

The Impact of Five Key Tourism Supply Chain Sectors on Tourists' Satisfaction of Cultural Heritage Tourism in Melaka, Malaysia

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Abstract

Purpose: Many past studies have focused tourists satisfaction as one general area, without differentiating it to five supply chain sectors which are involved in the provision and consumption of tourism products. Thus, this study aims to investigate those five most critical supply chain sectors (namely transportation, accommodation, foods & craft, excursion & activities, and destination) that contribute to tourists' satisfaction and as sources of superior performance in enhancing and sustaining the image of a cultural heritage tourism destination.

Design/methodology/approach: From 250 questionnaires distributed to the selected international tourists in Melaka using convenience sampling, about 211 questionnaires are deemed valid and useful for PLS data analysis.

Findings: The findings show that the experience of food amenities and cultural heritage destination sectors has effects on tourists' satisfaction. Meanwhile, the other sectors such as transportation, accommodation, and excursion & cultural activities were insignificant.

Research limitations/implications: The study shed light on the strength of each tiers or supply chain sectors in contributing towards the competitive advantage of the tourism industry in Malaysia. Hence, this study provides useful information to tourism practitioners and academicians on the importance of experience as a key driver for tourists' satisfaction and repeat visits.

Practical implications: The study could provide insights for directing resources, ultimately improving and sustaining Melaka's tourism image, competitiveness, and performance as the destination choice among the tourists. Hence, practitioners may gain a clearer understanding of the industry on how they fit in and predict future opportunities.

Originality/value: In addressing the importance of tourists' experience and satisfaction in the specific destination, each supply chain sector needs to be identified, their strengths and constraints tackled, and the value-adding along each industry chain has to be determined.

Keywords: Number One, Number Two, Number Three, Number Four, Number Five

Introduction

Despite the numerous researches on supply chain management (SCM), the studies of tourism supply chains are very limited. Many previous studies are a single focused such as on

destination or hotels, without fully considering the whole range of different products or services involved in the provision and consumption of tourism supply chain tourism (Hau and Omar, 2014; Ababneh, 2013; Pearce et al., 2007; Pearce and Schott, 2005). As such, there is a lack of study that emphasizes these five critical sectors of supply chain tourism (accommodation, ground handlers or activities, transportation, food and crafts, and destinations) simultaneously. Since consumers' perception of their experience is built from many social interactions from a chain of events which integrates the value of the entire supply chain, there is a need for a comprehensive study to identify which sectors of the supply chain are more critical and need more attention for improvements of tourists' experience.

Subsequently, tourism in Malaysia has been one of the major income generators and growth contributors to the economy for the past decade (Jaafar et al., 2011). In 2016, tourism was the third largest GDP contributor with 14.8% (182.4b) to the Malaysian economy (Malaysia Tourism, 2017; WTTC, 2017). Amongst 13 states and 3 federal territories in Malaysia, Melaka is recorded as one of the highest tourist arrivals of 12.2 million in 2015 and a viable destination due to its proximity to a capital city, Kuala Lumpur and international airport which attracted for the short-term foreign visitor and domestic tourists. Melaka is also famous and listed as a World Heritage Site that has outstanding universal value by the United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization (Chen & Chen, 2010; UNESCO, 2008; Worden, 2003). The difference of ethnics present in Malaysia, added with the history due to the colonials era brought different local knowledge discipline ranging from its architecture, handicrafts, traditional attire, music and dance, which reflects a colorful heritage and an amalgamated culture (Ismail et al., 2014). Hence, Melaka is also known as heavenly food places, thus attracting many domestic tourists and Singaporeans for a short stay. In other words, tourism has become the most vibrant sector of Melaka's economy and a must for the visitor who wishes to learn something of the historical roots of the country. Melaka itself has a unique historical heritage tourism, the tourism performance has not caught up with rising tourist visits and expectations like the neighboring countries (World Travel and Tourism Council, 2017; Mohd Shahwahid 2013).

While the attractions and offerings are in place, the industry needs to invest further to improve the tourism competitiveness of the country. The holistic view of tourism supply chain operators must be identified, their strengths and constraints tackled, and the value adding along each industry chain need to be determined. Inherently, this study addresses the ultimate goals of businesses to fulfill tourists' experiences in all supply chain critical sectors simultaneously in providing the amenities. There are some questions that may be raised in this study, namely (i) What are the tourists' experiences in all five critical sectors of the supply chain in heritage tourism? (ii) What is the relationship between tourists' experiences and satisfaction in heritage tourism?.

Analyzing the five critical sectors of the tourism supply chain from initial departure to the return home in measuring tourism experience represents the overall purpose of this paper. This study aims to examine the tourists' experiences by focusing on five critical sectors which integrate the supply chain tourism simultaneously and their satisfaction on the heritage tourism at Melaka on the preservation and cultural site. Since the economic transformation program (ETP) has placed tourism as one of the priority industries, this study shed light on the importance of supply chain tourism to facilitate the Malaysian tourism industry performance.

Literature Review

According to the International Scientific Committee on Cultural Tourism, cultural tourism can be defined as that activity which enables people to experience the different ways of life of other people, thereby gaining at first hand an understanding of their customs, traditions, the physical environment, the intellectual ideas and those places of architectural, historic, archaeological or other cultural significance which remain from earlier times. Cultural tourism differs from recreational tourism in that it seeks to gain an understanding or appreciation of the nature of the place being visited (Kajzar, 2014). As such Zhou, J. et al. (2021) defined cultural heritage tourism as “traveling to experience the places and activities that authentically represent the stories and people of the past and present. It includes historic, cultural and natural resources” (Zhou, J. et al., 2021). Heritage tourism stimulates the development of various tourism products and heritage destinations, ultimately attracting tourists.

Experience can be defined as the subjective personal reactions and feelings that are felt by consumers when consuming or using a product or service (Otto & Ritchie, 2000). While products are tangible and services intangible, experiences represent events that commit people in a particular manner and, as such, are memorable. The experience felt by visitors begins before arrival at a destination and ends with recollections of the experience and plans for future visits (Pine, & Gilmore, 1999). Tourists inevitably consume a composite or holistic tourism experience, which integrates the value of the entire service chain. Regardless of specific quality assessments and perceptions, tourists evaluate the whole tourism experience. This suggests that what is consumed and evaluated in a holistic way must also be produced and managed holistically (Uriely, 2005; Weiermair, 2000). Providing excellent tourism experience is essential for the tourism industry to tourist satisfaction and ensure repeat visits (Kerdpitak and Kai Heuer, 2016). Inherently, a better understanding of experiential phenomena in tourism service is particularly important and will permit the industry to perform successfully (Maklan and Klaus, 2011).

Tourism is not a single unified sector but consists of a supply chain that impacts many traditional and emerging sectors. As such, tourism products are often viewed as value added chains of different sectors that form service networks. Tourists inevitably consume a composite tourism experience from many social interactions, an array of services and chain of events namely accommodation, foods & beverages, transportation, excursions and destination, rather than based on the specific products or isolated services (Tigu and Calaretu, 2013; Zhang et al., 2009). Efficient tourism supply chains (TSC) significantly influence the tourist packages overall competitiveness by trying to simultaneously lower costs, achieve product variety and uniqueness, reduce waiting times, and improve customer services (Szpilko, 2017; Mendes et al., 2010). Identifying ways to manage these supply chain sectors is vital because failure in one component may impact other chain components. Hence, the adoption of the tourism supply chain has become vital for tourism firms to enhance their competitiveness (Chen, 2009; Zhang and Murphy, 2009).

In such a closely interlinked supply system, any behavior of any party can evoke chain reactions that will directly influence the performance of the individual sector and tourists' satisfaction (Murphy and Smith, 2009). Tourism industry needs to efficiently manage the operations of their supply chain within a specific tourism destination to meet the needs of tourists from the targeted source markets (Ebrahimpour and Haghkhah, 2010; Zhang et al., 2009). To increase visitors' positive repurchase intentions, supply chain providers of tourism should set their priorities to provide high quality, satisfying experiences that visitors perceive to be a good value (Lee, Petrick, & Crompton, 2007). Thus, it is very crucial for the tourism industry and related agencies responsible for tourism to pull in the same direction, to work

towards common goals in providing quality experience to the tourists to ensure the end results of tourist satisfaction is achieved. In other words, providing excellent tourism experience is essential for the industry to ensure tourist satisfaction and repeat visits (Kerdpitak and Kai Heuer, 2016).

Theoretical Framework and Hypothesis Development

The specific objectives are twofold. Firstly, this study aims to examine tourists’ experiences which integrate the critical sectors of supply chain tourism simultaneously. Secondly, this study intends to analyze the impact of tourist’s experiences to their satisfaction during their travel journey. The research framework of this study (illustrated in Figure 1) has been developed to evaluate each critical sectors of supply chain tourism with tourists’ satisfaction start from initial departure to the return home.

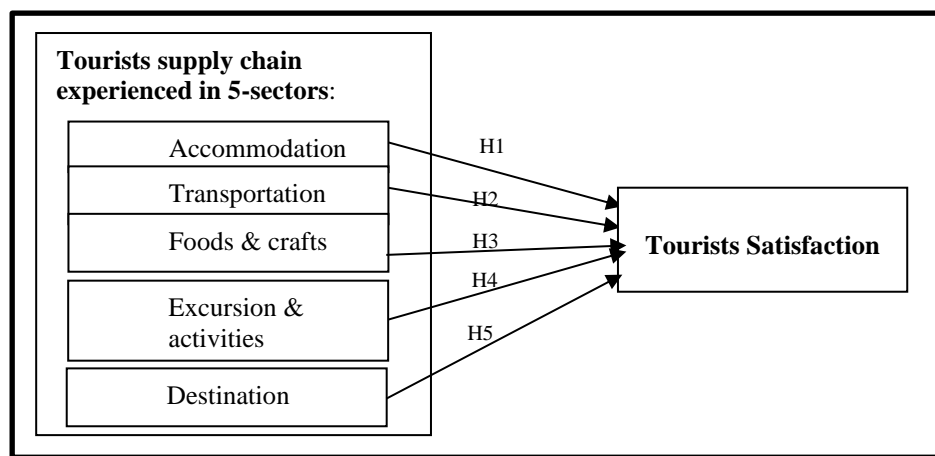


Figure 1: Research Framework

Thus, 5 hypotheses are proposed:

- H1: There is effect of accommodation services on tourist satisfaction
- H2: There is effect of transportation services on tourist satisfaction
- H3: There is effect of excursion & cultural activities on tourist satisfaction
- H4: There is effect of foods amenities on tourist satisfaction
- H5: There is effect of heritage destination on tourist satisfaction

Method

A quantitative study was employed by distributing questionnaires to the selected 250 international tourists to ensure reliable information was collected. The respondents must fulfill the requirement in which they had stayed at resort hotels at least a night and visited some tourist attraction destination at least once for their visits in Melaka are approached to participate in the study. Since Melaka consists of small districts, most of the tourists were scattered almost in the center of Melaka itself and easily reachable. About 211 questionnaires are deemed valid and useful for data analysis while another 38 are discarded due to incomplete data during the process of data collection. Fortunately, the data collection completed in March 2020 just before the lockdown was undergone in Malaysia due to the covid-19 pandemic. The questionnaire covers five critical sectors of the tourism supply chain (Table 1). A Likert Scale between 1-5 is used to measure tourists' experience of heritage tourism during their visit to Melaka. PLS data analysis was used to interpret the data in this study. Hence, this study has also considered tourism as a sector of multiple benefits,

including economic, cultural, social, heritage and environmental benefits as related to different segments of the society.

Table1: Questionnaire

TOURISTS SATISFACTION	
Rimmington and Yuksel (1998); Salazar, Costa and Rite (2004)	I am satisfied with my overall experience during my visit
	I think I made the right decision to visit this place
	My experience at this place was exactly as what I expected
	I would be pleased to revisit this place again if I got another chance
	I would like to recommend this place to my relatives and friends as a travel destination
TOURISTS EXPERIENCES	
1.Transportation (Economic and environmental)	Transportation is easily accessible
	Feasible transportation price
	Easy to access information on transportation
	Attractive transportation package
2.Accommodations (Economic and environmental)	Adequate hotel cleanliness and safety
	Hospitable and polite staffs
	Hotel price is value for money
	Convenient hotel location
3.Food amenities (Social & Cultural)	Foods places are easily accessible and convenient
	There are variety of foods
	The local cuisines are delicious and variety
	The foods prices are value for money
4.Excursion & Cultural Activities (Social & Cultural)	There are variety of souvenirs related to cultural heritage
	I have the opportunity to experience cultural events in here
	The cultural activities are very interesting to me
	The tourists' activities reflect the identity of local people
	There are variety of activities available in here
5.Heritage Destination (heritage & environmental)	I have the opportunity to experienced 'tri-cycle' related to cultural heritage
	Melaka is one of the best destinations for cultural heritage sites
	The cultural heritage sites are attractive to me
	The cultural heritage sites are well conserved and preserved
	The cultural heritage activities reflect the identity of this place
	The place cleanliness and safety are acceptable
	Easy to get information and arrangements for the destination
Feasible destination budget for cultural values	

Findings

Table 2 depicts the demographic profile of the respondents, based on regions, employment status, gender, information seeking on destination, frequency and reason of visits,

accompanying trips, and budget expenses. Out of 211 respondents, the majority were from Europe (51.7%), followed by South-East Asia (15.6%) and North America (almost 10%). More than half of the respondents (60%) are employed, while about 21% are students. The respondents are about balanced in gender with male (44%) and female (56%). Most of the respondents claimed they knew about Melaka from the internet (33.2%), while books & guides (22%), and friends & relatives (22%). Majority is the first-time visit (90%) and stay at least a night (98.6%) for holidays (60%) and cultural purpose (26.5%) before departing to another tourist attraction in Malaysia. About 38% of the respondents came with spouse/partners, friends (28%) and family/relatives (15%). Interestingly, 68% of them spent within the planned budget and 20.4% found that the trip was below their planned budget.

Table 2: Respondents Profile

	N=211	%
REGIONS		
South-East Asia	33	15.64
Eastern Asia	8	3.79
Southern Asia	15	7.11
North America	21	9.95
Europe	109	51.66
Latin America	1	0.47
African Countries	7	3.32
Oceania (Australia)	17	8.06
EMPLOYMENT		
employed	126	59.43
self-employed	16	7.55
student	44	20.75
retired	14	6.60
unemployed	12	5.66
GENDER		
male	93	44.10
female	118	55.90
INFO on DESTINATION		
Already knew it	23	10.90
Books & guides	46	21.80
Internet	70	33.20
Travel agency	9	4.30
Friends & relatives	46	21.80
Media	2	0.90
Part of travel package	8	3.80
Others	7	3.30
FIRST TIME VISIT		
Yes	190	90.00
No	22	10.00
NIGHT STAY		
I night	219	98.60
Between 2-4 days	3	1.40

REASONS of VISIT		
Rest and relaxation	127	60.20
Culture	56	26.50
Visiting relatives and friends	2	0.90
Fun	9	4.30
Business reasons	2	0.90
Sports and recreation	1	0.50
Attending a conference/seminar	7	3.30
other	7	3.30
ACCOMPANYING TRIP		
Self	22	10.40
Friends	59	28.00
Spouse/ partner	80	37.90
Co-workers	12	5.70
Family/relatives	31	14.70
Business partners	1	0.50
Other	6	2.80
BUDGET EXPENSES		
Within the planned	144	68.20
Higher than planned	24	11.40
Lower than planned	43	20.40

Table 3 shows the descriptive analysis of each variable. Out of five tourism supply chain sectors, destination has the highest mean (4.42), followed by food amenities (4.41) and accommodation (4.4). As for the best part of the trips, most of the respondents claimed that they really enjoy the friendliness (38%), cultural (30.8%) and foods (21.3%) of the multiracial people in Melaka. In contrast, the respondents complained about weather (35%) which is too hot and stuffy for them in comparison to their origin country, traffic jams (24%) and other menial factors (Table 4).

Table 3: Descriptive

Dimension	Mean	Std. Deviation
Tourism supply chain sectors:		
Transportation	3.730	0.933
Accommodation	4.403	0.730
Foods amenitiess	4.408	0.850
Excursion & Cultural activities	4.183	0.878
Destination	4.418	0.730
Tourists Satisfaction	4.459	0.754

Table 4: Descriptive

Best part of the trip	N=211	%
Walking & Sightseing	2	0.95
Arts	9	4.26
Buildings & architecture	10	4.74
Culture	65	30.81
Foods	45	21.33
People	80	37.91
Worst part of the trip		
Traffic jam	51	24.17
Weather	73	34.6
Language	8	3.79
Public transport	9	4.27
Others	70	33.17

As shown in Table 5, the composite reliability of every construct in this study is well above the suggested minimum benchmark of 0.70 for acceptable construct reliability (Hair et al. 1998). This indicates the consistency among the construct measures. Hence, the AVE of each construct in the model exceeds 0.50 (Hair et al 2017; Fornell and Larcker, 1981).

Table 5: Construct reliability and validity

Items	CA	CR	AVE
Accommodation	0.833	0.885	0.661
Transportation	0.877	0.909	0.714
Cultural activities	0.881	0.918	0.738
Foods amenities	0.887	0.917	0.688
Heritage destination	0.898	0.921	0.661
Overall satisfaction	0.914	0.932	0.663

As for discriminant validity, Henseler et al., (2015) proposed that Heterotrait-monotrait (HTMT) ratio of correlation can achieve higher specificity and sensitivity rates (97% to 99%), in which values close to 1 indicates a lack of discriminant validity. While Kline (2011) suggested a threshold of 0.85 and Gold et al. (2001) proposed a value of 0.90, there is no discriminant validity problem in regard to (HTMT) ratio of correlation criterion since the values were not above 0.90 (see Table 6). This means that discriminant validity has been established (Figure 2).

Table 6: HTMT Discriminant Validity

	Y1	Y2	Y3	Y4	Y5
Accommodation (Y1)					
Heritage Destination (Y2)	0.489				
Excursion & Cultural activities (Y3)	0.301	0.785			
Foods amenities (Y4)	0.431	0.569	0.516		
Overall satisfaction (Y5)	0.281	0.712	0.587	0.529	
Transportation (Y6)	0.343	0.202	0.106	0.193	0.160

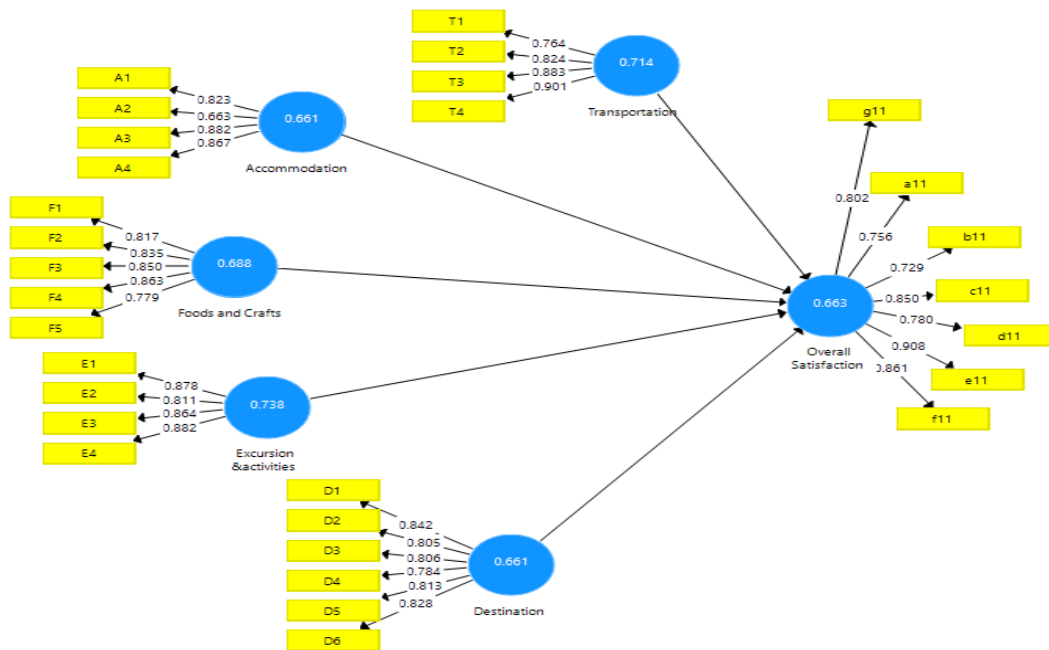


Figure 2. Measurement Model

Table 7 can be inferred that the hypothetical paths for food amenities and heritage destination in the conceptual model are only significant and supported, p-values ≤ 0.05 .

Table 7: Path Coefficient (β value).

	Sample Mean (M)	Standard Deviation	T Statistics	P-Values
Accommodation -> tourist Satisfaction	-0.061	0.087	0.809	0.419
Heritage destination -> tourist Satisfaction	0.492	0.077	6.502	0.000
Excursion & cultural activities -> tourist Satisfaction	0.110	0.073	1.411	0.159
Foods amenities -> tourist Satisfaction	0.210	0.068	2.898	0.004
Transportation -> tourist Satisfaction	0.057	0.057	0.772	0.441

In summary, Table 8 indicates the overall findings on each hypothesis.

Table 8: Results Summary

Hypothesis	Results
H1: There is effect of accommodation services on tourist satisfaction	Rejected
H2: There is effect of transportation services on tourist satisfaction	Rejected
H3: There is effect of excursion & cultural activities on tourist satisfaction	Rejected
H4: There is effect of foods amenities on tourist satisfaction	Accepted
H5: There is effect of heritage destination on tourist satisfaction	Accepted

Discussion and Conclusion

This study examines the tourists' experience in triggering for the satisfaction and loyalty in each of the comprehensive tiers of supply chain tourism (accommodation, transportation, ground handlers/activities, food & crafts, destinations).

As more and more researchers focus on the role of food in culture (Hegarty & O'Mahony, 2001; Williams, 1997), food has been regarded as not only being a basic necessity for tourist consumption but also an essential element of regional culture (Jones & Jenkins, 2002). Since food has been proven to be an important means of selling the identity and culture of a destination, food consumption is regarded as one of the important factors in the destination marketing development. The other reason is that food consumption enables local food producers to add value to their products by creating a tourist experience around the raw materials (Hjalager & Richards, 2002a).

Hence, the cultural and heritage were found to be the most important attributes for a heritage destination (Yousefi & Marzuiki, 2012). This implied that those well-interpreted heritage elements could be designed as accessible tourism products or activities to provide an authentic experience to tourists and increase the overall experience satisfaction (N. Wang, 1999; McKercher & Cros, 2002; Weiler & Yu, 2008). Previous studies had also implied that a better performance of destination attributes could lead to an increase in tourists' satisfaction; while, on the other hand, a poor performance in one of the attributes could cause dissatisfaction with destination (Kozak & Rimington, 2000; Meng et al. 2008; Pizam et al., 1978). This is consistent with Weiler and Yu's (2008), Huh et al. (2006); Yousefi & Marzuiki (2012), who proposed that a well-interpreted heritage has the power to enhance satisfaction of a traveler's experience.

Meanwhile, the findings of the study show that other sectors such as transportation, accommodation, and excursion & cultural activities were insignificant. Undeniably, e-hailing services have become common in any part of the world which greatly facilitate the traveling experience of many tourists in Melaka. In addition, there are many choices of accommodation with various price ranges in the city which are further facilitated by various internet hotel platforms. Travelers or tourists can easily assess the reviews of each listed accommodation based on their preference such as location, cleanliness, and price just at the fingertips. Hence, cultural activities might incur extra budget, many tourists enjoyed the cultural heritage provided by the destination and local foods to know more about the cultural heritage in Melaka.

The study shed light on the strength of each tier or supply chain sectors in contributing towards the competitive advantage of the tourism industry in Malaysia. Thus, this study provides useful information to tourism practitioners and academicians on the importance of experience as a key driver for tourists' satisfaction and repeat visits. Since tourism growth and viability is an integral part of overall economic health in Malaysia and abroad, it is hoped

that the findings of this study could ultimately improve tourism supply chain competitiveness and performance as well as local, state, and national economies. In addition, practitioners may gain a clearer understanding of the industry on how they fit in and predict future opportunities.

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