

Destination attractiveness in Ghana: Insight from visitors' perceptions of beach tourism

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Abstract | The attractiveness of destinations, particularly beaches, influences tourists' selection and visits. This study sought to ascertain visitors' perceptions of beach destination attractiveness and explore whether these perceptions are associated with sociodemographic factors. Data collected from beach visitors (N = 313) through a survey were analysed using descriptive statistics and Chi-square test. The results revealed that while users perceived geophysical features (73.7%) and access, safety, and comfort (66.9%) as attractive, they considered scenery and cleanliness (27.9%) and facilities and services (27.6%) dimensions as not readily attractive. The results also showed that the age, education, marital status, continent of origin and purpose of visit are significantly associated with perceived beach destination attractiveness. Most importantly, overall beach destination attractiveness is significantly correlated with gender, nationality (tourist type), and continent of visitors. The study recommends that regulators and beach management should essentially engage in infrastructure, service, and sanitation improvements at the beaches,

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and adopt target marketing, to meet diverse visitor needs, uphold the appeal and viability of these coastal destinations, and promote sustainable tourism development in Ghana and West Africa.

Keywords | destination attractiveness, demographic factors, perceptions, sustainable beach tourism

1. Introduction

The attractiveness of beach destinations extends far beyond mere geographical proximity, captivating visitors who yearn to immerse themselves in the aesthetic allure and leisure possibilities they offer. The attractiveness of destinations, particularly beaches, not only encourages individuals to visit, but also significantly influences their selection of beach destinations, experience expectations, and overall satisfaction (Rodella & Corbau, 2019; Reitsamer et al., 2016). Mayo and Jarvis (1981) conceptualised destination attractiveness as "the perceived capacity of a destination to deliver individual benefits," accentuating its multidimensional nature (p. 22). Given that beaches serve as hubs for a diverse array of tourism products and services (Dzitse et al. 2024), a holistic perception of their attractiveness is imperative to elicit emotional, cognitive, and behavioral responses from consumers towards management improvement and sustainability purposes. Visitors drawn by destination resources, such as natural scenery, aesthetics, serenity, safety, and services, are more inclined to envisage a sense of well-being during their stay and are more likely to recommend the destination to others after attaining the desired experience (Tengan et al., 2023, Liu et al. 2022). However, spatial differences, visitor backgrounds, and the evolving nature of traveller preferences make it crucial for beach destinations to identify unique selling points and areas for improvement, based on their distinct profiles among tourists (Vaz et al., 2016).

In a recent study, Mantolas et al. (2021) underscored the pivotal role of environmental objects, facilities, security, and accessibility in shaping beach destination appeal perceptions. In addition, the attractiveness of a beach destination is contingent upon a myriad of factors, including natural beauty, ambience, hospitality, and even user characteristics (Dodds & Holmes, 2019). Despite extensive literature on destination attractiveness, research on beach attractiveness is limited, particularly in West Africa, with Ghana as a noteworthy example. Scholars, such as Dada et al.

(2021), Angnuureng et al. (2021) and Mensah (2021) have highlighted the unique features and developmental nuances of beaches in this region, further emphasising the necessity for context-specific investigations (Ratnasari et al., 2019).

Moreover, understanding the dynamic nature of beach attractiveness requires a nuanced appreciation of the temporal dynamics and the diverse nature and preferences of visitors (Hasan, 2014). Visitor experiences and tastes change over time; some prioritise natural scenery, while others prefer augmented services, recreational facilities, or cultural experiences at natural destinations (Valverde-Roda et al., 2023; Mantolas et al., 2021). The heterogeneity of tourist characteristics, which usually are determinants of their perceptions of destinations underscores the need to identify beach aspects that need enhancement for distinctive destinations as beaches from the demand perspective towards need tourism development. These aspects include beach hygiene, safety measures, entertainment, services, and pricing (Sangpikul, 2017). Thus, beach attractiveness is foundational to improved destination marketing and sustainable development in tourism; hence, effectively allocating resources to maximise beach attractiveness requires a comprehensive understanding of various attributes/aspects (de Sousa-Felix et al., 2020). Furthermore, there is a noteworthy gap in the literature concerning the sociodemographic determinants of perceptions of beach attractiveness. Yet, in nature-based destinations such as beaches, sociodemographic factors and travel characteristics are critical influencers of destination perceptions, satisfaction and revisit (Lucrezi & van der Walt, 2015). Hence, understanding beach destinations and how factors such as age, gender, income, and education influence perceptions of beach attractiveness is indispensable for crafting effective destination management and marketing strategies (Vaz et al, 2016). As such, this paper also provides practical insights that can enhance visitor experiences and bolster the competitiveness of West Africa and Ghana's beach destinations and provide a robust foundation for future studies in this field. To achieve the aforementioned, the study sought to answer the following questions:

- (i) How do visitors perceive the attractiveness of beach destinations in Ghana?
- (ii) To what extent are visitors' perceptions of beach destination attractiveness associated with sociodemographic factors?

2. Literature review

2.1 Destination attractiveness

Destination attractiveness is a concept in tourism literature that refers to the features and attributes of a destination that attract potential tourists. It can be measured from two perspectives: demand and supply (Kim & Perdue, 2011). The demand-side perspective suggests that destination attractiveness depends on tourists' assessments of a destination's attributes, which are perceived as meeting their expectations, satisfying their needs, and providing individual benefits. However, the supply side view views this as a pull factor generated by destination attractions, making a destination a supplier of spatial tourist services with different attractiveness attributes (Sakyi & Tengan, 2021). Destination attractiveness has been extensively defined in the literature, with Islam and Chaudhary (2020) conceptualising it as the feelings, beliefs, and opinions tourists construct regarding what they witness, receive, or experience at a destination. This view also supports Vengesai et al. (2009), who argue that destination attractiveness consists of visitors' opinions about a destination's perceived ability to meet their expectations and needs. Similarly, it is defined as 'an aggregated indicator of attributes that make a specific location appealing as a potential destination to travellers' (Oliveira et al., 2023; Ariya et al., 2017). Thus, it can be concluded that destination attractiveness can be measured differently based on the destination attributes encountered, tourists' perceptions of the attribute relative to expectation and need satisfaction, or a combination of the two perspectives.

This study adopted a demand-side approach to examine tourist beach features in connection with tourism attractiveness. Identifying attributes that tourists consider attractive can help destinations identify areas that perform better or poorly, enabling them to prioritise attention, investment, and development, and retain their place among beach users (Liu et al. 2022; Zadel et al., 2018). Determining and evaluating destination attributes that play a key role in tourist satisfaction can provide important information for managers and policymakers to implement the interventions required to ensure destination competitiveness (Oliveira et al., 2023). Attractiveness is primarily assessed on the basis of the features and use of a specific destination (Montes-Guerra et al., 2023; Ariya et al., 2017). From a demand-side perspective, the focus is on users/tourists' assessment of destination attributes. Different user groups may have varying perceptions based on preferences,

age, gender, educational level, background, and experiences/exposure, among other variables (Dzitse et al., 2023). When aggregated, this variety can help construct a critical view of a destination's attractiveness through various attributes, and provide the data needed for destination management and marketing.

2.2 Attractiveness of beaches as tourism destinations

Coastal tourism destinations derive significant benefits from their beaches, which are the primary catalysts of their overall attractiveness. As tourist attractions, beaches serve as distinct resources and products, and their types and characteristics differ according to their physical locations (Zadel, 2016). For tourism purposes, the characterisation and attractiveness of a beach as a tourism resource involves considering a series of physical (geographical), environmental, and human elements. The decisive physical attractiveness attributes for tourism include the colour of sand and water, beach dimensions (width and length), slope, stability, texture, sand quality, water characteristics, nature of beach waves, and prevailing breezes/winds (Gonzalez & Holtmann-Ahumada, 2017). The qualities of these features are highly valued by beach users and contribute significantly to their attractiveness (Islam & Chaudhary, 2020). The human aspects of beaches are the most critical factors that determine their attractiveness, as human actions and inactions also affect their physical outlooks and overall attractiveness. Human dimensions, including facilities and services such as washrooms, food, safety measures, boat services, lifeguards, litter bins, and overall litter-free areas and comfort, are also essential for beach attractiveness and add to the enjoyment of tourists' trips to the beach (Thompson, 2015). Additional considerations include a range of factors: environmental quality, accessibility, and security in terms of cleanliness; the quality of amenities and services; image, comfort, tranquillity, aesthetics, crowd levels, and beach safety; and the pricing of beach services. Attractiveness plays a significant role in influencing coastal leisure, pleasure, excitement, and relief among holidaymakers (Lucrezi & van der Walt, 2015).

Thompson (2015) emphasised that the level of naturalness and cleanliness of the beach environment, including human facilities, constitute essential attributes for beach attractiveness. Liu et al. (2022) observed that environmental characteristics are paramount in shaping the attractive qualities of recreational beaches, affecting almost all other characteristics (Dzitse, 2024). Rodella and Corbau (2019) contended that neglecting environmental characteristics could

adversely affect other beach features. Poor sanitary conditions are recognised as a major limitation of beach appeal (Dzitse et al., 2023), and litter has been noted to be offensive to visitors, eroding beaches' attractive power (Mantolas et al. 2021). The cleanliness of all beach aspects provides room for destination attractiveness. This attribute is a top priority for all coastal travellers (Mehranian & Marzuki, 2018). Aesthetic quality is a key factor in beach attractiveness, influenced by litter, beach type, and commercialisation (Reitsamer et al. 2016). Anthropogenic structures and cloud cover can also affect beach scenery. Rodella and Corbau (2019) demonstrated that user perceptions are important for evaluating beach attractiveness, with sand availability and physical characteristics as key factors. A summary of the key beach destination attractiveness attributes is shown in figure 1.

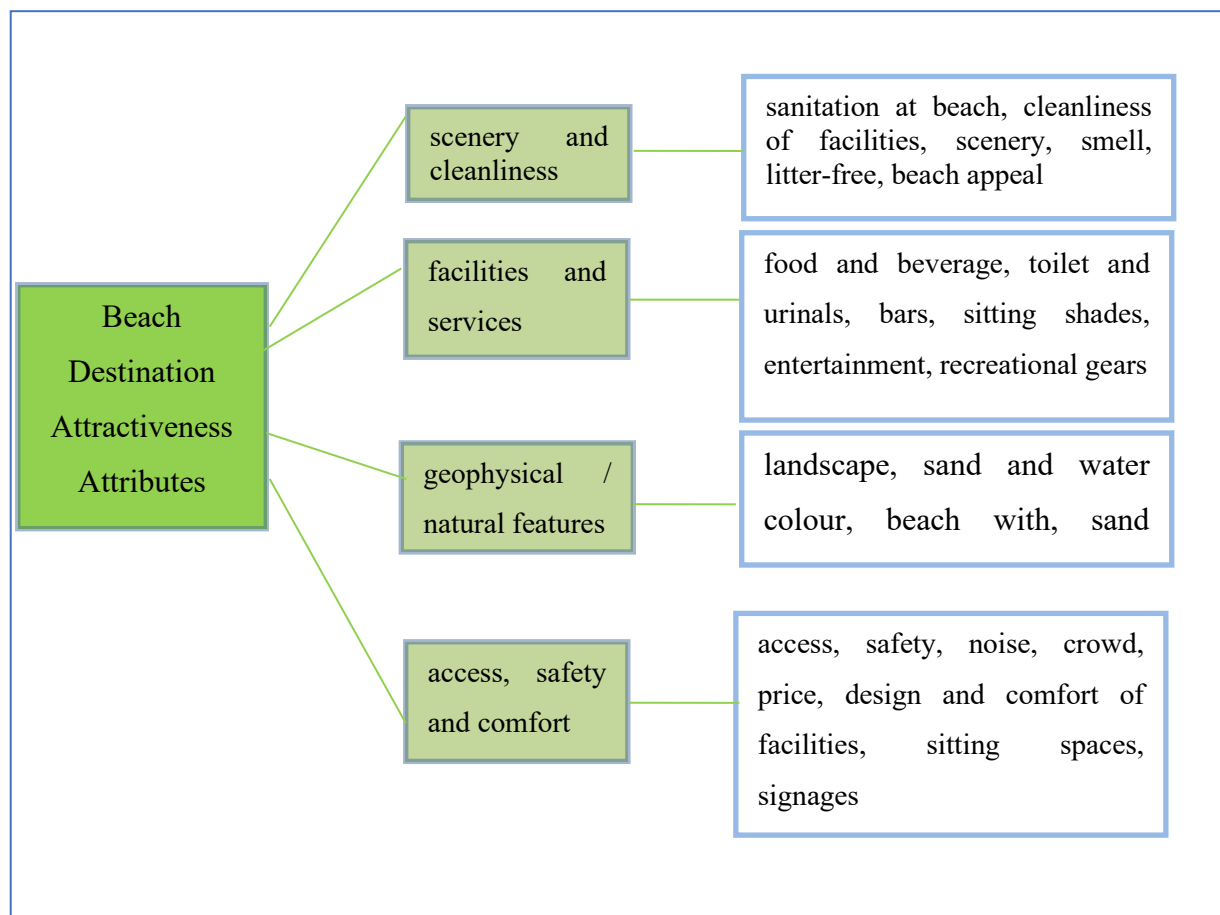


Figure 1: Flowchart of Beach Destination Attractiveness Attributes

Source: Elaborated by the authors

2.3 Factors that influence beach destination attractiveness

Beach appeal is shaped by both environmental features such as scenic beauty, water quality, and biodiversity, and sociodemographic factors. Studies show that tourists tend to prefer beaches perceived as pristine and having clear water (Liu et al., 2022; Lucrezi et al., 2016). However, sociodemographic factors were noted to have a significant impact on these perceptions, based on preference, travel purpose, and expectations. For example, age demographics can influence preferences for beach aesthetics. Younger individuals may be more attracted to vibrant and lively beach scenes, whereas older individuals may prefer serene and tranquil environments (Chen et al., 2017). Cultural and social factors also play a role in the perceptions of beach attractiveness. User encounters with local traditions, festivals, and community engagement contribute to the uniqueness of a beach destination, making it more appealing to tourists seeking authentic experience (Valverde-Roda et al., 2023; Lucrezi & van der Walt, 2015). Ethnicity and cultural background can influence preferences for specific beach activities or amenities, with different ethnic groups having varying preferences for recreational activities, food, and traditions associated with beach outings.

Accessibility factors are crucial determinants of beach attractiveness and often intertwined with sociodemographic variables. Efficient transportation, well-maintained roads, and proximity to tourist hubs enhance a beach's accessibility, impacting its popularity (Rodella & Corbau, 2019). Socioeconomic status can affect accessibility, with higher-income individuals potentially having more resources to access beaches with better infrastructure. Beach attractiveness perceptions and experiences are highly subjective due to differences among user groups. Factors like personality, origin, upbringing, activities sought, motivation, expectations, social background, and past experiences influence visitors' perceptions of destination appeals. Gender plays a role, with female tourists having higher pollution awareness and service quality reactions (Chen et al., 2017). Younger people, singles, women, and educated individuals frequently visit the beaches for relief and pleasure. Visitors' beach activity choices are determined by their gender, motivation, education, preferences, and perceptions of beach conditions (Lucrezi & van der Walt, 2015). Demographic variables contribute to visitors' perceptions of a destination's quality, activity choices, and experiences (Dzitse et al. 2023).

In the last decade, sustainability has become central to tourism and environmentally responsible practices have contributed to beach attractiveness (Zadel et al., 2018). Tourists increasingly prefer destinations that prioritise conservation efforts, including waste management, protection of local ecosystems, and community involvement in sustainable tourism practices (de Sousa-Felix, 2020; Silva et al., 2018). Sociodemographic factors, such as education level and environmental awareness, can influence tourists' preferences for environmentally responsible beach destinations. While natural characteristics like scenic beauty and biodiversity are essential for beach attractiveness, sociodemographic factors shape beach perceptions and preferences among different groups. Understanding these sociodemographic determinants is vital for beach managers and policymakers to develop strategies to cater to the diverse preferences of beach visitors in Ghana.

2.4 Theoretical framework

The study incorporates two theoretical frameworks: push-and-pull theory and Kaplan and Kaplan's landscape preference model. Push-and-pull theory, originating from tourism studies, identifies the factors that either repel individuals from their place of residence (push factors) or attract them to specific destinations (pull factors) (Dann, 1981; Crompton, 1979). In beach tourism, attractiveness functions primarily as a pull factor, enticing tourists to visit. Pull factors encompass a myriad of individual and collective beach attributes, including natural beauty characterised by scenic vistas, pristine sand, and clear water (Reitsamer et al., 2016). In addition, facilities, accessibility, and safety play pivotal roles in beaches' attractiveness. Cleanliness and water quality have emerged as critical pull factors, as tourists seek hygienic environments conducive to recreational activities. Conversely, push factors encompass a spectrum of personal preferences, economic conditions, health concerns, cultural interests, and demographic variables that significantly influence tourist-destination perceptions (Valverde-Roda et al., 2023; Chen et al., 2017). The provision of leisure activities, such as swimming and surfing, along with hospitality services, amenities, and infrastructure at beach resorts further contributes to the magnetism of beaches (Rodella & Corbau, 2019). Moreover, factors such as accessibility, affordability, and opportunities for cultural immersion can enhance the appeal of beach destinations. However, it is important to establish that destination attractiveness factors differ from one destination to the other.

In the context of the study seeking to establish the relationship between the sociodemographic factors of beach users and their perceptions of beach destination attractiveness, push-and-pull theory provides a robust framework for analysis. Demographic variables, such as age, gender, income level, and educational background can be related to push factors such as search for calm, which influence individuals' perceptions of beach attractiveness, while destinations' attributes may correspond to pull factors. For instance, younger individuals may be drawn to beaches for recreational activities, whereas older adults may prioritise tranquillity and scenic beauty. Similarly, individuals with higher income levels may seek luxurious amenities and services, whereas budget-conscious travelers may prioritise affordability and accessibility (Lucrezi et al., 2016; Lucrezi & van der Walt, 2015). By applying push-and-pull theory, this study can comprehensively examine the interplay between sociodemographic factors and beach destination attractiveness, shedding light on the dynamics shaping tourists' perceptions and preferences (Figure 2).

However, the push-and-pull theory lacks an environmental focus and does not account for the dynamic and evolving nature of tourists' perceptions of nature-based destinations; hence, the study adopted Kaplan and Kaplan's landscape preference model (1989), which offers a broader understanding of how environmental and aesthetic features or factors influence users' perceptions (Fyhri et al., 2009). Kaplan and Kaplan's landscape preference model (1989) asserts that people holistically perceive environments. Within this framework, individual perception is understood as a complex interaction focused on the organisation of space, particularly within tourist destinations, where users interact with more than one single element or attribute (Fyhri et al., 2009). The theory suggests four dimensions make a destination landscape more satisfying and attractive: coherence, complexity, legibility, and mystery. Coherence involves a preference for orderly, appreciable landscapes that enhance visual appeal. Complex landscapes provide exploration opportunities and maintain engagement through multiple features (Kuper, 2017). The capacity of the environment to support recreational purposes, entertainment, and convenience is crucial. A legible landscape has distinct landmarks and pathways that facilitate its ease of access, use, safety, and orientation. The mystery stage offers novel information or experiences as one progresses and engages more deeply with a destination. A mysterious landscape invites exploration, stimulates curiosity, and offers the required experience (Kaplan & Kaplan, 1989; Stamps, 2004). A destination may exhibit all four characteristics; however, an individual user's

level of appreciation determines the attractiveness of the destination. User characteristics influence landscape attractiveness and appreciation.

Operationalising Kaplan and Kaplan's theory in tourism shows that beach destinations can enhance attractiveness through scenic appeal and cleanliness, increasing visitor satisfaction (coherence). A diverse beach environment with various elements, geophysical features, amenities, appropriate occupancy, and comfort encourages exploration, maintains engagement, and fosters deeper appreciation (complexity). Well-defined pathways, landmarks, and safety posts improve accessibility and security, thereby enabling easy navigation and safety (legibility). Beaches that offer unique experiences and exploration opportunities stimulate curiosity, including complementary amenities that encourage

The framework suggests that tourists prefer destinations offering both coherence and opportunities for exploration. Literature on destination attractiveness highlights key factors important to tourists and managers, which align with Kaplan and Kaplan's model by contributing to sense-making or exploratory potential (Fyhri et al., 2009). This study also examines how users' sociodemographic characteristics influence their perception of beach attractiveness, affecting behaviors like intention to return and word of mouth. Although prior research has linked landscape resources, emotions, and behavior in tourism, studies specifically exploring the link between sociodemographics and perceptions of beach attractiveness remain limited (Häfner, 2017).

In addition, Dzitse et al. (2023) have elucidated that differences in perception of landscapes can exist between local people and visitors in a given place. While conventional definitions of attractiveness in tourism often emphasise physical attributes and conceive destinations as multifaceted products geared towards maximising aesthetic pleasure (Fyhri et al., 2009), this study delves into the perceptually driven dimensions of beach destination attractiveness, capturing the cognitive aspects of individuals' perceptions of overall beach destination attractiveness. Hence, this research seeks to provide an understanding of users' perceptions of beach destination attractiveness and elucidate the relationship between user demographic factors and these perceptions. The variables forming the relationships to produce perceived destination attractiveness are elaborated in figure 2, based on the operationalisation of the empirical and theoretical literature.

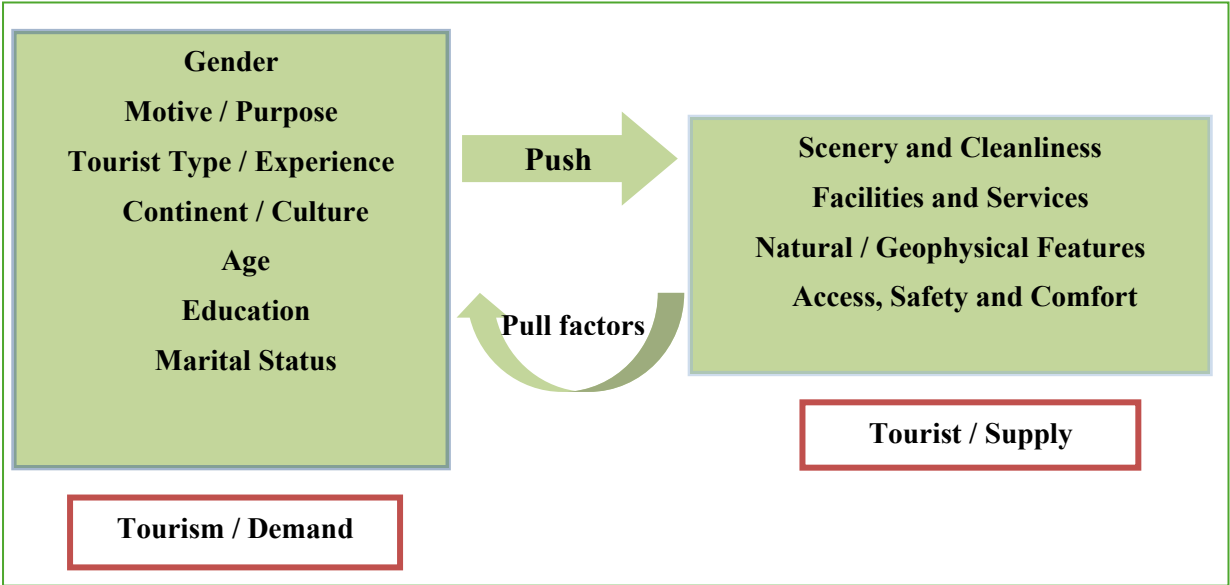


Figure 2: Determinant Factors of Beach Destination Attractiveness

Source: Elaborated by the authors

2.5 Study setting

This research was conducted at the Guinea Mensah Beach and Korle Gonno Beach destinations in the Accra Metropolis of Ghana. Guinea Mensah Beach, primarily for tourism, boasts sandy shores with a rock-cliff backdrop and is conveniently located near Accra. Situated within Ghana’s main tourist region, it spans approximately 220 meters with a gentle slope. Frequented by tourists from diverse backgrounds, its coordinates are N 05°32.594'W 000°11.823', N 05°32.599'W 000°11.825', N 05°32.609'W 000°11.771', and N 05°32.615'W 000°11.773'. Conversely, Korle Gonno Beach, located 2 km west of Accra, features a 200 m beach stretch characterised by a mix of rocky and sandy terrain. It attracts domestic and foreign visitors, particularly on weekends and holidays, and provides leisure facilities along its shoreline. Its coordinates are N 05°31.733'W 000°13.537', N 05°31.738'W 000°13.538', N 05°31.744'W 000°13.480', and N 05°31.752'W 000°13.481'.

3. Methods

This study used a quantitative research methodology with a descriptive cross-sectional survey design, commonly applied to describe and interpret empirical phenomena (Saunders et al., 2019). The quantitative approach, based on statistical analysis, helps test relationships between variables and evaluate theories (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). This design is suitable for examining the relationship between sociodemographic factors and visitors' perceptions of beach attractiveness in Ghana.

3.1 Survey instrument and variables

A two-part questionnaire was developed for the data collection. The first part (dependent variables) contained 32 statements drafted along four dimensions of beach attractiveness (scenery and cleanliness, facilities and services, physical features/landscapes, access, safety, and comfort) to elicit tourists' perception of beach destination attractiveness. In the questionnaire, the first section was on Beach Scenery and Cleanliness, which consisted of seven statements—for example, “The litter-free state of the beach area, Cleanliness of urinals and toilet facilities.” The second section was on Facilities and Services, which also contained seven statements, some of which were “The food and beverages,” and “Beach urinals and toilets available.” The third section was on physical features and contained nine statements, including “the landscape (scenery),” “sand texture”, “the color of beach sand and water”, and “the sea breeze and waves.” Finally, Access, Safety, and Comfort dimension also had nine statements, including “Access to the beach,” “Parking spaces,” “Crowd and noise level at the beach” and “Safety/level of safety at the beach.” The coherence, complexity, legibility, and mystery of the beach destination environment determine the quality and level of attractiveness that users attribute to each dimensional characteristic of the beaches (pull factors) (Kaplan & Kaplan, 1989). The statements for users' assessment of beach attractiveness were measured on a five-point Likert scale (1 = very unattractive, 2 = unattractive, 3 = fairly attractive, 4 = attractive, and 5 = very attractive). Several studies have shown that self-rated perception scales are valid measures for tourism destination assessment (Islam & Chaudhary, 2020; Lucrezi & van der Walt, 2015). The second part of the questionnaire (independent variables) encompassed sociodemographic characteristics (seven

statements) including visitors' nationality, age, gender, education, marital status, purpose of travel, and continent of origin. These items were adapted from previous studies by Dodds and Holmes (2019), Mehranian and Marzuki (2018), Ariya et al. (2017), and Gonzalez and Holtmann-Ahumada (2017).

3.2 Pre-test, sampling and data collection

Towards the start of the main data collection for the study, a pre-test of the questionnaire was conducted from 24 March to 30 March 2020 with a sample comprising 22 beach users selected from La Pleasure Beach, situated approximately 7.5 kilometres away from the Accra Metropolis in Ghana. This pre-test served as a vital phase in refining the questionnaire, enabling the identification and rectification of any contextual discrepancies and ensuring the content validity of the study within the Ghanaian context.

During data collection, researchers distributed self-administered questionnaires at two beaches over a three-month period (16 November 2020 to 3 February 2021). The questionnaires were given only to visitors who had spent at least two hours on the beach and actively engaged with the beach or its facilities, such as bars. A total of 317 questionnaires were distributed using a convenience sampling technique, chosen due to the lack of a sampling frame and the high mobility of tourists, which made probability sampling impractical. After excluding four incomplete questionnaires, 313 responses remained for analysis. This sample size surpasses the minimum threshold of 100 respondents recommended for quantitative research (Hair et al., 2013) and was considered statistically sufficient for the study.

Nonetheless, it is important to note that during late 2020 and early 2021, the COVID-19 pandemic significantly impacted travel conditions, as borders were not fully opened. Therefore, the majority of the respondents (71%) to the beaches were domestic visitors and only 29% of international tourists, which may have resulted in imbalances in the study outcomes. Moreover, the COVID-19 pandemic could impact visitors' perceptions of safety at beaches because their safety perceptions may have been heightened, affecting their responses regarding beach safety and comfort. However, the responses primarily reflect the views of respondents and the realities at the two beach destinations.

3.3 Data analysis

All data analyses were performed using STATA 13.0. using the “svy” command. Descriptive statistics were calculated for the respondents’ profiles, after which the reliability and normality of each dimension were measured. The overall perceived beach attractiveness was calculated by summing the mean scores for each dimension (mean= 3.15) and dividing by the number of dimensions (4) (Table 2). For each dimension, a total score below the overall mean was classified as unattractive, whereas a score equal to or greater than the mean was classified as attractive.

To systematically analyse the perceived beach attractiveness, binary responses were derived from the initially employed five-point ranked scale. This entailed amalgamating responses denoting ‘very attractive,’ ‘attractive,’ and ‘fairly attractive’ into a singular category labelled as “attractive,” (coded as 1) while responses indicating ‘very unattractive’ and ‘unattractive’ were grouped as “not attractive” (coded as 0). The overall perceived attractiveness of beach destinations was also explored. Binary categorisation was deemed necessary for the subsequent analytical phases of the study. The use of dichotomous measurements of perceptions and destination assessment is a common practice in tourism studies (e.g. Ariya et al., 2017). Furthermore, Jeong and Lee (2016) and Gu et al. (2015) demonstrated that condensing a multi-point scale into dichotomous and trichotomous classifications yields favorable outcomes in comparison with retaining the original five-point scale during analysis. This assertion is corroborated by Agresti and Kateri (2011) which further underscore the efficacy of such a methodological adjustment during the analysis phase.

The Pearson design-based chi-square test was also used to explore the association between the sociodemographic characteristics of the respondents (independent variables), and each variable representing the perceived beach destination attractiveness dimension and overall destination attractiveness (dependent variables).

4. Results

4.1 Sociodemographic variables

As shown in table 1, more females were included in this study (57.9%). The respondents were mostly below the age of 35years (76.3%), with those aged <25 years and between 25-34 years of

age accounting for 36.2% and 40.1%, respectively. The majority of respondents were domestic visitors (71.2%) and single visitors (77.6%), with 70.6% completing their first degree. In terms of continent of origin, the data were skewed towards Africa (75.3%), whereas over half of the respondents (67.3%) visited beaches for leisure/fun purposes.

Table 1: Characteristics of respondents (N=313)

<i>Characteristics</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>%</i>
Gender		
Male	133	42.1
Female	180	57.9
Nationality		
Domestic	223	71.2
International	90	28.8
Age		
<25	113	36.2
25-34	124	40.1
35+	76	23.7
Educational level		
High school	51	15.5
First degree	218	70.6
Postgraduate	44	13.9
Marital status		
Not married	240	77.6
Married	44	12.9
Ever-married	29	9.5
Continent of origin		
Africa	233	75.3
Europe	46	14.6
North America	23	6.5
Australasia	11	3.6
Purpose of travel		
Business	21	6.8
Leisure/fun	208	67.3
Education/research	26	8.1
Meeting others	58	17.8

Source: Authors' elaboration

4.2 Reliability and Normality tests

The reliability of the variables measuring perception of beach destination attractiveness was assessed using Cronbach's alpha (Table 2). The results indicate that Cronbach's alpha values for the measurement sets used in the study for the perception of beach destination attractiveness were above the recommended value of 0.70 (Hair et al., 2010). Therefore, it can be concluded that all the dimensions are reliable. Additionally, the normality of the data was assessed for further analysis. This revealed skewness and kurtosis values (z-values) within the -2 to +2 range ($p > 0.05$) (Shapiro-Wilk test), which is indicative of a normal distribution of the dataset (Table 2). The results show that overall, beach users perceived geophysical features (mean = 3.87) and access, safety, and comfort (mean = 3.68) as attractive, whereas scenery and cleanliness (mean = 2.54) and facilities and services (mean = 2.52) were unattractive. Figure 3 shows the distribution of visitors' perceptions of beach attractiveness in actual percentage terms.

Table 2: Reliability and Normality test for beach attractiveness dimensions

<i>Latent Constructs</i>	<i>No of Items</i>	<i>Cronbach alpha</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>Std. D</i>	<i>Skewness</i>	<i>Kurtosis</i>	<i>p-value</i>
Scenery and Cleanliness	7	.838	2.54	1.04	0.820	0.547	$p=0.0512$
Facilities and Services	7	.841	2.52	1.03	-0.544	1.412	$p= 0.0632$
Geo-Physical Features	9	.869	3.87	0.98	-0.425	1.661	$p=0.0822$
Access, Safety and Comfort	9	.838	3.68	1.01	0.911	1.742	$p=0.0524$
Overall Attractiveness	32	.887	3.15	1.01	0.722	1.411	$p= 0.612$

Source: Authors' elaboration

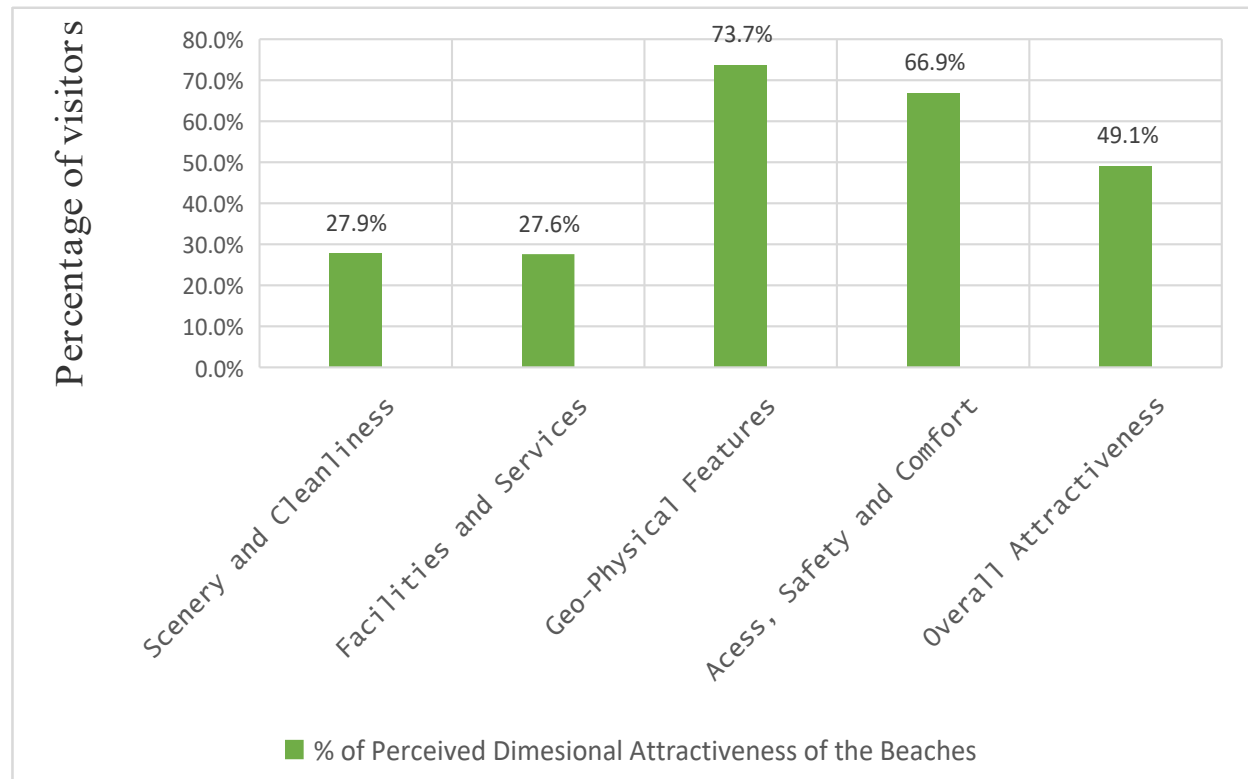


Figure 3: Visitors' perceptions of beach attractiveness

Source: Authors' elaboration.

4.3 Relationship between perceived beach attractiveness and sociodemographic factors

The Pearson design-based chi-square test was employed to investigate the association between the key explanatory variables and various dimensions of perceived beach destination attractiveness. The findings derived from this analysis are presented in table 3, which provides a comprehensive overview of the observed relationships between the variables under scrutiny and the assessed beach attractiveness dimensions.

4.3.1 Perception of attractiveness of beach scenery and cleanliness

Univariate analysis revealed significant variations between users' perceptions regarding the attractiveness of beach scenery and cleanliness based on demographic factors, such as nationality, marital status, continent of origin, and purpose of visit. Specifically, the findings indicate a higher tendency to positively report the attractiveness of beach scenery and cleanliness among specific user groups. These groups included domestic visitors, married individuals, those hailing from

Australasia, and those visiting for leisure and recreational purposes. Detailed insights into these observations are provided in table 3 to elucidate the differential responses across the demographic strata.

4.3.2 Perception of attractiveness of beach facilities and services

The findings indicate notable disparities in the perceived attractiveness of beach facilities and services across demographic categories, including gender, nationality, marital status, continent of origin, and purpose of the visit. Specifically, male respondents, domestic visitors, married people, Europeans and those visiting for business purposes were more likely to express positive perceptions of the beach facilities and services (Table 3).

4.3.3 Perception of attractiveness of beach geophysical features

The findings revealed a statistically significant association between the demographic variables of gender and users' perceptions of the attractiveness of the beaches' geophysical characteristics. Specifically, the data indicated a higher likelihood among male participants to report the perceived attractiveness of the geophysical attributes of the beaches compared to their female counterparts.

4.3.4 Perception of attractiveness of beach access, safety and comfort

The findings revealed statistically significant associations between demographic variables and users' perceptions of the attractiveness of access, safety, and comfort at beaches. The results suggest that male visitors, alongside domestic visitors, individuals with a high school educational background, and those within the age bracket of 25-34 (74.7%) had a higher likelihood of reporting positive perceptions of the attractiveness of access, safety, and comfort at the beaches (Table 3). These results suggest differential propensities among demographic subgroups regarding the assessment of attributes such as accessibility, safety, and comfort at beach sites, underscoring the importance of considering diverse user characteristics in evaluating coastal environments.

4.3.5 Overall perceived beach attractiveness

Factors such as gender, nationality, and continent of origin were associated with overall perceived attractiveness of the beach (Table 3). Specifically, the results indicate that a higher proportion of males (66.4%) than females, domestic visitors (65.7%) than international visitors, and individuals from Europe (68.7%) relative to other regions perceived beaches as attractive.

Table 3: Analysis of the association between sociodemographic factors and perceived beach destination attractiveness dimensions

<i>Assessed % of perceived beach attractiveness</i>					
Demographic Factors	Scenery & Cleanliness	Facilities & Services	Physical Features	Access, Safety & Comfort	Overall Beach Attractiveness
Sex					
Male	39.4	48.6	94.6	79.2	66.4
Female	33.7	37.4	82.7	57.7	59.6
	p= 0.146	p=0.014*	P= 0.006*	p=0.011*	p=0.012*
Nationality					
Domestic	23.4	23.4	85.6	80.4	65.7
International	18.9	15.3	94.4	61.9	57.3
	p= 0.001*	p= 0.002*	p= 0.086	p= 0.008*	p=0.041*
Education					
High school	39.2	48.9	86.1	85.2	63.2
First degree	37.4	46.1	84.1	64.4	53.4
Postgraduate	36.1	47.2	79.1	67.6	51.9
	p= 0.242	p= 0.072	p= 0.061	p= 0.001*	p=0.561
Marital status					
Married	39.6	39.7	87.2	63.4	63.2
Not married	26.4	29.3	96.4	82.1	64.7
Ever-married	24.3	23.3	84.6	73.4	61.6

	p= 0.033*	p= 0.012*	p= 0.234	p= 0.123	p=0.052
<i>Assessed % of perceived beach attractiveness</i>					
Demographic Factors	Scenery & Cleanliness	Facilities & Services	Demographic Factors	Scenery & Cleanliness	Facilities & Services
Age					
<25	37.8	37.1	83.1	55.4	53.7
25-34	37.2	43.7	91.2	74.7	64.6
35≥	39.2	55.3	90.5	68.8	63.6
	p= 0.962	p= 0.064	p= 0.234	p= 0.001*	p=0.067
Continent					
Australasia	57.2	37.1	60.1	85.8	65.7
Africa	40.5	36.7	85.8	63.4	67.2
Europe	22.2	40.0	93.4	84.2	68.7
N. America	10.2	27.4	95.2	85.2	63.6
	p=0.005*	p=0.001*	p= 0.151	p=0.100	p=0.049*
Purpose of visit					
Business	22.1	43.1	89.6	94.8	64.7
Leisure/fun	43.1	36.6	84.5	62.6	66.2
Educ - research	11.4	30.9	95.9	69.6	65.2
VFR/Others	28.7	35.2	86.5	62.1	56.3

Significance level at * $p < 0.05$

Source: Authors elaboration

5. Discussion

The exploration of beach destination attribute dimensions and visitors' perceptions of their attractiveness in this study provides valuable insights for researchers and beach management stakeholders. These findings can inform efforts to enhance key beach attributes such as cleanliness, service quality, and overall appeal. As illustrated in Figure 3, visitors' perceived attractiveness ratings are distributed across four key dimensions of beach attributes, along with overall destination attractiveness. Importantly, these dimensions appear to function independently of demographic factors such as sex, age, education, continent of origin, and purpose of visit. As such, they serve as reliable indicators of a beach destination's capacity to deliver meaningful experiences from the perspective of both visitors and operators. It is therefore essential for beach managers to prioritise the quality of beach resources, aesthetics, and services, as these are directly consumed by beachgoers. Providing high-quality services and maintaining visually and environmentally appealing beach settings is a vital strategy for attracting visitors and encouraging repeat visitation and loyalty (Ariya et al., 2017).

Regarding individual dimensions, the perception of the attractiveness of the geophysical features of beaches emerged as notably high (73.7%), potentially attributable to characteristics such as the texture of golden beach sands, soothing beach breezes, and rhythmic sea waves. The constituent variables comprising the geophysical features substantiated the rationale behind the visitors' elevated perceptions of attractiveness. This finding suggests that physical features and seascapes manifest the qualities desired by visitors, thereby positioning the attractiveness of beach destinations in this aspect (Rodella & Corbau, 2019). In addition, factors such as accessibility, feelings of safety, and comfort garnered relatively positive perceptions of attractiveness among the majority of the users (66.9%) (Figure 3). This may indicate that visitors can readily access beaches, encounter desired levels of ambiance and social/recreational activities (Dzitse, 2024), and afford products and services sold at competitive prices, thereby enhancing their overall experience and perception (Mehranian & Marzuki, 2018).

The research findings also indicated that the majority of beach users (72.1%) expressed very low ratings for the attractiveness of beach scenery and cleanliness, particularly concerning sanitation facilities (Figure 3). This displeasure may be attributed to the pervasive issue of litter

accumulation and odor stemming from some ends of the beaches, which is a concern in Ghana's coastal regions, including tourist beaches that are supposed to be under supervision and management (Dzitse et al., 2023; Mensah, 2021). The presence of deterring litter on these beaches likely contributes to an unappealing environment, thereby diminishing visitors' overall perceptions and ratings for their attractiveness. This shows that beach scenery and sanitation are crucial factors in user perception creation, as well as the attraction and retention of visitors to coastal destinations (Mehranian & Marzuki, 2018). In addition, beach users place a high premium on beach cleanliness; hence, the low rating for cleanliness at the beach destination shows that it was poor and may have negatively impacted their overall experience and satisfaction (Lucrezi et al., 2016). Such outcomes can severely impact the destination's fortune in terms of its ability to retain existing patrons and attract new ones. This could have undesirable long-term consequences for Accra's beach destinations amidst growing competitions and sustainable coastal tourism in the Metropolis (Dzitse et al., 2024). This issue is further compounded by the finding that facilities and services are among the least attractive beach features (27.6%). This includes the availability and condition of restrooms, amenities, and various services. The low ratings are attributed to inadequate provision or poor maintenance, which limits visitors' ability to fully enjoy the beach. Clean, well-maintained facilities, particularly washrooms are essential for enhancing tourist satisfaction and appreciation (Reitsamer et al., 2016).

The results, therefore, emphasise the importance of both natural and human elements in shaping visitors' desire for and use of these beaches, and ultimately their attractiveness in the minds of users. Undoubtedly, natural attributes such as sand colour, water quality, and cleanliness are crucial factors that influence visitors' beach appeal (Silva et al., 2018; Gonzalez & Holtmann-Ahumada, 2017) because they clearly define the key qualities of a beach location in almost all coastal destinations (Liu et al., 2022). For tourism, human dimensions are essential in maintaining these attributes in their desired state, which, however, does not appear to be the case in the current results.

Another human dimension is the provision of facilities and services that significantly complement and enhance user enjoyment and comfort at destinations (Mehranian & Marzuki, 2018), and in the case of beaches, this includes clean facilities, food, safety, and litter-free beach

areas. Nonetheless, this aspect of the beach destinations was considered the least attractive, implying the need for beach operators and regulators to improve their management of beaches.

In the chi-square analyses conducted, visitors' demographic characteristics emerged as factors having a significant association with perceptions of beach attractiveness. Notable variations were observed in the perceived attractiveness of beach scenery, cleanliness, and facilities and services across these sociodemographic factors. Specifically, domestic visitors, married individuals, those from Australasia, and visitors with leisure intentions reported higher levels of attractiveness regarding beach scenery and cleanliness. These findings highlight the impact of sociodemographic variables on beach perception in this dimension (Lucrezi & van der Walt, 2015). Regarding beach facilities and services, disparities based on sex, nationality, marital status, continent of origin, and purpose of the visit were identified. Male respondents, domestic visitors, married individuals, Europeans, and those visiting for business purposes are more likely to report perceptions of the attractiveness of beach facilities and services. These findings further underscore the importance and need for beach management to offer well-maintained and adequately equipped beach facilities that meet visitor needs and enhance the overall attractiveness and experience.

Furthermore, accessibility factors play a crucial role in beach attractiveness, with ease of entry and proximity to tourist accommodations enhancing a beach's popularity and attractiveness (Rodella & Corbau, 2019). Disparities in the perceived attractiveness of beach geophysical features, access, safety, and comfort across the demographic variables were also noted. Male participants were more likely to report positive perceptions of beach geophysical attributes, while various demographic groups, including domestic visitors, individuals with a high school educational background, and those within the age bracket of 25-34, exhibited a higher likelihood of reporting positive attractiveness perceptions of access, safety, and comfort at beaches. The results revealed that certain dimensions, particularly the perceived attractiveness of beach cleanliness, scenery, and facilities and services, showed significant associations with various sociodemographic factors. Notably, these same dimensions were rated as the least attractive across the studied beaches. Among them, facilities and services received the lowest ratings, despite their essential role in enhancing the overall visitor experience and satisfaction, thereby contributing to beach destination attractiveness (Ratnasari et al., 2019). This suggests that,

although these aspects are critical to the appeal of beach destinations, their current state at tourist beaches in Accra likely falls short of visitor expectations. However, the importance of these attributes requires beach operators and destination managers regardless of the destination to ensure that these attributes are continually offered at their premium state for visitor use, without which the destination may lose its desirability and competitiveness in the long term (Mehranian & Marzuki, 2018; Lucrezi et al., 2016). This could lead to the loss of a significant portion of patrons to better-established or emerging beach destinations in the region. Often, these patrons represent the most economically influential regular visitors. Consequently, their departure can severely impact beach operators, the sustainability of the destinations, and the coastal communities reliant on tourism (Dzitse et al., 2024).

Therefore, understanding the study outcomes and addressing these shortcomings for beach destination operators and managers in Accra beach destinations could lead to substantial improvements in the overall beach attractiveness, increase visitation and length of stay, and increase positive word-of-mouth, which can yield economic benefits and sustainability for these beach destinations as a whole.

6. Conclusion and Implications

This study sheds light on the perceived attractiveness of beach destinations in Ghana and West Africa, elaborates on the multilayered relationship between sociodemographic factors and perceptions of beach destination attractiveness, and offers valuable insights for researchers, beach management, and policymakers. These findings underscore the importance of understanding diverse visitors' perceptions and pointing out beach destination attributes, products, or offerings that need to be addressed to enhance the overall attractiveness and sustainability of beach destinations. The study highlights the significance of beach cleanliness, facilities, and services in shaping visitor perceptions, with notable disparities observed across demographic variables, such as age, education, marital status, and continent of origin. Importantly, the study revealed that beach cleanliness and facilities were perceived as not readily attractive dimensions, suggesting the need for improved maintenance and infrastructure development to enhance the visitor experience. Additionally, the study identified cultural and

experiential differences in perceptions of beach attractiveness, emphasising the importance of considering diverse demographic factors when evaluating distinctive destinations as beaches by offering services and qualities that would make beach destinations attractive to most of their patrons. Overall, by considering the interplay between beach attributes and sociodemographic factors, beach managers and policymakers can develop strategies to cater to the diverse preferences of beach visitors, ultimately enhancing the overall attractiveness and sustainability of beach destinations in Ghana.

6.1. Theoretical implications

The findings of this study have significant theoretical implications for both push and pull theory (Crompton, 1979) and Kaplan and Kaplan's landscape theory (1989). In the context of push and pull theory, this research underscores the role of various factors, particularly cleanliness and facility quality, as critical determinants of beach attractiveness. Push-pull theory explains how internal motivations (push factors) and external attractions (pull factors) shape visitors' perceptions of beach destination attractiveness. The study shows that physical features and beach comfort act as strong pull factors, drawing visitors by offering tangible benefits such as scenic beauty, a pleasant environment, and a sense of safety—key elements for a relaxing experience (Reitsamer et al., 2016). However, the low attractiveness of beach cleanliness and amenities as pull factors raises concerns. This suggests visitors may undervalue or overlook these aspects because they do not meet expectations or are perceived as less essential than beauty and safety. If cleanliness and amenities remain inadequate, they could deter visitors, especially if these factors become more prominent in visitor preferences.

Moreover, push factors, involving internal motivations driving visitors to beach destinations, such as desire for relaxation or health and well-being, may be affected, potentially leading to dissatisfaction (Dann, 1981). This is because the appeal of physical aspects and comfort of beaches can be associated with a desire for restorative escape from daily stressors. For those seeking health respite, a secure and comfortable environment is required. If these conditions are not met at Accra beach destinations, visitors may select alternative locations where they feel

secure and relaxed in future coastal visits. The results expand the significance of push-and-pull theory in the coastal destination context

This study also contributes to Kaplan and Kaplan's (1989) landscape theory by providing a deeper understanding of how environmental and aesthetic factors affect visitors' perceptions of attractiveness in beach tourism. For example, the high attractiveness of the geophysical features of beaches (73.7%) can be attributed to the coherence of these elements. The texture of golden beach sands, soothing beach breezes, and rhythmic sea waves creates a harmonious and orderly environment that is easy to understand and visually appealing to visitors. Thus, the diverse elements of beach scenery, such as the natural landscape, breeze, waves, and recreational activities, offer richness and variety to keep visitors engaged. However, the presence of litter and unpleasant odors detracts from this complexity, leading to lower ratings of cleanliness and overall attractiveness. Furthermore, the high attractiveness of the geophysical features further suggests that these elements evoke a sense of mystery and curiosity. As such, the beauty of the beach, with its soothing breezes and rhythmic waves, invites visitor exploration while promising new experiences that destination managers can pay attention to. Nevertheless, the negative impact of litter and poor sanitation diminishes this sense of mystery, which can make beaches less inviting over time if not addressed. Finally, the variances in perceived attractiveness across different demographic groups suggest that complexity plays a role in visitors' overall beach preferences (Häfner, 2017; Fyhri et al., 2009). By addressing issues related to beach coherence, complexity, legibility, and mystery and considering the diverse preferences of different demographic groups, beach management can create a more appealing and enjoyable coastal destination experience for all visitors, as well as create a sustainable destination that benefits all. Thus, these findings advance the relevance of landscape theory in tourism and destination attractiveness studies. The results offer key aspects of destination attributes and products that can be categorised under each of the four dimensions of the theory that researchers can appreciate, adapt, and use in tourism research.

The theoretical perspectives therefore suggest that while certain landscape/physical and safety aspects of beaches are strong pull factors that are appealing, there is a need to address the perceived lack of attractiveness in the cleanliness and amenities of the destinations. By understanding and addressing the diverse preferences shaped by sociodemographic

characteristics, beach destinations can develop more effective strategies to attract and retain visitors, ultimately enhancing their overall appeal. This holistic approach can ensure that all beach aspects and visitor experiences are optimised, catering to the diverse needs and expectations of beachgoers. Therefore, the study results have managerial implications for measures toward beach destination maintenance and renovation.

6.2. Practical/Managerial implications

The results indicate that beach scenery, cleanliness, and facilities and services at the studied destinations were perceived as unattractive. Negative perceptions, particularly regarding the human dimension, can lead to adverse word of mouth, damaging the beaches' reputation (Mantolas et al., 2021). This may hinder the attraction of new visitors and cause a gradual decline in visitor numbers, directly impacting revenue for operators, local communities, and government. Over time, these effects threaten the long-term sustainability and competitiveness of the Accra Metropolitan Area's tourist beaches. To address this, beach operators and management must enhance cleaning efforts and upgrade facilities by implementing regular cleaning schedules, installing waste bins, and fostering public awareness through collaboration with media, local authorities, communities, and beach users (Mensah, 2021). This partnership will be imperative for reducing litter from nearby communities and tourists entering the coastal environment and ending up at beaches. This can help to preserve and enhance beach aesthetics and user enjoyment and comfort.

Collaboration with regulators, including the Ghana Tourism Authority, the Environmental Protection Agency, and the Accra Metropolitan Assembly is essential to enforce stricter hygiene standards through regular monitoring and inspections. This will ensure operators comply with environmental and safety regulations, significantly enhancing the appeal of these destinations. Specifically, the Ghana Tourism Authority should ensure that beach facilities provide basic infrastructure and amenities, such as seating, shade structures (benches, picnic tables, pavilions, umbrellas), and hygienic washrooms, restrooms, showers, and recreational areas that meet regulatory standards. Meeting these standards increases the likelihood that visitor expectations will be satisfied (Liu et al., 2022). This, in turn, can result in a positive visitor experience,

satisfaction, and perception of these beaches. The Ghana Tourism Authority should also partner with beach operators to provide or intensify the provision of lifeguard services, information boards indicating potential hazards, and emergency contact at beach destinations. This offers a huge sense of safety and appreciation to patrons at beaches. Moreover, to improve coastal tourism, the Ministry of Tourism, Culture, and Creative Arts in Ghana or the Accra Metropolitan Assembly can allocate funds and resources to support beach operators through their units to help support beach maintenance and maintain high-level cleanliness standards at beach destinations. These measures can enhance beach destination attractiveness and coastal tourism in the region and beyond.

The study also offers an understanding that demographic factors influence visitors' perceptions of the attractiveness of the studied beach destinations, which is vital for beach management, as it offers them the opportunity to know how different groups perceive their destination, especially across individual domains. This can offer valuable insights for managers to develop services and destination products that cater to, meet, and satisfy diverse visitor preferences, allowing them to tailor amenities and services to the specific needs of different demographic groups. By doing so, they will also improve the quality of all beach services and product offerings, which can go a long way to improving the overall appeal of the destinations. For example, intentional efforts must be made to enhance cleanliness and safety measures at beaches to appeal to female visitors, international travelers, singles, and highly educated visitors who form the core visitors to beaches (Lucrezi & van der Walt, 2015), particularly since these groups have shown less appreciation for the cleanliness of the studied beaches. Furthermore, it can help develop marketing campaigns that resonate with specific groups. For instance, for domestic visitors or those who visit beaches for leisure purposes, promoting clean beaches that offer a variety of recreational opportunities that can be performed with ultimate safety can help attract and maintain more visitors. The demographic information can also be helpful to beach operators in offering seasonal promotions targeted at demographic groups based on their preferences and beach aspects they hold high, or perhaps beach management may have improved that could be of interest to a certain visitor category.

7. Study Contribution

This research contributes to a critical theoretical discourse in tourism literature by fusion push-pull and Kaplan and Kaplan's landscape theories in the coastal tourism context. Specifically, the findings show how psychological and physical factors interact to determine beach attractiveness, highlighting the changing influence and limit of pull factors (such as environmental comfort, perceived safety, and scenic beauty) alone in determining a destination's appeal. This adds to push-pull theory by demonstrating that while pull factors as considered are primary attractive motivators, the quality of those factors or overlooked attributes of user attributions and perceptions of those factors may serve as latent contributory determinants. Most importantly, the study extends Kaplan and Kaplan's landscape preference theory by integrating the cognitive dimensions of coherence, complexity, mystery, and legibility into destination attractiveness or beach destination assessment, which has rarely been probed through this lens. Traditionally applied in environmental psychology and landscape perception, this fusion approach offers a new perspective to tourists' evaluation of beach destinations, offering a new approach to environmental psychology and landscape perceptions. By incorporating these cognitive dimensions into destination attractiveness, this study offers a new theoretical extension that provides structured psychological dimensional elements for understanding how coastal destination attributes and landscapes affect destination appeal and perception. Thus, this study sets itself apart by offering an empirical validation of Kaplan and Kaplan's theory in a context-specific tourism destination, proving that it is applicable beyond general landscape aesthetics and therefore offers a crucial theoretical adaptation for tourism destination evaluation, while, contributing to a more integrated conceptual framework for coastal tourism studies.

Most importantly, this study offers the first significant academic investigation of how beach destination characteristics in sub-Saharan Africa affect visitor preferences, especially from the viewpoint of psychological appeal factors. Thus, it bridges tourism and environmental psychology, a connection that has been under-explored, particularly within the coastal destination experience domain in sub-Saharan Africa. Imperatively, it provides new insights into a non-traditional market of beach tourism that is now slowly growing in the region, and how psychological measures of experiences shape destination appeal among customers in these destination contexts. Hence, this study offers regional insights that contribute to the global

tourism discourse and establishes an adaptable theoretical basis for future studies to assess how natural landscapes can drive sustainable tourism from a demand perspective. In addition, in merging tourism management, environmental psychology, and landscape perception, it offers a new interdisciplinary structure for assessing destination attractiveness. Unlike previous tourism attractiveness studies, which largely focused on destination branding, infrastructure, and service quality, this study offers insights into cognitive landscape perceptions based on beach destination pull factors, providing understanding of the natural environmental aesthetics and psychological appeal of coastal destinations, further enhancing the structural dimensions of destination attractiveness in coastal tourism.

8. Limitations and future research

First, the study's data had a limited number of international respondents (29%) and an unbalanced age distribution. Second, the heightened perception of safety due to the pandemic may have influenced their responses. This could have introduced a bias that overemphasises the importance of safety and comfort, potentially overshadowing other factors that might be more significant in normal times. To mitigate this, future studies should consider conducting similar surveys during typical travel periods with balanced respondents (domestic and international visitor ratios) to compare the results. This would help in understanding how much the pandemic influenced travelers' perceptions and ensure that the findings are robust across different contexts.

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