



Capturing the Actual Perceived Image of International Urban Tourist During Visitation In Kuala Lumpur

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ABSTRACT

Destination image in Tourism Business District (TBD) especially in designated urban area often fail to capture real tourism image due to the nature that it was pre-conceive and portray from the view of supply side (or authorities and marketer). In other word, inaccurate image have been promoted from the view of supply-side rather than from demand-side (tourist). From the view of demand side, it was known in the existing literature that most of the tourism image studies focusing on measuring tourist perceived image using the idea of 'before and after' visitation (pre-visit and post-visit). However, a question arise as to how these efforts really capturing the actual image while tourist experiencing the site (during visit). In this context, the advancement in internet and sharing media technology using phone application increase the possibility in capturing 'real time' image or actual perceived image during the visit. One of them is using Volunteer Employed Photographer (VEP) technique. VEP give advantage in reducing cost of labor and equipment to collect the data since the respondent itself acting as a labor by using their own device to capture the image. The innovation and trend on smart phone for instance, allow tourist to capture high resolution photo and instantly shared. VEP in this case is a form of method in data collection that allow qualitative analysis in order to explore in depth the nature and formation of destination image. As Kuala Lumpur targeting to become a world class business city destination, an ideal destination image is critical and actual image will be able to portray correct positioning of the city tourism according to tourist perspective. This paper indicates preliminary findings of 116 international respondents on on-going survey in Kuala Lumpur business district or also known as golden triangle of Kuala Lumpur representing Bukit Bintang, Raja Chulan and Kuala Lumpur Convention Center (KLCC). The early findings suggest the need to facilitate theoretical integration of tourist-determined images with destination-determined images.

1. Introduction

Image is abstract and it includes two types of evaluations: a cognitive one related to beliefs (Crompton, 1979) and an affective one, covering feelings (Beerli, Diaz, & Pérez, 2002). Cognitive can also been referred perceptions that represent the views and opinions that the tourist holds about the characteristics and attributes of the object or place (Pike & Ryan, 2004), while affective evaluations include the affect and emotions regarding this object or place (Chen & Uysal, 2002; Kim & Richardson, 2003). Current studies also recognized the presence of a third image component, which is the conative one (Choi, Lethton, & Morrison, 2007), which results from cognitive and affective evaluations. The combination of both cognitive and affective elements forms the overall image that is reflected as a positive or negative evaluation by the tourist (Beerli et al., 2002).

Destinations now days becoming more important than one individual attraction as a result of increases in tourism demand for package holidays. As a result, when tourists visit a destination, they always seek more variety of experience at that destination. The tourist stay at a hotel, go outside the hotel to eat and drink, communicate with local people, shop, and visit cultural and historical venues. Thus, a trip becomes not a single product, but rather consists of different service components often provided by multiple organizations with different objectives (Kozak, 2003). In order to gain overall destination satisfaction, tourists have to be satisfied with all the services they receive (Chen & Kerstetter, 1999). This will give a view on the importance of understanding destination image when explaining tourist behavior. Destination image thus not only influences the destination choice during the tourist decision-making process (Crompton & Ankomah, 1993), but also affects post-decision-making behavior (Bigne', Sanchez, & Schancez, 2001). That post-decision-making

behavior can include participation (onsite experience), evaluation (satisfaction), and loyalty (intention to revisit) (Chen & Tsai, 2007).

Large cities becoming the main destinations that selected by domestic or international tourist now days. As Ashworth describes it (1989), cities are the main areas which generate tourist flow. Due to this, tourism begins to play more significant role in the economic, social and spatial development of large cities (Maitland and Newman 2009; Page and Hall 2003: 3). Projecting an ideal destination image will help the cities development well-organized. Getz (1993) clarifies how the term Tourism Business District (TBD) can be used to describe concentrations of visitor-oriented attractions and services located in conjunction with the urban Central Business District (CBD) functions'. The TDB basically is a combination of tourist attractions and CBD functions, including offices, retail, government, meetings and essential services, such as transport, catering, accommodation and information. Getz also identify challenges that related to the TBD planning process which one of them is using tourism as a catalyst in order to attract other development/ investments. Tourism too can be used to generate a positive image of the area, facilitate conservation and amenity provision through tourism.

2. Theoretical Background

Defining an exact meaning of the term 'tourist destination image' is challenging. The term has been used widely in a variety of contexts, including those relating to the destination images projected by tourism promoters, the publicly held and the destination images held by individuals. Understanding tourist destination images are important because they influence both the decision making behavior of potential tourists and the levels of satisfaction regarding the tourist experience. As Mayo (1975, p. 15) states in his article, the image of a destination area is a critical factor in a tourist's destination choice process. However, either an image is a true representation that being offer to the tourist is not important as the existence of the image in the mind of the person itself. Marketers always are interested in the concept of tourist destination image mainly because it relates to decision-making and sales of tourist products and services. According to MacInnis and Price (1987), imagery involves the whole consumption experience. Destinations serve different roles for tourists and, consequently, tourists consume destinations differently.

However, at its core, tourism involves the movement of people through time and space and, as such; differences in consumption styles should be reflected by differences in movement patterns. Before purchase, indirect consumption may influence through imagery. Throughout consumption, imagery can be added value and increase satisfaction. After consumption, imagery can be reconstructive in a person remembers the experience through memories and vacation souvenirs. Understanding the differing images shows that difference types of tourist have on a destination. This information is invaluable, enabling the significant attributes of the simple image and the re-evaluated image that can be merged into tourism marketing planning (Selby and Morgan, 1996, p. 288). Marketers can also use imagery to increase remembered satisfaction and to encourage repeat purchases of holidays.

Understanding tourist perceived image at the destination level will show their overall destination image experience. To provide comprehensive Tourism Destination Image (TDI), a review and discussion of existing theoretical literature about conceptualizing the TDI, and an analysis and classification of methodologies that used for its measurement is needed. (Gallarza et al 2002). Early tourism image research established the concept as critical to destination success. After Echtner & Ritchie

introduced a destination image component and being accepted by the research community, attention then focused on different methods to assess images (Tasci, Gartner 2007). Destination image in Tourism Business District (TBD) especially in designated urban area often fail to capture real tourism image due to the nature that it was pre-conceive and portray from the view of supply side (or authorities and marketer). In other word, inaccurate image have been promoted from the view of supply-side rather than from demand-side (tourist). An ideal tourism destination image should be portraying from the viewpoint of the tourist since they will actually experience the destination.

From the perspective of demand-side image, there are three stage of image that wandering in the mind of the tourists; Pre-visit, During-visit and Post-visit. Most of the studies on destination image focusing on the Pre and Post-visit even though During-visit is more crucial to be captured. Capturing tourist perceived image during their experience the destination is crucial since it's represent their actual image towards the place. Satisfaction with a visited destination depends not only on the configuration of ideal images held before visitation, but also on experiences while at the destination, since these influence the actual images (Ross 1991, Tasci, Gartner, 2007, Chen & Funk, 2010).

Promoting an image that not represents the actual destination will not satisfy tourist perceived value, expectation and loyalty toward the tourism destination. This scenario will hugely affect tourist level of satisfaction and expectation that also influence their tendency to revisit the destination. In order to promoting a good tourism destination image, tourism planner and local authorities must recognize first how the tourist consume the destination. Different types of tourist reflect different types of consumption style and different consumption style reflect difference in movement pattern. Understand how the tourist consumes and move in the destination can give knowledge to authorities in developing a destination images that can match the tourist satisfaction, expectation and of course revisit the destination.

3. Methodology

From past two decades, there have been plenty and diverse approaches on destination images study'' totaling 65 works, between 1971 and 1999, as identified by the thorough synoptic work of Gallarza et al (2002), as well as Pike (2002) who reviewed 142 papers on the subject of destination image. However, as Baloglu and McCleary suggest, "most studies have largely focused on its static structure by examining the relationship between image and behavior" (1999) from a construct measurement perspective. Studies before this tend to have concentrated on the relationship between place image and an excess of variables such as destination preference and visitation intention; tourists' geographical locations; trip purpose; destination familiarity and the impact of previous visitation; situational or temporal influences; the image as projected by tourism boards; and tourists' socio-demographical variables.

One of the most influential and cited studies on destination image was published by Echtner and Ritchie (1993, 2003), making several points. The first one is that place image should be intended as having two main components: attribute-based and holistic. The second is that each of these components contains functional (or more tangible) and psychological (or more abstract) characteristics. The third and final point is that images of destinations can include "common" functional

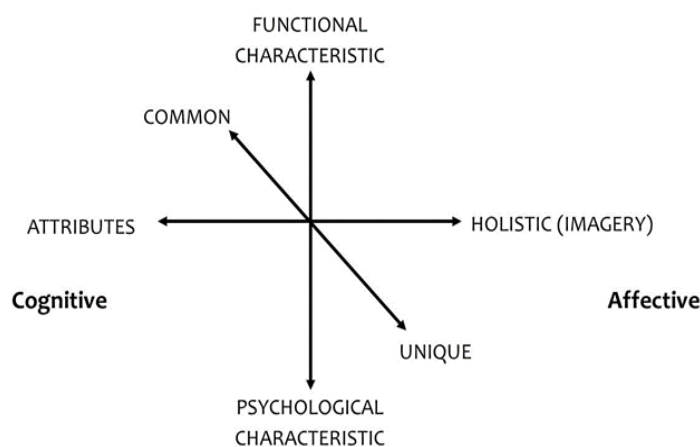


Figure 1: The component of destination images (Echtner & Ritchie, 1993)

and psychological traits (components) or more distinctive or even unique features, events, feelings, and auras. This would suggest that there are many aspects involved in expressing the total image in the mind of the tourist. The three-dimensional model imagined by Echtner and Ritchie (2003:43) is shown in Figure 1, together with some examples for the six components. As a result of the complexity of the construct, Echtner and Ritchie (1993) have proposed that in order to capture and measure destination images a combination of structured and unstructured methodologies is needed.

They suggest open-ended, semi-structured questionnaires to capture holistic components and more characteristic or unique features of the image. A structured attribute-based 8-factor scale like Likert Scale is produced to measure image performance across destinations. Current studies merely emphasize the second attribute-based approaches to assessing image. Gallarza et al conclude that “for the most part, there is a combination of multivariate and bivariate techniques, with a greater or lesser presence of qualitative techniques in the preliminary steps. Very few studies use qualitative methods as the main technique. Among all collection procedures, the seven-point Likert Scale is the most commonly used” when measuring image attributes and factors (2002:67). Such studies must, however, be limited because they cannot consider and capture the holistic nature and subjective perspective of the individual or the destination’s unique image characteristics (Echtner and Ritchie 2003; Tapachai and Waryszak 2000). Bigne’ and Sa’ nchez support this when they state that “the sum of the attribute scores is not an adequate measurement of the overall image” (2001:611).

Since the existing methodologies used in current studies on destination image does not capturing an overall image, an alternative method is needed to help researcher to measure overall tourism destination images that can be explained through holistic nature and subjective perspective of the individual. If the research reveals the wrong results due to methodological mistakes or faulty interpretations by the researchers, the destination might run the risk of spending tourism resources for the wrong purposes. (Tasci, Gartner and Cavusgil, 2007).

The tourist photographs in this study were collected using visitor-employed photography (VEP). This was first used as a practical research technique in the early 1970s by Cherem and Traweck (1977), being later developed by Cherem and Driver (1983) and Chenoweth (1984) in

the context of wilderness-area management. Since then it has been used in a variety of contexts, including the analysis of outdoor experiences, landscape preferences, and community planning (e.g., Dakin 2003; Loeffler 2004; Oku and Fukamachi 2006; OPENspace 2005; Schuster, Johnson, and Taylor 2004; Stedman et al. 2004; Taylor et al. 1995; Yamashita 2002). The technique has also been used to study children’s experiences and perceptions of place (e.g., Dodman 2003; Douglas 1998; Germain 2004).

Other research applications are in the field of health and well-being, where the technique has been used to investigate the experiences of both health practitioners and patients (e.g., Hurworth et al. 2005; Rapport, Doel, and Elwyn 2007). A large number of personality research studies have also used the technique to explore the question “Who am I?” (for a review, see Burke and Dollinger 2005), the first being conducted in the early 1980s by Ziller and Lewis (1981). Other researchers in the field of health studies have used the technique as a tool of action research, with the intention of empowering participants and thereby to influence policy agendas and public opinion (e.g., Wang and Burris 1997). Although the application of VEP can interpret the intimate relationship that exists between photography and the tourist experience, there have been relatively few applications of VEP in the field of tourism. Prominent exceptions include the work of Haywood (1990), who examines tourists’ perceptions of the city of Toronto; Jutla (2000), who compares tourists’ and residents’ visual images of the hill town of Simla in India; Groves and Timothy (2001), who use VEP to measure the importance to tourists’ satisfaction of particular components of a trip to Quebec City; and MacKay and Couldwell (2004), who examine the visual components of the tourist image of an outdoor heritage museum in Canada.

While all of the studies noted above employ some variant of the basic VEP technique, there has been a tendency for different researchers to claim it as their own, naming it according to the use to which the technique is being put (Balomenou 2007). For the purposes of this study, researcher using termed for this technique is “visitor employed photography.” This is simply because it is the more widely known term in the field of tourism, travel, and recreation. The reason why application of VEP studies in the tourism context is still remains as question. Even though the studies of the role of the photograph in tourism have been acknowledge, the tendency has more towards employ photographs taken by professional photographers for the purposes of promoting a tourism destination in brochures, guidebooks, and advertisements, rather than photographs taken by the tourists themselves. Indeed, most of the previous studies in this area, such as those by Edelman (2007), Hunter (2008), Pritchard (2001) and Scarles (2004), rely on pictures used by the tourism industry to illustrate particular destinations in their brochures.

While tourism studies have sometimes used photographs, mostly in the context of research into the images that tourists (potential or actual) hold of destinations, these are normally “found” images (Feighey 2003) insofar as the images have been created by the tourism industry and already exist in various media such as brochures and internet. Such research typically involves people being shown photographs of particular destinations and asked to respond verbally to them (MacKay and Couldwell 2004; Pike 2002). The use of VEP is particularly appropriate in the context of this study because it employs photographs that have been taken by tourists themselves, who act as an active role in the research as generators of the pictures, rather than passive respondents. According to Urry’s view, tourists are both receivers and modifiers of tourism images. This implies that their role is not an insignificant one and must be clearly incorporated into an empirical investigation of the

tourist perceived image.

4. Sampling

The study starts in January 2015 at the Kuala Lumpur City Center, well-known as Golden Triangle of Kuala Lumpur. Sample selection for the VEP survey was based on the train station that located within the Golden Triangle that consist of three major railway line which are Kuala Lumpur Monorail, Ampang Line and Kelana Jaya Line. From 17 stations that located in the area, only 8 stations are selected for purposed of this study. The selection are based on the previous pilot survey that referring by concentration of international tourist flow. Through this procedure, 116 VEP survey, using respondent own phones or cameras, instructions to respondents were distribute to the person.

Participants were requested to take a photograph scene when visiting the urban area either positive or negative images. Ensuring that the main subject of the photograph was identified by the visitor (i.e., photographer) is critical to accurate image assessment, as a researcher's judgment of the photograph's subject may not be correct. Visitors also were requested to note the main reason they took the picture and whether the image was positive or negative. The participants were required to share their image through internet sharing medium such as Dropbox, Sendspace, and etc... With this procedure, participants will have freedom in term of time since they are not required to return back to the place where they started the survey.

Participants also required answering simple questionnaire before they started the tour. The purpose of the socio demographic questionnaire was to collect basic information on the participant's age and gender, as well as to identify how long they were staying in the area and whether they were a first-time or repeat visitor. Previous studies using the VEP research suggest that such variables can be important determinants of the content of photographs taken by participants and it was important to test whether this might be the case in the present study and to allow for such effects in the subsequent content analysis of the photographs.

In processes of analyzing the photographic data, researchers began by organizing the pictures. Each photograph was numbered based on the diary ID number and the order in which the photographs were taken. Photographs were content analyzed based on visitors' descriptions of the pictorial content (subjects and reasons). The analysis moved through stages from a descriptive phase, to an analytic phase, to an interpretive phase (Yin 1989). Descriptive statistics were used to profile respondents and to tabulate frequencies for photograph subjects and rationales for selection.

5. Selected Result

The results reported here provide a brief overview of the findings. Several examples are offered to illustrate the unique characteristics of the VEP technique, the data, and results generated. The intent of the selected results and discussion presented is not to clarify fully their contribution to destination image research but to demonstrate an application of this research tool in image measurement.

Rate of completion is 77% from 151 respondents that participate in the survey indicate a good return rate. The 116 respondents produced a total of 2,249 images and around 2000 of them were successfully developed and suited to being analyzed. Since the research targeting tourist perceived image during their visits, their emotion that persuade

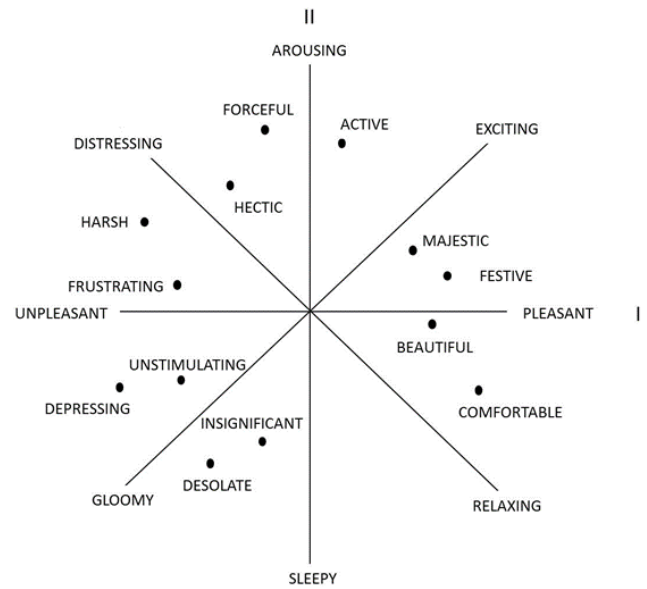


Figure 2: Two principal components of 21 clusters of adjectives descriptive of the affective quality of places (Russell & Pratt, 1980)

them to take a picture is vital information for researcher where this will indicated their affective image of destination. The picture will be group based on the two principal components of 21 clusters of adjectives descriptive of the affective quality of places introduce by Russell & Pratt (Refer Figure 2).

From the total image captured, 95% of the images taken by the participants located at the quadrant I and quadrant IV. Only 5% located at the quadrant III, while there are no pictures that fall into quadrant II. This scenario indicated that the Kuala Lumpur City Center give a drastic image alterations to the tourist when they experience the destination. The number of pictures taken by each respondent ranged

Table 1: Summary of VEP Data Collection

VEP Survey	Total
Respondent	151
Completely Returned	116
Response Rate	77%
Photographs	
Taken	2,249
Usable for analyzing	Around 2000
Positive image	1,463
Negative image	537
No. of Reason	35

from 5 to 25. The average number of pictures taken by the respondents was 18. All the respondents provided a positive and negative image of the destination for each photograph taken, and most participants (69%) indicated reasons for all of their photographs. The content analysis of photographic of positive and negative image and reasons for taking the pictures resulted as Table 1.

The most popular attraction that respondents take photographs was at Kuala Lumpur Convention Center (KLCC), which accounted for just over 31% of all pictures. Another popular venue was the Petaling Street, which are located near the Old Kuala Lumpur City Center that give excellent view and great experience in term of cultural and shopping. Based on the all the photographs taken, it was obvious that most image included no people interfere at all. This may due to the nature of the research, which involved respondents to take pictures for the benefit of the researchers rather than for themselves. Reasons that respondents note when they taking a picture as contributing most to site image ranged from the unique, "the only twin tower that in the list the tallest," to the predictable, "amazing building." Two consistent subjects that revealed why respondents took their pictures are closed related to aesthetics and nostalgia. Aesthetics can be related to the design or tangible elements of the subject. Nostalgia related as a reminder of personal memories, and linked historical and individual significance.

There were some significant differences in the content of the picture taken by first-time and repeat tourists. First-time tourists tend to visit as many as attraction available on the destination while repeated tourists more selective with their itinerary. Based on the preliminary finding, 93% of the first-time tourists visit all the attraction that been promoted by authorities either through internet or hard copies. This shows that they have higher possibility being influence by the image projected before they arrive at the destination. There have an issue raised about applying VEP technique on surrounded whose decision it was to take the picture. Because of very few people were visiting alone, respondents exposed that they sometimes felt pressure from someone in their group on what picture to take in.

6. Conclusion

The image that in the mind from the first-time tourist is very crucial since it create potential for loyalty and good word of mouth. First-time visitors have higher possibilities being influence by the projected image that being promoted by the authorities before they visit the area. As a first time tourists, they will be leaded to visit the place that being in their mind when they arriving to the destination. During the process, the image can be altered either the pre image meet the real image or not when they experience the place. In this stage, tourist may perceive a positive or negative image and this will lead to their satisfaction. First-time visitors tend to capture an image that represents the projected image of destination. They also started the tour by visit as many attractions as they can base on the projected image they receive before arrive at the destination. This situation gives the higher possibilities for the first time tourist to perceive more negative image towards destination compared to the repeated visitors.

Repeated tourists in the other hand becoming more blend with the destination environment because they more selective with their choices of attraction and lead them to capture more positive image of the destination. This is due to their preference on visiting a places or attractions that they get good experience from their first visit at the

destination. However, when the tourists start feeling comfortable with the environment they will try to accept the new environment and makes them to explore new attraction. This scenario make the repeated tourist to find a places or attractions that not on the list of attraction being promoted by the authorities which will make repeated tourist becoming a first time tourist. All of this circumstance giving an opportunities for authorities to find or recognized the potential places or areas that been portray by repeated tourist as positive images.

Based on the preliminary findings, the actual images that perceived by the tourist during experiencing the destination may help the authorities to take into consideration when they want to promoted the tourism destination image. Image perceived by the first time tourist can be used as indicator on how far the image projected by authorities really meets the image perceived by the tourists when their experience the destination. The image portray by the repeated tourist on the other hand can be valuable for the authorities to recognize the potential places or areas that not in the list of destination attractions.

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