

MEASURING TOURIST PROPENSITY TO VISIT HERITAGE CITY OF MELAKA, MALAYSIA

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Abstract

Melaka is a popular tourism destination in Malaysia. It has developed over 500 years of trading and cultural exchanges in the Straits of Malacca. Melaka becomes more outstanding when it was listed in the UNESCO World Heritage Cities List under “Historic Cities in the Straits of Malacca” on 7th July 2008. Such listing implied Melaka is indirectly belongs to all people of the world, irrespective of the territory on which they are located. Apparently, visitors are bringing different characteristics that may result pleasant or unpleasant attitude and behaviour. Every year government spends a lot of money to enhance cultural and heritage tourism activities in Melaka while tourism players are heavily promoting the destination to capture more visitors. However, do visitors who visiting Melaka have favourable attitude and behaviour? What would be their future behavioural intentions towards the destination? Therefore, the aims of this study are to identify the visitors’ attitude and behaviour during visiting Melaka and to indicate their future behavioural intention towards the destination. The study was revealed that visitors have pleasant attitude and behaviour during travel to Melaka. Moreover, they also have positive behavioural intention to revisit and recommend Melaka to the others. Discovering visitors’ attitude and behaviour may contribute some ideas to tourism operators on what types of visitors they would engage with and the findings are seen significant to be used in identifying effective measures in setting up strategies to encourage repeat visitation.

Keywords: Tourism, visitor, attitude, trip quality, behavioural intention

INTRODUCTION

Melaka is a city with a glorious past hidden. Although being among the smallest states but when it comes to history, Melaka is the wealthiest. The state was once a port-of-call for ships and has developed over 600 years of trading and cultural exchanges between East and West in the Straits of Malacca. By the end of 15th century, Melaka had become a great trading empire and also a meeting point for every seafaring nation such as Arabs, Indians, South Americans, Chinese, Portuguese, Dutch and English. As history evolved, Melaka becomes the city that possesses a magnificent mixture of cultures, namely Malays, Chinese, Indians, the Chittys, the Baba and Nyonyas and the Portuguese. The historical melting pot of cultures and races has very much influenced the architectural designs of homes and buildings in Melaka today.

The glorious historic of Melaka has attracted a significant number of visitors to visit the state. Malaysia now becomes more outstanding in the eyes of the world when Melaka and its fellow, Georgetown were listed in the UNESCO (United Nation United Nations Educational,

Scientific and Cultural) World Heritage Cities List under “Historic Cities in the Straits of Malacca” on 7th July 2008 (Chua, 2008). Visitors from across the globe are fascinated to come and visit Melaka. The statistics produced by Tourism Malaysia (2012) shown that there was a 0.36% change in hotel occupancy rates in Melaka from 3.89 million in year 2010 to 3.9 million in 2011. Meanwhile, the hotel and the rooms which are supplied in Melaka also had shown a good development where there was a 22.8% change from 8,318 in year 2010 to 9,993 in year 2011.

The study on human behaviour is a challenge and its complexity is a difficult task (Ajzen, 1991), but yet, it is beneficial for those does it matter (Pearce, 2005). What visitors do and why they do it has captivated a lot of tourism people to discover the answers. The rationale is what visitors think, how do they feel and what influences their thoughts and feelings are important for the tourism people in delivering right tourism products and services. It is important to tourism marketers and tourism players to study the contemporary styles of visitors in order to provide new emergence and quality experience to tourists. The good image of the tourism destination may stimulate visitors to come, meanwhile pleasant feelings that visitors experience can result a good travel satisfaction level and have an intention to return to the place.

It is important to tourism marketers and tourism players to study contemporary styles of visitors in order to provide new emergence and quality experience to tourists. The good image of the tourism destination may stimulate visitors to come, meanwhile pleasant feelings that visitors experienced can result a good travel satisfaction level and have an intention to return to the place. Therefore, it is crucial for tourism marketers and tourism players to discover visitors' attitudes and behaviour.

The listing of Melaka as one of the World Heritage sites invited visitors' intention to explore and experience the tourism resources available in it. Every year the government spent a lot of money to enhance cultural and heritage tourism activities in Melaka. Moreover, tourism players in Melaka are heavily promoting the destination to capture more tourists. Apparently, tourists from different parts of the world are bringing different attitudes and behaviour depending on their psychological and social factors that may result positive or negative impact to the visited destination. With that reason, do the tourism players in Melaka aware on what attitudes do visitors poses and what are the results of such attitudes towards visitors' behaviour during their visit to Melaka?

Hence, this study sought to identify what are the attitudes and behaviour of visitors visiting Melaka and to indicate their future behavioural intention towards the destination. Thereafter, tourism operators in Melaka can demonstrate right methods in attracting right prospects to enhance tourism activities while keeping a good satisfaction level and as well as to increase the visitors' retention and loyalty.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Visitors in the Tourism Context

All types of travelers who engaged in tourism are described as visitors. All visitors are subdivided into two categories which are same-day visitors and tourists. The same-day visitors are referring to visitors who did not spend the night in a collective or private accommodation in the visited country; meanwhile, visitors who stay in the country visited for at least one night are referred as the tourists (Goeldner & Ritchie, 2009). The types of visitors who visit a destination also can be classified into first time visitors and repeat visitors (McKercher & Wong, 2004).

Swarbrooke & Horner (2007) provided a definition for tourism, tourist and visitor where they defined tourism as the activity in which people spend a short period, of at least one night, away from home for leisure or business, a tourist is defined as a consumer of tourism products, meanwhile a visitor is defined as someone who make a visit to an attraction. Visitors are not all tourists in the technical sense in that they will not all spend at least one night away from home.

Understanding Visitors' Attitude and Behaviour

Almost everyone has an intuitive understanding of what attitude and behaviour are. Attitude may indicate how a person might act in a specific situation. If person holds a negative attitude toward an object, he is potentially ready to attack, destroy, punish, ignore or otherwise reject the object and those things associate with it. If his attitude is positive, he is potentially ready to help, reward, purchase, or otherwise embrace it (Mayo & Jarvis, 1981). According to Ajzen (2005), an attitude is a predisposition to respond favourably or unfavourably to an object, person, institution, or event. This definition was supported by Luchinger (1993), where he found that attitude as learned tendency to respond in a favourable or unfavourable manner to a given social object or concept.

Further reading revealed that attitude is defined as affect for or against a psychological object, where early theorist called attitude as "affect". Affect or attitude represent overall degree of favourability (like or dislike, happy or unhappy) for general moods and specific emotions (Ajzen, 2001). Attitude also is a form of psychological outcome, which is a mental state of readiness to respond that is organized through experience (Shim, Gehrt & Siek, 2005). It is more into emotional responses to people, ideas and objects based on values. Different values between individuals affect the way people deal with various situations (Lucas, 2012).

There are three components of an attitude (Mayo & Jarvis, 1981; Moutinho, 1993): (1) belief or knowledge that individual holds about something such as a place, an experience, other person; (2) feelings and emotion about the destination or service, and (3) predisposition or action tendency which can occur in favourable or unfavourable way. Moutinho (1993)

highlighted these three components of an attitude into cognitive, affective and conative component. The *cognitive* component is occasionally known belief or knowledge component, consisting of the beliefs and opinions, based on some evidences hold by individuals such as a place, an experience, a person and so forth. The *affective* component refers to the feelings and emotions about something and entails judgment based on emotion. Meanwhile, the *conative* component is the action tendency or disposition which can have a favourable or unfavourable character. Solomon *et al.* (2010) composed these three components of attitudes in ABC model which consists of affect, behaviour and cognition.

Meanwhile, according to Swarbrooke & Horner (2007), consumer behaviour is defined as the study of which products people buy, why they buy these products and how they make their purchasing decisions. Chen & Tsai (2007) added from the visitor consumption perspective, there are three stages of tourist behaviour, namely, pre-visitation, during-visitation and post-visitation. They highlighted that tourist behaviour is a collective term of pre-visit's decision making, onsite experience, experience evaluations and post-visit's behavioural intentions and behaviours. Furthermore, visitors' behaviour can be considered in terms of duration of stay, type of accommodation, mode of transportation, activities they are participating, travel budget and expenditure, and so forth (Jason *et al.*, 2011). When referring to Reisinger (2009), it was found that the attitude and behaviour influenced by visitors profile and preferences, however, the globalization brought the changes to the visitors' attitude and behaviour towards tourism products and services. Both are primarily developing and changing through learning processes and experiences (Luchinger, 1993).

After all, it can be said that attitudes are determinants of behavioural intentions. Predicting how attitudes affect behaviour is the most important concern for most people interested in consumer behaviour (Wen, 2009). In a study conducted by Feng, Cai & Zhu (2006), they claimed that studies on attitude-behaviour relationship have been extensively conducted, which attitude was proven to be one of the antecedents of behaviour outcomes. They also found that consumer's attitudes play an important role in shaping their purchase behaviours. They added that attitude surveys are often used in predicting demand for products and future consumer behaviours since attitudes were believed to be a better predictor than behaviour measures.

Purchasing Tourism Products and Services

Purchasing tourism products and services are unlike purchasing manufacturing products. From the consumer's perspective, a vacation destination is an experience product. It is characterized by intangibility at the time of both purchase evaluation and consumption. From the perspective

of a destination marketing organization (DMO), the product cannot be physically presented to the market for inspection in the evaluation process of consumers and at the point of sale (Cai, Feng & Breiter, 2004). However, the essence of service transaction of tourism product is that what visitors purchased includes both tangible and intangible. For example, in addition to tangible food/ beverages, foodservice and lodging operations also provide an intangible service such as the manner the service staffs serve the visitors (Hsu & Powers, 2002).

On the subject of purchasing behaviour, there are several critical dimensions that create differences between the visitors' behaviour and consumers' behaviour. The visitors' behaviour lies in the extended phases of some visitors' activities: (1) an anticipation or pre-purchase, (2) a travel to the site segment, (3) an on-site experience, (4) a return travel component and (5) an extended recall and recollection stage. In contrast, consumer's behaviour is more focused on the choices of products and the satisfaction with products (Pearce, 2005).

To know further on the significance of the study on visitors' behaviour in purchasing activity, Swarbrooke & Horner (2007) has introduced a behaviouric segmentation technique. This technique widely used in tourism industry in order to enhance loyalty among visitors by group consumer according to their relationship with a particular product or service. Behaviouric segmentation gives opportunity to the tourism operators to get clear pictures on visitors' preferences and retain their loyalty by providing good and quality travel's experience to the visitors.

Satisfaction on the Trip Quality and Behavioural Intention

Research shows that the travel quality has a significant positive impact on visitors' attitudes and behavioural intentions (Cronin *et al.*, 2000). Ajzen (1985) claimed that a behavioural intention as an intention to 'attempt' and to perform a particular behaviour, not necessarily the actual performance of the behaviour. Intention predicts whether an individual will attempt to perform a particular behaviour, if it does not predict attainment of the goal, then factors lying beyond the control of the actor prevented the person from carrying out the intention. Behavioural intention was seen to be associated with changes over time in respondents' perception of service quality (Palmer & O'Neil, 2003).

Parasuraman *et al.* (1985) defined service quality as a judgment between customer's expectations and what is provided by the service personnel. When the service delivered met or exceeded customer's expectation, it will contribute a result in the satisfaction level. Meanwhile, Wen (2009) defined customer satisfaction as a customer's evaluation of a product or service with their needs and expectations. Research has shown that customer satisfaction leads to repeat purchase intention and customer loyalty. Perceived quality also had been proved highly

influenced on satisfaction and intention to return. Nevertheless, since perceived quality is a determinant of satisfaction, and this in turn determines recommendation, in this indirect manner quality would affect the intention to recommend (Bigné, Sánchez & Sánchez, 2001).

In a study on revisit intention, Huang & Hsu (2009) found that past travel experience which influence on tourists' attitude toward revisiting a destination and on revisit intention. Their finding was supported by Chen & Tsai (2006) where they found that the tourist behaviours include the subsequent evaluations which include experience or perceived trip quality and overall satisfactions during visitation and also the future behavioural intention which consist of intention to revisit and willingness to recommend to others.

METHODOLOGY

The data was collected from the visitors who visited Bandar Hilir, Melaka since it is a central focused of tourism activities in the state. A descriptive research design using a quantitative approach is applied with self-reported and self-administered survey questionnaire randomly distributed amounted 196 responses. The questionnaire was designed into four sections. Section A consisted of the respondent's profile such as origin, gender, educational background, occupation and income level were asked in this section. Section B contained the travel profile of the respondents including the activities undertaken to indicate the related travel information. For section C, it comprised of the emotional response of the respondents during visiting Melaka. Meanwhile, Section D determined the information on the relevant respondents' future behavioural intention towards the destination.

The nominal scale and Likert scale ranging from 1 with "strongly dissatisfy" to 5 "strongly satisfy" were used in all sections where the respondents were asked to elicit their answers by ticking the relevant concept and filling in the blanks where appropriate. The pilot study was initially conducted to verify the reliability and validity of the instrument used. The data collected from a total of 196 valid responses were keyed in and analyzed by using Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) Version 20.0 for analysis.

EMPIRICAL RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Demographic profile

The field survey shows a total number of 196 respondents comprising of both domestic travelers (68%) and international visitors (32%), where 56% of them were male and 44% were female. The majority of 55% were married while 45% were not. In terms of employment information, it was found that 20% of them were self employed, 19% were students, 18% were skilled or professional worker and 15% were civil servant. Their monthly income were less than RM3,000

(46%), between RM3,001 to RM6,000 (25%), between RM6,001 to RM9,000 (8%) and between RM12,001 to RM15,000 (7%).

Travel profile

The majority of the visitors bring along their family (39%), spouse (16%), friends (16%) and colleagues (8%) during visiting Melaka while the rest travelled alone (11%) and also with an organized tour (10%). The visitors who travelled in group were found travelled with another 2 to 5 people in their group (41%) and with another 6 to 10 people (21%). Most of them did not have children in their group (62%). In addition, it was found that more than half (59%) of the visitors were repeat visitors while 41% were first time visitors.

The majority of 76% visitors were travelled to Melaka from their origin which is either from their home, states or their country of origin. Only 24% of the respondents were travelled from the other places. Those travelled to Melaka from the other places were found that they visited Kuala Lumpur and Melaka's neighbours, Negeri Sembilan and Johor first before continuing their journey to Melaka. The respondents were motivated to travel to Melaka for relaxation (22%), 13% for each category visited for a family vacation, to gain knowledge and to do shopping, 11% for visiting their friends and relative (VFR), 9% for entertainment or game activity and only 1% for medical or wellness and other activity. For further information, the respondents who were motivated to travel to Melaka for medical or wellness purposes were those who come from Indonesia.

Visitor's attitude and behaviour

In searching for information on the travel destination, visitors were used the Internet (22%), word of mouth (WOM) communication with their friends or relatives (20%), television program (18%) and also from the printed media such as newspaper (17%), guide book (12%) and tourism brochure (8%) as their main source of information before travel to Melaka. The visitors prefer to get the information from their friends and relatives maybe because they trust on the person they know better. Therefore, it is vital for the tourism players in Melaka to provide good service quality to the visitors since their experience becomes as vital source of reference. Due to the degree of information they received, almost all visitors had arranged their trip to Melaka on their own (81%) and only 16% of them used a tour package.

In order to access Melaka, private vehicle (63%) becomes the most popular transport used by visitors, followed by public transport (24%) and tour coach (13%). For accommodation, budget hotel were become the most popular choice for visitors to stay (33%) and followed by luxury hotel (24%), friend or relatives' house (19%) and homestay (16%). Most of the visitors

were stayed between 1 to 3 days (61%), followed by 4 to 7 days (18%), excursionist or day trip visitors who stayed less than 24 hours (10%), 1 to 2 weeks (8%) and the least numbers were the visitors who stayed more than 2 weeks (3%).

In indicating what visitors do in Melaka, it was found that they were involved in shopping (22%), culture and heritage (20%), visiting museum, zoo or farm (16%), visiting friends and relatives (VFR) (11%), seeing familiar setting, beach activity (9% each), business or conference activity (6%), event or entertainment (4%) and sports activity (2%). In terms of travel budget, it was revealed that almost half of them were allocated less than RM1,000 (47%), followed by between RM1,001 to RM3,000 (31%), between RM3,001 to RM5,000 (11%), between RM5,001 to RM7,000 (7%) between RM7,001 to RM10,000 (3%) to travel to Melaka.

The descriptive measures for quantitative variables for visitors' satisfaction towards trip quality are represented in Table 1. Most of visitors were satisfied when visiting Melaka. On the average, visitors were rated 4 for transportation and facilities with standard deviation 0.67229 and 0.70466. By referring the Skewness and Kurtosis value for transportation and facilities; (-0.329 and 0.444) and (-0.625 and 0.951) respectively that indicated the distribution of transportation and facilities were approximately normal. Visitors were neither satisfied nor dissatisfied towards accommodation, restaurant, cleanliness and hospitality. These four variables had an average rating of 3 and the value of Skewness and Kurtosis also indicated that the distribution of accommodation, restaurant, cleanliness and hospitality were approximately normal.

Table 1: Overall mean scores of visitors' satisfaction

	N	Min.	Max.	Mean	Std. Dev	Skewness	Kurtosis		
	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Std. Error	Std. Error
Accommodation	196	1.50	5.00	3.4464	.63876	-.394	.174	.265	.346
Restaurant	196	1.25	5.00	3.4005	.68242	-.119	.174	.175	.346
Transportation	196	1.50	5.00	3.5043	.67229	-.329	.174	.444	.346
Cleanliness	196	1.20	5.00	3.4092	.69231	-.447	.174	.830	.346
Facilities	196	1.00	5.00	3.7082	.70466	-.625	.174	.951	.346
Hospitality	196	1.60	5.00	3.4418	.60331	.008	.174	.594	.346

Behavioural intention

When respondents were asked about their behavioural intention to revisit Melaka in future, almost all of them said they will come to Melaka again (98%) while only a small portion of 2% were said they would not do so. This study was proven that respondents who have behavioural intention to revisit Melaka were among those who were satisfied with their trip to Melaka. Since

none of the respondents were dissatisfied with their trip, almost all respondents were intended to recommend to others to choose Melaka as their travel destination (99%) and only 1% of them will not do so.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Throughout the study, it is something good to discover that even most of the visitors' motivation to travel was for relaxation, however, when they arrived in Melaka, they tend to do shopping, involved in culture and heritage sites and other educational sites such as visiting museum, zoo or farm. Such findings may give the idea to the tourism operators that travel motivation cannot undertake the actual activities which will be participated during the actual visit. It is advisable for tourism operators in Melaka to be more concerned on expanding the reasons why visitors have to come to Melaka. By offering a variety of tourism activities, tourism operators can facilitate a strong pull factor in attracting visitors to visit the destination.

Besides, it was also proved that the past travel experience can influence visitors' attitudes and behaviour where majority of visitors in Melaka were found tend to choose Melaka as their destination although they had been visited the destination before. Even so, the tourism operators in Melaka cannot take that for granted. Visitors tend to revisit maybe due to level of novelty do they seek in the visited destination. Thus, the current promotional efforts should develop more tourism attractions and draw new types of enjoyment for them. To apply sustainable way in tourism development while attracting visitors to revisit, the tourism operators also can enhance the existing tourism resources which are available in Melaka in order to provide a new feeling and experience to the repeat visitors.

In addition, good satisfaction levels on the trip quality evidently contributed favourable impact on behavioural intentions to revisit and recommend the destination to the others. The responsible authorities therefore should enforce appropriate policies for the tourism operators in all areas to have standard operational procedure and service delivery system. Hence, the satisfaction level on the trip quality can continually be sustained. As the result, the satisfied visitors on their overall trip quality will repeat their visitation and they also will encourage optimistic dissemination information behaviour from word of mouth communication (WOM). Thus, it will attract attention of potential new visitors.

As the result indicated that Melaka also had become as the most popular tourism destination among those travelled in group such as with their families, couples and friends, therefore, it is vital for the destination to have a good WOM since Lucas (2012) told that a person who is dissatisfied will tell other 16 persons about a negative experience. Thus, portraying good perception and destination image looks can overtake such consequences. The

promotional activities also should be properly planned and designed by some appropriate entities in positioning good image of the destination in the visitors' mind.

In the last two decades, the application of quantitative and qualitative techniques in the study of the tourism phenomenon has gained momentum. This can be traced back to several factors. The most prominent is perhaps the fact that, as the reliance of destinations on tourism has grown and the industry expanded globally, more resources have been devoted to the collection of quantitative data and the maintenance of tourism data sets. This may have encouraged researchers interested in quantitative data analysis to give higher priority to the tourism industry in their research agenda. At the same time stakeholders of the industry, including destination managers, local and federal governments, keen to make more informed decisions, by devising better policies and evaluating existing are paying more attention to results from quantitative research. The approaches used by tourism researchers are heavily informed by progress in econometrics and statistical analysis across all social science disciplines.

The result hopefully may provide an overview to the tourism operators on the visitors' profiles and also the current travel trend of the visitors visiting Melaka Heritage City. Such trends can be observed from their actual attitudes during touring and staying at the visited place. In addition, it is hoped that this study may help the operators to indicate the behavioural tendency on the visitors' future travel decision, and therefore, the tourism operators may be improvised and well prepared to offer the right products and services, at the right time and to the right type of visitors.

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