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NURTURING HOSPITALITY, TOURISM AND WELLNESS WORLD

FHPK, UMK

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RESEARCH TOWARDS IR 4.0

Editors

Velan Kunjuraman, PhD
Suchi Hassan, PhD
Ruzanifah Kosnin, PhD
Aifa Rozaini Mohd Radzol, PhD

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Khairil Wahidin Awang, PhD
Ghazali Ahmad, PhD
Roslizawati Che Aziz, PhD
Mohd Fadil Mohd Yusof, PhD
Marlisa Abdul Rahim, PhD
Nor Dalila Marican, PhD
Derweanna Bah Simpong, PhD
Normaizatul Akma Saidi, PhD
Velan Kunjuraman, PhD
Siti Fatimah Ab Ghaffar, PhD
Hasif Rafidee Hasbollah, PhD
Nur Hafizah Muhammad, PhD
Aifa Rozaini Mohd Radzol, PhD
Suchi Hassan, PhD
Siti Salina Saidin, PhD
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Nur Athirah Sumardi, PhD
Ruzanifah Kosnin, PhD
Bintang Handayani, PhD
Naziatul Aziah, PhD
Nor Syuhada Zulkefli, PhD
Mazne Ibrahim
Raja Norliana Raja Omar
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Nur Aliah Mansor
Nurzehan Abu Bakar
Nurul Fardila Abd Razak
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Factors Influencing Local Tourists' Travel Destination Choice: A Case of Malaysia

Nuraina Asira Binti Hamidon, Nurul Atiqah Binti Gazer, Wan Nurul Faatihah Bt Wan Mohamed Sharif & Yap Chui Man

Faculty of Hospitality, Tourism and Wellness, Universiti Malaysia Kelantan
Corresponding email: syuhada.z@umk.edu.my / hazzyati@umk.edu.my

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ABSTRACT

This research aims to analyze the factors influencing local tourists' travel destination choices in Malaysia. Three influencing factors were investigated in this paper namely; destination image, price, and accommodation and facilities. Quantitative approach was used to reach 384 respondents among local tourists in Malaysia. The target population for the study has been set to be Malaysian local tourist. 384 online surveys were distributed to the respondents aged between 20 – 50 years old. The questionnaire is divided into three sections; Section A reflects the demographic profile of tourists; Section B is about factors influencing local tourists' travel destination choices and Section C consists of items related to tourists' destination choices. The results show that destination image has a stronger relationship with tourists' destination of choice as compared to other variables. The study found that destination image, price and accommodation and facilities are the important attributes for local tourists in choosing tourism destination. In conclusion, relevant discussions, recommendations, and limitations of the study Relevant discussion and recommendation were proposed in this study to boost Malaysia's position as the preferred destination of choice.

Keywords: Destination choice, Local tourist, Tourism destination

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INTRODUCTION

The tourism industry has been one of the fastest-growing segments. According to Martins (2015), tourism can be considered as an industry that sells fantasies and feeds upon dreams, hopes, beliefs, expectations, and people's imagery, which turn into consumer goods or experiences.

For over a decade, tourism has led the Malaysian economy. In the first half of year 2019, the tourism industry contributed RM41.69 billion to the Malaysian economy and the number of international tourist's arrival reached 13.35 million (Tourism Malaysia, 2019). Rogerson (2015) noted that domestic tourism receives less attention than international tourism, even though the former is the driving force behind a nation's tourism industry's structure and nature. Besides, there is a lack of research in examining the actions and decision-making of Malaysian tourists that would enable local government and business owners to address difficulties in meeting and productively attracting consumer needs, as attracting tourists to the destination is a major concern of destination marketers (Hussain, 2017).

Environment, products and services, culture, society, foodstuff, heritage, buildings, events, and activities are the essential factors that attract tourists to choose their favorite travel destinations (Fu, Ye, & Xiang, 2016). These factors may be easily affecting the behavior of tourists in the destination of choice. This shows that the behavioral intentions of visitors' behavioral intentions have causal relationship with source of information, motivation, perception, and satisfaction (Fu et al., 2016; Paudel, 2016; Micić, Denda, & Popescu, 2019). However, this

research aims to specify the important factors that tourists consider when choosing a travel destination in terms of destination image, price and accommodation, and facilities. There are three objectives included in this research:

1. To examine the relationship between destination image and local tourists' travel destination choice.
2. To examine the relationship between price and local tourists' travel destination choice.
3. To examine the relationship between accommodation and facilities and local tourists' travel destination choice.

Significance of the Study

This research would help stakeholders in the local tourism industry and encourage the government to upgrade or transform a range of domestic tourism destinations. Understanding the findings from this study will assist the respected parties elevate poverty and engage local communities in tourism development despite generating income. The government should facilitate local community access to the tourism market. This study will help the government and local community, especially to improve domestic tourism development in order to cater the demand of tourist.

This research would open the reader to a broader worldview, new concept, new perspectives, and new ways of thinking. Tourism knowledge and awareness are beneficial as it helps tourist to make a wise choice and plan a holiday.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Factors Influencing Tourists' Destination of Choice

Understanding why people travel and what influence their travel motivation to choose a travel destination is important to the tourism industry (Lam & Hsu, 2005). Travel motivation is dependent on personal attitude and behavior, while the factors that affect the destination of choice are related to what the destination could offer. According to Baniya and Paudel (2016) travel decision making involves pull and push factors. Travel motivation represents the needs or wants of the tourists, as well as the push and pull factors that influence tourists' decision-making. The push factor (psychological factor) according to Maslow's hierarchy of needs, are the intangible and inner desires (internal or emotional aspects) of an individual traveler related to the origin (Micic, et al. 2019). In contrast, pull factors are attributes associated with a particular destination (Baniya, et al., 2017). This relates to the existing attractions in the destination that attract tourists to visit, view, and experience (Subadra, et al., 2019). Seyidov & Adomaitienė (2016) considered few factors, such as social, cultural, personal, and psychological factors, the number of tourist attractions, available amenities, prices, human resources, and various types of tourist destinations in tourists' decision-making. There are many factors that will influence the motivation to choose a travel destination. As such, three prime factors will be investigated in this paper.

Destination Image

Destination image is the key element to successfully attract tourists to travel to a destination. Even when the tourists have not visited a particular destination, their thoughts can still reflect the destination's image (Sergio & Lopes, 2011). So, the image of a destination has the power to influence the tourists' destination of choice. Destinations with a positive image and good view

could improve visitors' expectations before traveling, thereby enhancing the tourism experiences and make visitors feel the value proposition of travel. A good and positive destination image will eventually lead to an actual visit to the destination. So that destination image can be said to be the decisive factor for tourists to choose the destinations.

H1: There is a significant relationship between destination image and local tourists travel destination choice.

Price

According to Merriam-Webster (2020), price is the amount of money given or set as consideration for the sale of a specified thing. It is used to measure the value of the products or services. Most tourists prefer to travel on a budget, especially in terms of transportation. Tourists do not like to spend a lot of money on transportation, so they will choose convenient and cheaper means of transportation to reach a specific destination. Vanhove (2011), highlighted that price is related to the cost of transport to and from the destination and the cost on the ground such as accommodation, attractions, food, and tour services.

H2: There is a significant relationship between price and local tourists' travel destination choice.

Accommodation and Facilities

Accommodation can be described as a base for travel and a place for tourists to rest and spend the night. According to Provotorina et al., (2020), the combination of accommodation and supporting facilities act as the vital element of the tourism industry. Accommodation directly affects consumers' choice of destination. The decision to choose a particular destination will begin as early as the tourist choose the accommodations as hotels do offer facilities and packaged activities (Anas et al., 2020). Accommodations and facilities are essential as it provides a safe place for travellers to rest, sleep, and relax. A good rest can reduce travellers' fatigue, thus keeping up the spirit and continuing to conduct their activities. Besides, the facilities offered in an accommodation will basically define their image in the eye of tourist. Pantry, elevators, 24 hours' front office and security, canteen, meeting room, resting areas, car parks, and free connected Wi-Fi are the most common facilities provided by hotels.

H3: There is a significant relationship between accommodation and facilities and local tourist's travel destination choice.

Destination Choice

Destination choice is one of the key elements in tourists' travel decision (Filimonau & Perez 2018). Destination choice is conceptualized as a tourist's selection of a destination from a set of alternatives (Ahn, Ekinci, & Li, 2013). Studying tourists' destination choice and identifying factors affecting tourists' destination decisions is of critical importance for destination marketers in order to attract tourists to visit and revisit the destinations. Based on the previous research, destination choice has always been one of the popular research topics in the tourism (Ahn et al., 2013). Destination selection is the choice that tourists make and decide to go to a specific tourist area.

In general, the choices made by tourists depend on the characteristics of the destination and its attractions. There are two factors that affecting the tourist choice to travel, which are 1) internal factors include a desire for escape, rest, relaxation, reputation, health and fitness, adventure, and social interaction, and 2) external factors are concentrated on the attractiveness of the destination, price, facilities, and others (Hsu et al., 2009). Thusly, this study will only be focusing on the external factors that influence the tourists' destination of choice.

Research Framework

The research framework has been formed to investigate the relationship between the independent variables and dependent variable. Figure 1 shows the relationship between destination image, price, accommodation, and facilities towards local tourist's travel destination choice.
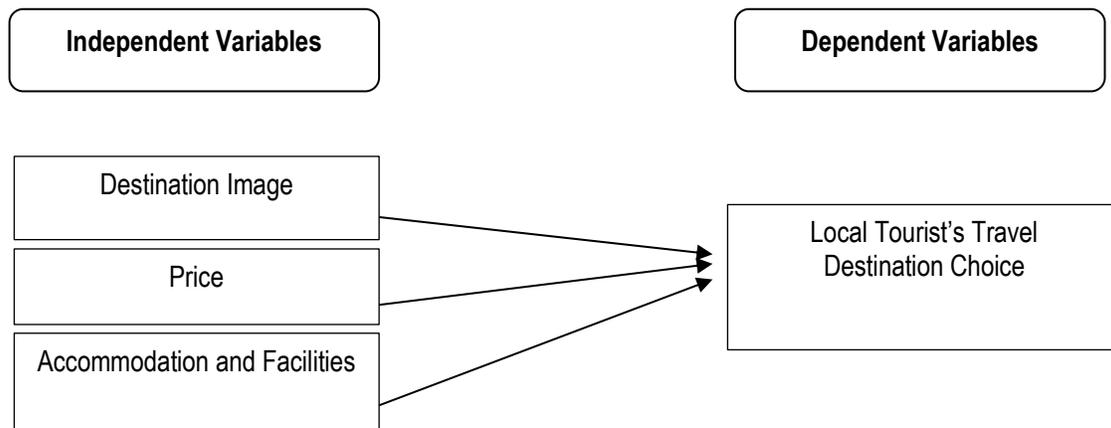
Independent Variables	Dependent Variables
Destination Image	
Price	Local Tourist's Travel Destination Choice
Accommodation and Facilities	

Figure 1: Research Framework.

Source: Victora, et al., (1997)

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

The employed quantitative approach to investigate the objective of the study. According to Pritha Bhandari (2020), quantitative research is a process of collecting and analyzing numerical data. Additionally, the design of research requires three methods of description, exploration, and design of causal research. In his research, we only collect data once during this research period. Based on the Department of Statistics Malaysia (2019), Malaysia's population is projected at 32.6 million in 2019, with 29.4 million (90.2 %) residents and 3.2 million (9.8%) non-citizens. The target population is domestic tourists in Malaysia, which is 29.4 million citizens.

Sampling

Simple random sampling which is part of the probability sampling has been adopted in this study to reach the respondents. According to Dan Fleetwood (2020), probability sampling is defined as a sampling technique that uses a method based on probability theory to select samples from a larger population.

The number of 384 samples have been set to be targeted for this research based on the sample size calculation formula by (Krejcie & Morgan 1970), The formula is as follow:

$$S = \frac{x^2 N p(1-p)}{e^2(N-1) + X^2 p(1-p)}$$

n = sample size

N = population size

e = the degree of accuracy expressed as proportion (0.05)

x^2 = chi-square of degree of freedom 1 and confidence 95% (3.841)

p = proportion of population (if unknown, 0.5)

Data Collection

First stage of data collection involves collecting primary data from targeted respondents through a predefined sampling technique. Total of 384 questionnaires have been distributed among the targeted respondents who are the local tourist aged between 20 to 50 years old. The questionnaire was equipped with three sections which represents the objective of the study. Section A reflects the demographic profile of tourist, Section B is about factors influencing local tourists' travel destination choices and Section C consists of items related to tourists' destination choices. The questionnaire was distributed to respondents via a web-based survey which is a Google form in order to reach the respondents easily due to Covid-19 phenomenon. The google form link has been snowballed through Instagram, Facebook, Twitter, WhatsApp and Telegram.

Data Analysis

Data collected has been analysed by using Statistical Package for the Social Science (SPSS) version 25. Reliability test followed by descriptive analysis and correlation analysis can be conducted to meet the objective of the study.

FINDINGS

Demographic profile of respondents

Based on the finding, there are 384 respondents, 56.5 % were female and 43.5 % were male. Majority of the respondents belong to the following age groups: 21 years old to 30 years old (69.3 %), 31 years old to 40 years old (11.7 %), below 20 years old (8.9 %), 51 years old and above (7.65 %) and 41 years old to 50 years old (2.6 %). As for races, most of the respondents are Chinese (71.1 %), followed by Malay (22.1 %), Indian (4.9 %) and others (1.8 %). As for the employment status, majority of the respondents are students (45.1 %), followed by employee (44.0 %), unemployed (7.0 %), self-employed (2.6 %) and retired (1.3 %). As for marital status, majority of the respondents are single (77.9 %), followed by married (21.9 %) and the rest are divorced (0.3 %). As for monthly salary, majority of the respondents have no salary (36.2 %), followed by RM 2001 to RM 3000 (26.8 %), RM 1000 and below (18.2 %), RM 3001 to RM 4000 (5.5 %), RM 5001 and above (1.3 %) and RM 4001 to RM5000 (0.3 %). Most of the respondents spend RM 500 and below (79.1 %) on local tourism activities, followed by RM 501 to RM 1500 (14.1 %), RM 1501 to RM 2500 (5.7 %), RM 2501 to RM 4500 (0.3 %) and RM 8001 and above

(0.3 %). Considering the purpose of visiting, most respondents visit a particular destination for travel purpose (89.6 %), followed by meeting friends and relatives (5.5 %), business (2.1 %), studies (2.1 %), and others (0.8 %). 69.5% agreed that they use tourism services yearly, followed by not using any tourism service (19.0 %) and the rest are monthly (11.5 %). As for their main interests in choosing a destination, majority of the respondents choose their intention to just rest (56.5 %), followed by culture (13.5 %), adventure (13.3 %), nature (9.4 %), visiting places seen on television (4.2 %), nightlife (1.8 %), and religion (1.0 %).

Factors Influencing local tourist travel destination choice.

Reliability test has been conducted to measure the instrument's reliability and reliability value is higher than 0.6 are read as acceptable and more than 0.9 is excellent value. The overall result shows the Cronbach's Alpha value of 0.8 and above. Individually, destination scored (0.874), and price (0.888) are considered as good value and accommodation and facilities has scored (0.975), which is an excellent value. While Pearson's Correlation was used in this study to describe the strength of relationship between two variables. The reliability test was conducted on the independent variables to check the internal consistency of the instrument. The result of hypothesis testing has been in Table 1.

Table 1: Hypothesis tests.

Hypothesis	r-value	p-value	N	Results
H1: There is a significant relationship between destination image and local tourist's travel destination choice.	.589	.000	384	Supported
H2: There is a significant relationship between price and local tourist's travel destination choice.	.599	.000	384	Supported
H3: There is a significant relationship between accommodation and facilities and local tourist's travel destination choice.	.662	.000	384	Supported

Note: Significant at p<0.01.

Table 1 shows the result of hypothesis testing based on significant value and strength of relationship between variables. The result proves that, all the independent variables are having significant relationship with the dependant variable at (p<0.01). Hence, all the hypotheses were accepted.

DISCUSSION

The study aimed to investigate the relationship between destination image, price, and accommodation and facilities towards destination choice among Malaysian local tourists. The result shows that there is a significant relationship between all the variables Firstly, the result indicates a significant relationship between destination image and tourists' destination choice with a moderate strength at (r = 0.589), and significant at (p <0.01). Thus, H1 can be accepted with the fact that there is a significant relationship between destination image and destination choice. The results are consistent with previous study by Abdullah et al. (2019) that there is a significant relationship between destination Image towards responsible environment behavioural intention at (β= 0.439, p <0.01).

Secondly, the price is reported to have a positive relationship with destination choice. The strength of association between price and destination choice is moderate at (r = 0.599), and statistically significant at (p < 0.01). Hence, H2 can be accepted with the fact that there is a significant relationship between price and destination choice. This results in line with the moderating role of motivations in the relationship between prices and destination choice by (Nicolau and Mas, 2006). According to Nicolau and Mas (2006), the direct impact of price is significant at the level below 0.001 in all equations (such as climate, tranquility, cultural interest, etc.), and shows a negative sign, indicating that tourists tend to choose intra-country (provinces) destinations at lower prices.

Lastly, accommodation and facilities are reported to have a positive relationship with destination choice. The strength of association between destination image and destination choice is strong at (r = 0.662), and statistically significant at (p < 0.01). Thus, H3 can be accepted with the fact that, there is a significant relationship between accommodation and facilities and destination choice. The results are consistent with the study by Nedelea (2017), which presents the significant correlation coefficient between accommodation and tourist satisfaction at 0.334.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this research has proven the significant relationship between destination image, price, and accommodation and facilities and the tourists' destination choice. Based on the data analysis, the finding shows that the factors such as destination image, price, and accommodation and facilities have positive influence towards tourists' destination choice. This paper has also described in the detail on how people are making travel decision based on their demographic profile. Considering the limitation of this study, future researchers should focus not only on local tourists but also on international tourists' choice of destination which might produce a diffent outcome. Future researchers might also want to explore the relationship between tourism experience satisfaction and the desire to revisit a particular destination as it might benefit both tourism marketers and tourists. Tourism in Malaysia needs to be well-tailored, and stakeholders should be aware of the factor affecting tourists' destination choice in order fulfill the tourists' needs and wants. Thus, the challenges faced by a particular destination can be reduced and tourist arrival can be sustained.

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