Cognitive Destination Image and Tourist Satisfaction: The Case of the Fruit Festival in Thailand

Mustafa Daskin ID [1]
Kübra Aşan ID [2]

1. Amasya University, Tourism Department. Amasya, Türkiye
2. Sinop University, Recreation Department. Sinop, Türkiye

ABSTRACT

This research study aims to examine the association between cognitive destination image (CDI) attributes and tourist satisfaction. Data for the present research work was attained from a sample of tourists at Sisaket Fruit Festival/ Thailand. Participants self-managed the questionnaires. A total number of 110 usable questionnaires were collected in the survey context. Bootstrapping technique by Partial Least Square-PLS in conjunction with SPSS 23 was used to analyze the data. The path analyses show that the CDI attributes were found positively related to tourist satisfaction at different levels. Additionally, based on the analyses of demographic comparisons, foreign tourists were found to be more satisfied with the festival through their participation in the study was much less than the Thai tourists. Public jobholders were more satisfied compared to the private jobholders and the student participants. This study contributes to tourism literature and has helpful implications for the industry in terms of developing fruit festivals and fairs.

KEYWORDS

ARTICLE HISTORY

CORRESPONDING AUTHOR CONTACT Mustafa Daskin daskinmus@hotmail.com Amasya University, Tourism Department, Amasya, Türkiye

1. Introduction

According to Ekinci (2003, p. 22), "destination image stands out as a critical element for destinations that want to differentiate as there is international competition". Tourists' travel choices are formed through the image of destination as one important factor (Baloglu & McCleary, 1999). Moreover, it plays an important role in the formation of desired behaviors (travel satisfaction, re-visit, and recommendation) in destination marketing (Baloglu & McCleary, 1999; Tsai, 2015; Al-Ansi & Han, 2019; Zhang, Byon, Williams & Huang, 2019).

The destination image has been explained with a multidimensional structure (cognitive, affective, and behavioral/conative) in the literature, especially in recent years (San Martin & Rodriguez del Bosque, 2008; Agapito, Valle & Mendes, 2013; Hidalgo-Alcázar, Sicilia-Piero & Ruiz de Maya, 2014; Woosnam, Stylidis & Ivkov, 2020; Hadinejad, Gardiner, Kralj, Scott & Moyle, 2022; Vera & Chang, 2022), but the cognitive approach is the most frequently used (Lekovic, Tomic, Maric & Curcic, 2020). The cognitive image elicits tourists' perceptions of various features of the destination like environment, service quality, attractions, and infrastructure and refers to visitors' general knowledge level about the destination (Beerli & Martin, 2004; Agapito, et al., 2013; Lindblom, Lindblom, Lehtonen & Wechtler, 2017; Alcocer & Ruiz, 2020). Understanding the cognitive image can assist destination managers and marketers in developing long-term positioning strategies (Lekovic et al., 2020). Tourists' approach towards a destination, such as satisfaction, intention to revisit the destination, and word of mouth intention, can be predicted using the cognitive destination image (CDI) evaluation. This study seeks to explain the CDI and its impact on tourist satisfaction.

Local events and festivals, on the other hand, can help the rural economy by enhancing the destination's image or identity, attracting more people, investment, or commerce, and increasing the tourist economy (Kim & Cuskelly, 2017). There are, however, few researches on small-scale local festivals in rural regions (Kalkstein-Silkes et al., 2010; Kalkstein-Silkes et al., 2010; Hernández-Mogollón, Duarte & Folgado-Fernández, 2018; Guerreiro, Mendes, Fortuna & Pinto, 2020). In this context, the study aims to contribute to the literature by analyzing destination image and satisfaction in a small-scale rural festival, with an emphasis on the cognitive component.

For the study, a survey was conducted in the context of the Sisaket Fruit Festival in Thailand. Food festivals or events are an important marketing strategy in developing a destination image in rural tourism (Kalkstein-Silkes, Cai & Lehto, 2010). The Fruit Festival held every year in the Sisaket province, which is a rural tourism area, is a remarkable event that provides an opportunity to assess the image of the city. Along with focusing on CDI, the study offers important implications for destination marketing in rural tourism.

2. Literature review

2.1 Festivals in rural areas

Festivals are themed public celebrations (Getz & Page, 2020). According to a definition in the cultural context, the festival can be defined as "a themed and inclusive community event or series of events which have been created as the result of an inclusive community planning process to celebrate the particular way of life of people and groups in the local community with an emphasis on particular space and time" (Jepson & Clarke, 2015, p. 3).

Festivals have been classified into sacred and secular, rural and urban, and people and establishments (Ravichandran, Lee & Atanga, 2021). Rural events and festivals are key tourist attractions and social activities in the framework of rural tourism. Initially conceptualized as a tourism practice in rural areas, rural tourism is an agent of sustainability and serves sustainable rural development (Sharpley & Roberts, 2004). Thus, rural tourism can be considered both an economic and a socio-cultural practice (Jenkins & Oliver, 2001). Accordingly, festivals held in rural areas can be conceptualized within the scope of rural tourism. The main purpose of these festivals is to provide cultural and recreational benefits for the local people and participants.

Festivals are an important part of many development plans aimed at improving economic and communal development (Wood & Thomas, 2008). Festivals encourage tourists to visit the region where they are held. At the local level, they provide a substantial economic impact (Yolal, Gursoy, Uysal, Kim, Lina & Karacaoglu, 2016; Dieck, Jung & Rauschnabel, 2018). Furthermore, numerous visitors from all cultures and structures visit the region during the festivities and engage with the local (host) people (Kalkstein-Silkes et al., 2010; Frost & Laing, 2015; Yolal et al., 2016). Festivals also improve the image and awareness of locations (Rivera, Semrad & Croes, 2008; Wood & Thomas, 2008; Lee, Lee & Choi, 2011). Richards and Wilson (2004) noted that cultural events and festivals provide the venue with the opportunity to improve the image of the community, add life to the community, and provide residents with renewed pride. Furthermore, festivals can contribute to the socialization of the local people (Ziakas & Boukas, 2014) and the cultural invention of festivals can deliver a uniquely practical social experience to local people (Ziakas, 2016).

2.2 Festivals as destination image makers

Baloglu and McCleary (1999) stated that "the destination image can be defined as the expression of all the information, impressions, prejudices, and emotional thoughts that a person or group has about a particular destination". Destination image is not just the image of people traveling; it also includes the image of managers and investors of tourism organizations like tour operators, hotel companies, and airlines that affect tourism development (Henderson, 2007). Therefore, the subject of destination image attracts the attention of large masses both in academia and in the sector.

The image is the most important factor that determines the tourist attractions of the destination, the value of the destination in the tourism market, and is very open to change (Choi, Chan & Wu, 1999). For example, destinations can be easily affected by competition, changes, innovations, and many factors, such as the development level of the region, political arguments, infrastructure and superstructure services, attitudes of local people (Von Friedrichs Grängsjö, 2003). These factors can affect the destination image perceived by the tourists. Therefore, image management is relevant and critical for destination managers in terms of creating and surviving desired representations in the tourists' minds. Also, understanding how the destination image is perceived by tourists, and then designing events to meet the demands and needs of the target market, will provide a competitive advantage to the destination. Destination managers spend a great deal of money, time, and effort to create a good image and attract potential visitors to visit their destinations (Baloglu & McCleary, 1999). Creating a good destination image and responding to visitor's requests and expectations will be effective in achieving the sustainability of the destination.

According to the literature, destination image can be explained by three components: cognitive, affective and behavioral/conative (San Martín & Rodríguez del Bosque, 2008; Agapito et al., 2013; Hidalgo-Alcázar et al., 2014; Woosnam et al., 2020). While the affective image is explained by the emotions and feelings of the individual regarding the features such as attractions, atmosphere, and environmental elements in a particular destination, the cognitive image includes the knowledge and beliefs of the individual about the destination in general and informed by its attributes (Pike & Ryan, 2004). Researchers propose that tourist forms the cognitive image, based on which affective components are developed and then conative image is constructed (Matos, Mendes & Valle, 2012; Chen & Phou, 2013; Lai, Khoo-Lattimore & Wang, 2019; Woosnam et al., 2020; Sio, Fraser & Fredline, 2021). According to past studies, cognitive image is explained as the antecedent of affective and conative image (Beerli & Martin, 2004; Agapito et al., 2013; Lindblom et al., 2017; Alcocer & Ruiz, 2020). Moreover, the literature mostly focuses on the cognitive component to explain the destination image (Yazıcıoglu & Akbulut, 2015; Lekovic et al., 2020). In this regard, the destination image will be explained with a cognitive approach in the study.

Events can shape an image of the host community or country, leading to its favorable perception as a potential travel destination (Getz & Page, 2020). Especially, festivals bring flexibility to fixed structures and provide a source of spectacle, which in turn, creates the value of the image of a landmark (Richards & Wilson, 2004). Thus, events can create a positive destination image and attract visitors who may not otherwise visit the area (Mair & Weber, 2019).

Local events and festivals, on the other hand, can benefit the rural economy by promoting the city's brand or identity, attracting more people, investment, or trade, and expanding the visitor economy (Kim & Cuskelly, 2017, p. 85). However, there are few studies on small-scale local festivals in rural areas (Kalk-

stein-Silkes et al., 2010; Hernández-Mogollón, Duarte & Folgado-Fernández, 2018; Guerreiro, Mendes, Fortuna & Pinto, 2020). According to Kalkstein-Silkes et al. (2010), festivals held in rural locations can establish a destination image and use a destination branding approach to differentiate their place. Furthermore, the food and food-related aspects in destination marketing might elicit emotional association with the food picture, indicating a favorable response to the destination. As shown by Hernández-Mogollón et al. (2018), small-scale events related to local heritage, traditions, and products have the potential to improve the cognitive image of a location and, as a result, its ability to attract visitors. In this regard, this study aims to contribute to the literature by examining the destination image and satisfaction in local, small-scale, rural festivals, with a focus on the cognitive component

Studies focusing on cognitive image reveal that the factors that explain the image are diversified. For example, Baloglu and McCleary (1999) explain the image with "quality of experience", "attractions" and "value/environment" factors. According to the research of Beerli and Martin (2004), another pioneering study in the field, the cognitive image includes perceptions of "natural and cultural resources", "infrastructure", "atmosphere", "social environment", and "sun and beach" factors. Akgun, Senturk, Keskin, and Onal (2019), who carried out their research in Istanbul, explained the image with the factors of "attractiveness", "atmosphere", "infrastructure" and "value". Bezirgan, Köroğlu, and İlban (2017) explained the destination image with the factors of "infrastructure", "security and personal safety", "hygiene and cleanliness", "hospitality" and "friendship" in their study in Antalya. As can be seen, the nature of the cognitive image is complex and multiple. Image formation can be considered as a creation of a mental representation of a destination depending on the information cues transferred by image information agents and personal factors (Atadil, Sirakaya & Altintas, 2017, p. 37). Similarly, it can be considered that the cognitive destination image can change to its connection with the reality of each destination. In this context, Hallman et al. (2015) research, which focuses on cognitive destination image specific to "events", provides a good basis for this study.

Hallmann et al. (2015) tested the cognitive image in the context of winter sports in Germany and Australia and reached a factor structure that includes the components of "service quality", "physiography", "hospitality", "visitor management", "sport, and event facilities" and "costs". In this study, the destination image was measured by adapting Hallman et al.'s (2015) factor structure as it is comprehensive and focusing event experience. Thus, in the context of an event, cognitive destination image factors can be explained as follows: The service quality factor is related to the perceived quality of the event experience by the participants. For example, it includes the scale item "*Sisaket stands for exciting experiences*". Items about the natural attractions of the destination are included under the physiographic factor, such as, "*Sisaket offers a lot of natural attractions*". The facilities of the event are included as a separate factor. For example, "*The availability of recreational facilities in Sisaket is adequate*". Another factor for the event relates to the perceptions of visitor management, including items such as "*I consider a central information center important for Sisaket*". In addition to items about accommodation facilities, items about hospitality facilities are included in the hospitality factor, for example, "*The atmosphere in Sisaket is inviting and appealing*". As an example of the cost factor, which includes perception items about the cost of visiting, the following item was considered "*Prices for eating out in Sisaket are adequate*".

2.3 Tourist satisfaction

As customer satisfaction is one of the most significant factors affecting consumer behaviors and establishing a better level of tourist satisfaction is a primary objective for all destination organizations (Mason & Paggiaro, 2012). Satisfaction, according to Srivastava and Kaul (2014), is a consumer's assessment of a product or service's ability to give a satisfying degree of consumption-related fulfillment. Consumers are content if the experience meets or surpasses their expectations, and they are unsatisfied if the experience falls short (Lekovic et al., 2020). In destination marketing, the tourists' assessment of their destination experience is referred to as satisfaction. Tourist satisfaction is the major indicator in determining whether or not tourists will recommend and revisit a given place (Tsai, 2015). Therefore, tourist satisfaction is one of the most common outcome variables in tourism research models (Assaker & Hallak, 2013; Tsai, 2015; Guzman-Parra, Vila-Oblitas & Maqueda-Lafuente, 2016; Lekovic et al., 2020; Ervinaa, Wulunga & Octivanya, 2020).

Tourist satisfaction can be measured by expectation-perception paradigm (Parasuraman, Zeithaml & Berry, 1985), the performance-only model (Grönroos, 1984), and the expectancy-disconfirmation model (Oliver, 1980).) According to the expectancy-disconfirmation model, before consuming a service, the tourist has created specific expectations of its performance, during which time the tourist makes concessions between the actual performance of the service and the tourist's anticipation after consumption, resulting in disconfirmation. A tourist will be satisfied if he or she receives a favorable disconfirmation (Saayman et al., 2018). In this study, the satisfaction scale developed by Aliman, Hashim, Wahid, and Harudin (2016) was used with this approach.

2.4 Cognitive destination image and tourist satisfaction

Tourist satisfaction is important for effective destination marketing since it impacts variables including destination choice, product and service consumption, and the desire to return (Kozak & Rimmington, 2000). According to Assaker and Hallak (2013), visitor contentment with a place improves the likelihood of returning in the long and short term. The satisfaction with destination visits may be explained by perceived destination image, according to studies conducted in various geographies (Assaker & Hallak, 2013; Tsai, 2015; Guzman-Parra et al., 2016; Gün, Durmaz & Tutcu, 2019; Kim, Stylidis & Oh, 2019; Ervinaa et al., 2020) Accordingly, a positive destination image increases tourist satisfaction. In this context, the following hypotheses have been developed to be tested in the study:

H1: "Service quality" is positively related to "tourist satisfaction"
H2: "Physiography" is positively related to "tourist satisfaction"
H3: "Event facilities" is positively related to "tourist satisfaction"
H4: "Visitor management" is positively related to "tourist satisfaction"
H5: "Hospitality" is positively related to "tourist satisfaction"
H6: "Costs" is positively related to "tourist satisfaction"

3. Methodology

3.1 Sample and data collection

In Thailand, Fruit Festival is held every June in Sisaket Province and honors fruits such as rambutans, durians, and stink beans. Caravans and tours to nearby orchards are conducted as part of the festivals and the festival presents a lot of fun and educational experience (Brown, 2016). According to Wikipedia (2021), "Sisaket is a Northeastern Province along the Cambodian border. The province has some national parks and numerous ruins and archeological sites from the Khmer Empire". Sisaket Fruit Festival is the second-largest durian festival in Thailand, after the Chanthaburi Durian Festival (Gassik, 2014). Thus, the Sisaket Fruit Festival is an important event to explore the destination image and satisfaction levels perceived by the local people as well as the visitors. The study examines the destination image in rural tourism within the scope of the Sisaket Fruit Festival.

For the current survey, data was gathered from both Thai and foreign tourists visiting Sisaket's Durian Festival which is organized every June before Amphoe Kantaralak or Amphoe Khun Harn. Tourismthailand (2021) reports that "festival visitors can enjoy the big sales of fruits from Sisaket such as rambutan, durian, lanson, mangosteen, stink beam, and rubber, flower floats, documentary exhibition, and fruit tasting caravan". A face-to-face survey technique was implemented for the data collection in June 2019. The convenience sampling technique was used for the current study and the research team tried to collect data from foreign tourists as much as possible but this was not possible due to the limited number of foreign tourists at that time, so mostly the Thai tourists were included in the current work. Additionally, due to the time restrictions and difficulties to find voluntary respondents during the festival, a total of 110 usable questionnaires were possible to be collected.

3.2 Instrument development and measures

The scales selected for the present research were adopted from the existing literature background review. Firstly, the tourist satisfaction scale was adopted from Aliman, Hashim, Wahid, and Harudin (2016). A sample item from this measure is *"I really enjoyed the visit to Sisaket".* There is empirical evidence from this study that this scale had high Cronbach's ($α$ = 0.928). CDI scale was measured using 21 items from Hallmann, Zehrer, and Müller (2015). As mentioned above, this scale consists of 6 attributes (4 items for service quality, 3 items for physiography, 3 items for event facilities, 4 items for visitor management, 3 items for hospitality, and 4 items for costs) and the sample item from this measure is *'Sisaket stands for high-quality tourism services'.* There is empirical evidence from this study that this scale had a high Cronbach's alpha over 0.70.

Each measurement applied a Likert-type scale that arrayed from "5"="strongly agree" to "1"="strongly disagree". Additionally, the research questionnaire includes demographic questions such as gender, job, education, age, nationality, and visit.

3.3 Data analysis

The current study has used Bootstrapping technique by Partial Least Square-PLS in conjunction with SPSS Version 23 to analyze the hypothesized relationships. Then the psychometric properties of the measures were reported and the study scales were put to confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) to assure support for the concerns of dimensionality, convergent, and discriminant validity (Chin 1998; Hair, Black, Babin & Anderson, 2010). PLS works well in analyzing a series of cause-and-effect relationships (Ringle, Oliver, Martin, & Bradley, 2009). After the validation of measures, Bootstrapping was run to analyze the validity of the model and hypotheses. Finally, though not hypothesized, independent Samples *t*-test and ANOVA test were performed to make demographic comparisons between groups.

4. Results

4.1 Descriptive statistics

Firstly, the study employed a descriptive analysis to explain the demographic characteristics of the participants. The participants' demographic frequencies such as gender, job, education, age, nationality, and visit were presented in Table 1. Based on the frequency analysis; a slight majority of the participants were females (52.7%), and the majority of the participants (73.6%) were over the age of 29 years at the middle-age level. Furthermore, 98.1% of the participants had education at the university level, the slight majority of the participants (34.5%) were private job holders, the most of the respondents (80.9%) were Thai tourists, and lastly, the results show that the 51.8% of the participants visited the festival before.

Table 1. Demographic Profile

Demographic Variable	Sample Composition	Percentage
Age	20–29 years	26.4
	30–40 years	40.0
	Over 40	33.6
Gender	Female	52.7
	Male	47.3
Education	Secondary education and lower	1.8
	Vocational/Faculty	67.3
	Masters and over	30.9
Job	Public	24.5
	Private	34.5
	Student	13.6
	Retired	27.3
Nationality	Thai	80.9
	Foreign tourist	19.1
Visit	Visited before	51.8
	Not visited before	48.2

Source: Own Elaboration

4.2 Psychometric properties of the measures

To assess the adequacy of the measurement, reliability, convergent validity, and discriminant validity were examined. The measurement items can be seen in detail in Table 2. The Cronbach's alpha (α) and composite reliability (CR) measures were over the acceptable value of .60, which depicts that items are representative of the latent constructs and internal consistency was adequate (Cortina, 1993; Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994; Hair et al., 2010). Convergent validity was satisfied as factor loadings were higher than the threshold value of 0.50 (Hair et al., 1998), except VM 20 which was omitted for the further analysis. Additionally, all constructs' average variances extracted (AVE) scores were over the threshold value of .50, indicating convergent validity, and all t-values over 1.96 are confirmed as significant values, (Chin, 1998; Tabachnick & Fidell, 2007; Hair Black, Babin & Anderson, 2014).

Table 2. The Results of the Measurement Model

Scale items	Factor Loadings	T-values	α	CR	AVE
Cognitive Destination Image (Hallmann et al., 2015)					
Service Quality (SQ)			0.88	0.92	0.73
SQ10: "Sisaket stands for exciting experiences".	0.85	25.11			
SQ11: "Sisaket stands for high-quality tourism services".	0.80	15.42			
SQ12: "The quality of accommodations in Sisaket is good".	0.88	39.46			
SQ13: "Cleanliness and hygiene are considered important in Sisaket".	0.88	37.81			
Physiography (PHY)			0.91	0.94	0.85
PHY14: "Sisaket offers a lot in terms of natural scenic beauty".	0.93	56.00			
PHY15: "Sisaket has varied and unique alpine plant and wildlife habitat".	0.92	38.56			
PHY16: "Sisaket offers a lot of natural attractions".	0.92	39.95			
Event Facilities (EF)			0.76	0.86	0.68
EF17: "The availability of recreational facilities in Sisaket is adequate".	0.79	10.86			
EF18: "The availability of health facilities/medical care for tourists is adequate".	0.87	17.56			
EF19: "Sisaket stands for a variety of outstanding special events".	0.80	12.06			
Visitor Management (VM)			0.61	0.79	0.57
VM21: "The homepage of Sisaket offers a lot of good information".	0.50	4.38			
VM22: "Booking the accommodation was easy to handle".	0.88	26.01			
VM23: "I consider a central information center important for Sisaket".	0.83	15.03			
Hospitality (HOS)			0.88	0.93	0.81
HOS24: "The atmosphere in Sisaket is inviting and appealing".	0.88	35.96			
HOS25: "The hospitality of the locals is very welcoming".	0.94	49.11			
HOS26: "The atmosphere in Sisaket is very welcoming toward families and children".	0.88	22.06			
Costs (COS)			0.79	0.87	0.63
COS27: "Altogether, Sisaket offers good value for the money spent".	0.85	21.44			
COS28: "Prices for accommodation in Sisaket are decent".	0.85	17.46			
COS29: "Prices for eating out in Sisaket are adequate".	0.91	52.53			
COS30: "Prices for transport in Sisaket are adequate".	0.52	4.35			
Tourist Satisfaction (TSAT) (Aliman et al., 2016)			0.92	0.93	0.61
TSAT1: "I really enjoyed the visit to Sisaket".	0.70	8.62			
TSAT2: "I am satisfied with my decision to visit Sisaket".	0.70	8.62			
TSAT3: "I prefer this destination".	0.75	11.12			
TSAT4: "I have positive feelings regarding Sisaket".	0.77	15.34			
TSAT5: "This experience is exactly what I need".	0.86	34.06			
TSAT6: "My choice to purchase this trip was a wise one".	0.85	33.64			
TSAT7: "This visit was better than expected".	0.79	20.60			
TSAT8: "This was a pleasant visit".	0.82	25.33			
TSAT9: "I rate Sisaket as a better destination as compared to similar tourist destinations".	0.81	24.32			

Notes: "All items are measured on five-point Likert scales ranging from 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree".
"All loadings are significant at the 0.05 level or better".
Source: Own Elaboration

Discriminant validity was analyzed using the Fornell and Larcker's criterion (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). These authors recommended that "the square root of average variance extracted should be greater than the correlations between the constructs" (Chin, 1998; Fornell & Larcker, 1981, p. 45-46). As Table 3 shows, all diagonal scores were over the inter-construct correlations, therefore confirming adequate discriminant validity.

Table 3. Discriminant Validity using Fornell and Larcker's Criterion

Variables	COS	HOS	PHY	EF	SQ	VM	TSAT
COS	**0.793**						
HOS	0.719	**0.900**					
PHY	0.642	0.609	**0.921**				
EF	0.454	0.365	0.516	**0.824**			
SQ	0.602	0.687	0.686	0.470	**0.854**		
VM	0.408	0.604	0.471	0.415	0.664	**0.754**	
TSAT	0.640	0.702	0.633	0.395	0.731	0.571	**0.781**

Note: "Bold values indicate the square root of AVE of each construct".
Source: Own Elaboration

4.3 Hypotheses testing, independent samples *t*-test, and ANOVA

A bootstrapping technique was employed to determine the *t*-statistics and to find out the path coefficients' significance and as well as the blindfolding procedure for predictive accuracy and relevance (Hair et al., 2014). The R^2 values and predictive relevance (Q^2) were examined and can be seen in Table 4. In this respect, Hair, Hult, Ringle, and Sarstedt (2017, p. 105) contend that "The goal of PLS is maximizing the explained variance (i.e., the R^2 value) of the endogenous latent variables in the PLS path model". Sarstedt, Ringle, and Hair (2017, p. 32) stated that "as a relative measure of predictive relevance, Q^2 values of 0.02, 0.15, and 0.35 indicate that an exogenous construct has a small, medium, or large predictive relevance, respectively, for a certain endogenous construct".

Firstly, H1 proposed that service quality makes a positive impact on tourist satisfaction. Table 4 demonstrated that the path from service quality to tourist satisfaction was significantly positive ($\beta = 0.732$, $t = 18.92$, $p < 0.05$). Thus, H1 was supported. Service quality explained 54% of the variance in tourist satisfaction. The Q^2 was found to be 0.32 which is medium predictive relevance (Chin, 1998; Henseler, Ringle, & Sinkovics, 2009). Secondly, H2 recommended that physiography makes a positive impact on tourist satisfaction. The path from physiography to tourist satisfaction was considerably positive ($\beta = 0.632$, $t = 10.99$, $p < 0.05$). H2 was, therefore, validated. Physiography explained 40% of the variance in tourist satisfaction. The Q^2 was found to be 0.24 which is medium predictive relevance. Thirdly, H3 proposed that event facilities make a positive influence on tourist satisfaction. The path from event facilities to tourist satisfaction was positive but less considerable ($\beta = 0.412$, $t = 5.12$, $p < 0.05$). So, H3 and event facilities explained 17% of the variance in tourist satisfaction. The Q^2 was found to be 0.10 which is small predictive relevance. Fourth, H4 recommended that there is a positive relationship between visitor management and tourist satisfaction. The path from visitor management to tourist satisfaction was substantially positive ($\beta = 0.574$, $t = 10.71$, $p < 0.05$). So, H4 was supported. Visitor management explained 33% of the variance in tourist satisfaction. The Q^2 was found to be 0.19 which is medium predictive relevance. Fifth, H5 proposed that there is a positive relationship between hospitality and tourist satisfaction. The path from hospitality to tourist satisfaction was significantly positive ($\beta = 0.706$, $t = 14.69$, $p < 0.05$). So, H4 was supported hospitality and explained 50% of the variance in tourist satisfaction. The Q^2 was found to be 0.29 which is medium predictive. Lastly, H6 proposed that there is a positive relationship between costs and tourist satisfaction. The path from costs to tourist satisfaction was substantially positive ($\beta = 0.654$, $t = 12.79$, $p < 0.05$). So, H4 was supported and, costs explained 43% of the variance in tourist satisfaction. The Q^2 was found to be 0.24 which is medium predictive relevance.

Table 4. Hypotheses Testing Results

Hypothesized Relationships	β	*t*-values	Results
Hypothesis 1 H_1: SQ → TSAT Explained Variance R^2 = 0.54% Predictive relevance (Q^2) = 0.32	0.732	18.92*	Supported
Hypothesis 2 H_2: PHY → TSAT Explained Variance R^2 = 0.40% Predictive relevance (Q^2) = 0.24	0.632	10.99*	Supported
Hypothesis 3 H_3: EF → TSAT Explained Variance R^2 = 0.17% Predictive relevance (Q^2) = 0.10	0.412	5.12*	Supported
Hypothesis 4 H_4: VM → TSAT Explained Variance R^2 = 0.33% Predictive relevance (Q^2) = 0.19	0.574	10.71*	Supported
Hypothesis 5 H_5: HOS → TSAT Explained Variance R^2 = 0.50% Predictive relevance (Q^2) = 0.29	0.706	14.69*	Supported
Hypothesis 6 H_6: COS → TSAT Explained Variance R^2 = 0.43% Predictive relevance (Q^2) = 0.24	0.654	12.79*	Supported

Notes: "*The *t*-values demonstrate a statistically significant relationship at the 0.05 level or better".
"The other *t*-value without any asterisk is not significant".
Source: Own Elaboration

Further, as depicted in Tables 5 and 6, the present study employed Independent Samples *t*-test and ANOVA to verify if there is a perceptional difference among demographical groups. After the *t*-test to compare the satisfaction levels of Thai and foreign tourists, it was found that the satisfaction levels of Thai and foreign tourists were different (t = 2.268, $p < 0.05$). Accordingly, although the number of foreign tourists is much less than that of Thai tourists, their satisfaction levels are higher than the satisfaction levels of Thai tourists (see Table 5).

Table 5. Independent Samples *t*-test for the Nationality-based Comparison in the Perception of TSAT

Group	N	Std. Deviation	Mean	t	df	p
Thai tourist	89	0.555	4.437			
Foreign tourist	21	0.351	4.656	2.268	46.820	0.028

Source: Own Elaboration

Based on the results depicted in Table 6, only the differences were found between job groups in tourist satisfaction, such that the respondents who were public job holders reported more satisfaction when compared to private job holders ($p >.008$) and the students ($p >.043$).

Table 6. ANOVA Test for the Job-based Comparison in the Perception of TSAT

(I) job	(J) job	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.	95% Confidence Interval	
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Public	private	0.399*	0.120	**0.008**	0.082	0.717
	student	0.495*	0.172	**0.043**	0.013	0.978
	retired	0.177	0.098	0.278	-0.082	0.436
Private	public	-0.399*	0.120	0.008	-0.717	-0.082
	student	0.096	0.187	0.955	-0.417	0.610
	retired	-0.222	0.123	0.276	-0.546	0.101
Student	public	-0.495*	0.172	0.043	-0.978	-0.013
	private	-0.096	0.187	0.955	-0.610	0.418
	retired	-0.319	0.173	0.287	-0.804	0.167
Retired	public	-0.177	0.098	0.278	-0.436	0.082
	private	0.222	0.123	0.276	-0.101	0.546
	student	0.319	0.173	0.287	-0.167	0.804

Note: "*The group difference is significant at the 0.05 level".
Source: Own Elaboration

5. Conclusion

5.1 Discussion

The rapid increase in the number of destinations has brought competition with it. In this competitive environment, destinations must be managed with a strategic perspective. Chi and Qu (2008) proposed that the success of destinations in a saturated market is possible with a comprehensive analysis of the interaction between destination image and visitor satisfaction. In this regard, it has been tried to determine the association between CDI and the satisfaction of the visitors coming to Sisaket destination for the Fruit Festival. When the past research was examined regarding the destination image attributes, destination belonging, and tourist satisfaction, it was realized that most of those studies are conducted in developed touristic places where sea-sand-sun tourism comes first. But, recently, the tourist needs and expectations are changing towards areas where they can be calmer and intertwined with nature and experience rural tourism forms. Conducting such studies in smaller and developing rural areas will provide contribute to future tourism planning. Hence, this study examined the Sisaket destination from Thailand, with its rural tourism activity.

The present work emphasized the CDI dimensions for a rural tourism place in Thailand because handling and comprehending these dimensions procures data that may be helpful for destination authorities and marketers to produce competitive and sustainable policies. Progress in touristic image contributes to future development in the hospitality sector at a particular destination. Along with this, the current research provides new support to the theoretical background in the area of perceived CDI for rural tourism regions.

The research findings clarify the important role of destination evaluation on TSAT. Thus, a fruit festival event and the tourists' image towards this can play an important attractive role in future marketing of the destination. Fundamentally, Table 4 shows that the model fits well, such that, the cognitive dimensions used in the study were approved to be drivers of TSAT. Therefore, destination managements need to acknowledge the tie among these variables.

The current study proposed a significant positive association between SQ and TSAT. The research results depict a significant positive association among these variables. This finding was concordant with pre-

vious literature, such as Guzman-Parra et al. (2016) examined the SQ dimension similarly under 'human ware attributes' and found it a determinant of tourist satisfaction. Gomezelj and Mihalic (2008) focused on CDI factors, including the SQ dimension, and they stressed the role of SQ for more competitiveness and customer satisfaction. According to Assaker and Hallak (2013), a better level of customer satisfaction is an outcome of higher service quality and, as a result, raises the revisit intention.

The current work proposed a significant positive association between PHY and TSAT. The research finding shows a significant positive association between these variables. This result was concordant with that of Guzman-Parra et al. (2016) who examined the PHY dimension similarly under 'hardware attributes' and found it as determinant of TSAT.

The present research proposed a significant positive relationship between EF and TSAT. This finding concerning the influence of EF on TSAT was consistent with the study hypothesis and past research findings. A very recent study conducted by Aliedan, Sobaih, and Elshaer (2021) examined the EF dimension similarly under the 'event (cities-based entertainment) quality dimension' and confirmed the positive relationship between these hypothesized variables.

The present research also anticipated a significant positive association between VM and TSAT. The research finding confirm this association between these variables. This finding concerning the influence of VM on TSAT was concordant with that of Ervinaa et al. (2020), who studied VM strategy in the North Bandung protected areas as an important determinant of TSAT.

This study proposed also a significant positive association between VM and TSAT. The research finding validate this relationship, which was concordant with that of Ervinaa et al. (2020), who studied VM strategy in the North Bandung protected areas as an important determinant of TSAT.

Moreover, the present research proposed a significant positive association between HOS and TSAT and also between COS and TSAT. The study findings depict a significant positive association among these variables. These findings were concordant with the results reported in previous literature, such as; empirical research conducted by Gün et al. (2019) on tourists in Mardin province/Türkiye reveals the role of HOS and COS for better TSAT. Similarly, in their empirical research conducted in Spain, Alcocer and Ruiz (2020) examined different cognitive dimensions, including HOS and COS and reported a positive impact of these dimensions on TSAT.

5.2 Implications

As in every study, this study puts forward some implications within the framework of its findings. First of all, when we look at the results, the relationship between the EF and VM dimensions and tourist satisfaction seems at a positive level, but the level of significance was found to be lower than the other dimensions, even if EF is close to the limit level. Therefore, it is recommended that destination authorities and private sector managers first consider and develop these dimensions. In this context, there is no doubt that some factors such as increasing recreational activities, improving health and medical infrastructure, increasing more prominent rural tourism activities, establishing tourist information offices in different areas, improving accommodation reservation systems in terms of tourists, and making them easily accessible to tourists are of priority for Sisaket. These will make the tourists more satisfied and accelerate Sisaket being among the outstanding rural tourism destinations.

Along with this, it is important to make developments for other dimensions. First of all, all stakeholders in the destination should come together and draw a destination planning and road map so that these dimensions can be discussed in all aspects. For rural tourism to develop in a region, good community leadership, support and participation of local government, technical assistance to provide information for adequate touristic development and promotion, good conference and visitor offices, and support of local people and farmers are required. The willingness of local people and farmers to take part in rural tourism activities and what they can do to participate is very important. For example, teaching the relationship between the environment and tourism to the local people through education is the starting point and should be made sustainable. Especially tropical fruits are important sources in the development of rural and gastronomic tourism because tropical fruit cultivation cannot be done in every region of the world and is unique to this region. Especially durian fruit is an extremely exotic fruit and is grown in Thailand,

Malaysia, and Vietnam. In this way, the development of tropical orchards in the region will provide economic development for the local people along with tourism.

Issues such as food and beverage, accommodation, environmental cleaning, and hygiene should be included in the planning at the forefront, and as a result service quality will be improved. Sisaket streets should be rearranged based on the future vision and homestay could be an alternative accommodation type. Since social media is a very effective tool in promotional activities today, the region should be promoted by using of local television channels and social media elements. Information trips should be organized for people who are specialized in rural tourism. In addition, the awareness of Sisaket's rural tourism potential should be increased by promoting it with fairs and festivals and promotional films.

Finally, the results show that foreign tourist satisfaction was higher when compared to Thai tourists. This finding might be an important indicator that they found the destination attractive together with its festival organization and various types of tourism sources and they are expected to revisit and recommend it to others. The destination authorities in Sisaket may attract more and more foreign visitors through marketing strategies. Along with this, the public job holders were found to be more satisfied with this trip when compared to other job groups. This means that public job holders find more satisfactory experiences in this destination. This is an interesting and important finding in terms of marketing segmentation strategies for this group of people whose expectations and needs may be studied more and in turn, this destination image will develop among this group of people.

5.3 Limitations

As with other studies, this study has a few limitations. In this study, only the cognitive dimension of the destination image was considered, which is accepted as the basis of the other two dimensions, but it is recommended to examine the affective and conative dimensions in future studies. Due to the short duration of the festival and the limited number of foreign tourists, the foreign tourist rate in the research could not be increased. In future studies, the model of the study can be tested in different geographies and cultures. On the other hand, in image studies, scales containing variables related to the characteristics of the relevant destination should be applied. Especially in small-scale studies to be carried out at the local scale, a deep understanding of the destination image can be reached by considering the attractions and variables specific to the local community.

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ORCID

Mustafa Daskin https://orcid.org/0000-0002-2453-490X

Kübra Aşan https://orcid.org/0000-0002-8739-3585

Notes on contributors

Mustafa Daskin is an Associate Professor of Hospitality Management and Head of Tourism Department in Amasya University. He has recently worked in academia as a senior lecturer in Cyprus, Malaysia, Oman, and Turkey. Over eight years, he worked in hospitality and manufacturing industry as a middle-level Manager in North Cyprus and Turkey. He has publications in hospitality management and management journals.

Kübra Aşan is a Doctor of Tourism at School of Tourism and Hospitality Management / Sinop University. She has been currently working in Oxford Brookes University under TUBITAK Project. Sinop, Turkey. She has publications related with recreation and tourism destinations.