

ANALYSING THE PERCEPTION & SATISFACTION OF TOURISM BUSINESS
OPERATORS TOWARDS QUALITY CERTIFICATION OF TOURISM
PRODUCTS: CASE OF MYTQA

AZAM AZIZAN BIN AZIZOL

A dissertation submitted in fulfilment of the
requirements for the award of the degree of
Master Science Tourism Planning

Faculty of Built Environment and Surveying
Universiti Teknologi Malaysia

27 JULY 2022

DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to my father, who taught me that the best kind of knowledge to have is that which is learned for its own sake. It is also dedicated to my mother, who taught me that even the largest task can be accomplished if it is done one step at a time.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

This research was not possible without the presence of the lecturers, my supervisor, and everyone who comes into contact during the development of this thesis. They all have delivered significant contribution in my understanding and thoughts in the topic. Specifically, my supervisor Professor Amran Bin Hamzah, I would like to convey my highest appreciation for accepting me as his supervisee and giving me the chance to develop this thesis with his meticulous guidance, advice and encouragement for me to finish this thesis. I would also like to thank you all the lecturers who also consulted me regarding this topic off site and during unexpected times. Without their support, this thesis will not be like what is presented here.

I am also indebted to University College of Yayasan Pahang (UCYP) for giving me the flexibility to study while working and understands my commitment in completing this study.

Lastly to my fellow classmates who should also be recognised for their support and motivation. Their views and tips are useful indeed. Unfortunately, it is not possible to list all of them in this limited space. I am grateful to all my family member. Thank you.

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to analyse the perception and satisfaction of tourism business operators towards tourism quality certification program particularly Malaysia Tourism Quality Assurance or MyTQA. Tourism certification is where an organisation was certified by an accreditation agency which is a third-party organisation in meeting the standards of quality product and services. MyTQA was introduced by the Ministry of Tourism, Art and Culture Malaysia (MOTAC) in uplifting the standards of delivering quality product and services by the tourism operators to the tourist and provide a form of guarantees for tourist to receive the desired experience while they travel here in Malaysia. In Malaysia, tourism certification is still new and there is no such thing as a perfect system. With that, various measures have been taken by the ministry during the development of this certification program including getting the industry on their views and overall perception towards this program. Certification program requires feedback from the industry to ensure that the program is widely accepted and many operators are willing to participate and get certified. However, that was not the case when it comes to MyTQA. Since its establishment until 2019, only 63 tourism business operators were certified by this program compared to more than 4000 registered tourism business under the ministry. This clearly deserve an explanation and a dive into that have cause this certification program were not so supported by the industry was undeniably necessary. What have caused this slow uptake and whether there were factors that affect their buy-in towards this program were identified. With that, the perception and satisfaction of the 63 MyTQA certified tourism business operators were collected in order to fully understand the issue and in the end looking upon recommendations for the future revision of this program. The certified tourism operators were chosen because we want to compare their initial perception with their satisfaction level regarding this program. In order to do that, importance-performance analysis (IPA) have been chosen to analyse their perception-satisfaction level where the output of this analysis is a two-dimensional matrix which can help to identify the attributes which have caused the slow buy-in among the operators. A questionnaire was developed and distributed through online platform using Google Form where it was delivered through electronic mail (e-mail). In the questionnaire, their liker-scale was used to measure the level of importance and satisfaction of the operators based on a 5-level ranking. The raw data were then transcribed into means and the GAP analysis were used to identify if there is significance between the importance and satisfaction of the operators based in the sets of attributes generated from the various literature review, In the end, it is clear which attribute have caused the nature of slow uptake by the operators towards MyTQA certification program and recommendations were presented based on the level of importance and satisfaction collected.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	TITLE	PAGE
	DECLARATION	iii
	DEDICATION	ivv
	ACKNOWLEDGEMENT	v
	ABSTRACT	vii
	TABLE OF CONTENTS	vii
	LIST OF TABLES	ix
	LIST OF FIGURES	x
	LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS	xi
	LIST OF APPENDICES	xii
CHAPTER 1	INTRODUCTION	1
1.1	Tourism Certification	1
1.2	Tourism Certification Issues	2
1.3	Problem Statement	3
1.4	Research Goal	3
	1.4.1 Research Aim	4
	1.4.2 Research Objectives	4
1,5	Research Significance	5
1.6	Conclusion	6
CHAPTER 2	LITERATURE REVIEW	7
2.1	Malaysia Tourism Quality Assuarance	7
2.2	Tourism Certification in Other Countries	10
	2.2.1 Qualmark	10
2.3	Importance of Tourism Certification	14
2.4	Benefits of Tourism Certification	14
	2.4.1 Visibility	14
	2.4.2 Operation	15

2.4.3	Incentives	16
2.4.4	Product and Service	16
2.5	Building the Conceptual Framework	17
2.6	Conclusion	18
CHAPTER 3	RESEARCH METHODOLOGY	20
3.1	Introduction	20
3.2	Proposed Method	202
3.3	Data Collection Duration	202
3.4	Sample and Population	202
3.5	Research Instrument	204
3.5.1	Rating Scale	25
3.5.2	Indicator Used in Section B of Questionnaire	26
3.5.3	Indicator Used in Section C of Questionnaire	27
3.5.4	Indicator Used in Section D of Questionnaire	27
3.5.5	Indicator Used in Section E of Questionnaire	28
3.6	Data Collection	208
3.7	Data Analysis	30
3.7.1	Importance Performance Analysis	30
3.8	Expected Outcome	31
3.9	Research Significance	31
3.10	Conclusion	32
CHAPTER 4	RESULTS AND ANALYSIS	33
4.1	Introduction	33
4.2	Respondent's Profile	33
4.3	Importance Performance Analysis	35
4.4	Conclusion	39
CHAPTER 5	DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION	41
5.1	Discussion	41
5.2	Conclusion	42
REFERENCES		44

LIST OF TABLES

TABLE NO.	TITLE	PAGE
Table 2.5	Qualmark Assessment Criteria	12
Table 3.1	Segregation of the questionnaire	24
Table 3.2	Five-Point Likert Scale	24
Table 3.3	Rating Scale for Survey Instrument	25
Table 3.4	Visibility Attributes Indicators	26
Table 3.5	Operation Attributes Indicators	26
Table 3.6	Incentive Attributes Indicators	27
Table 3.7	Product and Service Attributes Indicators	27
Table 4.1	The Number and Percentage (%) Of Overall Respondents Reported by Categories and MOTAC Registered Company	32
Table 4.2	Analysis of respondent's importance-performance means	35

LIST OF FIGURES

FIGURE NO.	TITLE	PAGE
Figure 2.1	MyTQA Logo	8
Figure 2.2	Certified MyTQA tourism businesses in Malaysia	8
Figure 2.3	MyTQA certification process	9
Figure 2.4	MyTQA assessment areas and criteria	10
Figure 2.6	Qualmark Application Process	13
Figure 2.7	Qualmark Certification Logo	13
Figure 2.8	Conceptual Framework	18
Figure 4.3	Importance-Performance Analysis Matrix	38

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

MyTQA	-	Malaysia Tourism Quality Assurance
MOTAC	-	Ministry of Tourism, Art and Culture
IPA	-	Importance Performance Analysis

LIST OF APPENDICES

APPENDIX	TITLE	PAGE
Appendix A	Survey Questionnaire	45
Appendix B	MyTQA Certified Tourism Operator by States	57
Appendix C	Respondent's Detail	63

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Tourism Certification

Tourism certification as a process in which tourism companies are certified by a third party, to ensure their responsible operations are meeting certain standards, as prescribed by the accreditation agency (Witchuta, 2014). There are elements mentioned here that builds the certification programs which includes a third-party or agency that initiate, maintain and conduct all the procedures required to obtain the certification. Besides that, as described by (Walas & Celuch, 2014) that certification programmes or schemes can be portrayed as a quality assurance mechanism, promotional tool for superior brand awareness and service standardisation, approach for gaining competitive advantage, and specialized tactics to win trust from potential clients. This shows that the benefits that can be sought after an organization is certified to comply with the standards and quality.

Certification is usually voluntary-based broadly as (Bien,2003) defined the program as a voluntary procedure that assesses, audits, and gives written assurance that a facility, product, process or service meets specific standards. Furthermore, the agency usually awards a marketable logo to those that meet or exceed the baseline standards. Therefore, we can define tourism certification as a system established by a third party evaluate tourism businesses with respect to its operation and products to achieve certain standards while obtaining commensurate benefits such as brand awareness and competitive advantage as well as trust from potential tourist.

1.2 Tourism Certification Issues

Tourism certification is still new in certain develop countries and it is still as its early stage as what Buckley (2002) suggested and only few tourists routinely searching for it when making decisions. This is also evident among the tourism operator where the uptake rate is very slow even there is significant proliferation of tourism certification schemes (Synergy, 2000). Less the 1 per cent of tourism business had join the certification program in 2000 as the main reason for the low uptake is due to uncertainties on the value of the certification and the cost of joining the certification program especially for those who is in the small and medium enterprises (Font & Buckley, 2001)

There is no such thing as a perfect system or process. Tourism certification is not exempted from this issue. The system is created so that the product and services offered by the tourism operator are exceeding or meeting the standards that the system proposed. However, there are some issues that needs to be addressed in order for the system to be implemented by them. Some operator expressed disappointment assuming that the system did not have the marketing impact that they had expected. This is further attributed by the misunderstanding of the nature of accreditation and what it actually seeks to achieve (Foster, 2000). As in the New Zealand, while the sustainable tourism certification does help to increase public relations and thus market image, majority of them felt that GG21 did not gave them the marketing advantage over its competitors (Rowe & Higham, 2007).

Confusion also occurs in the industry when there are many other certifications programme such as ISO and other green awards that be applied and this make them confused on deciding on which programme to sign up to (Foster, 2003). Commitment to accreditation also varies greatly between states which has made the establishment of such a framework has been problematic (Tourism Accreditation Board of Victoria, 2003). It is also found that there are companies awarding the certificates are only interested in commercial effect that can generate profits and this have caused the certificates delivered has almost no value towards their company businesses (Walas &

Celuch, 2014). This further deters the main objective of certification which is to improve the industry through quality product and services.

1.3 Problem Statement

Problem statement is the succinct description on the issues this research is trying to solve. The issues that have been outlined based on the literatures supported the establishment of this problem statement which define the present situation and the desired future state through highlighting the gaps that occur. The problem statement is vital in communicating the problems that have occurred and the justification of support for this research to be conducted.

From various issues that has been highlighted, it is clear that some of the system applicability rate has been affected by those issues. This creates a perception among the tourism operators to buy-in or decided to obtain the certificate where to them it is not important and thus have cause the uptake of the program to be low and fail to meet its objectives. In the MyTQA perspective, until today there are only 63 certified tourism businesses in Malaysia that has been awarded (MOTAC, 2019). There are even some states that did not even have any. For a programme that has been run for 8 years, this is still low. Therefore, this study is trying to look into why is this been occurring through the perceptions and satisfactions of the tourism business operators in Malaysia towards MyTQA programme.

1.4 Research Goal

The problem statement has given the researcher a clear understanding on the direction of this research which brings towards the development of the aim of this research as well as its objectives.

1.4.1 Research Aim

The aim of a research is what the researcher is expected to achieve in the end of research where it outlines the focal point of this research. This research is aimed to analyse the perception and satisfaction of tourism business operators toward tourism quality certification in Malaysia particularly the Malaysia Tourism Certification Assurance or MyTQA.

1.4.2 Research Objectives

Research objective is outlined to describe on what is this study is trying to achieve. In other words, it is the accomplishment that this study would like to achieve and hence creates the direction of this study. The research problem for this study has directed this research towards analysing the perception and satisfaction of the tourism business operators in Malaysia towards MyTQA programme that has affected their decisions to obtain the certification.

The objectives of the research are:

- (a) To review the framework of tourism certification and the importance of user perceptions and buy-in.
- (b) To assess the perception of tourism businesses in Malaysia towards MyTQA programme.
- (c) To assess the satisfaction of tourism businesses who have embraced MyTQA programme.

This research begins by diving into the tourism certification framework and looking into its structures and relating it to the importance of user perceptions and buy-in from the tourism business is important towards the success of the programme. This can provide better understanding on how the MyTQA operates and managed. The success of this program relies heavily on to the consistency and readily available to obtain and maintain the certification. Among the aspect includes the application

process and the objective as well as the current rate of acceptance among the tourism business operators. The study is then divided into two main perspectives.

First, the perception of tourism businesses towards MyTQA programme is assessed generally. This covers their awareness and initial thought which is vital in understanding what they have expected before even applying for the program and unravelling the cause for them not to buy-in into the programme. Obtaining the certification is not easy as it involves various stages and plenty of resources just to meet its compliance. Judgements from operators in the industry can affect their perception and overall picture of this program.

Secondly, looking at other perspectives which cover the tourism businesses that have obtained the certification. This can answer the questions towards how they were motivated to obtain the certification and how the programme has helped or otherwise towards their business. It is also crucial to look into the aspect of the benefits that they expected to receive and weighing it with the cost and effort to obtain and maintaining the certification.

1.5 Research Significance

The significance of this research can bring multiplier impact towards the stakeholders in the tourism industry which includes tourists, the government and also the tourism businesses themselves as the MyTQA program will be more diversely implemented. For the tourism businesses, their perception towards MyTQA programme can be identified and this can increase the buy-in towards the program and hence the overall success of this programme. The government who initiated this program can achieve their main objective to ensure the tourism product and services offered in Malaysia achieve the required standards internationally and meeting the tourist demand. In other hand, the tourist trust and confidence towards the tourism products and services in

Malaysia can be increased and therefore the marketing impact towards the destination that ensure the sustainability of the tourism industry.

1.6 Conclusion

This chapter provides the essence of this research where the definitaiton of tourism certification were first described and gives the fundamental understanding on how the program was organised and how the framework were developed and its reason behind its establishment. Then the issues on tourism certification were outlined and transcribed into the basis of understanding on what had occurred and how to resolve the current issues. With that a clear problem statement can be established which serve as the main agenda of this research and the direction it needs to take. The direction was described into the aim and objective of this reseach before supporting the signficance of this reseach where the justification for this research to be conducted was determined.

REFERENCES

- Alwi, M. K. et. al. (2021). Malaysia Tourism Excellence (MaTEx) Business Certification (Adventure Tourism Operator): Enhancement & Sustainability. Malaysia Productivity Corporation.
- Eskildsen, J. K., & Kristensen, K. (2006). Enhancing importance-performance analysis. *International Journal of Productivity and Performance Management*.
- Eraqi, M. I. (2006). Tourism Services Quality (TourServQual) in Egypt: The Viewpoints of External and Internal Customers. *Benchmarking: An International Journal*, Vol. 13, No. 4, pp. 469-492.
- Fournier, S., & Mick, D. G. (1999). Rediscovering satisfaction. *Journal of Marketing*, 63(4), 5. <https://doi.org/10.2307/1251971>
- Foster D. J. (2003). The Customer's Perception of Tourism Accreditation. Centre for Management Quality Research, RMIT University.
- Foster, D. (2000). Ensuring Service Excellence in the Australian Tourism Industry. In *Proceedings of the First International Research Conference of Organizational Excellence in the Third Millennium*, Estes Park, CO.
- Gkoumas, A. (2019). Evaluating a standard for sustainable tourism through the lenses of local industry. *Heliyon*, 5(11). <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.heliyon.2019.e02707>
- Ho, G. W. (2016). Examining perceptions and attitudes. *Western Journal of Nursing Research*, 39(5), 674–689. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0193945916661302>
- Idris, A. (n.d.). Malaysia Tourism Quality Assurance (mytqa). MOTAC. Retrieved January 24, 2022, from <https://www.motac.gov.my/en/services/registration/mytqa>
- Israel, G. D. (1992). Determining sample size.
- Joshi, A., Kale, S., Chandel, S., & Pal, D. (2015). Likert scale: Explored and explained. *British Journal of Applied Science & Technology*, 7(4), 396–403. <https://doi.org/10.9734/bjast/2015/14975>
- Martilla, J. A., & James, J. C. (1977). Importance-performance analysis. *Journal of marketing*, 41(1), 77-79.
- M. Asrori, Psikologi Pembelajaran. Bandung: Wacana Prima, 2009.

- Oh, H. (2001). Revisiting importance–performance analysis. *Tourism management*, 22(6), 617-627.
- O’Neill, M. A., & Palmer, A. (2004). Importance-performance analysis: a useful tool for directing continuous quality improvement in higher education. *Quality assurance in education*.
- Operators praise new criteria. Operators praise new criteria - Tourism New Zealand. (n.d.). Retrieved January 24, 2022, from <https://www.tourismnewzealand.com/tools-for-your-business/qualmark-a-trusted-guide/operators-praise-new-criteria/>
- Shu-Ping Lin , Ya-Hui Chan & Ming-Chun Tsai (2009) A transformation function corresponding to IPA and gap analysis, *Total Quality Management & Business Excellence*, 20:8, 829-846, DOI: 10.1080/14783360903128272
- Skaates, M. A. (2005). Marketing industry. *Encyclopedia of Social Measurement*, 623–631. <https://doi.org/10.1016/b0-12-369398-5/00248-6>
- Walas, Bartłomiej & Celuch, Krzysztof. (2016). Certification in tourism as an element of quality management –theoretical aspects and entrepreneurs’ attitudes. 10.13140/RG.2.1.4431.4489.
- Witchuta Marchoo, Ken Butcher & Mike Watkins (2014) Tour Booking: Do Travelers Respond to Tourism Accreditation and Codes of Ethics Initiatives?, *Journal of Travel & Tourism Marketing*, 31:1, 16-36, DOI: 10.1080/10548408.2014.861699
- W. K. Athula Gnanapala (2015). Tourists Perception and Satisfaction: Implications for Destination Management. *American Journal of Marketing Research* Vol. 1, No. 1, 2015, pp. 7-19
- www.qualmark.co.nz, Q. N. Z. L. T. D. |. (n.d.). Why Qualmark? Qualmark. Retrieved January 24, 2022, from <https://www.qualmark.co.nz/en/learn-about-us/why-qualmark/>