

PERCEIVED QUALITY OF VISIT AND FOREIGN TOURISTS' SATISFACTION IN MALAYSIA

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Abstract: This study examines the determinants of perceived quality of visit on foreign tourists' satisfaction in Malaysia. This study raises important questions concerning how destination image, consumer travel experience affect tourists' satisfaction level. The study empirically tests predicted relationships by using questionnaire survey on foreign tourists. Findings from the research sample support the argument that keeping cleanliness of the destination, ease of assessing a clinic or a hospital, the friendliness of local people and the ease of communication with local people are the key determinants of tourists' satisfaction. The study also discusses theoretical and managerial implications of research findings for marketing the tourism products globally.

Keywords: Satisfaction, Tourists, Malaysia.

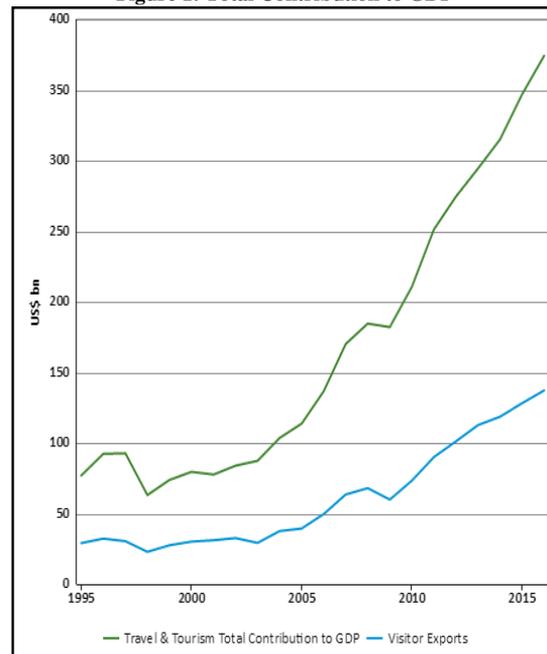
I. INTRODUCTION

There were approximately 25 million tourists globally in the 1950s, nevertheless when the world reached year 2000, this had increased to 700 million [1]. In the last 50 years, tourism industry had been globalized and was expanding rapidly. This major global industry linked visitors to diverse places to which they decided to visit. The current technology provided more opportunities for tourism in many countries. The high usage of internet had greatly increased the development of tourism, as such that tourists made bookings for their vacation and for travel agents as their promotional tourism marketing tool. The United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) [2] reported that the average annual growth for international tourist arrivals was 4 percent for the world, while South-East Asia was 5 percent. The effect of tourism to total contribution to gross domestic product (GDP) had greatly increased from 1995 to 2015 since the world tourism went global. This had influenced the economic and socio development in South-East Asia and had an enormous contribution in the GDP, employment, visitor exports and investment [3]. Besides, tourism industry had been proven to be a world source of invigorating economic growth [4] which consisted of exports, taxes, income, and employment [5].

It was also reported by the United States Institute of Peace Organization in 2009 that the tourism had several advantages over other industries. One of the advantages was that the locals who provided goods will benefit the tourism industry as it was consumed at the start of production. Tourism also provides an opportunity to those countries that had limited resources but wealth in culture. At the same time, history and heritage are used as their specialties as a source of income. Furthermore, a network of diverse operations is created through different and

interconnected industries served by tourism. The usage of multiple-use infrastructure such as roads, health-care facilities and sports centers is encouraged by tourism.

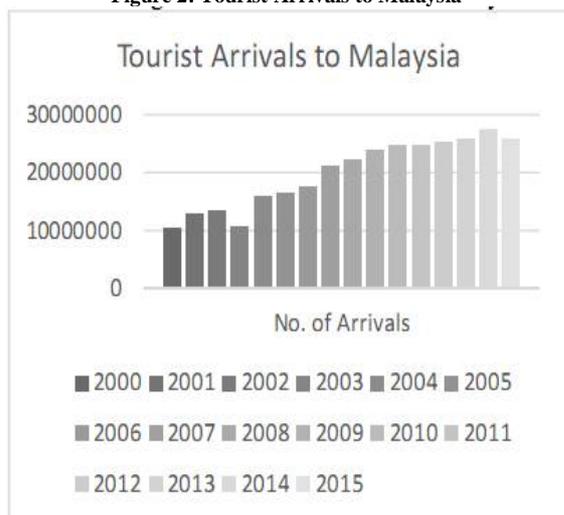
Figure 1: Total Contribution to GDP



Source: World Travel & Tourism Council (2015) [3]

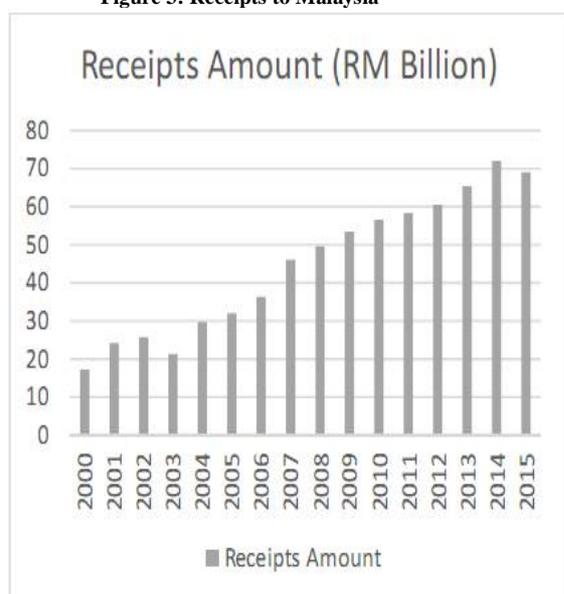
Tourism industry in Malaysia started to emerge in the 1960s as one of the new contribution to economic growth, however the development was rather slow [6]. Nevertheless, they claimed that tourism sector had become as one of main source to Malaysia's incomes. The Prime Minister of Malaysia also declared that Malaysia's tourism industry is at the 6th largest contributor for the year 2014 GDP, thus it is critical to sustain the development on the economy and society as well as bringing good destination image to international visitors.

Figure 2: Tourist Arrivals to Malaysia



Source: Tourism Malaysia. (2016)^[7]

Figure 3: Receipts to Malaysia



Source: Tourism Malaysia. (2016)^[7]

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Destination image is defined as individual's mental representation of knowledge, feelings and overall perception of a particular destination [8]. Since the destination image does affect a tourist's perceptions of a particular destination, it eventually affects a tourist's satisfaction towards a destination [9]. It is important when the tourists' preferred choice for travel is based on the tourists' perception of a destination's image. This is supported by Augustyn and Ho [10], in better understanding the tourists' needs and motives and customizing the provisions accordingly, so that destination marketing can go on smoothly. This is to aid in the tourist satisfaction factor.

Tourist satisfaction is essential in the tourism industry as to maintain long-term relationship with tourists,

which also affects the intention to return [11]. According to a study conducted by Barutcu et al. [12], tourist satisfaction is significant to the perception of shopping in Alanya. Holiday experiences which help people to relieve job stress have a direct effect on life satisfaction. A model based on five correlated theoretical constructs which are relaxation, detachment, control, mastery, tourism satisfaction and life satisfaction shows that the perceptions of a tourist is significant in determining the tourism satisfaction [13].

Tourist satisfaction is also determined by the development of the destination. In Taiwan, Chen et al. [14] discovered that the interrelationships between Taiwanese and Chinese tourists' perceptions, satisfaction are strongly related to destination resources, attractions and competitiveness. Tourist satisfaction measured by tourism development and better improvement of the destination is also discovered by Sukiman et al. [15]. The study was carried out by measuring the tourist's satisfaction among international and domestic visitors while embarking for vacation in Pahang, Malaysia. It was observed that all the attributes in determining the tourism satisfaction were mostly significant.

Verdugo et al. [16] argued that tourist satisfaction is also based on tourists' perceived value of the destination. The study explained that the increased perceived value of protected areas increased the tourism satisfaction. However, tourism in retail experiences does not have significant result on tourism satisfaction. This is supported by Murphy et al. [17], which explained the Tourist Shopping Village performance in providing a unique local experience, value for money and regionally quality products and services, and opportunities for entertainment as well as bargain hunting. Surprisingly, the findings were that the level of enthusiasm for leisure shopping did not have a strong influence on the visitor experience or satisfaction.

The perception of quality is also seen in the facilities and services provided by health sector services. It is essential to have a well-equipped medical tourism industry as this will also affects the tourist satisfaction especially in the medical tourism. Zailaini et al. [18] claimed that every visitor has different needs in medical assistance, such as Muslim medical tourists' needs halal practice in medical tourism industry. However, the study found out that the nurses' halal practices had no effect on Muslim medical tourists' satisfaction, while Muslim medical tourists' satisfaction is dependent on doctors and hospitals role and attitude. The doctors and hospitals role and attitude are also a part of the service provided by the clinic or hospital.

The transportation sector is also a fundamental need and development of tourism industry [19]. Personal transportation modes is necessary in a safety elements [20].

III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

A questionnaire survey is employed in this study to deal with the research questions appropriately and regression analysis is applied to test the model. It also investigates the determinants of perceived quality during visit on the tourists' satisfaction level. A total of 150 questionnaires are distributed among tourists in Malaysia using convenient sampling. On-site surveys will be administered among tourists at high traffic areas in the Klang Valley and Penang Island in Malaysia. The early and late respondents show no significant differences on any of the variables, indicating that late respondents do not differ from early respondents, thus showing the absence of nonresponse bias

IV. EMPIRICAL RESULTS

The analysis shows the reliability of the sample data and validities of the variables. The study conducts a regression analysis on the variables.

4.1 Descriptive Analysis

The empirical study was carried out in the Klang Valley and Penang area, these two attractive tourism destinations in Malaysia. The target population for the study was tourists and expatriates who travel to Malaysia. The data were gathered during the months of June and July 2016. There were 130 questionnaires collected, though some had to be rejected due to incomplete answering. The final selection results a sample of 114 valid respondents. The satisfactory completed questionnaires contain 61.4 percent of male respondents while 38.6 percent of the sample was female respondents. Majority of the respondents aged between 22 and 35 years old which contributes 24.6 percent of the sample.

Table 1 depicts the demography the respondents gathered. 65.8 percent of the respondents were single. The sample respondents were mostly Muslim which holds 37.3 percent of the sample. In regards to occupation, 8.8 percent of the respondents were in top-level management field, 34.2 percent of the respondents were in middle-level management field, 12.3 percent of the respondents were in low-level management field, 2.6 percent of the respondents were retirees. 3.5 percent of the respondents were jobless and 38.6 percent of the respondents were students. There were 11.4 percent of the respondents who had a PhD education, 15.8 percent of the respondents hold a Masters degree, 48.2 percent of the respondents hold a bachelor degree and 9.6 percent of the respondents possessed a post-matric or diploma.

Table 1: Characteristics of the respondents.

		Frequency	%
Age	18-21	16	14
	22-35	64	56.1
	36-55	28	24.6
	56 and above	6	5.3
Gender	Male	70	61.4
	Female	44	38.6
Marital Status	Single	75	65.8
	Married	38	33.3
	Separated	1	0.9
Religion	Islam	43	37.7
	Christian	40	35.1
	Buddhist	12	10.5
	Hindu	6	5.3
	Others	13	11.4
Education	Primary	1	0.9
	Secondary	15	13.2
	Post Matric/Diploma	11	9.6
	Bachelors	55	48.2
	Masters	18	15.8
	PhD	13	11.4
	Others	1	0.9
Region	America	3	2.6
	Europe	24	21.9
	Africa	8	7
	Middle East	23	20.2
	Asia	52	45.6
	Oceania	3	2.6
Occupation	Top Level	10	8.8

	Middle Level	39	34.2
	Low Level	14	12.3
	Retired	3	2.6
	Unemployed	4	3.5
	Student	44	38.6
Income	Under RM5,000	56	49.1
	RM5,000 to RM10,000	30	26.3
	RM10,000 to RM50,000	22	19.3
	RM50,000 and above	6	5.3
Expatriates	No	79	69.3
	Yes	35	30.7
Years Stayed	Less than 1 year	43	37.7
	1 to 2 years	15	13.2
	2 to 3 years	19	16.7
	More than 3 years	37	32.5
MM2H Applicant	No	107	93.9
	Yes	7	6.1
Travel Frequency	1-2 times per year	68	59.6
	3-5 times per year	37	32.5
	6-8 times per year	2	1.8
	More than 8 times and above	7	6.1

The monthly income of the respondents is also shown in Table 1, which the highest frequency falls under the category income of under RM5,000 which was 49.1 percent of the respondents. The respondents originated across various regions all over the world with 45.6 percent of them were from Asia. Furthermore, 69.3 percent of respondents were merely tourists while expatriates stood 30.7 percent of the sample. Only 6.1 percent had chosen Malaysia as their second home after and were Malaysia My Second Home (MM2H) participants. 37.7 percent of the respondents had stayed less than one year in Malaysia. Pertaining to frequency of travelling around the world, 59.6 percent of the respondents had travelled 1-2 times per year only.

4.2 Reliability Test and Regression Analysis

Cronbach's Alpha was calculated to test the reliability of multiple-item measures in variable perceptions of the quality during visit. The reliability for the constructs are required to have a Cronbach alpha which is higher than 0.7 [21]. The Cronbach Alpha in the analysis was 0.856 for the variable

perceptions of the quality during visit with total number of 14 items. The result shows a reasonably good internal consistency in the variable.

Table 2: Linear Regression of Perceptions of the Quality during visit.

Variable	Unstandardized Coefficient		Standardized Coefficient		T-Value	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta			
Model Statistics (ANOVA)						
F						3.112
Sig.						0.000
(Constant)	1.245	0.472			2.639	0.010
Friendliness of the local people	0.181	0.101	0.204		1.793	0.076
Quality service and cleanliness from the local business	0.017	0.116	-0.017		0.144	0.886
Prices of goods and services	0.053	0.108	0.051		0.488	0.627
Amount of lightning at night	0.006	0.098	-0.006		0.056	0.955
Number of police and security	0.074	0.104	0.076		0.707	0.481
Ease of local transportation services	-0.16	0.087	-0.199		1.834	0.070
Ease of communication with local people	0.178	0.101	0.194		1.753	0.083
Cleanliness of the destination	0.206	0.101	0.214		2.043	0.044
Clearness of signs	0.027	0.091	-0.03		-0.29	0.772
Air Quality	0.157	0.097	0.167		1.613	0.110
Water Quality	0.013	0.12	-0.013		0.107	0.915
Ease of getting a clinic or hospital	0.233	0.128	0.255		1.816	0.072
Facilities and services provided by clinic or hospital	0.204	0.138	-0.212		1.474	0.144
Climate Conditions	0.073	0.098	0.085		0.747	0.457

Significance level of p-value ≤ 0.1

The linear regression in Table 2 showed that the tourists' perceptions of the quality during their visit were associated with the tourists' satisfaction level. The model is significant as the significance value is p-value=0.000 ≤ 0.1. The study takes respondents' satisfaction level during their visit in Malaysia as the dependent variable and the indicators perceptions of quality during visit as independent variables. The variables were analysed using the regression analysis in SPSS version 23. The results of all the determinants are shown in Table 2. In this model, there were four indicators which are positively correlated with the satisfaction level. This indicates that the improvement in these factors will

significantly increase the overall satisfaction. Keeping the cleanliness of the destination exert the greatest influence ($b = 0.214$) in tourism satisfaction. Other contributing factors include the ease of assessing a clinic or a hospital ($b = 0.255$), the friendliness of local people ($b = 0.204$) and the ease of communication with local people ($b = 0.194$).

CONCLUSIONS

In recognition that the tourists' satisfaction is important in the tourism in Malaysia, a study concerning the tourists' perceptions in quality during visit was undertaken. This study intended to measure the determinants of quality during visit on tourists' satisfaction.

Based on the high Cronbach's alpha value, the mean and regression analysis could continue. The regression analysis results showed that there are four significant indicators in the tourists' satisfaction. Firstly, the results show that keeping cleanliness of the destination is essential in attracting tourists. The importance of keeping the destination clean could be explained by Tan and Omar [22], whereby keeping cleanliness of the destination helps to preserve the wildlife of the turtles in Rantau Abang Beach as well as increase tourists' satisfaction. Thus, it is important for the ministry to develop a thriving and sustainable tourism industry.

Secondly, the ease of getting a clinic or hospital is also observed by Alsharif and Al-Khaldi, [23]. The study found that the satisfaction of tourists who utilized health care services of five selected primary health care centers in Abha is significant with tourism satisfaction. The friendliness of local people and ease of communication with local people has both its similarity in contributing to tourist satisfaction as both requires body language and verbal usage. One of the attributes in maintaining tourist satisfaction is overcome language barriers and local people being friendly [24]. Although Malay language is Malaysia's national language, the international language, English Language is still widely used in foreign affairs. This is to attract as many possible foreign visitors to come to Malaysia.

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