



UNIVERSITI PUTRA MALAYSIA

***DESTINATION IMAGE-SATISFACTION-LOYALTY PARADIGM OF THE
WORLD HERITAGE SITES IN MALAYSIA***

HASNAWATI BINTI HAJI GULILING

GSM 2018 30



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By

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**Thesis Submitted to the Graduate School of Management, Universiti Putra
Malaysia, in Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Doctor of
Philosophy**

May 2018

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Abstract of thesis presented to the Senate of Universiti Putra Malaysia in fulfilment
of the requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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May 2018

Chairman : Associate Professor Yuhanis Abdul Aziz, PhD
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The tourism sector is experiencing a remarkable constant progress and becoming one of the fastest growing economic sectors globally. In this context, the image is an important element for the destination marketers to distinguish their destinations from others and to position themselves in this highly competitive industry. Therefore, it is high time for the academics and destination marketing organisations to undertake a dedicated study on destination loyalty. The study will give a greater understanding of this concept and enhance their knowledge on the role of satisfaction in enhancing tourists' loyalty. This study set out to test the Destination Image—Satisfaction—Loyalty Paradigm Model's ability to explain tourists' behaviors in reference to the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) World Heritage Sites in Malaysia—namely, Melaka City, Melaka and George Town, Penang. It is anticipated that the model will enhance the understanding of image concept of tourism destinations in predicting tourists' satisfaction and loyalty. The study is based on the deductive approach in which it is guided by theories or models. The theoretical framework of this study tested three components of destination image formation. In addition to the proposed components of cognitive and affective, this study also explores a new dimension, namely tourists' emotional experience as a possible dimension. It could possibly lead to satisfaction and loyalty in the context of heritage tourism destinations in Malaysia. Furthermore, the present study is undertaken in order to fill the gap due to the limited studies and to assess the service quality performance in property and heritage attractions using the HISTOQUAL scale. The theoretical framework empirical assessment included a survey of four hundred and fifty (450) international and domestic tourists who visited both the heritage cities. Data are analyzed through multivariate analysis using Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) via the Analysis of Moment Structures (AMOS) software. The SEM technique is used to evaluate the causal model and the pooled confirmatory factor analysis is performed to examine the reliability and validity of the measurement model. The findings of this

study provided valuable insights to the destination marketing organisations. First, the results indicated that the destination image impact is not limited to cognitive and affective evaluations. More importantly, the extant literature advanced more broadly with the addition of emotional experience aspect into the destination image formation and the interrelationships of the three components in one single model. Specifically, the findings revealed that significant relationships exist between the Destination Image constructs (Cognitive, Affective, and Emotional) and the major consequence constructs (Service Quality, Destination Satisfaction, and Destination Loyalty). The examples of supported relationships involving Destination Image constructs in this study include: Cognitive—Affective, Affective—Emotional, Affective—Service Quality, and Emotional—Destination Satisfaction. These relationships are major academic contribution in which they increase the knowledge of how the tourists perceived a particular destination and what constitutes destination image good predictors. Such understanding would assist the destination marketing organizations (DMOs) to design better marketing promotions in order to attract visitors as well as to encourage repeat visitors. In line with the aforementioned contribution, this study also supported the previous findings, which only consider Destination Image from the perspective of physical attributes to attract visitors to the destination; for instance, tangible resources (e.g. landscape, house, building and artifacts) and intangible resources (e.g. atmosphere and spirit). This study added tourists' emotional experiences to the literature by providing empirical results from the heritage destination perspective. Next, as the empirical work involved examining the mediation effects of tourists' satisfaction, this study revealed the presence of new empirical evidence. With regards to the relationship between Emotional and Destination Loyalty, the inclusion of Destination Satisfaction fully supports the mediating effect. This finding confirmed the underlying assumptions of marketing theory that customers' favorable or unfavorable emotional responses will increase or decrease their satisfactory experiences, which eventually will affect their future intentions. Likewise, for the second relationship of Service Quality and Destination Loyalty, it is evidenced that tourists' satisfaction mediates the relationship. Specifically, the result revealed that besides tourists' emotional experience, service quality also has a substantial effect on tourists' satisfaction and loyalty. In terms of practical implications, marketing campaigns should not emphasise solely on the destination distinguished characteristics; they should also accentuate the emotion aspect and strive to improve the quality of service. Various stakeholders are closely associated with Melaka City and George Town City (such as DMOs, private agencies, tour operators) through direct and indirect efforts; they should aggressively communicate about and collaborate with the UNESCO World Heritage Sites designation.

Abstrak tesis yang dikemukakan kepada Senat Universiti Putra Malaysia sebagai memenuhi keperluan untuk ijazah Doktor Falsafah

**PARADIGMA IMEJ DESTINASI-KEPUASAN-KESETIAAN TERHADAP
TAPAK WARISAN DUNIA DI MALAYSIA**

Oleh

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Sektor pelancongan sedang mengalami perkembangan yang luarbiasa dan merupakan salah satu sektor ekonomi yang paling pesat berkembang pada skala global. Dalam konteks ini, imej adalah elemen yang penting bagi para pengusaha destinasi dalam membezakan destinasi mereka dengan pesaing mereka dan seterusnya meletakkan organisasi mereka dalam industri pelancongan yang kompetitif. Oleh itu, masanya sangat sesuai bagi ahli akademik dan organisasi pemasaran destinasi untuk menjalankan penyelidikan khusus tentang kesetiaan terhadap destinasi pelancongan. Kajian ini akan memberi lebih kefahaman tentang konsep tersebut dan tentang peranan kepuasan dalam meningkatkan kesetiaan pelancong. Kajian ini akan menguji Model Paradigma Imej-Kepuasan-Kesetiaan Destinasi dalam menjelaskan tingkah laku pelancong. Kajian ini dijalankan di dua buah bandar bersejarah yang telah diiktiraf oleh Pertubuhan Bangsa-bangsa Bersatu dalam Pendidikan, Saintifik, dan Kebudayaan (UNESCO) sebagai Tapak Warisan Dunia di Malaysia, iaitu Bandaraya Melaka di Melaka dan George Town di Pulau Pinang. Model ini dijangka dapat memberi kefahaman yang jitu dalam meramal tahap kepuasan dan kesetiaan pelancong yang mengunjungi kedua-dua bandar tersebut. Kajian ini adalah berdasarkan kaedah deduktif iaitu teori dan model terdahulu menjadi asas dan panduan kepada keseluruhan penyelidikan. Rangka kerja teori untuk kajian ini menguji tiga komponen pembentukan imej destinasi berbanding hanya dua komponen yang dicadangkan sebelum ini, iaitu kognitif dan afektif. Kajian ini mencadangkan satu komponen baru iaitu pengalaman emosi pelancong sebagai salah satu konstruk yang berpotensi untuk menjelaskan pembentukan imej destinasi yang akan menyumbang kepada kepuasan dan kesetiaan pelancong dalam konteks destinasi warisan di Malaysia. Kajian ini juga bertujuan untuk memenuhi jurang penyelidikan dan membuat penilaian terhadap prestasi kualiti perkhidmatan harta dan tarikan-tarikan sejarah dengan menggunakan skala HISTOQUAL. Kajian empirikal untuk mengesahkan rangka kerja teori ini melibatkan empat ratus lima puluh (450) orang pelancong antarabangsa dan domestik yang mengunjungi kedua-dua bandar warisan dunia

tersebut. Data dianalisis melalui proses analisis multivariat menggunakan Model Persamaan Struktur (*Structural Equation Modeling*) dengan perisian Analisis Struktur Momen (*AMOS*). Teknik ini digunakan untuk menilai model sebab-musabab yang dikumpulkan dan analisis faktor pengesahan dijalankan untuk memeriksa kebolehpercayaan dan kesahihan model pengukuran. Hasil dapatan kajian ini menyumbang kepada percambahan maklumat dan memberi banyak manfaat kepada organisasi pemasaran yang terlibat dalam pengurusan destinasi, seperti yang dibincangkan pada bahagian seterusnya. Pertama, dapatan kajian ini menunjukkan bahawa impak imej sesebuah destinasi tidak terhad kepada penilaian kognitif dan afektif sahaja, pada masa yang sama ia menyumbang kepada perkembangan ilmu dengan penambahan aspek pengalaman emosi pelancong sebagai salah satu punca pembentuk imej destinasi. Hubung-kait diantara ketiga-tiga komponen pembentuk imej destinasi tersebut telah berjaya dibuktikan dalam sebuah model. Secara khusus, berdasarkan penemuan kajian ini, wujud hubungan yang signifikan diantara konstruk-konstruk penyebab imej destinasi (kognitif, afektif, dan emosi) dan konstruk-konstruk akibat iaitu kualiti perkhidmatan, kepuasan pelancong, dan kesetiaan terhadap destinasi. Antara contoh hubungan yang disokong melibatkan pembentukan imej destinasi dalam kajian ini termasuk: kognitif—afektif, afektif—emosi, afektif—kualiti perkhidmatan, dan emosi—kepuasan hati. Hubungan-hubungan ini memberi sumbangan yang signifikan kepada bidang akademik kerana kefahaman mengenai persepsi pelancong terhadap sesebuah destinasi merupakan peramal terbaik yang akan membantu organisasi pemasaran destinasi (*DMO*) dalam mereka-bentuk promosi pemasaran yang lebih menarik dan menjana pelancong berulang. Sehubungan itu, kajian ini juga menunjukkan sokongan terhadap penemuan terdahulu yang hanya mempertimbangkan imej destinasi dari perspektif fizikal untuk menarik pengunjung ke sesuatu destinasi; sumber yang nyata (contohnya, landskap, rumah, bangunan dan artifak) dan sumber tidak nyata (contohnya, suasana dan semangat). Dapatan kajian ini menyumbang kepada perkembangan pengetahuan tentang pengalaman emosi pelancong dari perspektif destinasi warisan. Seterusnya, kajian empirikal ini juga membuktikan kewujudan kesan pengantara yang baru. Berdasarkan perhubungan diantara unsur-unsur emosi dan kesetiaan pelancong, kemasukan faktor kepuasan pelancong terhadap sesebuah destinasi menyokong sepenuhnya bukti kesan pengantara. Dapatan ini mengesahkan tanggapan berasaskan teori pemasaran yang mencadangkan bahawa respon emosi suka atau tidak suka akan meningkatkan atau mengurangkan tahap kepuasan pelancong yang akhirnya memberi kesan terhadap kehendak masa depan mereka. Seterusnya, bagi perkaitan kedua diantara kualiti perkhidmatan dan kesetiaan destinasi, kepuasan pelancong sekali lagi secara empirikal telah disahkan sebagai pengantara hubungan. Selain daripada pengalaman emosi pelancong, kualiti perkhidmatan khususnya didapati memberi kesan yang signifikan terhadap kepuasan dan kesetiaan pelancong. Dari aspek implikasi praktikal, kempen pemasaran tidak seharusnya hanya menekankan ciri-ciri nyata sesebuah destinasi, tetapi juga harus berusaha untuk menimbulkan emosi terbaik dikalangan pelancong serta mengadakan penambahbaikan kualiti perkhidmatan. Oleh itu, pelbagai pihak berkepentingan yang terlibat dengan perancangan pelancongan Bandaraya Melaka dan George Town (seperti organisasi pemasaran destinasi, agensi swasta, dan pengusaha pelancongan) perlu bergerak lebih agresif secara langsung dan tidak langsung, dalam aktiviti-aktiviti komunikasi yang melibatkan tapak warisan dunia *UNESCO*.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

In the name of ALLAH the Most Beneficent, the most Merciful.

First and foremost praise is to ALLAH, the Almighty, the greatest of all, on whom ultimately we depend for sustenance and guidance. I would like to thank Almighty Allah for giving me strength and determination to successfully complete my PhD. Finally, I have the chance to thank those who provided encouragement, support, and understanding on this journey, those who give me assistance, direction and support throughout this process. My first special appreciation and sincerely thank to my main supervisor, Associate Professor Dr Yuhanis Abdul Aziz. Her good nature, patience, frankness, direction and valuable guidance had been infinite and this thesis could not have completed without her. Your kindness is highly appreciated.

I would like to extend my sincere gratitude to my supervisory committee, Associate Professor Dr Jamil Bojei and Professor Dr Murali Sambasivan, for their professional analytical directions and guidance which made this thesis become a reality. My special thanks to Tourism Malaysia under Ministry of Tourism and Culture (MOTAC) and Information Management Division of Department of Statistics Malaysia who gave assistance and support by providing all necessary information.

I owe a tremendous amount of gratitude to my husband, Sulaiman bin Sallah. He is truly a source of joy and inspiration in my life. I believe we were able to complete this thesis through teamwork and we managed to tackle difficult time together. I dedicate this work to my sincere and generous late father, Tuan Haji Guliling and my loving mother, Puan Hajah Waha. You are my guiding light in life and there are not enough words to convey my deepest gratitude to both of you. To my parents in law, thank you very much for your big loving hearts and continuous support. Every breath of my life and drop of blood in my body is dedicated to my parents. I would like to also mention my children, the twins huffaz, Ahmad Syukri and Ahmad Syukur, Aisyah Humaira and Ahmad Syakir who really understand that hard work and determination will result in fulfillment of every dream. Finally, to my loving family and friends, I will remember all your kindness forever.

I certify the Thesis Examination Committee has met on 14 May 2018 to conduct the final examination of Hasnawati Hj Guliling on her thesis entitled “Destination Image-Satisfaction-Loyalty Paradigm of the World Heritage Sites in Malaysia” in accordance with universities and Universiti Colleges Act 1971 and the Constitution of the Universiti [P.U. (A) 106] 15 March 1998. The committee recommends that the student be awarded the Doctor of Philosophy.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

DMO	Destination Management Organizations
EPP	Entry Point Project
ETP	Economic Transformation Program
GNI	Gross National Income
MOTAC	Ministry of Tourism and Culture Malaysia
NTHP	National Trust for Historic Preservation
PEMANDU	Performance Management and Delivery Unit
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNWTO	United Nations World Tourism Organization
VMY2014	Visit Malaysia Year 2014
WHS	World Heritage Site
WTO	World Tourism Organization

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

This chapter begins with the study background, which provides an overview of the globally rapid development of tourism industry and its importance in fostering economic value. The evidence of the global tourism industry's performance is also highlighted. Next, the problem statement addresses the various issues and gaps identified in this study are presented. This is followed by the statements of research objectives, research questions, research contributions, the scope of study, and definition of key terms. The last section outlines the thesis organisation.

1.1 Background of the study

Countries and cities around the world today are intensely competing in the global market for investments and aggressively attracting a larger number of tourists. These countries strive for the best placement of their respective exported products and attempt to portray the best image in order to boost the economic development of their nation. This scenario further motivates the researcher's growing interest in offering some relevant insights, primarily on the concept of image for tourism destinations.

Globally, the tourism industry is prospering at an exceptional rate, exceeding the expectations of leading tourism organisations. The United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) Highlight 2016 edition reported that tourism has experienced continuous expansion and diversification to become one of the largest and fastest growing economic sectors in the world over the past six decades. Despite occasional shocks, tourism has boasted virtually uninterrupted growth over time. In its long-term forecast, UNWTO stated that international tourism would continue to grow at a steady pace for the next two decades, between the year 2010 and 2030, with the number of international tourist arrivals worldwide increased by an average of 3.3% a year. The World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC, 2016) forecasted that by 2026, global tourism is expected to grow faster than the wider economy and many other industries over the next decade and make available 370 million jobs opportunity worldwide. These figures simply demonstrate the vast potential of the tourism sector to expand further in the future. It also denotes that competition is bound to be intense, as destinations must compete globally to get a bigger share of the tourism dollar. Obviously, the rapid development of the tourism industry has created new challenges for tourism marketers and if handled appropriately it can become an important engine for achieving broader social and economic goals. In a competitive atmosphere, one of the significant tasks for destination marketing specialists lies within the area of building a viable destination positioning strategy. Furthermore, the core components of this positioning mechanism are creating a positive and attractive image of the destination.

Malaysia is already started to enjoy a rapid and steady growth in tourist arrivals. Over the past twenty years, the tourism industry in Malaysia has been progressing and tourists' arrival has been growing immensely. These developments suggest that in order for Malaysia to compete on a global scale, it needs to raise competitiveness in terms of offering attractive tourists' destinations through its numerous exciting products, such as beautiful beaches and land, ecotourism, historical heritage sites, million-year-old-rainforest, recreational facilities as well as modern shopping centres and highways. Marketing is an important enabler in achieving the tourism targets for tourist arrivals and receipts. Malaysia has done well thus far in this regard, largely due to its focused and sustained destination marketing campaign—"Malaysia, Truly Asia", which has been Malaysia's tourism tagline since 1999.

The positioning of the present study focuses on Malaysia's tourism destination image and destination marketing strategies pertaining to the heritage tourism sector. The World Tourism Organization (WTO) has classified heritage tourism as a subclass of cultural tourism. This particular tourism sector provides an opportunity for the tourists to experience cultural-related activities, such as cultural festivals, historical landscapes, historical sites, unique colonial architecture buildings, artifacts, and distinctive local cultures that are commonly found in most heritage cities in Malaysia. As predicted by WTO, cultural heritage tourism will be one of the key tourism market segments in the future that will pose an inevitable challenge in managing visitor flows to the cultural heritage sites (Ismail, Masron, & Ahmad, 2014).

It is worth noting that due to the growing interest in cultural heritage tourism and the global influx of the new niche of tourism sector, tourist arrivals in Malaysia's has improved tremendously to explore the historical and cultural values of Melaka and Penang (Rahman et al, 2015). According to data collected by Tourism Malaysia, Penang received 6.3 million domestic and international tourist arrivals in 2015. Penang has long been a favourite spot among tourists, both locally and internationally. As for Melaka, the number of tourist arrival rose to 12.74 million from January to October 2016, with the highest tourist arrivals from China, followed by Singapore and Indonesia. The growth of heritage tourism sector in Malaysia is the result of various marketing and promotion efforts made by the Malaysian government. It is not surprising that many states and local communities throughout Malaysia venture into this new niche of tourism to rejuvenate the local economies. In a nutshell, tourism has the power to deliver significant international earnings and offer economic value to the industry players through cultural heritage tourism.

In destination image marketing extant literature, an exploration of relationships among Destination Image, Service Quality, Tourist Satisfaction, and Loyalty in the heritage setting is still lacking. The previous studies overlooked heritage tourism as one of the potential areas in tourism study. This study aims to identify the determinants of Tourist Satisfaction and Destination Loyalty. It proposes that tourist destination preferences can be influenced by the consistency in image building efforts of the destinations. A conceptual framework is developed to delineate the relationship among Destination

Image, Tourist Satisfaction, and Destination Loyalty of heritage destinations, in which the missing link subsist. The study is of practical importance since image building is a management process that involves marketing and management initiatives as well as destination planning. Therefore, destinations can successfully influence the future behaviour of tourists through image building and other antecedent factors. The findings of this study are deemed practical if they could assist and guide the destination to establish a positive approach and eventually inculcate the sense of satisfaction and loyalty among tourists.

1.2 Statement of Problems

One of the most significant industrial elements noted by this study is the tremendous growth of tourist arrivals to the heritage destinations in Malaysia. The growth demanded an obligatory need to understand the significant image that Malaysia portrays in the eyes of the world. Melaka City in Melaka and George Town in Penang have greatly benefited from being the first United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) World Heritage Site of Malaysia. Both historical cities are among Malaysia's top tourists' destinations for domestic and international's visitors. The encouraging number of tourist arrivals in the two historical cities signifies a huge market potential for Malaysia. The potential is not limited to the promotion of its diverse cultures, festivals, and delicacies, but also in its gallant heritage attractions and rich traditions.

However, it appears that the image portrayed by local heritage destinations in Malaysia did not receive much attention from researchers nor scholars. A better understanding of the image formation in the context of heritage setting is essential to boost further the tourism sector.

Recently, one of the most significant discussions in the issues pertaining to the image of heritage destination in Malaysia is about preservation and the destinations promotion strategies. For instance, a recent remark on heritage destinations by a Malaysian in an online newspaper article, New Straits Times dated November 24, 2016, suggested that the state authorities should not focus solely on the physical modern infrastructure but also to venture into nature and heritage preservation. It was emphasised that all national events are considered unique heritage products and Malaysian should be genuinely proud of them. Notably, the government should earnestly protect the historical and cultural values embedded in the traditions of the Malays, Chinese, Indians, and other ethnic groups from extinction because of progression and modernisation.

With regards to the tourism industry, Malaysia continues to face challenges in providing high-quality services to its tourists. The tourism chapter of the Malaysian Economic Transformation Program (ETP) Annual Report 2014 stated that one of the key challenges faced by the country's tourism industry is to improve the quality of

various existing tourism offerings. Tourists have complained about quality issues related to infrastructure, transportation, human resources, safety and security of tourists. Making sure the tourists receive pleasant memorable experiences right from their arrival through departure will ensure they leave a destination with pleasant memories; a condition that will surely lead to recurring visits and a positive word-of-mouth to third parties.

Evidently, the service trade is becoming more significant in relation to economic and social development. In businesses, such as travel and tourism industries, delivering high-quality service to the consumers is increasingly recognised as a key factor affecting the firms' performance. It is observed that among the service industries, tourism is especially significant in terms of its sensitivity to quality issues (Atilgan, Akinci, & Aksoy, 2003). The fact that quality in tourism is an important factor, which ultimately dictates the success of tourism business is becoming increasingly difficult to ignore. In line with this notion, a number of studies in tourism research confirmed a positive relationship between quality and satisfaction (Baker & Crompton, 2000; Murray & Howat, 2002; de Rojas & Camarero, 2008; Ruiz et al., 2009). Although this assertion has resulted in a growing number of studies devoted to the tourism industry in the past decade, there is an ongoing need for a novel empirical research in the aspects of quality in tourism. One of the urgent research need is service quality as the issue appears to have received scarce attention, particularly in the context of heritage destinations (Frochot & Hughes, 2000; Frochot, 2001; Wan & Cheng, 2011; Wan & Cheng, 2012). An assessment of service quality in a heritage setting has been addressed by few researchers but the analysis is often limited since they tend to analyse separately the different elements that constitute service quality; thus, the main component lacks a holistic view (Frochot & Hughes, 2000).

Malaysia is currently facing a stiff competition from its neighbouring ASEAN countries that are aggressively attracting tourists to boost their economic sector. Today, countries, such as China, Vietnam, and Laos are luring tourists into their countries through their abundant heritage products (Badaruddin, 2009). However, despite sharing the same geographical region and many other similarities—natural resources, tourism infrastructure, culture, tradition, and hospitality (Badaruddin, 2009) with the rest of ASEAN nations, Malaysia is still lagging behind other leading competitive destinations in the region in terms of international tourism receipts (Mohamad, Abdullah, & Mokhlis, 2011). Therefore, an understanding of the nature of Destination Image components plays a crucial role in decision making leading to the choice of destination (Kim, Hallab & Kim, 2012; Madden, Rashid & Zainol, 2016). Likewise, such understanding could help the nation to formulate winning marketing strategies and better positioning as a competitive destination.

So far the empirical research works on Destination Image were carried out to identify image components and to comprehend its formation. In particular, the Destination Image's Cognitive component generally refers to the destination's physical attributes whilst the Affective component refers to the individuals' emotional response towards

a destination. A considerable amount of literature (Reilly, 1990; Fakeye & Crompton, 1991; Echtner & Ritchie, 1993; Schroeder, 1996; Chen & Hsu, 2000; Chen & Uysal, 2002; Hankinson, 2004; Ibrahim & Gill, 2005; Chen & Tsai, 2006; Choi et al., 2007; Castro et al., 2007; Kim et al., 2012; Chen & Phou, 2013) focused on examining Destination Image from the Cognitive component in order to measure its image construct. Only a few studies (Baloglu & Brinberg, 1997; Hong et al., 2006; Papadimitriou, Apostolopoulou, & Kaplanidou, 2015) recognised the influence of Affective component in image formation. Recent evidence also argued that Destination Image is a combination of Cognitive and Affective components (Giraldi & Cesareo, 2014; Nghiêm-Phú, 2015; Kladou & Mavragani, 2015; Vinh & Phuong, 2017; Anjos, Pereira & Tennenberg, 2017).

Although extensive research works on Destination Image components have been carried out, there is no study that actually examines tourists' reaction and determines the benefit of tourists' emotional experiences, which could assist in the formulation of appropriate marketing strategies (Hosany & Gilbert, 2010). Thus, the present study aims to identify how Emotional components interact with other Destination Image components (Cognitive and Affective), which are supposedly associated with Tourist Satisfaction and Destination Loyalty.

Another issue that captured the interest of this study is the increasing number of visits to a site designated as a "World Heritage Site" (WHS). There has been a growing interest in designated WHS, which seem to be a popular destination icon for visitors. For instance, Roder and Oers (2011) claimed that the WHS title has become a force for nation development. The current body of research uses numerous terms, such as "a magnet for tourists", "a top brand", "a definite must see", "a lure for foreign tourists", "an extremely strong brand", and "a quality assurance measure" or "seal of approval" in reference of WHS (Shackley, 1998; Evans, 2001; Buckley, 2004; Li et al., 2008; Ryan & Silvanto, 2009). Indeed, the WHS designation has become a widely accepted stamp of quality and authenticity. Therefore, a thorough research on the marketing of heritage destinations is definitely required. Kotler and Gertner (2002) also suggested that the best way for a country to improve its image is to create a new association between the destinations and its attractions. Accordingly, the WHS designation may help in this endeavour by focusing on the cultural endowments of heritage destinations.

In Malaysia context, within the tourism sector, a new trend of tourism has emerged, namely the cultural heritage tourism (Ismail et al., 2014). This trend is evidenced by the growing number of tourists who seek adventure, culture, history, archaeology, and the interaction with the local people (Chourasia & Chourasia, 2012). The current development in cultural heritage tourism supported prior prediction of WTO that cultural will be one of the five key tourism segments in the future along with other tourism categories as classified by the European Union-Committee of the Regions (2007). Apart from cultural heritage tourism, the other segments are coastal tourism, urban tourism, rural tourism, and mountain tourism. It is predicted that this

development will trigger off new challenges in managing the visitors' flows to the cultural sites (WTO, 2000).

Accordingly, Li, Wu, and Cai, (2008) claimed that the local governments often regard the World Heritage Sites as a new source of income while both the state and local community have similar interests in promoting these heritage sites. Thus, the World Heritage Site designation serves as a catalyst to attract visitors to these spots. This, in turn, will boost the number of tourists to the country, injects capital into the local economy, and creates new jobs (Li et al., 2008; Prideaux, 2002). Chai (2011) reported that heritage sites in Malaysia has been identified as a niche product to be developed expansively within the tourism sector. In addition, the recent discussions by Yang et al. (2010) and Poria et al. (2013) concurred that heritage tourism has become a new popular segment of tourism, which had caught the attention of most policy-makers who are anxious to have it properly developed. This phenomenon occurs due to the people's penchant for novelty, including traditional cultures (Huh & Uysal, 2004). In fact, heritage tourism as part of the broader category of cultural tourism is now a major pillar of the emerging tourism strategy of many countries, worldwide.

Due to these reasons, the current study focuses on the cultural heritage tourism marketing, which emphasises the Cognitive, Affective, and Emotional components of Destination Image of both the heritage cities in Malaysia. These components may influence the Service Quality, which eventually will lead to Tourists' Satisfaction and Destination Loyalty.

1.3 Research Questions

Subsequent to the aforementioned problem identification and research gaps, this study is set to address the following research questions:

- i. What is the interrelationship among the Destination Image constructs: Cognitive, Affective, and Emotional?
- ii. What is the impact of Destination Service Quality on Destination Satisfaction and Destination Loyalty?
- iii. Does Destination Satisfaction contribute to Destination Loyalty?
- iv. Does Destination Satisfaction mediate the relationships between Destination Image, Service Quality, and Loyalty?

1.4 Research Objectives

Based on the aforementioned discussion, the fundamental objective formulated for this study is to examine the interrelationship between Destination Image components, Destination Service Quality, Tourist Satisfaction, and Destination Loyalty. In particular, the study concentrates on the impact of Cognitive, Affective, and Emotional

components of Destination Image. This study also attempts to determine whether the three constructs influence the delivery of service quality and eventually leads to tourist satisfaction and destination loyalty in the heritage setting.

The following specific research objectives are addressed to guide the entire research effort:

- i. To examine the interrelationship among Destination Image constructs: Cognitive, Affective, and Emotional.
- ii. To investigate the impact of Destination Service Quality on Destination Satisfaction and Destination Loyalty.
- iii. To study the relationship between Destination Satisfaction and Destination Loyalty.
- iv. To analyse the mediating effect of Destination Satisfaction in the relationship among Destination Image, Service Quality, and Loyalty.

1.5 Significance of the Research

This study aims to make a novel contribution to the extant knowledge by examining the relationship among the dimensions of Destination Image. These dimensions are deemed the key antecedents that influence Tourist Satisfaction and Destination Loyalty. The exploration is ventured from the tourists' perspective towards the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) World Heritage Site—namely, Melaka City in Melaka and George Town in Penang. The findings are anticipated to contribute towards a positive image formation of destinations in order to promote the heritage cities among the existing and potential target groups.

Additionally, this study aims to extend the current literature of Destination Image by examining the relationship among Cognitive, Affective, and Emotional components of Destination Image. There has been little discussion reported on a concurrent measurement of these three constructs as past studies of Destination Image are more inclined to focus only on the Cognitive and/or Affective components (Giraldi & Cesareo, 2014; Nghiêm-Phú, 2015; Kladou & Mavragani, 2015; Vinh & Phuong, 2017; Anjos, Pereira & Tennenberg, 2017). The nature of the relationship might hold considerable explanatory power in predicting tourists' satisfaction and loyalty.

The current study also proposes that the tourists' positive image perceptions towards a destination would beget tourists' satisfaction and loyalty. Consequently, it would facilitate the formulation of better marketing strategies to position the country as a competitive destination.

The findings will also enhance the understanding of how Destination Service Quality as an antecedent, predict tourists' Satisfaction and Loyalty. Apparently, the previous studies on service quality issues in the context of heritage tourist destinations disregarded this aspect. It is anticipated that the findings of the present study will contribute to the existing body of literature as well as to the industry practitioners.

Supported by the previous empirical studies in the marketing of heritage tourism, this study offers evidence for the application of conceptual models and contributes to the extant body of knowledge on Destination Image and its consequences on tourist behaviour. In this context, the findings of this study are of empirical value to image building and destination planning for Malaysian tourism destinations as well as competitive strategies for other destinations abroad. This study helps to identify and evaluate the image factors that contribute towards tourists' favourable attitude and future decisions, specifically on heritage destinations. The understanding gained from this study can also help the destinations to design and implement appropriate image promotional strategies and enable destinations to manage their limited resources more effectively.

More specifically, from a practitioner's point of view, the research findings will recommend viable action plans for the cities as well as guide the policy makers in improving tourists' satisfaction and enhancing their sense of loyalty. It is also expected that the study will provide a strategic focus based on competitive advantage and how to bond with the key audiences.

In the context of city management, the research findings are expected to provide a decision-making framework for building a solid, consistent image of the city in order to build a reputation and create a prosperous business climate within the city. Furthermore, based on the expected positive responses of the samples towards the Destination Image components, Service Quality, Tourist Satisfaction, and Loyalty, business investment in the city may appropriately target the most profitable ventures.

1.6 Scope of the Study

The scope of the study is focused on destination marketing from the perspective of a city or urban tourism within the context of the first cultural UNESCO World Heritage Site (WHS) in Malaysia—namely, Melaka City in Melaka and George Town in Penang. This study employs the quantitative methods in its methodology. A questionnaire survey is conducted to elicit tourists' perceptions and opinions towards the selected heritage sites. The unit of analysis is individual, which comprises international and domestic tourists as the main respondents. Specifically, the target population of this study is the international and domestic tourists and those travelling or visiting the cultural heritage sites of Melaka City and George Town. The samples comprised international and domestic tourists, aged 18 years and above and travelling or visiting

the Historic Cities of Melaka City and George Town; business travellers are excluded since their main purpose for visiting is not leisure tourism.

1.7 Definition of key terms

The operational definition of constructs is discussed as follows.

i. Destination image

The term “destination image” refers to “the sum of beliefs, ideas, or impressions that a person has toward a destination” as defined by Crompton (1979, p.18). The components of Destination Image in this study include Cognitive, Affective, and Emotional. This study uses the most commonly cited definition:

- a. Cognitive: Belief and knowledge about a destination (Baloglu & McCleary, 1999).
- b. Affective: Feeling about a destination (Baloglu & McCleary, 1999).
- c. Emotional: Intense feelings that are associated with a specific referent, such as a person, an object, or an event and instigated a specific response behaviour (Cohen & Areni, 1991; Hosany & Gilbert, 2010).

ii. Service Quality

The United Nation World Tourism Organization (UNWTO, 2003) defined “quality in tourism” as the result of a process that implies the satisfaction of all the legitimate products and service needs, requirements and expectations of the consumer at an acceptable price, in conformity with the underlying quality determinants, such as safety and security, hygiene, accessibility, transparency, authenticity, and harmony of the tourism activity concerned with its human and natural environment. Within the service sector, the definition of quality follows the customers’ perspective and should aim to meet customer expectations.

The HISTOQUAL scale considers the fact that the services provided in the heritage sites are unique and covered a wide range of components, such as direction signage, attitude of the staff, catering and retailing facilities, special care towards the disabled and children, and so forth (Yale, 1991). According to Frochot and Hughes (2000), the HISTOQUAL scale employs a more standardised questionnaire survey and suitable for assessing the service quality performance of a property and across different heritage attractions. Based on the HISTOQUAL scale by Frochot and Hughes (2000), Frochot (2001), and Wan and Cheng (2011), five dimensions, namely “responsiveness”, “tangibles”, “communication”, “consumables”, and “empathy” are adapted by this study to evaluate the visitors’ perceptions of service quality at the historical cities of Melaka City and George Town.

iii. Destination Satisfaction

Customer satisfaction refers to a short-term emotional reaction to a specific service performance (Lovelock & Wright, 1999). For the purpose of this study, Destination Satisfaction refers to the degree of pleasure or contentment experienced by the tourists, consequent to the destination ability in fulfilling their needs, expectations, and desires (Chi & Qu, 2008).

iv. Destination Loyalty

Loyalty is defined as “a deeply held commitment to re-buy or re-patronise a preferred product/service consistently in the future, thereby causing repetitive same-brand or same brand-set purchasing, despite situational influences and marketing efforts having the potential to cause switching behaviour” (Oliver, 1997). Operationally, Destination Loyalty is considered as an individual’s judgment in recommending a destination and visiting the same destination in the future as well as his/her willingness to stay longer at the destination; taking into account his/her current situation and likely circumstances. In this study, attitudinal loyalty measurement, which includes the intention to re-visit and recommend the sites to others, will be used to infer Destination Loyalty (Chi & Qu, 2008).

v. Heritage Tourism

The National Trust for Historic Preservation (NTHP) in the United States defines cultural heritage tourism as “travelling to experience the places, artifacts, and activities that authentically represent the stories and people of the past and present. It includes cultural, historical, and natural resources” (NTHP, 2008). Another definition by The International Council of Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS) defined heritage in a broad concept that includes tangible and intangible assets. Tangible assets refer to natural and cultural environments, landscapes, historical places, sites and building environment. While intangible assets refer to collection, past and continuing cultural practices, knowledge and living experiences. In the same vein, UNESCO (1972) divided heritage tourism into types; first, Natural heritage covers natural sites with outstanding universal value from aesthetic or science point of view that need to be protected and second, Cultural heritage – involves with monuments or buildings. It is also involves with works or combined works of nature and man with outstanding universal value from the point of view of history, art, science or anthropological.

1.8 Organisation of the Thesis

The thesis is divided into seven chapters. Chapter 1 discusses the background and motivation of the research; it introduces the problem statement and the gaps, which address various issues related to the study. This chapter also describes the research objectives, research questions, research contribution, the scope of the study, and definition of key terms.

Chapter 2 describes the current scenario of Malaysian tourism industry from the aspects of its development and the government support. It also provides an overview of The Historical City of Melaka and George Town as the first UNESCO World Heritage Sites in Malaysia.

Chapter 3 presents the review of previous literature by focusing on the main constructs involved in the present study—namely, Destination Image, Service Quality, Tourist Satisfaction, and Destination Loyalty. The chapter describes the overview of relevant theories and the model employed in the effort to understand consumers' satisfaction and loyalty.

Chapter 4 is dedicated to the conceptual model that mainly concentrates on the model and hypotheses development. The chapter starts by explaining the theoretical foundation and underpinning model suggested for the study, which is known as Image—Satisfaction—Loyalty Paradigm. The model proposes the relationship between the six major constructs: Cognitive, Affective, Emotional, Destination Service Quality, Destination Satisfaction, and Destination Loyalty. Subsequently, the chapter explains the development of nineteen hypotheses based on the seven main hypotheses.

Chapter 5 explains the research methodology, technique, and analysis of the study. Research design, defining the population of interest, sampling design procedure, and developing survey instrument are presented in this chapter as well. Specifically, it concentrates on the development of the scale or measurement of the main constructs based on the hypotheses formulated in Chapter 4. In addition, this chapter also presents the pilot test result for the purpose of refining the measurement of research instrument, which is subsequently used in a full-scale survey.

Chapter 6 reports the data analyses and findings of the full-scale survey administered to the international and domestic tourists in the heritage sites of Melaka City and George Town. This chapter begins by providing the general initial data examination, which includes the analysis of missing value, identifying and cleaning the outliers, and a series of data assumptions on multivariate analysis. The chapter proceeds with the results of exploratory analysis using the SPSS 21.0 statistical programme. Next, the chapter reports the main analyses using SEM-AMOS, which involved two processed analyses, namely the measurement model and structural model.

Finally, Chapter 7 discusses and concludes the research findings and offers extensive interpretations in relation to the current study's hypotheses. The chapter concludes by outlining and summarising the significant contributions of the study and its contributions from the theoretical and managerial perspectives. It also highlights the limitations of the study and recommendations for future research and practice.

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APPENDICES