PUSH AND PULL PERSPECTIVES: TRAVEL MOTIVATION TO COASTAL TOURISM IN CASE OF REDANG ISLAND

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Abstract: The tourism industry plays a large role in the development of many countries, including Malaysia. Unfortunately, the lockdowns caused by the COVID-19 pandemic brought global tourism to a standstill. Though most of the travel curbs have been eased, public health rules still pose challenges to the industry. In the light of the changes in travel preferences among tourists during this unprecedented time, this work sought to gain a better understanding of travel motivation and behaviour in this situation. Since push and pull factors are the most commonly used theory in evaluating tourists' behaviour, it is utilised in this conceptual paper to investigate the relationship between destination image, tourists' emotion, satisfaction, and loyalty in the context of Laguna Redang Island Resort. Moreover, tourists' daily emotional well-being needs to be considered in assessing their travel intention in the post-pandemic situation. The tests for the propositions in the conceptual model of this study revealed that pleasure is an important factor for behavioural intention. The impact of factors was empirically supported by the study. Next, this study presents factors to predict tourists' loyalty that are useful for future studies. This study also verifies the influence of push factor for tourism consumption on pull factor for destination selection. Plus, in the proposed framework, satisfaction has a mediator role. Overall, the present work contributes to the body of knowledge and provides useful recommendations for tourism authorities.

Keywords: Motivational factors, push and pull, coastal tourism, Pulau Redang.

Introduction

Over the last five decades, the tourism, leisure, and hospitality industry has grown tremendously (Scott *et al.*, 2019; Hung *et al.*, 2021). In order to gain competitive advantage, tourism destinations are urged to be creative and innovative (Ćulić *et al.*, 2021). It is apparent that the industry has made great contributions to the socioeconomic development of numerous countries (Salimon *et al.*, 2019) including Malaysia (Zainal & Yong, 2020). Due to the stable growth of tourism industry, it has been known as a crucial source of economic growth (León-Gómez *et al*., 2021). In 2017, the country generated RM82 billion in tourism revenue and increased to RM84 billion in the following year. it was expected that RM92 billion of income will be generated in 2020 (Islam *et al.,* 2020). Nevertheless, no one could predict that global economy, social, and politics would be changed by the emergence of the novel Coronavirus disease (COVID-19) (León-Gómez *et al.,* 2021).

First reported in Wuhan, China, at the end of 2019, this novel virus continues to spread worldwide (Shah *et al.*, 2020; Zhu *et al.*, 2020). In order to curb the infection rate, every country implemented travel bans, closing the border either partially or completely, and barring international flights to some destinations (Gu *et al.*, 2021). Although these precautions are vital, they had severe impacts on every sector (Altig *et al.*, 2020). With reported cases confirmed in more than 200 countries (Chakraborty & Maity, 2020), it was expected that global economic growth in 2020 was reduced by half, to 1.5% (León-Gómez *et al*., 2021). In most disastrous events, we can see that the aftermath er results in negative impacts on tourism to and from the

area involved (Rosselló *et al.,* 2020). Similarly, the negative impacts of the pandemic can be observed on the industry. The infection control measures during the pandemic made business operations and global commerce more difficult, and they really took a toll on tourism (Chin, 2022). In the light of this situation, tourism practitioners and policymakers are reviewing plans and strategies to overcome this crisis and encourage the growth of the tourism sector during these unprecedented times (Škare *et al.*, 2021).

Before the pandemic, coastal tourism was gaining popularity among travellers (Hanafiah *et al*., 2021). It is anticipated that more tourists would be attracted to coastal destinations even now due to concerns of contracting COVID-19 in congested and unsafe inland areas (Chin, 2022). When attempting to understand how people decide to travel and gauge how satisfied they are with their experience, tourism scholars have argued that motivations are the underlying causes of behaviour (Karn & Kumar, 2017). In light of this, this work is focusing on the coastal tourism sector to determine the factors that motivate the tourists' behaviour and intention in travelling to Laguna Redang Island Resort (Laguna) on Redang Island. This study will provide new insight into tourists' travel motivation and behaviour, which is useful for future tourism policymaking in the post-pandemic era.

Background of Study

According to Hanafiah *et al.* (2021), tourism is a huge contributor towards Malaysia's economic growth. Rich in marine resources, this country offers many coastal tourism destinations. Combining leisure and marine-based activities (Hall, 2001) such as cruising, snorkelling, and scuba diving (Menhat *et al.*, 2021), coastal tourism can be defined as "a popular sea, sand, and sun-based natural tourist attraction" (Hasan *et al.*, 2019).

Redang Island off Terengganu is famous for its scenic coastline, lush nature, and tranquil beaches (Abukhalifeh & Wondirad, 2019),

making it one of the well-known beaches in Malaysia (Hanafiah *et al.*, 2021) among domestic and international visitors (Menhat *et al.*, 2021). According to Graci and Vliet (2020), 40% of Redang Island marine park visitors were tourists from abroad. On this island, one of the most famous resorts is Laguna, which is known for its coral reefs and marine ecosystem. This resort generated revenue of RM19 million in 2019 and RM18.5 million in 2018 (Resort, 2020). Sadly, the resort recorded a huge drop in the number of tourists during the pandemic (Foo *et al.,* 2020) due to movement curbs (Adams *et al.*, 2021).

After more than a year since the number of COVID-19 infections had been brought under control, Malaysia eased travel restrictions as long as distancing measures are taken. On 10 October 2021, Datuk Seri Ismail Sabri Yaakob, Malaysia's ninth Prime Minister, announced that interstate travel will be permitted for those who are fully vaccinated against COVID-19. This development was made possible due to the COVID-19 National Immunisation Programme (NIP), which vaccinated 90% of the adult population (Povera, 2021). It was hoped that domestic tourism would be revived with the easing of restrictions on interstate travel (New Straits Times, 2020; Krishnan, 2021). Since the country's border remained to be closed, coastal tourism would involve only local tourists (Menhat *et al.*, 2021).

This study investigated the tourists' motivation to visit Redang Island. Among its aims are:

• To develop a conceptual framework to measure the effect of push motivational factors and pull motivational factors on tourist loyalty through satisfaction.

• To propose a role for destination image in this behaviour.

• To propose a moderating role for positive affect on the relationship between satisfaction and loyalty.

Literature Review and Proposition Development

Tourists Motivation

Maslow (1948) provided an explanation of why people act a certain way and what they do in various situations in life. Developed in the late 20th century, Maslow's Needs Hierarchy Theory examines human development from the perspective of needs and predict motivation and behaviour (Karn & Kumar, 2017; Papaleontiou-Louca et al., 2023). It starts with basic biological drives and progresses to the desire for self-actualisation, where a person becomes what they are calibrated for. In synchrony with this theory, Wen and Huang (2019) defined motivation as the drive that cause people to do something in fulfilling their needs. From the perspective of tourism, travel motivation is described as an internal drive that pushes people to engage in actions to fulfil their needs (Hudson, 2008) and in this scenario, their needs can be fulfilled by travelling (Dean & Suhartanto, 2019). To put it briefly, Wijaya et al. (2018) claimed that travel motivation explains why a tourist decides to visit a certain destination. Besides having a significant impact on a person's action, motive also influences tourism consumption.

In exploring consumer behaviour in tourism, Cohen et al. (2014) stated that it is necessary to examine nine key concepts, which include motivation. Recently, Bayih and Singh (2020) claimed that motivation is one of the main psychological factors that affect consumers' buying behaviour. To examine motivation, the established method is through the push-pull concept. In describing tourism motivation and understanding tourist travel behaviour, motivations are analysed either by classifying in different travel types with similar characteristics or by utilising a behavioural marketing approach (Michael et al., 2017; Wong et al., 2017; Suni & Pesonen, 2019; Damijanić, 2020). Through this multifaceted analysis, researchers are able to understand tourist behaviour, figure out their reasoning behind destination preference (Crompton, 1979b), and determine the main motivations that affect their decision-making

(Cengizci et al., 2020). According to Michael et al. (2017), it is possible that different tourists are attracted towards different aspects of the same tourism destination due to their differences in travel motivations. This information is beneficial to policymakers and tourism practitioners in forming effective marketing strategies (Bozic et al., 2017), as well as catering to the competitive market (Wijaya et al., 2018) and encouraging the growth of tourism industry (Ryan & Glendon, 1998).

Push and Pull Factors

Since the introduction of push-pull theory by Dann (1977), this theory has been widely applied in diverse tourism markets (Wen & Huang, 2019), as well as in investigating the choice of travel destination (He & Luo, 2020). In this theory, push motivations also known as internal factors (Bayih & Singh, 2020) are defined as the psychographic motivations which drives a person to perform activities that they consider as relevant (Andruliene et al., 2018). Meanwhile, pull factors are referring to the destination's attractive feature that compel travellers to choose that place as a travel destination (Bayih & Singh, 2020). Compared to push factors which are driven internally, these pull factors are stimulated by the external characteristics of the destination (Crompton, 1979b) such as beautiful natural scenery, entertainment, educational cultural attractions, and great accommodation (Andruliene et al., 2018). To put it briefly, tourists are influenced by internal forces which push them to go on a trip and are affected by the external forces which pulled them towards destinations with positive images (Baloglu & Uysal, 1996; Giddy, 2018; Bayih & Singh, 2020).

In other words, push factors stem from one's inner desire to embark on a trip, whereas pull factors are the allure of the travel destination. Ultimately, both factors encourage a person to visit a place or do something that is different from their daily routine. For instance, after months of being in quarantine, people are starting to feel depressed (Roy & Sharma, 2021), anxious, and

bored with their lockdown lifestyle (Pradana *et al*., 2020). These feelings motivate people to travel and experience something new to break free from the loneliness of social isolation (Roy & Sharma, 2021) or to escape from stressful daily life (Aldao & Mihalic, 2020). Moreover, Kataya (2021) noted that travelling can provide a person with the chance to grow within a group of people and, at the same time, feel a sense of achievement when on vacation by getting involved in rewarding activities, such as sports-related activities and spending quality time with loved ones.

Destination Image

Destination image can be briefly defined as a total impression of the person about a particular place (Crompton, 1979). The development and management of a location depend on its ability to control its image, which is essential to draw new and returning tourists. Although tourist products are intangible and impossible to assess without experiencing them first (Nam *et al*., 2022), tourists' perception of a location can be improved through other information despite not having prior experience there. From a branding standpoint, tourists tend to perceive a location based on tourists' knowledge, experiences, images painted by other tourists, and information sources regarding that location, both commercial and non-commercial types (Wu & Liang, 2021).

Satisfaction

Customer satisfaction has been recognised as a key factor in studies of consumer behaviour (Lee & Kim, 2023). Generally, satisfaction is a measure of how well-aware a customer is of the supplier's capacity to meet wants and expectations (Phi *et al.*, 2021). At its core, the level of customer satisfaction is based on whether they perceive that service or product that they receive is worth the price that they paid (He & Luo, 2020). Overall, tourists are satisfied when they have had excellent an experience during the visit, which increases their likelihood of revisiting and being loyal to the place (Wisker, 2020). However, it should be emphasised that tourists satisfaction differs by individual because

in the tourism industry, satisfaction is measured on how well was the tourists are treated (Phi *et al.*, 2021). It is frequently influenced by various characteristics such as first-time versus repeat tourists, demographic background (e.g., age and cultural), demand, objectives, and accessible alternatives (Wisker *et al.*, 2023). In discussing tourist satisfaction, this can be categorised into criteria, namely tourists' satisfaction, satisfaction regarding the services that one received, and satisfaction regarding the destination (He & Luo, 2020).

Positive Affect

Emotion is a personal experience manifested by psychological and physiological mechanisms triggered by present circumstances (Ibrahim *et al.*, 2022). The extent to which one experiences a positive level of emotional well-being in one's daily life is referred to as positive affect (Dornbach-Bender *et al.*, 2020; Rosli *et al.*, 2022). To reach life fulfilment, one should strive for a high level of emotional well-being, which is experiencing life satisfaction through a balance of negative and affective emotions (Io, 2021; Rosli *et al.*, 2022). Our emotional health affects many different areas of our lives (Kahneman & Deaton, 2010) such as our behavioural patterns (Dornbach-Bender *et al.*, 2020; Io, 2021; Rosli *et al.*, 2022). Unfortunately, the beginning of COVID-19 had a great impact on the overall emotional well-being of individuals (Yang & Ma, 2020). To mitigate the negative emotions associated with the pandemic, one should consider taking a mental health break by going on holiday. Positive emotions in tourists are frequently examined as a result of tourism consumption, but everyday emotional well-being or positive affect is rarely addressed in relation to its impact on travel reasons (Io, 2021).

Loyalty

Loyalty describes how customers feel about their interaction with the company (Cheng *et al*., 2019) and measures their attachment to a particular place or product. Loyalty practices are frequently used in the service sector as a

mechanism for attracting more arrivals (Woyo & Slabbert, 2020). The rationale behind using this metric is that while tourists' endorsement of an attraction is a sign of loyalty, intention is a representation of future behaviour (Suhartanto *et al.*, 2019). It is frequently manifested as a strong desire for recurrent purchases (Oliver, 1999). It is quantified in a destination environment by "repeat visitor, repeat purchase, repeat sale" and Word-of-mouth (WOM) (Agyeiwaah *et al.*, 2021). Since repeat visitors offer a reliable source of income from consumers who are not price sensitive, tourism locations are becoming more focussed on maintaining visitor loyalty than increasing annual visitor numbers (Antón *et al.*, 2017; Woyo & Slabbert, 2020).

Push-Pull Factors and Satisfaction

Previously, it has been consistently reported that pull factors are essential in the selection of travel destination (Bozic *et al.*, 2017; Sastre & Phakdee-Auksorn, 2017). Additionally, the destination's pull factors must satisfy the tourist's push factors (Josiam *et al.*, 1999). For example, if the tourists seek "sun, sea, and sand", the location must fulfil these characteristics. However, since many tourism spots fit these requirements, the selection of travel destination should be made based on the pull factors (Bozic *et al.*, 2017) such as scenic island, well-preserved coral reefs, friendly locals, and calming beaches (Sastre & Phakdee-Auksorn, 2017).

While many studies have been carried out to investigate the factors that improve loyalty, so far, the results obtained appear to be inconsistent. In their work, Dean and Suhartanto (2019) concluded that only push factors have impacts on tourists' loyalty. According to Preko *et al.* (2019), tourists can be said to be contented with their experience when they are inclined to recommend the destination to others. Overall, numerous studies have claimed that push and pull factors pose impacts on travel satisfaction (Preko *et al.*, 2019; Bayih & Singh, 2020; He & Luo, 2020; Shin *et al.*, 2020; Trimurti & Utama, 2020; Io, 2021; Leo *et al.*, 2021; Susanti, 2021). Hence, the current work proposes that:

Proposition 1: Push factors have a positive effect on satisfaction.

Proposition 2: Pull factors have a positive effect on satisfaction.

Destination Image and Satisfaction

In previous tourism studies, several researchers agreed that tourist behaviour is greatly affected by destination image (Baloglu & McCleary, 1999; Erawan, 2020; Saini & Arasanmi, 2021). Tourists tend to favour a location with a good tourism image in their mind (Zainuddin *et al.*, 2020) and choose a destination with vibrant images as their travel destination (Foroudi *et al.*, 2018). Eventually, this will result in improved tourist satisfaction (Martín-Santana *et al.*, 2017; Lu *et al.*, 2020). Similar findings are reported in other studies, where there is a positive correlation between destination image and satisfaction (Loi *et al.*, 2017; Prayag *et al.*, 2017; Li *et al.*, 2020; Hung *et al.*, 2021). Moreover, in a recent report by Stavrianea and Kamenidou (2021), tourism experiences can be improved by destination choice which ultimately will influence loyalty intentions. Overall, it is apparent that an ideal post-trip behaviour can be achieved through attractive destination image which will lead to better tourist satisfaction (Li *et al.*, 2020; Saini & Arasanmi, 2021). Nevertheless, more research is needed in understanding the influence of destination image and satisfaction on loyalty and motivation of tourist as proposed by the previous authors (Bayih & Singh, 2020; Leo *et al.*, 2021). In the light of this discussion, it is proposed that:

Proposition 3: Destination image has a positive effect on satisfaction.

The Moderating Effect of Positive Affect

In controlling the outbreak, people were advised to avoid the 3 C's: Confined spaces, close contact, and crowded spaces (Chin, 2022). This guideline on top of the implemented travel restrictions and social distancing during the long-term pandemic has increasingly changed tourist motivations and behaviour (Li *et al.*, 2020; Cheung *et al.*, 2021), and accordingly has

brought tourism industry to a halt. Not only did this situation make people feel hesitant to travel due to travel limitations in tourism destinations and infection risks (Karl *et al*., 2020), they also needed to consider cleanliness, safety, and social interaction factors while on vacation abroad (Cheung *et al*., 2021; Io, 2021). Moreover, the precautions are expected to be executed by the service providers in the tourism industry such as resort and hotel managers, thus imposing further challenges on them to navigate their businesses (Guillet & Chu, 2021). Although we can deduce that facing a health crisis had a negative impact on mental health, we do not have a complete understanding of this topic at the moment (Yang & Ma, 2020). Therefore, it is suggested that the effect of COVID-19 outbreak on hospitality sectors should be investigated (Roy & Sharma, 2021).

This suggestion is valid as it has been established that tourists' psychological needs influence their destination preference and motivations to travel (Io, 2021). Similarly, Ahn and Kwon (2019) reported that tourists' emotions play a part in decision-making processes. Additionally, Prayag *et al*. (2017) discovered that tourists' emotions before a trip affected their experiences during their travels, and eventually affected their post-trip loyalty and satisfaction. This is supported in recent studies which reported that tourists' positive emotions were linked to their loyalty and satisfaction (Chen *et al*., 2020), as well as enhancing their emotional well-being and life satisfaction (Extremera & Rey, 2018; Io, 2021).

Since positive emotions in tourists are linked to tourism consumption, more assessment on positive affect in regards to its influences on travel motives should be conducted (Io, 2021). More specifically, the possible moderating effect of positive affect on the relationship between push and pull factors and satisfaction should be investigated. This is due to the notion that every individual's preferences of satisfaction level are likely to be shaped by push and pull factors, particularly when their positive emotion is higher.

Therefore, it is likely that daily positive affect will moderate the relationship between push and pull motivations and satisfaction. Thus, the following propositions are presented:

Proposition 4: The positive relationship between push factors and satisfaction will be stronger when positive affect is high.

Proposition 5: The positive relationship between pull factors and satisfaction will be stronger when positive affect is high.

Mediating Effect of Satisfaction

In past works, a customer is described as loyal when they are attached to a particular brand (Backman & Compton, 1991) and tend to purchase a product several times over the course of a certain time period (Oliver, 1999; Leo *et al.,* 2021). For the benefit of the company, businesses usually strive to sustain a lasting relationship with their customers (Tajeddini *et al.*, 2021). To instil commitment (Trimurti & Utama, 2020) and loyalty (Prayag *et al.*, 2017; Chen *et al.*, 2020) from the customers, it is imperative to ensure that they are satisfied with the products and services provided. By emphasising customer satisfaction, Wang *et al.* (2021) reported that a company's positive image and customer loyalty could be improved.

From the perspective of tourism, destination selection is vital in ensuring tourists' satisfaction and ideal behavioural intentions (Preko *et al.*, 2019). Since overall tourist satisfaction has been connected with good tourist experience, Bayih and Singh (2020) concluded that a high level of tourist satisfaction will influence the destination choice of tourists and future visitor behaviours. Additionally, satisfied tourists tend to recommend others to visit the location, more probable to have revisiting intentions, and become loyal tourists (Bayih & Singh, 2020). In a different study, Abbasi *et al.* (2020) investigated the role of satisfaction as a mediator in understanding tourists' behaviour. Considering the role of satisfaction in influencing customers' loyalty and commitment, it is understandable that this aspect is commonly highlighted in discussing consumer behaviour (Martín-Santana

et al., 2017; Cho et al., 2021). Based on this discussion on loyalty, the following propositions are developed:

Proposition 6: Satisfaction has a positive impact on loyalty.

Proposition 7: Satisfaction mediates the relationship between push factors and loyalty.

Proposition 8: Satisfaction mediates the relationship between pull factors and loyalty.

Proposition 9: Satisfaction mediates the relationship between destination image and loyalty.

Research Model

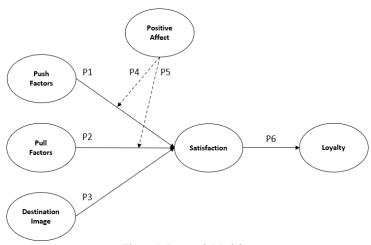The Research Model is shown in Figure 1.

Figure 1: Research Model

Conclusion and Implication

Inspired by the previous works on several tourism sectors such as halal tourism (Susanti, 2021), peer-to-peer accommodation (Shin et al., 2020), skiing (He & Luo, 2020) and youth tourism (Preko et al., 2019), this study was performed to assess the relationship between loyalty, destination, and pull-push motivation factors in the coastal tourism context. Although coastal tourism is gaining in popularity (Albayrak et al., 2019), currently, there is a limited knowledge on how motivational factors may affect loyalty to a certain destination. Considering that research on tourists' daily emotional well-being in the tourism industry is scarce, the study proposes that positive affect moderates the push-and-pull factors on satisfaction. Through this conceptual study, it can verify the influence of push factor for tourism consumption and on pull factor for destination selection. Additionally, in the proposed framework, satisfaction has been proven to possess a mediator role. Overall, the present work had contributed to closing the literature gap by proposing a conceptual framework which shows a possible mechanism in understanding tourists' motives and behaviours, as well as providing some useful recommendations for tourism authorities.

Acknowledgements

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