

UNDERSTANDING THE ROLE OF SOCIO- DEMOGRAPHIC FACTORS AND VACATION MOTIVES IN VACATIONER'S DECISION MAKING PROCESS: A CASE OF LANGKAWI ISLAND

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This study was designed to identify the relative importance vacation motives as perceived by the tourist visiting Langkawi Island, Kedah, Malaysia. In addition, this study also explored the underlying dimensions of the vacation motives and determinants factors. Questionnaires were distributed using convenient sampling utilizing 252 tourists and were analyzed using SPSS program. Analysis of variance (ANOVA) was deployed to determine whether the derived vacation motives and determinants varied among groups of socio-demographic and travelling characteristics. The findings indicated that the social-demographic factors placed a great influence on the perception of tourist towards Langkawi Island. Travel motivations and determinants were found to be significantly different in means when compared across different socio-demographic factors like age and income level. The findings also revealed the important segmentation

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variables in the context of consumer behavior literature where it became the contributing factors to develop appropriate marketing strategies to attract travelers.

Keywords: *Vacation motives; Vacation factors; Socio-demographic, Tourism marketing*

INTRODUCTION

Vacation decision making is often regarded as a high-risk decision to be made because vacationer can neither directly observed what is being bought, nor try it out personally before the decision is made. In addition, vacation decision making is a multidimensional process which include the sub-decision making to be made on different attributes such as choice of destination, type of accommodation, mode of transportation, kinds of activities, price level, and others. Heung, Qu, and Chu (2001) defined vacation motives as a set of attributes that aggregated together and describe a place as a travel destination. Existing researches on the other hand highlights that vacation decision making process is a function of the multi attributes vacationer perceived and of the importance of those attributes to the individual (Goodrich, 1978).

Collaboratively, many researches have been conducted to identify possible vacation motives that can be used to segment vacationer into homogenous groups. Many tourism literatures have proposed different segmentation criteria and the most widely used is socio-demographic criteria. With the increasing complexity in tourism products and competition, the need to classify vacationers is increasingly important. Such topologies can be used in day-to-day operations for tourism authorities that allows them to be better informed and understood on the inter-relationships between their offering and vacationer's demand. Therefore, to further understand the relationship, Langkawi Island is chosen that suit the purpose as

one of the best tourism destination in Malaysia. This study determine to achieve the following research objectives:

- a. To identify the relative importance of vacation motives perceived by vacationer when visiting Langkawi Island.
- b. To examine how vacation motives change respectively to different socio-demographic factors for vacationers visiting Langkawi Island.
- c. To examine the significant differences between demographic factors and vacation characteristics.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Vacation Motivation

An understanding of vacationer's motivation is crucial to develop appropriate marketing strategies. Tourism marketers will be benefited if they are able to predict the likely choice of destination and the types of activities vacationers would like to engage. Therefore, there are corresponding needs to understand further the vacation motivation. Firstly, motivation drives vacationer's behavior as it arouses, directs, and integrates behavior (Fodness, 1994). Secondly, motivation will determine vacationer's choice of destination and help to explain their preference over certain vacation activities (Moscardo, Morrison, Pearce, Lang, & O'Leary, 1996). Thirdly, vacationer's motivation varies across different individuals; failure in identifying this variation may hamper the design of vacation service offering to meet the vacationer's demand (Beh & Bruyere, 2007).

Various theories and models have been introduced to explain about the motivations. One of the most widely cited model is the push-pull model (Crompton, 1979). This model decomposed

vacationer's motivation to choose a vacation destination by largely depending on two factors which are the push-factor and the pull-factor respectively. The push-factor pushes vacationers away from home. This includes the internal or emotional aspects such as the desire for escape, rest and relaxation, adventure or social interaction (Baloglu & Uysal, 1996). On the other hand, the pull-factor is reinforced by the push-factor. Typical pull-factor includes external, situational or cognitive aspects associated with the destination itself (Devesa, Laguna, & Palacoi, 2010). Pull factors include leisure facilities, cultural or natural features, convenience, accessibility, and transportation (Devasa et al., 2010).

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN VACATION MOTIVATION AND SOCIO-DEMOGRAPHIC FACTORS

Earlier researches showed that socio-demographic and trip variables affected perceptions of a destination image (Woodside & Lysonski, 1989). Many researches also proved that socio-demographic factors such as age, income level, education level, and occupation are important factors in affecting vacationers' perceptions towards a vacation destination (Zimmer, Brayley, & Searke, 1995; McCleary & Weaver, 1992; Goodall & Ashworth, 1988). Their findings are pretty much consistent in the recent studies where motivations may differ because of socio-demographic factors. For instance gender, age, BMI, education, occupation, and income were positively significant with the swimming activity (Biernat, 2012). Study also demonstrated that marital status affects the tourist activity (Biernat & Vikuk, 2012). On the other hand, nationality also positively correlate with the vacation motivations (Prayag & Ryan, 2011). In addition, O'Connell (2010) revealed that age, gender, and level experience affects the motivation to involve in sea kayak.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

A structured questionnaire survey was conducted to understand the role of socio-demographic factors and vacation motives in vacationer's decision making process among the vacationers visiting Langkawi Island. The data was gathered using convenient sampling approach in most of the tourist attraction points in Langkawi.

The questionnaire consisted of two sections. In the first section, respondents were asked to express their trip characteristics. For example, their experienced with Langkawi island (i.e. first time or frequent visitors), prior destination before coming to Langkawi and also next destination after this vacation, information about the island, mode of transportation and the reasons on choosing Langkawi at the specific time. In the second section, respondents were required to rate nine vacations motives and ten specialties of Langkawi Island for the leisure travel on a five-point Likert scale (1= extremely unimportant, and 5 = extremely important). Existing literatures stated that a total of 33 vacation motives had been identified in various studies (Zimmer et al., 1995; Woodside & Lysonski, 1989; Goodall & Ashworth, 1988). This study refined and condensed these 33 vacation motives to only 11 after a thorough discussion with a group of experts including tourism authority and agents. In the third section, the questionnaire was designed to capture respondents' socio-demographic characteristics.

The data collection were then analysed using statistical package for social science version 18 (SPSS 18). One-way ANOVA (analysis of variance) test coupled with post hoc multiple comparison were used to test the significant difference among the vacations motives across different socio-demographic factors.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

A total of 252 vacationers were surveyed in this study. The majority of the respondents were male (64.3%) and most of them were aged between 20 to 25 years old. 59.5% or the majority of them were single and 50% of them were employed. Besides that, 47.6% of them were vacationers from Malaysia. In regards to the education levels, 45.2% of them hold a university degree. There were three distinctive income group in this study. 35.7% of them having an annual income of below RM20,000, 26.2% of them having an annual income more than RM60,000, and 23.8% of them earning around RM30,001 to RM40,000 per year. The descriptive analysis of the vacationers' socio demographic factors are shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Socio-Demographic Profile

Socio-Demographic Factors	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender		
Male	162	64.3
Female	90	35.7
Total	252	100
Age		
Below 20	18	7.1
20 to 25	114	45.2
26 to 30	54	21.4
31 to 35	30	11.9
36 to 40	24	9.5
40 and above	12	4.8
Total	252	100
Marital Status		
Single	150	59.5
Married	96	38.1
Divorced	6	2.4
Total	252	100

Socio-Demographic Factors	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Employment Status		
Employed	126	50
Self-Employed	24	9.5
Unemployed	12	4.8
Student	84	33.3
Other	6	2.4
Total	252	100
Origin		
Malaysian	120	47.6
East Asia	18	7.1
Middle East	30	11.9
South-East Asia	30	11.9
Europe	30	11.9
Australia	18	7.1
Other	6	2.4
Total	252	100
Education Level		
Primary	18	7.1
Secondary	12	4.8
High school/College	102	40.5
University	114	45.2
Informal Education	6	2.4
Total	252	100
Annual Income Level		
Below RM20,000	90	35.7
RM20,001 to RM30,000	6	2.4
RM30,001 to RM40,000	60	23.8
RM40,001 to RM50,000	12	4.8
RM50,001 to RM60,000	18	7.1
RM60,001 and above	66	26.2
Total	252	100

Based on Table 2, in regards to the vacation motives, significant differences were found on ‘peace and quiet’, ‘value for money’, and ‘promotion and publicity’ between genders. Age group

showed a great power in affecting the vacationer's vacation motives in all contexts. Besides that, marital status also affected the vacationer's rating decision on 'clean and clear water', 'interesting activities', and 'promotion and publicity'. Moreover, employment status also affected the rating of 'beautiful scenery', 'clean and clear water', 'good services', 'peace and quiet', 'abundance of coral and marine life', and 'promotion and publicity'. On the other hand, this result illustrated that vacationers coming from different countries will perceive the vacation motives differently and the results were significant across all the vacation motives. Education level was a powerful factor in shaping different rating on vacation motives. The analysis showed all the vacation motives were significant different across many vacation motives except 'peace and quiet'. Lastly, different annual income levels also affect their rating on many vacation motives except 'interesting activities' and 'good facilities'.

Referring to Table 3, vacationers' perception toward Langkawi as a special vacation destination comparing to the other tourist destinations in Malaysia, gender and marital status were found to be insignificant factor to affect their perception. In spite of that, vacationers coming from different age groups were found to have significantly different perception of the specialty of Langkawi except 'peace and quiet' and 'value for money'. Besides that, vacationers also rate 'beautiful scenery', 'clean and clear water', and 'good services' significantly difference across different employment status. Moreover, there was a significant difference of rating on the specialty of Langkawi across vacationers who come from different countries. On the other hand, education level was also proved to have an impact towards the rating on many Langkawi's specialty, except "peace and quiet' and 'value for money'. Finally, vacationers with different annual income level rate the Langkawi's specialty differently, expect 'good facilities'.

Table 2. ANOVA analysis on mean differences of vacation motives

Socio Demographic factors	Motives to Choose Langkawi as Vacation Destination								
	Beautiful Scenery	Clean and Clear Water	Good Services	Interesting Activities	Good Facilities	Peace and Quiet	Value for Money	Abundance of Coral and Marine Life	Promotion and Publicity
Gender	t = -1.570	t = -1.488	t = -1.684	t = 0.450	t = -0.849	t = -2.750***	t = -2.968***	t = -0.841	t = -3.854***
Male	4.08	3.73	3.43	3.84	3.58	3.73	3.39	3.42	3.24
Female	4.30	3.96	3.63	3.83	3.70	4.11	3.77	3.52	3.75
Age	F = 20.683***	F = 17.468***	F = 19.400***	F = 8.531***	F = 16.290***	F = 10.215***	F = 11.435***	F = 15.452***	F = 9.924***
Below 20	3.39	2.94	2.50	3.28	3.21	3.29	3.18	2.49	2.47
20 to 25	4.17	3.93	3.55	3.98	3.78	4.20	3.85	3.68	3.65
26 to 30	4.68	4.42	4.11	4.19	4.18	3.86	3.73	3.77	3.65
31 to 35	4.40	3.20	3.60	3.80	3.60	3.40	2.80	3.40	3.40
36 to 40	2.75	2.75	2.50	3.00	2.25	3.00	2.75	2.50	2.50
40 and above	5.00	5.00	3.50	3.50	3.00	4.50	3.50	3.50	3.50
Marital Status	F = 2.951	F = 4.154**	F = 1.037	F = 5.364***	F = 1.017	F = 0.442	F = 2.170	F = 0.779	F = 4.927***
Single	4.21	3.71	3.46	3.99	3.67	3.91	3.60	3.47	3.55
Married	4.02	3.91	3.53	3.59	3.52	3.79	3.38	3.46	3.18
Divorced	5.00	5.00	4.00	4.00	4.00	4.00	4.00	3.00	4.00
Employment Status	F = 2.095**	F = 8.062***	F = 11.348***	F = 0.963	F = 1.850	F = 3.747***	F = 2.297	F = 5.488***	F = 4.065***
Employed	4.20	3.94	3.67	3.89	3.65	3.80	3.50	3.54	3.31
Self-Employed	4.75	4.50	4.25	4.00	3.75	4.25	3.75	4.00	4.00
Unemployed	4.08	2.41	2.75	3.42	2.81	2.93	2.76	2.73	2.71
Student	3.94	3.63	3.14	3.77	3.66	3.99	3.61	3.28	3.53
Other	4.16	3.82	3.50	3.84	3.62	3.86	3.53	3.46	3.42
Origin	F = 23.344***	F = 10.898***	F = 10.724***	F = 33.724***	F = 8.976***	F = 17.619***	F = 17.672***	F = 12.742***	F = 17.497***
Malaysian	4.16	3.99	3.58	3.83	3.66	3.99	3.45	3.52	3.69
East Asia	2.00	2.00	2.00	1.67	2.33	2.00	1.84	2.00	1.67
Middle East	4.46	3.73	3.80	4.14	3.85	3.55	3.41	3.38	2.88
South-East Asia	4.40	3.80	3.60	4.20	3.20	4.00	4.00	4.00	3.40
Europe	4.83	3.96	3.50	4.37	4.32	4.37	4.11	3.49	3.88
Australia	4.33	4.00	3.67	4.00	3.67	4.00	4.00	3.49	3.33
Other	4.00	5.00	4.00	4.00	4.00	5.00	4.00	4.00	4.00
Education Level	F = 7.110***	F = 4.153***	F = 6.799***	F = 9.522***	F = 2.981**	F = 2.080	F = 4.100***	F = 4.626***	F = 5.567***
Primary	3.00	3.00	2.67	2.67	3.00	3.33	2.84	3.00	2.67
Secondary	4.58	4.41	4.25	4.42	4.31	4.43	4.26	4.23	4.21
High school/College	4.14	3.68	3.41	3.91	3.70	3.86	3.50	3.32	3.28
University	4.32	4.00	3.63	3.89	3.58	3.89	3.58	3.57	3.58
Informal Education	4.16	3.82	3.50	3.84	3.62	3.86	3.53	3.46	3.42
Annual Income Level	F = 9.132***	F = 6.792***	F = 7.564***	F = 7.328	F = 1.100	F = 4.027***	F = 5.965***	F = 7.765***	F = 6.482***
Below RM20,000	3.62	3.31	3.20	3.43	3.46	3.57	3.21	3.09	3.15
RM20,001 to RM30,000	5.00	4.00	4.00	4.00	4.00	5.00	5.00	3.46	3.00
RM30,001 to RM40,000	4.50	4.00	4.50	4.50	4.00	3.50	3.50	3.50	3.00
RM40,001 to RM50,000	5.00	5.00	4.00	4.00	4.00	3.50	3.50	3.50	4.00
RM50,001 to RM60,000	4.72	4.27	3.83	3.61	3.54	3.95	3.18	3.15	2.67
RM60,001 and above	4.45	4.09	3.73	4.27	3.73	4.09	3.82	4.00	3.73

** significant at 0.05 level
*** significant at 0.01 level

Table 3. ANOVA analysis of mean differences of specialty of Langkawi as compared to other tourist destination

Socio Demographic factors	Specialty of Langkawi as compared to other tourist destination									
	Beautiful Scenery	Clean and Clear Water	Good Services	Interesting Activities	Good Facilities	Peace and Quiet	Value for Money	Abundance of Coral and Marine Life	Well Organized Agency Tours Services	Good Accessibility
Gender	t = -1.015	t = 0.165	t = 1.177	t = 0.583	t = 0.118	t = 0.762	t = 0.340	t = -0.556	t = -1.784	t = -0.562
Male	3.83	3.69	3.58	4.00	3.56	3.79	3.63	3.55	3.50	3.51
Female	3.98	3.67	3.44	3.93	3.55	3.68	3.59	3.62	3.72	3.57
Age	F = 9.641***	F = 12.163***	F = 14.032***	F = 11.563***	F = 5.032***	F = 19.927	F = 1.176	F = 11.999***	F = 13.225***	F = 3.765***
Below 20	2.96	2.56	2.51	3.32	3.19	3.25	3.21	2.53	2.53	2.84
20 to 25	3.93	3.74	3.45	3.94	3.49	3.71	3.68	3.75	3.70	3.61
26 to 30	4.31	4.15	4.07	4.44	4.01	3.94	3.76	3.86	3.86	3.51
31 to 35	4.18	3.94	3.91	4.39	3.71	3.95	3.52	3.72	3.92	3.71
36 to 40	3.00	2.75	3.00	3.25	3.00	3.50	3.50	2.75	2.75	3.25
40 and above	4.00	4.00	3.50	3.50	3.50	4.00	3.50	3.50	3.50	4.00
Marital Status	F = 0.530	F = 0.325	F = 0.869	F = 0.917	F = 0.657	F = 0.743	F = 0.497	F = 2.126	F = 2.246	F = 1.049
Single	3.94	3.66	3.51	4.03	3.53	3.80	3.60	3.66	3.66	3.55
Married	3.80	3.71	3.54	3.87	3.57	3.66	3.62	3.48	3.48	3.54
Divorced	4.00	4.00	4.00	4.00	4.00	4.00	4.00	3.00	3.00	3.00
Employment Status	F = 2.718**	F = 4.061***	F = 6.304***	F = 0.946	F = 1.393	F = 1.165	F = 0.135	F = 1.636	F = 0.704	F = 1.267
Employed	3.89	3.64	3.74	4.00	3.53	3.88	3.61	3.59	3.65	3.60
Self-Employed	4.50	4.50	3.75	4.25	4.00	3.50	3.75	4.00	3.64	3.75
Unemployed	3.89	3.69	3.53	3.97	3.56	3.75	3.62	3.58	3.58	3.53
Student	3.70	3.53	3.15	3.85	3.48	3.63	3.59	3.44	3.44	3.36
Other	3.89	3.69	3.53	3.97	3.56	3.75	3.62	3.58	3.58	3.53
Origin	F = 18.434***	F = 11.454***	F = 16.813***	F = 33.628***	F = 19.829***	F = 15.404***	F = 21.306***	F = 12.188***	F = 17.788***	F = 18.353***
Malaysian	3.89	3.82	3.48	4.00	3.53	3.74	3.54	3.59	3.49	3.58
East Asia	2.00	2.00	2.00	2.00	2.00	2.33	2.00	2.00	2.00	2.00
Middle East	4.13	3.81	4.12	4.38	3.74	4.05	3.77	3.95	3.95	3.72
South-East Asia	3.98	3.54	3.71	3.99	3.31	3.55	3.92	3.72	4.12	3.11
Europe	4.58	4.14	3.71	4.59	4.51	4.75	4.52	3.72	3.83	4.11
Australia	4.33	4.00	4.00	4.33	4.00	3.67	3.67	3.86	4.00	4.00
Other	3.00	3.00	3.00	3.00	3.00	3.00	3.00	4.00	3.00	4.00
Education Level	F = 2.562**	F = 5.894***	F = 3.685***	F = 6.820***	F = 3.305**	F = 1.794	F = 2.027	F = 3.669***	F = 3.885***	F = 3.685***
Primary	3.33	3.00	3.00	3.00	3.00	3.67	3.33	3.00	3.00	3.00
Secondary	4.44	4.34	4.26	4.49	4.28	4.38	4.31	4.29	4.29	4.26
High school/College	3.80	3.46	3.51	4.05	3.52	3.84	3.59	3.52	3.52	3.51
University	3.99	3.93	3.55	4.00	3.61	3.62	3.61	3.64	3.64	3.55
Informal Education	3.89	3.69	3.53	3.97	3.56	3.75	3.62	3.58	3.58	3.53
Annual Income Level	F = 4.940***	F = 4.005***	F = 6.449***	F = 4.915***	F = 1.373	F = 3.430***	F = 3.801***	F = 3.445***	F = 6.433***	F = 6.321***
Below RM20,000	3.50	3.38	3.24	3.79	3.39	3.62	3.34	3.26	3.26	3.31
RM20,001 to RM30,000	5.00	4.00	4.00	5.00	4.00	3.00	3.00	3.58	4.00	4.00
RM30,001 to RM40,000	4.00	3.50	4.50	5.00	3.50	3.00	3.50	4.00	4.50	2.50
RM40,001 to RM50,000	4.50	4.50	4.00	4.00	4.00	3.50	3.50	3.50	3.00	3.50
RM50,001 to RM60,000	4.30	4.23	3.84	3.99	3.85	4.25	3.54	3.53	3.53	3.84
RM60,001 and above	3.90	3.61	3.68	4.00	3.60	3.98	2.37	3.87	3.83	3.87

** significant at 0.05 level

*** significant at 0.01 level

CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

This study examined the role of socio-demographic factors in affecting vacation motives and also vacationer's perception of the specialty of Langkawi Island. Nine motivational factors were included: 'beautiful scenery', 'clean and clear water', 'good services', 'interesting activities', 'good facilities', 'peace and quiet', 'value for money', 'abundance of coral and other marine life', and 'promotion and publicity'. Among all of the socio-demographic factors; age, country of origin, education level, and income level significantly posed a great impact on the importance of different vacation motivation. Meanwhile, vacationer's perception of the specialty possessed by Langkawi Island were also analyzed in this study: 'beautiful scenery', 'clean and clear water', 'good services', 'interesting activities', 'good facilities', 'peace and quiet', 'value for money', 'abundance of coral and other marine life', 'well organized agency tours services', and 'good accessibility'. Again, the result was highly consistent with the result that has been gathered in vacation motivation where age, country of origin, education level, and income level significantly posed a great impact on the specialty of Langkawi Island as comparing to the other tourist destinations in Malaysia.

Referring back to Crompton's (1979) push-pull model, the vacation motivations and perceived specialties of Langkawi Island used within this study were mainly categorized as the pull factors to attract vacationer to spend their holiday in Langkawi Island. The push factors were excluded in this study as it was highly out of the control of the tourism marketers. Therefore, tourism marketers can utilize these factors (i.e. vacation motivations and perceived specialties of Langkawi Island), which proven to have vacation pulling capabilities for their target vacationers. Although socio-demographic factors provide many segmentation methods for tourism markets but there are some which are obviously easier to

use, such as age, gender, and country of origin because all this information can be gathered during the first sight on the vacationers. Focal point of marketing should be emphasize on female vacationers because the majority are more attracted to a vacation destination which possessed following characteristics 'peace and quiet' and 'value for money'.

Besides, female vacationers are more affected by publicity and promotions. In addition to that, tourism marketers should design a tourism package which include many interesting activities especially the adventurous and challenging versions for the young vacationer aged under 20. Vacationer aged 20 to 25 would prefer a tourism package which emphasized on privacy that can bring them to enjoy scenic views without any disturbance from the crowds. While, vacationer aged 26 to 30 and 40 and above will be delighted if the tourism marketer can provide them a tourism package that include beach activities that bring them to enjoy the scenic views, and clean and clear water. On the other hand, vacationer aged 31 to 35 would be enjoyed if the tour package can be a mixture of visitation to scenic destinations and having some interesting activities there.

Finally, vacationer aged 36 to 40 would prefer a relaxation oriented tour package where they emphasized on peace and quiet activities which can calm their minds and tired body. From country of origin perspective, scenic view is the main concern by the majority of vacationers regardless of their nationality. Anyhow, other than beautiful scenery, other factors can be consider to further segment the vacationer. For instance, Malaysian vacationer would prefer clean water, East Asia vacationer prefer good facilities, Middle East and South-East Asia vacationer prefer interesting activities and European and Australian vacationer prefer peace and quiet, and other origin vacationers would prefer clean and clear water.

LIMITATION AND FUTURE RESEARCH

Convenient sampling was used in this study and thus the ability to generalize the finding of this study is weakened. Future studies may use other probability sampling method to improve the generalizability of the findings. Secondly, the travel motivation recorded in this study may not be exhaustive. Future studies may be expanded the list of travel motivations by using qualitative approach such as interview to elicit some hidden travel motivation.

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