

CAN TOURIST MEMORABILITY INFLUENCE TOURISTS' SATISFACTION? A STUDY OF INTERNATIONAL TOURIST TO MALAYSIA

Anis Abd Razak¹, Syafiqah Md Nayan², Norwani Mohd Nazari³, Siti Aisyah Esa⁴

^{1,2,3,4} Universiti Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

Email: anis@unikl.edu.my¹, syafiqah.nayan01@s.unikl.edu.my², norwani@unikl.edu.my³, aisyah.esa@s.unikl.edu.my⁴

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ABSTRACT: It is about time where tourism industry focused more on customer retention rather and counting the numbers of visitors on periodical basis. Tourist important is as good as customer satisfaction in other industry where it brings advantages not only to the service provider but to the state and country. The purpose of this study is to measure the relationship between the tourists' memorability towards satisfaction. This study used a cross sectional survey using a questionnaire to collect data. Respondents were among the international tourist that come to Terengganu for vacation purposes. 345 respondents participated in the data collections. Data was collected at the strategic exit points. Results indicates that positive memorability have significant impact towards tourists' satisfaction. Local and culture have shown positive relationship towards tourists' satisfaction. This study was only focusing in Terengganu, one of the 13 states in Malaysia. The result is only limited to the scope of Terengganu and further study can be done focusing the whole states with a bigger scale data. Result from this study can be used by all local operators to ensure that they take into consideration the elements of local culture and novelty towards their strategic marketing for future growth.

KEYWORDS: Tourist satisfaction, Novelty, Local culture, Terengganu.

I. INTRODUCTION

Visitors to Malaysia for the year 2019 was recorded as 26.1 million. The numbers show that at least 1% increase from total visitors 2018 and at the same time recorded increase in total expenditure of 2.4% (RM86143.50). It was also highlighted that average stay per visitors is 7.4 nights with per capita expenditure of RM3300.40. The figures illustrate that tourism is very important to the country as well as part of economy activities at the state level. Terengganu is among the most visited destination in Malaysia. Report from the tourism media indicates that Terengganu is targeting 750,000 visitors for the year 2020. There are many interesting tourism destinations which covers all type of interest such as sea activities, fishing, hiking, history, shopping and many mores. This research is aiming to explore tourist's responses on the elements of novelty and local cultures towards tourists' satisfaction. The information and findings gathered in this research can be used to improve the service delivery that may satisfied tourist in the future.

II. Literature review

2.1 Tourist satisfaction

Tourists' satisfaction is a measurement of how the tourist perceived of the overall service delivery from a tourism based service provider that meet or surpass the tourists' expectations (Kotler, 2017). The level of tourists' satisfaction is not much different against the customer satisfaction (Mohd Farid Shamsudin & Razali, 2015). Tourist is also a customer, but in this case it is more focused on the hospitality and tourism industry (Swart, George, Cassar, & Sneyd, 2018). Ideally tourist will get satisfied once the services offered to them meet their expectations that comprised the overall tourist's experience (Agyeiwaah, Adongo, Dimache, & Wondirad, 2016). It is also including the pre, during and post tourist's experiences (M. F. Shamsudin, Nurana, Aesya, & Nabi, 2018). Tourism operator or player in the tourism industry must ensure that they provide excellent services that surpass the tourists' expectations (Murphy, Moscardo, Benckendorff, & Pearce, 2011).

¹anis@unikl.edu.my

The challenge is always on understanding the tourist. Service provider need to ensure that they understand what is the tourist needs, wants and expectations (Torres-Sovero, González, Martín-López, & Kirkby, 2012). In order to that, service provider need to find ways especially through communication and getting feedback about their expectations (Agyeiwaah et al., 2016). Tourist feedback can help the service provider to understand their criteria and what is their needs and most importantly is the ability of the service provider to meet the needs (Hasim, Shamsudin, Ali, & Shabi, 2018). Past researcher indicates that tourists' satisfaction is important especially in service based business model. Tourism products such as homestay, island hopping, fishing and many mores that may related to servicing requires some adaptive approach in order to understand them (Truong, Lenglet, & Mothe, 2018). Satisfied tourist, according to (M. F. M. F. Shamsudin, Esa, & Ali, 2019) will stay longer and have high tendency to spend more. Hassan, Shamsudin, and Mustapha (2019), claimed that satisfied tourist in most of the past research will come back to the destination to repeat their experiences.

It was also recorded that satisfied tourist will share their experiences to their family and friends (Medina-Viruel, López-Guzmán, Pérez Gálvez, & Jara-Alba, 2019). In the past, tourist was reported to articulate up to 8 to 10 of their family and friends about their happiness from the services received (Murphy et al., 2011; Swart et al., 2018; Torres-Sovero et al., 2012). It was also mentioned by Mohd Farid Shamsudin, Ali, Wahid and Nadzri (2019), that the same people who received the information will share to same amount of people about the same things. Indirectly the positive things about the service provider went through as a word of mouth exponentially (Agyeiwaah et al., 2016; Torres-Sovero et al., 2012). Today, tourist still do the same by sharing their experiences, moments and happiness in a more daring approach where they used live session through social media that can reach unlimited numbers of viewer. Tourist not only able to promote the services through photo and video but may share their moments at real time for a greater impact (B. Kadir & Shamsudin, 2019). Social media is the new medium of word of mouth where it is more effective in spreading messages and information (Swart et al., 2018). As a result, tourist helps to promote the service providers in terms of their excellent services as well as their brand image (Baharudin Kadir, Shamsudin, Nurul, & Mohd, 2020).

Hui, Wan, & Ho, (2007); Mutanga, Vengesayi, Chikuta, Muboko, & Gandiwa, (2017), claimed that satisfied customer will bring their family and friends to the same destination. The findings at the same time supported by (Salem, Shawtari, Shamsudin, & Hussain, 2016). It means tourist not even share their moments over the internet but would like their close friends to enjoyed themselves the services that provided by the tour operator. Recent research (Aminuddin, Don, & Shamsudin, 2020) recommended that service provider to maintains their quality services as satisfied tourist have more chances to become happy with their overall vacation. Happy tourist in terms of feeling and emotion will have resulted to other service provider or local businesses to gain the benefits since tourist tends to spend more during their vacation. It was also mentioned by (Zulkifli, Faizun, & Yazid, 2020) that to meet tourists' expectations and gain their satisfaction is not easy as the tourist may have a sceptical minds being around in the unfamiliar areas and they tend to be more defensive and protective (Zarifah, Azahari, & Nayan, 2020). Izarul, Syed, and Nayan (2020), claimed that only service provider that focused on customer driven and understanding their customer will have managed to provide the positive customer experiences.

Past research (Agyeiwaah et al., 2016; Murphy et al., 2011; Torres-Sovero et al., 2012) suggested that service provider to continuously gathered information about their services from tourist. The feedback is to measure the best possible way the service provider to arrange in a line their operational in order to meet the customer expectations (Bin et al., 2016). It was suggested that the service provider to asked the tourist how they can be satisfied based on their overall experiences (Affendy Abu Hassim, Asmat-Nizam, & Mohd Farid Shamsudin, 2016). By doing that, service provider can improve their services over a period of time. According to Ahmad, Ismail, Shamsudin, and Kadir (2016), service provider must also evaluate the tourists' expectations based on all part of services including food, accommodation, transportation and other features experiences.

There is a gap between tourists' expectations between age, gender and country of origin according to (Hasegawa, 2010; Medina-Viruel et al., 2019; Truong et al., 2018). Different people from different countries expectations defer based on their culture and travelling experiences. Service provider need to collect all the data and customize their services accordingly for the future benefits (Ramseok-Munhurrun, Seebaluck, & Naidoo, 2015). Overall, with the high numbers of tourism in Terengganu, combination between small and large operator may invite fierce competition. Such things require the service provider to equipped themselves with knowledge and understanding about tourist and customer in order to sustain in the industry.

2.2 Memorability of vacation experiences

Memory in the contexts of tourism is the overall feeling that lead to a long term remembrance as a result of the vacation (Zatori, Smith, & Puczko, 2018). There are many parts and elements that can be associate with customer memory with regards to their overall experiences (Campos, Mendes, Valle, & Scott, 2017). It was claimed that good memory experiences may lead to overall tourists' satisfaction (Zatori et al., 2018). This paper will measure two dimensions of memorability which is local culture and novelty. Both may have own elements in order to lead to the high memorability. Williams, Yuan, and Williams (2019), claimed that memorability can be categorized as the output of the vacation or tourism trips. The memory itself is very subjective based on the individual

characteristics, behaviour and interest. Recent research indicates that memorability can be measured either during the event or post event.

2.2.1 Local culture

Past research indicates that one of the purpose of tourism is related to local culture (Su et al., 2016). In fact, most tourism operator promote their local culture as one of their selling point to attract tourist especially from other countries and different continents (Kastenholz, Carneiro, Marques, & Loureiro, 2018). Many tourists wish to see and experience themselves the different in culture. Most will feel grateful and enjoy of the activities related to culture such as dance, singing and traditional games (Campos et al., 2017). Never the less, responses and acceptance of local community towards tourist is also one of the important elements in satisfying tourist. Tourist will always remember the warm welcome and acceptance of local community in terms of knowledge and experiences sharing. However, it was mentioned by Zatori et al., (2018), that there could be a likelihood that tourist cannot accept or enjoyed with the local culture due to their personality that shun adventurer and limited themselves from exploring new things. According to Kastenholz et al., (2018), tourist normally will gain more knowledge's and experiences should they are more socially open to the local community. Language barriers could be one of the possibility in communications but research have found that language barriers does not significantly resulted to tourist's frustration or dissatisfaction. On the other vein, it was concluded that local culture not only helps to create a memorability experiences to tourist but helps the success and growth of the tourism industry (Williams et al., 2019).

2.2.2 Novelty

Novelty have been reported among the most significant factors towards tourists' satisfaction (Campos, Mendes, do Valle, & Scott, 2016). Measurement of novelty is through the comparison between current perception as compared to past tourists' experiences (Zatori et al., 2018). It was highlighted that novelty is related to the change of tourists' routine, elements of surprises, thrill experience and relief of boredom. Tourist that enjoyed any part of the experiences may feel the novelty of their trips. Many studies claimed that customer got excited when they experienced thrill over their vacation (Kastenholz et al., 2018). Such things may or may not expected. The elements of surprise are more significant towards memorability where customer never expect that they managed to see or to experiences something that were not being expected (Campos et al., 2016). Novelty is important because not only it will have strengthened the memorability over the long terms but the most that provide immediate feeling towards satisfaction (Schroeder, Pennington-Gray, Korstanje, & Skoll, 2016).

Past research (Sthapit, Del Chiappa, Coudounaris, & Björk, 2019; Yadav & Krishnan, 2014) related to novelty claimed that study related to tourists' satisfaction and experiences are recently become important and interesting. Many researchers focused on the novelty as it may provide a long term tourists' experiences that may cause them to come back to the same destination (Wang, Liu, Wei, & Zhang, 2020). Past research also encourages the service provider or tourism operator to think of something that can associate or get the tourist involvement in something that new to them (Asmelash & Kumar, 2019). The activities must be unique and different from their daily activities (Zailani, Ali, Iranmanesh, Moghavvemi, & Musa, 2016). A good novelty experiences according to Rajaratnam, Munikrishnan, Sharifand Nair (2014), will lead to tourists' satisfaction. There is also research conducted on the same issues but measuring the novelty as mediator or moderator (Zailani et al., 2016). Most of the past researches highlighted that novelty plays positive roles towards increasing tourists' satisfaction level (Zatori et al., 2018). However, it was highlighted that novelty is more related to the emotion of individual tourist. The overall result could be varying due to different tourist's background, cultures and expectations (Campos et al., 2016).

III. Methodology

This is a quantitative study thus it engages a cross sectional survey using a set of questionnaire to collect data. Prior to the full data collection, a pilot test was conducted in order to measure the clarity of the items used in the survey. Items used have been sent to 3 experts in tourism in which 2 were from academic sectors and 1 is from professional attached in the industry. 50 sample for pilot test was done and the result was good based on the Cronbach's alpha value and factors loading.

This survey used 5 enumerators from the local university to approach tourist and get them to participate in the data collection. Each participant was given a small face towel with the Terengganu tourism map on it. This research is only focusing on international tourist and thus data were collected at the airport, bus station and boat's jetty using a convenience sampling. 345 respondents participated over a 7 days of data collection exercises. All questions are in English and printed in a booklet with colours papers to attract the interest of tourist to participate and motivate them to cooperate.

The measurements of relationships were using 7 Liker-point scales in which 1 = strongly disagree and 7 = strongly agree. Overall there are 5 items used to scale tourists' satisfaction, 4 items scale for local culture and 5 items scale for novelty. All items were adapted from the past researcher related to the same topic. Data analysis were conducted using structural equation model.

IV. Findings

Table 1 below presents the summary statistics of the questionnaire survey. This researched adapted 4 items for local culture, 5 items each for the novelty and tourist satisfaction. The mean for local culture is 4.669 and for novelty is 4.627. Tourist satisfaction recorded the highest means of 5.201. All alpha value is above the minimum acceptance values. Table 2 presents the result of rotated factor loadings and the corresponding eigenvalues. This study presents, the α values of each item are higher than the broadly diagnosed rule of thumb, thereby indicating a good internal consistency.

Table 1: Summary statistics of the questionnaire survey

Constructs	No. of items	Mean	SD	α
Local culture	4	4.669	1.026	0.812
Novelty	5	4.627	1.128	0.863
Tourist satisfaction	5	5.201	1.324	0.871

Notes: SD, standard deviation; α , Cronbach's α ; overall $\alpha = 0.857$

Table 2: Result of principal component analysis

No	Local culture	Novelty	Tourist satisfaction
LC1	0.853		
LC2	0.871		
LC3	0.821		
LC4	0.783		
N1		0.877	
N2		0.874	
N3		0.876	
N4		0.798	
N5		0.845	
TS1			0.931
TS2			0.915
TS3			0.878
TS4			0.851
TS5			0.919
Eigenvalue	8.526	4.116	1.412
Variance explained (%)	35.527	17.153	5.888

Table 3 indicates the result goodness-of-fit statistics for the measurement model and the structural model. All the measures of measurement model satisfy the suggested values. It is shown in table 3 below that $\chi^2/df = 1.391$, RMSEA = 0.043, GFI = 0.901, NFI = 0.944, CFI = 0.983 and IFI = 0.983. Thus, fit indices for the model are well within the threshold levels, as recommended by Hair et al. (2010).

Table 3: Goodness-of-fit statistics for measurement model and structural model

	Suggested values	Measurement model values	Structural model values
X^2/df	<3	1.391	1.374
RMSEA	<0.06	0.043	0.042
GFI	>0.90	0.901	0.902
NFI	>0.90	0.944	0.945
CFI	>0.90	0.983	0.984
IFI	>0.90	0.983	0.984

Table 4 presents the results of item reliability and construct reliability. There is a good item reliability because the standardized loadings ranged from 0.695 to 0.954. All values of construct reliability were more than the required threshold (i.e. 0.70), which indicated a high level of construct reliability. After the assessment of the required levels of reliability of the scale, this study evaluated the scale validity. Convergent validity and discriminant validity were checked under construct validity. Convergent validity assesses the magnitude of the correlation of dimensional measures in the same concept. Calculation of average variance extracted (AVE) is suggested to assess convergent validity (Fornell and Larcker, 1981; Hair et al., 2010). The higher AVE represents true indication of

latent construct. The value of AVE should be more than 0.50 (Hair et al., 2010). Table 4 presents the values of AVE for constructs ranged from 0.62 to 0.80, which surpassed the threshold value 0.50, thus ensuring the convergent validity. To assess convergent validity, t-statistics related to factor loadings are also taken under consideration (Rao and Troshani, 2007). Table 4 shows the t-statistics values of all items that are significant at the 0.01 level and established the convergent validity of the constructs. To test discriminant validity, AVE is also used (Fornell and Larcker, 1981). The rule of thumb is that AVE values should be higher than corresponding squared inter-construct correlation estimates (SIC) in the model (Churchill, 1979).

Table 4: Measurement model results

Constructs and variables	Standardized loadings	t-statistics	Construct reliability (CR)	Average variance extracted (AVE)
Local culture				
LC1	0.882	15.567**	0.88	0.62
LC2	0.909	16.420**		
LC3	0.750	12.227**		
LC4	0.695	11.123**		
Novelty				
N1	0.811	12.698**	0.89	0.70
N2	0.862	13.816**		
N3	0.912	14.775**		
N4	0.868	13.613**		
N5	0.707	11.254**		
Tourist satisfaction				
TS1	0.922	17.222**	0.92	0.80
TS2	0.954	18.272**		
TS3	0.921	17.220**		
TS4	0.871	15.679**		
TS5	0.788	13.291**		

The structural modelling results are shown in table 5. The results show that local culture has a positive influence on tourist satisfaction. Novelty at the same time is positively linked with the level of tourist satisfaction.

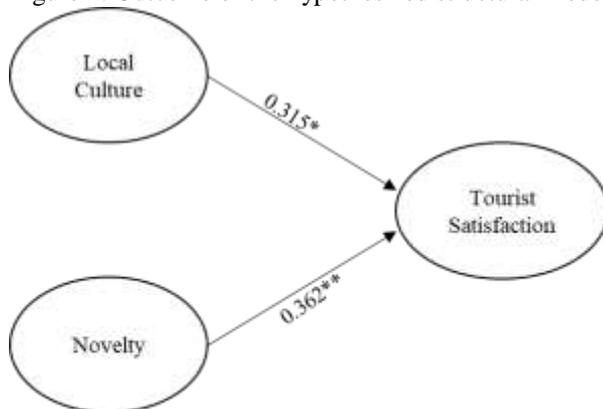
Table 5: Path analysis of structural model

Casual path	Path coefficient	t-statistics	Results
Local culture → Tourist satisfaction	0.315*	2.200	Supported
Novelty → Tourist satisfaction	0.362**	2.596	Supported

Notes: *,** Significant at $P < 0.05$ and $P < 0.01$ levels, respectively

The following figure is the outcome of the hypothesized model based on the result of path analysis Table 5.

Figure 1: Outcome of the hypothesized structural mode



Notes: * $P < 0.05$; ** $P < 0.01$

V. Discussion and implications

This research indicated that both local culture and novelty contributes to the tourists’ satisfaction. This is a clear signal to all the industry players to focused and align their business and marketing strategy towards the things that tourist’s feel and expect. The result of this findings are consistent with the previous studies conducted by researchers from other part of the world (Chi & Qu, 2008; Hasegawa, 2010; Murphy et al., 2011). Based on records, top international visitors to Malaysia are coming from India, South Korea, Vietnam, Japan and Philippines. However, top tourist related to Terengganu are coming from America, Africa, Europe and Oceania. Malaysia and Terengganu basically have a lot interesting opportunity to the international tourist especially related to the ecotourism, city tour, Islamic tour, island tours, Edu tourism and adventures tourism. Terengganu have so many unique attractions that is not available any part of the world. The local dialect, local food and the culture of the local people are among the things that can be promoted to attract more people from other part of the world to visits. From a practical perspective, industry players should create more awareness about the activities in Terengganu and at the same time focused to satisfy the current tourists. Service provider must also from time to time improved their service level and increased the service quality in order to meet tourist expectations. Past research indicates that tourist expectations keep increased resulted from knowledge, awareness and experiences.

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