Research Article

Tourism product quality perceptions and big spenders' travel intentions in Malaysia: a comparative study of Southeast Asian and Middle Eastern countries

Journal of Tourism, Hospitality & Culinary Arts (JTHCA)
2021, Vol. 13 (3) pp 180-200

Submit date: 02nd October 2021
Accept date: 06th December 2021
Publish date: 30th December 2021

Zaliha Zainuddin*
Faculty of Business, Economics and Social Development, Universiti Malaysia Terengganu
zaliha.z@umt.edu.my

Mazni Saad
Department of Tourism, Kulliyyah of Languages and Management, International Islamic University Malaysia
maznisaad@iium.edu.my

Mohd Hanafi Azman Ong
Department of Statistics and Decision Sciences, Faculty of Computer and Mathematical Sciences, Universiti Teknologi MARA Kampus Segamat
napieong@uitm.edu.my

Proposed citation:
Zainuddin, Z., Saad, M., & Ong, M. H. A. (2021). Tourism product quality perceptions and big spenders' travel intentions in Malaysia: a comparative study of Southeast Asian and Middle Eastern countries. *Journal of Tourism, Hospitality & Culinary Arts, 13*(3), 180-200.

Abstract
Tourism has been the second-largest economic driven in Malaysia's economy. This paper aims to examine the mediating role of perceived tourism products quality (TPQ) in Malaysia towards electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) and travelling intentions of Southeast Asia (SEA) and the Middle East. Two-fold objectives were developed: (1) To investigate the significant difference of the perception between SEA and Middle East countries on Malaysian's tourism products quality and (2) to examine the mediating role of perceived tourism products quality in Malaysia towards eWOM and travelling intentions of SEA and the Middle East. Methodology design using the SEA and Middle East tourists who have been to Malaysia was approached through the online Google Form survey. Upon processing 92 respondents from the Middle East and 79 respondents from SEA, the data sets of responses were analyzed using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modelling (PLS-SEM) and MANOVA techniques. The findings show a significant mediating effect of perceived TPQ toward the relationship of eWOM and revisit intention. Besides, comparison analysis shows that SEA tourists are more likely to revisit Malaysia than the Middle East, the same as for the finding

of eWOM and perceived TPQ. TPQ has a mediating impact on eWOM and revisits intention for both markets. The findings of this study are expected would positively affect stakeholders, especially the State Tourism, Tourism Board, and tourism industry players.

Keywords:

eWOM, Tourism Product Quality, Big Spender Tourists, Southeast Asia, Middle East

1 Introduction

This study aims to investigate a role of tourism product quality (TPQ) among the international markets, particularly the Southeast Asia (SEA) and the Middle East. These two regions are recognized as big spenders for the inbound tourism. Tourism is widely recognized as a significant growth industry in all countries and a leading source of wealth formation, livelihood, and income. Over the years, the tourism industry has experienced exponential growth and diversification, and it has emerged as one of the world's fastest emerging economic areas (Abbasi et al., 2021) in terms of gross domestic product (GDP) and employment (Sharif et al., 2020). Therefore, the tourism industry plays a vital economic role in generating income for the country because it generates income for particular places and will contribute to the economic development of the country, producing substantial foreign exchange earnings and job opportunities (Karim & Haque, 2020). Somehow, tourism in the modern era is linked to development and includes increasing new destinations (Abbasi et al., 2021). Malaysia is situated in Southeast Asia (SEA). We can enjoy a year-round tropical climate, unique and diverse natural and cultural landscape through this geographical location. Moreover, Malaysia is home to the oldest tropical rainforest, the most crucial cave chamber, pristine beaches, rich culture and history, well-preserved heritage, and multi-ethnic and multicultural people friendly and helpful (Yap et al., 2018). As a result, the government puts some effort to utilize and preserve the sources by promoting Malaysia. Malaysia is now known as one of the most popular tourist destinations in the Southeast Asian Nations region (Al-Mulali et al., 2020). Malaysia's tourism industry is the second largest contributor to the national economy, trailing only the manufacturing sector (Ahn & Kwon, 2020).

Furthermore, the government has taken serious steps to further bolster tourism in a bid to diversify its economy by focusing more on high-class cultural destinations and building the country's identity concerning art, culture, hotels, restaurants, transports, entertainment organizations and so on (Islam et al., 2020). The increasing numbers of tourists are because of the excellent facilities provided by the tourism sector (Karim & Haque, 2020). As a result, it is vital for tourism and hospitality management to ensure tourists' overall travel experience of accommodation and seek long-term relationships with customers instead of adopting a short-term. This is underlying in relationship marketing theory, which focuses on building and maintaining relationships between an organization and its external actors, with customers. This will subsequently facilitate customer loyalty (Tajeddini et al., 2021)

This study examines the international tourists revisit intention based on TPQ by using the theory of planned behavior (TPB) to fill substantial knowledge gaps in contemporary hospitality literature. TPB explains and predicts human behavior in many studies. For example, the theory explained Airbnb and hotel accommodation consumers (Tajeddini et al., 2021) and home-based accommodation consumers (Erul et al., 2020). It was also demonstrated in studies such as pro-environmental behavior (green hotel) (Nimri et al., 2020; Yarimoglu & Gunay, 2020; Yeh et al., 2021) and food and beverage sectors (Chan & Hon, 2020), and explained residents' behavioral intentions that support tourism development (Erul et al., 2020). TPB was a versatile tool for understanding tourists' behavioral intention to understand better the psychological factors that directly or indirectly influence tourist loyalty (Tajeddini et al., 2021) in Laguna Redang Island Resort. Therefore, the factors of behavioral intention of tourists that lead to customer loyalty in the tourism industry are theoretically grounded in TPB. This will be discussed more throughout this case of study.

1.1 Research Problems

Inbound tourism in Malaysia is facing Malaysia s tourism sector witnessed a decline in tourist flows due to different factors. For example, the number SEA visitors to Malaysia from Jan till December, 2018 compared to 2019 decreased by -1.3%, stated by Tourism Malaysia. (2020). Malaysia Tourism Statistics in Brief retrieved from http://www.tourism.gov.my/statistics The number of tourists continued to drop to -20.1% for Middle East tourist to Malaysia 2018 showed 315,733 compared 2019 stated 309,224) These statistics pointed out that a study will certainly will be an assistance to gain back these market and problems on revisit intention, or eWOM). About what are the perceptions of SEA and Middle Easts towards perceived TPQ. All these will justify our Research Question at end of this section.

This problem is particularly important as Malaysia registered a total of 4,332,722 international tourist arrivals in 2020, down 83.4% as compared to 26,100,784 recorded in 2019. Malaysia is not alone in registering negative growth in the number of tourist arrivals. According to the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), Asia and the Pacific recorded a 64% decrease in arrivals. Malaysia's neighboring ASEAN countries also saw a significant decline in the number of tourists, including Thailand (-83.2%), Singapore (-85.7%), Vietnam (-78.7%), and Indonesia (-75%), according to the data from the Pacific Asia Travel Association (PATA) and National Tourism Organization (NTO). Malaysia's tourist receipts plunged by 85.3% from RM86.14 billion in 2019 to RM12.69 billion in 2020, with the average per capita expenditure recorded a total of RM2,928, a decline of 11.3% from RM3,300 in 2019. Negative growth had been observed for tourists from every market, namely short-haul market (-83.5%), medium-haul market (-84.7%), and long-haul market (-79.7%). The massive drop in international tourist arrivals is attributed to the closure of Malaysian borders since 18 March 2020 due to the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic.

ASEAN countries or the short-haul market remains Malaysia's top contributor with a 68.1% share of tourist arrivals (2,949,363), followed by the medium-haul market with

a domination of 20.1% share includes East Asia & South Asia (870,314). The long-haul market share was 11.8%, with 512,484 tourists from West Asia, Middle East, America, Oceania, Europe, and Africa. Top ten international tourist arrivals to Malaysia were from Singapore (1,545,255), Indonesia (711,723), China (405,149), Thailand (394,413), India (155,883), Brunei (136,020), South Korea (119,750), Japan (74,383), Australia (72,680), and Vietnam (64,184). In terms of overall tourist expenditure, the top five contributors came from Singapore, Indonesia, China, India and Thailand. Figure 1 shows that Asia and the Pacific reported by World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) showed negative growth with -64% and from the Middle East with -41% since March 2020.

The presented statistics show that Malaysia needs not to rely on the eWOM alone in generating more tourists to Malaysia.

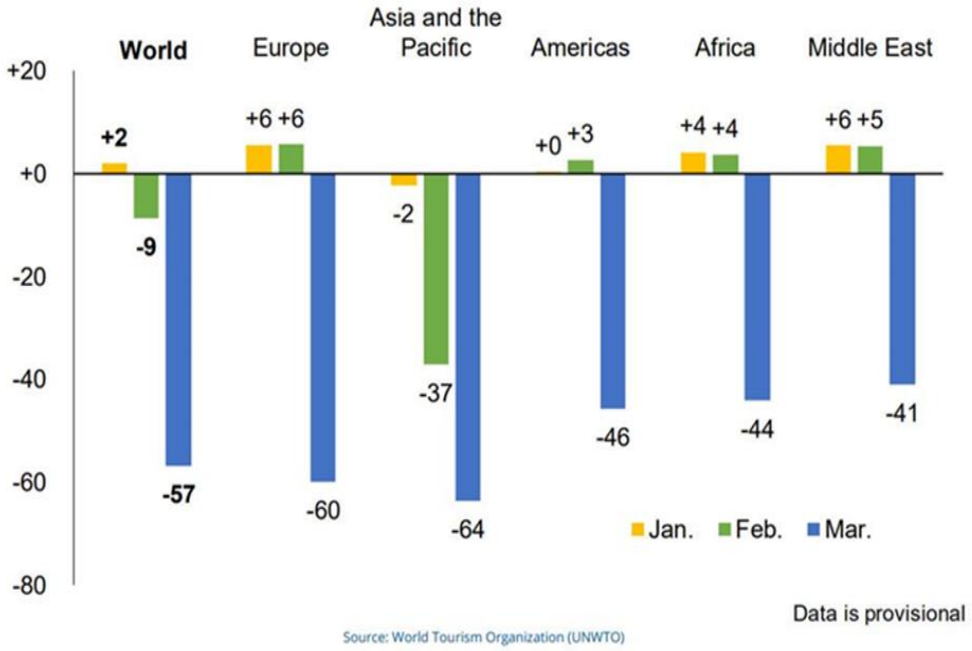


Figure 1: Asia and the Pacific reported by World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) March 2020

Hence, the following research questions will drive this study:

1) What is the significant difference of the perception between SEA and Middle East countries on Malaysian's tourism products quality?

2) What is the mediating role of perceived TPQ in Malaysia towards eWOM and travelling intentions of SEA and the Middle East?

As for the travel experience, previous studies have shown that more experienced tourists appear to have better travel intentions in crisis eras (Sönmez & Graefe, 1998a; Kozak et al., 2007; Polas, Sahidullah, Hossain, Karim, Prabhakaran, & Khan, 2019). Higher-income levels were related to stronger travel intentions. Studies have shown

that there is a relationship between income and travel intentions both in risky and riskless times (Sönmez & Graefe, 1998b; Floyd, Gibson, Pennington-Gray, & Thapa, 2004; Djeri, Armenski, Jovanović & Dragin, 2014; Li, Mengdie & Cheng, 2018). Education level were relevant predictors of travel intentions during disasters. Tourist concern for safety declines as the education levels increase. This has been supported by Qi, Gibson, and Zhang (2009), who argue that travellers with higher education levels tend to be more adventurous and to travel despite possible risks.

Thus, prospect travellers' travel intentions are measured to understand the key factors that make them travel. According to Lin and Chen (2009), six consumer intentions have been identified: (1) purchase intentions: Willingness to buy 2. Repurchase intentions: Anticipation in repurchasing the same product or brand 3. Shopping intentions: The place planned to perform the product purchasing 4. Spending intentions: The amount of money expected to be spent 5. Search intentions: The intentions to engage in external searching of information 6. Consumption intentions: The intentions to engage in a certain activity. These can be an interesting measure for the key factors for travel revisit intention.

Tourism has been a good income for Malaysia, particularly for SEA and Middle East tourists. Europe experienced the second greatest number of casualties, followed by North America, Africa, and the Middle East.

Inbound tourism in Malaysia has a massive impact on volume statistics (tourist arrival) and value statistics (tourist receipts). Recent statistics show that tourism has a share of 15% of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) in 2017 (Department of Statistic, 2018), contributing significantly to the Malaysian economy. The tourism industry posits significant earnings in which almost one-fifth of Malaysians are involved. Malaysia received the second largest tourist arrival from ASEAN countries and is ranked ninth among the top tourism destinations. Malaysia's image as a tourism destination has attracted SEA tourists for many years, contributing to Malaysia's good income.

The statistics raised a question if the Malaysian government special emphasis on the tourism sector through the Social and Economic Development Program (PSED) in the Eleventh Malaysia Plan (2016-2020) or any issues at the ground level that affect the ETP. The worries are also mentioned in the National Tourism Policy 2020-2030 (MOTAC 2021), which there are signs that tourism industry in Malaysia is stuck in a comfort zone, resulting from the over-dependence on the government and a silo mentality in comparison to SEA neighbours and Middle East countries. Given this, the study aims to investigate the significant difference of the perception between SEA and Middle East countries on Malaysian's tourism products quality and to examine the mediating role of perceived TPQ in Malaysia towards electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) and travelling intentions of SEA and the Middle East. This mediating study will advance the idea of the role of perceived TPQ towards eWOM and travel intentions of big spenders in Malaysia: a comparative study on SEA and Middle East countries, in this study, is expected able to intervene the government policy in harnessing the competitiveness of Malaysia's tourism industry in line with the National Tourism Policy 2020-2030.

2 Literature Review

2.1 Revisit Intentions of Big Spenders in Malaysia

As stated in Tourism Malaysia. (2020). Malaysia Tourism Statistics in Brief, stated that SEA market and ME countries are in top five main market arrival in Malaysia with per capita expenditure in 2018 was RM2,678 for SEA tourist while ME countries are the big spenders' as stated Arab Saudia top in the ranking with RM11.6K, UAE RM10K, Oman RM9.1K, Kuwait RM 9K and Iran RM8.5K.

Revisit intention is defined as a person's willingness to make a repeat visit, in a specific timeframe, a prior destination (Abbasi et al., 2021; Cham et al., 2021; Meng & Cui, 2020). Intentions are the measurements of how much people are willing to attempt and how much effort they expect to take to carry out a specific behavior (Ajzen, 1991). There is comprehensive evidence that when people have a stronger the intention to perform the behavior, the more likely the behavior will be performed (LaMorte, 2019). Yu and Lee (2019) confirmed that the relationship between value perceptions and willingness to buy from consumers is always positive.

Previous studies on tourist behavior indicate that some individual characteristics may affect travel intentions. Variables such as age show that younger tourists were less concerned about physical tourism-related risks and showed more travel intentions (Khan, Chelliah & Ahmed, 2018; Hajibaba et al., 2015; Neuburger & Egger, 2020). As for the travel experience, previous studies have shown that more experienced tourists appear to have better travel intentions in crisis eras (Sönmez & Graefe, 1998a; Kozak et al., 2007; Polas, Sahidullah, Hossain, Karim, Prabhakaran, & Khan, 2019). Higher-income levels were related to stronger travel intentions. Studies have shown that there is a relationship between income and travel intentions both in risky and riskless times (Sönmez & Graefe, 1998b; Floyd, Gibson, Pennington-Gray, & Thapa, 2004; Djeri, Armenski, Jovanović & Dragin, 2014; Li, Mengdie & Cheng, 2018). Education level were relevant predictors of travel intentions during disasters. Tourist concern for safety declines as the education levels increase. This has been supported by Qi, Gibson, and Zhang (2009), who argue that travelers with higher education levels tend to be more adventurous and to travel despite possible risks.

Thus, prospect travelers' travel intentions are measured to understand the key factors that make them travel. According to Lin and Chen (2009), six consumer intentions have been identified: (1) purchase intentions: Willingness to buy 2. Repurchase intentions: Anticipation in repurchasing the same product or brand 3. Shopping intentions: The place planned to perform the product purchasing 4. Spending intentions: The amount of money expected to be spent 5. Search intentions: The intentions to engage in external searching of information 6. Consumption intentions: The intentions to engage in a certain activity. These can be an interesting measure for the key factors for travel revisit intention.

2.2 eWOM and Travel Intention

The tourism industry faces some of the major challenges inherited in nature and cannot be avoided. For example, tourism products are intangible, and thus, they cannot be evaluated before its consumption (Pandey & Sahu, 2017). As stated in Trip-Adviso.com, LateRooms.com and Hotels.com, the intangible nature of tourism services, there is a greater level of uncertainty and ambiguity. This intangibility encourages potential visitors to visit sites that rank hotels in destinations according to how they are favorably reviewed (Abubakar, 2016). Tourism products are also seen as heavy risk purchases due to the cost involvement. Hence, interpersonal influence among consumers plays an essential role in minimizing the above risk associated with consumption of tourism products and decision-making (Lewis & Chambers, 2000). This statement is also agreed by Abubakar and Ilkan (2016) that online reviews are consulted by prospective tourists since the tourism product and service is not available until the moment of consumption.

This communication process of sharing opinions and information regarding experiences through online medium is called eWOM (Bilal et al., 2020). With the advent of web 2.0, virtual interactions among tourists have become common place where users are allowed to interact with each other through a virtual community. Variety of online platforms such as discussion forums, social media, blogs, video sharing and review websites and eWOM has emerged as a most influential media which is informally connecting the customers, companies, and society as a whole (Pandey & Sahu, 2017; Saura, Palos-Sanchez & Velicia-Martin, 2020).

eWOM has become a portal for most people, which has been used to share their opinions, feedback, suggestions, recommendations, and complaints about their products and services, which affect changes in using Word Of Mouth to the use of eWOM (Weerawit & Panjakajornsak, 2014). As much as eWOM affected consumers, eWOM became attractive for practitioners and researchers because of the advancement and significant growth in e-commerce (Hussain, Song, & Niu, 2020). Focusing on eWOM can affect customers' behavior and attitude, which increases the percentage of buying some categories of products (Casalo et al., 2015). eWOM has the strength and power that lies in the fact that each day more than one million people tune in to read any online review about specific products, and they interact with each other, which affect and influence their decision-making process (Erkan & Evans, 2016). All credit goes back directly to the usage of eWOM, which gave users the ability to understand the reliability of the information they read daily and enhance their self-knowledge (Hanandeh, 2018).

Today, eWOM is recognized as one of the essential information resources for firms, valuable and certified information resources for customers (Abu-Bakr & Ilkan, 2016) that can decrease threats and any doubt related to goods, products, and services (Casaló et al., 2015). Most firms started to focus on using eWOM as an efficient tool that affects sales and marketing performance because of the positive and strong impact of eWOM on industries such as restaurants, telecommunications, entertainment, tourism etc.

(Casaló et al., 2015). Research focused on the tourism field; because it is a strong sector that affects its GDP (Casaló et al., 2015; Abubakar & Ilkan, 2016). Tourism firms started to pay attention to providing information about touristic locations for customers to make the process of choosing a location easier (Abu-Bakr, 2016). More than 67% of travelers in the United States use internet websites and mobile applications to get all of the needed information about the places they intend to visit. Tourism destinations should keep in mind that providing a pleasant experience for their tourists has a major effect on developing positive image for non-visitors.

2.3 Tourism Product Quality

Overall, the tourist experience is shaped by visitors' engagement and interactions with products, services, resources, environments, and people at the destination and stimulates cognitive, emotional and behavioral reactions. From a managerial perspective, tourists' cognitive and emotional responses are associated with tourist satisfaction and loyalty (Tung & Ritchie, 2011), and their feelings concerning the visited place (Page, 1997). Oh (1999) has proposed and tested an integrative model of service quality, customer value, customer satisfaction and customers' post-purchase decision-making process using TPQ as the theory. Using a sample from the luxury segment of the hotel industry, the author found significant relationships between perceived service quality and customer satisfaction. Customer satisfaction was also positively associated to both intents to spread positive word of mouth about the hotel and repurchase of accommodation. The model appears to possess practical validity as well as explanatory ability. With this result, it is argued that TPQ may be extended to this present study, particularly with regards to the antecedents and consequences of underlying dimension of tourist satisfaction and response behavior. In this sense, their level satisfaction will increase when the resources are better or beyond their expectation. Hence, their positive level of satisfaction level is assumed to directly influence their response behavior.

This is because of the fact that the perceived quality of the accommodation increases the level of satisfaction of customer, which, in turn, affects their level of trust and, hence, loyalty, understood as a future decision on whether to repeat the tourism experience. In the same way, accommodation quality has a direct effect on how a visitor perceives d destination, which in turn will influence other aspects, such as the number of overnights, the possibility of a repeat visit or recommendation or the positive image of the establishment – or even of the destination (Bigné et al., 2020). Therefore, quality has become a key variable of competitiveness, with the following impact on the main indicators of tourism and business profitability (number of overnight stays, average length of stay, occupancy rates, average daily room rates, average daily income per available and occupied room, etc).

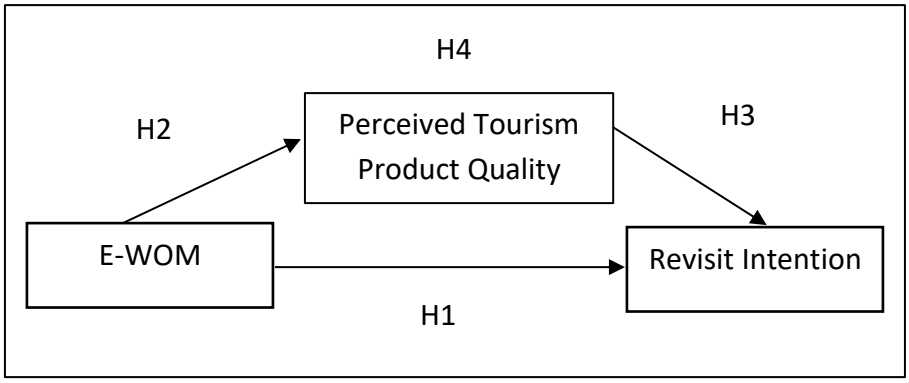
Numerous factors were deemed as basic reasons to conduct the current study. First, the intensity of competition between countries in terms of tourist destinations (DiPietro

and Peterson, 2017) Perhaps the most important aspect of this competition is how to properly employ the resources of the tourist destination (Lin et al., 2017). Second, satisfaction level of the tourist should be assessed on a continuous basis because knowing tourist's satisfaction help in recognizing the degree of tourist's loyalty in terms of the desire to revisit or recommending others to visit this place (Foroudi et al., 2018).

Third, Malaysia s tourism sector witnessed a decline in tourist flows due to different factors. For example, the number of SEA visitors to Malaysia from Jan till December 2018 compared to 2019 decreased by -1.3% (Tourism Malaysia, 2020). The number of tourists continued to drop to -20.1% for Middle East tourist to Malaysia 2018 showed 315,733 compared 2019 stated 309,224) These statistics pointed out that a study will certainly be an assistance to gain back these market

2.4 Theoretical Framework

Researchers have created and developed tools to measure and analyse the Perceived TPQ mediating eWOM toward revisit intention. Hence, it makes sense to turn to the efforts of TPQ as the mediator who study why the SEA and Middle East tourist the factor concerning for their revisit intention. By adapting the below theoretical framework as below gathered as per constructed hypotheses, which was proposed TPQ as the mediator between eWOM and Revisit Intention.



H1: There is a significant effect of E-WOM toward Revisit Intention
H2: There is a significant effect of E-WOM toward Perceived Tourism Product Quality
H3: There is a significant effect of Perceived Tourism Product Quality toward Revisit Intention
H4: Perceived Tourism Product Quality significantly mediated the relationship between E-WOM and Revisit Intention

3 Methodology

Quantitative analysis and survey methodology were employed in this study, since this study is to explore the effect of Perceived Tourism Product Quality mediator variables toward the relationship of Electronic Word-of-Mouth and Revisit Intention (i.e. structured questionnaire).

Population of this study is the international tourists. Since the arrival statistic in 2019 has recorded 30,433,506 international tourists, a threshold of sampling size was based on Krejci and Morgan (1970), yielding a total of 384 respondents from Southeast Asia (i.e. SEA) and Middle East (i.e. ME) tourists' groups were selected by using purposive convenience sampling. As for data collection method, researchers used electronic medium data collection method as to ensure all questions asked in the structured questionnaire was answered by the respondent.

In the context of statistical analysis used, Structural Equation Modelling with Partial Least Squares (i.e. PLS-SEM) estimation multivariate data technique was used since sample size for this study can be considered as relatively small). Besides that, PLS-SEM can be considered as the optimal statistical data analysis since it allows the research to testing the indicators used for measuring targeted constructs based on convergent validity and discriminant validity. In addition, the significance test in this PLS-SEM analysis was computed by using the Bootstrapping method, where this method can be considered more robust as compared to conventional t-test method Therefore, 5000 replications of samples were computed for getting reliable results for empirical t-statistics and Bias Corrected (i.e. BCa) bootstrap. As for comparing analysis, independent t-test was used for accessing the different average values of the targeted variables between two tourists' group.

4 Findings

A total of 171 respondents from Southeast Asia (i.e. SEA) and Middle East (i.e. ME) tourists' groups responded to the survey. Table 1 shows the descriptive analysis of the respondent's profile that participated in this study. The descriptive analysis also indicated that male (57.1%) respondents are the majority of respondents that participate in this study. The analysis also indicated that the majority of them spends around 4 days to 6 days (59.6%) in each vacation, and about 49.7% of them stated that the preferred style of travelling they want is casual, followed by backpacking (26.9%), pre-organized style (17.5%), and only 5.9% preferred formal style of traveling.

Table 1: Respondent's Profile

Profiles	**n**	**%**
Gender		
Male	97	57.1
Female	73	42.9

Spending Time in Each Vacation		
1 – 3 days	44	25.9
4 – 6 days	102	59.6
7 days and above	24	14.5
Preferred Style for Travelling		
Casual	85	49.7
Formal	10	5.9
Pre-Organized	30	17.5
Backpacking	46	26.9

4.1 Measurement Models

Table 2 shows the results of the convergent validity of the measurement model. The analysis indicated that all indicators used for measuring the constructs in this measurement model met the minimum threshold value for at least .70 factor loading (Hair et al., 2017; Hair et al., 2012). In addition, the Average Variance Extracted (i.e. AVE) index for each construct was also above .50 (Hair et al., 2017; Hair et al., 2012), as well as both reliability values (i.e. Composite Reliability and Cronbach's Alpha) for each construct was also above .70 (Hair et al., 2017; Hair et al., 2012). Therefore, it confirms that each construct in this measurement model can be considered to have an optimal uni-dimensionality validity (Hair et al., 2017; Hair et al., 2012).

Table 2: Convergent Validity for Measurement Model

Indicator	Loading	AVE	γ
Electronic Word-of-Mouth			
Information about a vacation in Malaysia on social media is clear (WOM1)	.703**		
Information about vacation on social media will reduce my thought on possible risk in travelling to the destination in Malaysia (WOM2)	.750**		
I think information about a vacation in Malaysia on social media given by people around me is reliable. (WOM3)	.847**	.564	.885
Content from social media about Malaysia is similar to the destination facts. (WOM4)	.774**		
I easily understand the information about destinations in Malaysia through social media (WOM5)	.720**		
Social media's travel reviews about Malaysia is an acceptable source of information (WOM6)	.701**		
Perceived Tourism Product Quality			

I need enough information to plan for a vacation (QUA1)	.860**		
Having quality accommodation choices are important for a vacation (QUA2)	.797**		
Having quality facility choices are important for a vacation (QUA3)	.791**	.683	.915
Having a transportation facility is convenient for the vacation (QUA4)	.838**		
Having quality service at the destination is important for a vacation (QUA5)	.844**		
Revisit Intention			
I am willing to travel and tour within Malaysia again (REV1)	.787**	.578	.872
I am committed to travel and tour within Malaysia again (REV2)	.706**		
I am interested to have a vacation within Malaysia again (REV3)	.832**		
There is a high chance that I would travel and tour in Malaysia again (REV4)	.731**		
The motivation to travel again to Malaysia at a younger age is High for me (REV5)	.740**		

*Note: AVE = Average Variance Explained; γ = Composite Reliability; α = Cronbach's Alpha; **p <.01.*

As for accessing the discriminant validity of this measurement model, two statistical tests were applied in this study, namely the Fornell-Larcker criterion and the Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio of Correlations (i.e. HTMT). This analysis aims to differentiate the constructs in the theoretical framework (Henseler et al., 2015; Hair et al., 2017). To test discriminant analysis using a Fornell-Larcker test, the correlation value between all constructs should be lower than the square root value of AVE for each construct (Fornell and Larcker, 1981; Hair et al., 2017), and presented in Table 3. In addition, each construct was also totally discriminate against each other's since each HTMT ratio value was below .90 (Henseler et al., 2015).

Table 3: Discriminant Analysis for Measurement Model

	Fornel-Larcker Criteria			HTMT Criteria		
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(1)	(2)	(3)
(1)	**.751**			-		
(2)	.680	**.827**		.778	-	
(3)	.581	.620	**.760**	.688	.727	-

Note: (1) = Electronic Word-of-Mouth; (2) = Perceived Tourism Product Quality; (3) = Revisit Intention.

4.2 Structural Models

The structural model analysis indicates that the e*WOM* independent construct and perceived TPQ mediator construct gave 43.1% (R^2 = 0.431) toward revisiting intention dependent construct. At the same time, the e*WOM* independent construct was also given a 46.2% (R^2 = 0.462) variance explains toward revisit intention dependent construct. In terms of effect size and predictive relevance (i.e. Table 3), the analysis also indicated that e*WOM* gives a small effect size (f^2 = 0.083) and small predictive relevance (q^2 = 0.074) toward the revisit intention construct. However, the analysis revealed that e*WOM* could be considered it gives a large effect size (f^2 = 0.860) and large predictive relevance (q^2 = 0.731) toward the perceived TPQ construct. In addition, perceived TPQ construct give a medium effect size (f^2 = 0.165) and medium predictive relevance (q^2=0.153) toward revisit intention construct. Hence, based on these findings, the structural model in this study can be considered to meet the minimum requirement of PLS-SEM model, which is the value of effect size and predictive relevance are above zero as suggested by Hair et al. (2017) and Ringle et al. (2015).

Table 4: Direct Hypothesis Testing

Path	β	t-statistic	p-value	95% BCa Bootstrap	*f2*	*q2*	Remark
e*WOM* → TPQ	0.680	21.066**	<.01	(0.607, 0.735)	.860	.731	Large
TPQ → REVI	0.418	6.988**	<.01	(0.293, 0.528)	.165	.153	Medium
e*WOM* → REVI	0.297	4.675**	<.01	(0.169, 0.416)	.083	.074	Small

*Note: eWOM = Electronic Word-of-Mouth; TPQ = Perceived Tourism Product Quality; REVI = Revisit aThe Intention; ß = Standardized Beta Coefficient; f2 = Effect Size; q2 = Predictive Relevance; bootstrap samples was 5000 samples; *p <.05; **p <.01.*

The assessment of direct hypotheses reported in Table 4 indicates that e*WOM* (β = 0.680, t = 21.066, p <.01) positively and significantly affected perceived TPQ. In addition, simultaneously e*WOM* (β = 0.297, t = 4.675, p <.01) also significantly affected revisit intention with a positive effect. Regarding the effect of perceived TPQ toward revisiting intention, the analysis revealed that perceived TPQ (β = 0.418, t = 6.988, p <.01) was also positive and significantly affected revisit intention.

The mediating analysis reported in Table 5 indicates that perceived TPQ was statistically mediated the relationship between e*WOM* and revisit intention since the p-value of the indirect effect was lower than 0.05 (β = 0.284, t = 6.828, p <.01) with the partial effect. It is also supported by the result of 95% Bias Corrected Confidence

Interval, where the confidence interval did not include zero (LL = 0.201, UL = 0.363). Figure 1 and Figure 2 shows the structural analysis using the PLS-SEM algorithm.

Table 5: Mediating Testing

Path	β	t-statistic	p-value	[a]95% BCa Bootstrap	Direct Path	Remark
e*WOM* → TPQ → REVI	0.284	6.828**	<.01	(0.201, 0.363)	E-WOM → REVI**	Partial

*Note: eWOM = Electronic Word-of-Mouth; TPQ = Perceived Tourism Product Quality; REVI = Revisit Intention; β = Indirect Effect Coefficient; [a]The bootstrap samples was 5000 samples; *p <.05; **p <.01*

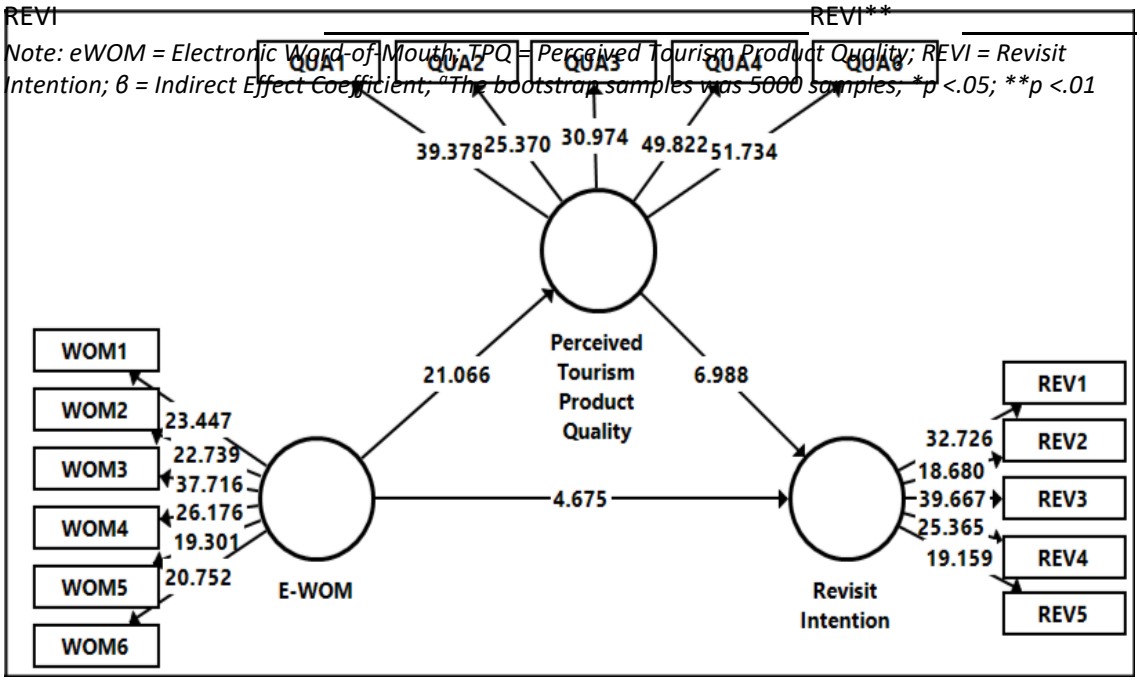


Figure 1: PLS SEM Analysis Output for Loading and Path Coefficient Values

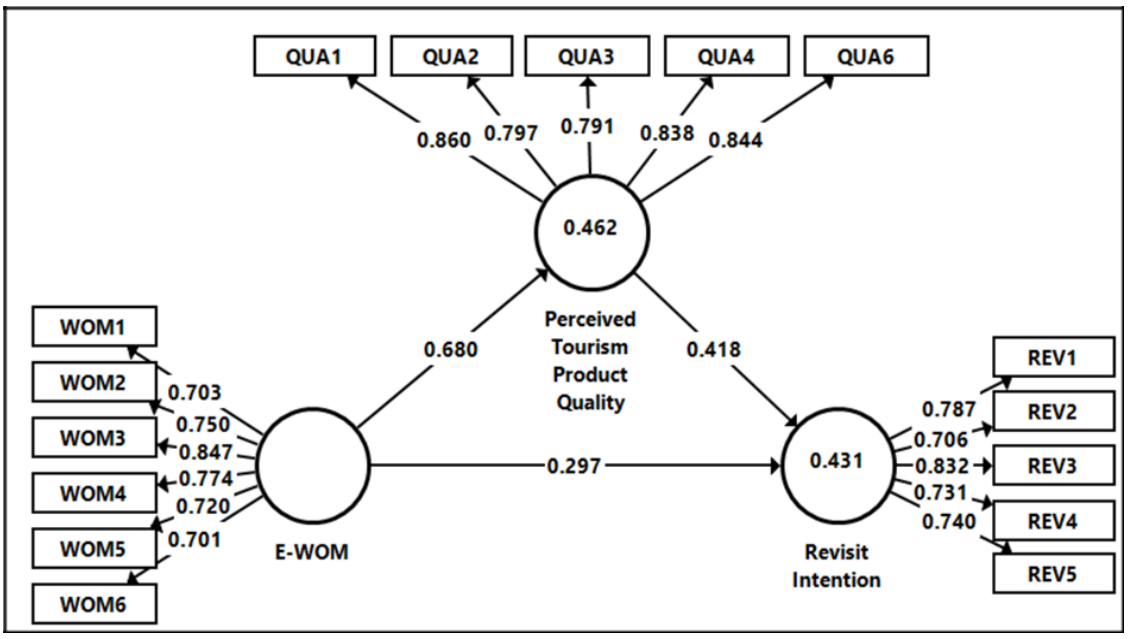


Figure 2: PLS SEM Analysis Output for Loading and Path Coefficient Values

4.3 Comparison Analysis

The independent t-test was used for accessing the different average values of the e*WOM*, perceived TPQ and revisit intention between SEA tourists' group and Middle East tourists' group. The analysis can be considered optimal to use since the targeted variables were normally distributed since the Skewness and Kurtosis statistics were in the range of ± 1.00 (e*WOM*: Skewness = -0.561; Kurtosis = 0.102, perceived TPQ: Skewness = -0.631; Kurtosis = 0.231, and Revisit Intention: Skewness = -0.631; Kurtosis = 0.145) as well as the group that need to compare are two groups only (Field, 2009; Pallant, 2010).

Table 6 illustrates that concluded that tourists from SEA are more likely to give a better perception of e*WOM* (5.74±1.31) as compared to Middle East (4.83±1.33) since the independent t-test was showing a significant different result ($t(169) = 2.305$, $p < .05$). The same conclusion can also be made for the perceived TPQ and Revisit intention. The independent t-test analysis shows that, there is a significant difference between the average level of perceived TPQ between SEA tourist group and Middle East tourist group ($t = 2.145$, $p < .05$), where tourists from SEA are more likely to give a better perceived TPQ perception (5.69±1.30) as compared to the Middle East (4.66±1.35). In addition, tourists from SEA (5.35±1.45) group are also more likely to revisit as compared to Middle East (4.63±1.52) with significantly differ ($t(169) = 2.247$, $p < .05$). Figure 3 shows the comparison graph of average value for e*WOM*, perceived TPQ, and revisit intention between SEA tourists' group and Middle East tourists' group.

Table 6: Comparison Analysis using Independent t-test

Variable	Group	M±SD	Levene's Test (p-value)	t-statistics (Dof)	p-value
E-WOM	SEA	5.74±1.31	0.698 (.404)	2.301* (169)	.023
	ME	4.83±1.33			
PTPQ	SEA	5.69±1.30	0.357 (.551)	2.145* (169)	.033
	ME	4.66±1.35			
REVI	SEA	5.35±1.45	0.518 (.379)	2.247* (169)	.026
	ME	4.63±1.52			

*Note: E-WOM = Electronic Word-of-Mouth; PTPQ = Perceived Tourism Product Quality; REVI = Revisit Intention; SEA = Southeast Asia (n = 79); ME = Middle East (n = 92); M = Mean; SD = Standard Deviation; Dof = Degrees of Freedom' *p <.05.*

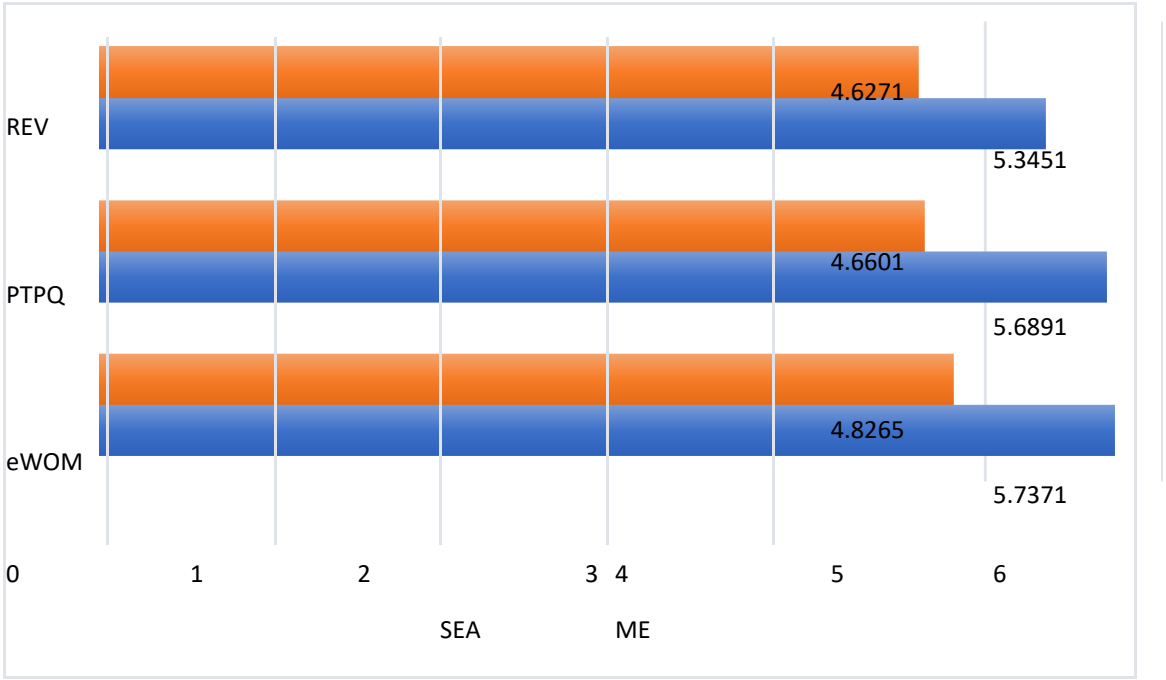


Figure 3: Clustered Bar Graph for Average Value of eWOM, Perceived TPQ, and Revisit Intention between SEA and Middle East Tourists' Groups Note: eWOM = Electronic Word-of-Mouth; PTPQ = Perceived Tourism Product Quality; REVI = Revisit Intention; SEA = Southeast Asia; ME = Middle East.

5 Result and Discussion

The study has answered the investigation and significant difference of the perception between SEA and Middle East countries on Malaysian's TPQ. In overall, both regions had good perceptions towards Malaysian' TPQ in line with past researchers have shown that both service and product quality (e.g. González, Comesaña, & Brea, 2007; Ngo & Nguyen 2016; Subrahmanyam & Raja, 2016; Spreng & Mackoy, 1996 are positively related to customer satisfaction and value. Besides that, a number of past researches (e.g. Chang & Wang, 2011; Gallarza, Saura, & Moreno, 2013; Gera, 2013; Jen, Tu, & Lu, 2011; Lai & Chen, 2011; Yu et al., 2014) have also revealed that service quality and value are positively correlated. Accordingly, instead of merely assuming that service quality has only the direct influence on customer satisfaction, the indirect effects, i.e. the mediator effects through value may take place as well. This means that the relationships between service quality, value, and satisfaction could be more complex and might consist of intermediate interactions such as the mediating effects and thus warrant further examination. For that reason, the main purpose of this study is to examine whether value mediates the service quality-satisfaction relationship, particularly in the Malaysian tourism context.

The comparison analysis shows that SEA tourists are more likely to revisit Malaysia as compared to the Middle East, same as for the finding of eWOM and perceived TPQ. The possible reasons could be the customer is the key evaluator of the service quality where they determine the success of a product or service (Kelesbayev, Kalykulov, Yermankulova, Dandayeva, & Aymurzayeva, 2015; Peter & Donnelly, 2013a, 2013b; Swarbrooke & Horner, 2007). Subsequently, customer surveys are the most used tools in measuring See-Ying Kwok, Ahmad Jusoh and Zainab Khalifah 365 service quality thus far (Homburg, Kuester, & Krohmer, 2013). In a nutshell, service quality in this study is best defined as the tourist's assessment on the overall quality of services they perceived throughout their visit to Malaysia. Stated by McDougall and Levesque (2000, p.393) suggested that value is the "benefits received relative to costs", which is consistent with Zeithaml's viewpoint who defined value as "consumer's overall assessment of the utility of a product (or service) based on perceptions of what is received and what is given" (1988, p.14).

Next, the finding of mediating role of perceived TPQ in Malaysia towards electronic-word-of-mouth (eWOM) and travelling intentions of SEA and the Middle East with is repeat holidays at a familiar destination and a declared intention to revisit it, are two signs of destination loyalty that are often taken into account in literature (Chiu et al., 2016; Ozdemir et al., 2012; Quintal & Polczynski, 2010a). The main factors that determine a declared intention to revisit a destination seem to be tourist satisfaction with their stay, specific motivations in choosing a destination and tourist attachment to it, where the latter can be measured in terms of the repeat visitation (Ozdemir et al., 2012). The findings show a significant mediating effect of perceived TPQ toward the relationship of eWOM and revisit intention.

TPQ has a mediating impact on eWOM and revisits intention for both markets. In the literature on tourism, where this topic has been analysed, the choice to revisit a destination is seen as a dynamic decision involving a variety of interrelated variables (satisfaction with the stay, tourist motivations, prior experience of the destination, etc.). Without TPQ, eWOM had a significant role, but perceived TPQ have the positive and significant mediating role toward the relationship of eWOM and revisit intention. Having the quality of product, tangibly, would be more appropriate during this challenging trend.

This study identified several limitations. Firstly, the data was only limitations of the research co – small data, rely heavily on snowballing type of data collection. Subsequently, future research on this study is important to be carried out in other neighborhood countries and to validate the role of perceived TPQ as a mediator in the relationship between eWOM and Revisit Intention, due to tourism landscape have mass changes due pandemic and many tourism industry players affected.

6 Conclusion

This study achieved the objectives set in the investigation of two regions big spenders' tourist in Malaysia. In order to understand the whole tourism industry within Malaysia, a research study like this would more beneficial for the tourism developers to develop the Malaysian tourism industry, as it is one of the major economy generators for Malaysia. This nature of research will benefit the country for the future understandings of the inbound tourist.

This study has contributed significantly to the understanding of the SEA and Middle East spenders. The result of mediating study will advance the idea the role of perceived TPQ towards eWOM and travel intentions of big spenders in Malaysia: a comparative study on SEA and Middle East countries, in this study, is expected able to intervene the government policy in harnessing the competitiveness of Malaysia's tourism industry in line with the National Tourism Policy 2020-2030.

7 References

Abbasi, G. A., Kumaravelu, J., Goh, Y.-N., & Dara Singh, K. S. (2021). Understanding the intention to revisit a destination by expanding the theory of planned behaviour (TPB). *Spanish Journal of Marketing* – ESIC, ahead-of-(ahead-of-print). https://doi.org/10.1108/sjme-12-2019-0109

Abubakar, A.M. (2016). Does eWOM influence destination trust and travel intention: a medical tourism perspective, *Economic Research-Ekonomska Istraživanja*, 29(1), 598-611, DOI: 10.1080/1331677X.2016.1189841

Abubakar, M. & Ilkan, M. (2016). Impact of online WOM on destination trust and intention to travel: A medical tourism perspective‖, *Journal of Destination Marketing & Management*, 5(3), 192-201.

Ajzen, I. (1985). *From intentions to actions: A theory of planned behaviour*. In J. Kuhl & J. Beckman (Eds), Action-Control: From Cognition to Behaviour, 11-39, Heidelberg, Germany: Springer

Ajzen, I. (1991). *The theory of planned behavior. Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes*, 50, 179-211

Alaeddinoglu, F. & Can, A.S. (2010). Destination image from the perspective of travel intermediaries. *An International Journal of Tourism and Hospitality Research*, 21(2), 339-350.

Al-Mulali, U., Gholipour, H. F., & Al-hajj, E. (2020). The nonlinear effects of oil prices on tourism arrivals in Malaysia. *Current Issues in Tourism*, 23(8), 942–946. https://doi.org/10.1080/13683500.2019.1586844

Ali, M., Puah, C. H., Ayob, N., & Raza, S. A. (2019). Factors influencing tourist's satisfaction, loyalty and word of mouth in selection of local foods in Pakistan. *British Food Journal*, 122(6), 2021–2043. https://doi.org/10.1108/BFJ-11-2018-0728

Amalia, R., Yahya, A., Nurhalis, Idris, S., Mahdi, S., Putra, T.R.I., & Sartiyah. (2018). Impact of Electronic Word of Mouth on Tourist Attitude and Intention to Visit Islamic Destinations. *Advances in Social Science, Education and Humanities Research,* 292.

Arsal, I., Backman, S., & Baldwin, E. (2008). *Influence of an online travel community on travel decisions*. In P. O'Connor, W. Höpken, & U. Gretzel (Eds.), Information and Communication Technologies in Tourism 2008, (pp. 82–93). Vienna, Austria: Springer Verlag.

Bashir, S., Khwaja, M.G., Mahmood, A., Turi, J.A., & Latif, K.F. (2021). Refining e-shoppers' perceived risks: Development and validation of new measurement scale. *J. Retail. Consum. Serv.* 2021, 58, 102285.

Barsky, J. and Nash, L. (2003), "Customer satisfaction", Cornell Hotel and Restaurant Administration

Quarterly, pp. 173-183.

Beirman, D. (2002). Marketing of tourism destinations during a prolonged crisis: Israel and the Middle East. *Journal of Vacation Marketing,* 8 (2), 167–176. https://doi.org/10.1177/135676670200800206

Bigne, E., Fuentes-Medina, M.L., Morini-Marrero, S. (2020). Memorable tourist experiences versus ordinary tourist experiences analyzed through user-generated content. *Journal of Hospitality and Tourism Management.* 45, 309-318.

Bilal, M., Jianqiu, Z., Akram, U., Tanveer, Y., & Rasool, H. (2020). *Understanding the Effects of Internet Usage Behavior on eWOM*

Chan, W.-C., Wan Ibrahim, W. H., Lo, M.-C., Mohamad, A. A., Ramayah, T., & Chin, C.-H. (2021). Controllable drivers that influence tourists' satisfaction and revisit intention to Semenggoh Nature Reserve: The moderating impact of destination image. *Journal of Ecotourism*, 0(0), 1–19. https://doi.org/10.1080/14724049.2021.1925288

Cuong, D. T. (2020). The effect of physical environment and perceived value on customer satisfaction and behavioral intention at the cinema in Vietnam. *Test Engineering and Management*, 82(1–2), 1665–1674.

Creswell, J.W. (2014). *Educational Research: Planning, Conducting, and Evaluating Quantitative and Qualitative Research* (4th ed.). London: Pearson New International Edition /Eagly, A., & Chaiken, S. (1998). *Attitude, structure and function*. In D. Gilbert, S. Fisk, & G. Lindsey (Eds.), Handbook of social psychology (pp. 269–322). New York, NY: McGowan-Hill.

Erkan, I., and Evans, C. (2016). The influence of e-WOM in social media on consumers' purchase intentions: An extended approach to information adoption‖. *Computers in Human Behavior*, 61, 47-55.

Eunha, J., & Soocheong, J. (2011). Restaurant experiences triggering positive eWOM motivations. *International Journal of Hospitality Management,* 30, 356–366

Filieri, R., & McLeay, F. (2014). E-wom and accommodation: An analysis of the factors that influence travelers' adoption of information from online reviews. *Journal of Travel Research*, 53, 44–57.

Fishbein, M. (1967). Attitude and the prediction of behavior. In M. Fishbein (Ed.), Readings in attitude theory and measurement (477-492). New York: Wiley.

Floyd, M. F., Gibson, H., Pennington-Gray, L., & Thapa, B. (2004). The effect of risk perceptions on intentions to travel in the aftermath of September 11, 2001. *Journal of Travel & Tourism Marketing,* 15(2/3), 19–38. https://doi.org/10.1300/J073v15n02_02.

Field, A. (2009). Discovering Statistics Using SPSS (3rd Edition). London: SAGE Publications.

Fornell, C., & Larcker, D.F. (1981). Evaluating structural equation models with unobservable and measurement error. *Journal of Marketing Research*, 34 (2), 161-188.

Hasan, K., Abdullah, S. K., Islam, F., & Neela, N. M. (2020). An Integrated Model for Examining Tourists' Revisit Intention to Beach Tourism Destinations. *Journal of Quality Assurance in Hospitality and Tourism*, 21(6), 716–737. https://doi.org/10.1080/1528008X.2020.1740134

Hair, J. F., Hult, G. T. M., Ringle, C. M., & Sarstedt, M. (2017). A primer on partial least squares structural equation modeling. (PLS-SEM) (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications.

Hair, J. F., Sarstedt, M., Ringle, C. M., & Mena, J. A. (2012). An assessment of the use of partial least squares structural equation modeling in marketing research. *Journal of the Academy Marketing Science*, 40(3), 414–433.

Hair, J.F., Ringle, C.M., & Sarstedt, M. (2011). PLS-SEM: Indeed a silver bullet. *Journal of Marketing Theory and Practice*, 19 (2), 139-151.

Henseler, J., & Chin, W. W., (2010). A comparison of approaches for the analysis of interaction effects between latent variables using partial least squares path modeling. *Structural Equation Modeling*, 17 (1), 82–109.

Henseler, J., Ringle, C.M., & Sarstedt, M. (2015). A new criterion for assessing discriminant validity in variance-based structural equation modeling. *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science,* 43, 115-135.

Iacobucci, D., Saldanha, N., & Deng, X. (2007). A meditation on mediation: Evidence that structural equation models perform better than regression. *Journal of Consumer Psychology*, 7(2), 140-154.

Krejcie, R. V., & Morgan, D. W. (1970). Determining sample size for research activities. *Educational and Psychological Measurement*, 30(3), 607-610.

Ong, M.H.A., & Puteh, F. (2017). Quantitative Data Analysis: Choosing Between SPSS, PLS, and AMOS in Social Science Research. *International Interdisciplinary Journal of Scientific Research*, 3 (1), 14-25.

Pallant, J. (2010). SPSS Survival Manual (4th Edition). New York: McGraw-Hill Publications.

Pandey & Sahu, (2017). Determinants of Electronic Word-of-Mouth in Tourism Sector. Proceedings of International Conference on 'Research and Business Sustainability'.

Saunders, M., Lewis, P., & Thornhill, A. (2009). *Research Method for Business Students* (5th ed.).

Sharif, A., Godil, D. I., Xu, B., Sinha, A., Rehman Khan, S. A., & Jermsittiparsert, K. (2020). Revisiting the role of tourism and globalization in environmental degradation in China: Fresh insights from the quantile ARDL approach. *Journal of Cleaner Production*, 272, 5494–25509. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jclepro.2020.122906 New York: Prentice Hall Publications.

Tourism Malaysia. (2020). Malaysia Tourism Statistics in Brief, http://www.tourism.gov.my/statistics

Zainuddin.Z, Mohd Zahari.M.S, Mohd Radzi.S, Mohd Hanafiah, M.H (2020): *Tourism Destination Competitiveness, The Langkawi Island Perspective*: Penerbit UMT13-19.

Zeithaml, V. A. (1988). Consumer perceptions of price quality, and value: A means-end model and

synthesis of evidence. *Journal of Marketing*, 52(3), 2-22.

Zhao, X., Lynch, J.G.J., & Chen, Q. (2010). Reconsidering Baron and Kenny: Myths and truth about mediation analysis. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 17, 197-206.