

Promoting and Improving the Tourism Industry in Malaysia through Tourist Satisfaction

Abdul Kadir Othman¹, *Mohd Khalid Mohd Abas², Azmi Mat², Ismael Abujarad³, Noor'ain Mohamad Yunus²

¹Institute of Business Excellence, Universiti Teknologi MARA, Shah Alam, Selangor, Malaysia

²Faculty of Business and Management, Universiti Teknologi MARA, Puncak Alam, Selangor, Malaysia

³Faculty of Economics and Administrative Sciences, Suleyman Demirel University (SDU), Isparta, Turkiye

abdkadir@uitm.edu.my, *khalid210@uitm.edu.my, azmimat@uitm.edu.my, ismaelabujarad@gmail.com,

noorainyunus@uitm.edu.my

Corresponding author: Mohd Khalid Mohd Abas

Abstract: Tourism is an important sector that contributes to the countries' economies. Tourism has a direct relationship with other industries such as hotels, transportation, and retail as tourists who come to the country will spend their money on these categories. During the COVID-19 pandemic, the tourism industry was badly affected and so did the other related industries. Now, people are back visiting attractive places, staying in hotels during their visits, and spending money on food and other items. However, little is known about why people are attracted to visit some places or countries and not others. The study is meant to investigate the factors that lead to tourist satisfaction when they visit a country. A total of 150 respondents answered the survey that was distributed to students, and public and private sector employees in Malaysia through an online platform. The results indicated that accommodation, tourism products and host attitudes were significant in leading to tourist satisfaction. While price was not a significant predictor of tourist satisfaction. The practical and theoretical implications of the study are discussed at length in this paper.

Keywords: *Accommodation, tourism products, price, host attitudes, tourist satisfaction*

1. Introduction and Background

The tourism industry can be defined as any activity involving the short-term movement of people to locations other than their customary residence. It is one of the world's major industries, and several countries' economies are mostly supported by their tourism activities. Moreover, this is also a broad industry that encompasses the hotel business, transportation, and a range of other industries or sectors. It is true to recognize that the tourism sector is reliant on individuals traveling to different places for a variety of reasons, including leisure, business, and other factors (Raza, Zhong, & Safdar, 2022). The tourism business relates to four types of experiences gone through by a person at three stages of the visit: before, during, and after the visit (Godovykh, & Tasci, 2020). Under the COVID-19 pandemic, tourism is one of the industries most affected by the non-arrival of tourists.

Previous research indicated that there were factors that led to the problem related to this study which is tourist satisfaction when they spend money on hotels and restaurants, transportation, tourist information centers, marketplaces, sporting events, cultural attractions, and other items. When tourists buy imported goods and services rather than indigenous products and services, the cumulative impacts of tourism are reduced (Mato, & Mosoma, 2022). In that instance, tourism revenues increase, however, whether they help local industries is debatable (De Siano, & Canale, 2022). Moreover, this is complex to describe the framework of a tourism product, which implies that it is difficult to ascertain exactly how much money the business participates in the tourism product directly or indirectly (Custódio Santos, Ferreira, Costa, & Santos, 2020).

Thus, the study focused on understanding tourist satisfaction in the tourism industry just after the COVID-19 pandemic by investigating the relationship between accommodation, tourism products, price and host attitudes toward tourist satisfaction.

2. Literature Review

Customer satisfaction has become the most important aspect being considered in most service industries. Studying the existing literature shows that tourist satisfaction is an important factor in choosing a destination which means that if a tourist is satisfied with his journey to a destination, he is likely to return or recommend it to others (Widjaja, Jokom, Kristanti, & Wijaya, 2020). According to Al-Adwan, Al-Debei, and Dwivedi (2022), customer satisfaction is recognized as a very important aspect of all commercial firms because it influences

repeat purchases and word-of-mouth recommendations. Furthermore, Kotler and Keller (2016) stated that customer satisfaction is the feelings of contentment or dissatisfaction that arise from comparing the perceived performance of items with the expected outcome. The consumer will be dissatisfied and unhappy if the perceived performance does not meet the tourist's expectations.

Accommodation refers to a set of rooms or a building where tourists may live or stay (Hou, & Wu, 2021). It is essential for visitors who wish to travel to another destination or go on a trip because they will always need a place to stay. The types and availability of accommodation in a tourist destination area reflect the image of the destination to the tourists (Leković, Tomić, Marić, & Čurčić, 2020). Accommodation has an everlasting influence on tourist destinations and as such the accommodation services are intended to provide maximum comfort and satisfaction to tourists (Onigbogi, Ajayi, & Yakub, 2021). Tourism is a matrix, it is necessary to expand and develop the tourism industry, and a suitable choice of accommodation is needed (Martín-Martín, Prados-Castillo, Jimenez Aguilera, & Porras Gonzalez, 2023). Therefore, the following hypothesis is developed:

H₁: Cozy accommodation will lead to overall tourist satisfaction.

The amount of physical and psychological outcomes provided to the tourists during their traveling route to the destination is referred to as the tourism product. The tourism product comprises facilities and services that cater to the needs of tourists. It can be thought of as a composite product, consisting of the sum of a country's tourist attractions, transportation, lodging, and entertainment, all of which contribute to tourist satisfaction (Zhang, Plathong, Sun, Guo, Munnoy, Ma,... & Tanboot, 2020). It is difficult to define the structure of a tourist product, which means it is also difficult to figure out how much each firm participates in the tourist product directly or indirectly (Custódio Santos, et al., 2020). Moreover, nowadays companies operate in a situation called global competitiveness and it is still impossible to define global tourism products due to the different demographic characteristics of tourists, as well as the uneven quality of services provided that partly contributes to the overall competitiveness of destinations. Thus, the following hypothesis is developed:

H₂: Satisfying tourist products will lead to overall tourist satisfaction.

One of the most crucial elements of tourism marketing is pricing. Customers in the tourism industry rate the products based on their price, and without a price, there is no indication of worth. Esquivias, Sugiharti, Rohmawati, Setyorani, and Anindito (2021) stated that price is an economic factor that has a significant impact on visitor flow; it has a direct impact on tourism demand and contributes to its elasticity. The low-price strategy is commonly used to attract more tourists, particularly to new tourist locations that have just recently begun to promote themselves on the global tourism market (Napierała, & Pawlicz, 2023). External and internal variables influence pricing in the hospitality business. Internal factors include costs, organization, and working conditions. One of the most important internal factors is cost. Therefore, the following hypothesis is developed:

H₃: An affordable price will lead to overall tourist satisfaction.

A host attitude towards tourists is essential for the long-term development of the tourism industry. The success of tourism development depends on the balance of the relationship between the tourists and the hosts (De Siano, & Canale, 2022). A negative host attitude can damage the reputation and destination image and it can cause conflict between tourists and hosts which is a phenomenon that differs and deviates from the initial motivation of tourist development. In addition, when the development of the destination occurs the number of tourists also will increase, host's attitude gradually becomes apathetic, annoyed, and ultimately antagonistic (Fan, Liu, & Qiu, 2019). Moreover, the hosts' reactions to tourist development can be divided into four stages namely embracement, tolerance, adjustment, and withdrawal, which correspond to their changing attitudes during the tourism development process (Guaita Martínez, Martín Martín, Ribeiro Soriano, & Salinas Fernández, 2021). Therefore, the following hypothesis is developed:

H₄: A positive host attitude will lead to overall tourist satisfaction.

3. Research Methodology

The variables in this study were measured using a descriptive study technique. The study population comprised students, and public and private sector employees in Malaysia aged 18 and above. The samples were acquired using convenience sampling techniques. The questionnaires were distributed to participants using several online platforms, resulting in a total of 150 completed questionnaires.

The Statistical Package for Social Sciences (Version 28) was employed to conduct descriptive, reliable, correlational and multiple regression analyses. Multiple regression analysis was used to assess hypothesis testing and the strength of the relationship between variables. In addition, Pearson's correlation analysis was employed to identify the nature and degree of the associations between the variables.

4. Data Analysis and Findings

The findings indicated that a total of 150 respondents answered the survey that was distributed to students, and private, and public sector employees in Malaysia. The table below shows the analysis of the data obtained about the demographics of respondents, followed by factor analysis of independent variables, factor analysis of the dependent variable, reliability analysis, correlation analysis and multiple regression analysis.

Table 1: Demographic Profile of Respondents

Variable	Description	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	50	33.3
	Female	100	66.7
Age	18-25 years old	119	79.3
	25-35 years old	11	7.3
	35-45 years old	9	6.0
	45-55 years old	8	5.3
	55 years old and above	3	2.0
Occupation	Student	106	70.7
	Unemployed	6	4.0
	Private sector employee	19	12.7
	Public sector employee	19	12.7
Marital status	Single	118	78.7
	Married	30	20.0
	Others	2	1.3
Race	Malay	145	96.7
	Chinese	2	1.3
	Others	3	2.0
Income	No income	108	72.0
	RM 1,000- RM 2,500	15	10.0
	RM 2,501- RM 5,000	19	12.7
	RM 5,001- RM 7,500	8	5.3

Based on Table 1 demographic profile of respondents, in terms of gender distribution female respondents consist of 100 respondents, which is equivalent to 66.7% while male respondents consist of 50 respondents, which is equivalent to 33.3%. Regarding age distribution, 119 respondents aged between 18 and 25 years old, which is equivalent to 79.3%. This is followed by the age group of 25 to 35 years old consisting of 11 respondents, which is equivalent to 7.3%. Then, the age group of 35 to 45 years old consists of nine respondents, which is equivalent to 6%. Then, the age group of 45 to 55 years old consists of eight respondents, which is equivalent to 5.3% followed by the age group of 55 years and above, which consists of three respondents, which is equivalent to 2%.

Next, in terms of occupation, most of the respondents were students of IPTA and IPTS, which consist of 106 respondents, which is equivalent to 70.7%. This is followed by private and public sector employees consisting of 19 respondents, which is equivalent to 12.7%. The last group is the unemployed, which consists of six respondents, which is equivalent to 4%.

In terms of marital status, single respondents consist of 118 respondents, which is equivalent to 78.7%. Then, married respondents consist of 30 respondents, which is equivalent to 20%, followed by the status of "others" consisting of 2 respondents, which is equivalent to 1.3%.

Next, respondents' race, most of them were Malays consisting of 145 respondents, which is equivalent to

96.7%. This is followed by Chinese who were represented by 2 respondents, which is equivalent to 1.3%, then followed by other races consisting of 3 respondents, which is equivalent to 2%.

Lastly, in terms of income, most respondents did not earn a stable income consisting of 108 respondents, which is equivalent to 72%. This is followed by those in the income group of RM 2,501- RM 5,000 consisting of 19 respondents, which is equivalent to 12.7%. Then, 15 respondents had monthly income ranging from RM 1,000- RM 2,500 representing 10% of the total respondents and then followed by those having income ranging from RM 5,001- RM 7,500 consisting of eight respondents, which is equivalent to 5.3%.

Table 2: Results of Factor Analysis for the Independent Variables

	Component			
	1	2	3	4
Accommodation 14	.812			
Accommodation 12	.794			
Accommodation 15	.772			
Accommodation 13	.709			
Tourism products 8		.818		
Tourism products 10		.699		
Tourism products 9		.693		
Tourism products 6		.662		
Tourism products 11		.577		
Price 16			.828	
Price 17			.777	
Price 18			.759	
Price 19			.611	
Host attitudes 2				.825
Host attitudes 3				.754
Host attitudes 4				.628
Host attitudes 1				.559
% variance explained (69.8)	19.42	17.76	16.88	15.75
Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.				.917
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-square			1500.379
	df			136
	Sig.			.000
MSA				.858 - .953

Based on Table 2 factor analysis of the independent variable shows that the first component consists of four items that measure accommodation. The second component consists of four items that measure tourist products. The third component consists of four items that measure pricing. The last component consists of four items that measure host attitudes. The variance explained for component 1 is 19.42%, component 2 is 17.76%, component 3 is 16.88% and component 4 is 15.75%. The total variance explained is 69.806%. Next, the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy value from the analysis is 0.971 which is sufficient to proceed with analysis. Bartlett's test of Sphericity indicates the significant values which means that the correlation matrix is significantly adequate. The values of MSA (measure of sampling adequacy) range from .858 to .953. Overall, the factor analysis of independent variables proves the existence of four factors.

Table 3: Results of Factor Analysis for the Dependent Variable

	Component
	1
Tourist satisfaction 21	.890
Tourist satisfaction 22	.887
Tourist satisfaction 20	.856
Tourist satisfaction 23	.842

Tourist satisfaction 24		.788
% variance explained		72.85
Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy		.877
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	466.389
	df	10
	Sig.	.000
MSA		.860 - .917

Factor analysis of the dependent variable in Table 3 showed that there is one component consisting of five items that measure tourist satisfaction. The variance explained is 72.85%. Next, the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy value from the analysis is 0.877 which is sufficient to proceed with analysis. Bartlett's Test of Sphericity indicates the significant values which means that the correlation matrix is significantly sufficient. The values of MSA range from .860 to .917. Overall, the factor analysis of the dependent variable indicates the existence of only one factor to measure the dependent variable.

Table 4: Results of Descriptive, Reliability and Correlation Analysis

No	Variables	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4	5
1	Accommodation	4.01	.64	(.894)				
2	Tourist Products	3.79	.68	.645**	(.857)			
3	Price	3.62	.76	.614**	.623**	(.872)		
4	Host Attitudes	3.85	.63	.594**	.587**	.607**	(.798)	
5	Tourist Satisfaction	5.29	.91	.599**	.644**	.554**	.597**	(.904)

The reliability analysis in Table 4 showed all items measuring the variables have Cronbach's Alpha higher than 0.857 which is tourist product while the lower score is 0.798 which is related to host attitude. Correlation analysis shows the highest mean value is 5.29 which is for tourist satisfaction with a standard deviation of .91 while the lowest mean value is 3.62 which is for pricing with a standard deviation of .76. Looking at the correlation between the independent variables and the dependent variable, all independent variables comprising accommodation, tourist product, price, and host attitude are correlated significantly with tourist satisfaction. The highest correlation is between tourist products ($r=.644$; $p<.01$) and tourist satisfaction and the lowest correlation is between price and tourist satisfaction ($r=.554$; $p<.01$). All other factors are correlated significantly with tourist satisfaction. These significant relationships indicate that all four independent variables have a potential influence on tourist satisfaction as the dependent variable.

Table 5: Results of Multiple Regression Analysis

Variables	Std Beta Coefficients	Sig.
Accommodation	.193	.022
Tourist Products	.323	.000
Price	.089	.282
Host Attitudes	.238	.003
R ²	.516	
Adjusted R	.502	
F Value	38.5	
Sig. F value	.000	
Durbin-Watson	1.95	

Table 5 shows the result of a multiple regression analysis concerning the predictors that contribute to tourist satisfaction. The significant predictors are accommodation ($\beta=.193$, $p<.05$), tourist product ($\beta=.323$, $p<.01$), and host attitude ($\beta=.238$, $p<.01$). Pricing is not a significant predictor of tourist satisfaction ($\beta=.089$, $p>.05$). The regression model is significant with an F value of 38.5 whereas the R² value is .516 which explained 51.6% of the variance in the regression analysis. Lastly, the value of Durbin Watson of 1.95 indicates that there is no

issue of autocorrelation in the regression model.

Discussion

Accommodation is the third significant factor that affects tourist satisfaction. Having cozy accommodation will make tourists happy and for sure they will revisit the destination (Purba & Putra, 2023). Having a variety of choices with different price ranges, accommodation contributes significantly to tourist satisfaction (Jahmani, Jawabreh, Abokhoza, & Alrabei, 2023). Besides, having pleasant and courteous employees adds to the list of reasons why tourists are satisfied when visiting places in the country (Arasli, Saydam, Gunay, & Jafari, 2023).

The tourism products comprise facilities and services that cater to the needs of tourists. It can be thought of as a composite product, consisting of the sum of a country's tourist attractions, transportation, lodging, and entertainment, all of which contribute to tourist satisfaction (Zhang, et al., 2020). The research discovered that tourist products lead to tourist satisfaction. Tourists come to the country because there are a lot of attractive places to visit that are equipped with modern and satisfying facilities, including lodging, transportation, and entertainment (Anuar, Sapari, Sulaiman, Hashim, & Jaini, 2021; Islam, 2023).

Price is not a significant factor because tourists do not consider money as an issue when they can get what they want during the trip. Most tourists have allocated enough money for their trip. They are willing to spend if their spending guarantees a pleasant journey during their visit (Corbisiero, & Monaco, 2021). In general, this study has demonstrated a significant relationship between tourist products, host attitudes, accommodation, and tourist satisfaction.

The last significant factor is the host attitude, which indicates that a positive host attitude will make tourists come again (Tabaeeian, Yazdi, Mokhtari, & Khoshfetrat, 2023). Malaysians are known for their outstanding hospitality when treating their guests. They are willing to go the extra mile to assist tourists who are in need (Jiony, Lew, Gom, Tanakinjal, & Sondoh Jr, 2021). In addition, most Malaysians can speak English which facilitates communication between locals and tourists. They are proud to share their interesting stories regarding their place and the historical aspects of it with tourists, making the visit unforgettable (Tabaeeian, et al., 2023).

5. Conclusion

The tourism sector is a catalyst for the economic growth of a country. Tourism brings tourists to the country to visit various attractive places and spend heftily during their visits on food, accommodations, transportation, souvenirs, and others that also contribute to the growth of other related industries. The present study is meant to investigate factors that lead to tourist satisfaction during their visits so that the right programs and activities can be done to improve tourist satisfaction. The findings of the study show that tourism products, host attitudes, and accommodation contribute significantly to tourist satisfaction. Price does not act as a significant predictor of tourist satisfaction because tourists are willing to spend extra money if they are happy during their visit. To attract tourists visiting the country, the related agencies must ensure that tourists receive outstanding treatment from the locals, hotel employees, retailers, tourism site operators, and transportation operators since all these facilities and experiences will accumulate to form a total hedonic experience for tourists. They surely will come again to visit the country if they have formed positive impressions during their visit.

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