



ISSN 2635-3296

Journal of Forest Science Environment.
Volume 6 (2021): 14 – 22

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of Some Selected Eco-Destinations in
Northern Nigeria**

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VISITORS' PERCEPTION ON DESTINATION IMAGE, DESTINATION SECURITY AND SERVICE QUALITY OF SOME SELECTED ECO-DESTINATIONS IN NORTHERN NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT: Tourism continues to increase due to its importance globally; hence, destination image has been one of the key sectors of tourism research for years. This study thus identified visitors' perceptions of destination image, security and service quality at the selected eco-destinations in Northern Nigeria. A total of five hundred and seventy-five (575) structured questionnaire was administered to 575 respondents at Chad Basin National Park; CBNP (69), Gashaka Gumti National Park; GGNP (165) and Yankari Game Reserve; YGR (341). Data was obtained across the three sites from April to December 2018 and thereafter collated for analysis. Data was analyzed descriptively and inferentially. Results on demographic characteristics of the respondents showed that majority of the respondents at CBNP were males (72.5%), majority of the respondents at GGNP were females (77.6%) and majority of the respondents at YGR were males (53.1%). Destination image revealed that "the community is very friendly and calm" and had the highest mean value 4.38 at CBNP, "Modern security gadget are provided in the area such as; CCTV camera, Bomb detectors, Scanners" had the highest mean value (3.68) at GGNP while "the destination is well protected by physical security personnel had the highest mean value (4.12) at YGR. Destination security revealed "peace, safety and security are the primary condition for successful tourism development" to had the highest mean (4.41) at CBNP, "all forms of security incident negatively affect their image and can cause decline in tourist arrivals" had the highest mean both at GGNP (4.28) and at YGR (4.31). Service quality recorded employees being consistently courteous as the highest mean at CBNP (4.33), employees' readiness to respond to customers' request as the highest mean at GGNP (4.38) and YGR (4.39). Furthermore, there are significant differences in destination image, destination security among the sites ($P < 0.01$).

Keywords: Ecotourism, Visitors, Hospitality, Game, Guides

1. INTRODUCTION

As research on tourism continues to increase due to its importance globally, destination image has been one of the key sectors of tourism research for more than forty years (Stepchenkova and Mills, 2010). This fact has projected destination image to be conceived as the foundation for evaluating and selecting a tourism

destination and thus provides a relationship between motivation to visit a destination and final selection of the destination (O'Leary and Deagan, 2003). Effectively understanding visitors' perception of destination image is very essential to all tourism destinations and serves as the core for topnotch strategic planning and decision making on the part of tourism service providers. This indicates that destination image research is important in order to

record success in the marketing strategy of tourism destinations (Lai *et al.*, 2009). As soon as a tourist arrives at a destination, his or her satisfaction totally depends on evaluation of expectations on perceived image of the destination previously and the present state that the tourism destination shows which the tourist can see (Prayag, 2009).

Security of life and property is fast becoming a significant factor for tourists when they visit a tourism destination globally. Bojan and Boris (2015) had their research on the impact of security threat on destination development and the research showed that all forms of security incidents have adverse impact on destination image and can cause a reduction in tourist arrivals. Insecurity describes a state of violence, anarchy, absence of peace and a state of disorderliness. It is saddening to note that Nigeria may have been included in the list of infamy among countries, as a body of terrorism groups have begun to unleash bomb attacks in the country thereby causing loss of lives, properties to the tune of millions. Religious centres, tertiary institutions and tourist centres are also not spared from this mayhem (Babalola, *et al.*, 2011). Also, the quality of service delivery at destinations have an impact on the loyalty of the tourists indicating whether the tourists would come back to revisit the destination or not.

The feelings and attitudes that are experienced by the tourists through the services provided by tourism service providers form the perception of quality service. "Based on their individual perceptions of the services, consumers generally build their experiences" (Rousan *et al.*, 2010). Protected areas are increasingly becoming portrayed as significant tools for biodiversity management and conservation in spite of some reservations that there is no direct link between designating land for conservation and achieving conservation and or related biodiversity goals (Hulme and Murphere, 2001). Recent evidence however, also reveals that African protected areas generally have failed to eradicate human-induced threats to large mammal populations (Craigie *et al.*, 2010). This indicates the poor state of the eco-destinations and might reduce the patronage of such sites by tourists. This has necessitated the need for this research to find out the people's perception on destination image, destination security and service quality of some selected eco-destinations in Northern Nigeria.

2. MATERIALS AND METHOD

2.1 Study Area

The study was carried out at Chad Basin National Park (CBNP), Borno and Yobe States, Gashaka Gumti National Park (GGNP), Taraba and Adamawa States and Yankari Game Reserve (YGR), Bauchi State. They are located in the Northern part of Nigeria. CBNP is located on latitude 12°5'49.37"N to 11°26'47.85"N and longitude 14°14'31.53"E to 14° 6'39.67"E. GGNP is located on latitude 7°34'25.49"N to 7°17'56.03"N and longitude 11°29'12.13"E to 11°41'57.53"E. YGR is located on latitude 9°52'4.56"N to 9°50'40.52"N and longitude 10°17'46.27"E to 10°19'12.29"E. The Chad Basin National Park is located in Borno and Yobe States, Nigeria with a total area of about 2,258km². The park is fragmented, with three sectors. The Chingurmi-Dugurna sector is in Borno State, in a Sudanian Savanna ecological zone.

The Bade-Nguru Wetlands and Bulatura sectors are in Yobe State in the Sahel ecological zone. The park combines the former Chingurmi-Dugoma Game Reserve, Gorgoram and Zurgun Baneri Forest Reserves, and Bulatura Oasis. Gashaka Gumti National Park was gazetted from two game reserves in 1991 and is Nigeria's largest national park. It is located in the eastern provinces of Taraba and Adamawa to the border with Cameroon. The total area covers about 6,402 km², much of the northern GGNP is savannah grassland, while the southern GGNP sector of the park has a rugged terrain characterized by very mountainous, steep slopes as well as deep valleys and gorges, and is home to montane forests. Yankari Game Reserve is a large wildlife park located in the south-central part of Bauchi State, in northeastern Nigeria. It covers an area of about 2,244 square kilometers (866 sq mi) and is home to several natural warm water springs, as well as a wide variety of flora and fauna.

2.2 Data Collection and Analysis

The sample population for this study were visitors to Chad Basin National Park, Gashaka Gumti National Park and Yankari Game Reserve. The sample size for the study was determined from 2017 arrival records of the selected study areas using Krejcie and Morgan (1970) method of sampling size determination. Out of 98 visitors at Chad Basin National Park, sample size was determined to be 69. At Gashaka Gumti National Park, a sample size of 165 was chosen out of 367 visitors while 341 sample size was chosen out of 42,520 visitors at Yankari Game Reserve. In total, 575 sample size was selected out of 42,985 visitors. Structured questionnaire which was

designed to capture information on socio-demographic characteristics, destination security, image and service quality was used to obtain information from the visitors. Data was obtained across the three sites from April to December 2018 and thereafter collated for analysis. Data

was analysed using Statistical Package for Social Sciences version 23 (IBM Corp, 2015) and results were presented descriptively using frequency, percentage, means, standard deviation and inferentially using Analysis of Variance (ANOVA).

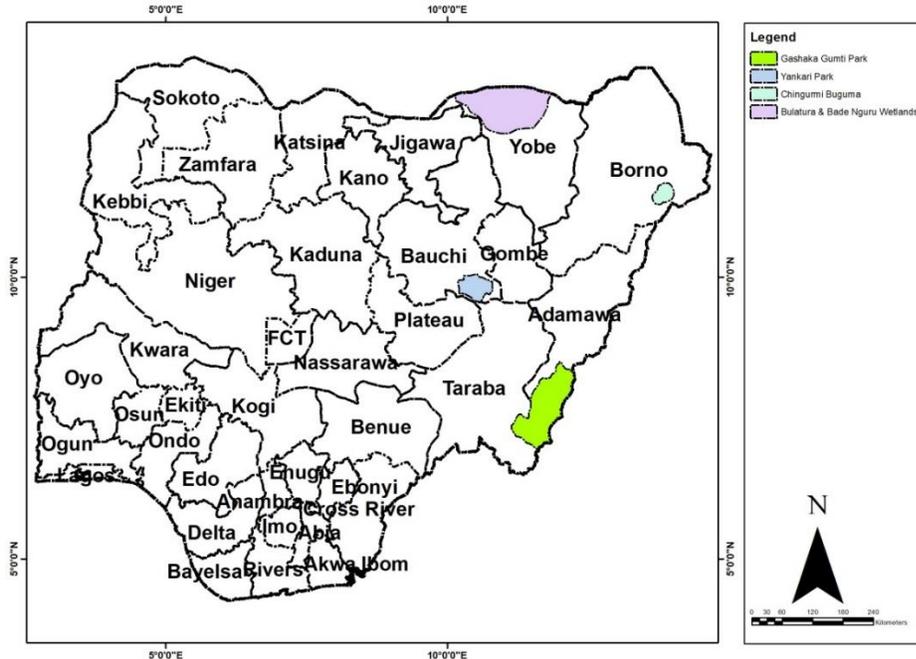


Figure 1: Map of Nigeria showing the location of the eco-destinations

3. RESULTS

Table 1 shows the socio-demographic characteristics of visitors at Chad Basin National Park (CBNP), Gashaka Gumti National Park (GGNP) and Yankari Game Reserve (YGR). Highest percentage of the visitors were males at CBNP (72.5%) and YGR (53.1%) while highest of the visitors were females at GGNP (77.6%). Majority of the respondents were between age range 15-44 years at CBNP (86.9%), GGNP (98.2%) and YGR (92.1%). Also, majority of the respondents earn more than ₦30,000 monthly income at CBNP (75.3%), GGNP (99.4%) and YGR (76.8%). Furthermore, highest percentage of the respondents had tertiary education at CBNP (82.6%), GGNP (48.5%) and YGR (41.3%). Majority of the respondents were civil servants; at CBNP (59.4%), GGNP (97.6%) and YGR (71.6%).

Table 1: Socio-demographic characteristics of respondents

| Variables | CBNP (N=69) | | GGNP (N=165) | | YGR (N=341) | |
|--------------------------|----------------|------|-----------------|------|----------------|------|
| | Fre | % | Freq | % | Fre | % |
| Sex | | | | | | |
| Male | 50 | 72.5 | 37 | 22.4 | 181 | 53.1 |
| Female | 19 | 27.5 | 128 | 77.6 | 160 | 46.9 |
| Age | | | | | | |
| 15-44 | 60 | 86.9 | 162 | 98.2 | 314 | 92.1 |
| 45 and above | 9 | 13 | 3 | 1.8 | 27 | 7.9 |
| Monthly income | | | | | | |
| < N 30,000 | 17 | 24.6 | 1 | 0.6 | 79 | 23.2 |
| > 30,000 | 53 | 75.3 | 164 | 99.4 | 262 | 76.8 |
| Educational level | | | | | | |
| Non formal | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 68 | 19.9 |
| Primary school | 3 | 4.3 | 40 | 24.2 | 50 | 14.7 |
| Secondary | 9 | 13.0 | 45 | 27.3 | 82 | 24.0 |
| Tertiary Sch. | 57 | 82.6 | 80 | 48.5 | 141 | 41.3 |
| Occupation | | | | | | |
| Civil servant | 41 | 59.4 | 161 | 97.6 | 244 | 71.6 |
| Self employed | 16 | 23.2 | 2 | 2.4 | 44 | 12.9 |
| Unemployed | 12 | 17.4 | 0 | 0.0 | 53 | 15.5 |

Source: Field survey, 2019

According to Table 2, the Cronbach Alpha for destination image is 0.77, the cronbach Alpha for destination security is 0.84 and the Cronbach Alpha for service quality is 0.79. The scale in the instrument had an acceptable internal consistency because Cronbach's Alpha scores were above the recommended 0.6 level (De Vellis, 1991). Therefore, the high Cronbach's Alpha coefficient in this study represents a high consistency and reliability among statement in the questionnaires.

Table 2: Reliability of the instruments

| Scale | No. of items | Cronbach Alpha coefficient |
|----------------------|--------------|----------------------------|
| Destination image | 20 | 0.77 |
| Destination security | 15 | 0.84 |
| Service quality | 21 | 0.79 |

Source: Field survey, 2019

3.1 Visitors' perception on destination image

As it is indicated in table 3, the statement "the community is very friendly and calm" obtained the highest mean value (4.38) followed by "the destination is well protected by physical security personnel" (4.29) at Chad Basin National Park, it can be concluded by this response that the destination is secured and a good place to visit. At Gashaka Gumti National Park, it was indicated that the statement "Modern security gadget are provided in the area such as; CCTV camera, Bomb detectors, Scanners" has the highest value of (3.68) followed by "There is poor visitors' orientation regarding security" (3.66), "the destination is well protected by physical security personnel" has next mean value of (3.58). It revealed that at Gashaka Gumti, the destination has a good image however, little or not much attention is given to visitors' orientation on security. At Yankari Game Reserve the response shows that the statement "the destination is well protected by physical security personnel has the highest value of (4.12) while "modern security gadgets are provided in the area such as; CCTV camera, Bomb detectors, Scanners has (3.67), the destination is peaceful and safe has (3.65) it is therefore concluded that Yankari Game Reserve in a safe destination to visit.

Table 3: Visitors' perception on destination image

| Variables | CBNP | | GGNP | | YGR | |
|---|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|--------|
| | Mean | SD | Mean | SD | Mean | SD |
| The destination is well protected by physical security personnel | 4.29 | .709 | 3.58 | 1.205 | 4.12 | .932 |
| The community is very friendly and calm | 4.38 | .545 | 2.50 | 1.243 | 3.63 | 1.243 |
| Terrorism is a permanent feature of the area | 3.09 | 1.210 | 2.58 | 1.065 | 3.09 | 1.246 |
| Ethnic crises frequently occur | 2.25 | .991 | 2.67 | 1.025 | 2.70 | 1.056 |
| Natural disasters such flood is common in the area | 2.41 | .896 | 2.69 | 1.108 | 2.72 | 1.087 |
| There is poor physical security measures in place | 2.57 | 1.078 | 2.87 | 1.124 | 2.87 | 1.070 |
| There is poor visitors orientation regarding security | 2.65 | 1.174 | 3.66 | 1.156 | 3.49 | 1.187 |
| There is poor staff training on safety and security | 2.54 | 1.051 | 2.87 | 1.408 | 3.02 | 1.293 |
| The destination is peaceful and safe | 4.03 | 1.014 | 3.25 | 1.156 | 3.65 | 1.226 |
| Crime rate in the area is alarming | 2.70 | 1.180 | 2.41 | 1.081 | 2.84 | 1.143 |
| There is a report of rape at the destination | 2.23 | 1.238 | 2.33 | .965 | 2.53 | 1.075 |
| Cases of kidnapping is rampant around the park | 1.90 | .894 | 3.05 | 1.470 | 2.98 | 1.340 |
| There is high risk of attack by Boko haram terrorists | 1.97 | 1.137 | 3.48 | 1.472 | 3.39 | 1.369 |
| Modern security gadgets are provided in the area such as; CCTV camera, Bomb detectors, Scanners. Etc. | 3.14 | 1.375 | 3.68 | 1.436 | 3.67 | 1.327 |
| There is adequate security on the access road to the destination | 3.54 | 1.431 | 3.62 | 1.318 | 3.60 | 1.387 |
| There are signage indicating areas of dangers in the destination | 3.42 | 1.299 | 2.86 | 1.184 | 2.98 | 1.265 |
| There are cases of wild animals attacking visitors | 2.39 | 1.178 | 2.31 | 1.057 | 2.46 | 1.024 |
| Religious crises is common in the area | 1.84 | 1.009 | 2.65 | 1.146 | 2.48 | 1.045 |
| Outbreak of diseases is common in area | 2.33 | 1.184 | 2.59 | .987 | 2.48 | 1.045 |
| There is frequent report of communal crises around the area | 2.46 | .979 | .15 | .665 | 1.37 | 1.533 |
| Total destination image | 56.12 | 8.678 | 55.81 | 9.965 | 60.09 | 10.752 |

Source: Field survey, 2019

3.2 Visitors' perception on destination security

Table 4 reveals the perception of the tourists on destination security. At Chad Basin National Park shows that the statement “peace safety and security are the primary condition for successful tourism development” has the highest mean of (4.41), followed by “personal security is a major concern for tourists” with a mean value of (4.23) similarly “digital security gadget and physical security guard is necessary” also has a value of (4.23). At Gashaka Gumti National Park, it shows that the statement “all forms of security incident negatively affect their image and can cause decline in tourist arrivals” has the highest mean of (4.28), the next is

“availability of contingency and crisis plans is required by stake holders” has a mean value of (4.27), followed by the statement “the profitability of businesses that partially rely on tourism is negatively affected” has a value of (4.07). At Yankari Game Reserve the descriptive analysis shows that the statement “all forms of security incident negatively affect their image and can cause decline in tourist arrivals” has the highest mean of (4.31), followed by the statement “the profitability of businesses that partially rely on tourism is negatively affected” with a mean value of (4.30), the next is the statement “the longer a security crisis last the higher it aggregated negative impact on a tourist destination” with a mean value of (4.29).

Table 4: Visitors' perceptions on destination security

| Variables | CBNP | | GGNP | | YGR | |
|---|--------------|--------------|--------------|---------------|--------------|--------------|
| | Mean | SD | Mean | SD | Mean | SD |
| All forms of security incident negatively affect their image and can cause decline in tourist arrivals | 3.74 | 1.133 | 4.28 | .894 | 4.31 | .966 |
| The longer a security crisis last the higher it aggregated negative impact on a tourist destination | 4.10 | .807 | 4.01 | 1.158 | 4.29 | .955 |
| The decline in tourist arrivals due to insecurity can last for weeks to indefinitely | 3.25 | .976 | 4.02 | 1.187 | 4.11 | 1.096 |
| The profitability of businesses that partially rely on tourism is negatively affected | 3.86 | 1.047 | 4.07 | 1.187 | 4.30 | 1.058 |
| Peace, safety and security are the primary condition for successful tourism development | 4.41 | 1.217 | 4.02 | 1.355 | 4.23 | 1.210 |
| Personal security is a major concern for tourists | 4.23 | 1.202 | 3.95 | .885 | 4.05 | 1.120 |
| The perceived risk of travelling to a security affected destination is shaped by; objective facts on ground, mass media, travel trade, personal information sources | 4.01 | .717 | 4.04 | .996 | 4.01 | 1.025 |
| Leisure tourists are more prone to taking risks while on vacation than local residents | 3.70 | .773 | 3.96 | 1.035 | 4.10 | .988 |
| Most frequently tourist cancel their booking due to security situations | 3.49 | 1.441 | 3.93 | .893 | 4.09 | .973 |
| Evacuation of tourist by tour operators is the order the where there is security challenges | 3.49 | 1.220 | 3.68 | 1.316 | 3.85 | 1.084 |
| Security issues has serious negative impact on the economy of the host community and the country | 3.91 | 1.222 | 3.55 | 1.062 | 3.64 | 1.226 |
| Extent of coverage of incident by media has effect on tourist decision to a destination | 3.64 | 1.057 | 3.91 | 1.058 | 3.88 | 1.035 |
| Extent of publicity and public relations activities becomes necessary by stake holders | 3.77 | .910 | 3.69 | 1.074 | 3.86 | 1.062 |
| Availability of contingency and crisis plans is required by stake holders | 3.57 | .992 | 4.27 | .813 | 4.09 | .972 |
| Digital security gadgets and physical security guard is necessary | 4.23 | .807 | .10 | .587 | 2.13 | 2.232 |
| Total destination security | 57.39 | 9.103 | 55.47 | 10.244 | 58.95 | 9.583 |

Source: Field survey, 2019

3.3 Visitors' perception on service quality

At Chad Basin National Park, in the area of reliability of service the statement with the highest mean is “providing services at the promised time with mean value of (4.23), in the area of responsiveness to customers the statement with the highest mean is “keeping customers informed about when services will be performed with a mean value of (4.29), in the area of assurances to customers the statement with the highest mean is “employees are consistently courteous” with a mean value of (4.33), with regards to empathy the statement with the highest value is “having the customers best interest at heart with a mean value of (4.20), in the area of tangibility of service the statement with the highest mean is “employees have a neat, professional appearance with the mean value of (3.84). At Gashaka Gumti National Park, in the area of reliability of service the statement with the highest mean is “maintaining error free records with a mean value of (4.30), in the area of responsiveness to service the statement with the highest mean value is “readiness to respond to customers request with (4.38), in the area of assurances to customers the statement with the highest mean is “customers feel safe in their transactions” with a

mean value of (4.37), in the area of empathy the statement with the highest mean value is “giving customers individual attention with a mean of (4.23), and in the area of tangibility of service the statement with the highest mean is “employees have a neat profession appearance with a mean value of (3.95).

At Yankari Game Reserve, in the area of reliability of service the statement with the highest mean is “performing services right the first time” with the mean value of 4.30, responsiveness the statement with the highest mean is “readiness to respond to customers request with a mean value of (4.39), assurances the highest mean is “customers feel safe in their transactions with mean value of (4.28), empathy to customer the statement with the highest value is “giving customers individual attention” and “having customers best interest at heart” with a mean value of (4.24), in the area of tangibility the statement with the highest value is “employees have a neat , professional appearance with the mean value of (3.91) it can be concluded that respondents of this study have confidence in the various services rendered at the different destinations.

Table 5: Visitors' perception on service quality

| Variables | CBNP | | GGNP | | YGR | |
|--|------|-------|------|-------|------|-------|
| | Mean | SD | Mean | SD | Mean | SD |
| RELIABILITY | | | | | | |
| Providing service as promised | 3.83 | .663 | 3.77 | 1.252 | 3.81 | 1.224 |
| Dependability in handling customers' service problems | 3.65 | .872 | 4.29 | .699 | 4.21 | .929 |
| Performing services right the first time | 4.16 | .656 | 4.26 | .826 | 4.30 | .829 |
| Providing services at the promised time | 4.23 | .689 | 3.79 | 1.150 | 3.78 | 1.186 |
| Maintaining error free records | 3.64 | .785 | 4.30 | .821 | 4.06 | 1.023 |
| Total | 3.90 | .733 | 4.08 | .950 | 4.03 | 1.038 |
| RESPONSIVENESS | | | | | | |
| Keeping customers informed about when services will be performed | 4.29 | .517 | 4.33 | .768 | 4.35 | .770 |
| Prompt service to customers | 4.13 | .616 | 4.32 | .731 | 4.37 | .649 |
| Willingness to help customers | 4.12 | .758 | 4.25 | .809 | 4.34 | .725 |
| Readiness to respond to customers' requests | 4.07 | 1.034 | 4.38 | .852 | 4.39 | .738 |
| Total | 4.15 | .731 | 4.32 | .790 | 4.36 | .721 |
| ASSURANCE | | | | | | |
| Employee instill confidence in customers | 4.12 | .738 | 4.18 | .775 | 4.21 | .830 |
| Customer feel safe in their transactions | 4.28 | .705 | 4.37 | .743 | 4.28 | .716 |
| Employees are consistently courteous | 4.33 | .634 | 3.97 | 1.050 | 4.24 | .818 |
| Employees who the knowledge to answer customer question | 4.16 | 1.009 | 4.15 | .928 | 4.06 | .970 |
| Total | 4.22 | .772 | 4.17 | .835 | 4.20 | .833 |

Table 5 Cont'd: Visitors' perception on service quality

| Variables | CBNP | | GGNP | | YGR | |
|--|------|-------|------|-------|------|-------|
| | Mean | SD | Mean | SD | Mean | SD |
| EMPATHY | | | | | | |
| Giving customers individual attention | 3.75 | .847 | 4.23 | .824 | 4.24 | .822 |
| Employees deal with customers in a caring fashion | 3.96 | .775 | 4.22 | .812 | 4.22 | .826 |
| Having the customers' best interest at heart | 4.20 | .632 | 4.12 | .936 | 4.24 | .795 |
| Employees understand the needs of their customers | 4.03 | .785 | 3.53 | 1.368 | 3.90 | 1.186 |
| Total | 3.98 | .760 | 4.02 | .985 | 4.15 | .907 |
| TANGIBILITY | | | | | | |
| Has modern equipment | 3.54 | 1.290 | 3.78 | 1.471 | 3.79 | 1.380 |
| Visually appealing facilities | 3.67 | 1.256 | 3.87 | 1.445 | 3.80 | 1.411 |
| Employees have a neat, professional appearance | 3.84 | 1.324 | 3.95 | 1.352 | 3.91 | 1.344 |
| Visually appealing materials associated with the service | 3.81 | 1.240 | 0.7 | .525 | 1.82 | 2.072 |
| Total | 3.71 | 1.277 | 3.07 | 1.198 | 3.33 | 1.551 |

Source: Field survey, 2019

Table 6 reveals that there are significant differences in destination image and destination security among the selected eco-destinations ($P < 0.01$).

Table 6: Difference in visitor's perception of destination image, destination security, service quality

| Variables | Mean square | F | Sig. | Decision |
|----------------------|-------------|--------|------|----------|
| Destination image | 1216.522 | 11.461 | 0.00 | * |
| Destination security | 680.090 | 7.195 | 0.01 | * |
| Service quality | 255.048 | 2.697 | 0.68 | NS |

 $P < 0.01$, *- significant, NS- Not significant

Source: Field survey, 2019

4. DISCUSSION

Findings from this study reveals that the visitors perceived the community of the parks to be friendly and calm and this would create a sense of calmness in the minds of the visitors as supported by AbuThahir and Krishnapillai (2018) that destination ambience which highlights the relevance of resident friendliness, history and service levels has a positive relationship with tourists' behavioral responses. The visitors also perceived that there is modern security gadget in the areas and that the destinations are well protected by physical security personnel. All these factors show that the protected areas have good image and as such would facilitate the visitation of the public as supported by

Fadda and Sorensen (2017) that the factors that determine the attractiveness of a tourism destination can be classified into two major groups: "natural elements, such as cultural heritage, natural resources, and geographical and climatic features; and artificial elements, such as infrastructure, tourism supplies, and all aspects that generally support tourist needs in a specific location". The artificial elements of the destination are considered more important in determining a destination's attractiveness as compared to the natural attributes (Fadda and Sørensen, 2017). This also supported by Tan and Wu (2016) on a study carried on 493 Taiwanese tourist visiting Hong Kong and manifested that cognitive and affective destination image was influential on tourists' intention to visit again. On the other hand, Stylos *et al.* (2016) conducted a research on Russian tourists' visiting Greece in 2014 and concluded that cognitive and affective destination image had no impact on the intention of tourists to revisit. A review of the studies in relevant literatures indicates that destination image has a major influence on the loyalty of tourists while few assert that destination image has no impact on the intention to revisit a destination.

The visitors affirmed that peace, safety and security are the primary condition for successful tourism development. They also affirmed that all forms of security incidence negatively affect the destination's image and can cause decline in tourist arrivals and that the longer a security crisis lasts, the higher its aggravated negative impact on the tourist destination as safety and

security of a destination are seen to have a big impact on the level of satisfaction with a tourist trip (Tasci and Boylu, 2010). This is also consistent with Heung *et al.* (2001) that travel safety played an important role in affecting the pull travel motivation of tourists. Tourists are beginning to place importance on security of a destination before they visit and it is consistent with Kovari and Zimanyi (2011), that security has undergone a significant change: from a more or less passive factor to an active element of tourism, an imperative to act in order to protect tourists and their belongings. Different waves of insecurity and terrorism in the country is affecting the tourism industry and has thus heightened the need for safety among tourists before visiting eco-destinations as supported by Hall *et al.* (2004) who proposed that tourism security is traditionally attached to issues of national security and political stability.

The findings indicate that the perceived service quality was very high, responsiveness had the highest average score 4.27, followed by assurance 4.18, empathy 4.05 and reliability of service 4.00 and the least was tangibility 3.37. This is supported by Birenboim *et al.* (2013) that today it is claimed that, parks should concentrate on providing high quality service to satisfy visitors' expectation. Chiappa (2013) opined that a good understanding of visitor behavior could be a decisive factor to help parks improve their management and marketing of attractions sites, thus improving customer satisfaction. Tsang *et al.* (2012) also stated that visitor satisfaction is directly correlated with security, safety and service quality.

5. CONCLUSION

- i. This study aimed to assess the perception of visitors on destination image, security and service qualities of some eco-destinations in northern Nigeria. The visitors perceived the communities where the parks are located to be friendly and calm, modern security gadget are provided in the parks and the destinations are well protected by security personnel which connotes a good destination image.
- ii. The visitors also perceived the need for destinations to be safe and secured as they agreed that peace, safety and security are the primary condition for successful tourism development, all forms of security incidence negatively affect destination image and can cause decline in tourist arrivals and personal security is a major concern for tourists.
- iii. The visitors also perceived the destinations to have good service quality as they agreed that the employees are consistently courteous, they provide services at the promised and right time,

they maintain error free records, they are ready to respond to customer's request and they have the customers' best interest at heart.

- iv. It is recommended that more security measures should be put in place in order to guarantee the safety of visitors as this is paramount to them visiting the eco-destinations or not.

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