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Destination Image Differences Between First-Time and Repeat-Visit Tourists: The Malaysian Case

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Abstract: The main aim of this study is to identify the underlying factors that are not only common but different between first-time and repeat tourists. This is to ensure that promotional strategies using an appropriate image are strategically formulated to entice the different groups of tourists visiting Malaysia. Data collection was conducted at Kuala Lumpur International Airport (KLIA) using survey questionnaires among departing tourists. A total of 261 European tourists were involved in this study, comprising 143 first-time and 118 repeat tourists. The exploratory and confirmatory factor analyses were used to conduct data analysis. The findings of the study suggest that both first-time and repeat-visit tourists perceived Malaysia as a safe country with a stable political environment that offers natural attraction and beautiful beaches. In addition, the findings of the study suggested that first-time visiting tourists are price-sensitive compared to repeat tourists. Moreover, the repeat-visit tourists perceived Malaysia as offering nightlife entertainment and an adventurous holiday with many places to visit.

Key words: Destination image, first-time tourist, repeat tourist, measurement model, tourism Malaysia

INTRODUCTION

Globally, the tourism sector is experiencing a competitive environment and posting challenges to tourism marketers in distinguishing tourists' experiences of a destination from others (Maroofi and Dehghan, 2012). The importance of tourism in the global economy can be observed through its contribution to a country's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and job creation (Artuger and Cetinsoz, 2013; Othman *et al.*, 2012). Likewise, in Malaysia, the tourism sector is one of the vibrant economic generators as reflected in the GDP figures during 2011-2012 which amounted to RM 57.0 and 65.3 billion, respectively (WTTC, 2012, 2013). Currently, Malaysia is the second most popularly visited destination in Southeast Asia (Emmanuel and Zulkefli, 2014). Moreover, the same source reported that during 2014, the Visit Malaysia Year, it was expected that the arrival of tourists to Malaysia would be 28.8 billion, a growth of 12% from 2013. The tourism industry was Malaysia's second major foreign-earning sector in 2012 (Tourism Malaysia, 2012) after manufacturing. In 2011 and 2012, the sector generated 753,500 (6.3% of total employment) and 811,500 (6.5% of total employment) jobs, respectively, reflecting an increase of 7.7% from 2011 (WTTC, 2012, 2013).

Previously, the selling proposition of Malaysia as an attractive destination fell short because, according to the report by the WTTC (2002), Malaysia failed to position clearly its image as a tourist destination. Moreover, KPMG (2004) suggested that Tourism Malaysia should undertake actions to create a distinctive image that distinguishes Malaysia from its competing neighbouring travel destinations such as Singapore, Indonesia and Thailand. This was in lieu of the failure by the country to portray a clear and strong destination image that has a clear product appeal compared to Thailand and Singapore (WTTC, 2002). The report stated that Thailand is known with the image of nightlife and Singapore is portrayed as an entertainment country. Indonesia is linked with the image of diverse culture, unique traditions and cuisine. Recently, the Malaysia Tourism Promotion Board (Tourism Malaysia) rigorously launched promotional undertakings to put forward ecotourism (nature tourism) as one of the tourism appeals to attract foreign and local tourists (Tourism Malaysia, 2012). Promoting the image of nature tourism, was pertinent as Malaysia is blessed with a variety of world-class ecotourism products.

Examining the effectiveness of the established destination image of a travel destination is crucial as it was considered as an important factor that can affect the selection of a destination which, in turn, would influence

the demand towards a particular destination (Aksoy and Kiyci, 2011). Effective destination image would mean tourists perceived the image as the way it was promoted. Different categories of tourist may have different perceptions of Malaysia as a travel destination. Thus, efforts should be taken to understand tourists' perceptions which would provide insightful information to Tourism Malaysia in designing promotional strategies that would appeal and attract the different categories of potential tourists.

Uysal *et al.* (2000) suggested that the most important destination promotion and competitiveness is to form a new image or strengthen the existing positive image of a destination in the tourist's mind. Therefore, it is not only important for Tourism Malaysia to create a destination image that enables it to be different from the competing countries but also that would appeal to the right potential market segments. Destination image creation through proper communication channels reaching the right market segment is crucial to the future of a destination image. In this regard, the main aim of this study was to investigate the underlying factors measuring destination image that would affect tourists' destination choice among first-time and repeat tourists. The study undertook to measure destination image of Malaysia among first-time and repeat tourists in order to ascertain commonalities of differences of destination image perceptions between these two groups so that different promotional strategies could be designed for the different categories, if necessary.

Destination image of Malaysia: Generally, destination image is the perceptions of tourists about a destination (Hunt, 1975; Nadeau *et al.*, 2008). However, the definition has been expanded into several definitions by different authors. According to Baloglu and McCleary (1999), destination image is an attitudinal constructs consisting of an individual's mental representative of knowledge (belief) feeling and global impression about a destination. Kim and Richardson (2003) suggest that destination image is the total impressions, beliefs, ideas, expectations and feelings accumulated towards a place over time. Alcaniz *et al.* (2009) supported the work of Hunt (1975) and Nadeau *et al.* (2008) that describe destination image as, the perception of tourists about a destination. In addition, they suggest that destination image is the representation in the minds of tourists about the destination which encompasses ideas, beliefs and feelings (attitude). Although, there are similarities among these definitions, this study adopts the destination image postulated by Weaver and Lawton (2010) corresponding to the definitions given by the above-said authors that proposed that it is the sum of beliefs, attitudes and

impressions that individuals or groups hold toward tourist destination or aspects of destination.

As reported by Uysal *et al.* (2000), to become an identified destination was a marketing challenge. Nevertheless, it may be even more difficult to sustain a positive image in the tourist's mind as other competing destinations were always approaching to capture the visitor market. Therefore, measuring tourist destination image was crucial and should be conducted on a continuous basis to capture and monitor the changes of destination image in the travel market, if any, so that timely intervention strategies could be put in place to battle the competition within the travel market. In addition, it was to assess the success of a travel destination in term of sustaining the established image. Tourism Malaysia undertook the initiative of capturing the image of Malaysia among international tourists as a travel destination using several main attributes of image as illustrated in Table 1. The figures in Table 1 suggested that Malaysia over the period between 2010-2012 was constantly perceived by tourists as a travel destination with friendly people, nice beaches and jungle sport/greenery. It appears that the effort by Tourism Malaysia to promote an image of unique multi-culturalism of Malaysia which comprises three major races namely Malay, Chinese and Indian which focuses on culture diversity stressed on the image branding "Malaysia Truly Asia" falls short (Table 2). Thus, the image branding of "Malaysia Truly Asia", focusing on a multi-racial country with culture diversity to foreign tourists, required re evaluation.

Table 2 illustrates the themes used by several countries such as Thailand, Singapore and Indonesia as well as Malaysia to describe and promote their countries to other people all over the world. From the table, it can be concluded that Malaysia promoted the country as a multi-racial country with cultural diversity,

Table 1: Destination image of Malaysia perceived by international tourists between 2010-2012

Image of Malaysia	Year (%)		
	2010	2011	2012
Historical sites	2.5	4.0	3.8
Beaches	11.2	8.7	8.2
Safe destination	8.0	5.9	6.8
Hill resorts	1.8	1.0	1.1
Island resorts	3.9	3.1	4.5
Friendly people	25.7	22.0	22.0
Shopping facilities	4.1	3.6	9.9
Jungle sport/greenery	8.6	9.9	9.4
Variety of goods	5.6	3.5	6.5
Multi-racial country	5.3	7.4	8.0
Modern city	9.9	15.0	6.8
International sport and event organiser	0.4	0.2	0.3
Cultural and festival events	1.2	0.9	1.1
Health facilities	4.2	6.4	5.4
Others	NA	8.4	6.1

NA: Not available, Source: Tourism Malaysia, 2010, 2011, 2012

Table 2: Themes used by country of Malaysia, Thailand, Singapore and Indonesia

Countries	Themes	Year launched	Description
Malaysia	'Malaysia Truly Asia'	1999-2014	To portray the unique multiculturalism of Malaysia which comprises three major races namely Malay, Chinese and Indian. Focusing on culture diversity (Din, 2010)
Thailand	'Amazing Thailand, it begins with the people'	2014	Portraying the Thai people's way of living, referring to mentality and hospitality, that influenced the visitors' experience in the country (Thomsen, 2014)
Singapore	'Your Singapore'	2010-2014	Portraying Singapore as offering mix-and-match multiple experiences on dining, shopping, natural and cultural attractions, whilst focusing on service quality
Indonesia	'Wonderful Indonesia'	2011-2014	To portray Indonesia as a country that possesses beautiful nature, unique culture, varied food, hospitable people and price competitiveness

using the promotional theme of "Malaysia Truly Asia", Thailand focused on their people's way of life and hospitality aspect. Both Singapore and Indonesia promoted their natural, cultural and food to attract other people from all around the world. However, Singapore focused on service quality and Indonesia stressed on price competitiveness.

Destination image: Usually, consumers have a choice-set of travel destinations when considering that where to go for a holiday. A choice-set would normally comprise 3-5 destinations (Page, 2003). In deciding where to go for a holiday, tourists will make their decision based on several criteria or elements. One of the elements in the decision-making of selecting a destination was the destination image (Page, 2003). In addition, Choi *et al.* (2011) and Aksoy and Kiyci (2011) described image as consisting of objective enlightenment level, impressions, prejudices, dreams, expectations, emotions and thoughts that determined tourists' choosing holiday destination. Image not only influences tourists' decision-making but also tourists' behaviour (Jamil, 2006). Usually, before tourists embark on a trip, they tend to develop an image and a set of expectations about the planned destination (Choi *et al.*, 2011). Therefore, studying destination image is vital as it is related to demand of a destination and makes tourism destination sustainable for the long-term tourism business (Rashid and Ismail, 2008).

As destination image is very important to the tourism business, it is important to make the destination image identifiable and accessible through effective image communication (Xiang and Hans, 2002). According to Hassan (2009), the image of a destination can be delivered through three effective mediums. First medium is slogan, theme and image positioning. This kind of medium is defined as a meaningful phrase that is used to explain the entire motive so that it can produce a momentum and new idea of a place for example 'Malaysia Truly Asia'. Second medium is visual symbol. Visual representation is known as architecture that had been developed at a place such as Menara Petronas in Kuala Lumpur, Eiffel Tower in Paris and the Great Wall in China. Third medium is attractive events that can be promoted such as flower festival,

harvest festival and so on. Examples of attractive events in Malaysia are Malaysia International Shoes Festival, Le Tour de Langkawi, Pasir Gudang World Kites Festival and Independence Day.

Apart from that, it is also important for tourism management to investigate the image held in the mind of tourists as image identification process will figure out the most representative objects and descriptors of the destination which has the most marketing potential (Xiang and Hans, 2002). Image vehicles/mediums and promotion tools strategies should be consistent with established positive images as tourists will compare their image to what they actually see (Xiang and Hans, 2002).

METHODOLOGY

Survey instrument: The construct of destination image was adapted from the study of Echtner and Ritchie (1993). The measurement items of destination image consist of 72 items. However, after conducting a pilot study, there were only 31 items used for the actual survey and 41 items were dropped. The respondents were asked according to their level of agreement towards every statement using a 7-point Likert scale ranging from 1 as highly disagree to 7 as highly agree.

Pilot test: The pilot test was conducted among international tourists that have the similar background with the actual respondents (European tourists) at the Kuala Lumpur International Airport (KLIA) in May 2009. During the pilot test, 100 respondents answered the questionnaire completely. The data was then subjected to two statistical analyses which were exploratory factor analysis (to reduce and summarise the items of destination image) and reliability test (used to test the reliability and validity of the instruments).

Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA): After conducting the pilot test, an exploratory factor analysis was run to reduce and summarise the items of destination image to identify how many factors were needed to represent the data. The result of Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) and Bartlett's Test of Sphericity for destination image was 0.694 which was

Table 3: Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) for independent variables-items retained in destination image

Factors	Factor loading	Eigen value	Variance (%)
Factor 1: Architecture/Museum and Adventure		6.848	9.469
There is a lot of interesting architecture in Malaysia (D16)	0.714		
A holiday in Malaysia is a real adventure (D20)	0.632		
Numerous historical sites and museums exist in Malaysia (D44)	0.792		
In Malaysia, everything is fascinating (D48)	0.565		
There are many places of interest to visit in Malaysia (D61)	0.630		
Factor 2: Safe and clean		2.820	7.238
There is a high risk of illness due to dirty, unsanitary condition (D18)	0.676		
There is a lot of crime in Malaysia (D30)	0.800		
Local standards of cleanliness and hygiene are high (D63)	0.539		
In general, Malaysia is a safe place to visit (D65)	0.624		
Factor 3: Natural attraction and tour package		2.350	6.580
Tours/excursions are readily available in Malaysia (D17)	0.708		
Malaysia offers the chance to see wildlife (D38)	0.597		
Malaysia offers a lot of natural scenic beauty (D46)	0.564		
There are many packaged vacations available to Malaysia (D64)	0.544		
Factor 4: Tourist activities		2.142	6.132
There is little to see in Malaysia (D12)	0.855		
There is little to do in Malaysia (D13)	0.895		
Factor 5: Hotel and restaurant		1.983	5.709
There are few first-class hotels in Malaysia (D10)	0.884		
There are few first-class restaurants in Malaysia (D11)	0.836		
Factor 6: Climate		1.706	5.595
Malaysia has pleasant weather (D4)	0.791		
Malaysia has a disagreeable climate (D60)	-0.718		
Factor 7: Nightlife and entertainment		1.500	5.405
Malaysia has a good nightlife (D5)	0.883		
Malaysia offers a large variety of entertainment at night (D52)	0.780		
Factor 8: Political stability		1.430	5.355
There is frequent political unrest in Malaysia (D25)	0.764		
There is political unrest in Malaysia (D70)	0.905		
Factor 9: Food and lifestyle		1.194	4.182
Lifestyles in Malaysia are similar to ours (D6)	0.713		
The food in Malaysia is similar to ours (D40)	0.742		
Factor 10: Beaches		1.102	4.132
Malaysia is a good place to go for beaches (D9)	0.569		
Malaysia has nice beaches for swimming (D42)	0.773		
Factor 11: Living standard and tourist accessibility		1.000	4.118
Malaysia has a high standard of living (D47)	0.725		
Good tourist information is readily available in Malaysia (D68)	0.577		
Factor 12: Price		1.000	3.901
Prices in Malaysia are low (D21)	0.740		
Goods and services are expensive in Malaysia (D51)	0.596		
Total variance explained			67.816

Factors with a loading of ≥0.5 were retained

higher than 0.5 and in terms of Bartlett's Test of Sphericity, the result was significant ($p<0.001$) as suggested by Hair *et al.* (2010) and Field (2005). Based on Table 3, there were 12 factors under destination image variable with 31 items remaining for the actual survey. In this study, factor loadings for the items with value greater than ±0.5 were considered necessary to measure as suggested by Hair *et al.* (2010). The total variance explained for the variables of destination image was 67.82% which exceeded the point suggested by Hair *et al.* (2010).

Reliability test: Reliability test was applied to help assess the degree of consistency between multiple measurements of variable free from random error

(Malhotra, 2007; Hair *et al.*, 2010). The result of Cronbach's alpha coefficient for destination image after conducting EFA was 0.79 which was greater than 0.7 and it revealed that the 31 items of destination image were technically free from error and qualified for the actual survey.

Data collection method: The final questionnaire for the study was developed after the pilot study. The collection of data of the actual study was conducted at Kuala Lumpur International Airport (KLIA) among the European tourists. The data were collected through self-administered questionnaires using closed-ended structured questionnaire. The data collection was conducted in two phases, phase 1 in November 2009 and

phase 2 in December 2009. A total of 820 respondents answered the questionnaire completely.

Sample plan and size: A sampling frame was created based on the returned questionnaires with the population (N) size of 820. According to Burn and Bush (2009), a sampling frame was created because accurate data pertaining to the size of this population were not available. Two stages of sampling method were used. At the first stage, systematic sampling method was used followed by simple random sampling at the second stages of selecting sample. A systematic sampling method was used where after a random starting point, every 5th intercepted respondents was included in the study. After conducting the systematic sampling method, simple random sampling was chosen to select the study sample. Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) software was used to select the respondents by "Random Sample of Cases". 420 European tourists were selected as the sample size (50% from the total population). After the cleaning process, the usable sample size was 261 respondents. In order to determine the expected sample size for this study, a confidence interval method was used with p (Population = 50%, q (100-p) = 50% and e (acceptable sample error expressed as a percent) between ±5% and ±10% at 95% level of confidence, the calculated sample size (n) being between 96 and 384. Therefore, the usable sample size of 261 met the sample size requirements of Burn and Bush (2009).

Data analysis procedure: The data collected was subjected to statistical analysis using Statistical Package for Social Science program (SPSS version 16) and Analysis of Moment Structures (AMOS). SPSS was used to run descriptive analysis and exploratory factor analysis. AMOS was used to run confirmatory factor analysis in order to identify the measuring items of destination image. An independent t-test was conducted to identify statistically significant difference in destination image perception between first-time and repeat-visit tourists.

RESULTS

Demographic's profiles: The respondents' profiles of the first-time and repeat European tourists are illustrated in Table 4. The findings in the table revealed that, most of the tourists who visited Malaysia for the first time were from Western Europe (50.3%), coming from countries such as the Netherlands, Germany, France, Switzerland, Belgium, Austria and Holland. Repeat tourists were mainly from Northern Europe, from countries namely United

Kingdom, Sweden, Ireland, Scotland, Norway and Finland (55.1%). Majority of the tourists for first-time and repeat-visit were male which were 59.4 and 66.1%, respectively. Most of the first-time tourists were single or living with partner and representing younger age group compared to the returning tourists. On the other hand, majority of the repeat-visit tourists equally consisted of both married and single tourists. Mostly, for both first-time and returning tourists, the purpose of visiting Malaysia was to spend their holidays.

Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA): Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) was used to confirm the measurement model after conducting exploratory factor analysis (Hair *et al.*, 2010). The result from Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) would provide the underlying factors that best represent the data together with their respective measuring items. Following EFA, CFA was carried out to test the goodness of fit of the variables measuring the studied constructs. Any measuring items that obtained factor loadings of less than 0.6 and squared multiple correlations (R^2) of less than 0.4 should be dropped from the analysis (Awang, 2012) and supported by the literature. Figure 1 depicts the measurement model of destination image for the first-time tourists visiting Malaysia. After conducting an item-deletion process, several items were dropped and 12 items with 6 factors remained in order to achieve a better fit model. These factors were:

- Safe and clean (DF2)
- Natural attraction (DF3)
- Tourist activities (DF4)
- Political stability (DF8)
- Beaches (DF10)
- Price (DF12)

Table 5 presents the fitness indices for the measurement model of destination image for the first-time tourists. RMSEA was one of the indicators that were used as a reference in this analysis. The value for RMSEA in this present model was 0.07 which indicated a better fit. According to Hair *et al.* (2010) and Ho (2006), the suggested cut-off point for RMSEA was less than 0.08. Besides RMSEA, other indicators such as CFI, GFI, TLI and p-value were used to identify the measurement model fit. Based on the result of CFI, the value showed an impressive fit with 0.97. Meanwhile, the result for GFI and TLI also showed better fit, 0.94 and 0.95 parallel with suggested model fit indices by Hair *et al.* (2010) which was over 0.90. The p-value for destination image model showed a significant p-value ($p < 0.05$). In this case,
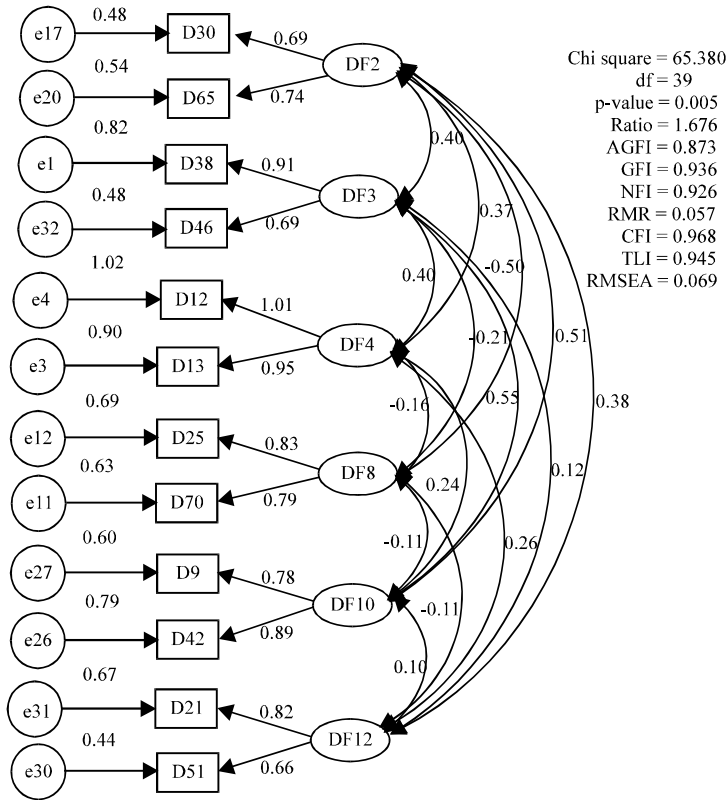
Fig. 1: Measurement model of destination image among first-time tourists

Table 4: Demographic profile of first-time and repeat-visit tourists

Variable	First-time tourists (%) (n = 143)	Repeat tourists (%) (n = 118)
Country of origin		
Northern Europe	42.7	55.1
Western Europe	50.3	38.1
Eastern Europe	2.1	2.5
Southern Europe	4.9	4.2
Gender		
Male	59.4	66.1
Female	40.6	33.9
Marital status		
Single	39.9	38.5
Married	27.3	38.5
Living with Partner	30.8	14.5
Others	2.1	8.6
Age		
Below 20	2.1	0.9
20-29	50.0	29.9
30-39	32.4	24.8
40-49	7.7	16.2
50-59	2.8	18.8
60 above	4.9	9.4
Purpose of visit		
Holiday	88.1	71.2
Business trip	7.0	17.8
Visiting friends	0.0	3.4
Visiting relatives	0.0	4.2
Other (please specify)	4.9	3.3

normed chi-square (ratio) was used to ascertain model goodness of fit. The value of normed chi-square less than 3.0 was associated with better-fitting model (Hair *et al.*, 2010).
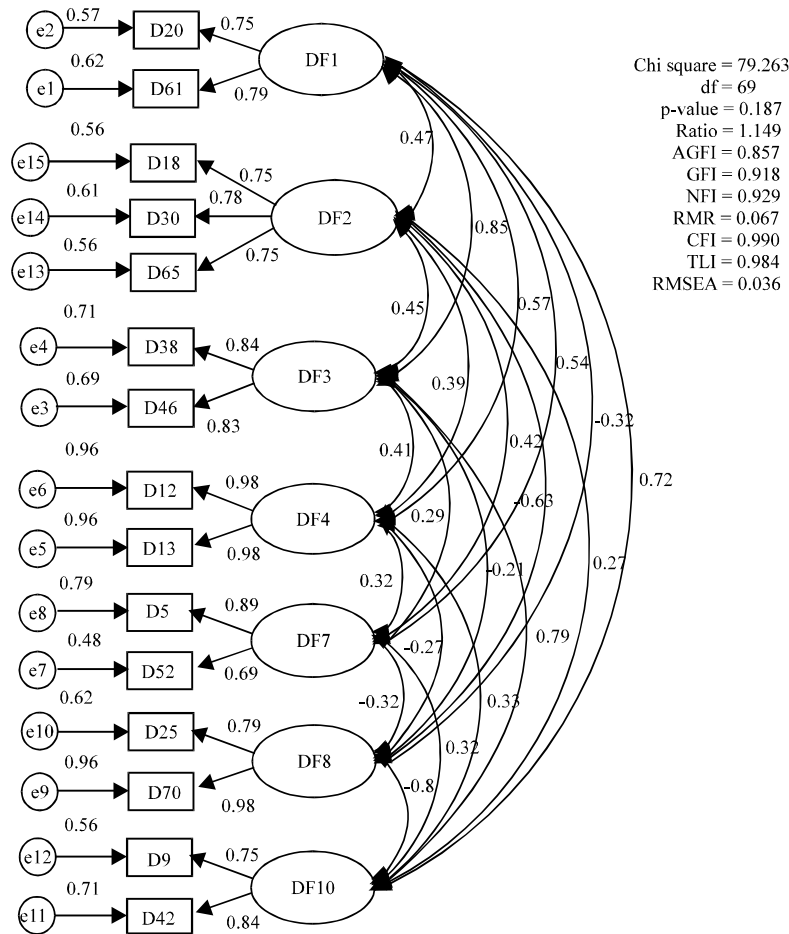
Fig. 2: Measurement model of destination image among repeat-visit tourists

Table 5: Fit results for measurement model of destination image after item purification for the first-time tourists

Parameter	Total No. of items (newly dropped)	No. of items remaining	RMSEA (= 0.08)	CFI (= 0.90)	GFI (= 0.90)	TLI (= 0.90)	p-value (p>0.05) (p>0.001)
Destination image	19	12	0.069	0.968	0.936	0.945	0.005

After conducting CFA, it is important to measure the validity and reliability of the measurement model of destination image through unidimensionality, convergent validity and internal reliability. The unidimensionality of the model of destination image is determined through observing factor loading values which should be above above 0.6 (Hair *et al.*, 2010). In this study, the unidimensionality achieved the required level which is above 0.6. Convergent validity is accessed through Average Variance Extracted (AVE) and Composite Reliability (CR). In order to achieve the required level of convergent validity, the value of AVE and CR should be higher than 0.5 and 0.7, respectively. In this study, the result of AVE and CR achieved the required level as

shown in Table 6. The internal reliability for all factors as shown in Table 6 also achieved the required level which is 0.7 above as suggested by Hair *et al.* (2010). This means that the items that measured destination image were free from random error.

Figure 2 depicts the measurement model of destination image for the repeat tourists. Items purification has been conducted and some items have been eliminated with factor loading below 0.5. Table 7 presents the items that measured destination image for repeat tourists. There were 15 items with 7 factors namely:

- Adventurous (DF1)
- Safe and clean (DF2)

Table 6: Reliability and validity of the items measuring destination image for the first-time tourists

Items	Factor loading	Cronbach's alpha	AVE	CR
Factor 2: Safe and clean		0.70	0.51	0.70
*There is a lot of crime in Malaysia (D30)	0.68			
In general, Malaysia is a safe place to visit (D65)	0.75			
Factor 3: Natural attraction		0.77	0.65	0.78
Malaysia offers the chance to see wildlife (D38)	0.89			
Malaysia offers a lot of natural scenic beauty (D46)	0.71			
Factor 4: Tourist activities		0.98	0.96	0.98
*There is little to see in Malaysia (D12)	1.01			
*There is little to do in Malaysia (D13)	0.95			
Factor 8: Political stability		0.79	0.67	0.80
*There is frequent political unrest in Malaysia (D25)	0.86			
*There is political unrest in Malaysia (D70)	0.77			
Factor 10: Beaches		0.82	0.70	0.82
Malaysia is a good place to go for beaches (D9)	0.84			
Malaysia has nice beaches for swimming (D42)	0.83			
Factor 12: Price		0.70	0.55	0.71
Prices in Malaysia are low (D21)	0.81			
*Goods and services are expensive in Malaysia (D51)	0.67			

*Reverse item

Table 7: Reliability of the items measuring destination image for the repeat-visit tourists

Items	Factor loading	Cronbach's alpha	AVE	CR
Factor 1: Adventurous		0.75	0.59	0.75
A holiday in Malaysia is a real adventure (D20)	0.75			
There are many places of interest to visit in Malaysia (D61)	0.79			
Factor 2: Safe and clean		0.79	0.58	0.80
*There is a high risk of illness due to dirty of unsanitary condition (D18)	0.75			
*There is a lot of crime in Malaysia (D30)	0.78			
In general, Malaysia is a safe place to visit (D65)	0.75			
Factor 3: Natural attraction		0.82	0.70	0.82
Malaysia offers the chance to see wildlife (D38)	0.84			
Malaysia offers a lot of term natural scenic beauty (D46)	0.83			
Factor 4: Tourist activities		0.98	0.96	0.98
*There is little to see in Malaysia (D12)	0.98			
*There is little to do in Malaysia (D13)	0.98			
Factor 7: Nightlife and entertainment		0.76	0.63	0.77
Malaysia has a good nightlife (D5)	0.69			
Malaysia offers a large variety of entertainment at night (D52)	0.89			
Factor 8: Political stability		0.87	0.79	0.88
*There is frequent political unrest in Malaysia (D25)	0.79			
*There is political unrest in Malaysia (D70)	0.98			
Factor 10: Beaches		0.77	0.63	0.76
Malaysia is a good place to go for the beaches (D9)	0.75			
Malaysia has nice beaches for swimming (D42)	0.84			

*Reverse item

- Natural attraction (DF3)
- Tourist activities (DF4)
- Nightlife and entertainment (DF7)
- Political stability (DF8)
- Beaches (DF10)

Table 8 shows the fitness indices for measurement model of destination image for the repeat-visit tourists. It shows that the result of RMSEA achieved the required level which is 0.036, below 0.08. Other fit index namely CFI, GFI and TLI achieved the required level which was 0.990, 0.918 and 0.984, respectively. The p-value for destination image model also showed insignificant p-value. Thus, this explained that there was an insignificant difference between the actual and predicted metrics (Ho, 2006).

Table 7 presents the result of unidimensionality, internal reliability and convergent validity for measurement model of destination image among repeat-visit European tourists. The factor loading of the items that measured destination image achieved unidimensionality with all the factor loadings were above 0.6. For the internal reliability, the analysis revealed that all items were free from random error with the value of Cronbach' alpha above 0.7. Meanwhile, value of AVE and CR also achieved the required level which was above 0.5 and above 0.7, respectively for each dimension of destination image. The results presented in Table 7 concluded that all the items measuring destination image for repeat tourists fulfilled the condition of reliability and validity aspect.

Table 8: Fit results for measurement model of destination image after item purification for the repeat-visit tourists

Parameter	Variables		RMSEA (= 0.08)	CFI (= 0.90)	GFI (= 0.90)	TLI (= 0.90)	p-value (p>0.05) (p>0.001)
	Total No. of items (newly dropped)	No. of items remaining					
Destination image	16	15	0.036	0.990	0.918	0.984	0.187

Table 9: Similar factors measuring destination image of first-time and repeat-visit tourist

Items measured destination image for first-time tourist	Items measured destination image for repeat-visit tourist
Factor 2: Safe and clean (β = 1.83)	**Factor 2: Safe and clean ((β = 3.95)**
	*There is a high risk of illness due to dirty of unsanitary condition (D18)
*There is a lot of crime in Malaysia (D30)	*There is a lot of crime in Malaysia (D30)
In general, Malaysia is a safe place to visit (D65)	In general, Malaysia is a safe place to visit (D65)
Factor 3: Natural attraction (β = 1.65)	**Factor 3: Natural attraction (β = 2.22)**
Malaysia offers the chance to see wildlife (D38)	Malaysia offers the chance to see wildlife (D38)
Malaysia offers a lot of natural scenic beauty (D46)	Malaysia offers a lot of natural scenic beauty (D46)
Factor 4: Tourist activities (β = 2.09)	**Factor 4: Tourist activities (β = 1.02)**
*There is little to see in Malaysia (D12)	*There is little to see in Malaysia (D12)
*There is little to do in Malaysia (D13)	*There is little to do in Malaysia (D13)
Factor 8: Political stability (β = 2.04)	**Factor 8: Political stability (β = 1.81)**
*There is frequent political unrest in Malaysia (D25)	*There is frequent political unrest in Malaysia (D25)
*There is political unrest in Malaysia (D70)	*There is political unrest in Malaysia (D70)
Factor 10: Beaches (β = 1.88)	**Factor 10: Beaches (β = 1.84)**
Malaysia is a good place to go for the beaches (D9)	Malaysia is a good place to go for the beaches (D9)
Malaysia has nice beaches for swimming (D42)	Malaysia has nice beaches for swimming (D42)

*Reverse item

Table 10: Different factors measuring destination image of first-time and repeat-visit tourist

Items measured destination image for first-time tourist	Items measured destination image for repeat-visit tourist
Factor 12: Price (β = 2.35)	**Factor 1: Adventurous (β = 1.94)**
Prices in Malaysia are low (D21)	A holiday in Malaysia is a real adventure (D20)
*Goods and services are expensive in Malaysia (D51)	There are many places of interest to visit in Malaysia (D61)
	Factor 7: Nightlife and entertainment (β = 2.27)
	Malaysia has a good nightlife (D5)
	Malaysia offers a large variety of entertainment at night (D52)

*Reverse item

Table 9 and 10 illustrated the similar and different underlying factors of Malaysia destination image between first-time and repeat tourist, respectively. The findings suggest that both first-time and repeat tourists perceived Malaysia as offering the chance to see wildlife and having a lot of natural scenic beauty with nice beaches. In addition, it is believed that they could engage in many tourist activities and Malaysia was politically stable. However, price appears to be the only factor that distinguishes the perceptions of first-time tourists about Malaysia from repeat tourists. On the other hand, repeat tourists perceived Malaysia as offering nightlife entertainment and adventurous holiday with many places to visit. Nevertheless, the result of the independent t-test (t = 0.775, p>0.05) suggest that there was no significant difference between the two groups in their perceptions of Malaysia destination image.

CONCLUSION

Destination image is considered as one of the important elements that contributed to the tourism industry because it can help the destination to possess suitable and acceptable images to the potential tourists. The findings of this study uncover the underlying factors that would affect the destination choice of first-time and repeat tourist. The common underlying choice factors shared by the two groups are safe and clean, natural attractions, tourist activities, political stability and beaches. In summary, both groups perceived Malaysia as providing safe and clean nature-based tourism. In this case, focusing on culture diversity to allure European tourists to Malaysia was not appropriate because the findings of this study provide empirical evidence that they came to Malaysia for nature-based tourism apart from Malaysia being safe and clean. The recent decision of Tourism Malaysia to promote nature-based tourism or ecotourism was the right step. Therefore, the findings of this study supported the efforts of Tourism Malaysia to portray the image of nature tourism or ecotourism in the attempt to attract European tourists visiting Malaysia. Efforts to promote Malaysia as a destination that accommodated a host of nature-based activities and ecotourism should be enhanced. Besides sandy beaches and islands, the potential ecotourism products that should be highlighted were the well-preserved tropical forest with its many species of flora and fauna, beautiful lakes, mountains and hills and caves. Nature-based activities would occupy visitors with a lot of adventurous holiday activities.

Although, there were differences between these two groups in aspects such as adventurous holiday, good nightlife and entertainment and price: Empirical evidence suggested that there was no significant difference in destination image between first-time and repeat tourists. Tourism Malaysia can adopt the promotional activities appealing to first-time and repeat tourists since their perceptions of Malaysia as a travel destination are homogenous. However, the different underlying factor emerged from these two groups would provide an insightful information in case Tourism Malaysia decided to have different promotional strategies for the different market segment. Perhaps, highlighting that spending a holiday in Malaysia was cheap could have a greater impact on the potential first-time tourists since they appeared to be price sensitive but not the repeat-visit tourists. On the same note, highlighting that Malaysia provided good nightlife and entertainment and promised an adventurous holiday would probably have a greater influence on the repeat tourists' decision to visit Malaysia. However, Tourism Malaysia should convey different messages to the different market segments using different communication channels. This is to ensure the right message would be delivered to the right target group.

LIMITATIONS AND SUGGESTION

The findings of the study should be interpreted with cautions in the light of the limitations of the study. First, the study was conducted during the months of November-December, thus the study was limited to those who travelled during that particular period of time. It was important to note that tourists travel in different seasons may form different beliefs, attitudes and impressions of Malaysia as a travel destination. Therefore, future research conducted in a similar study should consider expanding the period of collecting data to include the different categories of tourist to reduce the influence of seasonality. In addition, subjected to adequate sample size, the results of future study that include tourists travelling at different point of time throughout the year can be compared in term of similarities and differences. Therefore, the findings of the study may not be generalised beyond this population. Replicating similar studies to include tourists travelling at different point of time during the year would increase the generalisation of these findings. Secondly, the study was conducted using two stages of sampling method; systematic sampling and simple random sampling. Using these sampling techniques, the study was unable to get adequate sample size for the major different groups of European countries to make comparison in term of tourists' attitude towards

Malaysia as a travel destination. Future studies should also consider adopting stratified sampling method, in addition to the above-mentioned sampling methods to overcome the limitation, with at least 100 cases for each group considered adequate to compare among groups.

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