Empirical Analysis of Mega Projects Effects on Destination Ethiopia

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Abstract

Megaprojects are believed to help the growing interest in destination competitiveness that affects perceived mixture of tourists' attraction elements and experiences. However, no studies have been done to examine the possible effect on the destination image. Particularly, no empirical findings exist in the Ethiopian context that assess how mega projects affect a given destination image. Hence, this paper intended to identify the impact of megaprojects on a destination branding and then proceeds to examine their significance as perceived by tourists. 400 usable responses were used to proceed for further analysis. Both descriptive and inferential statistical techniques were used to test the possible effect of mega projects on the destination image. The results reveal that the cognitive, affective and unique image of destination branding dimensions was significantly affected by megaprojects existed in the country. It also shows mega projects, i.e., energy, train and transport, industrial expansion and park development, education and housing projects were a significant predictors of the cognitive, affective and unique image of Ethiopia and have a direct correlation each other with dependent (destination image dimensions) variables. Therefore, stakeholders that work on destination branding in Ethiopia can use those mega projects existed in the country as tools to promote the nation endowed resources that will have a multidimensional benefit in terms of attracting investment and changing the nation image in general.

1. Introduction

Destination marketing is a very important and dynamic sector in the world economy, particularly in developing countries. It is one of the key sectors of development in all countries and a major source of income, jobs and wealth creation [1]. Its growth affects not only the activities directly linked to tourism but also other sectors [2]. Meanwhile, tourism has played a wider role in promoting the image and perception of a country and influencing complementary domestic policies and has been considered as an integral part of their economy through the adaptation of destination branding strategies that could build an image of the country using communication tools [1].

To revitalize country's fagging tourism industries and provide insights on how to rejuvenate products and the way they are viewed by customers, recently, several governments take initiatives to increase tourism industry performance by developing a sense of quality in their visitor experiences using communication tools [3]. Similarly, studies equally show value perceptions as a key objective of increasing the attractiveness of destinations for tourists by promoting an image [4].

Since the image of a country is one of the most important

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success factors for the destination banding, it has to be promoted effectively to the stakeholder using destination branding techniques [5]. To realize its objective of being an economic hub or a good competitive tourist destination, every nation has to compete with other nations for the share of different kinds of audiences such as residents, visitors, investors, factories or entrepreneurs [1].

The destination image is a total impression of cognitive and affective evaluations [6-8]. It is the raw material for global competition and it represents the way to position themselves and reaching a sufficient degree of recognition. Meanwhile, Mwaura, D., Acquaye, D., & Jargal, S. (2013) [9] finds out that, tourists choose where to visit according to the images they hold of destinations that include cognitive and effective image components [10].

The positive brand image is achievable by emphasizing on strong, favorable and unique brand associations. Consumers perceive a positive brand image when brand associations are implemented to suggest the benefits of purchasing from a specific brand. This creates favorable feelings toward the brand and differentiates the brand forms its alternatives with the unique image to understand exactly how tourists perceive places [11].

Positive brand images of countries have helped several economies, boost their exports, attract tourism and visitors, residents and investment [11]. Therefore, it is important to understand destination image and visitors' perceptions that considered as a prerequisite for providing the basis for more effective and efficient future strategic planning and destination branding that influences the consumer's selection choice of particular destination images already held by the target audience [12-13].

Studies show that even if the atrocious factors are no longer relevant to the particular country, the negative image of Africa resulted from the war, civil unrest; deadly diseases, poverty, starvation, and economic disorder receive most media attention at the expense of nation's positive developments [14-16]. Above all, the current image is having a nature of stereotypes attached to most African nations. Such an atrocious event has burdened most of its 54 nations' economies and become an obstacle for a destination with the negative association of being located on the Dark Continent. That is also true for Ethiopia [16].

Destinations are made up of both tangible and intangible assets [17-18]. Consumers looking to experience tangible or intangible features that are different from those they can experience at home or previously visited destination and in order to develop a competitive position, it is important to create and transmit a favorable image to potential tourists in target markets because each destination has an image, but

few can have a stronger image than others [10].

Previous findings show that not the perception of every destination attributes impact on tourists' destination choice equally; some destination attributes may play a more important role than others [18]. However, this all would be affected by other variables and includes the nation's mega infrastructures that are playing a wider role, transformational, cost a billion dollars or more impacts of a million people [19]. Therefore, this study would find out the impacts of mega-projects on the current image of destination Ethiopia in terms of cognitive, effective and unique image hoping such projects will help a nation to eliminate misconception and stereotypes developed with early atrocious events happening to the country.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Introduction

Consumer evoked set is the basic factor that affects consumer decision making in a choice of destination to visit in the tourism market [20-22]. Currently, those sets that evoked consumers become similar and provide related features of services and offers to the destination market [22]. This show, on the current competitive tourist market, it is not enough offering such a list of services, rather it needs more unique offers to the tourism market [9]. It is not enough to offer accommodation, beautiful centuries and other issues rather it needs more concrete offers to the market as destination marketing is becoming a dream selling [7]. The evoked set of offers that fail to bring significant impact on the consumers' interest need to substitute with evoked unique sets of offers [10]. Hence; it will affect consumer decision and increase satisfaction for visitors'. This show, it is essential for the destination to find a certain unique identity that helps to brand the country in the competitive market [22]. Such unique elements can create a unique blend of perception and experience that can affect future recommendation and revisit intention of the tourists. However, this has to support by marketing communications [22].

The destination image is a total impression of cognitive and affective evaluations [6-8]. It is suggested that brand associations should include cognitive and affective image components [10]. These two components are widely accepted as influential indicators of the destination image [6-8]. Also, destination branding defined as a way to communicate a destination's unique identity by differentiating a destination from its competitors [23].

2.2. The Destination Offers

Tourism product as a complex consumptive experience that results from a process where tourists use multiple travel

services during the course of their visit i.e. information, transportation, accommodation, and attraction services [24]. Research shows that the role of such travel services in creating a productive experience and describes how various inputs from the destination could produce experiential output for tourists [25]. Numerous authors assert, however, that tourism is not just a series of inputs, but also an experience in its own right [26-27]. A destination may be viewed as an amalgam of individual products and experience opportunities that combine to form a total experience of the area visited [28-29]. The tourism destination as a package of tourism facilities and service experience composed of a number of multi-dimensional attributes that affect image [30].

Six environmental factors shape the (destination) macro-environment; demographic, economic, natural, technological, political and cultural forces, which some beliefs impinge upon the visitor experience and sense of a destination [31]. In this sense, certain physical, social, cultural, technological, political, and economic characteristics of a destination develop an environmental effect that directly influences tourist perceptions and experiences [32]. In agreement with Smith, it is considered that destination elements can and in many cases do, make up the core of the environmental effect on visitors.

Physical elements of the destination could include features like a site or facility, natural resources such as scenic landforms, flora, and fauna, or physical conditions such as the weather [32-33]. Social factors like the friendliness of the local people, the language is spoken, family structures, occupations, urban layout, and population density, are also attributes of the destination that can form part of the macro-environment [34]. In addition, the destination's service infrastructure also called travel service dimension that includes transport, food, and lodging service is factors in an international tourist's experiential desires of the destination product [25], although, shopping experiences [35] have significantly affected revisiting interest of tourists and to grow up all together all the attributes need investment and megaprojects that transform both the nation's economy and tourists perception and image of the nation.

The economic conditions and structural features that characterize a country, such as currency exchange, market behavior, and pricing, are further attributes of the product that can influence traveler experiences and thoughts about a destination [36]. Culture is another important factor in shaping many tourist experiences. Authentic local culture, its history, institutions, and customs can provide a rich experiential tapestry for the visiting tourist [37].

Finally, the political dimension is another key factor that includes political stability, foreign policy, or government policy on important issues such as human rights or democratic elections contributes to the nature of the destination product and can determine tourist perceptions and behavior. Furthermore, government control, responsiveness to tourism, and the treatment of tourists (e.g. Visa applications, ports of entry, industry support, specific entry conditions, e.t.c...) can also affect the destination environment that tourists experience [38].

The level, use, or lack of infrastructure and technology in a destination (e.g., water and power supply, the use of computer technology and communications and other infrastructure are also visible features of developed and underdeveloped tourism products that can factor into the visitors' trip experience [26]. Destination's infrastructure, service infrastructure, and the destination environment in terms of weather conditions are active in determining the trip value and destination products that do not meet tourist quality expectations are less likely to be revisited (repurchased) than those that satisfy where all can be categorized in either project form or mega projects form [39].

2.3. Communicators of Destination Branding

Nations can use all sorts of communication channels depending on their purpose and specific target audience [40-41]. These could be different kinds of events, cultural artifacts, and government policy, branded exports, advertising and news reports in different media. In addition, brand ambassadors, mega-events, and the country's Diaspora are also used for communicating a nation.

Although, mega projects that defined as large-scale, complex ventures that typically cost a billion dollars or more, take many years to develop and build, involving multiple public and private stakeholders, are transformational, and impact millions of people [42], attracting a lot of public attention because of substantial impacts on communities, environment, and budgets [43] also affect perception of tourists. Hirschman (1995) calls such projects as "privileged particles of the development process [19]. He and points out that often they are "trait making," that is, they are designed to ambitiously change the structure of society, as opposed to smaller and more conventional projects and considered as a preferred delivery model for goods and services across a range of businesses and sectors [44].

3. Material and Method

3.1. Description of the Study Area

Ethiopia is situated in the eastern part of Africa also called horn of African countries. It is a well-known diplomat, tourist and investment destination in Africa in 2017/18 international tourists spent 84,297.4mn or 5.7% of GDP of the country.

This makes the nation as the most popular domestic tourism destination in Africa, currently, the country has 9 UNESCO registered tourist site.

3.2. Sampling Techniques

Multi-stage sampling was applied in this study and 440 respondents approached. 400 usable questionnaires were collected in a cross-sectional timing approach. The questionnaire was personally administered to the respondents who were approached mainly in selected hotels and shopping area) using a random day/time/site pattern. To investigate the proposed model, namely the mega project's impact on the cognitive, affective and unique image, a tourist on those randomly selected hotels were preferred as they have direct experience with the destination and basic services.

A multi-item questionnaire on the cognitive-affective unique image and mega projects was utilized. This item covered place attributes such as sanctuaries, natural attraction climate friendless of the people's safety and tourist activities, appealing casino, and shopping and accommodation facilities in addition to a question related to mega projects. Given the varieties of the attribute in the literature, attention was given to the universal attributes for destination image dimensions.

3.3. Data Presentation and Analysis Techniques

After the primary data screen and review, descriptive, correlation and regression analysis was conducted. Last, the structural relationship between cognitive, affective and unique image and predictor variables (megaprojects namely, power or energy projects, train or transport projects, industrial development projects, industry park development projects, housing, educational and interregional projects) were tested using the regression model.

4. Data Analysis and Discussion

4.1. Preliminary Analysis of Data

Table 1 is a summary of the profile of the final samples obtained from respondents who visited Ethiopia. The finding shows more male visitors were coming to Ethiopia with an age group of 34-64 that have a 2nd degree and above. This probably due to the data collection time where the country hosts the international, regional and continental conference from December to mid of May 2018.
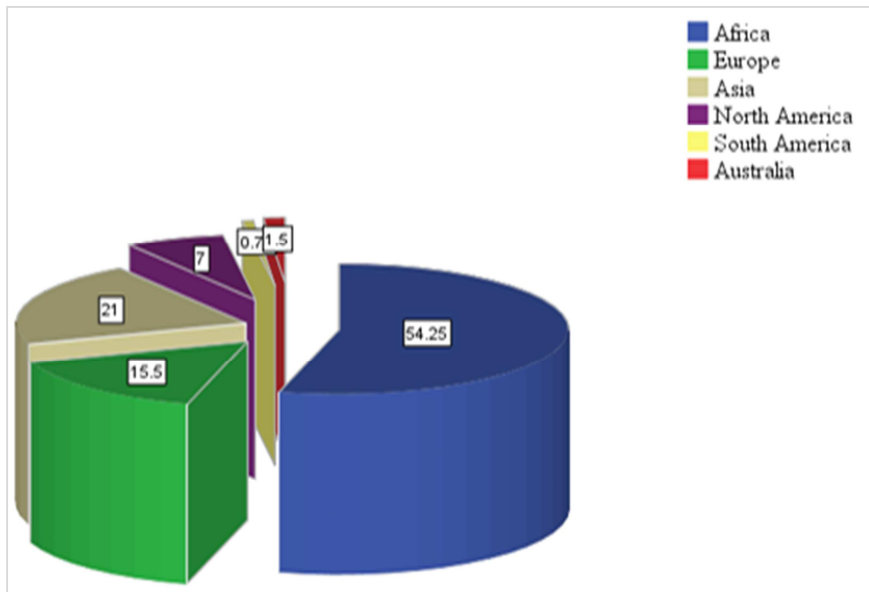
Source: own survey 20218

Figure 1. Respondents origin.

Table 1. Respondents' Biographic information.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent		Cumulative Percent
Gender	Male	240	60.0	60.0		60.0
	Female	160	40.0	40.0		100.0
	Total[a]	400	100.0	100		
Age	18-24	40	10.0	10.0		10.0
	25-34	52	13.0	13.0		23.0
	34-45	140	35.0	35.0[a]		58.0
	46-64	128	32.0	32.0		90.0
	64+	40	10.0	10.0		100.0

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent		Cumulative Percent
	Total	400	100.0	100.0	
	High school complete	12	3.0	3.0	3.0
Level of educated	University or college student	41	10.3	10.3	13.3
	First degree[a]	99	24.8	24.8	38.0
	Masters and above	248	62.0	62.0	100.0
	Total	400	100.0	100.0	

a. Source: own survey 2018

Questions related to where they come were asked to know their origin, respondents answer that that more 54% (217) respondents were coming from Africa, 21% (84) respondents were from Asia, 15.5% (62) were from Europe and few of the respondents were North America. Showing significant percent of respondents were from Africa followed by Asian.

In Table 2, 200 respondents were coming to Ethiopia for attending conference whereas, 128 of them were coming to Ethiopia for visiting purpose and the rest 10, as representative of aid and non government organization, 30 were coming to work also the finding shows conference attendees and visitors cover more than half of the respondents.

Table 2. Respondents Reason to come to Ethiopia.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
	Visiting	128	32.0	32.0	32.0
	As diplomat	17	4.3	4.3	36.3
	For work	30	7.5	7.5	43.8
Valid	For attending conference	200	50.0	50.0	93.8
	For business	10	2.5	2.5	96.3
	As representative of aid agency	15	3.8	3.8	100.0
	Total	400	100.0	100.0	

Source: - Own survey 2018

4.2. Correlation Between Megaprojects and Export Dimensions

The significance level of correlations between (outcome variables) dependent variable for cognitive, affective and unique image and independent (predictors) variables is significant p-value of 0.000. This indicates a high statistical significance of the results. Also, it shows mega projects affect the tourist's perceived image.

Table 3. Correlation between Megaprojects and Destination Branding Dimensions.

Statistics		Cognitive image	Affective image	Unique image
	Pearson Correlation	.948**	.684**	.923**
Power/Energy projects	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000
	N	400	400	400
	Pearson Correlation	.630**	.558**	.796**
Train projects	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000
	N	400	400	400
Industry expansion and development projects	Pearson Correlation	.955**	.685**	.898**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000
	N	400	400	400
	Pearson Correlation	.964**	.704**	.883**
Industry park development projects	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000
	N	400	400	400
	Pearson Correlation	.778**	.562**	.673**
Housing projects	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000
	N	400	400	400
	Pearson Correlation	.948**	.711**	.887**
Educational projects	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000
	N	400	400	400
	Pearson Correlation	.944**	.678**	.903**
Interregional road projects	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000
	N	400	400	400
	Pearson Correlation	.988**	.967**	.952**
Over all megaprojects	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000
	N	400	400	400
Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).				

Source: - Own survey 2018

4.3. Regression Analysis for Cognitive Dimension

Simple linear regression was calculated to predict the effects of mega-projects on the cognitive image dimension of destination branding. The result shows power projects exists in the country, b=.3.414, t(5.903), p<0.001; projects related to industry expansion and development, b=.4.518, t(10.096), p<0.001; industry park development projects, b=.3.689, t(5.180), p<0.001; housing projects, b=2.900, t(12.232), p<0.001; educational expansion projects, b=2.382, t(4.826), p<0.001; inter-regional projects, b=4.149, t(9.108), p<0.001 with degree of freedom (f(7,392)= 9136.844, p<0.001 and R^2 of .991 are significantly affecting the cognitive image of destination branding dimension.

Table 3. Regression Analysis for Mega Projects Vs. Cognitive Image.

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	6.444	.760		8.473	.000
	Power projects	3.416	.579	.164	5.903	.000
	Train projects	1.471	.225	.062	6.537	.000
	Industry expansion projects	4.518	.448	.221	10.096	.000
	Industry park projects	3.689	.712	.171	5.180	.000
	Housing projects	2.900	.237	.132	12.232	.000
	Educational projects	2.382	.494	.118	4.826	.000
	Interregional road projects	4.149	.455	.207	9.108	.000
1	Model	R	R^2	Ad. R^2	Std. E. Est.	
		.991ᵃ	.981	.981	1.76826	
1	Model	$\sum^2$	DF	$\bar{}x^2$	F	Sig.
	Regression	63957.909	7	9136.844	2922.165	.000ᵇ
	Residual	1225.681	392	3.127		
	Total	65183.590	399			

a. Dependent Variable: cognitive image
b. Predictors: (Constant), Interregional road projects, Train projects, Housing projects, Industry expansion, and development projects, Power projects, Educational projects, Industry park development projects
Source: - Own survey 2018

4.4. Regression Analysis for Affective Dimension

The result shows, predictors (independent variable) i.e. power projects exists in the country, b=.584, t(3.740), p<0.001; train projects exists in the country, b=.1.384, t(22.839), p<0.001; projects related to industry expansion, b=.1.516, t(12.566), p<0.001; industry park development projects, b=1.361 t(7086), p<0.001; educational expansion projects, b=.150, t(7.2)=, p<0.001; inter-regional projects, b=.2.031, t(16.535), p<0.001 with degree of freedom (f(7,392)= 2485.260, p<0.001 and R^2 of .985 are significantly affecting the affective (outcome variable) dimension of destination branding.

Table 4. Regression Analysis for Mega Projects Vs. affective Image.

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	.830	.205		4.048	.000
	Power projects	.584	.156	.130	3.740	.000
	Train projects	1.386	.061	.270	22.839	.000
	Industry expansion projects	1.516	.121	.346	12.566	.000
	Industry park projects	1.361	.192	.294	7.086	.000
	Housing projects	1.174	.064	.248	18.372	.000
	Educational projects	.133	.133	.031	1.001	.317
	Interregional road projects	2.031	.123	.472	16.535	.000
	Model	R	R^2	Ad. R^2	Std. E. Est.	
	1	.985ᵃ	.970	.970	.47681	
	Model	$\sum^2$	DF	$\bar{}x^2$	F	Sig.
	Regression	1086.518	7	155.217	2485.260	.000ᵇ
	Residual	24.482	392	.062		
	Total	1111.000	399			

a. Dependent Variable: Affective image
b. Predictors: (Constant), Interregional road projects, Train projects, Housing projects, Industry expansion, and development projects, Power projects, Educational projects, Industry park development projects
Source: - Own survey 2018

4.5. Regression Analysis for Unique Image Dimension

To predict the effects of mega-projects on unique image Simple linear regression was calculated. The result shows power projects exists in the country, b=.1.409, t (17), p<0.001; train projects exist in the country, b=.1.062, t (33), p<0.001; projects related to industry expansion, b=.1.129, t (17) =, p<0.001; industry park development projects, b=.-1.722, t (-17), p<0.001; educational expansion projects, b=.564, t (8.081), p<0.001 with degree of freedom (f (7,392) = 2485.260, p<0.001 and R^2 of .989 are significantly affecting the unique image destination dimension.

Table 5. Regression Analysis for Mega Projects Vs. Unique Image.

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	-.113	.107		-1.051	.294
	Power projects	1.409	.082	.518	17.226	.000
	Train projects	1.062	.032	.341	33.382	.000
	Industry expansion projects	1.129	.063	.424	17.855	.000
	Industry park projects	-1.722	.101	-.613	-17.106	.000
	Housing projects	.020	.034	.007	.585	.559
	Educational projects	.564	.070	.214	8.081	.000
	Interregional road projects	.562	.064	.215	8.737	.000
	Model	R	R^2	Ad. R^2	Std. E. Est.	
	1	.989ᵃ	.978	.978	.24991	
	Model	$\sum^2$	DF	‾x²	F	Sig.
	Regression	1086.518	7	155.217	2485.260	.000ᵇ
	Residual	24.482	392			
	Total	1111.000	399	.062		

a. Dependent Variable: unique image
b. Predictors: (Constant), Interregional road projects, Train projects, Housing projects, Industry expansion, and development projects, Power projects, Educational projects, Industry park development projects
Source:- Own survey 2018

5. Implications and Conclusions

This study appraises the effect of mega-projects on Ethiopia's destination image-building efforts. It particularly addressed the questions of whether the images of the mega-project could be transferred to destination Ethiopia or not. While it is generally assumed that mega projects, chiefly attract the attention of local and international Media community for the country's branding purpose, this study attempted to appraise the mega project's effect on destination branding and was focused on measuring the image-building effects on Ethiopia's external audiences. Though taking only on those who visit Ethiopia from abroad as the targets, this study has generated several academic and practical implications that may inspire future research in this area.

First, mega projects affect images of the country and seem to transfer to that of the country destination. This study has discovered that all respondents who come from the different corner of the world expressed a strong inclination to link mega projects with positive images of the destination Ethiopia and affect their perception to visit or experience after visiting the place. However, Still, more research is needed to validate this analytical model and, particularly, to explain the effect of mega-projects on branding the image of the country by taking diverse nations experience.

Second, world-famous mega projects are utilized not only to brand the country's image abroad, but also to promote the government's image at home. This study demonstrated that there is a correlation between megaprojects and image and the likelihood of associating megaprojects image with country image due to high media coverage. Especially when the project affects neighboring countries' interests, its exposure to media is very high and attract greater attention and even link to politics and government image that increase tourist interest to know more about the destination to visit, know about unique gifts of the nation that link to the cognitive and the unique image dimension of the destination. Such a finding implies that mega projects could affect the perception of tourists and increase the intention to visit.

Third, such mega projects have infographic benefits to the country and affect the perception of different stakeholder. As media consumption behaviors and sources of information prove significant in forging the positive association between mega projects and images of destination and that of the government. They stand as influencing factors, proving useful in predicting audiences' perceptions toward the country. This finding suggests that mega project just like traditional media have a direct effect on promoting a nation. Meanwhile, the finding also reveals positive evaluations on the country's destination is highly linked to mega projects and affect an individual's emotional attachment to the

country.

Finally, this study has expected limitations. Being a study of only seven projects in one country, the results cannot be generalized before being compared with other cases in other countries. Indeed, there is a need for multiple replications. In addition, this study may stand only as a first step toward further research with the wider representative case through considering another competitive dimension (i.e. FDI, export, and government) from more diverse audiences (i.e., going beyond international audiences).

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