Determinants of Tourist Satisfaction in Beach Tourism

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Abstract. This study examines the relationship between perceived quality and perceived value towards tourist satisfaction in beach tourism. The tourism industry, especially east coast's island, Penisular Malaysia, contributes to a high economy with more than 40% tourist arrival. Understanding the needs and tourist expectations is important to serve them better. Data were collected from a questionnaire distributed to tourists at selected top five beach tourism. Two hundred respondents were gathered, and data were analysed using structural equation modelling. The results indicate that both predictors are equally important towards tourist satisfaction. The result revealed that service providers must carefully review their marketing strategy, especially service quality and value. Both are interrelated and involved in belief, perception, and emotions, which are intangible and subjective. Service providers that can position and offer the high benefits over cost will gain more support from customers or tourists.

Keywords: Perceived Service Quality; Perceived Value; Tourist Satisfaction

1 Introduction

East coast (Malaysia) has at least 7 stunning beaches, vigorously marketed by tourist agencies and other local and foreign entities. According to a recent estimate, the number of travellers visiting island accounts for 40% of Malaysia's tourists. It indicates that east coast is a prominent tourism destination for beach and island tourism. As such, it needs to pay greater attention to customer and visitor pleasure. In the previous year, tourism in Malaysia produced 1.8 percent of total GDP and is expected to generate 5.6 per cent of jobs. Despite its popularity for its beaches, east coast (Malaysia) is in a dilemma as tourists begin to compare its beaches to other beaches or coastal tourism in different regions of Malaysia. Service providers in east coast (Malaysia) must enhance their quality of service, which includes both micro and macro marketing. The primary goal is to ensure that every client that visits the tourism location is happy. The service provider must improve their service quality, understand their customers' demands, and readily satisfy their expectations. The difficulty for service providers is not just gratifying consumer needs but also competing with other industry competitors. This study aims to look at the impact of service quality and perceived value in business survival and sustainability. It is usually preferable for any service provider to market their unique services as a selling feature that can grow and make them more attractive.

2 Literature Review

2.1 Tourist Satisfaction

Studies on customer satisfaction have been done broadly since four decades ago. But the topic is remaining important as customers change. Today customer is from a different generation (Razak and Shamsudin 2019). They are not the same as a customer a decades ago. Today, customer behaviour changes as well as their attitude and how they perceived value and quality. The customer today is very knowledgeable (Shamsudin et al. 2020b). They know what they want and have more bargaining power (M. F. Shamsudin, Esa, and Ali 2019). Marketers at the same time also have changed. Today in the 21st-century, people are talking about modern marketing. Today is all about digital marketing that creates value for the customer. The definition of the customer, however, remains the same. It is the overall customer experience based on comparing customer expectations and service delivery (Shamsudin et al. 2020a). Customer who enjoyed service performance more than what they expect is getting happy and satisfied. Many customers who put high hope but received low service delivery or performance ended up frustrated or dissatisfied (Medina-Viruel et al. 2019). Tourist satisfaction carries the same method as customer satisfaction (Asmelash and Kumar 2019; Bazneshin, Hosseini, and Azeri 2015; Truong, Lenglet, and Mothe 2018). Tourist satisfaction is the overall emotional state upon experience the visit or trips. It can be concluded that tourist satisfaction is the comparison between pre-visit and post-visit.

Tourists who feel enjoy and happy after the trip may get the excitement of satisfaction. Whereas, according to (Asmelash and Kumar 2019), customers who feel frustrated after the trip may get frustration and dissatisfaction. Tourist satisfaction is equally important as customer satisfaction. The role of tourist expectation is important as satisfied tourists may benefit the destination operator or tourism service providers (Shamsudin et al. 2020b). The trip that fulfils the customer expectations may lead to contribute to a positive customer experience. Tourists may share their experiences and recommend the destination to their family, friends, and social media networking (Huang and Crotts 2019). Today customers used social media to share their experiences. The practice of word of mouth now is converting to e-word of mouth, where customers can easily update their stories and share their moments using social media over the internet (Shamsudin et al. 2015). Today word of mouth is no longer after the event. It can be done through a live video that can be share and view by unlimited numbers of people within the customer social group (Shamsudin, Razak, and Salem 2018). The advantage of word of mouth is that destinations may have enjoyed greater coverage and promotions through their customer. The spreading news about the goal may spark other tourists to come for a visit. Indirectly it means that happy tourists will get satisfied.

They will later share their satisfaction by recommending the destination to other potential tourists. (Hassan and Shamsudin 2019) stated that the higher the tourist gets satisfied, the higher the likelihood of returning for the repeat visit. Tourist satisfaction is very much depending on the perceived service quality and perceived value. The higher the perceived level may lead to low chances of the tourist getting satisfaction level. Today customer could be different from the past (Hui, Wan, and Ho 2007; Mutanga et al. 2017; Sukiman et al. 2013). Today tourists can have clear information before they even arrived at the destinations. There are many options that tourists can get information about the destination before deciding to visit. The current technology provides live video, video advertisements, travel blogs, tourist experience videos, and comments and feedback from previous tourists. Tourists may have enjoyed a virtual 360-degree view should anyone from the past upload on the internet. Swart

et al., (2018) claimed that tourists should make a wise judgment on the perceived quality and value as they have the chance to see and pre-experience the trip before the actual moment. Past research on tourist satisfaction leads to various conclusions as it is very difficult to generalise the findings of one destination into another (Zailani et al. 2016). (Shamsudin et al. 2018) claimed that tourist is heterogeneous by nature. It depends on the destination and other external factors that play a role in tourist satisfaction (M. F. M. F. Shamsudin, Esa, and Ali 2019). The variety of destinations available for tourism may result in a different emotional state of mind based on various demographic profiles of tourists (M. F. M. F. Shamsudin, Ishak, et al. 2019). Tourist who doesn't line beach will give a negative customer experience on their visit. Whereas tourists who like the beach for watersports may not get satisfied if the beach does not provide extreme activities as the tourist wishes to have (Asmelash and Kumar 2019; Bazneshin et al. 2015; Truong et al. 2018). The tourist satisfaction level needs to match with the overall tourist perceived quality and value for comparison.

2.2 Perceived Value

It was mentioned earlier that there are changes in the marketing approach due to the shift in customer pattern and behaviour (Truong et al. 2018). Customer perceived value last times can be measure using the economic situation (Mutanga et al. 2017). In the past, perceived value is just a total evaluation based on the losses and benefits. The positive balance based on the assessment means that the customer enjoyed high values compared to the negative answer. Today perceived value has been extending to more factors such as functional value (Konuk 2019; Nugroho, Setyorini, and Novitasari 2019), value for money (Muhammad, Farid Shamsudin, and Hadi 2016), emotional value (Hamari, Hanner, and Koivisto 2020), social value (Ahn and Thomas 2020; Chen and Lin 2019; C. Wang, Teo, and Liu 2020), and novelty value (Chen et al. 2020; El-Adly 2019; El-Haddadeh et al. 2019). The combinations of five dimensions will lead to the actual perceived value, especially for tourists regarding the beach as a destination area. According to (Huang et al. 2019; Sharma and Klein 2020; Song, Guo, and Zhang 2019), perceived value is the benefits minus the cost that may result in the value. Tourists who enjoyed the beach at the maximum level may have a high value. However, they need to spend the high cost of transportation, travelling and accommodation. Tourists who come from far and spend much money may find low value should be the beach offers nothing unique. Functional value is according to (Mustak 2019; Punzo et al. 2019; Zanon et al. 2019) is the result of economic evaluations that tourists obtained from the capacity of the functional. In this study, the beach represents the perceived utility whether the tourist is getting more positive results. (Aini, Rahardja, and Hariguna 2019; Kim et al. 2018; Y. Wang et al. 2020) stated that it is the outcome of enjoying the beach as the main product or services measured in this study. (Shapiro, Reams, and So 2019; Sinha and Verma 2020) argued that the functional value might also contain the function of service value, price and flexibility.

Past research (Huang et al. 2019; Mustak 2019; Punzo et al. 2019; Sharma and Klein 2020)indicates that the tourist benefits that the tourist expects to gain from the beach. Tourist benefits in this study are closely related to the benefit that tourists gained at the beach. The benefits of tourists achieved at the beach are very important. It contributes to the total sum up of the tourist benefit. There is also the image benefit that contributes to the total benefits. The image is rEpresenting by the attraction and popularity of the beach. It can also be measured with tourists' difficulty reaching the place that may contribute to the high image. Other than that (Chen et al. 2020; El-Adly 2019; El-Haddadeh et al. 2019; Song et al. 2019) also mentioned the service benefits that the tourist could enjoy during their session at the beach.

Those things are all based on perception, and the result could be varying from one to another. Another element is the personnel benefit that the tourist may enjoy or gain at the beach. (Shamsudin et al. 2018) stated that a combination of the dimensions might help determine whether tourists are gaining positive or negative value. (García-Fernández et al. 2018; Hamari et al. 2020; C. Wang et al. 2020).

2.3 Perceived Service Quality

Perceived service quality is the overall customer experience of the service quality delivery based on comparing service delivered against expectations (Truong et al. 2018). The service quality roles towards customer satisfaction are very important, as proven by past research. The findings, however, resulted in various key points where it indicates a different preference among the tourist-based on the destination and areas of tourist attractions, the study on the beach is covering the same dimensions of service quality, but the services offered are according to the suitability of the services itself from the service providers to their customer. (Kozak 2001) highlighted that the service delivery should not focus only on tourists but should satisfy the customer as an overall means of focus. Total perceived quality is derived from two important elements, which are experienced quality and expected quality. High expectation of quality may lead to high expectations from the tourist before the actual experienced occurred. The high expectations could be due to information received from previous tourists or reports from other past customers regarding their experiences. Today, customers may have enjoyed accessing information to almost everything they need to know as their preparation to visit the destination. Tourists can have enjoyed reading the review, watching videos, and following the development from social media or any other digital media platforms. All the information gathered will be translated into the tourist expectation before they arrived at the destination and experienced the services they expected to receive.

On the other hand, experience quality is related to the real service delivered to the tourist while they are on site. The treatments from the service providers, the physical attributes offered, and the interactions from the employee. Combinations of all the services received will be the findings of whether the tourist is satisfied enough. The challenges in the service quality, especially related to the tourist, is because the perceived quality is different from one perception to another. Low expectations could lead to satisfaction upon receiving the actual services. The high expectations could end up frustrated because they did not receive what they expected to receive based on the virtual information and experiences. Based on that, service providers need to be more focused on customers, especially tourists, as they are important for business survival. The service on tourist destinations is mostly related to the environment of the destination. A service provider must ensure that they provide a clean environment that may attract more tourists to come. Besides that, service providers must ensure that the places are clean and pleasant to the tourist. (Yadav and Pathak 2016) highlighted that the service provider must ensure that the overall customer benefits are more than the amount paid to enjoy the services. High benefits over cost may lead to a positive value that may lead to customer satisfaction. Putting more effort in service delivery will ensure that customers are satisfied, and chances for the service provider to enjoy the benefits of having a satisfied customer are very bright. Service-related to tourists is related to providing the destination spot in good condition and must also ensure the safety of the tourist.

They must feel safe and secure, especially when the service provider prepared a good welcome and had the tourist as their customer. Service involving customer interaction between tourists and service providers through their employees is also important. That interactions are

the best communication touchpoint where service providers can gain feedback and obtain as much information as possible to understand what tourists were looking for when they visited the destination. Services offered by the service provider must be reliable and worth the effort made by the tourist. The high competition among the industry players leads to a creative idea in attracting customers and tourists. As such, service providers must ensure that they are focused on maintaining the customers and ready for the next level, which is to retain and satisfy them. Complaints, comments, feedback, and ideas are among the best measurement tools that service providers can use to identify the level of service quality delivered. Service providers can also follow the rating made by the tourist on the tourism portal about their services. A high rating means that customers are satisfied and talk good about their experiences and the service provider. A low rating means that the service providers need to put more effort into understanding the needs and wants of tourists or customers for future benefits. Overall, service quality is again another factor that should be focused on getting more customers and obtaining market share and growth.

3 Methodology

This research aims to measure the relationship between Perceived service quality and Perceived value towards tourists' satisfaction. Both constructs will be measured based on a direct connection towards tourists' satisfaction. This research applied the quantitative method; thus, it used a questionnaire to gathered data. The data collection used a self-administered survey form which consists of 8 questions on the respondent profile and 13 inquiries related to the constructs. All items used in the research was adopted from the past researcher. A pilot test was conducted before the full data collection to check the suitability of the selected items. Three subject matters in marketing were referred to comment on the questionnaire to ensure the questions meet the objectives and are easy to understand. Some minor changes were made based on comments and suggestions from the subject matter expert. Two hundred respondents participated in the data collections exercises with help from the tourism operator. The only international tourist was invited to participate, and the selection of respondents was based on convenience sampling. Data were analysed using the structural equation model.

4 Results and Discussion

Two hundred respondents participated in the survey, of which 49% were male and 51% female. All respondent is an international tourist that comes to Malaysia for vacation purposes. Breakdown by the percentage that participated in the survey in China (25%), Australia (30%), Japan (10%), South Korea (5%), USA (14%), UK (9%) and the balance 7% are from ASEAN countries. It was found that 35% of respondents have come to Malaysia at least once before. The balance is first-time tourists to Malaysia. The majority of the respondent is between 25 to 35 years old with the length of stay between 7 – 10 days.

Table 1. Descriptive statistics and results of confirmatory factor analysis

Item	Mean	Sd	SFL	t-value	CR	AVE	Item to Total Correlation	α
Perceived service quality								
PSQ 1	4.40	0.68	0.853	10.955	0.807	0.72	0.619	0.832
PSQ 2	4.37	0.67	0.852	10.988			0.632	
PSQ 3	4.45	0.69	0.849	10.875			0.623	

Item	Mean	Sd	SFL	t-value	CR	AVE	Item to Total Correlation	α
PSQ 4	4.37	0.67	0.852	10.912			0.658	
Perceived value								
PV 1	4.36	0.65	0.844	10.194	0.804	0.68	0.667	0.744
PV 2	4.48	0.62	0.841	10.236			0.678	
PV 3	4.46	0.67	0.867	10.114			0.605	
PV 4	4.45	0.69	0.836	10.126				
Tourist satisfaction								
TS 1	2.28	0.83	0.871	13.006	0.906	0.67	0.838	0.904
TS 2	2.47	0.74	0.870	13.120			0.822	
TS 3	2.59	0.67	0.849	12.968			0.761	
TS 4	2.44	0.85	0.834	12.564			0.701	
TS 5	2.36	0.84	0.827	12.485			0.795	

Notes: SFL, standardised factor loadings; CR, composite reliability; AVE, average variance extracted; α, Cronbach's α

The factor loadings of all the variable items of the brand experience construct were above 0.7 with an acceptable level (Hair et al., 2010). Factor loadings of all the items were above 0.7. The Cronbach's α values of all the constructs were above 0.7, higher than the minimum cut-off (i.e. 0.7) (Nunnally, 1978). Table 1 shows that composite reliability (i.e. ranging from 0.804 to 0.906) was higher than the suggested value of 0.7 (Hair et al., 2010). The average variances extracted (AVE) of the constructs (i.e. ranging from 0.67 to 0.72) were higher than the minimum accepted value of 0.5 (Bagozzi and Yi, 1988). The factor loadings of all variables were above the minimum acceptable value of 0.5, with the high AVE of the latent constructs confirming convergent validity (Fornell and Larcker, 1981). AVEs were higher than the squared correlations between a pair of the latent constructs, thereby confirming the discriminant validity

Table 2. Squared correlations matrix of latent variables

Constructs	Mean	Perceived Service Quality	Perceived Value	Tourist Satisfaction
Perceived service quality	4.50	0.72[a]		
Perceived value	4.32	0.63[b]	0.64	
Tourist satisfaction	3.56	0.75	0.58	0.61

Notes: [a]Average variance extracted; [b]squared correlations

Table 2 indicates the factor loadings of constructs in which all were found to be more than 0.5 which is the minimum acceptable value. It is also found that the AVEs value were higher than the squared correlations between a pair of the latent constructs, thereby confirming the discriminant validity.
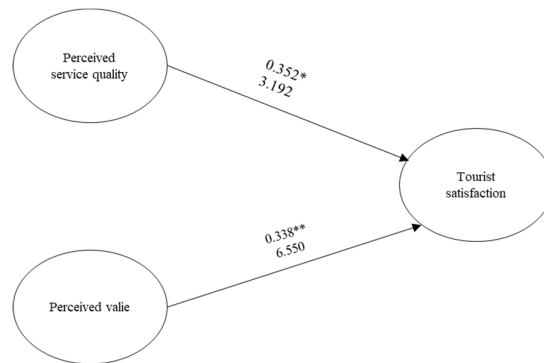
Fig. 1. Result of the proposed model

The constructs and the hypothesised relationships were tested using a structural model. Figure 1 shows that perceived service quality has a positive effect on tourist satisfaction (β = 0.352, t = 3.192, p < 0.001). Thus, H1 is supported. Perceive value positively influences tourist satisfaction (β = 0.338, t = 6.520, p < 0.001). Hence, H2 is supported.

5   Conclusion

This study is about the measurement between perceived service quality and value towards tourist satisfaction. The study shows that both perceived value and quality are significant towards tourist satisfaction. It means that both are the factors that derived tourist satisfaction. Perceived service quality representing the overall customer expectation before and after the experiences. The higher the expectations, the more challenges are for the service provider to meet the customer positive perceived quality. Service providers need to address this carefully as the results will determine the main objective of achieving customer satisfaction. The past researcher highlighted that it is difficult to deal with the perception. It is intangible and related to customer psychological needs. However, there are both advantages and disadvantages to the perceived service quality. The disadvantage of poor perception may lead to poor interest that may affect the business performance. High perception also helps the service provider to continuous increase their service level according to the high expectations. Indirectly it leads to superior services. Perceived value, on the other hand, is the substance of the customer experiences. It can be derived from both combinations of emotions and logical evaluations. Marketers emphasise the service value as it can improve customer or tourist satisfaction in this context. A service provider is suggested to look into details by finding out the actual customer needs and wants to improve their service value.

The basic formula used by the customer is by deducting the benefits against the cost to get the value. Positive results mean customers enjoyed more benefits than the amount of investment they paid for the services. Therefore, it is valuable. On the other hand, the negative value represents the amount of investment or cost they produced was not worth for the benefits they got. The service provider needs to focus on their services attributes and match with the customer's overall usefulness. Based on the results, the service provider needs to focus on both as they are interrelated between perceived quality and value. Service providers that managed to solve the expectations and psychological state of demand will survive and sustain in the market. This study, at the same time, support a few recent research on the

perceived quality (García-Fernández et al. 2018; Keshavarz and Jamshidi 2018; Suhartanto et al. 2019; Wang and Teo 2020) and perceived value (Ahn and Thomas 2020; MacIntosh and Spence 2012; Song et al. 2019; Vijaranakorn and Shannon 2017) towards customer satisfaction (Shamsudin et al. 2018).

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