportunities
		11. Quality of hotel services
Destination management attributes		12. The hospitality of the local people
		13. Accessibility of the destination
		14. Local transportation quality
		15. Presence of foreign/international companies
Qualifying and amplifying attributes		16. Cost of transport
		17. Safety and security at the destination
		18. Hotel prices
		19. Political stability
		20. Overall destination image
		21. Value for money
		22. Cleanliness of the destination
		23. Online booking facilities are available.
Core resource attributes		24. Knowledge of a foreign language among tourism employees
		25. Availability of tourism promotion materials in a foreign language
		26. Education profile of employees in tourism
		27. Destination reputation related to tourism
		28. Development and innovations of business tourism products
		29. The available interpretation and education services at the destination
		30. Human specialists for conference and business events
		31. Available information linked to the tourism product offered at the destination
		32. The potential for incentive trips



Pull Motivation factor	Measured Items
	33. Tourism impact management and monitoring by the destination managers
	34. Tourists' satisfaction management programs at the destination
	35. The use of ICT by tourism firms in the region
	36. Emphasis on community empowerment by the destination managers

To measure tourists' pull motivations, respondents were asked to evaluate the relative importance of each of the items above on the scale of 1 – Not at all important, 2 – Low importance, 3 – Slightly important, 4 – Neutral, 5 – Moderately important, 6 – Very important and 7 – Extremely important.

**Table 2: Tourists' Perception Measures**

Perception Measure	Measured Items
Destination awareness	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The destination has a good name and reputation.</li> <li>2. The destination is well-positioned in the media.</li> <li>3. I have heard about tourism activities, meetings, and holidays held in this destination before</li> <li>4. I have seen a lot of advertising promoting tourism in the Lake Victoria Region circuit.</li> <li>5. The destination is very famous.</li> <li>6. The characteristics of this destination come to mind very quickly.</li> <li>7. Whenever I think of a tourism holiday in Kenya, this destination comes to mind immediately.</li> </ol>
Destination image	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>8. The online presence of the destination is high.</li> <li>9. The characteristics of this destination come to my mind quickly when I am thinking about a holiday destination in Kenya.</li> <li>10. The destination is safe for everybody in the family.</li> <li>11. The image of the destination fits my personality.</li> <li>12. Visiting this destination reflects who I am</li> <li>13. The destination is not crowded.</li> <li>14. The destination allows having a good time as a family.</li> <li>15. The destination has a good name and reputation as a tourist destination.</li> <li>16. My colleagues would think highly of me if I visited this destination for tourism purposes.</li> </ol>
Destination quality	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>17. The destination has many interesting places.</li> <li>18. In the destination, there is a variety of things to see/do</li> <li>19. Tourism infrastructure in the destination is reliable.</li> <li>20. The quality of infrastructure in the destination is high.</li> <li>21. The destination is better compared to similar destinations in Kenya.</li> <li>22. Finding information about this destination is easy.</li> <li>23. There are high levels of personal safety in the destination.</li> <li>24. Accommodation in this destination is of high quality.</li> <li>25. The level of cleanliness in the destination is high.</li> <li>26. The performance of tourism employees in this destination is superior compared to other destinations.</li> </ol>
Destination value	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>27. In general, the experience provided here is satisfying.</li> <li>28. Visiting this destination provides an opportunity to have fun compared to similar destinations.</li> </ol>

Perception Measure	Measured Items
	29. The destination provides opportunities to be part of environmental protection.
	30. The destination provides more benefits than other similar destinations in Kenya.
	31. The destination provides opportunities for the feeling of belongingness.
	32. The destination provides opportunities to meet other people.
	33. The destination provides an opportunity to stay in a green hotel.
	34. Being at a tourism meeting or holiday in this destination will help me develop personally.
	35. The price for accommodation and services is competitive as compared to other destinations for me.
	36. The destination provides opportunities to be close to nature.
	37. The price of accommodation is affordable.
	38. Considering the expenses related to visiting this destination, the benefits received are much more significant.
	39. The destination provides opportunities to enjoy authentic culture.
	40. The destination provides opportunities to experience other cultures.

To measure tourists' perceptions, respondents were required to evaluate their level of agreement on the extent to which pull motivations influenced their perceptions and how their perceptions influenced

destination choice on a scale of 1-Strongly Disagree, 2-Disagree, 3-Somewhat Disagree, 4-Neither Agree nor Disagree, 5-Somewhat Agree, 6-Agree, and 7-Strongly Agree.

**Table 3: Tourists' Destination Loyalty Measures**

Destination Measure	Loyalty Measured Item
Attitudinal measures	1. I intend to visit this destination in the future.
	2. This destination would be my preferred choice for a vacation.
Behavioral measures	3. I would advise other people to visit this destination.
	4. I will tell other people about the benefits of visiting this destination.

To measure destination loyalty, respondents were asked to rate on a scale of 1 – 7 (1-Strongly Disagree, 2-Disagree, 3-Somewhat Disagree, 4-Neither agree nor disagree, 5-Somewhat agree, 6-Agree, and 7-Strongly agree), their extent of agreement with four items regarding their future relation with the destination.

identified in PAF and used as latent variables. Measurement models were assessed for internal consistency, convergent validity, discriminant validity, and collinearity. The results are as provided below.

### Measurement Models Assessment

### Data Analysis

PLS-SEM was conducted in SmartPLS software version 3.2.7. Latent variables were created for destination loyalty. Tourist motivation factors were

The measurement models' assessment results for internal consistency and convergent validity are presented in Table 4, while the results of discriminant validity are presented in Table 5. Table 6 presents results for collinearity assessment.

### Internal Consistency

Cronbach's alpha ( $\alpha$ ), composite reliability coefficients ( $P_c$ ), and rho\_A coefficient as defined in Dijkstra & Henseler (2015) were used to assess the models' internal consistency. Values above .70 indicate higher levels of internal consistency (Chin, 2010; Hair *et al.*, 2014; Dijkstra & Henseler, 2015; Hair *et al.*, 2017). The results in Table 4 indicate that the measures were robust in terms of their internal consistency reliability as indexed by the composite reliability ( $P_c$ ). Table 4 shows that the composite reliabilities ( $P_c$ ), for instance, ranged from .89 (Destination support resources) to .94 (Destination perceived value). This is an indication of internal consistency and that all constructs are within accepted limits and hence reliable.

### Convergent Validity

Convergent validity was assessed using the outer loadings > .70 and the Fornell and Larcker criterion,

average variance extracted (AVE) > .50. Table 4 shows that all the outer loadings were above .70 with exception of "I would advise other people to visit this destination" under destination loyalty construct (.68). Since removing this item had no significant influence on the model, it was retained. The highest loading of 0.88 was recorded under destination qualifying determinants, for the item, "overall destination image". This implies that almost all the constructs explained more than 50% of their indicators' variance. Consistent with the guidelines of Fornell and Larcker, the average variance extracted (AVE) for each measure exceeded .50. The table indicates that AVEs for this study ranged from .54 (Destination loyalty [DCL]) to .67 (Destination support resources [DSR]), implying that, on average, each construct explains more than half of the variance of its indicators.

### Reliability and Convergent Validity

**Table 4: Reliability and Convergent Validity Results**

Constructs and measured variables	Load	$\alpha$	rho_A	$P_c$	AVE
<i>Destination Support Resources</i>		0.89	0.89	0.89	0.67
Accessibility of the destination	0.80				
Presence of foreign/international companies	0.80				
The hospitality of the local people	0.81				
Local transportation quality	0.86				
<i>Destination Awareness</i>		0.91	0.91	0.91	0.60
The destination has a good name and reputation	0.73				
I have seen a lot of advertising promoting tourism in the Lake Victoria Region circuit	0.75				
Whenever I think of a tourism holiday in Kenya, this destination comes into mind immediately	0.80				
The destination is well-positioned in the media	0.71				
The online presence of the destination is high	0.85				
The characteristics of this destination come into mind very quickly	0.82				
The destination is very famous	0.74				
<i>Destination Loyalty</i>		0.83	0.83	0.83	0.54
I would advise other people to visit this destination	0.68				
I intend to visit this destination in the future	0.72				
I will tell other people about the benefits of visiting this destination	0.78				
This destination would be my preferred choice for a vacation	0.76				
<i>Destination Core Resources</i>		0.93	0.93	0.93	0.58

Constructs and measured variables	Load	$\alpha$	rho_A	Pc	AVE
Availability of up-to-date audio-visual equipment	0.77				
Climate of the region	0.78				
Availability of conference and business meeting facilities	0.75				
Attractions of cultural heritage	0.74				
Festivals and events in the area	0.70				
Gastronomy is offered in the area	0.81				
Unspoiled nature in the destination	0.80				
Quality of hotel services in the area	0.77				
Shopping opportunities available	0.71				
<i>Destination Image</i>		0.87	0.87	0.87	0.57
My colleagues would think highly of me if I visited this destination for tourism purposes	0.76				
Visiting this destination reflects who I am	0.72				
The destination has many interesting places	0.78				
The destination is not crowded	0.78				
In the destination, there is a variety of things to see/do	0.74				
<i>Destination Management Factor</i>		0.93	0.93	0.93	0.57
Destination reputation related to tourism	0.72				
Education profile of employees in tourism	0.72				
Knowledge of foreign languages among tourism employees	0.73				
Tourism impact management and monitoring by the destination managers	0.77				
The potential for incentive trips	0.82				
Available information linked to the tourism product offered at the destination	0.74				
The available interpretation and education services at the destination	0.73				
Development and innovations of business tourism product	0.82				
Availability of tourism promotion materials in a foreign language	0.73				
Tourists' satisfaction management programs at the destination	0.79				
<i>Destination Perceived Quality</i>		0.90	0.91	0.90	0.61
The destination is better compared to similar destinations in Kenya	0.82				
The level of cleanliness in the destination is high	0.74				
The quality of infrastructure in the destination is high	0.83				
Tourism infrastructure in the destination is reliable	0.79				
There are high levels of personal safety in the destination	0.77				
Accommodation in this destination is of high quality	0.74				
<i>Destination Perceived Value</i>		0.94	0.94	0.94	0.63
The price of accommodation is affordable	0.77				
The destination provides opportunities to enjoy authentic culture	0.82				
The destination provides opportunities for the feeling of belongingness	0.78				
The destination provides more benefits than other similar destinations in Kenya	0.79				

Constructs and measured variables	Load	$\alpha$	rho_A	Pc	AVE
The price for accommodation and services is competitive as compared to other destinations for me	0.73				
The destination provides opportunities to experience other cultures	0.87				
Visiting this destination provides an opportunity to have fun compared to similar destinations	0.77				
The destination provides an opportunity to stay in a green hotel	0.79				
The destination provides opportunities to be close to nature	0.83				
<i>Destination Qualifying Determinants</i>		0.92	0.93	0.92	0.60
Cleanliness of the destination	0.72				
Overall destination image	0.88				
Hotel prices	0.78				
Value for money	0.76				
Online booking facilities are available	0.74				
Political stability in the area	0.76				
Safety and security at the destination	0.75				
Cost of transport to the destination	0.80				

**Note:** Load – Loadings,  $\alpha$  - Cronbach's alpha, Pc - Composite Reliability, AVE - Average Variance Extracted, rho\_A - coefficient Dijkstra-Henseler.

### Discriminant Validity

This study employed the heterotrait-monotrait ratio (HTMT) in assessing discriminant validity. Specifically, this study used the conservative heterotrait-monotrait ratio of HTMT<sub>.85</sub>. Table 5 provides the HTMT results with values ranging between .42 in respect to HTMT (Destination

perceived value [DPV], Destination perceived quality [DCR]) and .69 in respect to HTMT (Destination loyalty [DCL], Destination awareness [DA]). Comparing these results with the threshold values as defined in HTMT.85 (Henseler *et al.*, 2014) does not give rise to a discriminant validity concern.

**Table 5: Discriminant Validity (Heterotrait-monotrait ratio [HTMT<sub>.85</sub>] criterion) Results**

	DSR	DA	DCL	DCR	DI	DMF	DPQ	DPV	DQD
<b>DSR</b>									
<b>DA</b>	0.53								
<b>DCL</b>	0.63	0.69							
<b>DCR</b>	0.57	0.43	0.47						
<b>DI</b>	0.64	0.48	0.66	0.61					
<b>DMF</b>	0.56	0.84	0.67	0.52	0.50				
<b>DPQ</b>	0.52	0.43	0.43	0.44	0.32	0.47			
<b>DPV</b>	0.65	0.49	0.64	0.65	0.61	0.42	0.42		
<b>DQD</b>	0.63	0.35	0.54	0.62	0.59	0.41	0.34	0.67	

**Note:** DSR - Destination Support Resources, DA - Destination Awareness, DCL - Destination Loyalty, DCR - Destination Core Resources, DI - Destination Image, DMF - Destination Management Factor, DPQ - Destination Perceived Quality, DPV - Destination Perceived Value, DQD - Destination Qualifying Determinants



**Structural Models*****Collinearity Assessment***

Multicollinearity issue in the study was assessed using the variance inflation factor (VIF) in SmartPLS 3.2.7, where a VIF value  $\geq 5$  indicated a potential collinearity problem (Hair *et al.*, 2011; Hair *et al.*, 2013; Hair *et al.*, 2014; Petter *et al.*, 2007). Table 6 shows the result of collinearity assessment among the study constructs as indexed by the variance

inflation factor (VIF) values. All the VIF were  $< 5$ , suggesting that multicollinearity was not an issue.

The highest VIF value (2.69) is registered between Destination awareness (DA) and Destination loyalty (DCL), while the lowest VIF value of 1.41 is recorded between Destination management factor (DMF) and Destination awareness (DA).

**Table 6: Variance Accounted for (VIF) Results**

Paths	$\beta$	Mean	SD	T Statistics	P Values	VIF	Sig. Level
Destination Support Resources -> Destination Image	0.22	0.22	0.07	3.04	0.00	2.25	****
Destination Support Resources -> Destination Perceived Quality	0.22	0.22	0.08	2.64	0.01	2.00	***
Destination Support Resources -> Destination Perceived Value	0.18	0.18	0.06	3.10	0.00	1.96	****
Destination Support Resources -> Destination Loyalty	0.23	0.23	0.09	2.60	0.01	1.91	***
Destination Awareness -> Destination Loyalty	0.49	0.49	0.09	5.59	0.00	2.69	****
Destination Core Resources -> Destination Loyalty	0.20	0.20	0.08	2.47	0.01	1.73	***
Destination Core Resources -> Destination Image	0.26	0.26	0.08	3.33	0.00	1.78	****
Destination Core Resources -> Destination Perceived Quality	0.16	0.16	0.07	2.16	0.03	1.63	**
Destination Core Resources -> Destination Perceived Value	0.22	0.22	0.08	2.73	0.01	1.93	***
Destination Image -> Destination Loyalty	0.32	0.31	0.08	3.92	0.00	2.05	****
Destination Management Factor -> Destination Awareness	0.57	0.57	0.07	8.12	0.00	1.41	****
Destination Management Factor -> Destination Perceived Quality	0.18	0.18	0.08	2.27	0.02	1.79	**
Destination Management Factor -> Destination Loyalty	0.15	0.14	0.08	1.92	0.06	1.46	NS
Destination Perceived Quality -> Destination Loyalty	0.10	0.12	0.06	1.74	0.08	1.43	NS
Destination Perceived Value -> Destination Loyalty	0.19	0.19	0.09	2.22	0.03	2.54	**
Destination Qualifying Determinants -> Destination Image	0.19	0.19	0.07	2.57	0.01	2.00	***
Destination Qualifying Determinants -> Destination Perceived Value	0.20	0.19	0.07	2.74	0.01	2.27	***
Destination Qualifying Determinants -> Destination Loyalty	0.11	0.11	0.09	1.19	0.24	2.05	NS

**Note:**  $\beta$  – beta coefficient, SD – Standard Deviation; Sig. – Significance level; NS – Not significant

\*\*  $p \leq .05$ . \*\*\*  $p \leq .01$ . \*\*\*\*  $p \leq .001$ .

Tests for research hypotheses were conducted using bootstrapping in SmartPLS 3.4.7, and the results are summarised in Table 7.

Mediation was tested using a non-parametric bootstrapping specific indirect effects method in SmartPLS 3.2.7 to evaluate the significance of mediation effect (Hair *et al.*, 2017; Hair *et al.*, 2014;

Hayes, 2009; Preacher & Hayes, 2008) of the four tourists perception constructs on the relationship between the four pull motivation factors and tourists' destination loyalty.

To determine whether there is a mediation role, the specific indirect effects results obtained using the bootstrapping procedure in SmartPLS 3.2.7 were used. In this case, significant paths of the specific indirect effects indicated the presence of mediation (Hair *et al.*, 2017; Hair *et al.*, 2014). To determine the type of mediation, ratios of specific indirect effect to total indirect effect were computed, whereby a VAF > 80%

indicates full mediation,  $20\% \leq \text{VAF} \leq 80\%$  shows partial mediation, while  $\text{VAF} < 20\%$  assumes no mediation (Preacher & Kelly, 2011; Hair *et al.*, 2014).

Tourists' perceptions were hypothesised to mediate the relationship between pull motivation factors and destination loyalty among tourists in the Lake Victoria Region Tourism Circuit, Kenya.

**Table 7: Test of Mediation by Bootstrapping Approach**

	Specific Indirect Effect				Total Effects				Total Indirect Effect				VAF	Mediation Type	Conclusion
	$\beta$	t-value	P	Sig.	$\beta$	t-value	P	Sig.	$\beta$	t-value	P	Sig.			
DMF -> DA -> DCL	0.28	4.19	0.00	****	0.30	4.62	0.00	****	0.30	4.62	0.00	****	.93	Full	H <sub>1biv</sub> accepted
DQD -> DA -> DCL	0.02	1.27	0.21	NS	0.00	0.05	0.96	NS	0.14	4.01	0.00	****	.16	None	H <sub>1biii</sub> rejected
DSR -> DA -> DCL	0.12	2.22	0.00	**	0.06	2.70	0.01	***	0.18	3.23	0.00	****	.67	Partial	H <sub>1bii</sub> accepted
DCR -> DA -> DCL	0.14	2.18	0.00	****	0.20	1.36	0.08	NS	0.16	2.95	0.01	**	.88	Full	H <sub>1bi</sub> accepted
DSR -> DI -> DCL	0.07	2.14	0.03	**	0.13	3.49	0.00	****	0.13	3.49	0.00	****	.54	Partial	H <sub>1aii</sub> accepted
DCR -> DI -> DCL	0.08	2.76	0.01	***	0.00	0.05	0.96	NS	0.14	4.01	0.00	****	.57	Partial	H <sub>1ai</sub> accepted
DQD -> DI -> DCL	0.06	1.96	0.05	**	0.10	2.60	0.01	***	0.10	2.60	0.01	***	.60	Partial	H <sub>1aiii</sub> accepted
DMF -> DI -> DCL	0.07	1.96	0.03	**	0.13	2.60	0.00	****	0.13	2.60	0.00	****	.74	Partial	H <sub>1aiv</sub> accepted
DSR -> DPQ -> DCL	0.02	1.20	0.23	NS	0.13	3.49	0.00	****	0.13	3.49	0.00	****	.15	None	H <sub>1cii</sub> rejected
DCR -> DPQ -> DCL	0.02	1.27	0.21	NS	0.00	0.05	0.96	NS	0.14	4.01	0.00	****	.14	None	H <sub>1ci</sub> rejected
DMF -> DPQ -> DCL	0.02	1.30	0.19	NS	0.30	4.62	0.00	****	0.30	4.62	0.00	****	.07	None	H <sub>1civ</sub> rejected
DQD -> DPQ -> DCL	0.02	1.21	0.24	NS	0.12	3.21	0.00	****	0.12	3.21	0.00	****	.13	None	H <sub>1ciii</sub> rejected
SCF -> DPQ -> DCL	0.02	1.26	0.19	NS	0.00	4.46	0.00	***	0.20	4.46	0.00	***	.08	None	H <sub>1civ</sub> rejected
DSR -> DPV -> DCL	0.04	1.99	0.05	**	0.13	3.49	0.00	****	0.13	3.49	0.00	****	.31	Partial	H <sub>1dii</sub> accepted
DCR -> DPV -> DCL	0.04	2.20	0.03	**	0.00	0.05	0.96	NS	0.14	4.01	0.00	****	.29	Partial	H <sub>1di</sub> accepted
DQD -> DPV -> DCL	0.04	1.53	0.13	NS	0.10	2.60	0.01	***	0.10	2.60	0.01	***	.40	Partial	H <sub>1diii</sub> accepted
DMF -> DPV -> DCL	0.04	2.48	0.05	**	0.14	3.69	0.00	****	0.14	3.69	0.00	****	.36	Partial	H <sub>1div</sub> accepted

**Note:** VAF - variance accounted for. VAF is computed as a ratio between specific indirect effects and total indirect effects. VAF > 80% indicates full mediation,  $20\% \leq \text{VAF} \leq 80\%$  shows partial mediation, while  $\text{VAF} < 20\%$  assumes no mediation; DSR - Destination Support Resources, DA - Destination Awareness, DCL - Destination Loyalty, DCR - Destination Core Resources, DI - Destination Image, DMF - Destination Management Factor, DPQ - Destination Perceived Quality, DPV - Destination Perceived Value, DQD - Destination Qualifying Determinants.

\*\* p < .05. \*\*\* p < .01, \*\*\*\*p < .001.

### **Structural Model Path Coefficients and Coefficient of Determination ( $R^2$ )**

Table 8 shows that the  $R^2$  value for the endogenous constructs is above the 25% accepted level set as the threshold in this study.

**Table 8: Determinant of Coefficients ( $R^2$ ) Results for the Endogenous Constructs**

	R Square	R Square Adjusted	Cut Off	Description
<b>Destination Awareness</b>	0.85	0.84	>.25	Substantial
<b>Destination Loyalty</b>	0.76	0.76	>.25	Substantial
<b>Destination Image</b>	0.55	0.54	>.25	Moderate
<b>Destination Perceived Quality</b>	0.34	0.33	>.25	Moderate
<b>Destination Perceived Value</b>	0.64	0.64	>.25	Substantial

Note N/A – Not applicable

### **FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS**

This study sought to establish the mediation role of tourists' perceptions in the relationship between tourists' pull motivations and destination loyalty. To achieve this, non-parametric bootstrapping techniques were used. As indicated in the foregoing sections of this article, tourists' perceptions were measured in four constructs, namely: destination awareness, destination image, destination perceived quality, and destination perceived value.

Using the specific indirect effects, Table 7 shows that destination awareness (DA) fully mediates the relationship between destination management factor (DMF) and destination loyalty (DCL) ( $\beta = .28$ ,  $t = 4.19$ ,  $p = .00$ ); destination core resources (DCR) and destination loyalty (DCL) ( $\beta = .14$ ,  $t = 2.18$ ,  $p = .00$ ); and, partially mediates the relationship between destination support resources (DSR) and destination loyalty (DCL) ( $\beta = .12$ ,  $t = 2.22$ ,  $p = .03$ ). The findings imply that destination awareness complements pull motivations of tourists in their decision-making process to visit the destination. That is, the tourist's awareness of the destination influences their decision to visit the destination. As such, destination knowledge, destination recognition, and destination recall from

the perspective of the tourist complement their motivation to visit the destination and decision to visit the destination. The results support previous research findings (Bianchi & Pike, 2011; C. F. Chen & Myagmarsuren, 2010; Chiu *et al.*, 2014; Hsu & Cai, 2009; S. (Sam) Kim *et al.*, 2018; S. (Sam) Kim *et al.*, 2017; X. (Robert) *et al.*, 2007; Sartori *et al.*, 2012; Stephens Balakrishnan *et al.*, 2011; Ye, 2012) who considered destination awareness as complementary to tourist motivation in predicting destination loyalty.

Table 7 also indicates that tourists perception about destination image (DI) partially mediates the relationship between destination support resources (DSR) and destination loyalty (DCL) ( $\beta = .07$ ,  $t = 2.14$ ,  $p = .03$ ); destination core resources (DCR) and destination loyalty (DCL) ( $\beta = .08$ ,  $t = 2.76$ ,  $p = .01$ ); destination qualifying determinants (DQD) and destination loyalty (DCL) ( $\beta = .06$ ,  $t = 1.96$ ,  $p = .05$ ); destination management factor (DMF) and destination loyalty (DCL) ( $\beta = .07$ ,  $t = 1.96$ ,  $p = .03$ ). This implies that, to some extent, the overall mental picture of the destination from the tourists' perspective based on their pull motivations complements their motivation and decision to visit the destination. Generally, the results of the study support previous research on destination image

(Abodeeb *et al.*, 2015; Ageeva & Foroudi, 2019; Cardoso *et al.*, 2019; Chaulagain *et al.*, 2019; C. F. Chen & Phou, 2013; J. H. Kim, 2018; S. W. Lee & Xue, 2020; Rodríguez-Molina *et al.*, 2015; Styliadis *et al.*, 2017; Stylos *et al.*, 2017; Wu & Li, 2017) that confirms the complementary role of destination image in predicting destination loyalty.

The results in Table 7 further indicate that destination perceived value (DPV) partially mediates the relationship between destination support resources (DSR) and destination loyalty (DCL) ( $\beta = .04$ ,  $t = 1.99$ ,  $p = .05$ ); destination core resources (DCR) and destination loyalty (DCL) ( $\beta = .04$ ,  $t = 2.20$ ,  $p = .03$ ); destination qualifying and amplifying resources factor (DQD) and destination loyalty (DCL) ( $\beta = .04$ ,  $t = 1.53$ ,  $p = .13$ ); destination management factor (DMF) and destination loyalty (DCL) ( $\beta = .04$ ,  $t = 2.48$ ,  $p = .05$ ). This implies that the tourists' overall assessment of the utility of visiting the destination based on; destination support resources, destination core resources, destination qualifying and amplifying resources, and, destination management practices compliment their decision to visit the destination. Generally, the results support previous research findings (Bhat & Darzi, 2018; Bianchi & Pike, 2011; Chi *et al.*, 2020; H. M. Lee *et al.*, 2011; Moon & Han, 2019; Park *et al.*, 2019; Ram *et al.*, 2016; Stephens Balakrishnan *et al.*, 2011) that established the complementary role of perceived value in predicting the relationship between tourist motivation and destination loyalty.

Finally, Table 7 shows that destination perceived quality (DPQ) plays no mediation role at all. However, previous research (Buhalis, 2000) argues that some elements of perceived quality, such as the perceived quality of a destination's infrastructure, impact destination performance and have a positive effect on destination loyalty. Also, according to Vázquez *et al.* (2002), perceived quality influences consumer choice, preferences, intention to purchase, pay a premium price, and recommend the product. Even though this study's results are

contrary to several previous research findings (Das & Mukherjee, 2016; Dean & Suhartanto, 2019; Hasan *et al.*, 2019b; H. K. Kim & Lee, 2018; Lv *et al.*, 2020; Mohaidin *et al.*, 2017; Prebensen *et al.*, 2013; Rajesh, 2013), they may help advance knowledge on the relationship between tourist motivation and destination loyalty, particularly in the Lake Victoria region tourism circuit, Kenya.

## Summary of Findings

The main objective of this study was to establish the mediation role of tourists' perceptions in the relationship between tourists' pull motivations and destination loyalty in the Lake Victoria Region Tourism Circuit, Kenya. The study findings suggest that perceived destination awareness (DA) fully mediates the relationship between destination management factor (DMF) and destination loyalty (DCL), destination core resources (DCR) and destination loyalty (DCL). Perceived destination awareness (DA), however, partially mediates the relationship between destination support resources (DSR) and destination loyalty (DCL). Perceived destination image (DI) however, partially mediates the relationship between destination support resources (DSR) and destination loyalty (DCL), destination core resources (DCR) and destination loyalty (DCL), destination qualifying and amplifying resources (DQD) and destination loyalty (DCL), destination management factor (DMF) and destination loyalty (DCL). Test for mediation results further suggest that; perceived destination value partially mediates the relationship between destination support resources (DSR) and destination loyalty (DCL), destination core resources (DCR) and destination loyalty (DCL), destination qualifying and amplifying resources (DQD) and destination loyalty (DCL), destination management factor (DMF) and destination loyalty (DCL).

## CONCLUSIONS

This paper provides insights into the complementary role of tourists' perceptions in the

relationship between tourists' pull motivation factors and destination loyalty. The study outcome suggests that destination managers who want to improve the levels of tourists' destination loyalty should focus their attention on tourists' perceived destination awareness, perceived destination image, perceived destination quality, and perceived destination value. Regarding perceived destination awareness, destinations' good name and reputation should be maintained by the destination managers. Given the high level of competition across destinations, the reputation of a particular destination should all the time be favourable to provide a competitive advantage. Concerning perceived destination image, destination managers should always accentuate the characteristics of the destinations that are quick to remember by tourists whenever they are faced with a decision to choose a destination. Destination managers should therefore emphasise the unique characteristics of the destination while marketing the destination to enhance the ease of recall by visitors, which will in turn accelerate visitation levels. The study also points to the need for destination managers to pay attention to the reliability of infrastructure in the destination regarding the perceived destination quality. The reliability of tourism-related infrastructure determines the tourists' level of confidence in the destination's provisions, thereby influencing their visit decisions. Regarding perceived destination value, destination managers should ensure that the experience provided in the destination is generally satisfying. Providing satisfying experiences will not only create memorable tourist experiences but also ensure increased levels of loyalty to the destination.

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