

Examining the Impact of Visitors' Emotions and Perceived Quality towards Satisfaction and Revisit Intention to Theme Parks

(Kajian Kesan Emosi dan Tanggapan Kualiti Pengunjung Terhadap Kepuasan dan Hasrat Berkunjung Semula Ke Taman Tema)

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ABSTRACT

Theme parks attempt to create enjoyable and amazing experiences for visitors. As a result, theme parks are important sectors within the tourism industry, which has grown dramatically with theme parks becoming the main tourist destinations in some countries. The purpose of this research is to analyze how the perceived quality and emotions of visitors in Malaysia's theme park environments influence their satisfaction and behavioral intentions to revisit. Three main factors that will influence visitors' satisfaction towards theme parks and their behavioral intentions to revisit are perceived quality, arousal-based experiences and pleasure-based experiences. This study involves 320 respondents, employing a questionnaire survey as the main method of data collection. The results of the study indicate that two significant predictors that influence the satisfaction among the theme park visitors are arousal-based experiences and perceived service quality. The theme parks' managements can use the findings of this study in planning and executing marketing strategies to improve the theme park service offerings.

ABSTRAK

Taman tema cuba untuk mencipta pengalaman yang menyeronokkan dan menakjubkan kepada para pengunjungnya. Taman tema adalah satu sektor yang penting dalam industri pelancongan yang mana ia telah berkembang dengan dramatik dan menjadi destinasi pelancongan utama di sebilangan negara. Tujuan kajian ini adalah untuk menganalisis bagaimana tanggapan mengenai kualiti dan emosi para pengunjung taman tema di Malaysia mempengaruhi tahap kepuasan dan hasrat mereka untuk berkunjung semula ke taman tema terbabit. Tiga faktor utama yang mempengaruhi tahap kepuasan pengunjung terhadap taman tema dan hasrat kunjungan ulangan adalah diwakili oleh tanggapan mengenai kualiti, rangsangan dan pengalaman berasaskan keseronokan. Kajian ini yang melibatkan 320 responden telah menggunakan borang kaji selidik sebagai kaedah utama pengumpulan data. Hasil kajian ini menunjukkan dua faktor yang mempengaruhi tahap kepuasan dalam kalangan pengunjung taman tema adalah pengalaman yang berasaskan rangsangan dan tanggapan terhadap kualiti perkhidmatan. Hasil kajian ini boleh digunakan oleh pihak pengurusan taman tema dalam merancang dan melaksanakan strategi pemasaran bagi meningkatkan penawaran perkhidmatan taman tema.

Keywords: Visitor's emotions; Perceived quality; Revisit intention; Theme park

INTRODUCTION

Globalization and the growth of economic integration have had an enormous impact on the area of leisure and tourism. The theme park industry has been growing fast globally in the last three decades due to the development of different types of theme park in respect to size, capacity, products and entertainment offerings. Theme parks provide the opportunity to obtain political advantage – locally, nationally and internationally. Theme park attractions are able to improve the

destination image, enhance tourism, benefit the economy and provide education, recreation and entertainment opportunities to the people. In addition, theme parks also provide the employment opportunities, which sustain the country. Theme parks are becoming more integrated with other tourist and leisure activities nowadays (Milman 2010). Contemporary theme parks offer services, such as accommodation, on-line booking services, night entertainment activities and transportation services other than the rides, performances, retail outlets and food services (Clave' 2007).

In 2008, there were about 186 million visitors who visited the top 25 theme parks world-wide, although there was a slight decrease of 0.4% in the number of visitors compared to the year 2007 (Rubin 2009). The number of visitors to the world's top 25 theme parks was slightly higher than the number of international tourists who visited Spain, China, Italy and UK combined in 2008, even though economic, social and political instability has affected the theme park industry (World Tourism Organization 2009). In 2009, the number of visitors to the top 25 global parks had declined slightly, by 0.2 percent compared to 2008, reaching 185.6 million. The decline in the number of visitors may be due to the impacts of economic downturns. During such periods, visitors are more likely to shift to lower cost, closer-to-home entertainment attractions (TEA, AECOM Economics 2009). According to the consulting firm, Economic Research Associates, the development of theme parks in Asia has shows huge potential. This is because of the robust economic growth in Asia, resulting in a growing middle class with more disposable income, which increases the demand for entertainment and leisure time. People no longer have to visit North American or European theme parks, since theme parks are blossoming in China, Singapore, South Korea, India and other Asian countries. These aspects seem to be the ideal product of tourism industry and economic development. Executives from Asian theme parks expect that Asian theme parks will be able to accelerate the growth curve and theme park product development lifecycle in the future, with increasing visits per capita and worldwide market share (TEA, AECOM Economics 2009).

Asian countries, such as China and Malaysia, are developing major theme parks in order to increase tourism revenues (Ah-Keng 1994). The growth of theme parks as a tourist attraction would increase the economic input and provide the leisure and entertainment activities to the people. There are many types of theme parks in the market, which include well-known large-scale theme parks with thrill rides, historical features, art galleries, museums, botanical garden, zoos and wildlife parks. As a result, the competition among theme parks is increasing rapidly. It is important for the theme parks to make effort to differentiate themselves from their competitors. Understanding consumers' needs and behaviour is crucial in order to assist theme park executives to develop or improve marketing programs and to better position the theme parks. Malaysia is an ideal place for people to enjoy theme parks, as it is possesses a green environment with good weather. There are many exciting theme parks that have been developed in Malaysia, such as Genting Highlands Theme Park, Sunway Lagoon Theme Park, A' Famosa Water World, Cosmo's World Theme Park, Bukit Merah Laketown Resort, and many others. These theme parks offer great fun and excitement to visitors. The growing rate and the sustainability of the theme park industry is affected by the attendance of the consumers. The perceived quality of a tourist destination, such as

theme parks, by visitors, including their satisfaction level with their experiences and behavioral intentions are important for the successful management and marketing of the destination.

Research on the relationships between perceived quality, customer satisfaction and behavioral intention has become a debated issue. Several models have been proposed and tested empirically in all the industries, including tourism. Most researchers believe that the two variables - perceived quality and satisfaction – affect the behavioral intentions of the consumers. However, no research has determined the precise relationship between these variables. The role of consumer's emotion in their consumption experiences becomes an important aspect in consumer research (Peterson et al. 1986). While a limited number of studies on emotional experiences have been conducted in the area of marketing, including studies by Bagozzi et al.(1999), Dube' and Menon (2000), Smith and Bolton (2002), Hirschman and Stern (1999), Liljander and Strandvik (1997) and Westbrook and Oliver (1991), no research has been carried out in the area of leisure and tourism services. According to Barsky and Nash (2002) and Goulding (2000), it is important to study the emotional reactions of consumers. The increasing numbers of innovative leisure products has led to intense competition in the tourism industry (Stevens 2000). Consumer research has traditionally neglected the effect of the environment, atmosphere and emotional aspects of consumption behaviour. These factors create moods, and affect customer perceptions and attitudes, thereby affecting intention (Jackson et al. 1993). Moreover, as indicated by Loewenstein and Lerner (2003), understanding the future oriented emotions of consumers is crucial because it plays an important role in decision-making among consumers.

Although consumer research has included the measuring of emotions, the focus on emotions in scholarly contributions has been limited to considering the role of emotions in all aspects of life and consumer behaviour. Moreover, the conceptualization of emotions has not been clearly researched (Baumgarther et al. 2008). The theme park industry should continuously monitor the visitors' satisfaction and perception through customer surveys or research; and react to the results in order to stay competitive (TEA/ER 2009). Kim (2001) concludes that a theme park can be a profitable attraction, providing visitors a sole reason to travel to a specific location. Bigne et al. (2005) suggests that further research is necessary in order to provide a better understanding of the linkages between consumption emotions, satisfaction and behavioural intention.

The aim of this research is to analyze the relationship between perceived quality and emotional factors in influencing the consumer satisfaction in the context of theme park visits and their behavioral intentions. The most important role that affects the success of any tourist attraction is providing the visitors with what they want and fulfil such requirements in order to encourage their

behavioural intentions, such as revisiting the theme parks. This will help the theme parks' managements and marketers to develop and improve the strategies to attract the visitors. Understanding the underlying factors that influence visitor patronage behaviour in theme parks can help the management to create more appealing spaces and environments, as well activities that enhance the patronage.

LITERATURE REVIEW

THEME PARK EXPERIENCE

According to Geissler and Rucks (2011), theme parks are generally differentiated from amusement parks in terms of design attributes, including the architecture, landscaping, stores, rides and food services. Theme parks usually possess family appeal; some form of entertainment such as costumed characters; high investment in rides and show capacity; high standards of maintenance; activities that encourage visitors to stay longer; and a one price admission policy. A theme park is a public entertainment area where people enjoy themselves due to the setting provided in the parks, where most of the entertainment correlates to one idea or subject. Theme parks are the main motivator for tourists to visit the city where they are located and attract such visitors to an atmosphere of amusement, entertainment and new experiences.

To optimize the theme park visit experience of tourists or visitors, the development of theme parks must be planned properly, particularly in regards to economic, social and cultural aspects; the physical environment; transportation; accommodation; infrastructure; facilities offered; and institutional environment. Mills (1990) asserts that theme parks possess technological wonders; spectacular buildings (exotic, enormous, novel); educational performances; sideshows to entertain visitors; historical pageantry or displays; and festive celebration atmospheres, including fireworks and performances, as well as food and beverage. Clave' (2007) suggests that the prototype of the theme park should have a thematic uniqueness and identity with one or more themed areas; it should be also designed as an enclosed space with guests; and have single admission price that is attractive to children, teenagers, adults and families.

While there were 66.9 million patrons who visited the top ten Asian theme parks in 2008, (Rubin 2009) the total declined by 3.5 percent to 64.5 million in 2009 (TEA, AECOM Economics 2009). The decline in the number of visitors to the major Asian theme parks was a result of the global recession. The growing economies that lead to expanding middle class consumers in Asia countries, such as China, are expected to grow from medium term to long term. Current theme park developments in Asia include the first Legoland in Malaysia, expected to open in 2012, and the fourth Universal Studios in South Korea, which will be the largest Asian theme park when

it opens in 2014. The development, design and operation of the recent Asian theme parks have been adapted from American and European parks. Research finds that the key factors to the success of an Asian theme park are location, quality, safety, consistency, imaginative theme, constant advertising, and constant activities and promotions. Two of the most important aspects, that are often unnoticed in the management of Asian theme parks, are ample shade from the sun and accessibility (Emmons 1999).

Tourist experience and satisfaction are important in tourism and service industries because they indicate the impact of the quality of the product or services on the ability of the service provider to satisfy the tourists' needs and wants. Consumers often interact with the service environment during their consumption experiences, therefore understanding their emotions, including affective and cognitive responses, is important (Wirtz et al. 2000; Zins 2002). The service quality and emotions of visitors in relation to theme parks will have a great influence on consumer satisfaction and behavioural intentions. Therefore, information about the perceived quality and emotional concepts of theme park visitors needs to be integrated in order to explain and understand their satisfaction and behavioural intentions (Zins 2002). Such an understanding results from research focusing tourists' subjective experiences (Gnoth et al. 2000).

CONSUMER SATISFACTION

In general, satisfaction is the feeling of pleasure and enjoyment when a person has achieved something or when things a person desire to happen do happen. Besides that, satisfaction is the act of fulfilling one's desires and needs on the post purchase assessment of products or services. The definition of different aspects of satisfaction, as well as what is entailed in consumer satisfaction, is widely debated in literature (Bowen 2001; Kozak 2001; Oliver 1997; Ryan 1995; Yuksel & Yuksel 2001). Oliver (1997: 13) gives a comprehensive definition of satisfaction:

Satisfaction is the attainment response from the consumers. It is a judgment on the feature a product or service possessed that provides a pleasant consumption experience to fulfill the perception of consumers.

Satisfaction is the overall behavior and judgment of the consumers towards a service provider or the emotional response of consumers towards the difference between their expectations and the results they receive in relation to fulfillment of their needs or desires (Oliver 1997). There are many different ways to define consumer satisfaction. Kotler (2000) defined satisfaction as "the pleasure feelings or disappointment of people towards a product by evaluating its perceived performance in relation to their expectations". Hoyer and MacInnis (2001) view satisfaction as a reflection of the feelings

of acceptance, excitement, relief, delight and happiness. Factors that can influence the impact of consumer satisfaction are the quality of employees (knowledgeable employees, friendly employees, courteous employees), timeliness, pricing, good value, service quality and billing accuracy (Hokanson 1995).

Consumer satisfaction is an attitude change, influenced by the consumption experience, and viewed as a fundamental determinant of long-term consumer behavior (Oliver 1980; Yi 1990). In research of the hospitality industry, Gibson (2005), finds that satisfied consumers will become regular purchasers of the products or services and will provide the positive feedback to the people around them based on their experiences. Therefore, business owners, managers and marketing executives must be able to design and develop the suitable offers that reflect market demand by identifying and understanding the factors that influence consumer satisfaction. Mittal and Kamakura (2001) conclude that consumer satisfaction plays an important role in the activities of all firms. Empirical research shows that satisfied customers are less sensitive to price and willing to pay a higher premium price (Homburg et al. 2005). Therefore, consumer satisfaction has become a cornerstone in all businesses, irrespective of the industry.

REVISIT INTENTION

Intention indicates the willingness of a person to engage in a behavior. From the view of leisure and recreation, behavioral intention is the intention of visitors to revisit within a year and their willingness to travel often to the destination (Baker & Crompton, 2000). Further factors involved in the evaluation of behavioral intention include the willingness to recommend to others and positive word of mouth (Bigne et al. 2001). The revisit intention of consumers to a destination may be influenced by the performances at the destination, as well as by the promotional efforts and the spreading news of new attractions at the destination. A tourism industry that emphasizes attractions at particular destinations relies heavily on the revisit intention of visitors because less costs are incurred in the retention of existing visitors, than in the attraction of new visitors.

One factor that influences the revisit intention is the number of previous visits to a particular destination (Court & Lupton 1997; Mazursky 1989; Petrick et al. 2001; Sampol 1996). Kozak (2001) describes the relationship between previous visits and revisit intention to the same destination. The development of destinations is another factor that influences revisit intention. Furthermore, Bigne et al. (2001) demonstrate that tourist satisfaction has an impact on revisit intention. There is a lack of empirical and theoretical evidence demonstrating the relationship between the antecedents of revisit intention and how revisit intention influences the enjoyment of visitors at a travel destination. Therefore, an integrative model, considering the factors of service

quality, customer value and satisfaction, is proposed by Oh (1999) and conducted utilizing hotel users as a sample group.

Bigne et al. (2005) considers the constructs of perceived quality, destination image and satisfaction in order to analyze the revisit intention to destinations in Spain, utilizing a convenient sampling to examine this model. Satisfaction is one of the most preferred constructs to analyze the intention to revisit (Bigne et al. 2001; Bowen 2001; Kozak 2001; Kozak & Rimmington 2000; Mazursky 1989; Oh 1999). Researchers suggest that satisfaction leads to repurchase intention and positive word of mouth, in the form of recommendations to the others in the future. If a person is satisfied, he or she will continue to repurchase, while if a person is dissatisfied, he or she will switch to other products or services (Oliver & Swan 1989). An empirical study shows that when visitors experience a more enjoyable and memorable travel than expected, they are more likely to return to the same destination in the future, following research which conducted in Balearic Islands that determined that positive feedbacks from visitors will increase the probability of their revisit intention (Juaneda 1996).

PERCEIVED QUALITY AND VISITOR SATISFACTION

The common definition of perceived quality is the total judgement and consumers' perception towards the superiority of the product or service (Parasuraman et al. 1988) and integrates the consumer expectations towards the service and perceptions of the firm that provide the service (Grönroos 1994; Parasuraman et al. 1988). Most of the service industries, including tourism, use SERVQUAL to measure quality (e.g. Armstrong et al. 1997; Hsieh et al. 2008; Hui et al. 2007). The process of delivering a quality service plays an important role in tourism (Wyllie 2000) and may be used as a platform to assess the effectiveness of the leisure service agency, including the tourism service sectors. SERVQUAL only provides the framework to evaluate the service quality of some specific services (Parasuraman et al. 1988; Backman & Veldkamp 1995). Mackay and Crompton (1988) proposed a framework – the REQUAL model – to study the service quality in the recreational and leisure industries.

Many researchers have provided empirical evidence indicating that perceived service quality has an influence on the satisfaction of customer (Cronin & Taylor 1992; Spreg & MacKoy 1996; Ting 2004). The relationship between service quality and satisfaction is examined using the modified Oliver's (1993) satisfaction/service quality model proposed by Spreg and MacKoy (1996). They conclude that their modified model has positive results and proves that service quality affects satisfaction. In the area of tourism, most of the empirical research justifies the view that perceived quality influences satisfaction. Besides that, the antecedent role of quality is supported in the area of sports and leisure centres (Murray & Howat

2002), cultural places (De Rojas & Camarero 2008) and tourist destinations' attractions (Chen & Tsai 2007).

However, an indeterminate result concerning the causal relationship between service quality and satisfaction in the area of entertainment parks resulted in research conducted by Lee et al. (2000). They realized that perceived service quality influences the satisfaction of the visitors, but they do not provide a proper explanation of how this occurs. Therefore, the objective of the present research is to provide a clear and accurate explanation of the relationship between perceived quality and visitor satisfaction in theme parks. Based upon this, the following hypothesis is posited:

H₁ Perceived quality has an influence on visitor's satisfaction.

AROUSAL, PLEASURE AND VISITOR SATISFACTION

Consumer researchers began to pay their attention on the role of emotion in consumption behavior relatively recently (Peterson et al. 1986). Emotion is an affective variable, tending to be more extreme and specific when compared to mood; and more likely to have a closer relationship to the stimuli that trigger them (Batson et al. 1992). Emotion can be defined as a complex set of interactions among subjective and objective factors, mediated by neural systems that can cause affective experiences such as the feelings of arousal and pleasure (Dube' & Menon 2000), which Russel and Pratt (1980) describe as dimensions of emotions. Arousal refers to the feelings in which an individual feels active and stimulated, while pleasure refers to the degree to which an individual feels good, joyful or excited in a situation. The influences of emotion on consumption experiences determine the level of satisfaction and post consumption behaviour (Liljander & Strandvik 1997; Mano & Oliver 1993). Hence, emotions need to be measured using a bi-dimensional approach (Russell 1980), reflecting the degree to which different individuals incorporate subjective experiences of pleasantness/ unpleasantness and activate/deactivate subjective feelings into their emotional experiences (Feldman 1998).

Ang et al. (1997) find that consumers seek different levels of arousal or pleasure from different services during their service consumption. For instance, individuals who go for a fine dining will seek for the experience of low arousal and high pleasure, while theme parks would be perceived as thrill seeking experiences. Besides that, the research conducted by Mehrabian and Wixen (1986) reports that consumers have a stronger preference towards a video game if they find more pleasure and higher arousal. Some research also finds that there is a positive relationship between the feeling of arousal or pleasure and the purchasing intention in the retailing industry (Donovan & Rossiter 1982; Sherman & Smith 1987). Oliver (1989) recommends a framework that focuses on the role of emotions as affective elements, finding that an

affective impact is parallel to the cognitive effect, which is disconfirmation. Both affected impact and cognitive effect are posited to affect satisfaction. Hence, emotions are one of the antecedents that influence satisfaction. The relationship between emotions and visitor satisfaction has been measured (Mano & Oliver, 1993; Liljander & Strandvik 1997; Erevelles, 1998). The following hypotheses summarize the expectation in regards to the present study:

H₂ Arousal has an influence on visitor's satisfaction.

H₃ Pleasure has an influence on visitor's satisfaction.

REVISIT INTENTION

In the tourism industry, evidence from empirical studies demonstrates that satisfaction has an influence on the behavioral intention of visitors (Baker & Crompton 2000; Petrick 2004; Pritchard & Howard 1997). Similarly, there are several studies indicating that a dissatisfied consumer has a high probability of not revisiting a destination (Dube et al. 1994). In tourism destination choice settings studies, satisfaction has a positive relationship with revisit intention (Baker & Crompton 2000; Kozak 2001; Petrick et al. 2001; Yuksel 2001). Han and Back (2006) indicate that the intention of a guest to revisit is positively influenced by satisfaction. Therefore, the above statements support the following hypothesis.

H₄ Visitor's satisfaction has an influence on revisit intention.

Ekinci (2004) examines the relationship between quality, customer satisfaction and behavioral intention and finds that service quality is not the consequence of satisfaction, but an antecedent for satisfaction. However, the relationship between behavioral intentions and service quality is not clear. It could be direct or indirect relationship or there are interactions with other constructs. If there is an indirect relationship between perceived service quality and behavioral intentions (Bou et al. 2001; Woodside et al. 1989), satisfaction merely serves as a moderator in this relationship. Researchers explain that service quality and satisfaction are antecedents that lead to the behavioral intention of consumers (Cronin & Taylor 1992; Gremler & Brown 1997). In addition, a defined relationship between customer satisfaction and behavioral intentions is indicated (Dabholkar & Thorpe 1994; Oliver & Swan 1989). Consistent with this argument, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H₅ Satisfaction mediates the relationship between perceived quality and revisit intention.

The main objective of this study is to examine the factors that influence visitors' satisfaction and, on this basis, to predict the behavioral intentions in relation to

theme parks in Malaysia. The measure of the perceived quality, pleasure and arousal emotions of visitors towards theme parks that lead to satisfaction and its influence on behavioral intentions is rarely researched. Therefore, the

conceptual framework for this research is proposed as follows. The framework is adopted from the research of Bigne et al. (2004). However, the framework is extended by including a new construct i.e., perceived quality.



FIGURE 1. Conceptual framework of factors influencing satisfaction and behavioral intentions to theme park

METHODOLOGY

A structured questionnaire with three parts was developed. The first part consists of 20 items that evaluated the experiences and attitudes of theme parks' visitors. This part was divided into four instruments that measure perceived quality, emotional factors, satisfaction and revisit intention. The rating scale used for this part was a Likert scale anchored from '1' for strongly disagree to '6' for strongly agree, in which respondents were asked to indicate their level of agreement. The second part of the questionnaire consists of 12 items that measure the emotions of visitors towards the theme parks. The measurement of emotions includes the dimensions of pleasure and arousal by using 6-point semantic differential scale. The last part of the questionnaire includes nine questions relating to demographic variables, including gender, age, education level, marital status, ethnic, monthly household income and theme park experiences. Previous researchers have validated most of the items used in this research, however, the wording of the items was slightly modified to fit in the context of theme parks experiences. Perceived quality was measured by using 21 items of the SERVQUAL instrument proposed by Parasuraman et al. (1994). The items of satisfaction were measured based on Oliver's (1997) scale. The items relating to revisit intention were measured by the scale proposed by Zeithaml et al. (1996) and Mittal and Kamakura (2001). Emotions that represent pleasure and arousal were measured using ten items (Russell 1980).

For the purpose of scale development, all items underwent exploratory factor analysis to identify which items do not belong in the specified domain (Churchill 1979). This is to ascertain the measures retained for purposes of construct validity (i.e. measure what they are supposed to). An exploratory factor analysis using principal components and Varian rotation technique was conducted to examine the underlying dimension of

overall satisfaction. In determining the factors, common decision rules employed in empirical research were applied: (i) minimum eigenvalue of 1, (ii) Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) measure of sampling adequacy greater than 0.5, (iii) minimum factor loading of 0.5 for each indicator variable, (iv) simplicity of factor structure, and (v) exclusion of single item factor structure. As the number of variables analysed is important in deciding which factor loadings are significant, those items with factor loadings below 0.60 were discarded (Hair et al. 1998). Two items from the visitor satisfaction construct and two items from the behavioural intentions construct were discarded after factor analysis, therefore, 4 items and 7 items, respectively, for each of the constructs were retained.

Altogether, 500 questionnaires were distributed in three main theme parks in Malaysia. The theme parks setting was chosen based on McClung (2000). McClung indicated that theme parks are associated with highly emotional experiences. The atmosphere and activity in the theme parks contribute to respondents' participation in the survey. Two interviewers were stationed outside the entrance to the attractions of each theme park. All data was collected over a period of one month. Respondents were approached and informed about the purpose of the survey in advance before they were given the questionnaire. Since the data was collected from a convenience sample of individuals, there was no control on the sample size of each respondent group in terms of demographics and country of origin. A total of 320 usable samples were obtained and the response rate was 64%.

Multiple regressions were used to test the possible roles of the constructs in the proposed model. This technique was chosen for the analysis of the data because it simultaneously develops a mathematical relationship between two or more independent variables and the interval scaled dependent variable. Before conducting

multiple regression analysis, the data was examined to ensure that the four basic assumptions of multiple regressions were adhered to, as suggested by Hair et al. (1998). The conceptual model in this study contains mediating variables. Testing for such variables in this study utilized Baron and Kenny's (1986) approach, where the mediating and independent variables are measured on a continuous scale. Testing the linkages of the mediator involves four steps. The first step is to show that there is a significant relationship between the predictor and the outcome/criterion. The second step is to identify that the predictor is related to the mediator. The third step is to show that the mediator is related to the outcome variable. The final step is to show that the strength of the relationship between the predictor and the outcome is significantly reduced when the mediator is added to the model. A complete mediator occurs when the relationship between independent and dependent variables does not differ from zero. Besides that, a partial mediator occurs when the relationship between independent and dependent variables is significantly smaller than when the mediators are included, but is still greater than zero (Frazier et al. 2004).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The 320 responses were obtained, almost equally, from the three theme parks, which consisted of Genting Highland Theme Park (36.6%), Sunway Lagoon Theme Park (35%) and A'Famosa Water World (28.4%). Fifty percent of the respondents were male, whereas the majority (66.2%) of the respondents were between the ages of 20 to 29. 46.6 percent hold a bachelor's degree; 75 percent were single; and 71.5 percent were either Malay (33.1%) or Chinese (38.4%). It was interesting to note that most visitors were from the low-income group (35% earned monthly salary less than RM1500) and medium-income group (30% from those earned between 1500 and RM3000 per month). Only 4 percent of respondents earned more than RM9000 per month. Most visitors came with family (44.7%) or friends (47.5%). In term of frequency of visits, almost all respondents came to the theme parks less than four times per year. As expected, the best time to visit the theme parks was during the school holidays (35.6%), followed by the end of year (20.3%), with the least amount of visits occurring at the beginning of the year (2.5%).

Factor analysis performed on perceived quality, arousal, pleasure, satisfaction and revisit intention constructs produced a clean factor structure, with only one factor emerging for each construct. The factor analysis results on the perceived quality construct resulted in one factor explaining 75.4 percent of the overall variance. The KMO measure of sampling adequacy is 0.914 and the Bartlett's test of sphericity is significant. The factor loadings for these items are between 0.63 and 0.85. The factor analysis results on arousal explaining 64%

of the overall variance. The KMO measure of sampling adequacy is 0.804. The factor loadings for the items are between 0.814 and 0.875. For pleasure, the KMO measure of sampling adequacy is 0.923 and the Bartlett's test of sphericity is significant, which indicates that the items for Pleasure factor are appropriate. The factor explained 68 percent of the total variance. Its loadings for these items are between 0.89 and 0.93. The KMO measure of sampling adequacy for satisfaction is 0.904 and the Bartlett's test of sphericity is significant. The factor explained 68.2 percent of the total variance. Its loadings for these items are between 0.85 and 0.89. Lastly, the KMO measure of sampling adequacy for revisit intention is 0.75 and the Bartlett's test of sphericity is significant. The factor explained 64.8 percent of the total variance. Its factor loadings are between 0.71 and 0.75. The reliability test for the above variables, Cronbach's coefficient alpha, was utilized in this study due to its popularity in marketing studies. The reliability test for all the dimensions recorded excellent reliability with a coefficient alpha of above 0.80 to 0.96, which is the cut-off point of reliability recommended for theory testing by Nunnally (1978).

THE EFFECTS OF PREDICTORS ON VISITOR'S SATISFACTION

Table 1 clearly shows that the regression analysis output for the variables perceived quality and arousal meet the significant level of $p < 0.05$. This shows that perceived quality and arousal have a significant influence on visitors' satisfaction, and the hypotheses null of H_1 and H_2 are rejected. However, the variable of pleasure (0.174) does not have a significant influence on visitors' satisfaction because it does not fulfill the minimum significance level of $p < 0.05$. Therefore, H_1 and H_2 are supported, while H_3 is not. Collectively, the variables in the model explain 58.3 percent of the variance in visitors' satisfaction. The model is significant given the F-statistics of has a p -value which is less than significant level of 0.05. Moreover, the result from the analysis shows that the variable of arousal, with the largest absolute value of standardized beta coefficient ($\beta = 0.535$), emerges as the most important determinant of visitors' satisfaction. Arousal is followed by perceived quality, with the value of standardized beta coefficient equals to 0.366. The findings indicate that the higher the arousal and perceived quality, the higher level of satisfaction.

Consistent with Ekinci (2004), the results of this study show that the perceived quality by visitors is an antecedent of satisfaction among visitors. Hence, the management of the theme parks should take a great attention and formulate policies that generate positive perceptions of quality among the visitors. The findings suggest that the perceived quality of visitors, which takes into consideration the attitude and performance of staff in theme parks; and adequate facilities and service, is a

TABLE 1. The influence of predictors on satisfaction

Independent Variables	Unstd.B	Std.Beta	t-stats	Sig.(p value)
Constant	-0.158			
Perceived quality	0.301	0.366	9.186	0.000
Arousal	0.859	0.535	13.418	0.000
Pleasure	0.061	0.074	1.362	0.174
R Square	0.583			
Sig. of F	0.000			

significant predictor of visitors' satisfaction. For instance, the theme park management should acknowledge that the service quality provided in theme parks increases the satisfaction level of visitors. Although the services provided are intangible, it creates a physically enjoyable environment as important as the tangible elements, such as rides and attractions, guideline, map, direction and maintenance.

The perceived quality of visitors towards theme parks, which includes the quality of customer service, quality of the attractions, rides, performances and shows, quality of staff and facilities, must be evaluated before establishing policies or strategies intended to improve the quality of the theme parks. It is also necessary to know the factors that appraised by visitors when evaluating the quality that is offered to them. Additionally, the satisfaction of the visitors is significantly influenced by their feeling of arousal. Studies on consumption emotions are a growing area of study in marketing (Smith & Bolton 2002). Visitors will feel aroused and excited when they enjoy the thrilling and excitement rides or games. By having the experiences of arousal in theme parks, visitors demonstrate a tendency to be more satisfied. This is because the attractions, rides and activities provided in theme parks are exciting.

THE EFFECT OF VISITOR'S SATISFACTION ON REVISIT INTENTION

Since the earlier regression analysis result showed that perceived quality and arousal have significant influences on satisfaction, but not pleasure, only perceived quality and arousal were used in the regression analysis to test the mediating effect on satisfaction. The results are presented in Table 2. This study hypothesized that to get loyalty from the visitors so that they will revisit theme parks, the theme park management must meet the expectations of the visitors or provide the best service for them. A visitor who is satisfied with the performance or services provided by the theme park is more likely to revisit the theme park. From Table 2, it is evident that the model explains 57.1 percent (significant at $\alpha < 0.01$) of the variance in regards to revisit intention. With a standard beta coefficient of 0.755, satisfaction is considered as an important determinant for revisit intention and this finding rejects the hypothesis null of H_4 . The result in this study supports the proposition by Darnell and Johnson (2001), who find that higher levels of satisfaction positively influence the revisit intention to the destination.

TABLE 2. Influence of satisfaction on revisit intention

Mediating Variable	Unstd. Beta	Std. Beta	t-stats	p value
Constant	0.025			
Satisfaction	0.300	0.755	20.561	0.000
R Squared	0.571			
Sig. F	0.000			

THE MEDIATING EFFECT OF SATISFACTION ON REVISIT INTENTION

Based on the first regression analysis, perceived quality and arousal appeared to have significant influence on satisfaction. Therefore, these variables were used to conduct the analysis of the mediating effect of satisfaction on the relationship between perceived quality, arousal and revisit intention. Perceived quality is found to affect the mediator, which is satisfaction (Table

3), demonstrating that satisfaction partially mediates the relationship between perceived quality and revisit intention. The results support previous studies such as Han and Back (2006), who indicate that perceived service quality influences the satisfaction of tourists and has an impact on the intention to revisit a destination. Arousal is also found to influence the mediator (Table 4). It showed that satisfaction partially mediates the relationship between arousal and revisit intention.

TABLE 3. Summary of mediating effect of satisfaction on the relationship of perceived quality and revisit intention

Significant Variable	Beta Coefficient in Regression (II) Satisfaction based DV on IV	Beta Coefficient in Regression (IV) Satisfaction based DV on IV & MV	Results
Perceived Quality	0.484 ($p=0.000$)	0.720 ($p=0.000$)	Partial Mediation
R Squared	0.235		
Sig. F	0.000		

TABLE 4. Summary of mediating effect of satisfaction on the relationship of arousal and revisit intention

Significant Variable	Beta Coefficient in Regression (II) Satisfaction based DV on IV	Beta Coefficient in Regression (IV) Satisfaction based DV on IV & MV	Results
Arousal	0.649	0.586	Partial Mediation
R Squared	0.603		
Sig. F	0.000		

CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

The results of this study suggests that to improve visitors' satisfaction and revisit intention, theme parks should provide and improve the overall park experience by offering a variety of attractions and value by providing entertaining, aesthetically pleasing and captivating experiences for visitors. Thus, it is vital that park managers understand the important role 'emotional value' plays in influencing visitors' satisfaction. The understanding and managing of visitors' satisfaction involves meeting and shaping expectations in order to create an environment and experience that will result in revisit intention. Theme parks' management needs to create and deliver the emotional experiences that arouse the visitors to enjoy the theme parks activities (Chebat & Michon 2003).

Customer satisfaction is crucial and critical for any service organization to create and maintain its competitiveness in the marketplace (Fonseca 2009). Theme parks' managements should introduce multiple experiential plans to increase their theme parks attractions for visitors. They should not only maintain activities that provide experiential attractions, but also enhance the value of the activities offered (Lin et al. 2009). Facilities, services, psychological needs, attractions and visitors' previous experiences will lead to revisit intention (Su & Shih 2009). Repeat visiting is an important advantage in tourism industry. In this study, intention to revisit the theme parks explains that if the current visit provokes positive emotional experiences, the visitors' likelihood to revisit will increase and their word of mouth will attract others to visit the same destination. The revisit intention also indicates loyalty among the visitors (Hui et al. 2007; Lin et al. 2009).

Some limitations restricted and caused barriers to the results of this research. First, this research focuses

only on respondents who visited the three theme parks in Malaysia – Genting Highlands Theme Park, Sunway Lagoon Theme Park and A' Famosa Water World. The scope of the theme parks can be widened to other theme parks in Malaysia. Second, the total respondents in this research consisted of only 320 people. This sample size might not be big enough and may result in sampling bias. Additionally, most of the respondents were in between 20-29 years old and do not represent the general population from young to old age. This will limit the generalization and applicability of the findings to the population of Malaysia who visit theme parks (Cooper & Schindler 2006). Thus, a larger sample size and more diverse representatives groups would be beneficial. Third, the study uses cross-sectional data representing only one point in time, preventing the authors from inferring cause and effect, as would be the case with a longitudinal study.

Future studies should expand the scope of the study using multiple measures. It would also be interesting to include further variables in future research. For example, the effects of atmosphere (McGoldrick & Pieros 1998); the existence of thrill rides; and perceived reasonable entry prices can be taken into account as potential constructs that influence theme park visitors' satisfaction and lead to the intention to revisit. As suggested by Geissler and Rucks (2011), one way to improve visitors' satisfaction and revisit intention is to provide and improve the overall park experience in an effort to offer a variety of attractions and value (entertaining, aesthetically arousing and pleasing as well as captivating experiences). By having exciting thrill rides and attractions; and adventurous games, the feeling of arousal among visitors will be dramatically affected. The theme park layout and attractions, as emphasized by Lin et al. (2011), are key to the revisit and recommendation intentions of visitors.

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