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# Beach satisfaction factors in emerging coastal destinations: A case of Ada Region, Ghana

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**Abstract:** Tourist satisfaction with destinations is intricately tied to competitiveness and sustainable growth, which shape destinations' fortunes. Although user satisfaction has received much attention in the tourism literature, little exists on beaches, which are distinctive destinations. To this end, this study explored tourists' satisfaction levels, satisfaction factors, and demographic influences within an emerging beach destination context. Based on 604 quantitative survey responses from Ada beaches in Ghana, this study found that slightly more than half (57.7%) of the tourists were fairly satisfied (mean = 2.45). The study explored six beach satisfaction factors: amenities and services, cultural elements, physical attributes, beach accessibility, beach comfort, and beach recreation. Moreover, tourists' gender, nationality, and age influence the variance in their satisfaction. The results provide implications for beach operators, the Ada East District Assembly, and the Ghana Tourism Authority to better appreciate beach destination satisfaction domains that need immediate consideration and long-term improvements to boost tourist experience and satisfaction and promote sustainable development within this emergent destination's management and development framework.

**Keywords:** Emerging destinations, beach satisfaction, tourist satisfaction, coastal tourism, socio-demographic profiles, Ghana.

## 1 Introduction

Emerging coastal regions have great potential as future tourist destinations, but there is a gap in research on

visitor destination satisfaction determinants in these regions (Joppe, 2019; Raimkulov et al., 2021). This lack of comprehensive data hinders informed decision making and sustainable tourism development in these new destinations (Gursoy et al., 2021). Destination viability and sustainability, particularly in the early stages, depend on tourist satisfaction (Rasoolimanesh et al. 2023). Choi et al. (2017) argued that destination managers must understand users' perceptions, experiences, and satisfaction in order to drive sustainable planning and development in emerging destinations. Bigne et al. (2020) further emphasize that effective tourism planning and development demands comprehensive inquiry and data that offer insights into the variability of tourist experiences and satisfaction within emerging destinations (Raimkulov et al., 2021). Consequently, Brščić and Šugar (2020) and Chen and Bau (2016) contended that addressing the lack of information and data in understanding visitor satisfaction is decisive for the future success and sustainability of rookie coastal tourist destinations.

Distinctive destinations, such as beaches, require a specific valuation of factors, such as water quality, recreational opportunities, amenities, safety, comfort, cultural experiences, and accessibility, which usually define satisfaction and competitiveness (Lukoseviciute & Panagopoulos, 2021). Chen and Chen (2010) postulated that understanding these factors and attributes is crucial for emerging beach destinations, such as Ada and Ghana, as it enables destination management to identify and prioritize key beach attributes, identify areas needing immediate attention and future investment, and effectively allocate resources (Rasoolimanesh et al. 2023). This also allows planners and management to improve existing infrastructure and develop targeted marketing strategies to ensure sustainable destination development (Brščić & Šugar, 2020; Kim et al., 2019).

Moreover, emerging destinations, such as Ada, attract a diverse range of tourists, including local, regional, and international tourists (Dzitse & Nkrumah, 2024). Hence,

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different satisfaction levels are expected across attributes that are crucial for destination product design, marketing planning, and development. In addition, tourists' backgrounds can influence their satisfaction with their destination. Hence, understanding these dynamics can provide insights into niche market development, positioning, and marketing (Dodds & Holmes, 2019). However, despite the importance of research and empirical data on the development, viability, and sustainability of emerging tourism destinations (Choi et al., 2017; Kim et al., 2019), there is a significant lack of studies and data on visitor destination satisfaction in emerging coastal destinations, particularly in sub-Saharan African coastal regions, such as Ghana.

To address existing knowledge gaps, this study explored the following questions:

1. What are the satisfaction levels of tourists with beach destination attributes of the Ada Region?
2. What factors contribute to beach destination satisfaction among tourists visiting the Ada Region?
3. Do tourists' background characteristics influence the differences in beach satisfaction in the Ada region?

The Ada Region (Ada East District), located in the eastern coastal belt of the Greater-Accra Region of Ghana, is a rising tourism destination. In 2018, the Ghana Tourism Authority declared the region a new tourism enclave, showcasing a unique blend of natural beauty and cultural heritage. Ada Foah, the capital, is strategically located along the Volta River Estuary and offers a picturesque coastal landscape and various recreational activities. The district's 45 km coastline is adorned with palm-fringed beaches, making it an ideal destination for beach lovers, eco-travelers, and water enthusiasts (Dzitse & Nkrumah, 2024). However, critical assessments of performance, user experience, and satisfaction with this emerging destination are unavailable. As a "new piece of paradise," critical evaluations of the destination and its various thematic areas are needed to provide insights into the proper planning and development of a holistic, ideal, and competitive destination that can withstand the test of time.

## 2 Literature Review

### 2.1 Destination satisfaction

Destination satisfaction is a complex construct that is influenced by various factors. According to Chen and Chen (2010), satisfaction is rooted in the perceived fairness of an exchange. In tourism literature, Bigne et al. (2020) emphasized the role

of perceived fairness in terms of the exchange of inputs (e.g., travel efforts and expenses) for outcomes (e.g., services, safety, and experiences), which is based on expectations and actual experience and significantly impacts satisfaction levels among tourists (Dzitse et al., 2023). Therefore, destination satisfaction is determined by tourists' expectations based on their pre-trip desires and expectations of a destination, and their personal beliefs about their actual encounters with the destination. Upon experiencing the destination, the disconfirmation between expectations and reality shapes perceptions of satisfaction (Choi et al., 2017). Hence, destination satisfaction is an outcome of the interaction between anticipated and encountered elements of a beach destination (Peng & Oleson, 2017). These destination elements play a crucial role in satisfaction dynamics. Such elements include attraction, amenities, culture, service quality, destination image, and environmental factors (Dzitse & Nkrumah, 2024; Gursoy et al., 2021).

### 2.2 Theoretical framework

Tourist satisfaction is influenced by the balance between expectations and experiences. This study used Oliver's (1980) Expectation Disconfirmation Theory (EDT) to evaluate visitors' perceived satisfaction with various beach attributes. The theory posits that consumer satisfaction is influenced by the comparison between expectations and the actual destination experience. Thus, destination satisfaction can be evaluated based on whether tourists are positive, negative, or indifferent to their experiences (Su et al., 2020). In essence, the EDT offers this study the ability to provide nuanced insights into actual visitor satisfaction, highlighting whether expectations were met, exceeded, or unmet. This theory also offers room for the assessment and profiling of individual satisfaction differences based on visitors' age, economic background, distance travelled, experiences, and expectations, which can inform strategies for enhancing visitor experience at coastal destinations.

In tandem with EDT, this study also adopted Adams' (1963) equity theory to explore satisfaction dynamics in the tourism context. Equity theory suggests that people evaluate the fairness of their exchanges by comparing their inputs and outcomes to those of others, leading to perceptions of equity, inequity, and onwards actions (Gursoy et al., 2021). This theory is particularly useful for understanding travelers' satisfaction levels as tourists evaluate the resources and efforts they invest in the outcomes they receive, such as services, beach quality levels, amenities, and overall experiences. Satisfaction is more likely when tourists perceive a fair exchange between their

inputs and outcomes (Chen & Chen, 2010). Conversely, an imbalance in favor of underrewards leads to dissatisfaction. Fairness perception plays a crucial role in shaping satisfaction levels. In this study, tourists assessed whether the exchange of inputs for the outcomes provided at Ada Beaches was equitable, negotiating expectations and beach encounters. Therefore, the interplay between the EDT and equity theory provides a valuable framework for understanding satisfaction levels. Stakeholders and practitioners can use these outcomes to enhance beach destination services, attributes, and experiences, thereby fostering greater satisfaction and a more sustainable future.

### 2.3 Beach destination attributes and satisfaction

Beach tourism destinations offer a unified experience and satisfaction influenced by various factors, such as travel, food and services, lodging, attractions, accessibility, pricing, safety, and amenities (Dzitse et al., 2023). However, identifying the specific attributes that impact destination satisfaction is challenging because of destination and user diversity. Tourists generally view a destination as a unified entity, and issues in one area affect overall satisfaction in specific segments (Lim et al., 2024; Öğretmenoğlu et al., 2023). Breiby and Slåtten (2018) highlighted how the visual aesthetics of a beach destination significantly influence overall satisfaction, evoking positive emotional responses and contributing to visitors' sense of tranquility and well-being. Beachgoers expect clean restrooms, well-maintained beaches, lifeguard services, user- and disability-friendly amenities, and competitive prices (Brščić & Šugar, 2020; Chen & Bau, 2016). Satisfied tourists often report positive experiences with efficient services, well-maintained facilities, and sitting spaces (Emuy et al., 2024). Conversely, deficiencies in services or infrastructure can lead to dissatisfaction and reduced intention to revisit (Dzitse et al., 2024). Beyond the natural and infrastructural aspects, social and cultural experiences at beach destinations also contribute to satisfaction (Kim et al., 2019; Valle et al., 2011).

Weather and climate conditions, such as sunny skies and comfortable temperatures, also significantly affect beach satisfaction (Lim et al., 2024). Unfavorable weather conditions can result in disappointment and reduced safety and satisfaction (Toubes et al., 2020). Ensuring tourist safety through effective monitoring, emergency response readiness, and well-maintained beach areas is essential to fostering satisfaction and building destination trustworthiness. In addition, a well-maintained beach with recreational activities leads to higher

satisfaction levels, longer stays, repeat visits, and positive word-of-mouth, benefiting the destination tourism industry (Dzitse, 2024; Lucrezi & Saayman, 2015). Moreover, ease of access positively influences tourists' intentions to visit beach destinations (Job et al., 2022). Ciki et al. (2024) also identified that the sustainable management of coastal environments and conservation efforts significantly influenced tourist satisfaction and intention to revisit.

### 2.4 Socio-demographic determinants of destination satisfaction

Destination satisfaction is a subjective construct influenced by socio-demographic factors such as nationality, gender, age, culture, and travel purposes (Lucrezi & Saayman, 2015). Age plays a significant role in beach satisfaction, with younger tourists seeking adventure and older tourists valuing relaxation and cultural experience. Often, while females prioritize safety and cleanliness, males focus on recreational activities (Dzitse, 2024). Tourists have diverse expectations for beach attributes such as amenities, cultural and physical attributes, accessibility, comfort, and recreation (Dzitse et al., 2024; Valle et al., 2011). Thus, negative disconfirmation occurs when these expectations are not met, leading to dissatisfaction, whereas exceeding expectations result in positive disconfirmation and satisfaction. Thus, these theories suggest that tourist satisfaction is influenced by the perceived fairness of the exchange between inputs and outputs (Adams, 1963). If the perceived outputs do not match the inputs, a sense of inequity arises, leading to dissatisfaction. Conversely, perceived equity leads to satisfaction (Gursoy et al., 2021). Thus, to understand specific destination attributes and visitor satisfaction, beach managers and researchers must explore multiple destination aspects across socio-demographic profiles.

Different groups have varying expectations and perceptions of equity, resulting in different satisfaction levels (Bigne et al., 2020). Given the possible differences that could occur in satisfaction, which have implications for destination management and marketing, this study examines differences in beach satisfaction across the socio-demographic profile of tourists visiting beaches in the Ada region of Ghana using the following hypotheses:

*Hypothesis 1 (H1):* There is a significant difference in satisfaction with (a) amenities and services, (b) cultural attributes, (c) physical attributes, (d) beach accessibility, (e) beach comfort, and (f) beach recreation across the genders of tourists.

*Hypothesis 2 (H2):* There is a significant difference in satisfaction with (a) amenities and services, (b) cultural

attributes, (c) physical attributes, (d) beach accessibility, (e) beach comfort, and (f) beach recreation, according to the *nationality* of tourists.

*Hypothesis 3 (H3):* There is a significant difference in satisfaction with (a) amenities and services, (b) cultural attributes, (c) physical attributes, (d) beach accessibility, (e) beach comfort, and (f) beach recreation across the *educational level* of tourists.

*Hypothesis 4 (H4):* There is a significant difference in satisfaction with (a) amenities and services, (b) cultural attributes, (c) physical attributes, (d) beach accessibility, (e) beach comfort, and (f) beach recreation across tourists' *marital status*.

*Hypothesis 5 (H5):* There is a significant difference in satisfaction with (a) amenities and services, (b) cultural attributes, (c) physical attributes, (d) beach accessibility, (e) beach comfort, and (f) beach recreation across tourists' *ages*.

### 3 Methodology

#### 3.1 Study area

The Ada region of Ghana, located along the eastern coastline (latitudes of 5°45' and 6°00' and longitudes of 0°20' to 0°35'), is a growing tourist destination that combines

freshwater, islands, coastal resources, and cultural heritage sites (Figure 1). With a population of approximately 76,000, it boasts key attractions such as the Songor Ramsar and UNESCO Biosphere Reserve, islands and water tourism, the Nkyinkyin Museum, and the Asafotufiami Festival. This region is also a hotspot for ecotourism, offering opportunities for bird watching, fishing, and water sports. The Ada Estuary, the most expensive in Ghana, attracts tourists from all walks of life. The Ada region is managed by two destination management organizations (DMOs), the Ada East District Assembly (AEDA) and the Ghana Tourism Authority (GTA), which play a crucial role in managing and promoting the Ada region as an emerging tourist enclave. However, environmental conservation challenges may also affect the quality of coastal tourism. Investment in infrastructure, such as an improved road network and accommodation facilities, is needed to further enhance tourism in the Ada region (Dzitse & Nkrumah, 2024).

#### 3.2 Instrumentation and data collection

This study developed and used a paper-based survey questionnaire consisting of two parts: Part A and Part B. Part A of the questionnaire contained 52 statements elicited from

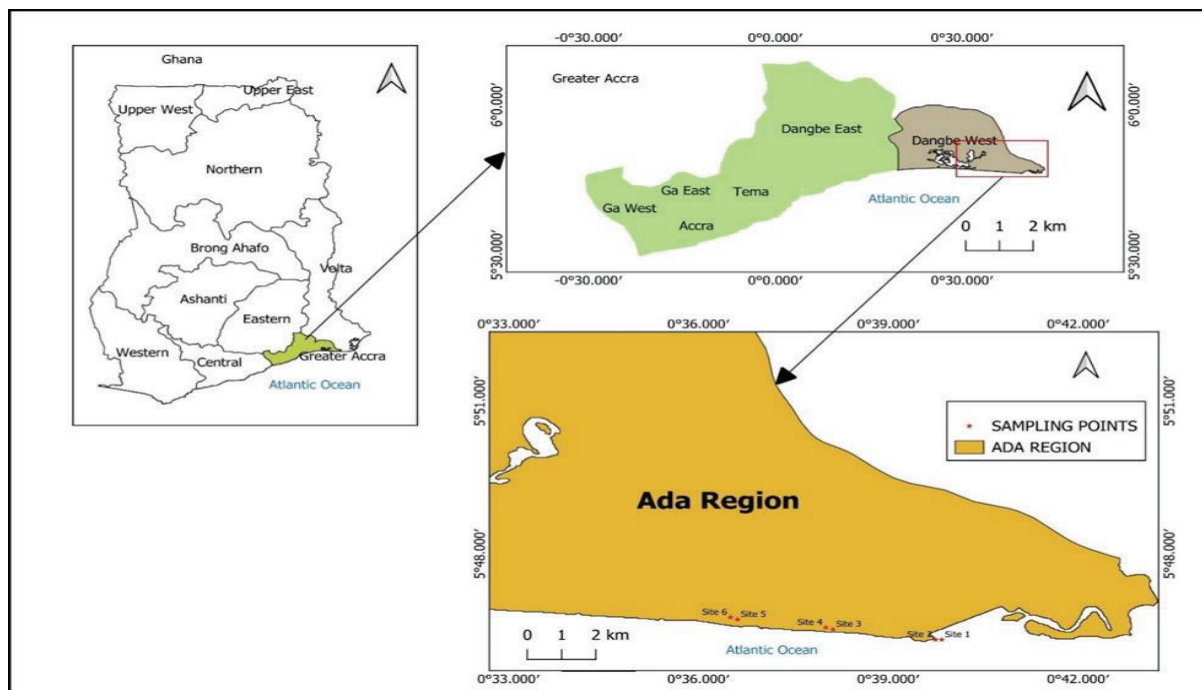


Figure 1: Map of the study area

Source: Authors.

previous studies by Brščić and Šugar (2020), Chen and Bau (2016), Dodds and Holmes (2019), Lucrezi and Saayman (2015), Souza Filho et al. (2014), Sirgy and Su (2000), Valle et al. (2011), and Wyles et al. (2016), and measured on a five-point Likert scale. Each item was scored (1 = very satisfied, 5 = very dissatisfied). Part B focused on tourist characteristics, including nationality, age, gender, education, marital status, and purpose of the visit. The questionnaire was written in the English language.

At the data collection stage, a convenience sampling technique was adopted because of the lack of a sampling frame, which allowed the authors unparalleled access to respondents who were available and willing to participate in the study at a practical level (Leiner, 2014). The questionnaire was administered randomly regardless of user/visitor type. To curb data skewing, only one respondent was given the questionnaire when a group of five or fewer respondents was encountered, whereas two respondents were selected from a group of six or more. The inclusion criterion for each respondent was that they be at least 18 years old and have spent at least one night at the Ada beach destination. The data were collected from July 3, 2022, to December 29, 2022. Because data on the number of visitors to the Ada beach destination in Ghana are currently unavailable, this study applied the guidelines proposed by Brida and Scuderi (2013) and Hair et al. (2018), namely, that a minimum of 100 responses is sufficient and appropriate for statistical estimation. Accordingly, 604 valid responses were obtained from the 614 self-administered questionnaires. Based on a sample size of 604 responses, the authors deemed the data to be statistically adequate for this study. Before the actual study data were collected, a pre-test was conducted at Ada Maranatha Beach involving 32 respondents between April 16, 2022, and April 27, 2022. This was done to ensure the conciseness and content validity of the instrument used for the study, as some of the questions were reworded after the pre-test for appropriateness before the instruments were used for actual data collection.

### 3.3 Data analysis

IBM SPSS version 25 was used for the data analysis, focusing on respondents' profiles and satisfaction levels with beach destinations. EFA was used to identify factors and latent variables affecting satisfaction, while independent-sample t-tests and ANOVA were used to examine differences in beach destinations across respondents' socio-demographic profiles.

## 4 Study Results

As Table 1 indicates, the research findings reveal a balanced gender distribution among respondents, with 52.4% male and 47.6% female. The age groups represented diverse demographics: 28.1% were < 25 years old, 39.8% were 25–40 years old, and 32.1% were ≥ 41 years old. Educational backgrounds varied, with 23.2% having a high school education, 48.2% holding a first-degree qualification, and 28.6% pursuing postgraduate education. Marital status was diverse, with 35.8% being married, 29.1% unmarried, and 35.1% previously married. Nationality data indicated a balanced representation, with 52.1% domestic tourists and 47.9% international tourists. International tourists to the Ada beach destination came from fourteen (14) different countries, including the United States (15.7%), Nigeria (13.1%), the Caribbean (12.7%), Germany (11.8%), the United Kingdom (8.1%), India (7.8%), China (4.2%), and the rest. These findings demonstrate the diverse and inclusive nature of the participants.

**Table 1:** Respondents' Socio-demographic Profile (N=604)

Characteristics	N	Percent
Gender		
Male	317	52.4
Female	287	47.6
Age		
< 25	170	28.1
25–40	241	39.8
41 and above	193	32.1
Educational level		
High school	141	23.2
First degree	293	48.2
Postgraduate	170	28.6
Marital status		
Married	216	35.8
Not Married	175	29.1
Ever-married	213	35.1
Nationality		
Domestic	315	52.1
International	289	47.9

Source: Authors.

### 4.1 Purpose of visit

In this beach satisfaction study, conducted at beaches in the Ada region of Ghana, tourists’ primary purposes for visiting were investigated and revealed various motivations (Figure 2). The findings indicated that the largest group, comprising 28.2% of tourists, visited Ada beaches seeking recreation and relaxation to relieve stress. Meanwhile, 21.2% of the visitors were drawn to the beach for fun and entertainment, reflecting the beach’s role as an enjoyable leisure destination. Additionally, holidaymakers accounted for 18.3%, while 16.6% visited for business purposes, demonstrating the destination’s appeal and versatility for tourists. Additionally, 8.9% arrived for admiration and sightseeing, highlighting the area’s cultural and scenic attractions, whereas 6.8% had other purposes. These statistics underscore the diverse motivations that attract tourists to Ada beaches, suggesting opportunities for tailored experiences and marketing strategies to enhance overall satisfaction and meet visitors’ needs.

### 4.2 Tourist satisfaction levels with beach destination/attributes

Tourists at the beach destinations studied indicated their satisfaction based on their encounters and experiences (see Table 2). As shown in Table 2, only slightly more than half of the respondents (57.7%) were satisfied with the

overall attributes of the Ada beach destination. Specifically, the beach destination attributes that tourists were most satisfied with were beach width and breadth for recreational activities (82.2%), followed by ocean breezes (82.1%), oceanic waves (81.2%), traditionally inspired beach facilities (80.2%), ocean wave intensity (71.2%), bonfire/bonfire nights (71.1%), and interactions with local people on beaches (70.1%). This key element shows that physical features and cultural elements play important roles in tourists’ overall satisfaction at the Ada beach destinations.

However, tourists were dissatisfied with attributes such as availability of signage for easy outing of the beach (safety signs) (21.2%), parking facilities at the beaches (33.2%), availability of sufficient shaded areas/umbrellas (38.6%), accessibility to facilities (accommodation, bars, and washrooms) (39.2%), quality of sitting spaces (40.5%), and maintenance/cleanliness of beach toilets and urinals (40.5%). Moreover, tourists considered the Ada beach destination to indicate only moderate or fair satisfaction (Table 2).

To further determine the structure of the factors and latent variables that account for beach destination satisfaction among tourists in the Ada region, a factorial analysis was performed using principal component analysis (PCA) to obtain the underlying dimensions of beach destination satisfaction. PCA was conducted on 52 beach satisfaction variables, with 38 variables meeting the factor requirements of 0.50 or above

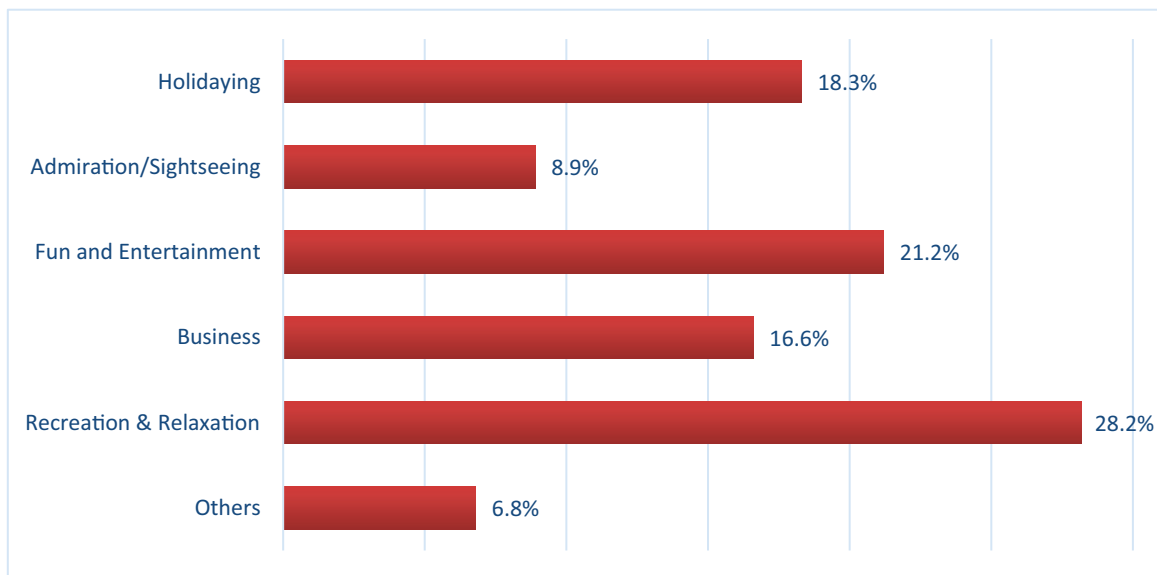


Figure 1: Purpose of Ada Beach Visitation

**Table 2:** Tourist Satisfaction Levels With Beach Destination/Attributes

<b>Variables</b>	<b>% of Satisfaction</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Std. D</b>
<i>Amenities &amp; Services</i>			
Quality of food services	43.2	3.04	1.02
Hygiene at the beach areas	54.2	2.33	1.01
Accommodation/room	54.1	2.32	1.23
Safety and security at the beaches (including lifeguards)	51.3	2.94	0.91
Day/Night beach entertainment	46.2	3.12	0.96
Availability and quality of facilities for recreation	45.1	3.41	0.21
Quality and quantity of sitting spaces	40.2	3.93	0.82
Availability of expected places of convenience (urinals and toilets)	56.1	2.31	0.98
Availability of enough shaded areas/umbrellas	38.6	3.82	0.54
Maintenance/cleanliness of beach toilets and urinals	40.4	3.21	0.24
Designs/visual painting done at the beach	53.1	2.81	0.89
<i>Cultural Elements</i>			
Availability of local food options at this beach (local drinks, palm wine, sobolo, mixed fruits)	60.2	2.10	0.99
Bonfire/bonfire nights with songs	71.1	1.69	1.58
Traditional/local music	65.2	1.62	1.32
Interaction with local people at the beaches	70.1	1.57	1.25
Beach facility local/traditionally inspired	80.2	1.43	1.34
Historical/landmarks at the beach	63.8	1.67	1.41
Cultural/exhibition/Exhibits at the beach	66.4	1.48	1.11
<i>Physical Features</i>			
Sand quality and cleanliness	62.2	2.23	1.09
Texture of beach sand	69.1	2.41	1.04
Beach water quality	55.2	3.12	1.12
Ocean breeze	82.1	1.46	1.21
Oceanic waves	81.2	1.48	1.31
Smell at this beach	64.3	2.45	0.92
Landscape	59.1	2.33	0.65
Colour of water	54.2	2.48	0.95
Colour of sand	68.2	2.12	1.02
Breezing palm trees at the beach	67.4	2.34	0.98
Beach view of sunrise or sunset	69.2	2.41	1.03
Intensity of beach waves	71.2	2.13	1.04
<i>Beach Accessibility</i>			
Accessibility to beach destinations	44.2	3.12	0.78
Accessibility to facilities (accommodation, bar, washrooms)	39.2	3.21	0.97
Parking facilities at the beaches	33.2	3.53	0.76
Ease in undertaking various activities (hiking, swimming, sunbathing, etc.)	55.2	2.69	1.02
Proximity of accommodation to the beach	42.1	3.42	0.89

(continued)

**Table 2:** (continued)

Variables	% of Satisfaction	Mean	Std. D
Accessibility for people with disabilities	40.1	3.71	0.98
Availability of signages for easy tour of the beach (safety signs)	21.2	4.32	0.67
Access within the beach area	53.2	2.39	0.99
<i>Beach Comfort</i>			
Crowd level at this beach	53.2	2.12	0.96
Noise level at this beach	63.1	1.98	1.03
Comfortability of beach facilities (Seats, accommodation, cleanliness of beach, urinals, toilets)	46.3	3.03	0.56
Prices of overall services	54.2	2.42	0.78
Disability friendliness of facilities	62.1	1.97	1.12
Convenience with accessibility within the beach	52.8	2.38	0.92
<i>Beach Recreation</i>			
Swimming	44.1	3.12	0.89
Beach Hiking	58.2	2.34	0.92
Beach & water sports (football, volleyball, etc.)	60.2	2.13	1.01
Sunbathing and relaxation	61.1	2.32	0.78
Music and dancing	65.3	1.98	0.98
Beach width and breadth for recreational activities	82.2	1.26	0.92
Picnic activities at the beach	58.1	2.33	0.94
Beach nature trails	49.2	2.88	1.01
<i>Overall Score</i>	<i>57.7</i>	<i>2.45</i>	<i>0.957</i>

Source: Authors. Scale: 1 = very satisfied, 2 = satisfied, 3 = fairly satisfied, 4 = dissatisfied, and 5 = very dissatisfied

(Pallant, 2007). The appropriateness of the data for factor analysis was confirmed using Bartlett’s test of sphericity, which yielded a significant result of 7931.2 ( $p = 0.001$ ). In addition, a Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) value of 0.888 further demonstrated the suitability of the PCA technique for the data set (Kaiser, 1974). Table 3 lists the coefficients used to express the standardized variables. Factor loading shows the correlation between the factors and variables. A coefficient with a higher value indicates that factors and variables are closely related.

PCA identified six factors among the 38 variables that collectively accounted for 59.81% of the variance in the data set (Table 3). These factors included: (1) amenities and services, (2) cultural attributes, (3) physical attributes, (4) beach accessibility, (5) beach comfort, and (6) beach recreation. The results are displayed in Table 3, which shows consistently high factor loadings, ranging from 0.508 to 0.881. Furthermore, all six factors exhibited strong reliability (amenities and services = 0.887, cultural elements = 0.926, physical features = 0.865, beach accessibility = 0.733, beach comfort = 0.796, and beach recreation

= 0.894) as indicated by an overall Cronbach’s alpha of 0.850, demonstrating internal consistency within the scale. Factor 1 (amenities and services), with an eigenvalue of 6.24, accounted for the highest percentage of explained variance (14.28%), whereas Factor 6 (beach recreation), with an eigenvalue of 1.21, had the lowest percentage of explained variance in the data set (7.21%) (Table 3). Fourteen variables were excluded from further analysis due to their inability to achieve a factor loading of 0.50 or higher.

### 4.3 Beach destination satisfaction factors by socio-demographic characteristics

The study employed a t-test and analysis of variance to test the variations in beach destination satisfaction across respondents’ socio-demographic characteristics of gender, age, marital status, nationality, and education level (hypotheses). To facilitate the data analysis and interpretation, a five-point Likert scale measuring beach satisfaction was condensed into three categories: satisfied, fairly satisfied, and

**Table 3:** Factorial Structure of Tourist Satisfaction With Beach Destinations/Attributes

Latent Factors and Variables	Factor Loading	Variance Explained (%)	Eigenvalue	Cronbach Alpha (Reliability)	Factor Mean
<i>Amenities &amp; Services – Factor 1</i>					
		14.28	6.242	0.887	<b>3.08</b>
Quality of food services	0.758				
Hygiene at the beach areas	0.681				
Safety and security at the beaches (including lifeguards)	0.53*				
Day/night beach entertainment	0.583				
Quality and quantity of sitting spaces	0.631				
Availability of expected places of convenience (urinals and toilets)	0.578				
Availability of shaded areas/ umbrellas	0.523*				
/Maintenance/cleanliness of beach toilets and urinals	0.721				
<i>Cultural Elements – Factor 2</i>					
		13.41	4.016	0.926	<b>1.68</b>
Availability of local food options at this beach (local drinks, palm wine, sobolo, mixed fruits)	0.891				
Bonfire/Bonfire nights with songs	0.782				
Traditional/local music	0.812				
Interaction with local people at the beaches	0.792				
Beach facility local/traditionally inspired	0.872				
<i>Physical Features – Factor 3</i>					
		9.14	3.199	0.865	<b>2.23</b>
Sand quality and cleanliness	0.673				
Texture of beach sand	0.652				
Beach water quality and clarity	0.581				
Ocean breeze	0.821				
Oceanic waves	0.843				
Smell at this beach	0.624				
Landscape	0.823				
Colour of water	0.562				
Colour of sand	0.689				
<i>Beach Accessibility – Factor 4</i>					
		8.46	2.466	0.733	<b>3.48</b>

(continued)

**Table 3:** (continued)

Latent Factors and Variables	Factor Loading	Variance Explained (%)	Eigenvalue	Cronbach Alpha (Reliability)	Factor Mean
Accessibility of facilities (accommodation, bar, washrooms)	0.671				
Parking facilities at the beaches	0.510*				
Ease in undertaking various activities (hiking, swimming, sunbathing, etc.)	0.671				
Proximity of accommodation to the beach	0.523				
Accessibility for people with disabilities	0.781				
Availability of signages for easy tour of the beach (safety signs)	0.508				
<i>Beach Comfort – Factor 5</i>		7.31	1.931	0.796	<b>2.30</b>
Crowd level at this beach	0.781				
Noise level at this beach	0.829				
Comfortability of beach facilities (Seats, accommodation, cleanliness of beach, urinals, toilets)	0.623				
Prices of overall services	0.683				
Disability friendliness of facilities	0.783				
<i>Beach Recreation – Factor 6</i>		7.21	1.217	0.894	<b>2.38</b>
Swimming	0.781				
Hiking and nature walks	0.712				
Beach & water sports (football, volleyball, etc.)	0.829				
Sunbathing and relaxation	0.62				
Music and dancing	0.881				
Total Variance Explained		59.81%	(0.850)		

Kaiser–Meyer–Olkin measure = 0.888; Bartlett’s Test of Sphericity ( $X^2$ ) = 7931.26;  $p = 0.001$ .

Source: Authors.

dissatisfied. Significant differences were only observed across three socio-demographic factors, namely, gender, nationality, and age, which had a significant impact on tourists’ satisfaction with beach destinations. Significant differences were observed between men (mean=1.26) and women (mean=1.43) in terms of cultural elements at beach destinations ( $t = 2.74, p = 0.004$ ), thus confirming *Hypothesis 1b*. In the context of beach accessibility, a significant difference emerged, supporting *Hypothesis 1d*, with men reporting moderate satisfaction (mean = 2.33) and

women expressing dissatisfaction (mean = 2.65) ( $t = 2.21, p = 0.012$ ). Additionally, men indicated greater satisfaction (mean = 1.32) with beach recreation ( $t = 1.26, p = 0.011$ ) than women (mean = 1.42). This result confirms *Hypothesis 1f*.

The results also showed that international tourists reported very high satisfaction (mean = 1.35), whereas domestic tourists expressed moderate satisfaction (mean = 1.93) with the cultural elements on beaches ( $t = 1.79, p = 0.021$ ). Similarly, international tourists reported very

**Table 4:** Beach Destination Satisfaction Factors by Socio-demographic Characteristics

Socio-demographics	Beach Destination Satisfaction Factors (%)						
	N	Amenities & Services	Cultural Elements	Physical Attributes	Beach Accessibility	Beach Comfort	Beach Recreation
<b>Gender</b>							
Male	317	2.14	1.26	1.41	2.33	2.12	1.32
Female	287	2.48	1.43	1.50	2.65	2.22	1.42
		t = 2.22, df = 2, p = 0.212	t = 2.74, df = 2, p = 0.004*	t = 1.81, df = 2, p = 0.247	t = 2.21, df = 2, p = 0.012*	t = 2.16, df = 2, p = 0.061	t = 1.26, df = 2, p = 0.011*
<b>Nationality</b>							
Domestic	315	2.18	1.93	1.45	2.43	2.13	1.56
International	289	2.15	1.35	1.43	2.62	1.48	1.43
		t = 2.73, df = 2, p = 0.465	t = 1.79, df = 2, p = 0.021*	t = 1.33, df = 2, p = 0.123	t = 2.14, df = 2, p = 0.013*	t = 2.98, df = 2, p = 0.002*	t = 2.73, df = 2, p = 0.058
<b>Education</b>							
High school	141	2.21	1.46	2.22	2.31	2.43	1.94
First degree	293	2.12	1.49	2.31	2.45	2.32	1.67
Postgraduate	170	2.33	1.98	2.18	2.48	2.12	1.44
		F = 2.41, df = 3, p = 0.222	F = 2.54, df = 3, p = 0.062	F = 2.96, df = 3, p = 0.321	F = 141, df = 3, p = 0.054	F = 2.12, df = 3, p = 0.211	F = 2.96, df = 3, p = 0.244
<b>Marital status</b>							
Married	216	2.22	2.41	1.43	2.40	2.36	1.96
Not married	175	1.71	2.53	1.27	2.12	2.14	2.12
Ever-married	212	2.52	2.52	1.52	2.18	2.12	1.32
		F = 1.02, df = 3, p = 0.321	F = 0.60, df = 3, p = 0.548	F = 2.96, df = 3, p = 0.054	F = 1.96, df = 3, p = 0.321	F = 2.14, df = 3, p = 0.231	F = 1.98, df = 3, p = 0.312
<b>Age</b>							
< 25	170	2.13	2.34	1.52	1.49	2.43	1.43
25–40	241	2.20	1.98	1.46	2.23	2.13	1.46
41 ≥	193	2.05	1.46	1.42	2.63	1.47	1.48
		F = 2.41, df = 3, p = 0.212	F = 4.44, df = 3, p = 0.015*	F = 1.88, df = 3, p = 0.054	F = 1.68, df = 3, p = 0.049*	F = 2.98, df = 3, p = 0.242	F = 2.87, df = 3, p = 0.002*

Source: Authors. \*Significance level at  $p \leq 0.05$ . Scale: 1.0 – 1.49 = satisfied; 1.50 – 2.49 = fairly satisfied; 2.50 – 3.00 = dissatisfied.

high satisfaction (mean = 1.35), whereas domestic tourists reported moderate satisfaction (mean = 1.93) with beach accessibility ( $t = 2.14$ ,  $p = 0.013$ ). Finally, international tourists were more satisfied with beach comfort than their domestic counterparts were ( $t = 2.98$ ,  $p = 0.002$ ) (Table 4). These results affirm *Hypotheses 2b, 2d, and 2e*.

The ANOVA test results in Table 4 confirm *Hypothesis 5b*. The results showed a significant difference in respondents' satisfaction with cultural elements ( $F = 4.44$ ,  $p = 0.015$ ) across the age groups. Specifically, adult tourists (aged 41 and above) exhibited higher satisfaction (mean = 1.46) than younger and middle-aged tourists,

who reported moderate satisfaction (Table 4). Additionally, variations in satisfaction with beach accessibility were evident ( $F = 1.68, p = 0.049$ ); younger tourists were highly satisfied, middle-aged tourists expressed moderate satisfaction, and adult tourists tended to be dissatisfied (*Hypothesis 5d*). Furthermore, differences in satisfaction levels concerning beach recreation were observed (*Hypothesis 5f*), with younger tourists displaying higher satisfaction (mean = 1.43) than their middle-aged (mean = 1.46) and adult counterparts (mean = 1.48) ( $F = 2.87, p = 0.002$ ).

## 5 Discussion

The study found that tourists were generally satisfied with the Ada beach destination but were dissatisfied with beach attributes such as safety signs, parking facilities, shaded areas, accessibility, quality of sitting spaces, and cleanliness of beach toilets. These aspects are crucial for user satisfaction and the apparent display of dissatisfaction indicates that they do not meet users' expectations (Dodds & Holes, 2019). Beach accessibility is the most apparent issue, as it is expected that all visitors to coastal destinations will easily access and use beaches without which the destination may not be fully appreciated (Job et al., 2022). In the study areas, inadequate sitting spaces, parking issues, lack of safety signs, and access to beaches and facilities presented setbacks for tourists' enjoyment and satisfaction. Evidently, most of the less satisfying beach attributes were linked to beach accessibility, facilities, and services. This was confirmed by the factor analysis results, which showed that beach users were dissatisfied with the beach accessibility factor (mean = 3.48) and barely satisfied with beach amenities and services (mean = 3.08). This dissatisfaction is crucial for emerging beach destinations, such as Ada, especially in a competitive tourism market where even established destinations seek to "woo" the same travelers (Dodds & Holmes, 2019). Thus, although emerging beach destinations such as the Ada region may have diverse or extensive characteristics for tourists, the quality or relevance of beach attractions may not necessarily meet expectations, requiring attention and change for the destination to become vibrant and competitive (Sirgy & Su, 2000).

The study also found that Ada beaches have highly satisfying beach attributes, such as beach width, breadth for recreational activities, ocean breeze, bonfire activities, sand colour, and palm fronts. These attributes

are aligned with the factor analysis, which found cultural elements and physical attributes of Ada beaches to be the most appealing, offering high satisfaction levels among tourists. This contrasts with other findings in China (Chang et al., 2012), and other Ghanaian beaches (Mensah, 2021) where biophysical environments, safety, and cultural elements are less appealing and offer little to no satisfaction.

This study revealed six core factors that contribute to beach destination satisfaction among tourists exploring emerging beach destinations in Ada and Ghana. These factors, which accounted for approximately 61% of the variance in the data set, included amenities and services, cultural elements, physical attributes, accessibility, comfort, and recreation. These factors are pivotal in shaping tourists' satisfaction with their beach experience. Previous studies, such as Mensah (2021) and Mensah et al. (2014), have reported factors related to sanitation, infrastructure, amenities, and geophysical factors, but none have found essential factors related to beach comfort and recreation, particularly cultural elements that are unique to Ada beaches. This suggests that cultural elements are essential and unique aspects of some coastal tourism destinations, and that similar emerging destinations should identify and integrate these elements into their development frameworks. Identifying these factors is fundamental to the holistic determination of user satisfaction in emerging beach destinations. Thus, for incipient destinations such as the Ada region, the realization of all these factors is vital for building a broader and holistic management framework (Valle et al., 2011). This study enriches the body of knowledge on destination development and management in Ghana and West Africa by revealing the importance of these factors in emerging beach destinations.

The study revealed that amenities, services, cultural elements, and physical attributes were the most influential factors affecting tourists' beach satisfaction in the Ada region. This contradicts previous research, which found beach access and recreation to be the most significant factors (Souza Filho et al., 2014). This study highlights the uniqueness of Ghana's emerging beach destinations in Ada, where cultural and physical elements are integral attributes. Local cultural offerings, such as traditionally crafted huts, locally produced food and beverages, bonfire experiences, and coexistence between locals and tourists contribute to beach appreciation. These findings suggest that destination management organizations in the Ada region must understand the uniqueness of their beach destinations to drive their tourism development agenda, focus, and marketing plans for the coastal region.

This study highlights the challenges faced by Ada beaches in Ghana in terms of accessibility and amenities for tourists. While the destination has positive aspects, it also faces limitations, such as limited beach access, directive signage, parking, disability friendliness, and inadequate sitting spaces. These issues may affect tourists' experiences, especially those of older tourists and those with disabilities, potentially limiting their enjoyment of and participation in beach activities (Botero et al., 2013; Dzitse, 2024). Lack of sitting spaces may also affect comfort, convenience, and length of stay, leading to economic consequences for tourism operators and the local economy (Wyles et al., 2016). This study emphasizes the importance of prioritizing tourist-centric amenities, cultural elements, physical cleanliness, and accessibility in emerging coastal destinations because contemporary tourists often seek to enrich their coastal experiences by experiencing cultural environments.

This study found that socio-demographic variables (gender, age, and nationality) also significantly influenced tourist satisfaction at the beaches. This finding is consistent with the assertion that background characteristics are linked to tourist satisfaction on beaches (Dodds & Holmes, 2019; Lukoseviciute & Panagopoulos, 2021). That is, different subpopulations have peculiar characteristics and beach elements appear satisfactory and unsatisfactory based on their backgrounds. Men reported higher satisfaction levels than women across several dimensions, suggesting that they prioritized cultural elements, beach accessibility, and beach recreation factors. This could be because men prioritize certain aspects of beach visits and uses that are more active (Kim et al., 2019). Nationality also played a significant role in this variation. International tourists consistently reported higher satisfaction levels than domestic tourists did, particularly in terms of cultural elements and beach comfort. These differences may arise from varied cultural backgrounds and expectations, with international tourists potentially appreciating cultural nuances and beach comfort experiences elsewhere compared to domestic visitors, who may be more accustomed to the same beach environment and cultural elements in their own country or region (Valle et al., 2011). However, domestic tourists were satisfied with beach accessibility, whereas international tourists were dissatisfied, possibly because of their familiarity with the local routes and transportation options.

Furthermore, the study revealed that tourist satisfaction with cultural elements, beach accessibility, and beach recreation varies across age groups. Older tourists tend to express higher satisfaction with cultural elements, whereas younger tourists show greater satisfaction with

beach accessibility and recreation. This can be attributed to differences in the expectations of tourists visiting beach destinations, as suggested by expectation disconfirmation theory (Gursoy et al., 2021; Oliver, 1980). Beach destinations targeting older visitors should prioritize cultural attractions, while younger tourists should prioritize easy access to beaches and recreational activities. Thus, to appeal to the younger demographics, emerging destinations should focus on improving beach infrastructure, providing recreational activities, and ensuring accessibility. Thus, since individuals compare their inputs with their outputs, any individual disparities between them can affect their satisfaction levels (Dzitse et al., 2023; Su et al., 2020); hence, managers of emerging destinations must recognize this to continuously enhance their overall coastal satisfaction. To enhance the appeal of emerging beach destinations, prioritization of accessibility, provision of basic tourist-focused amenities, recreational facilities, cleanliness, visually attractive and safe areas, and continuous improvement of visitor experience, satisfaction, and revisit intentions are essential.

## 6 Conclusion and Implications

This study explored the factors affecting beach destination satisfaction in emerging Ada beach destinations in Ghana, and examined variations in tourist satisfaction with these factors. The results showed that tourists had an average satisfaction with the Ada destination. This study identified six core factors—amenities and services, cultural elements, physical attributes, beach accessibility, beach comfort, and beach recreation—that constitute tourist satisfaction at emerging Ada beach destinations in Ghana. However, socio-demographic characteristics such as gender, nationality, and age significantly influenced satisfaction. These empirical results provide a valuable foundation for beach management at incipient destinations to develop a framework that can be used holistically to develop and manage destinations for competitiveness and sustainability.

### 6.1 Theoretical implication

This study explores expectation disconfirmation theory (Oliver, 1980), highlighting how disparities between expectations and actual experiences affect satisfaction levels among different demographic groups. Six core factors were identified, although they may not have fully met tourist satisfaction expectations, particularly in terms

of accessibility and amenities. Dissatisfaction with beach attributes, such as signage, parking facilities, shaded areas, accessibility, sitting spaces, and cleanliness of beach toilets, leads to negative disconfirmation. However, attributes such as beach width, ocean breezes, cultural elements, and recreational activities exceeded expectations, leading to positive disconfirmation and high satisfaction. This disconfirmation of expectations can lead to dissatisfaction or satisfaction, as is evident from this study. By acknowledging and addressing these gaps, DMOs can enhance tourist satisfaction, aligning actual experiences more closely with expectations, even in emerging destinations, where there may be limitations in various services and facilities that are currently being provided.

This study also highlights the influence of socio-demographic characteristics (gender, nationality, and age) on satisfaction levels, indicating that perceptions of equity vary among tourist groups (Adams, 1963). Tourists' satisfaction is influenced by their cultural backgrounds and expectations. Addressing these diverse perceptions can help DMOs create more balanced and satisfying experiences for all tourists, ensuring that the benefits received are perceived as fair relative to the efforts and costs incurred during their visits.

By understanding and addressing these diverse perceptions, DMOs can enhance tourists' overall satisfaction, leading to longer stays and increased economic benefits for the local communities. These results underscore the importance of managing tourist expectations and perceptions of fairness and equity to enhance satisfaction and to support sustainable tourism. By addressing the fairness and equity gap in services and destination output, DMOs can create more inclusive and satisfying tourist experiences, ultimately contributing to the economic and social benefits of coastal tourism in Ghana and the West African sub-region.

## 6.2 Practical contributions

This study explored and identified six beach satisfaction factors in an emerging destination context. The results of this study highlight the importance of cultural elements and physical attributes in tourist satisfaction, which has been emphasized in previous studies, particularly for Ghanaian and West African beach destinations. This finding suggests that integrating local cultural elements into coastal tourism development can significantly enhance visitor experiences and satisfaction. This study underscores the critical role of accessibility and amenities in shaping tourists' satisfaction. For DMOs (GTA and AEDA) in the Ada region, dissatisfaction with these two

key aspects indicates areas needing imminent improvement to meet visitor expectations, particularly for international, older, and physically incapacitated tourists who offer more economic value in coastal tourism (Emuy et al., 2024). Additionally, by identifying six core factors and their core variables, this study offers a practical tool for DMOs to evaluate and enhance their beach destinations. This can holistically guide DMOs, especially in the Ada region, Ghana, West Africa sub-region, and similar regions, in developing more inclusive and satisfying tourist experiences.

Moreover, the results provide data for devising strategies, allocating resources, and implementing beach destination improvement projects and initiatives geared towards enhancing visitor satisfaction and promoting sustainable coastal destination development in Ada and Ghana. Ada has the potential to become a flourishing and all-encompassing coastal tourism destination by focusing on these pivotal areas and fostering effective collaborations among various stakeholders. This transformation will not only draw a diverse array of visitors, but also bolster the local economy, leading to a more prosperous and sustainable future for the region. Hence, enhancing the identified beach aspects can increase tourist satisfaction, length of stay, and overall economic impact on the local community, thereby supporting sustainable tourism development. For instance, partnerships between beach operators, the Ada East District Assembly, the GTA, and key stakeholders in improving beach accessibility and amenities for visitors can enhance their length by injecting more economic benefits for tourism operators and local communities. Moreover, understanding the specific needs and preferences of different demographic groups allows DMOs and tourism operators to develop targeted marketing strategies and plans to keep visitors coming (for example, focusing on cultural attractions for older tourists, and improving recreational activities and accessibility for younger tourists).

Finally, the identification of higher satisfaction levels among international tourists, particularly regarding cultural elements and beach comfort, highlights the importance of catering to the diverse cultural backgrounds and expectations. In addition, variations based on age offer valuable insights for designing age-appropriate tourism offerings at coastal destinations to ensure fulfilling experiences for all visitors.

## 6.3 Suggestions for future study

As a pioneering inquiry in this domain of the study area, this study is limited by its cross-sectional nature. This

finding suggests the need for longitudinal studies to track changes in satisfaction over time, particularly in response to accessibility improvements by the DMOs. Comparative studies can also identify the best practices and unique challenges across Eastern coastal destinations (Pramp-ram, Ada, Keta) to identify unique challenges. This can help understand regional/district variations and develop broader and tailored strategies for each destination in Ghana.

**Data availability statement.** The data for this study are only available upon request.

## Bionotes

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