

CHAPTER 1

OVERVIEW OF RESEARCH PROJECT

1.1 Introduction

The current study aims to identify what is the tourists' perception on each variable (i.e. cognitive image, affective image, destination personality, overall destination image, perceived trip quality, perceived value, and satisfaction) after visiting Kuala Lumpur and also the relationships of all variables in respect to tourists' behavioral intention. In this chapter, research background, research question, objectives of the study and contribution of the study will be discussed.

1.2 Research Background

Tourism industry has becoming an important driving force of foreign exchange earner which contributes to a country's economic growth and development. A successful tourism industry will result an increase in destination's tourist receipts, attracting investments, providing employment and improving nation quality of life.

In United Nations World Tourism Organization's (UNWTO) top-ten list for tourist arrivals for 2009, Malaysia was one of the few countries in Asia Pacific that successfully surpassed the overall negative trend while the tourism industries of most countries in the world were experiencing a downturn. Malaysia was one of

the three countries in Asia (after Taiwan and Hong Kong) which achieved a double-digit growth - RM52 billion from a total of 23.65 million tourist arrivals.

By having the brand of 'Malaysia Truly Asia' which was used to promote Malaysia internationally since 1999, it has become an internationally recognized brand (Economic Planning Unit, 2006). This tagline emphasizes on Malaysia's multiethnic and multicultural harmony as the selling point, by offering a diversity of tourism products that reflects the elements of Asia in promoting the country to the world.

According to Tourism 2020 Vision report, UNWTO has forecasted that tourist arrivals to the Asia Pacific region will be double from 195 million in 2010 to 397 million by 2020 within 10 years time. In order to maintain successfully in this growing competitive market environment, a strong cooperation and continuous efforts among the public, private and non-governmental organizations in tourism industry is highly needed. Following with government's effort in promoting Malaysia to the world, this study will focus on Kuala Lumpur to investigate how tourists' overall destination image, perceived trip quality, perceived value and satisfaction affect tourists' behavioral to revisit and/or recommend Kuala Lumpur to others.

1.3 Research Questions

In order to measure the relationships among cognitive image, affective and destination personality to overall destination image, perceived trip quality, perceived value, satisfaction and tourist behavior intention, this study aims to conceptualize, develop and test a model which describes the above mentioned relationships.

In particular, research questions related to the purpose of the study include:

Research question 1: What is the overall destination image of Kuala Lumpur?

Research question 2: How the perceived trip quality is be influenced by overall destination image?

Research question 3: How the perceived value be influenced by overall destination image?

Research question 4: How the perceived trip quality and perceived value influenced the satisfaction of tourist?

Research question 5: How tourist behavior intention is influenced by satisfaction and destination personality individually?

Research question 6: How overall destination image be influenced by age of the tourists?

1.4 Research Problem

From the perspective of tourist consumption process, tourist behavior can be divided into three stages: pre-visitation, during-visitation and post-visitation (Ryan, 2002; Williams & Buswell, 2003). More specifically, tourist behavior is an aggregate term, which includes choice of a destination to visit, on-site experience and subsequent evaluation and post-visit's behavioral intention.

One of the main challenges for tourist managers in their planning and marketing is to understanding the patterns of behavior of tourists. However, this is a complex process. Numerous researchers across the fields and disciplines support that destination image do influence tourists satisfaction (Abdullah, Alnasser, Aamjad, & Husain, 2000; Cai, Wu, & Bai, 2003; Kandampully & Suharatanto, 2000; O'Leary & Deegan, 2005) and tourist behavior (Hunt, 1975; Pearce, 1982; Bigne, Sanchez, & Sanchez, 2001, Fakeye & Crompton, 1991; Lee, lee, & Less, 2005). By recognizing the image of a destination, it will enhance the efficiency in promoting a destination (Leisen, 2001) and increase guarantee to its competitive success (Telisman-Kosuta, 1994).

The subsequent evaluations include travel experience or perceive trip quality, perceived value and overall satisfaction while future behavior intention include the intention to revisit and willingness to recommend to others. Empirical research has suggested that key service-oriented constructs (e.g., quality, value, and satisfaction) has positive impact on future behavioral intention to return to as

destination and/or generate positive word-of-mouth referrals for that destination (Baker & Crompton, 2000; Getty & Thompson, 1994; Oh, 1999; Petrick, 2004; Tam, 2000).

In this study, we will construct a more integrated model of tourist consumption by including overall destination image, evaluation factor of perceive trip quality, perceived value and satisfaction in tourists' future behavioral intention.

1.5 Objective of Study

To enabling destination manager to have general picture of which destination attributes are the most influential in tourist behavioral intention regarding the destination. The objectives of this study are: -

- i) to analyze the relationships between cognitive image, affective image and destination personality with overall destination image.
- ii) to examine the relationships between overall destination image with perceived trip quality, perceived value.
- iii) to study the relationship between perceived trip quality, perceived value and satisfaction.
- iv) to understand the interrelationships of tourists satisfaction and their behavioral intention to Kuala Lumpur.
- v) to explore the relationship between destination personality and tourists' behavioral intention.

- vi) to examine the relationship between the socio-demographic characteristic of age and overall destination image.

1.6 Contribution of Study

The Tourism Society of England (1976) defines tourism as temporary, short-term movement of people to destination outside the places where they normally live and work and their activities during the stay at each destination.

Research of the past two decades has agreed that there are combination of cognitive aspects and affective aspects in destination image. However, in Hosany and Ekinci (2003) study, it is argued that an overall destination image not only made up of cognitive image and affective image but also destination personality. In addition to that, the effects of destination personality with tourists' behavioral intention also covered in their study. Therefore, in this study, research on destination personality will be included with the aim to examine how destination personality affects the overall destination image and tourists' behavioral intention.

In the context of travel and tourism, a review of literature reveals an abundance of studies on the interrelationship between quality, satisfaction and behavioral intention (Backman & Veldkamp, 1995; Baker & Crompton, 2000), but perceived value has not been thoroughly investigated (Kashyap & Bojanic, 2000; Murphy,

Petrick & Backman, 2002a,b; Oh, 1999). Therefore, in this study, the measurement of perceived value and perceived trip quality will be recognizing as the antecedents of satisfaction in tourists evaluation in order to have greater knowledge of this concept.

By looking to the numerous studies on destination image, there were no studies conducted on destination image of Kuala Lumpur before. In this study, not only the overall destination image of Kuala Lumpur will be measure from the view of international tourist's inclusive evaluation of tangible and intangible part of the image but a more comprehensive model on-site experience, experience evaluation and post-visit behavior intention will also be evaluate in this study.

Some authors (MacKay & Fesenmaier, 1997; Baloglu & McCleary, 1999a) contend that there has been little research about how socio-demographic characteristics of tourists influenced overall destination image. When Walmsley and Jenkins (1993) studied the perceived image of different tourist resorts in Australia, they found that the image of some places differed depending on the visitor's gender and age. On the other hand the study carried out by Baloglu (1997), which analyzed the image of the USA among German tourists, found no statistically significant relationships between the perceived image and the demographic variables of gender, income and education. As such, in this study, the extent of the relationship between the overall destination image and the

socio-demographic characteristics related to age of the international tourists to Kuala Lumpur is also be examined.

The study on overall destination image of Kuala Lumpur, on-site experience on perceived trip quality and perceived value and evaluation factors of the international tourists will definitely be an important contribution to destination marketer and government agencies. With this, government and stakeholders may have a better understanding on the key component to be considered in promoting Kuala Lumpur as a tourism spot. The objective of positioning will help to create a distinctive place and to evoke images of Kuala Lumpur in the tourist's mind and therefore differentiates Kuala Lumpur from other Asian country.

1.7 Structure of paper

