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Tourists' perceptions of destination travel attributes: An application to International tourists to Kuala Lumpur

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Abstract

This paper seeks to contribute to the literature on tourists' perception by evaluating the relationship between destination travel attributes and tourist satisfaction. Using a sample of 140 international tourists exiting Kuala Lumpur Malaysia, the influence of travel attributes on satisfaction and the moderating effect of demographic factors in the relationship between travel attributes and tourist satisfaction were investigated. Partial Least Square (PLS), a variance based structural equation model was employed to analyse the data. The travel attributes had satisfactory predictive relevance and explained the changes in the variance of the endogenous variable tourist satisfaction. All the demographic factors considered moderated the relationship between at least one of the travel dimensions and tourist satisfaction. This study is limited with cross-sectional data.

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1. Introduction

Tourists' perception of a destination's image as a preferred choice for travel is crucial. According to Augustyn and Ho (1998), with a better understanding of the needs and motives of tourists and tailoring provisions accordingly, destination marketing can be facilitated well. Hui, Wan, and Ho (2007) indicated that increasing significance of tourism on a country's national economy has aggravated an increase of exploratory research aimed to provide more analytical insights on tourists' motivation and satisfaction. International tourism has shown a steady growth since 2010. According to the United Nations World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO) (2013), the average annual growth in international tourist arrival was 3.6% for the world while for South-East Asia was 8.3% for the years 2005 to

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2012. This steady and steep growth of international tourism in South-East Asia has resulted in severe competition among the destinations in the region to attract international tourists. Hui et al. (2007) highlighted in their study that Singapore, Kuala Lumpur and Bangkok are competing to become major tourism and aviation hubs. Crompton, Lee and Shuster (2001) stated that economic impact attributable to (an event or destination) relates only to new money injected into the (study area) economy by visitors from outside the community. Therefore, international tourists make a greater impact compared to domestic travellers. It is critical to understand how international tourists perceive Kuala Lumpur as a travel destination in order to attract them to compete with the cities from the neighbouring countries and have a greater economic impact.

According to Heung and Quf (2000), an understanding of the preferences and travel related behaviour of tourists is vital for tourism marketing in terms of market segmentation and the design of effective promotional campaign. It is also critical to develop infrastructure, products and services to satisfy tourists' preferences. This study is intended to measure international tourists' satisfaction levels with Kuala Lumpur by assessing their perception of travel attributes. The specific objectives of the study are to explore the influence of the perception of travel attributes on international tourists' overall level of satisfaction with Kuala Lumpur as a travel destination; and examine the differences in the relationship between travel attributes and satisfaction among different demographic groups.

2. Literature Review and Hypotheses

This study is intended to understand the tourists better. As such, it is structured with a discussion of the issue of satisfaction in terms of travel attributes and the effect of the differences in different demographic groups on the relationship between travel attributes and tourist satisfaction.

2.1. Tourist Satisfaction

According to Fakeye and Crompton (1991), destination image is an individual's mental representation of knowledge, feelings and overall perception of a particular destination. The authors also indicated that the tourists' evaluation of a destination experience influences their image of the destination. The same view is also stressed by Kozak and Rimmington (2000), Assaker and Hallak (2013) etc. Destination image plays a critical role in tourists' satisfaction (Chi & Qu, 2008), which in turn will influence tourists' future behaviour (Bolton & Drew, 1991; Taylor, 1997; Taylor & Baker, 1994; Rust & Oliver, 1994). However, measuring satisfaction is a complex process. According to Assaker and Hallak (2013), tourist satisfaction can be measured based on the expectation/disconfirmation paradigm (Oliver, 1980), equity theory (Oliver and Swan, 1989), norm models (LaTour & Peat, 1979) and perceived overall performance (Tse & Wilton, 1988). According to Tian-Cole and Crompton (2003), tourist satisfaction is determined by the extent to which desired outcomes or benefits are realized. Therefore, this study adopted the perceived performance approach to operationalise satisfaction. Kozak and Rimmington (2000) advocated performance approach because of its parsimony and its advantages in capturing tourist satisfaction. Assessing satisfaction through performance evaluation is also supported by Churchill and Suprenant (1982); Cronin and Taylor (1992).

2.2. Travel Attributes

Performance of a destination can be measured through the perception of destination travel attributes to tourists in order to facilitate market segmentation and promotion. Travel attributes are set of attributes that describe a place as a travel destination (Heung & Quf, 2000). There are several studies in consumer behaviour indicate that the customers consider the attributes to decide on the goods and the same applies to tourists and destinations. Etchner and Ritchie (1993) concluded in their research that every destination has a combination of functional or tangible attributes and psychological or abstract attributes. Several authors (Goodrich, 1977; Holloway, 1986; Shih, 1986; Van Raaij, 1986; etc) have attempted to look into the travel attributes of destinations. The reason is that tourists generally have limited knowledge about a destination that they have not visited and they often choose based on symbolic information acquired either from the media or from social groups (Mok and Armstrong, 1996). There are several studies (Baker & Crompton, 2000; Kozak, 2002; Yoon & Uysal, 2005; Alegre & Garau 2010; etc) in tourism literature indicated

that tourists' overall satisfaction is determined by how the tourists evaluate the attributes related to the destination. This explains the first hypothesis of the study.

H₁: The higher the perception of the destination travel attributes, the greater the tourist satisfaction.

2.3. Moderating Role of Demographic Factors

The tourists are heterogeneous in their perception of travel attributes. Travel attributes may be perceived differently by tourists of different cultures (Mayo & Jarvis, 1981; Mill & Morrison, 1985) and from different countries (Mill & Morrison, 1985; Calantone, Di Benedetto, Hakam, & Bojanic, 1989; and Chen & Kerstetter, 1999) to their favourite destinations. According to Baloglu and McCleary (2000) an individual's age influenced the perceived image of various tourist destinations. A study of the image of Pennsylvania as a rural tourism destination indicated that the tourists' gender significantly influenced the perceived image (Chen & Kerstetter, 1999). According to Hwang, Kim and Hyun (2013), marketing research scholars have postulated that socio-demographic factors could play moderating roles in consumer behaviour. According to them gender, age and marital status have been revealed to have moderating roles in consumer behaviour. This study assumed that the tourists' groups in terms of gender, age, marital status and geographical origin can be segregated based on the relationship of their perception of travel attributes to satisfaction. This discussion leads to the second hypothesis.

H₂: The effect of perception of the destination travel attributes on tourist satisfaction is different among different demographic groups representing gender, age, marital status and geographic origin.

3. Methodology

3.1. Data

This study employed quantitative research method using questionnaire to meet the research objectives. Convenience sampling was adopted to collect the sample data. The respondents were chosen from a population of international tourists that had already experienced tourism in Kuala Lumpur. As indicated by Vaughan, Farr and Slee (2000) in their study on visitor expenditure, exit surveys are suitable to provide more accurate experience related facts. Therefore, survey instruments were distributed to international tourists leaving Kuala Lumpur to the Kuala Lumpur International Airport (KLIA) or Low Cost Carrier Terminal (LCCT) via Sentral Station. The data were collected for a period of two weeks. A total of 140 usable samples were collected and processed for further analysis. A brief sample description is presented below in Table 1.

Table 1. Sample Description

Group	Frequency	Percent
Asian	73	52.14
Westerner	67	47.86
Male	70	50.00
Female	70	50.00
Single	90	64.29
Married	50	35.71
Young (Below 40 years old)	78	55.71
Old (40 years old and above)	62	44.29
Total	140	100

There were no gender biasness in the sample. A typical sample in this study is an Asian, below 40 years old and single.

3.2. The Instrument

The instrument or the questionnaire used for this study consisted of three sections. The first section covered the demographic profile of the respondents and the second section adopted 25 travel attributes used by Hui et al (2007) in their study of Singapore. The first section contained questions asking for the socio-demographic details of respondents such as gender (male and female), age ('below 40 years old' referred as 'young', '40 years and above' referred as 'old'), marital status (single and married) and geographical origin (Asian and Western). The second section used 25 statements capturing the travel features of Kuala Lumpur in terms of people, overall convenience, price, commodities, accommodation and food, attractions, culture, and climate and image. At section three, the respondents were asked to rate their perceived satisfaction. Sections two and three asked the respondents to rate their perception related to the statements given on a 7-point likert scale ranging from 'strongly disagree' to 'strongly agree'.

3.3. Statistical Analysis

This research used Partial Least Squares-Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) method and smartPLS 2.0 (Ringle, Wende, & Will, 2005) to test hypotheses. Small sample size and tourist' perceptions of destination travel attributes which are measured by formative constructs justify using PLS-SEM method in this study. PLS-SEM can be employed to analyze models with both reflective and formative constructs (Chin and Newsted, 1999; Henseler, Wilson, and Westberg, 2011; Tenenhaus et al., 2005; Wixom & Watson, 2001).

4. Findings

4.1. Validity of the Measures

First of all, the travel attributes were assessed for their significant contribution to forming their respective dimensions or constructs and tested for collinearity among them (Falk & Miller, 1992; Hair, Hult, Ringle, & Sarstedt, 2013; Coltman, Devinney, Midgley, & Venaik, 2008). In order to assess the relative and absolute contribution of each travel attribute, significance of factor weights and size of factor loadings were evaluated. Attributes with non-significant outer weights and non-significant outer loadings with the size less than 0.5 were excluded from the model. Only 23 attributes out of 25 fulfilled the criteria of assessment either through the relative contribution (weights) or absolute contribution (loadings) to forming their respective constructs and reported in Table 2.

Collinearity between the variables causes unstable estimation for the indicator coefficients (MacKenzie et al., 2005; Diamantopoulos et al., 2008). A common cut-off threshold of 10 for variance inflation factor (VIF), which assesses the degree of multicollinearity, is usually regarded acceptable (Hair et al., 2006, p.230). As it is reported in Table 2 for tourists' perceived travel attributes, maximum VIF for all dimensions is less than five, which indicate that there is no evidence of collinearity among the measures. This result suggests the presence of no major conceptual overlap indicating the stability of the estimates of the indicator coefficients. Therefore all the 23 indicators measuring the formative constructs were retained.

4.2. Direct Effect of Travel Attributes on Satisfaction (Hypothesis 1)

The direct effect was evaluated based on the structural path coefficients (in terms of their algebraic sign, magnitude and significance), the R^2 values for the endogenous variable's explained variance, and the Q^2 tests for predictive relevance. The path coefficients were estimated by running PLS algorithm. Standard errors and t -statistics were estimated by using bootstrapping (2000 resamples) based on Hair, Ringle and Sarstedt (2011) to assess the statistical significance of the path coefficients and the results are shown in Table 3.

Table 2. Tourist' Perception Formative Constructs

Construct / Measure		Outer Weights (t-value)	Outer Loadings (t-value)
Accommodation and Food (Range of inter-item correlations= 0.38-0.60; Average inter-item correlation: 0.49; Max. VIF= 1.85)			
acc21	Hotel accommodations should be comfortable in Malaysia	0.14 ^{ns} (0.72)	0.72 ^{***} (5.18)
acc23	Hotel facilities should be satisfactory	0.62 ^{**} (3.18)	0.93 ^{***} (13.24)
acc24	There should be great variety of food in Malaysia	0.01 ^{ns} (0.03)	0.52 ^{**} (3.19)
acc25	Quality of food should be satisfactory	0.39 ⁺ (2.05)	0.81 ^{***} (8.04)
Attractions (Range of inter-item correlations= 0.40-0.54; Average inter-item correlation: 0.49; Max. VIF= 1.78)			
att26	Malaysia should have attractive urban sightseeing	0.37 ^{ns} (1.69)	0.77 ^{***} (4.59)
att27	Malaysia should have an interesting night life	0.35 ^{ns} (1.40)	0.82 ^{***} (6.25)
att28	Malaysia should have attractive natural land scenic spots	0.50 ^{ns} (1.54)	0.85 ^{***} (5.59)
Climate and Image (Inter-item correlations= 0.65; VIF= 1.77)			
cli31	Climate and weather should be acceptable	0.39 ^{**} (2.60)	0.85 ^{***} (11.75)
cli32	Malaysia should be a safe place to visit	0.70 ^{***} (5.23)	0.96 ^{***} (24.82)
Commodities (Inter-item correlations= 0.65; VIF= 1.73)			
com19	There should be great variety of commodities in department stores	0.40 ⁺ (2.04)	0.85 ^{***} (8.57)
com20	Quality of products should be satisfactory	0.69 ^{***} (3.80)	0.95 ^{***} (19.58)
Convenience (Inter-item correlations= 0.50; VIF= 1.33)			
con12	Immigration and customs procedure should be simple	1.00 ^{***} (8.84)	1.00 ^{***} (31.34)
con13	Shopping centres should be conveniently located in Malaysia	-0.02 ^{ns} (0.10)	0.48 ⁺ (2.21)
Culture (Inter-item correlations= 0.53; VIF= 1.41)			
cul29	Malaysia should have a mixture of Oriental and Western culture	0.53 ^{***} (5.64)	0.86 ^{***} (16.35)
cul30	There should be interesting cultural events in Malaysia	0.61 ^{***} (6.82)	0.89 ^{***} (20.19)
People (Range of inter-item correlations= 0.45-0.74; Average inter-item correlation: 0.60; Max. VIF= 3.47)			
peo8	Immigration/Customs/Police labour force should be helpful and efficient	-0.04 ^{ns} (0.17)	0.82 ^{***} (10.48)
peo9	Hotel/Restaurant/Retail labour force should be helpful and efficient	0.26 ^{ns} (1.32)	0.75 ^{***} (6.70)
peo10	Malaysians should be friendly and courteous	0.72 ^{***} (4.36)	0.96 ^{***} (28.44)
peo11	Malaysia should be clean and tidy place	0.22 ^{ns} (1.46)	0.71 ^{***} (7.12)
Price (Range of inter-item correlations= 0.44-0.66; Average inter-item correlation: 0.57; Max. VIF= 2.57)			
pri15	Prices for hotel accommodation should be reasonable	0.25 ^{ns} (1.04)	0.81 ^{***} (6.54)
pri16	Prices for commodities should be reasonable	0.36 ^{ns} (1.26)	0.86 ^{***} (6.56)
pri17	Prices for food should be reasonable	0.51 ^{ns} (1.32)	0.92 ^{***} (8.18)
pri18	Prices for air ticket should be reasonable	0.01 ^{ns} (0.06)	0.62 ^{***} (3.58)

*, **, and *** indicate statistical significance at the 0.05, 0.01, and 0.001 levels respectively. ns indicates not significant at 95% confidence level. $t(0.05, 1999) = 1.960$, $t(0.01, 1999) = 2.576$, $t(0.001, 1999) = 3.291$.

Table 3. Path Coefficients

	Path Coefficient (<i>t</i> -value)	Percentile 95% confidence intervals
Tourist Satisfaction		
(R ² =53.18%; Q ² =0.5229)		
Tourist' Perception Constructs		
← Accommodation and Food	0.16 ^{ns} (1.43)	[-0.06; 0.39]
← Attractions	-0.15 ^{ns} (1.15)	[-0.41; 0.11]
← Climate	0.36 ^{**} (2.71)	[0.10; 0.62]
← Commodities	-0.12 ^{ns} (0.92)	[-0.36; 0.13]
← Convenience	0.03 ^{ns} (0.25)	[-0.18; 0.23]
← Culture	0.31 ^{**} (2.98)	[0.11; 0.52]
← People	0.23 ^{ns} (1.88)	[-0.01; 0.46]
← Price	-0.02 ^{ns} (0.17)	[-0.30; 0.25]

*, **, and *** indicate statistical significance at the 0.05, 0.01, and 0.001 levels respectively. ns indicates not significant at 95% confidence level. $t(0.05, 1999) = 1.960$, $t(0.01, 1999) = 2.576$, $t(0.001, 1999) = 3.291$.

Hypothesis 1 (H₁) looked into the direct effect of dimensions of travel attributes on satisfaction. Based on the outcomes of the analysis, it is evident that the tourists' perceptions of accommodation and food, climate, convenience, culture and people have a positive effect while attractions, commodities and price have negative effect on satisfaction. However, only tourists' perception of climate (standardized coefficient = 0.36, *t*-value = 2.71) and culture (standardized coefficient = 0.31, *t*-value = 2.98) have significant positive effects on tourist satisfaction at 95% confidence level. Therefore H₁ is partly supported. However, the relationship has appropriate predictive power for tourist satisfaction with the Q² value (0.5229) greater than zero and the explained variance (R²) of more than 53%. In summary, the travel attributes have satisfactory predictive relevance and explained the changes in the variance of the endogenous variable tourist satisfaction.

4.3. Interaction of Demographic Variables (Hypothesis 2)

Hypothesis 2 measured the moderation effect of the variables 'geographical origin', 'age', 'gender' and 'marital status' in the relationship between the dimensions of travel attributes and tourists' satisfaction. As Henseler and Georg (2010) indicated, moderating effects are induced by variables whose variation influences the strength or the direction of a relationship between an exogenous and an endogenous variable. Moderator variables can either be metric or categorical in nature. The interacting variables in this study are categorical; therefore 'group comparison approach' would be appropriate. In the 'group comparison approach', the model effects are estimated separately for each group of observations. Differences in the model parameters between the groups are interpreted as moderating effects. The results of the moderating effects of the tourists' demographic attributes on the effect of the dimensions of travel attributes of the destination on tourist's satisfaction are reported in Table 4.

The results indicated that there is a significant difference between Asian (standardized coefficient = 0.29, *t*-value = 1.58) and Western (standardized coefficient = -0.33, *t*-value = 1.71) visitors in terms of their perception of attractions at Kuala Lumpur (z-score = -2.94). Moreover, while climate does not have any significant effect on married tourists' satisfaction (standardized coefficient = 0.01, *t*-value = 0.02), it has a significant positive effect on single visitors (standardized coefficient = 0.47, *t*-value = 2.89) and the difference is significant (z-score = -2.11).

Furthermore, while female tourists' perception of accommodation and food (standardized coefficient = 0.34, *t*-value = 2.25), and price (standardized coefficient = 0.33, *t*-value = 2.84), has a positive significant effect on their satisfaction, this research could not find any significant effect for male tourists' perception of accommodation and food (standardized coefficient = -0.02, *t*-value = 0.15), and price (standardized coefficient = -0.17, *t*-value = 0.82). This difference between male and female is significant for both accommodation and food (z-score = 2.21), and price (z-score = 2.50). Besides, female tourists' perception of convenience has a negative significant effect on tourists' satisfaction (standardized coefficient = -0.33, *t*-value = 2.02) and this effect is not significant for male visitors (standardized coefficient = 0.11, *t*-value = 0.65). The results show that this difference between male and female tourists is significant at 95% confidence level (z-score = -2.63).

Table 4. The Moderating Effect of Demographic Attributes on the Perception Model Paths

	Path Coefficient (<i>t</i> -value)	Percentile 95% confidence intervals	Path Coefficient (<i>t</i> -value)	Percentile 95% confidence intervals	Group Differences z-score
	<u>Asian</u>		<u>Western</u>		
Satisfaction					
← Accommodation and Food	0.12 ^{ns} (0.68)	[-0.22; 0.45]	0.09 ^{ns} (0.48)	[-0.27; 0.45]	-0.14
← Attractions	0.29 ^{ns} (1.58)	[-0.07; 0.64]	-0.33 ^{ns} (1.71)	[-0.70; 0.04]	-2.94**
← Climate	0.43[†] (2.25)	[0.06; 0.81]	0.53*** (3.48)	[0.23; 0.82]	0.50
← Commodities	-0.28 ^{ns} (1.60)	[-0.62; 0.06]	-0.11 ^{ns} (0.77)	[-0.40; 0.17]	0.83
← Convenience	0.04 ^{ns} (0.28)	[-0.23; 0.31]	-0.14 ^{ns} (1.02)	[-0.40; 0.13]	-1.10
← Culture	-0.04 ^{ns} (0.25)	[-0.39; 0.30]	0.17 ^{ns} (1.25)	[-0.10; 0.44]	1.10
← People	0.08 ^{ns} (0.61)	[-0.18; 0.35]	0.36** (2.19)	[0.04; 0.67]	1.50
← Price	0.25 ^{ns} (1.72)	[-0.03; 0.54]	0.22 ^{ns} (1.44)	[-0.08; 0.51]	-0.22
	<u>Single</u>		<u>Married</u>		
Satisfaction					
← Accommodation and Food	0.09 ^{ns} (0.72)	[-0.16; 0.34]	0.31 ^{ns} (1.31)	[-0.16; 0.78]	1.03
← Attractions	-0.03 ^{ns} (0.16)	[-0.34; 0.29]	-0.01 ^{ns} (0.02)	[-0.45; 0.44]	0.10
← Climate	0.47** (2.89)	[0.15; 0.79]	0.01 ^{ns} (0.02)	[-0.46; 0.47]	-2.11*
← Commodities	0.05 ^{ns} (0.33)	[-0.26; 0.36]	-0.23 ^{ns} (0.86)	[-0.75; 0.29]	-1.25
← Convenience	-0.03 ^{ns} (0.20)	[-0.27; 0.22]	0.02 ^{ns} (0.11)	[-0.35; 0.39]	0.24
← Culture	0.23 ^{ns} (1.90)	[-0.01; 0.47]	0.14 ^{ns} (0.66)	[-0.28; 0.56]	-0.45
← People	0.14 ^{ns} (0.99)	[-0.14; 0.41]	0.40[†] (1.97)	[0.00; 0.79]	1.16
← Price	-0.09 ^{ns} (0.57)	[-0.42; 0.23]	0.10 ^{ns} (0.55)	[-0.27; 0.48]	0.91
	<u>Male</u>		<u>Female</u>		
Satisfaction					
← Accommodation and Food	-0.02 ^{ns} (0.15)	[-0.32; 0.27]	0.34[†] (2.25)	[0.04; 0.64]	2.21*
← Attractions	-0.08 ^{ns} (0.36)	[-0.49; 0.34]	0.00 ^{ns} (0.02)	[-0.26; 0.26]	0.47
← Climate	0.39 ^{ns} (1.85)	[-0.02; 0.79]	0.35[†] (2.41)	[0.07; 0.64]	-0.18
← Commodities	-0.08 ^{ns} (0.42)	[-0.46; 0.30]	-0.09 ^{ns} (0.81)	[-0.31; 0.13]	-0.04
← Convenience	0.11 ^{ns} (0.65)	[-0.22; 0.44]	-0.33* (2.02)	[-0.65; -0.01]	-2.63**
← Culture	0.30 ^{ns} (1.84)	[-0.02; 0.61]	0.15 ^{ns} (1.21)	[-0.09; 0.39]	-0.84
← People	0.33[†] (2.17)	[0.03; 0.62]	0.14 ^{ns} (0.96)	[-0.14; 0.42]	-1.05
← Price	-0.17 ^{ns} (0.82)	[-0.58; 0.24]	0.33** (2.84)	[0.10; 0.55]	2.50*
	<u>Young</u>		<u>Old</u>		
Satisfaction					
← Accommodation and Food	0.29 ^{ns} (1.77)	[-0.03; 0.61]	-0.03 ^{ns} (0.21)	[-0.34; 0.27]	-1.67
← Attractions	0.23 ^{ns} (1.45)	[-0.08; 0.55]	-0.05 ^{ns} (0.23)	[-0.50; 0.39]	-1.42
← Climate	0.46** (2.86)	[0.15; 0.78]	0.13 ^{ns} (0.65)	[-0.26; 0.51]	-1.62
← Commodities	-0.24 ^{ns} (1.75)	[-0.51; 0.03]	-0.01 ^{ns} (0.05)	[-0.39; 0.37]	1.05
← Convenience	0.03 ^{ns} (0.23)	[-0.26; 0.33]	-0.01 ^{ns} (0.06)	[-0.31; 0.29]	-0.23
← Culture	-0.08 ^{ns} (0.65)	[-0.34; 0.17]	0.51** (3.21)	[0.20; 0.82]	3.07**
← People	0.04 ^{ns} (0.21)	[-0.34; 0.42]	0.41[†] (2.23)	[0.06; 0.75]	1.92
← Price	0.07 ^{ns} (0.37)	[-0.32; 0.47]	-0.16 ^{ns} (0.82)	[-0.55; 0.23]	-1.20

*, **, and *** indicate statistical significance at the 0.05, 0.01, and 0.001 levels respectively. *ns* indicates not significant at 95% confidence level. $t(0.05, 1999) = 1.960$, $t(0.01, 1999) = 2.576$, $t(0.001, 1999) = 3.291$.

Finally, old tourists (who are 40 years and above) perception of culture has a positive significant effect on their satisfaction who are below 40 years old (standardized coefficient = 0.51, *t*-value = 3.21). However, this relationship is not significant for young visitors (standardized coefficient = -0.08, *t*-value = 0.65) and this difference between young and old visitors is significant at 95% confidence level (z-score = 3.07).

5. Discussion and Conclusion

The study was intended to understand the international tourists’ preferences related to the travel attributes of Kuala Lumpur. The findings showed that the travel attributes of Kuala Lumpur explained the tourists’ satisfaction and had the predictive relevance. Eight dimensions of destination travel attributes can possibly explain the

international tourists' satisfaction with Kuala Lumpur. The dimensions are accommodation and food, attractions, climate and image, commodities, convenience, culture, people, and price. Among them, only climate and culture had the significant positive influence on the overall tourist satisfaction. The relationship between travel attributes and satisfaction was interacted with demographic variables geographical origin, marital status, gender and age. All these groups differ at least in one of the travel attributes. Asian and Western travellers differed significantly in the relationship between the perception of 'attractions' and 'satisfaction'. Asian's showed high perception towards the attractions and satisfaction compared to westerners. Climate significantly differentiated single and married in their relationship with satisfaction. International tourists who are single perceived the 'climate' good and had the higher satisfaction compared to the married. Male and female international tourists differed significantly in the relationship of their perception of 'accommodation and food', 'convenience' and 'price' with satisfaction. While their perceptions on 'accommodation and food' and 'price' are higher for females in influencing the satisfaction, the perception on 'convenience' is low for females and its influence on satisfaction is negative. International tourists who are 40 years and above differed significantly from tourists who are below 40 years in their perception of culture and its influence on their satisfaction. It's higher for tourists who are 40 years and above. This study established that different demographic groups of tourists can be segregated based on the relationship of their perception of travel attributes with satisfaction. This study has supported previous studies done to establish differences between age (Baloglu & McCleary, 2000), gender (Chen & Kerstetter, 1999) and geographical origin (Calantone et al, 1989; Chen & Kerstetter). However, the study of Hwang, Kim, and Hyun (2013) concluded that there were no differences in tourist satisfaction between single and married tourists.

The results of the study have theoretical and practical significance. The analysis has highlighted important insights on the travel attributes of Kuala Lumpur that play a significant role in satisfying the tourists and the role of geographical origin, gender, age and marital status in the relationship between travel attributes and tourist satisfaction. The implications of the study are several. With the understanding of the international tourists with their perception of the destination and its relation to satisfaction, destination marketers could segment their market and devise effective positioning strategies. It also enables them to develop new products, services and specific strategies for different groups. The limitations of the study are cross sectional data and limited sample size. Though PLS and bootstrapping were employed to handle small sample issue, a longitudinal study would be more appropriate. Therefore future research on this area would focus on longitudinal approach to capture the dynamism and changes over the time.

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