

TOURISTS' SATISFACTION WITH A DESTINATION: AN INVESTIGATION ON VISITORS TO LANGKAWI ISLAND

Nor Khasimah Aliman^{1*}, Shareena Mohamed Hashim², Siti Dalela Mohd Wahid¹ and Syahmi Harudin¹

¹Faculty of Business Management, Universiti Teknologi MARA, Malaysia

²Academy of Language Studies, Universiti Teknologi MARA, Malaysia

ABSTRACT: *This study attempts to investigate the antecedents of tourist satisfaction. The focus of the study is Langkawi Island, a well-known tourist destination in Malaysia. Questionnaires were distributed to 500 tourists in Langkawi island. Descriptive statistic, factor analysis and multiple regressions were run on the 482 useable data. The results indicate that 295 (61.2%) of the respondents were repeat visitors and the remaining 187(38.8%) were first-timers. More than half (56.8%) of the respondents had high levels of satisfaction with the mean items score of 3.90 and above. When factor analysis was run, seven factors emerged from the 33 items used to measure the constructs. Apart from tourist expectations, perceived quality, destination image, cost and risks, and perceived value, a new variable known as social-security was identified as a predictor. Regression analysis revealed that destination image, tourist expectations, costs and risks, and social-security have positive and significant influence on tourist satisfaction. Social-security was found to be the most important predictor of tourist satisfaction, followed by tourist expectations, destination image, and costs and risks. The findings of this study could provide guidelines for tourism managers and destination operators to further develop better strategies to satisfy travellers to Langkawi.*

KEYWORDS: Tourist satisfaction, Antecedents, Langkawi Island, Malaysia

INTRODUCTION

Travel and Tourism is one of the world's largest and most dynamic service industries comprising a number of different sectors including travel, hospitality and visitor services. Tourism has been selected as the focal service industry in this study because it is one of the fastest growing global industries with significant impacts across the world economies (WTO, 1995). Realizing the travel and tourism industry's role as the driver of economic growth and employment, governments all over the world have intensified efforts to compete for the tourism dollars. In fact, the World Travel and Tourism Council (2013) reported that the industry supports 225 million jobs for the skilled, semi-skilled and unskilled, and generates 9 per cent of world GDP. In the same vein, Hui et al. (2007) note that all countries develop the tourist industry because it will benefit not only the industry itself, but the other sectors as well, such as retail, transportation and construction. For the same reason, the Malaysian government has included the tourism industry as one of the 12 National Key Economic Areas (NKEAs) that will spearhead the country's transformation into a high income nation by 2020. Twelve Entry Point Projects (EPPs) across five main themes – affordable luxury; family fun; events, entertainment, spas and sports; business tourism and nature adventure – have been introduced to attract 36 million tourists and earn RM168bil in tourist receipts by 2020.

According to the Performance Management Delivery Unit (2012), the EPPs are expected to provide an incremental GNI contribution of RM66.7bil and create 37,900 new job vacancies by 2020 through direct, indirect and induced employment.

Background of the study

Langkawi Island is a cluster of 99 islands situated in the northern state of Kedah, on the west coast of the Peninsula of Malaysia. It is within commutable distance by ferry to Perlis and mainland Kedah and by plane to Kuala Lumpur. Since 1984, the Malaysian government has been actively developing and promoting Langkawi as a premier island resort equipped with modern infrastructure and facilities. Subsequently, on January 1, 1987, Langkawi was designated as a duty-free port to serve as an important catalyst to spur the socio-economic development of the island and transform its economic base from a mainly agricultural community. With its natural attributes and diverse habitats including rainforests, mangrove wetlands and coral reefs, Langkawi has the potential to offer ecotourism to nature lovers. At the same time, it is fast expanding as one of South-East Asia's premier meeting and exhibition destinations as a result of investments by both public and private sectors. The biennial Langkawi International Maritime and Aerospace Exhibition (LIMA), which was first held in 1991, continues to attract government officials, trade delegations and visitors from all parts of the world. The Langkawi Development Authority (2014) reported an increasing number of tourists over the last decade, and in 2012 alone, the island welcomed a total of 3.06 million domestic and international tourists. Although some of those tourists were first-timers, a sizeable number were repeat visitors. For the Asian and domestic visitors, duty-free shopping is an added attraction, but to the Westerners, the charm of the island lies in its natural beauty.

It is a commonly held view that tourist satisfaction is the key to the success of the tourism industry (Sadeh et al., 2012). Unfortunately, only a few academic studies have focused directly on satisfaction among tourists, and an even more limited number have been undertaken in Malaysia, specifically on Langkawi. According to Zabkar et al. (2010), studies on satisfaction in the tourist industry have always had several difficulties on conceptual and practical grounds. As such, the determinants of tourist satisfaction and the consequences need to be further explored. This research was undertaken in response to calls for more analytical insights on satisfaction of tourists visiting the island of Langkawi in Malaysia. A better understanding of the attributes that ascertain their satisfaction would be a significant step in sustaining the island's ranking as one of Malaysia's most popular holiday destinations. For this reason, the findings of this study could have a notable impact on the Langkawi Development Authority (LADA), the state government of Kedah and the policy makers in Malaysia.

Research objectives

To date, no studies in tourism literature have simultaneously examined the structural relationships between tourist expectation, perceived quality, perceived value, costs and risks, and destination image as antecedents of satisfaction in Langkawi Island, Malaysia. Thus, the objectives of this study is to identify the antecedents of tourist satisfaction among visitors to the island.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Tourist satisfaction and its antecedents

Severt et al. (2007) define tourist satisfaction as the extent of the tourist's fulfillment pleasure which occurred from the trip experience about a product or service feature that fulfills the tourist's desires, expectations and wants in association with the trip. Satisfaction is created by the comparison of the customer's expectation before and after consumption. In tourism context, satisfaction is primarily referred to as a function of pre-travel expectations and post-travel experiences. The tourist is satisfied when experiences go beyond the expectations. However, if the tourist feels displeasure, dissatisfaction will be the expected outcome (Chen & Chen, 2010; Reisinger & Turner, 2003). From the foregoing discussion, it is understood that satisfaction of tourists is caused by two different dimensions: firstly, it is related to the pre-expectation of the tourist before the travel; and secondly, it is referred to the justification of the tourist on the delivered services after the travel, and based on the real experiences.

Empirical work on customer satisfaction has a double managerial roles: informative and communicative (Vavra, 1997). The primary purpose of measuring and explaining customer satisfaction is to understand how well suppliers at a particular destination recognize and respond to the needs of its visitors, and to identify which elements of the destination's offer need improvement. Indeed, tourists' comments, complaints and suggestions are invaluable source of ideas for improvements and innovations. Also, tourist satisfaction research is important for successful destination marketing because it influences the choice of destination, the consumption of products and services, and the decision to return (Kozak & Rimmington, 2000). For these reasons, satisfaction is viewed as an important research topic by both practitioners and academics (Xia et al., 2009). Yet, there is a dearth of exploratory studies aimed at providing analytical insights on satisfaction among tourists. Heung and Qu (2000) rightly assert that the current tourism literature has mostly reported findings about tourist perceptions and satisfaction levels towards travelling in Western rather than the Asian countries.

Until recently, no mention has been made of determining the real drivers with respect to overall satisfaction with the vacation destination. Measuring tourist satisfaction with a destination is conceptually different from measuring satisfaction at the transaction specific level. Previous literature has revealed many cause-and-effect models for measuring customer satisfaction. However, there is no complete universal cause-and-effect model found specifically for measuring tourist satisfaction. Thus, this research incorporates the American Customer Satisfaction Index Model (ACSI), European Customer Satisfaction Index (ECSI) and other general consumer satisfaction models to generate antecedent variables of tourist satisfaction in Malaysia.

According to ACSI (Fornell et al., 1996), the three antecedents of customer satisfaction are customer expectation, perceived quality and perceived value. In the ECSI model (Eklof & Westlund, 2002), customer expectation, perceived quality, perceived value and company image are identified as the antecedents of overall customer satisfaction. In the past decade, these models have been used widely in different geographical regions. A research conducted in Hong Kong using the same model investigated the impact of perceived attractiveness, perceived quality and perceived value on satisfaction (Um et al., 2006). Xia et al. (2009) present tourist expectation, destination image, perceived quality and perceived value as predictors of tourist satisfaction. Dmitrovic et al. (2009) suggest that quality, perceived value,

image, and costs and risks are determinants of tourist satisfaction. In Western Australia, Quintal and Polczynski (2010) studied the relationships between perceived attractiveness, perceived quality, perceived value, perceived risk and satisfaction, while in Thailand, Prayag and Ryan (2012) investigated the role and influence of destination image, place attachment and personal involvement on visitor satisfaction. Based on this background, the present study examines five antecedents of tourist satisfaction: tourist expectation, perceived quality, perceived value, destination image, and costs and risks.

Relationships between variables

Tourist expectation in relation to satisfaction

Tourist expectation is an affective variable in the service sector (Sadeh et al., 2012). The study of the levels of expectation and satisfaction has paramount significance in so far as sustained development of tourism at the given destination is concerned (Lather et al., 2012). Unfortunately, researchers do not agree on how the term ‘tourist expectation’ should be defined. Akama and Kieti (2003) argue that tourists usually have initial expectations of a service before they consume it. Their expectations are formed through information from advertisements and word of mouth perceptions from other consumers during past experience. However, Rodriguez del Bosque et al. (2006) suggest that expectations are formed through past experience, the tourist’s level of previous satisfaction with the service, communication from the service provider such as a promise and the tourist’s perceived image of the service. According to Tribe and Snaith (1998), expectations are what people anticipate regarding their experience. Expectations are also related to the performance of a product or service as anticipated by the consumers (Xia et al., 2009; Ngobo, 1997). In this research, expectation is measured using three dimensions: overall expectations of quality, expectations regarding customization, and expectations regarding reliability (Fornell et al., 1996).

Expectations are always changing because consumers are aware of alternative service providers in the ever-growing tourism industry. A tourist’s expectations directly influence his feelings about the services (satisfaction). In fact, it is a popularly held view among experts that tourist expectation directly affects perceived value and satisfaction (Song et al., 2012; Lee et al., 2011; Xia et al., 2009). The expectation of the destination can be the basis for assessment of the money paid and the service delivered (perceived value). Thus, the researchers propose:

H1: Tourist expectations for a destination have a positive effect on tourist satisfaction.

Tourists’ perceived quality in relation to satisfaction

Another antecedent of satisfaction for this study is the perceived quality of service which is determined by customer perception. In tourism research, Chen and Tsai (2007) define perceived quality as the “visitor’s assessment of the standard of the service delivery process in association with the trip experience” (p. 1116). Among the many researchers who have undertaken studies on quality and satisfaction which relate to goods and services, a few have suggested that perceived quality and satisfaction need to be viewed as distinct constructs. This is because perceptions about quality are based on long-term cognitive evaluations of a firm’s service delivery, whereas customer satisfaction is a short-term emotional reaction to a specific experience (Tian-Cole et al., 2002; Rust et al., 1999; Oliver, 1997; Taylor & Baker, 1994). Additionally, Saleh and Ryan (1993) state that, “Satisfaction is determined by the

consumers' perceptions of the service and attention they receive from the representative of the service company with whom they are dealing" (p. 107).

Other studies have found a causal relationship between the two constructs (Spreng & Mackoy, 1996; Cronin & Taylor, 1992). Past studies have also suggested that perceptions of service quality and value affect satisfaction, and satisfaction then affects loyalty and post-behaviors (de Rojas & Camarero, 2008; Chen, 2008; Chen & Tsai, 2007; Choi & Chu, 2001). A positive relationship between the two constructs has also been confirmed in prior investigations (Quintal & Polczynski, 2010; Ruiz et al., 2009; de Rojas & Camarero, 2008; Um et al., 2006; Howat & Murray, 2002; Baker & Crompton, 2000). Goodrich (1978) assert that, "The more favorable the perception of a given vacation destination, the more preferred that destination will tend to be" (p. 11). Xia et al. (2009) found a significant positive relation between perceived quality and satisfaction ($\beta = 0.64$, $t = 7.89$), implying that visitors who perceive higher destination quality are more likely to experience greater satisfaction with the destination.

To assess perceived quality, the present research uses seven items adopted from Xia et al. (2009), Hui et al. (2007), Chen and Tsai (2007) and Wang et al. (2005). Hence, based on previous literature, the researchers posit:

H2: Perceived quality has a positive effect on tourist satisfaction

Tourists' perceived value in relation to satisfaction

Zeithaml (1988) defines perceived value as the customer's assessment of the services based on the perceptions of what is received and what is given. Rust and Oliver (1994) adopt a microeconomic view that value is some combination of what is received (utility derived from quality) and what is sacrificed (price and other costs). Meanwhile, Lovelock (2000) views perceived value as a trade-off between perceived benefits and perceived costs. In this study, perceived value is measured by multidimensional items (Petrick & Backman, 2002). It is viewed as a combination of both monetary and non-monetary prices including other factors such as time, search costs and convenience

According to the equity theory (Oliver & Swan, 1989), consumer satisfaction occurs when more value is received than what is spent by the consumer. Indeed, several researchers have found that when tourists perceive that the quality of services given to them is greater than the money paid by them, they will feel satisfied with the services received (Song et al., 2012; Chen & Chen, 2010; Haung & Su, 2010). In essence, tourist satisfaction is directly affected by perceived value – visitors who perceive higher destination value are more likely to experience greater satisfaction with the destination (Song et al., 2012; Haung & Su, 2010; Chen & Chen, 2010; Chen & Tsai, 2007; Lee et al., 2007; Um et al., 2006; Deslandes, 2003). A study by Xia et al. (2009) also confirmed a significant positive relationship between perceived value and satisfaction ($\beta = 0.46$, $t = 6.23$).

Perceived value has been measured using three dimensions (price, time and effort). These dimensions were employed by Xia et al. (2009), Chen and Tsai (2007), Bolton and Drew (1991), and Oliver and Swan (1989) in their investigations. Based on this background the researchers propose:

H3: Perceived value has a positive effect on tourist satisfaction

Destination image in relation to tourist satisfaction

A destination is defined as a blend of consumers' space and tourism products providing a holistic experience which is subjectively interpreted according to the consumer's travel itinerary, cultural background, purpose of visit, past experience, etc. (Fuchs & Weiermair, 2003). According to Tasci et al., (2007), "Destination image is an interactive system of thoughts, opinions, feelings, visualizations, and intentions toward destination" (p. 200). Chi and Qu (2008) define destination image as an individual's mental representation of the knowledge, feelings, and overall perception of a particular destination. It is formed as a result of interactions between cognitive, affective and conative elements (Lin et al., 2007; Gartner, 1993). Echtner and Ritchie (1991) describe destination image as the perception of destination features or attributes known as cognitive images, while the combination of cognitive and affective images refers to mental pictures or place imagery such as a safe and enjoyable experience for the family. Similarly, Choi et al. (1999) claim that destination image is people's belief, idea or impression about a place.

Many researchers agree that destination image is important in terms of its effects on tourist behavior such as destination choice, decision making and satisfaction (Chen & Hsu, 2000; Court & Lupton, 1997; Schroeder, 1996; Ross, 1993). In the English Historic Towns Forum (1992), it was found that more than 80% of visitors considered the retailing mix and general environment of the town as the most important attraction of the destination. The following factors were deemed important by tourism and leisure shoppers:

- The cleanliness of the town
- Pedestrian areas/pavements that are well maintained
- Natural features such as rivers and parks
- The architecture and facades/shop fronts
- Street furniture (seating and floral displays)
- Town center activities (e.g., outdoor markets and live entertainment)

A few destination image studies have investigated destination image as an independent variable influencing several consumer behaviour variables concerning not only before, but also during and after visiting a destination (Chen & Hsu, 2000; Schroeder, 1996; Ross, 1993). A tourist may form a positive or negative image towards a destination. Chen and Kerstetter (1999) claim that tourists will choose one destination over another only when its positive image aspects exceed its negative image aspects. However, some researchers state that destination image must be not only be positive but also strong to be chosen by travellers (Ross, 1993; Hunt 1975). To measure image perceptions, the majority of studies have relied on lists of attributed measures using the scaling method (Prayag, 2009; Tasci & Gartner, 2007).

Destination image may directly or indirectly affect satisfaction through tourist expectation, perceived quality and perceive value. The positive relationship between destination image and satisfaction is well established in the tourism literature for different types of destinations, including island destinations (Prayag, 2009; Xia et al., 2009; Chi & Qu, 2008; Cheng & Tsai, 2007; Lee et al., 2005; Bigne et al., 2001; Kozak & Rimmington, 2000). Echtner and Ritchie (1991) note that image is a key factor in destination choice for the first-timers. In their studies, Leong et al. (2010) and Mohamad et al. (2012) found that destination image is the

antecedent to tourist satisfaction for Malaysia, and according to Mohamad et al. (2011), the country is perceived as offering natural scenic beauty supported by good facilities for food and accommodation. Similarly, research in Thailand by Nikorn and Ampasri (2012) confirm that tourist satisfaction is positively influenced by destination image ($\lambda = 0.62$, $t = 5.75$). Chen and Tsai (2007) also reported a positive relationship between destination image and trip quality.

Destination image in this study is measured using the six components of tourism destination proposed by Buhalis (2000) which include attractions, amenities, accessibility, activities, ancillary services, and available packages. The researchers posit:

H4: The more positive the destination images are, the higher the satisfaction levels.

Costs and risks in relation to tourist satisfaction

Any tourist will consider both costs and risks before travelling. Costs and risks may be high or low in the eyes of different individual tourists. The low risk associated with a holiday destination can influence repeat visitations, contributing to increased employment and modern infrastructure (Aqueveque, 2006; Darnell & Johnson, 2001). Moreover, the low risk that tourists perceive in a holiday destination can impact on its reputation for safety and encourage repeat visitation (Kozak, et al., 2007). Perceived costs and risks is influenced by many factors: experience, personal characteristics, environmental forces such as political stability, economic conditions, etc. As such, rational travellers normally choose to travel to destinations that offer low costs and low risks.

In the service setting, costs and risks is a different construct from perceived value (Cronin et al., 2000). Pisnik Korda and Snoj (2007) consider costs and risks as an independent variable that causes disutility. Monroe (1990) and Zeithaml (1988) propose costs and risks as a sacrifice construct which includes the element of price and non-price components (e.g. the time and effort invested in pre-purchase activities). The risks associated with the purchase may also include social desirability and security. Thus, the present research incorporates the five (5) items – price, time, effort, social desirability and security – in the costs and risks construct.

Previous studies have observed the negative effect of perceived risk on satisfaction (Fornell et al., 2006; Yuksel & Yuksel, 2007). Both Monroe (1990) and Zeithaml (1988) indicate that costs and risks is negatively related to perceived value and it can adversely affect customer satisfaction. Therefore, visitors who perceive lower risk are more likely to experience greater satisfaction with the destination. Based on the findings of previous research, this study proposes:

H5: Costs and risks directly influences tourist satisfaction.

METHODOLOGY

A survey using close-ended questions was used to gather data on the predictors and criterion variable, as well as on specific demographic characteristics.

Research framework and measures

Based on past studies, a blend of five variables was considered to have influence on tourist satisfaction with Langkawi Island. Twenty-four items were used to measure the predictor variables. Tourist satisfaction was measured using 9 items. The research framework is shown schematically in Figure 1.

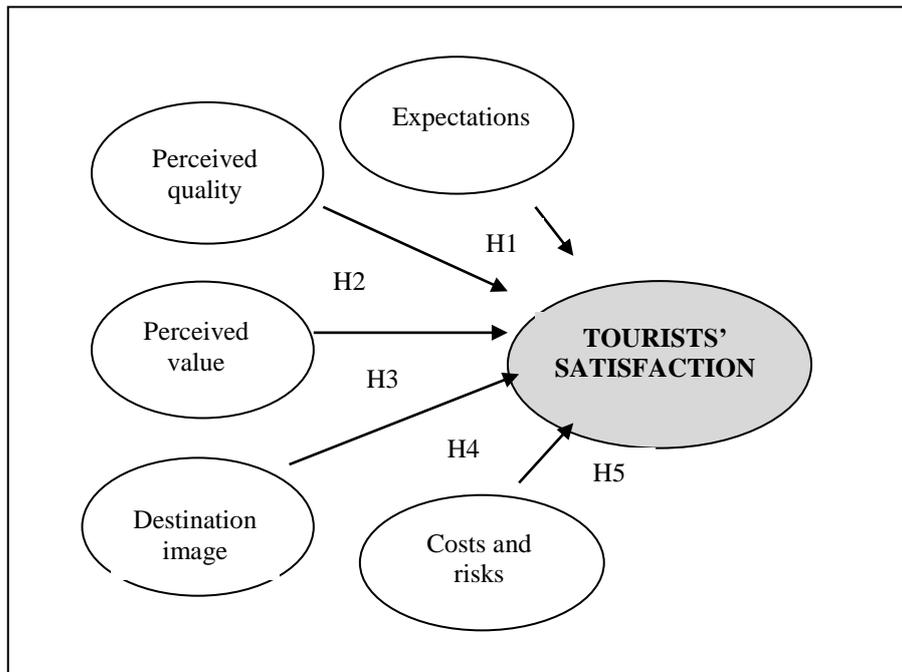


Figure 1. Proposed Research Framework

A five-point Likert-type scale, ranging from (1) strongly disagree to (5) strongly agree was used to measure the independent and dependent variables. Demographic variables were measured using nominal and ordinal scales.

Target population, sample and data collection

In 2012, about 3.06 million tourists visited Langkawi Island. Based on the target population of 2012, the targeted sample size for this study was determined. As suggested by Roscoe (1975), a sample of more than 30 and less than 500 is sufficient for most research. Thus, 500 survey questionnaires were distributed to the visitors at various tourist spots such as the ferry terminal, airport and Cenang Beach. This sample size is consistent with similar research conducted in other countries. For instance, Chanin (2011) used 251 international tourists in Thailand, Chen and Chen (2010) surveyed 477 tourists in Tainan, Taiwan, Hui et al. (2007) investigated 424 tourists in Singapore, while Joppe et al. (2001) surveyed 359 tourists in Toronto. Since the visitors were preoccupied with their holiday activities, convenience sampling was employed to select the respondents.

Data Analysis

Both descriptive and inferential statistics were used to analyze the data. Demographic variables were reported using frequency counts. Every item used to measure the variables was analyzed using mean score and standard deviation. Conformatory factor analysis was

carried out to identify the number of factors that emerged. Cronbach's Alpha was calculated to test the internal consistency of the items, and hypotheses testing was conducted using multiple regressions.

RESEARCH RESULTS

Respondents profile

The research respondents comprised tourists from Malaysia and other countries such as Indonesia, Thailand, Canada, Iran and so on. Out of the 482 respondents, 426 (88.4%) were Malaysian citizens while 56 (11.6%) were non-citizens. The subjects were categorized into two groups: first-time visitors (187/38.8%) and repeat visitors (295/61.2%). There were 261(54.1%) female respondents and 221 (45.9%) male respondents. About 70% of the respondents were Malay Bumiputra, and the remaining were Chinese, Indians and foreign nationals. The respondents represented various age groups but the majority (74.3%) were aged between 21 to 49 years old. Half (50%) of the respondents were single, while married couples made up 47.3% of the sample. One hundred and thirty-two (27.4%) respondents had secondary education, about 31.7% possessed diploma qualification and 30.1% were degree holders. From these data, the researchers concluded that more than 60% of the respondents earned sufficient monthly incomes that allowed them to travel and have vacations (Refer to Table 1).

Table 1. Respondents profile (n=482)

	Frequency	Percent		Frequency	Percent
First visit	187	38.8	Malaysian	426	88.4
Repeat visit	295	61.2	Non-Malaysian	56	11.6
Malay	340	70.5	20 years and below	89	18.5
Chinese	35	7.3	21-29	182	37.8
Indian	32	6.6	30-39	109	22.6
Others	19	3.9	40-49	67	13.9
Non-Malaysian	56	11.6	50-59	29	6
			60-69	6	1.2
Single	244	50.6	Primary	3	0.6
Married	228	47.3	Secondary	132	27.4
Divorced	6	1.2	Diploma	153	31.7
Widowed	1	0.2	Bachelor	145	30.1
Separated	3	0.6	Master	44	9.1
			PhD	5	1.0

Pilot Test

Prior to the data collection, the questionnaires were pilot tested on 50 respondents. Similar tests were also carried out by Hui et al. (2007) in Singapore, and by Prayag and Ryan (2012) in Mauritius. The result of the pilot test indicated that most of the items used to measure the variables had a mean score of more than 3.0, which was more than the average score of the five-point Likert scale. The reliability score for the predictors and criterion variables were above 0.50 and considered acceptable for basic research by Nunnally (1978) (Refer to Appendix).

Factor Analysis and Alpha Scores

The results of conformatory factor analysis identified the eigenvalue, KMO and Barlett's Test score. The varimax rotation method was performed and the number of factors was determined based on the eigenvalue criterion ($\lambda > 1$). Barlett's Test of Sphericity was statistically significant (9097.469, $p = 0.000$) and the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) value was 0.938. Factor loadings for all items are shown in Table 2.

Out of 33 items, the principal component analysis revealed the presence of 7 factors with eigenvalues exceeding 1, explaining 65.96 per cent of the total variance, which exceeds the 60% threshold used in social sciences (Hair et al., 1995). Factor 1 clearly represents tourist satisfaction (criterion variable) that comprises nine items, explaining 38.57 percent of the variance with eigenvalues of 12.73. Factor 2 contributes 7.50 percent of the total variance with eigenvalues of 2.48, known as destination image and consisting of 8 items (destination image = 6 items and perceived quality = 2 items). Meanwhile, Factor 3 is the perceived quality which comprises six out of seven items used to measure the variable. This factor explains the 5.05 percent of variance with eigenvalues of 1.67. Factor 4 represents perceived value and consists of four items (perceived value = 3 items and costs and risks = 1 item), explaining the 4.47 percent variance with eigenvalues of 1.48. Factor 5 which contributes 3.81 percent of the total variance with eigenvalues of 1.26 is the tourist expectations and consists of four items (expectations = 3 items and perceived quality = 1 item). Factor 6, the costs and risks, comprises three out of five items used to measure the variable, and explains the 3.50 percent of the variance with the eigenvalues of 1.15. Factor 7, identified as a new predictor known as social-security, and comprises of two items, explains 3.07 percent of the variance with eigenvalues of 1.01.

Table 2. Factor Analysis of the variables (n=482)

Factor	Eigenvalues	Factor Loading	% Variance Explained
Factor 1: Tourist Satisfaction ($\alpha = 0.928$)	12.727		38.567
I really enjoyed the visit to Langkawi.		0.704	
I am satisfied with my decision to visit Langkawi.		0.708	
I prefer this destination.		0.705	
I have positive feelings regarding Langkawi.		0.692	
This experience is exactly what I need.		0.780	
My choice to purchase this trip was a wise one.		0.749	
This was a pleasant visit.		0.742	
This visit was better than expected.		0.752	
I rate Langkawi as a better destination as		0.718	

compared to similar tourist destinations.

Factor 2: Destination Image ($\alpha = 0.877$)	2.476		7.503
I perceive the quality of the tourist centers in Langkawi is		0.407	
I perceive the quality of the tourist guides in Langkawi is		0.464	
Attractions (natural, man-made, artificial, purpose built, heritage, special events)		0.573	
Accessibility (entire transportation system comprising of routes, terminals and vehicles)		0.681	
Amenities (accommodation and catering facilities, retailing, other tourists service)		0.668	
Activities and events (all activities available at the destination and what tourists will do during the visits)		0.583	
Ancillary services (services used by tourists such as banks, telecommunication, post, newsagent, hospital, etc.)		0.739	
Available packages (pre-arranged packages by intermediaries and principals)		0.677	
Factor 3: Perceived Quality ($\alpha = 0.851$)	1.665		5.046
I perceive the quality of accommodation in Langkawi is		0.693	
I perceive the quality of food in Langkawi is		0.738	
I perceive the quality of transportation in Langkawi is		0.726	
I perceive the quality of the local environment Langkawi is....		0.590	
I perceive the quality of the tourist centers in Langkawi is....		0.469	
I perceived the quality of tourist guides is		0.516	
Factor 4: Perceived Value ($\alpha = 0.844$)	1.475		4.471
In terms of money, travelling to Langkawi is		0.718	
In terms of time, travelling to Langkawi is		0.819	
In terms of effort, travelling to Langkawi is		0.842	
I consider travelling to Langkawi is expensive.		-0.497	
Factor 5: Tourist Expectations ($\alpha = 0.820$)	1.257		
My overall expectation of quality is		0.718	3.809
My expectation towards customization is		0.474	
My expectation toward reliability is		0.715	
I perceive the quality of the attractions (natural & heritage) in Langkawi is		0.583	
Factor 6: Costs and risks ($\alpha = 0.543$)	1.154		3.497
I consider travelling to Langkawi is expensive.		0.527	
		0.703	
I have to spend more time to visit Langkawi.		0.781	
I have to put more effort to visit Langkawi.			
Factor 7: Social-security ($\alpha = 0.719$)	1.012		3.066
I feel secure during my visit to Langkawi.		0.773	

I am able to socialize during my visit to Langkawi. 0.790

KMO = 0.938**Sig. = 0.000****Barlett's Test = 9097.469****T. Variance = 65.96%**

Table 2 also presents the reliability and internal consistency of each factor. A cut-off point of 0.40 was used to include items in interpretation of a factor. According to Sekaran and Bougie (2013), the closer the Cronbach's alpha is to 1, the higher its internal consistency reliability. The alpha values for the variables are as follows: F1 = Tourist Satisfaction ($\alpha = 0.928$), F2 = Destination Image ($\alpha = 0.877$), F3 = Perceived Quality ($\alpha = 0.851$), F4 = Perceived Value ($\alpha = 0.844$), F5 = Tourist Expectations ($\alpha = 0.820$), F6 = Costs and risks ($\alpha = 0.543$), F7 = Social-security ($\alpha = 0.719$). Except for F6 and F7, all constructs have alpha scores of above 0.80, which indicate that the items used to measure the constructs are reliable and satisfactory (Sekaran & Bougie, 2013; Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994; Nunnally, 1987).

Hypotheses testing

To test the hypotheses, multiple regression was run. When all six predictors were regressed with the criterion variable, which is tourist satisfaction, the model was found to be fit (Refer to Table 3). The overall strength of the relationship is strong and acceptable ($R = 0.69$). The percentage variance of satisfaction is explained by 47.5% of the variance of tourist expectations, perceived quality, perceived value, destination image, costs and risks, and social-security. Although the R^2 value is below 0.50, the F-value is significant at 0.00 and the model is fit. As such, there are other variables that may influence tourist satisfaction with Langkawi.

Table 3. Regression analysis results (n=482)

	B	β	t-value	p-value
<i>Constant</i>	0.375		2.019	0.037
Tourist expectation	0.237	0.216	4.423	0.000
Perceived quality	0.101	0.095	1.658	0.098
Perceived value	0.027	0.023	0.511	0.610
Destination image	0.267	0.234	4.151	0.000
Costs and risks	0.126	0.141	3.532	0.000
Social-security	0.183	0.199	5.245	0.000
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R	0.689			
R^2	0.475			
F-value	1.581			
F-sig	0.000			

Note: Significant at the 0.05 level

Table 3 shows that all predictors have positive relationships with tourist satisfaction; however, only four variables predict tourist satisfaction significantly. Tourist expectations ($B = 0.237$; $\beta = 0.216$; $p = 0.000$), destination image ($B = 0.267$; $\beta = 0.234$; $p = 0.000$), costs and risks ($B = 0.126$; $\beta = 0.141$; $p = 0.000$), and social-security ($B = 0.183$; $\beta = 0.199$; $p =$

0.000) emerge as important predictors of tourist satisfaction. These results support the findings of other researchers (Song et al., 2012; Lee et al., 2011; Xia et al., 2009; Chi & Qu, 2008). However, perceived quality ($B = 0.101$; $\beta = 0.095$; $p = 0.098$) and perceived value ($B = 0.027$; $\beta = 0.023$; $p = 0.610$) are insignificant to tourist satisfaction. These contradict the findings of earlier studies by Chen and Chen (2010) and Quintal and Polczynski (2010). Thus, H1, H4, and H5 are supported while H2 and H3 are rejected. The new predictor (social-security) was found to influence satisfaction significantly. In fact, out of the six predictors, social-security prevails as the most important predictor of satisfaction ($t = 5.245$), while the second and third most important predictors are tourist expectations ($t = 4.423$) and destination image ($t = 4.151$).

These findings suggest that although visitors enjoy indulging in social activities and interacting with others during the trip, they also want the assurance that their safety is guaranteed. Furthermore, the tourists have realistic expectations that the trip would be enjoyable and worthwhile. These expectations have to be met in order for them to reflect on their Langkawi trip with great contentment.

DISCUSSION

From the R-value, all factors predict tourists' satisfaction strongly ($R=0.689$). However, there are other factors that may affect tourists' satisfaction ($R^2=0.475$). Only four antecedents have significant positive relationships with satisfaction. High levels of expectations result in the higher overall satisfaction achieved. Likewise, the more positive the destination images are, the higher the satisfaction levels experienced by the visitors. This means that the destination service providers must strive to maintain the good image of their attractions because higher levels of customer satisfaction could lead to higher levels of retention and loyalty. Also, visitors who feel secure while travelling and those who are able to socialize with others achieve a higher level of satisfaction. Since safety is of great concern for most holidaymakers, the absence of tangible improvements in this aspect could eventually erode their personal attachment to the destination. In short, the possibility of harm or injury, no matter how slight, must be completely eliminated and improving the security aspects of the attractions and public facilities on the island should be a top priority of the tourism managers and policymakers.

The positive relationship between the costs and risks variable and satisfaction is unexpected. Numerous studies have indicated a negative relationship between the two variables, suggesting that the higher the costs and risks are, the lower the satisfaction (Yuksel & Yuksel, 2007; Fornell et al., 2006; Monroe, 1990; Zeithaml, 1988). In this study, however, the visitors indicated that their satisfaction level remained high despite the increase in costs and risks. This could be due to the probability that the tourists were willing and prepared to absorb any increase in costs, and experiencing risky events such as riots, tsunami, earthquake or the SARS epidemic while vacationing on the island was perceived as remote possibilities.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The current research results give support to three hypotheses developed by the researchers. It is hoped that the results derived from the model will serve as the basis for the business

development of Langkawi as a popular tourist destination in Malaysia. Understanding tourist expectations will provide meaningful clues on developing the tourist destination further and offering better goods and services. The findings of the study indicate that tourists are generally satisfied with their visits to the island. The overall image of Langkawi as a tourist destination is positive. Langkawi is perceived as offering good natural scenic beauty, reliable transportation and accommodation facilities and other travelling services, and as a consequence, many tourists profess their intention of revisiting Langkawi in the future. Hence, the researchers propose that Langkawi be positioned as a travel destination that promises good natural attractions, amenities, accessibility, activities, ancillary services, and available packages so as to support the Visit Malaysia Year 2015 and other future tourism campaigns.

Even though tourist satisfaction is high, tourist satisfaction monitoring should be performed on a continuous basis. The results may serve as valuable input for a trend analysis on the one hand and strategic discussions on the other. The goals are :

- i) to identify strategic objectives at the destination level;
- ii) to prepare tactical and operational plans (carefully balancing risk/cost and quality elements);
- iii) to increase the competitiveness of a given destination;
- iv) to allocate resources efficiently and effectively; and
- v) to define future missions.

To increase satisfaction further, the researchers suggest that LADA and the tourism operators control the price of products and services on the island so that costs will not increase tremendously. They are encouraged to design packages that offer value-for-money tours to attract those from the lower income group to visit Langkawi. It would be timely and appropriate to revive the mid-nineties tourism campaign when Malaysia introduced “A Shopping Paradise” slogan to position itself as a value-for-money destination (Badaruddin, 2009). Other than that, tourism operators in the island should continue to upgrade the accommodation and surrounding environment because some respondents had suggested that more public amenities such as washrooms, cheaper accommodations, and bigger or clearer signage should be made available in the future. In addition, initiatives should be taken to identify the social and financial aspects to better understand the reasons why Langkawi remains a popular choice for vacation travel or why many continue to return for subsequent visits.

LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

As a cross-sectional study, this research has some limitations since the data gathered make inferences about the population of interest at a defined time only. As such, a longitudinal research should be carried out to measure change across time and the direction of causality among relationships. Furthermore, the majority of the respondents were Malaysian citizens. Thus, future research should enlarge the sample and balance the number of local and foreigners, so that a comparative study between the two groups can be carried out. Moreover,

only five antecedents of satisfaction were examined. Other determining factors related to travel ability should be included such as distance, place attachment, personal involvement and specific novelty. Also, an attempt to identify the risk-seeking and risk-avoiding groups of tourists should be undertaken. It would help tourism marketers design specific campaigns targeting those segments. Finally, it would be beneficial to conduct in-depth research to differentiate the level of satisfaction, loyalty and complaint among first-time and repeat visitors.

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APPENDIX

Pilot test results - Mean score and Cronbach's alpha (n=50)

Variables	Mean	Cronbach's alpha
Tourists' satisfaction		0.884
TS1	4.680	
TS2	4.600	
TS3	4.580	
TS4	4.500	
TS5	4.460	
TS6	4.620	
TS7	4.500	
TS8	4.380	
TS9	4.640	
Tourists' expectation		0.723
TE1	4.540	
TE2	4.460	
TE3	4.660	
Perceived quality		0.712
PQ1	4.540	
PQ2	4.580	
PQ3	4.460	
PQ4	4.340	
PQ5	4.640	
PQ6	4.500	
PQ7	4.480	
Perceived value		0.738
PV1	4.160	
PV2	4.280	
PV3	4.320	
Destination image		0.724
DI1	4.560	
DI2	4.360	
DI3	4.460	
DI4	4.580	
DI5	4.440	
DI6	4.180	
Costs and risks		0.550
CR1	2.400	
CR2	4.120	
CR2	4.060	
CR4	4.460	
CR5	4.380	