

ASSESSING THE INFLUENCE OF DESTINATION PERCEIVED ATTRIBUTES PERFORMANCE ON CHINESE TOURIST EMOTIONAL RESPONSES

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Abstract: *All tourists hope to bring home a memorable experience after visiting a destination. This experience is essentially depending on the outcome of their encounters with the destination attributes. It is suggested that the outcome from the encounters may also lead to certain emotional responses. This paper empirically examines tourists' visit experience of 486 Chinese tourists in Malaysia in terms of the influence of destination attributes performance on their positive and negative consumption emotions. A survey method was employed to collect data regarding tourist demographic information as well as destination attributes performance, and positive and negative emotional responses. The results of regression analyses show that the destination attributes performance significantly influence the positive and negative consumption emotions. This finding is beneficial to tourism and hospitality stakeholders in Malaysian particularly about perceived destination attribute performance by the Chinese tourists and relevant destination attributes that require attention for future improvement.*

Keywords: *Affective Dimension, Cognitive Dimensions, Consumption Emotion, Destination Attributes, Perceived Performance, Visit Experience*

Introduction

Destination is central to tourism because it offers a combination of products, services, and facilities that meet the tourists' needs and wants. The outcome from their encounters with these products, services and facilities would reflect tourist perceived visit experience. (Quan & Wang, 2004; Andersson, 2007; Mossberg, 2007; Oh, Fiore, & Jeoung, 2007). Hence, the standard and performance of products, services, and facilities is crucial to ensure a memorable visit experience (Otto & Ritchie, 1996; Buhalis, 2000).

In the service industry, through a service process, customers evaluate the service they obtained cognitively and affectively, (Edvardsson, Enquist, & Johnston, 2005). Likewise, in the tourism context, visitors encounter with different products, services, and other facilities during their visits may eventually evoke emotion as a response to the encounter. In other words, cognitive evaluation of the encounters (or consumption) of the services, products, and facilities would produce emotional responses which is articulated as consumption emotions (Patwary & Rashid, 2016).

Consumption emotion is an emotional reaction to ones' response to consumption. It is a series of emotional reactions come from the mental (cognitive) evaluation about the experience of products and service consumers consumed (Westbrook & Oliver, 1991; Izard, 1993; Oliver, 1997; Richins, 1997; Bagozzi, Gopinath, & Nyer, 1999; Menon & Dubé, 2000). Arguably, positive cognitive evaluation would induce positive emotions and negative outcome would produce negative emotions.

This paper aims to empirically test the cognitive and affective post visit experience assessment of Chinese tourists at few popular destinations in Malaysia. The process involves assessing their perceived destination attributes performance evaluation and their emotional responses as the outcome. In doing so, a comprehensive review of the literature was carried out to develop a cognitive - affective research framework. The framework is then tested to assess the influence of destination attributes on tourist positive and negative consumption emotions.

Literature Review

It is argued that tourist visit experience reflects tourist activities that are prompted from their encounters with the destination's attributes. These attributes are the composition of products, services and facilities at the destination. The encounters with these attributes are cognitively evaluated which ultimately will produce series of emotion. These induced emotions are called consumption emotions. Literature posited that emotions play an important role in tourism experience (Bigné and Andreu, 2004; Wang, 1999). Recent decade shows that tourist consumption emotion has becoming an important study topic among tourism researchers. The following section discusses the cognitive aspect (destination attribute evaluation) and affective dimensions (consumption emotions) of tourist visit experience based on relevant literature reviews.

Destination Attributes Performance Evaluation

Literatures suggest that tourism experience is the outcome of cognitive evaluation of tourist encounters with the various attributes (products, services and facilities) at the destination (Quan & Wang, 2004; Andersson, 2007; Mossberg, 2007; Oh, Fiore, & Jeoung, 2007; Tung & Ritchie, 2011). Hence, in order to make a visit more memorable, destination managers should provide and maintain these attributes accordingly (Manente & Minghetti, 2006; Tung & Ritchie, 2011). This would also attract more tourists, ensure destination's sustainability and competitiveness as well as benefiting the local community (Crouch & Ritchie, 2000; Prahalad & Ramaswamy, 2004; Jennings & Nickerson, 2006; Mossberg, 2007; Binkhorst & Dekker, 2009).

Scholars seem divided in terms of categorizing destination attributes. Nonetheless these attributes can be generally categorized into products, services and facilities. These multifaceted destination attributes may influence tourist perception about the destination during the trip. Murphy, Pritchard, and Smith (2000) for example explained that tourists experience is influenced by the two fundamental elements namely destination environment and service infrastructure. A

stable environment at the destination facilitates the development of basic infrastructure such as electricity, water supply, and service infrastructures that in turn form better accommodation, restaurants, shopping, and other entertainment facilities (Murphy *et al.*, (2000). Destinations rely on varied attractive features or characteristics to attract visitors (Lew, 1987; Kim, 2014) but the performance of the destination attributes can provide notable and enjoyable visit experience. Numerous literature claimed that various dimensions of the destination attributes can stimulate unforgettable tourism experience. In this case local culture, infrastructure, superstructure, events and activities, services, environment and hospitality of local people may have great impacts on tourist visit experience (Laws, 1995; Dwyer & Kim, 2003; Murphy *et al.*, 2000; Kim, *et al.*, 2012; Crouch & Ritchie, 2000; Rashid, 2013).

It is also common that tourist evaluate the worthiness of their visit. This is known as perceived trip value. In this regard, perceived trip value is considered as the cognitive evaluation of the destination attributes performance. A notable study by Murphy *et al.* (2000) for example studied trip value as four dimensions namely “value for the trip”, “value for the money spent”, “reasonable prices”, and “value relative to destinations”. The study tested visitors’ perceptions of quality, value and intent to return in relation to their cognitive satisfaction with money time and effort they spent. The findings indicated that these variables are significantly associated. Therefore trip value can be regarded as one of the important elements is tourist perceived visit experience.

In summary, the performance of the destination attributes has great impacts on visitors’ visit experience. In other word, destination attributes performance could be influential in determining visit experience outcome. Sensibly, if the attributes performance were perceived as acceptable, it is expected that the visit would be worthy and vice-versa. Conclusively, based on previous studies, this paper proposed that destination attributes that are influential in the formation of tourist visit experience are attractions (natural and man-made); activities; service and hospitality; facilities (infrastructure and superstructure); local culture; and perceived trip value. This can diagrammatically illustrated in figure 1.

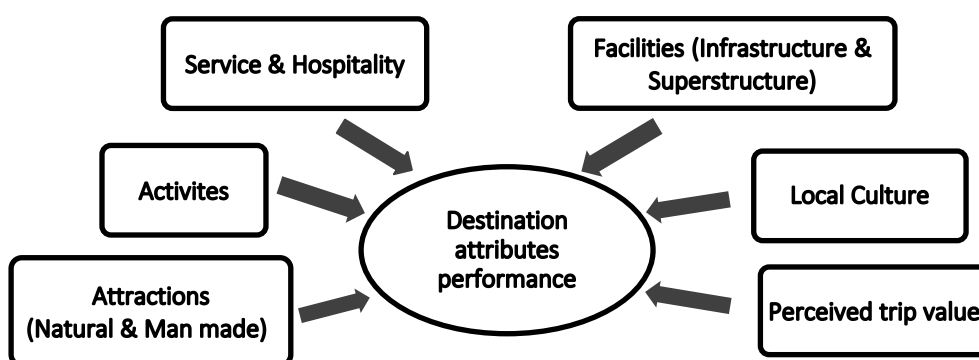


Figure 1: Variables for destination attributes

It is noted that tourist perceived visit experience involved experience from the emotional, physical, spiritual, and intellectual context involving evaluation of every activity and event related to the destination attributes from the beginning to the end of the trip as well as after the trip (Tung & Richie, 2011; Herington, Merrilees, & Wilkins, 2013; Patwary & Omar, 2016). Eventually the experience generates certain types emotions which is called consumption emotion (Hosany, Prayag, Deesilatham, Caušević, & Odeh, 2014; Sthapit *et al.*, 2017). The following

section discusses consumption emotion as the outcome from cognitive evaluation of tourist visit experience which emotion is important for a memorable visit experience.

Consumption Emotion

There seems to be no consensus of the definition of emotion but rather it is the mental state with high intensity contains pleasure and displeasure feeling (Cabanac, 2002). The literature classifies emotion as a part of affective dimension (Bagozzi, Gopinath, M., & Nyer, 1999). Over the past decades, the affective dimension has becoming an important research area related to post-consumption experience (Cronin, Brady & Hult, 2000; Westbrook, 1987; Westbrook & Oliver, 1991; Sthapit, Björk & Coudounaris, 2017). Affect is an umbrella of several mental process includes emotions, moods, and possibly attitudes. Recent studies have indicated that consumers' emotions significantly influence visit experiences (Hosany, Prayag, Deesilatham, Caušević, & Odeh, 2014; Sthapit *et al.*, 2017). It is suggested that people have an emotional reaction to their environment and surroundings (Machleit & Eroglu, 2000; Ortony, Chore and Collins (1988). Thus, emotion may be seen as a vital component in tourist visit experience evaluation.

Numerous past studies have investigated the role of affective dimensions in tourists' visit experiences. Many of these studies examined the influence of mood on tourist visit experience and the factors that evoke affective feelings (Petrick, 2004; Sirakaya, E., Petrick & Choi 2004; Tapachai & Waryszak, 2000; Williams & Soutar, 2009). Bitner (1992) for example suggested that comfortable environment at the destinations produces pleasure or positive feeling, in turn visitors likely to spend more money and time. Hence it is notable that emotional responses are closely linked with the pre-consumption, consumption, and post-consumption phases of encounters with the destination attributes (Liljander & Strandvik, 1997; Mattila, 1999). For example, Carù and Cova (2003) pointed out that experiences with destination attributes could induce emotions that ultimately influence consumer responses. Argan, Argan and Akyildiz (2014), stated that visitors' emotion may influence to buy products or products visitors bought could determine the emotions they developed. The emotional reaction to ones' response to certain consumption is called consumption emotion. Ultimately, pleasurable emotions are most likely to influence memorable visit experience (Sthapit *et al.*, 2017).

Most post consumption scholars agreed that consumption emotion is an observable behavioral reaction (Westbrook & Oliver, 1991; Izard, 1993; Oliver, 1997; Bagozzi *et al.*, 1999; Dubé & Menon, 2000; Argan *et al.*, 2014). It involves cognitive assessment of the events or thoughts that happens through a state of physiological arousal. It could be summarized that consumption emotion is an observable emotional reaction developed from individual's response to the products and services (Richins, 1997).

In terms of categorizing emotions, scholars divided emotion into the structural dimension (e.g. arousal/sleepiness; calmness/excitement) and the categorical dimensions of positive and negative emotions. (Westbrook & Oliver, 1991; Liljander & Bergenwall, 1999). Nonetheless, it is argued that the categorical approach with the negative and positive dimensions of emotions receive better attention in consumer consumption studies to measure consumption emotions (Westbrook & Oliver, 1991; Mano & Oliver, 1993; Liljander & Bergenwall, 1999; Laros & Steenkamo, 2005; Argan *et al.*, 2014).

With regard to measuring consumption emotion, numerous types of scales were developed. These include the ten primary emotions: Plutchik, (1980), the differential emotion scale (DES): Izard (1977), the scale for pleasure, arousal, and dominance (PAD): Mehrabian & Russell,

(1974), the positive affect and negative affect scales (PANAS): Watson, Clark and Tellegen, (1988), the consumption emotion set (CES): Richins, (1997). Among all these measurement scales, the most common is the two-factor structure contains both positive emotion and negative emotion (Bagozzi *et al.*, 1999).

After considering advantages of the positive emotion and negative two-factor dimensions, this study adapt the measurement items from the CES and other related emotional responses studies (Richins, 1997; Petrick, 2004; Williams & Soutar, 2009). As a result, the categorical emotions which has six positive emotions: romantic, peaceful, fulfilled, happy, excited, relaxed and seven negative emotions: angry, worried, scared, sad, bored, disappointed and frustrate were used to measure tourist emotional responses.

Conceptual framework

It is posited that emotions are aroused when the events are being assessed and interpreted as hurtful or beneficial. In other words, emotion occur because of the cognitive appraisal and this cognitive process both are consider as vital and adequate elements to ensure the formation of emotions. Bagozzi (1992) clearly explained that cognitive responses precede emotional responses. Additionally, it is broadly accepted that to cause emotions, certain forms of appraisals are essential (Mathews & MacLeod, 1994; Nyer, 1997; Argan *et al.*, 2014). Hence, cognitive model may help to identify the possible antecedents which helps towards formation of emotions, thus it has the capability to make the prediction.

In line with the theoretical evident from the literature, this paper propagates that the basic components of tourist experience research framework should include cognitive responses and affective responses. In this instance, the process of evaluation is depicted as a series of steps, involving: cognitive appraisal → emotional response framework. Therefore, this paper proposes that a research model to investigate the outcomes of tourist visit experience shall include tourist assessment of the destination attributes performance (cognitive) and emotional responses (affective). This can be illustrated as a diagram in figure 2.

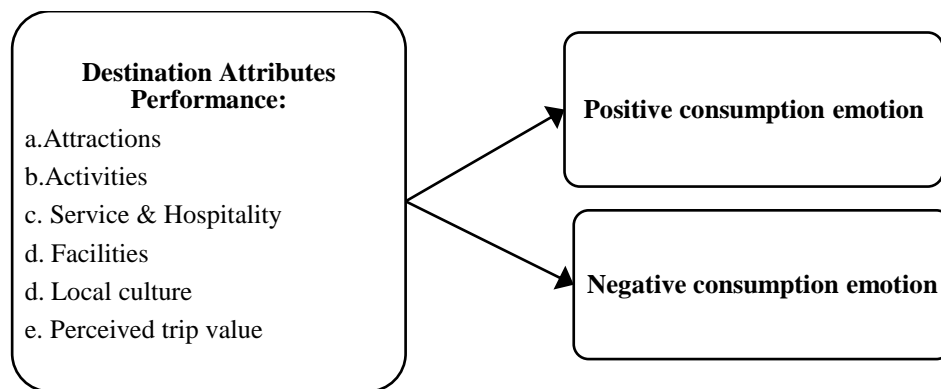


Figure 3: Conceptual framework of tourist visit experience assessment

The above framework implies that:

1. There are six (6) elements to measure destination perceived performance; namely, service and hospitality, natural attractions, manmade attractions, infrastructures and superstructures.

2. Tourist consumption experience is gauged based on the unipolar dimensions of emotions namely positive and negative emotions
3. It is anticipated that tourist visit experience is initially influenced by their encounters with the various features and eventually evoke positive and negative emotions depending on the outcome of their encounters.

Methodology

This research uses non-probability sampling due to its simplicity, while still being able to secure some level of generalizability. It allows the researcher to add a systematic element into the random selection of subjects, yet is easy to do (Cooper & Schindler, 2014). In this study, the population is the Chinese tourists who experience the products, services and facilities in Malaysia. Due to time and budget limitations, it would be impractical to collect data from all the tourism destinations in Malaysia, so some famous destinations, and have direct flights between China and Malaysia, popular with Chinese tourists, selected for this research: Kuala Lumpur and Langkawi.

A sample of Chinese tourists visiting Malaysia will represent the overall large population in this paper. Some researchers recommend a general sample size of at least 400 (Pedhazur, 1997). Hair *et al.* (2006) suggested that 200-400 is usually recommended and accepted as the critical sample size. A group of trained research assistants helped to distribute the questionnaire. Respondents must meet certain criteria and be willing to participate. First, respondents must be Chinese tourists visiting Malaysia and consuming the products and services at tourism destinations for at least two days. Secondly, they should have recently completed their visit to ensure that they are able to remember the experience. Hence, the respondents are required to fill in the questionnaire during their visit in Malaysia or before they go back to China at Airport. After all these conditions have been administered, this study managed to obtain 486 useable questionnaires for further data analysis, the amount seem to accept and appropriate for this research.

In terms of the question and scale design, the fixed alternative question type was used, in order to reduce the risk of missing responses and to help tourists to remember their memory flashback (Churchill, 1999). Most questions are scored on a Likert-type scale, which is commonly used in tourism destination evaluation research. The details of measurement of the 3 groups of questions are presented as follows.

1. Demographics. The first section of questionnaire is to collect personal information from the respondent: their nationality, gender, age, tourist types (group tourists or VIP/ independent tourists), who is accompanying them, and length of stay.
2. Destination's attributes. Based on reviews of past studies, the destination attributes were categorized into six main components: 1) tourist attractions (natural attraction and man-made attraction), 2) tourist activities, 3) service and hospitality, 4) facilities (infrastructure and superstructure), 5) local culture, and 6) perceived trip value. Respondents are required to evaluate these components cognitively using positive statements measured on the 7-point Likert scale from 1 = "strongly disagree" to 7 = "strongly agree".
3. Emotional responses. The list of emotions was developed from previous literatures (Mehrabian & Russell, 1974; Richins, 1997; Rashid, 2013). In this case, 6 positive emotions (Romantic, Peaceful, Fulfilled, Happy, Excited, Relaxed) and 7 Negative emotions (Angry, Worried, Scared, Sad, Bored, Disappointed, Frustrated) are utilized to measure respondent emotion based on the 7-point Likert measurement scale of: 1 = "I have not experienced this emotion at all" to 7 = "I have strongly experienced this emotion".

Discussion and Findings

The first part of questions relates to the personal information about the 486 Chinese respondent (tourist) including the respondents' gender, age, type of travel, travel companion, and duration of visit. This is shown in table 1.

Table 1. Demographics information

Variable	Description	Frequencies	Percent
Gender	Male	231	47.5
	Female	255	52.5
Age	25 or below	146	30.0
	26-40	218	44.9
	41-55	101	20.8
	56 or below	21	4.3
Type of Travel	By Agency	176	36.2
	Independent/FIT	308	63.4
Travel with	Alone	37	7.6
	With Family	214	44.0
	With Friends	190	39.1
	With Colleague	45	9.3
Stay nights	2	60	12.3
	3-4	168	34.6
	5-7	172	35.4
	Over 7	86	17.7

There sample consists of 47.5% male respondents and 52.5% female. In terms of age group, most of the respondents were in the middle aged 26-40 years, 44.9%; and young aged in 25 year or below, which occupied 30.0%. Majority of the respondents (63.4%) were independent tourists or FIT while the 36.2% of the respondents used travel agencies. As for travel companion, 44.0% respondents visited Malaysia with their families, 39.1% with friends, with colleague were 9.3%, and only 7.6% respondents traveled alone. In terms of the duration of night stay, majority of them stayed between 5-7 nights (35.4%) and 3-5 nights (34.6%).

Further analyses were carried out to test the relationship between destination attributes and consumption emotions. It is estimated that the destination attribute performance elicits tourists' emotions. In this research, the tourists' consumption emotional responses are divided into two distinct types of emotions; positive emotions and negative emotions. The regression analyses were utilized to test the relationship of the destination attributes and the emotions.

Result of regression analysis on the influence of destination attribute performance on positive emotion is summarize in table 2. The model explains 61.2% of the variance in positive emotion, with $F(125.933)$, $p < .001$ ($Sig = .000$). Within destination attributes, there are three attributes, named: tourist attractions, local culture, and trip value, are significantly influence in predicting positive emotion. Meanwhile, other three attributes, named tourists activities, service and hospitality, and facilities do not contribute towards the prediction of positive emotion significantly. The Beta coefficients (β) from this result indicates that the trip value ($\beta = .332$) is the most contribution to predicting positive emotion. Followed by tourist attraction ($\beta = .157$), local culture ($\beta = .147$), facilities ($\beta = .097$), tourist activities ($\beta = .092$), and service and hospitality ($\beta = .090$).

Table 2. Multiple Regression Result for Destination attribute performance Influencing Positive

Variables	Positive Emotion		
	Beta(β)	Sig.	VIF
Tourist Attractions	.157**	.001	2.921
Tourist Activities	.092	.068	3.147
Service and Hospitality	.090	.063	2.882
Facilities	.097	.079	3.761
Local Culture	.147**	.000	1.909
Trip Value	.332**	.000	2.978

Note:

Positive Emotion: R=.782; R-Square=.612; F=125.933; Sig=.000;

Significant level: *p<.05, **p<.01; Beta(β)=Beta coefficient

In terms of the influence of destination attribute performance on negative emotion, the model explains 29.8% of the variance in negative emotion, with F (33.924), p<.001 (Sig=.000). This is shown in table 3. Two attributes namely; trip value and service and hospitality are significantly influential in predicting negative emotion.

Table 3. Multiple Regression result for Destination attribute performance Influencing Negative emotion

Variables	Negative Emotion		
	Beta(β)	Sig.	VIF
Tourist Attractions	-.019	.766	2.921
Tourist Activities	.097	.156	3.147
Service and Hospitality	-.199**	.002	2.882
Facilities	-.107	.151	3.761
Local Culture	-.068	.199	1.909
Trip Value	-.305**	.000	2.978

Note:

Negative Emotion: R=.546; R-Square=.298; F=33.924; Sig=.000

Significant level: *p<.05, **p<.01; Beta(β)=Beta coefficient

Trip value is the highest contribution to predicting negative emotion with β value -.305, the second is service and hospitality(β =-.199), followed by facilities(β =-.107), tourist activities(β =.097), local culture(β =-.068), and tourist attraction(β =-.019). In comparison, the destination attributes performance could explain much more in positive emotion than negative emotions.

Overall, these results indicate that tourists visit experience is initially influenced by their encounters with the various destination attributes and eventually evoke positive and negative emotions depending on their evaluation of destination attributes performance. In order to examine that, the results from Table 2 and Table 3 indicate that in terms of positive emotion, three items from perceived destination attributes performance significantly predict positive emotion, which are attractions (sig=.001), local culture (sig=.000) and trip value (sig=.000). However, three attributes are not influential in predicting positive emotions: activities (sig=.068); service and hospitality (sig=.063); and facilities (sig=.079), while their sig value is quite near to 0.05. As for negative emotion, only two items from perceived destination attributes performance influence negative emotion significantly, named: service and hospitality (sig=.002) and trip value (sig=.000). In addition, the model fit of regression analysis for destination attribute performance influencing emotion indicate the significant level (sig=.000) for both positive and negative model

(Table 3). Based on these results, it is reasonable to acknowledge that perceived destination attributes' performance would significantly predict tourist consumption emotion.

This outcome agrees and in line with a number of past studies that suggested that emotion is evoked from consumer behavioral responses of cognitive evaluation of the consumer's experience of products and services. (Westbrook & Oliver, 1991; Izard, 1993; Oliver, 1997; Bagozzi *et al.*, 1999; Liljander & Bergenwall, 1999; Dubé & Menon, 2000). Findings from this paper suggest that tourists' consumption emotions are significantly influenced by their perceived destination attributes performance. The destination attributes are the related products and services which are in the forms of tourist attractions, activities, service and hospitality, facilities, local culture and trip value that the tourists encounter at the destination.

Conclusion

This paper provides evident that tourist visit experience involves cognitive and affective dimensions. The tourist evaluates their visit experience after they encounter with various destination attributes. Ultimately, this also affirms that the destination attributes performance namely, the tourist attraction, activity, service and hospitality, facilities, local culture and trip value, would elicit tourist's both positive and negative consumption emotions. Certain attributes are very influential in producing emotions. A good destination attributes performance will elicit good consumption emotions, and a bad destination attributes performance will lead to negative emotional responses. Thus, tourism destination should offer adequate and acceptable destination attributes performance in order to be sustainable. The destination could improve the service quality, update facilities and add more tourist activities such as offer opportunities for tourists to experience local culture, and so on. In summary, the findings will provide the tourism destination manager or employees with a clear picture about the importance of the destination attributes performance and their influence on tourist emotional responses. Nonetheless, this study could be improved on adding more predictive variables, such as visit satisfaction and future behavioural intentions, to portray a wholesome tourist visit assessment.

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