Perceived Authenticity as a Determinant to Revisit Heritage Tourism Sites in Penang

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ABSTRACT
Heritage tourism is one of the fastest-growing segments that can be classified as the peculiar fraction in tourism industry. The popularity of heritage tourism escalates as the segment provides diversity of and variation of cultural and heritage elements that offer more authentic experience to the visitors. Undeniably, Malaysia and her neighbouring country Indonesia are the main destinations in Asia that flourishes with culture and heritage elements. However, in terms of preservation, promoting and marketing aspects, Malaysia is lagging behind Indonesia. As a recent success, Indonesia managed to obtain 11 Indonesian heritage recognized by UNESCO. There must be an underpinning reason why only few location in Malaysia able to obtain UNESCO's recognition as a world heritage sites. Moreover, it is afraid that the heritage tourism product in Malaysia is losing the touch of authenticity and originality to capture and sustain the tourist market. Significantly, the issue of authenticity and originality are the foremost to determine the magnitude of the success of heritage tourism. Therefore, the study has two (2) main objectives: (1) to examine the relationship of perceived authenticity and satisfaction to revisit Penang, (2) to analyze the role of perceived authenticity as a measure in shaping tourist’s satisfaction in revisiting Penang.

Keywords: Penang, perceived authenticity, revisit intention, tourist satisfaction.

INTRODUCTION
The growth of tourism industry provides numerous advantages which in turn will benefits the country and residents in terms of monetary and recognition (Liu, Feng & Yang, 2011; Mensah-Ansah, Martin & Egan, 2011; Waligo, Clarke & Hawkins, 2012). In the interim, the globalization of tourism industry became the major reason in developing modern infrastructures such as hotels, tourist attractions, recreation areas and other infrastructures to accommodate the demand from the mass tourist. Inevitably, the development has catalyst the growth of heritage tourism market. However, as the tourism industry became to globalize, heritage has become a commodity or a product that attracts people to come to cherish and learn (Mohamed, 2005). Mohamed (2005) revealed that post-modernism has brought up the value of heritage, and tourism has
not only glorified it but pressures for tourism development, in some cases, bring the downfall of heritage sites worldwide.

Heritage tourism, as a part of the broader category of “cultural tourism,” is now a major pillar of the nascent tourism strategy of many countries (Huh, 2002). Heritage is one of the important segments of the tourism industry in Malaysia. Malaysia and her neighbouring country Indonesia are the main destinations in Asia that flourish with culture and heritage elements. However, as highlighted earlier, if Malaysia is to be compared with Indonesia, there is still an elongated way to be at least at par. This scenario is due to Indonesia recent success to obtain 11 heritages recognized by UNESCO while Malaysia obtained only 4 recognitions from UNESCO. Thus, the gap has reveal that the issue of authenticity and originality are the foremost notion to determine the magnitude and success of heritage tourism.

Consequently, the study has two (2) main objectives (1) to examine the relationship of perceived authenticity and satisfaction to revisit Penang, (2) to analyze the role of perceived authenticity as a measure in shaping tourist’s satisfaction in revisiting Penang. The findings of this conceptual paper will indicate a distinct relationship between tourists’ perceptions of a site relative to their own heritage and the motivations for revisit the site. The study contributes to the understanding of tourist behaviours relative to heritage settings along with implications for the marketing of heritage settings.

**Authenticity**

The issue of authenticity is a serious consideration in heritage studies (Apostolakis, 2003; Mkono, 2013; Timothy & Prideaux, 2004; Zhou, Zhang & Edelheim, 2013). Numerous studies in heritage addressed the issue of experiences in relation with authenticity (Chhabra, Healy & Sills, 2003; Jamal & Hill, 2004; Halewood & Hannam, 2001; Wang, 1999). The authenticity of heritage and historic experiences is a complex issue, but it is of sufficient importance to warrant attention to ensure the primacy of visitor experiences (Prideaux and Timothy, 2008).

Few researchers (Kolar and Zabkar, 2010; Harvey, 2004; Taylor, 2001), declared that the issue of authenticity in heritage tourism is indistinguishable and debatable. Thus, it has made authenticity one of the focal issues among the researchers for the past few decades. Authenticity is often staged and commoditized to meet the needs of the tourist (Chhabra, 2005). These criteria were uniqueness and originality, workmanship, aesthetics, cultural and historic integrity, craftsperson and materials, shopping experience, and genuineness (Chhabra, 2005).

Most researchers believed that authenticity can profile tourists’ experience, and able to improve it. Tourists’ perception towards the authenticity of a particular heritage sites is one of the underlying factors which determine their decision to travel to a destination (Chhabra, 2010; Kolar & Zabkar, 2010; Tasci & Knutson, 2004). Therefore, it is vital to understand the motivation and behaviour as well as strategic and tactical implications concerning tourist destination management (Kolar and Zabkar, 2010). Apostolakis (2003) contended that the concept of authenticity is of pivotal significance in
heritage tourism settings due to authenticity as the main attribute that brings the two component part (tourist and attraction) together.

**Satisfaction**

The study of tourist satisfaction and motivation towards the destination has long been studied by several researchers and now it is considered as one of the superseded issues. Notwithstanding, it is one of the vital issues that need to be explored in the fullness of time due to its ability to enhance the tourist eagerness to revisit apart from achieving the destination goals in providing tremendous experience to the tourist. Taking into consideration of the magnitude of tourist behavior towards tourism industry and particularly to heritage destination, the concern of tourist satisfaction can be pondered as vital as it will contribute to the growth of the industry (Bhat & Qadir, 2013) and to enhance the tourist’s intention to revisit (Al-Rafaie, Ko & Li, 2012). Tourist satisfaction determines the success of the destination in complying with the tourist preferences (Maroofi & Dehghan, 2012).

Generally, tourist’s satisfaction can be examined after the occurrence of the purchasing process and beyond doubt after the tourist experiences it by his or herself. The questions about satisfaction need to be understood as it has the compelling influence towards tourist behavior intention positively or negatively. As stated in many tourism literatures, there are many significance values from the tourist’s satisfaction during their visit in the heritage destination. Accordingly, Qin and Prүbutok (2009) noted customer satisfaction is viewed as influencing repurchase intentions and behavior, which, in turn, leads to an organization’s future revenue and profits. Kozak, (2001) asserted that satisfaction in tourism study is considered as a central concept in the study of tourist behavior.

Under that circumstance, this issue has once more turn out to be the major concentration of several researchers in the field of tourism that have found numerous antecedents that strongly associated to revisit intention (Assaker, Vinzi & O’Connor, 2011; George & George, 2004; Hong, Lee, Lee & Jang, 2009; Jang & Feng, 2007; Katircioglu, 2009; Kozak, 2001; Um, Chon & Ro, 2006).

**Revisit Intention**

In a similar context, revisit intention is crucial as this behaviour will flourish the industry (Feng, 2007) as it eventually will prosper the particular heritage destination. Revisit intention is decisive in assuring the prosperity of a particular tourism destination apart from recommending (Chen & Tsai, 2007). Som and Badarneh (2011) disclosed that revisit intention also enhance the international tourism flow to a particular country. Due to the significance of revisit intention towards the industry, numerous literature have discussed on this noteworthy issue. However, there is little attention of revisit intention in the context of heritage tourism. Therefore, the need to investigate the relationship of perceived authenticity and revisit intention is important, as this significant sector is crucial to the industry.

According to Chen and Tsai (2007) perceived trip quality, perceived value and overall satisfaction will further enhance the tourists’ intention to revisit and recommend to others.
Conversely, according to Um et al. (2006) the antecedents for satisfaction constructs are attractive, quality, customer value and images will help them to constantly study on the revisit intention to a destination. They found that the most prominent antecedent of revisiting intention and the strongest indicator of satisfaction is perceived attractiveness. Meanwhile, revisit intention together with word of mouth publicity, price sensitivity, spending behaviour and spending risk are the main variables that contribute to a market development (Petrick, 2004).

On the other hand, in other literature, revisit intention is caused by the tourists’ novelty-seeking and destination satisfaction (Jang & Feng, 2007; Som & Badarneh, 2011). Conventionally, satisfaction derives when quality of service obtain by the customer surpasses the customer expectation. According to Um et al. (2006), revisit intention has been regarded as an extension of satisfaction rather than an initiator of revisiting decision making process. Kozak (2001) asserted that satisfaction in tourism study is considered a central concept in the study of tourists’ behaviour. Indeed, although the number of previous visits and the level of overall satisfaction are considerable influences to revisit intention, the maturity of destinations is also an important stimulus (Um et al., 2006).

CONCLUSION

Understanding tourists’ revisit intention in heritage sites can be considered as a multifaceted task. It is a complex task, yet it provides numerous economic and social benefits to the various organizations that related to the tourism industry. In the interim, perceived authenticity is among the most influential predictor of revisit intention, particularly to heritage destination. Authenticity plays an important role to every heritage destination and it is also one of the major attribute that magnetize tourist to visit and later to revisit the destination. Therefore, it is expected that the outcome of this conceptual study will help to enhance body of literature in revisit intention to heritage sites in Penang.

REFERENCE


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