Factors That Influence Visitors’ Satisfaction Toward Kuching Waterfront

Awang Yusop Adom, Bernard Jussem, Joseph Pudun, Azizan bin Yatim
Faculty of Hospitality and Tourism Management, UCSI University, Sarawak Campus.
Centre for Pre-U Studies, UCSI University, Sarawak Campus.
awangyusop@ucsi.edu.my

Abstract

This study was conducted to theoretically develop and empirically study a structural model of visitors’ satisfaction of Kuching Waterfront to determine its position as feasible tourist destination thus in the hope to improve its current weaknesses on all the variables tested in this study from the tourism stakeholders’ perspective. The proposed hypotheses that attempted to identify the structural relationship among the 11 construct model to examine through the series of analysis based on the various variables such as perceived tourism perception of the Kuching Waterfront, environmental attitudes, and development preferences about tourists’ attractions and in terms of various physical, amenities, facilities, locations, entertainments and recreations.

The principal guideline of this study is to provide supports for the tourism stakeholders in the process for tourism planning and long-term sustainability of tourism destinations. The tourism stakeholders’ should have solid knowledge and direct participation in the tourism planning and development and having long term observation and interactions with their important role in managing tourism industry and bring forward Sarawak as one of the preferred tourist destination in the world.

The study had collected 316 usable survey questionnaires from the convenience sampling throughout Sarawak and foreign tourists. From the research findings and tests, the tourist attractions are with preferences to positive perception of all the important variables such as location, image, environment, uniqueness of the physicals and recreation activities at the site of which will place a memorable experience after the visit. Additional findings that would benefit the tourism development in particular to the economic growth to the nations thus it is very important that Sarawak state should support enhancement of tourism strategies for destination competitiveness. The future of Kuching Waterfront should be a place of as an important and preferred destination for local and foreign tourists are our great expectation for the economic growth of the state.

Keywords: Visitors’ satisfaction, location, infrastructure, environment, image, value, recreational and entertainment, security, safety, tourism industry
1. INTRODUCTION

The development of Kuching Waterfront started in 1991 and completed in August 1993. Being surrounded by Kuching’s Golden Triangle and historical buildings such as the Astana, Fort Margherita, and the Court House, the Kuching Waterfront looks set to become a crowd puller and center for tourism in the heart of Kuching.

Kuching Waterfront is now considered by some Kuching citizens as a white elephant project, as it did not fulfill its original design objective – to be an engaging and lively urban river park. However, people’s perception and image of the Kuching Waterfront has yet to be researched on.

This research was done to find out people’s perception and viewpoint on this tourism site. The research findings will determine the new needs, wants and desires of Sarawakians and tourists to create a better image and use of the waterfront and as tourism asset for Sarawak.

The objective of this research is to determine the key determinants of visitors’ satisfaction toward Kuching Waterfront.

The findings from the research study would provide greater opportunities for private sectors involvement to develop the Kuching Waterfront as a new business investment or BLUE OCEAN opportunities in providing the various events and business opportunities at the site for tourism activities.

In addition, the research findings will provide the Kuching Waterfront management with a good understanding of the factors that play an integral role in enhancing visitors’ satisfaction toward the premise.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

With the many tourist attractions available in Kuching, the Kuching Waterfront is at the risk of being neglected by both the local population and tourists as a preferred tourist destination. This is due to the limited amount of active and passive activities that patrons can look up to doing whilst at the Kuching Waterfront.

Visitor attractions’ key components are primary elements and integral feature of urban tourism that motivate tourists to visit urban destinations and offer active and passive activities to occupy their time during the visit (Jansen-Verbeke, 1986). Anderson (2002) believes that destinations need the critical mass in terms of size and attraction before tourists can be expected to visit and stay.

A research study by Ruth Craggs and April (2008) indicates that development of urban waterfronts should include essential factors like enabling public accessibility and safety, creating a certain character or ambience, incorporating new structures and design elements along with historic structures, and most importantly, avoiding the obstruction of views to the water. The link between the factors and how they affect the visitors’ satisfaction levels are shown in the conceptual model of the research in Figure 1.
Research Hypothesis:

H1. There is a positive relationship between infrastructure factors and Kuching Waterfront visitors’ satisfaction.
H2. There is a positive relationship between location and Kuching Waterfront visitors’ satisfaction.
H3. There is a positive relationship between environment and Kuching Waterfront visitors’ satisfaction.
H4. There is a positive relationship between image and Kuching Waterfront visitors’ satisfaction.
H5. There is a positive relationship between value and Kuching Waterfront visitors’ satisfaction.
H6. There is a positive relationship between recreation & entertainment and Kuching Waterfront visitors’ satisfaction.
H7. There is a positive relationship between restaurants & eateries and Kuching Waterfront visitors’ satisfaction.
H8. There is a positive relationship between security & safety and Kuching Waterfront visitors’ satisfaction.
H9. There is a positive relationship between tourist information and Kuching Waterfront visitors’ satisfaction.
H10. There is a positive relationship between facilities & amenities and Kuching Waterfront visitors’ satisfaction.
3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

To achieve the research objectives, this study targeted visitors of the Kuching Waterfront. Frequent patrons (i.e. locals), local and foreign tourists of different age ranges and background were also selected to get the right sample which closely and accurately portray the general consensus of the public on the study’s goals.

Incorporating a single-informant approach, 1000 questionnaires were disseminated. The selection of samples was based on a convenient sampling technique. From the 1000 questionnaires distributed, 316 valid questionnaires were usable for the research and were analysed.

The questionnaire is divided into three sections. Section A asked 50 scale items that evaluating the determinants of visitors’ satisfaction toward the Kuching Waterfront as a tourist destination, Section B asked 13 demographic questions. All the determinants of visitors’ satisfaction will be measured by 5 point likert scale, ranging from (1) Strong Agree to (5) Strong Disagree. The visitors’ satisfaction will be measured by 5 point likert scale, ranging from (1) Excellent to (5) Poor.

4. DATA ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

4.1 Respondents’ Screening Analysis

Of the 1000 questionnaires distributed, a total of 316 valid responses were collected and analyzed in this study. The respondents are from local tourists and foreign tourists of various ages and profession that have visited Kuching Waterfront at least once in their lifetime. The number of visits made by respondents for the last six months to waterfront were on the first time was 4.4 percent, from 2 to 10 times were 41.1 percent, more than 10 times 26.8 percent and at none for the past six months 5.4 percent. The walk frequency of the respondents for daily, week, months and annually were collected where daily visit was 4.4 percent, once a week is 21.2 percent, once a month 20.2 percent, less than 2 times a year 28.6 percent, and first time 3.4 percent.

The objectives or reasons of their visit to waterfront were of work related 3.2 percent, just passing by 31.8 percent, eating 12.3 percent, recreation purposes 7.1 percent, meeting friends 21.2 percent and others 2.2 percent. In terms of time preference to visit, most respondents preferred to visit at weekends 31.8 percent and night 20.2 percent.

In responds to future visits, the most likely and likely percentages are 16 percent and 36.5 percent respectively thus show a quite high level (51.5 percent) of interest among visitors to repeat the visit. The respondents of “unsure” to visit is 20.4 percent, it shows of uncertainty where the visitors are not satisfy with the offers provided by the waterfront.

4.2 Respondents’ Demographics

The findings showed that most of the respondents were female 41.9 percent and male 36 percent. All respondents had visited Kuching Waterfront once in their life time. There were 20.4 percent single and 57.4 percent married. For income level, 34.2 percent were below RM 1000.00, 25.4 percent were having income of RM 1000 to RM2000.00 and 18
percent were earning more than RM 3000.00 per month. Most of the respondents were having age group of 21 to 30 years old 31.5 percent, age group of below 20 is 25.1 percent, age group of 31 to 45 is 14.3 percent, 45 to 50 is 5.2 percent and above 51 is 1.7 percent.

In term of occupation, the students group was the highest number of respondents which was 34.5 percent; followed by professional 23.6 percent, non professional 10.3 percent, self-employed 6.2 percent and others 3.2 percent.

4.3. Reliability Test

The study had used a popular measure of reliability coefficient alpha or Cronbach’s alpha (Malhotra and Peterson, 2006). The reliability study tested to ascertain the stability and consistency of measurement scale. The result of the scale was considered reliable as it produces consistent result when repeated measures are made (Hair et al., 2004). The composite reliability refers to a measure of the internal consistency of indicators to the construct, depicting the degree to which they indicate the corresponding latent construct (Hair, Anderson, Tatham & Black, 1998), the acceptable level of composite reliability is .70 the indicators for the latent construct are reliable and are measuring the same construct. In assessing the reliability of all the variables it shows that the level of alpha reliability increased from 0.941 to 0.944 which is very consistence for all items.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Constructs</th>
<th>Items</th>
<th>Number of Items</th>
<th>Cronbach’s Alpha</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Infrastructure Factors</td>
<td>- Architecture;</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0.811</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Building;</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Use of space.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Locations</td>
<td>- Hotel accessibility;</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0.878</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Tourist accessibility;</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Strategic spot;</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Shopping centre;</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Handicraft shop;</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Centre to Kuching.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Environment</td>
<td>- Clean and green;</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0.791</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Pollution free.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Image</td>
<td>- Socializing;</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>0.881</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Memorable;</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Relaxing;</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Sarawak Pride;</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Tourism asset;</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- New experience;</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Cultural heritage;</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Family;</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Friendly locals.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Value</td>
<td>- Attractions variety;</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0.789</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Educational;</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Shopping at site;</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Customer service.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recreation and Entertainment</td>
<td>- Night activity;</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0.741</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Children entertainment;</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Water activities;</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Indoor games;</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Cultural exhibition;</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Seasonal activity.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Restaurants and Eateries - Variety; - Fast food and café; - High class. 3 0.854

Safety and Security - Easy to get to; - Safe place; - Police and security; - Lighting; - CCTV. 5 0.876

Tourist Information Centre - Information centre; - Printed information; - Signage. 3 0.852

Facilities and Amenities - Car park; - Toilets; - Shades; - Seats and chairs; - Public transportation; - Recreation space; - Handicapped accessibility. 7 0.812

Visitors’ Satisfaction - Level of satisfaction; - Assessment of satisfaction. 2 0.867

Analysis of the Cronbach’s alpha of all the 11 variables (10 independent variables and 1 dependent variable) were above 0.70 as recommended by Hair et al. (2004), ranging from the 0.741 (recreation and entertainment) and to the highest 0.881 (image).

4.4 Multiple Regression Analysis

Multiple regression analysis is the appropriate technique to analyze the linear relationship between a dependent variable and multiple independent variables by estimating coefficients for the equation for a straight line (Hair, et al. 2006). Multiple regression analysis will be carried out to test all the ten hypotheses (H1 to H10) in this research.

The result of the multiple regression analysis for hypothesis 1 was presented in Table 4. The p value of the Infrastructure Factors (p=0.000) is less than alpha value of 0.05. However, the value of the unstandardized beta coefficient is 0.149. Therefore, the research concludes that Infrastructure Factors is significant positively related to the Visitors’ Satisfaction. Thus, hypothesis 1(H1) is supported.

The result of the multiple regression analysis for hypothesis 2 was presented in Table 4. The p value of the Location (p=0.232) is more than alpha value of 0.05. However, the value of the unstandardized beta coefficient is -0.032. Therefore, the research concludes that Location is not significantly related to the Visitors’ Satisfaction. Thus, hypothesis 2(H2) is rejected.

The result of the multiple regression analysis for hypothesis 3 was presented in Table 4. The p value of the Environment (p=0.232) is more than alpha value of 0.05. However, the value of the unstandardized beta coefficient is 0.057. Therefore, the research concludes that Environment is not significantly related to the Visitors’ Satisfaction. Thus, hypothesis 3(H3) is rejected.

The result of the multiple regression analysis for hypothesis 4 was presented in Table 4. The p value of the Image (p=0.002) is less than alpha value of 0.05. However, the value of
the unstandardized beta coefficient is 0.070. Therefore, the research concludes that Image is significant positively related to the Visitors’ Satisfaction. Thus, hypothesis 4(H4) is accepted.

The result of the multiple regression analysis for hypothesis 5 was presented in Table 4. The p value of the Value (p=0.623) is more than alpha value of 0.05. However, the value of the unstandardized beta coefficient is 0.020. Therefore, the research concludes that Value is not significantly related to the Visitors’ Satisfaction. Thus, hypothesis 5(H5) is rejected.

The result of the multiple regression analysis for hypothesis 6 was presented in Table 4. The p value of the Recreation and Entertainment (p=0.287) is more than alpha value of 0.05. However, the value of the unstandardized beta coefficient is 0.025. Therefore, the research concludes that Recreation and Entertainment is not significantly related to the Visitors’ Satisfaction. Thus, hypothesis 6(H6) is rejected.

The result of the multiple regression analysis for hypothesis 7 was presented in Table 4. The p value of the Restaurants and Eateries (p=0.703) is more than alpha value of 0.05. However, the value of the unstandardized beta coefficient is 0.016. Therefore, the research concludes that Restaurants and Eateries is not significantly related to the Visitors’ Satisfaction. Thus, hypothesis 7(H7) is rejected.

The result of the multiple regression analysis for hypothesis 8 was presented in Table 4. The p value of the Safety and Security (p=0.000) is less than alpha value of 0.05. However, the value of the unstandardized beta coefficient is 0.109. Therefore, the research concludes that Safety and Security is significant positively related to the Visitors’ Satisfaction. Thus, hypothesis 8(H8) is accepted.

The result of the multiple regression analysis for hypothesis 9 was presented in Table 4. The p value of the Tourist Information Centre (p=0.261) is more than alpha value of 0.05. However, the value of the unstandardized beta coefficient is 0.050. Therefore, the research concludes that Tourist Information Centre is not significantly related to the Visitors’ Satisfaction. Thus, hypothesis 9(H9) is rejected.

The result of the multiple regression analysis for hypothesis 10 was presented in Table 4. The p value of the Facilities and Amenities (p=0.151) is more than alpha value of 0.05. However, the value of the unstandardized beta coefficient is 0.024. Therefore, the research concludes that Facilities and Amenities is not significantly related to the Visitors’ Satisfaction. Thus, hypothesis 10(H10) is rejected.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>Unstandardized Beta Coefficients</th>
<th>t-value</th>
<th>Significant</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Infrastructure Factors (H1)</td>
<td>0.149</td>
<td>3.773</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Location (H2)</td>
<td>-0.032</td>
<td>-1.199</td>
<td>0.232</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Environment (H3)</td>
<td>0.057</td>
<td>1.198</td>
<td>0.232</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Image (H4)</td>
<td>0.070</td>
<td>3.158</td>
<td>0.002</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Value (H5)</td>
<td>0.020</td>
<td>0.492</td>
<td>0.623</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recreation and Entertainment (H6)</td>
<td>0.025</td>
<td>1.067</td>
<td>0.287</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In conclusion, the study also indicated the change of visitors’ satisfaction is explained 45.2% by the above independent variables or known as the determinants of visitors’ satisfaction. The regression equation is provided as followed:

Visitors’ Satisfaction = 0.789 + 0.149 Infrastructure Factors + 0.070 Image + 0.109 Safety and Security

5. CONCLUSION

5.1 Implications of Research Findings

The study provides the strengths and weaknesses of the Kuching Waterfront to the local and foreign tourists. The factors such as infrastructure factors, image, safety and security are very important to ensure a high level of visitors’ satisfaction toward the Kuching Waterfront.

From the findings, the research concludes that Kuching Waterfront needs to be “re-vamped” in certain areas to ensure the location remains relevant and continues to be an ideal tourism spot in Kuching.

5.2 Limitations of the Research

All research has its limitation thus it would encourage more research to be done to gather better and accurate findings for future improvement of Kuching Waterfront and further contributions to other waterfronts development in Malaysia in the future. The major limitations of this study were research scope and boundaries were not broad enough to cover many more areas to gather information such from Government Agency, Sarawak Tourism Boards, Ministry of Tourism and other nongovernmental organizations. The second major limitation was the lack of responses from local and foreign tourists and in future required more data from tourists.

5.3 Recommendation for the Future Research

For future research, it would be advisable to collect data intensively from other regions of Sarawak to obtain a better finding. In addition, more respondents from foreign tourists would be required to provide a better picture of Kuching Waterfront evaluations and
assessments. The future study should collect data from various stakeholders specifically residents, local and foreign tourists, tourism experts from Government Agencies, non-governmental organizations, businessmen and entrepreneurs for better evaluation and assessment in this study. The constructs were based on the literatures review thus it would be recommended other critical variables and constructs need to be included in the future research to achieve further insights in related to the Kuching Waterfront.

6. REFERENCES


48