# Holiday satisfaction in Penang, Malaysia: A quantitative perspective analysis of international and domestic tourists

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## Abstract

This study centres on tourists' satisfaction level; with specific attention given to their experience and expectation of 20 holiday attributes during their visits to Penang. The study adapts the model of Holiday Satisfaction (HOLSAT) to measure the difference between experience and expectation of holiday attributes. The attributes employed are categorised into four groups, namely accessibility, accommodation, tourist amenities and food/meals. Results are drawn from a questionnaire survey of 4170 domestic and international tourists who visited Penang in 2014. The data is analysed quantitatively using matrices that show the mean score of expectation, plotted against the mean score of experience on a two-dimensional axis. The significance of the results is determined using a paired t-test at a scale of 1:1000. A similar pattern of satisfaction and dissatisfaction level was detected for international and domestic tourists. Overall, the study observed similar satisfaction and dissatisfaction patterns for all attribute groups, for both international and domestic groups. Despite a slight difference in $p$ values, both accessibility and accommodation attributes performed excellently, except for attribute [3] 'availability of information for tourists at entry points' as perceived by the domestic group. However, the results for food/meals and tourist amenities should be of interest to tourism service providers as these are the attributes that need to be significantly improved upon and enhanced in order to increase tourists' positive experience; especially for the domestic group. Specific attention should be directed towards conserving the ocean and beaches, as they house many of the main tourism developments and activities.

**Keywords**: expectation, experience, holiday attributes, holiday satisfaction, HOLSAT model, Penang

## Introduction

Tourism has been an important source of revenue and a catalyst for Penang's economic growth for a number of years. Placed as the second highest sector after manufacturing (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development 2010), tourism accounted for more than 30 percent of the state's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) in 2012 (Mok, 2013). As one of Malaysia's leading tourist destinations, after Kuala Lumpur and Pahang (The Star Online, 2012), Penang received over 90.14 million visitors between 1990 and 2013, with an annual average of 3.92 million visitors (Figure 1). In 2013, the total number arriving in Penang reached a record 4.70 million (Tourism Malaysia, 2015); representing a remarkable growth of 2.53 times that of 1990. The top five foreign tourist generating markets in 2013 were Indonesia (292,145), Singapore (131,130), China (55,612), Japan (31,297), and the United States of America (21,796) (Penang Global Tourism, 2014).

Penang has always been a dynamic tourist destination. The first indication of 'tourism' in Penang was published in an 1834 travelogue (Begbie. 1967). Meanwhile, the first few hotels; namely Hotel de L'Europe, E & O, Runnymede, and the Crag Hotel in Penang Hill, were established in the 19th century as a response to British and European expatriate demand (Snodgrass, 1980). The title 'Pearl of the Orient'

was assigned to Penang in the 60s and 70s due to its outstanding 3S tourism (Sun, Sea and Sand). The island is well-known for its pristine beaches, tropical weather and landscapes, which make it a favourite holiday destinations; especially for foreign tourists. In 2008, the capital city of Penang, (George Town), was listed as a United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) World Heritage Site, which further boosted the tourism sector.

In spite of these achievements, inbound tourism witnessed unprecedented declines, as well as, changes in tourist's market profiles. Hooi (2006) claimed that Penang's charm was slowly diminishing and fast losing out to emerging destinations, such as Phuket, Bali and other Indo-China countries, which were regarded as more 'exotic' in the eyes of Western visitors. In addition, a series of threats and disruptions, such as the Malaysian plane crash in the Ukraine, the flight disappearance in the southern Indian Ocean and tourist kidnapping incidents in Sabah, have made international tourists stay away from visiting the country. At the same time, World Heritage Site status is linked to the growing number of global 'culture-vulture' travellers that seek a different kind of holiday that is not packaged as a rush shopping or sightseeing tour trip (Ho, 2009).
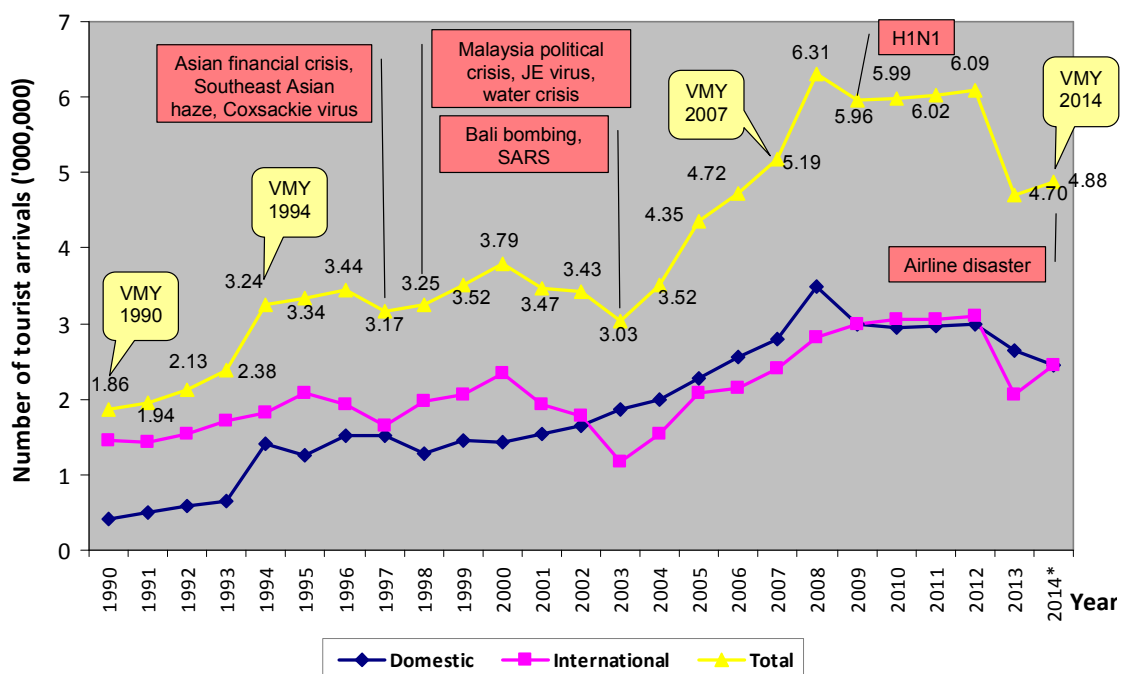


Source: Ministry of Tourism and Culture Malaysia, Penang Development Corporation, Penang Global Tourism
Note: * Jan-Sept 2014

**Fig. 1**. *Tourist arrivals to Penang State, 1990-2014\**

Since retaining tourists in Penang is equally important as attracting new ones, it is important to understand how these tourists perceive Penang as a holiday destination. This highlights the need to assess the gap between tourists' experience and expectation of products, services and facilities in Penang. It is acknowledged that experience and expectation are the two main factors that influence tourist satisfaction. The balance between tourist expectations and real experiences determines tourist satisfaction. When satisfaction is met or when actual performance exceeds expectations, tourists experience a positive confirmation, feel satisfied, and his/her willingness to use the product again is reinforced (Ganesh et al., 2000; Pritchard & Havitz, 2006). Responding positively to tourist's demands and expectations will help Penang to overcome its weaknesses and improve tourist's experience; which in the long-term, will contribute to the sustainability of the state's tourism sector. Therefore, we evaluate tourists' satisfaction in

Penang using the adapted Holiday Satisfaction (HOLSAT) model; pioneered by Tribe and Snaith (1998). We specifically measure the gap between tourists' experience and expectation in Penang for both international and domestic groups, for the following aspects; accessibility, accommodation, tourist amenities and food/meals.

## Literature review

*Tourist satisfaction*

Satisfaction generally refers to the formation of a post-purchase attitude, which is influenced by the difference between expected product/service quality and purchase value (Barutçu et al., 2011). This echoes the psychological relationship between expectation, experience and participation (Crilley et al., 2012). Li et al. (2011), define satisfaction as "an affective state that is the emotional reaction to a service experience." Meanwhile, Quach (2013) portrays satisfaction as something that is indispensible in determining a successful marketing strategy, whereby "it impacts the choice, the consumption of goods and services, and the decision to return." The field of satisfaction studies is gaining importance, where, in a tourism industry context, satisfaction studies address the difference between expectations and perceived performance levels of a particular tourism destination's attributes (Pizam et al., 1978). In detail, tourism satisfaction refers to a determined value of a particular attribute, which is chosen from previously compared options (Baker & Crompton, 2000). More importantly, tourism satisfaction reflects the attachment of an individual's feelings towards the attractiveness of a particular attraction (Tribe & Snaith, 1998), which in return, constructs the notion to revisit (Ryan et al., 1999). Therefore, tourist satisfaction has an important role in planning marketable tourism products and services for destinations and its assessment must be a basic parameter used to evaluate the performance of destination products and services (Yoon & Uysal, 2005).

*Tourist expectation*

The tourism industry envisages tourist expectation as an establishment of performance standards that possibly exists in the form of an ideal or desired performance (Aksu et al., 2010). To a greater extent, expectation refers to the state of visualizing the probability of the potentials of a certain tourism attribute of a particular tourism destination (Quach, 2013), by using prior estimation made for the questioned attribute previously experienced at another tourism destination (Lai & Vinh, 2013). Although there is a difference between tourist expectation (functional quality) and real outcome (technical quality), in addition to a complex reaction towards intangible and/or tangible tourism products, tourist expectation is nevertheless viewed as being attached to tourism products with credibility (Diaz-Perez et al., 2011). More specifically, tourist expectation is considered to be "pre-trial beliefs about a product that serve as standards or reference points; against which product performance is judged" (Zeithaml et al., 1993: p.1). From the perspective of the experience-satisfaction relationship, the act of performing consistently excellent services serves as a platform for attending to the tourist's expectation (Jadhav and More 2010), which then becomes an indicator for service quality management (Boulding et al., 1993). Furthermore, Oliver (1981, p. 33) indicated that "it is generally agreed that expectations are consumer-defined probabilities of the occurrence of positive and negative events if the consumer engages in some behaviour," and tourist expectation can be derived from previous experiences. Interestingly, Lee and Pachmayer (2012), who evaluated consumers' psychological process during consumption experience, states that tourist satisfaction, can be determined through ones' ability to apply the consumption vision technique during decision-making and expectations construction processes.

*Tourist experience*

According to Wang et al. (2012), the principal theories of tourist experience focus on situational experience, flow experience, binary experience, two-factor experience, and strategic experiential modules. Tourist experience is the global consumption experience of a destination (Neuhofer et al., 2012; Ritchie & Hudson, 2009). Further compounding this, is the realization that tourist experience is an interpretation of activities that are first conceptualized as being relative to everyday life routine (Uriely, 2005). At a deeper level, this interpretation varies; not only based on destination, but also by being influenced by the time dimension (Murray et al., 2010). Echoing this, Tussyadiah and Fesenmaier (2007, p. 2260), who consider tourist experience as temporality, highlighted the tourist experience as being a "process that begins with the ordinary, progresses to heightened moments and returns to the ordinary." In the context of marketing, the intensification of tourist experience can be stimulated by sensory marketing, such as by sight, smell, taste, sound and touch (Agapito et al., 2014). A better understanding of tourist experience can be achieved by re-developing the tourist experience paradigm shift; which is traditionally viewed in the academic dimension, based on a re-conceptualization of the structure of the tourist experience (Quan & Wang, 2004). The heart of the redevelopment of the tourist experience paradigm shift might address the real and additional values of the tourist experience, once instilled with a creativeness aspect (Richards and Wilson 2005). While tourist encounters are personal to each visitor (Agapito et al., 2014), tourism planners can facilitate the development of the right environment to enhance the likelihood of positive and memorable tourist experience encounters (Tung & Ritchie, 2011), thus benefiting all tourism industry players (Manente & Minghetti, 2006).

*HOLSAT model*

The Holiday Satisfaction Model (hereafter referred to as HOLSAT), is a model founded on a price factor given a high probability of willingness to pay effecting the expectation. It was principally developed by Tribe and Snaith (1998) for the purpose of evaluating tourists' satisfaction level; where satisfaction is defined as "the degree to which a tourist's evaluation of a destination's attributes exceeds his/her expectations" (Bindu & Kanagaraj, 2013: p. 180). The model is constructed using the disconfirmatory paradigm previously outlined, in addition to implementing the philosophy of the SERVQUAL model (Tsitsiloni et al., 2012). Interestingly, HOLSAT measures the complexity of tourists' satisfaction level towards a destination without utilizing fixed attributes (Truong & Foster, 2006), rather than focusing on a specific service provider, such as hotel (Suh et al., 1997). According to Truong (2005), HOLSAT overcomes the concept of absolute values of satisfaction observed in previous models, such as SERVQUAL, importance-performance and SERVPER; as HOLSAT evaluates satisfaction from the perspective of expectation and experience, while considering the positive and negative attributes of a destination (Meimand et al., 2013). In contrast, SERVQUAL evaluates performance according to best quality, SERVPERF assesses satisfaction using the experience aspect and importance-performance examines satisfaction using the perception-importance score's function (Latu & Everett, 2000). Truong and Foster (2006) proposed the five 'A's' (attractions, activities, accommodation, amenity and accessibility) as a holistic approach, towards tourism products and services, in her application of the Holiday Satisfaction (HOLSAT) model, to measure satisfaction levels among Australian tourists visiting Vietnam.

## Methodology

*Instrument design*

The survey instrument, developed based on the key features of the HOLSAT model, aimed to measure the level of tourist satisfaction of Penang holiday attributes. During the instrument's development, several

features outlined in the original model were omitted. Features that were only deemed important to Penang's tourism remained and were applied in the instrument. The process of content validity was carried out by a panel of tourism stakeholders, such as tourism officials, hotel managers, travel agents, airline officials, airport staff and tourist attraction representatives. The 20 attributes chosen were categorised under four groups; namely accessibility, accommodation, tourist amenities and food/meals. The instrument was prepared in multiple languages i.e., English, Malay, Mandarin, Arabic and Japanese, to capture the true voice of a wider range of respondents.

*The sample and data collection*

The survey targeted both international and domestic tourists who visited and spent at least one night in Penang in 2014, with a minimum age of 18 years old. Transient visitors and day trippers were excluded from the sampling frame. The selection of respondents was based on a stratified random sampling method; where the stratum for international and domestic tourists was determined from their region of origin and ethnic group, respectively.

Data collection was conducted consecutively in four cycles during March, June, September and December 2014, at selected gateways (e.g., airport, ferry jetty, bus station and pier cruise terminal), tourist spots (Penang Hill, Fort Cornwallis, Kek Lok Si temple, Komtar, Little India, Pesta Pulau Pinang, Gurney drive and Batu Ferringhi), hotels, and shopping malls throughout Penang. Of the 5413 distributed questionnaires, we received 4170 completed forms (2061 international and 2109 domestic), which amounts to a 77 percent response rate. The profiles of respondents is summarised in Table 1.

**Table 1. Profile of respondents**

|  |  | International (N = 2061) | Domestic (N = 2109) | Total (N = 4170) |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Place of origin** | Southeast Asia | 25.1% | - | 25.1% |
|  | Europe | 18.0% | - | 18.0% |
|  | Eastern Asia | 16.4% | - | 16.4% |
|  | Western Asia | 13.1% | - | 13.1% |
|  | Oceania | 9.4% | - | 9.4% |
|  | Americas | 7.1% | - | 7.1% |
|  | Southern Asia | 5.9% | - | 5.9% |
|  | Africa | 4.9% | - | 4.9% |
| **Gender** | Male | 45.6% | 44.1% | 44.9% |
|  | Female | 54.4% | 55.9% | 55.1% |
| **Age** | 18-25 years old | 27.9% | 42.4% | 35.2% |
|  | 26-35 years old | 41.8% | 38.4% | 40.1% |
|  | 36-49 years old | 20.4% | 16.2% | 18.3% |
|  | $\geq$ 50 years old | 9.9% | 2.9% | 6.4% |
|  | Average | 33 years old | 29 years old | 31 years old |
| **Marital status** | Single | 55.0% | 60.1% | 57.6% |
|  | Married | 41.3% | 38.7% | 40.0% |
|  | Divorcee/widowed | 3.7% | 1.2% | 2.4% |
| **Number of visit** | First-time visitor | 64.2% | 32.1% | 48.0% |
|  | Repeat visitor | 35.8% | 67.9% | 52.0% |
| **Travel style** | Independent/FIT | 79.9% | 86.9% | 83.4% |
|  | On package tour | 20.1% | 13.1% | 16.6% |

*Data analysis*

Data analysis involved two stages. In the first stage, a reliability test was performed on each of the 20 attributes of experience and expectation, where Cronbach's Alpha values were found to be 0.872 and 0.934, respectively. All items appeared to be worthy of retention. During the final stage, the mean score for each attribute of expectation and experience was calculated and illustrated in a two-dimensional matrix; with expectation values (Y-axis) plotted against experience values (X-axis). The data was depicted in a matrix with each variable plotted on a line with its perceived expectation and experience. The mean of the difference between experience and expectation was also computed. 'Win' and 'Loss' segments were labelled on each matrix; with a 45-degree diagonal line representing the 'Draw' line. The 'Draw' line demonstrates a visual presentation of where the attribute data points lay on the positive and negative matrices. The attribute points that are plotted furthest away from the 'Draw' line in the 'Win' segment indicate a greater gain of satisfaction for that particular attribute. In addition, a paired sample t-test was performed to determine whether any significant difference existed between each attribute of perceived expectation and experience at the 1:1000 level, if any.

## Results

*International tourist group*

Figure 2 shows the HOLSAT matrix plot of expectation as a function of experience for the international tourist group. The numbers shown against each data point plotted correspond to the attribute number in
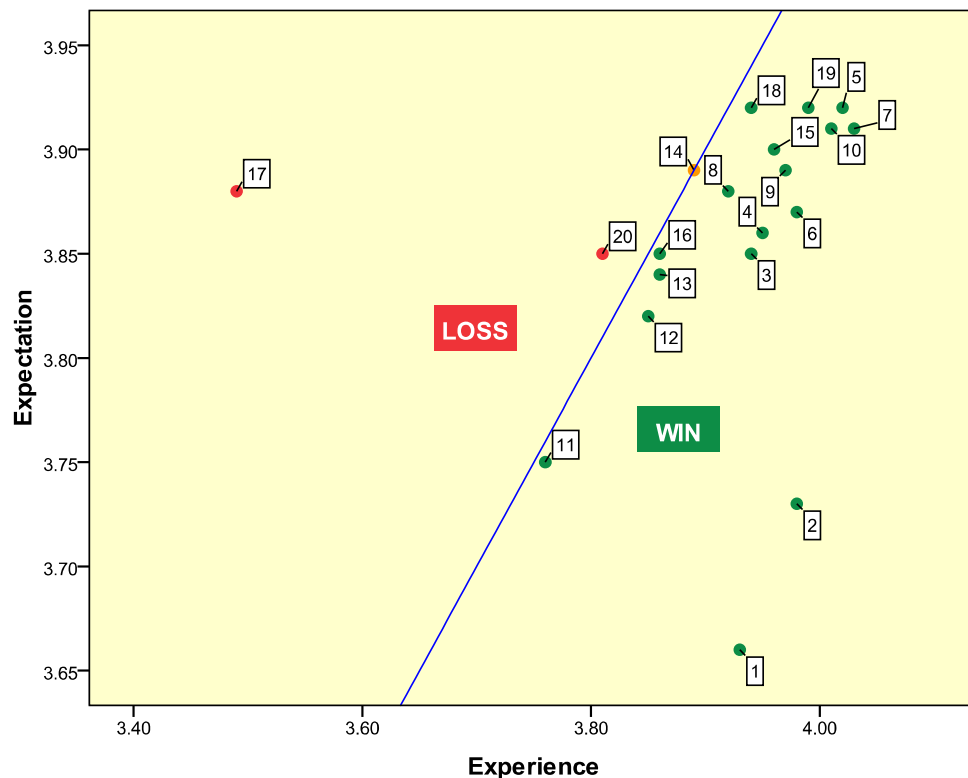


Note: Win = improvement of visitor's expectation; Loss = reduction in visitor's expectation;
Draw line = closely matching of visitor's expectation

**Fig. 2**. *Experience-expectation matrix for international tourist group*

Table 2. From the 20 studied attributes, scores for experience for 17 attributes exceeded those for expectation; indicating an apparent high level of overall satisfaction of respondents whilst holidaying in Penang. These attributes appeared in the 'Win' segment of the matrix. The further away from the 'Draw' line the plotted data points were, the greater the level of satisfaction experienced for that particular attribute. However, the significance of each attribute must be supported by the results of the t-test.

From the t-test results presented in Table 2, it appears that for 9 of 17 satisfied attributes, the difference between experience and expectation was significant at the 0.001 level. Attributes [1], [2], [3], [4], [5], [6], [7], [9] and [10] all show significant levels of satisfaction. Eight attributes did not show statistically significant results, namely [8], [11], [12], [13], [15], [16], [18] and [19]. Further observation illustrates that attribute [14] i.e., 'the price of goods' was plotted on the 'Draw' line, indicating that respondents were neither satisfied nor dissatisfied with that particular attribute. Nevertheless, two attributes ([17] and [20]) appeared in the 'Loss' area of the matrix; demonstrating equal experience and expectation values by respondents against 'cleanliness of beaches and ocean' and 'cleanliness of eating places'. Between these two attributes, attribute [17] showed a significant level of dissatisfaction.
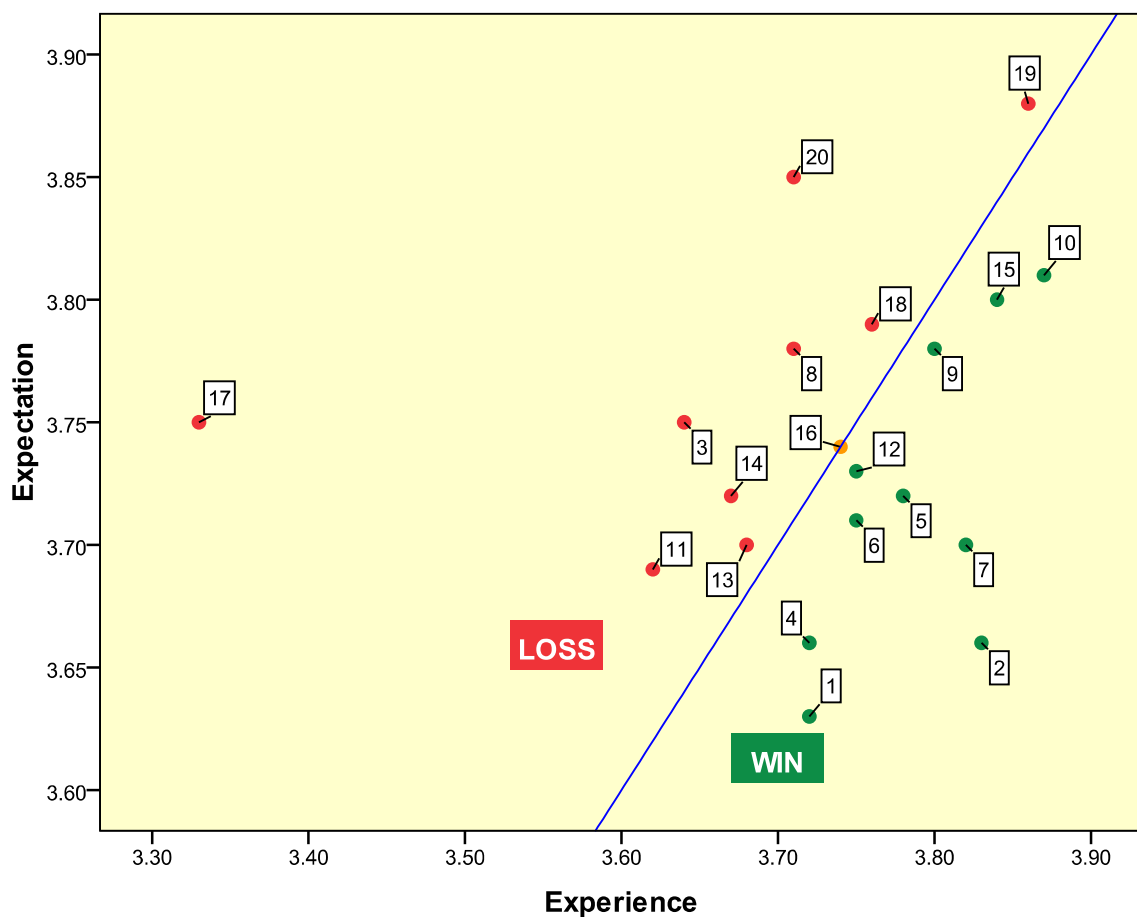
**Table 2. Summary of result for international tourist group**

| No | Statement | Expectation (Expt) | | Experience (Exp) | | (Exp − Expt)[1] | t-TEST | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | Mean | SD | Mean | SD | | $N$[2] | $t$[3] | SIG[4] |
| | **Accessibility** | | | | | | | | |
| 1 | Hospitality of immigration officials at the entrance point | 3.66 | 0.775 | 3.93 | 0.721 | **0.27** | 1465 | -10.235 | **0.000** |
| 2 | Check-in/check-out process at the airport | 3.73 | 0.804 | 3.98 | 0.745 | **0.25** | 1477 | -9.382 | **0.000** |
| 3 | Availability of information for tourist at entry points | 3.85 | 0.882 | 3.94 | 0.894 | **0.09** | 1926 | -3.826 | **0.000** |
| 4 | Accessibility to tourist attractions | 3.86 | 0.782 | 3.95 | 0.782 | **0.09** | 2014 | -3.955 | **0.000** |
| | **Accommodation** | | | | | | | | |
| 5 | Availability of accommodation | 3.92 | 0.762 | 4.02 | 0.765 | **0.10** | 2024 | -4.473 | **0.000** |
| 6 | Quality of accommodation | 3.87 | 0.790 | 3.98 | 0.799 | **0.11** | 1921 | -5.110 | **0.000** |
| 7 | Hospitality of hotel staffs | 3.91 | 0.802 | 4.03 | 0.773 | **0.12** | 1897 | -5.574 | **0.000** |
| | **Tourist Amenities** | | | | | | | | |
| 8 | Internet connectivity/WIFI/telephone services | 3.88 | 0.819 | 3.92 | 0.897 | 0.04 | 2022 | -1.513 | 0.130 |
| 9 | Money changer/automatic teller machine | 3.89 | 0.764 | 3.97 | 0.833 | **0.08** | 2011 | -4.040 | **0.000** |
| 10 | Shopping facilities | 3.91 | 0.758 | 4.01 | 0.812 | **0.10** | 2000 | -4.894 | **0.000** |
| 11 | Public toilets | 3.75 | 0.908 | 3.76 | 1.004 | 0.01 | 1990 | -0.453 | 0.650 |
| 12 | Signage at attractions | 3.82 | 0.845 | 3.85 | 0.927 | 0.03 | 1991 | -1.251 | 0.211 |
| 13 | Tourist information centre | 3.84 | 0.788 | 3.86 | 0.918 | 0.02 | 1984 | -0.494 | 0.621 |
| 14 | The prices of goods | 3.89 | 0.765 | 3.89 | 0.827 | 0.00 | 2004 | -0.286 | 0.775 |
| 15 | Variety of tourist attractions | 3.90 | 0.763 | 3.96 | 0.836 | 0.06 | 2012 | -2.583 | 0.010 |
| 16 | Nightlife entertainments | 3.85 | 0.804 | 3.86 | 0.861 | 0.01 | 1949 | -0.754 | 0.451 |
| 17 | Cleanliness of beaches and ocean | 3.88 | 0.846 | 3.49 | 1.116 | **-0.39** | 1961 | 13.834 | **0.000** |
| | **Food/Meals** | | | | | | | | |
| 18 | Prices of food and beverages | 3.92 | 0.773 | 3.94 | 0.832 | 0.02 | 2029 | -1.176 | 0.240 |
| 19 | Availability of Halal food | 3.92 | 0.774 | 3.99 | 0.796 | 0.07 | 1892 | -3.074 | 0.002 |
| 20 | Cleanliness of eating places | 3.85 | 0.806 | 3.81 | 0.904 | -0.04 | 2023 | 1.748 | 0.081 |

**Note:** 1. Mean of differences;  2. Number of pairs of scores;  3. Value of $t$;  4. SIG: Level of significance, ***p<0.001 (1:1000);  Statements highlighted in yellow and tan are significant

*Domestic tourist group*

Figure 3 illustrates the attribute's distribution within the 'Win' and 'Loss' matrices. Five attributes were found to be significant at the 0.001 level ([2], [3], [7], [17] and [20]), with attributes [2] and [17] recording the highest and lowest levels of satisfaction, respectively. When analysing the 'Win' matrix, the results show that 10 attributes exceeded the domestic group's expectation; of which, only 2 attributes showed statistically significant results (i.e., [2] and [7]) whilst the remaining were insignificant. In the case of the 'Loss' matrix, the domestic group was found to be dissatisfied with 9 attributes, of which 3 attributes showcased significant results (i.e., [3], [17] and [20]). It was also learned that the highest level of dissatisfaction was recorded by 'cleanliness of beaches and ocean'. Further observation illustrates that attribute [16] i.e., 'nightlife entertainments' was plotted on the 'Draw' line, indicating that the domestic group were neither satisfied nor dissatisfied with that particular attribute.



Note:  Win = improvement of visitor's expectation; Loss = reduction in visitor's expectation;
        Draw line = closely matching of visitor's expectation

**Fig. 3**. *Experience-expectation matrix for domestic tourist group*

**Table 3. Summary of result for domestic tourist group**

| No | Statement | Expectation (Expt) | | Experience (Exp) | | (Exp − Expt)[1] | t-TEST | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | Mean | SD | Mean | SD | | N[2] | t[3] | SIG[4] |
| | **Accessibility** | | | | | | | | |
| 1 | Hospitality of immigration officials at the entrance point | 3.63 | 0.823 | 3.72 | 0.802 | 0.09 | 389 | -2.569 | 0.011 |
| 2 | Check-in/check-out process at the airport | 3.66 | 0.873 | 3.83 | 0.773 | **0.17** | 393 | -4.094 | **0.000** |
| 3 | Availability of information for tourist at entry points | 3.75 | 0.890 | 3.64 | 1.016 | **-0.11** | 1493 | 3.791 | **0.000** |
| 4 | Accessibility to tourist attractions | 3.66 | 0.910 | 3.72 | 0.897 | 0.06 | 1988 | -2.532 | 0.011 |
| | **Accommodation** | | | | | | | | |
| 5 | Availability of accommodation | 3.72 | 0.861 | 3.78 | 0.826 | 0.06 | 2056 | -2.905 | 0.004 |
| 6 | Quality of accommodation | 3.71 | 0.815 | 3.75 | 0.843 | 0.04 | 1750 | -2.478 | 0.013 |
| 7 | Hospitality of hotel staffs | 3.70 | 0.883 | 3.82 | 0.835 | **0.12** | 1734 | -5.049 | **0.000** |
| | **Tourist Amenities** | | | | | | | | |
| 8 | Internet connectivity/WIFI/telephone services | 3.78 | 0.861 | 3.71 | 0.949 | -0.07 | 2059 | 2.969 | 0.003 |
| 9 | Money changer/automatic teller machine | 3.78 | 0.812 | 3.80 | 0.853 | 0.02 | 2048 | -0.757 | 0.449 |
| 10 | Shopping facilities | 3.81 | 0.805 | 3.87 | 0.831 | 0.06 | 2062 | -2.802 | 0.005 |
| 11 | Public toilets | 3.69 | 0.831 | 3.62 | 0.981 | -0.07 | 2048 | 2.872 | 0.004 |
| 12 | Signage at attractions | 3.73 | 0.820 | 3.75 | 0.884 | 0.02 | 2050 | -0.673 | 0.501 |
| 13 | Tourist information centre | 3.70 | 0.817 | 3.68 | 0.913 | -0.02 | 2049 | 0.766 | 0.444 |
| 14 | The prices of goods | 3.72 | 0.822 | 3.67 | 0.917 | -0.05 | 2071 | 1.880 | 0.060 |
| 15 | Variety of tourist attractions | 3.80 | 0.807 | 3.84 | 0.865 | 0.04 | 2062 | -2.066 | 0.039 |
| 16 | Nightlife entertainments | 3.74 | 0.877 | 3.74 | 0.906 | 0.00 | 1954 | 0.333 | 0.739 |
| 17 | Cleanliness of beaches and ocean | 3.75 | 0.877 | 3.33 | 1.120 | **-0.42** | 2025 | 14.155 | **0.000** |
| | **Food/Meals** | | | | | | | | |
| 18 | Prices of food and beverages | 3.79 | 0.808 | 3.76 | 0.932 | -0.03 | 2063 | 1.267 | 0.205 |
| 19 | Availability of Halal food | 3.88 | 0.804 | 3.86 | 0.897 | -0.02 | 2017 | 0.971 | 0.332 |
| 20 | Cleanliness of eating places | 3.85 | 0.811 | 3.71 | 0.961 | **-0.14** | 2043 | 5.764 | **0.000** |

**Note:** 1. Mean of differences;  2. Number of pairs of scores;  3. Value of *t*;  4. SIG: Level of significance, ***p<0.001 (1:1000);  Statements highlighted in yellow and tan are significant

## Conclusion

The objective of this study was to measure tourists' satisfaction level of Penang using an adapted Holiday Satisfaction (HOLSAT) model (pioneered by Tribe and Snaith, 1998). The study compared tourists' experiences of 20 holiday attributes against their expectation of the same attributes. The findings provided insights into how Penang is perceived as a holiday destination by both international and domestic groups. It also portrayed the tourist groups' sense of satisfaction and dissatisfaction with Penang's attributes across four aspects, namely accessibility, accommodation, tourist amenities and food/meals. At the same time, the findings facilitated a better understanding of the leisure behaviour of tourists during their visits to Penang. The identified perception of respondents (i.e., the pre-trip expectation and the actual experience) and their satisfaction level have strong practical and policy implications in targeted marketing, product development and management.

Overall, the study observed similar satisfaction and dissatisfaction patterns for all attribute groups, for both international and domestic groups. Despite a slight difference in *p* values, both accessibility and accommodation attributes performed excellently, except for attribute [3] 'availability of information for tourists at entry points' as perceived by the domestic group. However, the results for food/meals and tourist amenities should be of interest to tourism service providers; as these are the attributes that need to

be significantly improved upon and enhanced, in order to increase tourists' positive experience; especially for the domestic group. Specific attention should be directed towards conserving the ocean and the beaches, as they house many of the main tourism developments and activities.

In summary, providing satisfactory experience to tourists is equally important as building a good image of Penang. Tourism stakeholders should ensure that tourists' travel experiences in Penang are satisfactory. They should consider how to provide added value to the tourist's experience, in order to encourage them to revisit in the near future, as well as disseminate only the good news to others.

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