

Changes of city image in Kuala Lumpur

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Abstract. Previous studies on destination image have attempted to capture the differences in destination perceive image between the before and after trips. However, not much study has focused on the during-visit perceived image. This is crucial as to how the tourists actually experience the destination is when they actually visit the destination. The study aims to explore the actual image and image changes at each stage perceived by tourists. A total of 384 international tourists participated in the study involving two stages, using questionnaire and VEP techniques in Kuala Lumpur (KL). Volunteer Employed Photographer (VEP) techniques were used in capturing affective elements of the destination. Finding shows that international tourists perceived KL differently before and during visitation. Before visitation, cognitive and affective images of tourists differed according to their demography, information sources, and travel characteristic. Elements of expenditure and food were dominant in the cognitive images while culture, expenditure, and food were dominant in the affective images perceived by tourists before visiting city. Acknowledging the image changes helps in understanding the tourist preferences and loyalty towards the destination.

1. Introduction

Multiple destinations nowadays are becoming more essential than one individual attraction due to the increase in tourism demand for holidays. As a result, when visiting a destination, tourists always seek more diverse experiences. The common things tourist do when travelling is staying at a hotel, going outside to eat and drink, interconnecting with local people, going shopping, and visiting cultural and historic places and attractions. Thus, it can be observed that a trip is not a single product, but consists of different service components, which are often provided by several organisations with multiple objectives [1]. In order to gain overall destination satisfaction, most importantly, the tourists must be satisfied with all the services they receive at the destination [2]. Tourist overall satisfaction is crucial towards determining their future purchase behaviour because tourists with high satisfaction level usually have a higher intention to revisit the destination. This is because destination image not only influences the destination choice during the tourist decision-making process [3], but also influences the post-decision-making behaviour [4]. Post-decision-making behaviour can involve participation (onsite experience), evaluation (satisfaction), and future behavioural intentions (intention to revisit) [5]. Therefore, in tourism research, images are much more important than tangible resources, where Meng et al [6] mentioned that perceptions, rather than reality, are what motivate consumers to act. However, mismatched images promoted for the actual destination experience can affect the tourism economies in the area since tourist satisfaction and expectation greatly influence tourism business. Identifying the factor that influences tourist behaviour and their decision-making process would lead to a vast amount of information being funneled to local authorities to help them promote their tourism



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destination. A destination image can be interpreted according to three dimensions, which are cognitive, affective, and conative. The combination of these dimensions will form an overall image of the tourism destination, since different types of tourists have different kinds of perceptions towards an attraction.

2. Literature review

2.1. Cities and image

Firstly, large cities are debatably the most crucial type of tourist destination and secondly, tourism acts as a significant component of a large city, especially impacting its economic sector. Travel has grown continuously and rapidly over the past three decades such that visiting cities is now viewed as a reflection of this statement [7]. Nowadays, major urban areas carry out significant functions within the mechanisms of the overall tourism system [8]. Urban tourism can best be understood as the intersection of various related tourism fields. In view of the above, the numerous tourists visiting urban areas have various reasons for visiting a country other than leisure, including visiting friends and relatives, business and conferences events, and shopping. Moreover, local residents and commuters are also significant contributors to tourism, as they are the majority users of attractions and infrastructures in the urban area, which was commonly developed for non-tourism purposes.

This complexity of this phenomenon has triggered many questions and generated interest in the urban tourism context, specifically on the question of who are the actual users of the cities. The increased academic interest in the urban tourism field is related to the growth of tourism in cities [9]. Cities have slowly started to become destinations that tourists want to explore, rather than merely acting as gates or stop-over points to rural and coastal destinations. The growth of tourism demand in the city has made the authorities and governments realise the economic potential of the city to this industry. Tourism strategies of urban renewal and economic development have become popular in many cities around the world [10]. Urban tourism has contributes significantly to the basic economy of a city and also impacts people's activity and city shape [11]. However this trend has also sparked competitions between the big cities around the world. A destination is considered to be competitive enough only if it can attract and satisfy potential tourists. Enright and Newton [12] added that these criteria are determined by tourism-specific factors and by a much wider range of factors that influence tourism service providers.

Image plays a fundamental role in the success of tourist destinations, as it is considered critical to the destination choice [13]. Image provides an identity to the place or destination. The image portrayed by a city could then be perceived by the consumer, for which the tourist can then create a perception towards the destination that will influence their purchase behaviour. The similarity of attractions and activities among the cities around the world makes promoting the most appealing image difficult. Nowadays, strong competitions occur where tourists can freely choose from a wide variety of destinations available, but which often substitutable [14]. So a particular destination needs to identify and differentiate itself from other possibilities in the minds of the target market [15]. A statement by Echtner and Ritchie [16] supports this in that each destination requires their own unique image because a destination must be positively positioned or favourably differentiated from its competition in the minds of the consumers. Research on destination images have been discussed and new ones have been discovered for over three decades. However, in the recent years, academic researchers have been more concerned with capturing and measuring the overall destination image components.

2.2. The tourist perceived image

An image can be defined as the sum of impressions and views that people hold about places. Images symbolise the huge number of relations and bits of information that interact with a place. Fakeye and Crompton [17] define this concept as the overall impression that a tourist has towards a tourism destination. Images are abstract and consist of two types of evaluations, which are the cognitive component related to beliefs [18] and the affective component that covers feelings or emotions [19].

Cognitive can be summed up as perceptions that represent the views and opinions that the tourist embraces about the characteristics and attributes of a certain object or place [20], while affective evaluations comprise the affected feeling and emotions towards these objects or places [21,22]. Current studies also recognise the presence of a third image component, which is the conative image [23]. Conative can be defined as the behavioural action that is reflected from cognitive and affective valuations. Palacio et al [19] highlighted that the combination of those components would eventually form the overall image that reflects a tourist's positive or negative evaluation. It can also be noted that all elements must be acknowledged in their contribution towards better understanding of the overall image of a destination.

When perceiving a thing, the individual will become aware about that thing or start to notice it more. Sometimes, perceiving things involves our senses of sight, hearing, and smell. Plus, an individual's mind can also perceive things, which means that a person will be able to recognise or understand things. One trend that destination image literature has currently taken into consideration is to recognise the differences in the perceived image of a destination. Numerous studies have attempted to examine the differences in perceived image between first-time and repeat visitors [24], ideal and actual images [25], visitors and non-visitors [26], before and after the trip [27], pre-visitors and post-visitors [28], and mega-events [29,30]. Gripsurd et al [31] made an effort to examine whether the Tiananmen Square conflict that happened in June 1989 could have affected China's tourism destination image. They measured the image by comparing images from before and after the event. Their results show that tourists from the USA showed a more negative perception towards China as a tourism destination after the conflict had occurred.

On the other hand, a study by Kim and Morrison [32] on Korea's 2002 FIFA World Cup event showed that the image perceived by tourists could differ according to their socio-demographic profile. Their results reveal that respondents in their 20s, civil servants, and graduate students were the ones that perceived a more positive image of Korea after the mega-event compared to other groups. However, previous studies on identifying destination perceived image during visitation are still limited. Thus, further study in the field of destination image is needed, specifically in the literature of tourist behaviour. This situation can be considered as the demand-side reaction to the image formation process. How the image will actually affect what tourists would do or want to do during their travel is critical in designing the correct image formation of a destination. Thus, it is essential to make a distinction between tourist perception "a priori", perception "in situ", and perception "a posteriori" [33]. The stage of tourist image also better be known as pre-visit, during-visit and post-visit perceived image.

3. Research method

Quantitative research design was employed for the study, relying on VEP technique and questionnaire. Descriptive research approach were applied in the study to comprehensively understand the destination image characteristics. The study focuses on capturing the real images perceived by tourists in Kuala Lumpur Business District (KLBD). Quantitative method were used to measure the overall destination image perceived by the tourists. Two instruments were used to capture the real-time images perceived by tourists consisting of Volunteer Employed Photography (VEP) and questionnaire. 384 international tourists were chosen as the respondents. The actual data collection is conducted at the Kuala Lumpur Urban Rail Systems involving nine stations which are determined during the pilot survey. The survey process involves two stages to acquire two different types of data including tourist preference (cognitive image and conative image) and tourist experience (affective image). The data collected using questionnaire were analysed through several descriptive and statistical analysis method. The photos acquired using VEP technique were analysed using 'supplemental photo analysis' in the context of manifest and latent content as indicated in Table 1.

Table 1. Categories of manifest and latent content perceived by respondent.

Manifest and Latent Content	Description	
Manifest Content	Place	Image contains street name or landmark of a place
	People	Image contains crowds
	Food	Image contains food and beverages
	Shopping	Image contains shopping activities
	Architecture	Image contains iconic buildings or facades
	Culture	Image contains cultural activities—either religious or racial
	Fun	Image contains activities done in groups
	Transports and Infra	Image contains transportation networks and infrastructure
	Recreation	Image contains greenery and scenic landscapes
	Exciting	Emotion done in group- (fun)
Latent Content	Festive	Emotion towards a place or activity- (place, cultural)
	Crowd	Positive emotion towards crowds- (people)
	Majestic	Emotion towards a building or facade- (architecture)
	Active	Highest positive emotion towards activities- (shopping, food)
	Beautiful	Emotion towards the landscape of a place- (recreation)
	Unique	Emotion towards place, building or activities- (architecture, cultural)
	Comfortable	Emotion towards place and services- (recreation, transport and infra)
	Hectic	Negative emotion towards crowds- (people)
	Frustration	Negative emotion towards services- (transport and infra)
	Dirty	Negative emotion towards services and places- (food, place)
Unsafe	Negative emotion towards a place- (place)	

4. Analysis and results

4.1. Respondents' profile

The overall profiles of international tourists were based on the socio-demographic, travel characteristics, perceived cognitive image, motivation to visit, preferred attraction place, and the positive and negative images of KLBD. These results are based on a survey of 384 respondents. The demographic and travel characteristic is shown in detail Table 2. The images of KLBD were captured by respondents using VEP technique.

Table 2. Respondents' profile.

Characteristics	Frequency	Percentage (%)	
Type of Tourist	First-Time Tourist	144	37.5
	Repeat Tourist	240	62.5
Gender	Male	252	65.6
	Female	132	34.4
Travel Companion	Alone	163	42.4
	Partner	134	34.9
	Business Partner	29	7.6
	Friends and Relatives	58	15.1
Age Group	21–30 years old	171	44.5
	31–40 years old	135	35.2
	41–50 years old	69	18.0
	>50 years old	9	2.3
Country (Region)	Europe	179	46.6
	Americas	58	15.1
	Asia	28	7.3
	Middle East	27	7.0
	Oceania	92	24.0

4.2. Pre-visit perceived image by respondents

4.2.1. *Cognitive image.* Twelve elements of the cognitive image of an urban destination were incorporated in the questions given to the respondents using the 5-point Likert Scale. Table 3 shows the means score of respondent's cognitive image toward KLBD. Based on the twelve elements, the

cognitive image or knowledge of respondents about Kuala Lumpur is that “It is a destination that offers higher possibilities of shopping” with the highest mean out of all the other elements (mean=4.49), followed by “A destination that has diverse offerings of local cuisine” (mean=4.45) and “It is a destination that can easily be reached” (mean=4.42). Since the Internet is the main source of information for the respondents about Kuala Lumpur, the cognitive image perceived by respondents towards KLBD is totally shaped by Tourism Malaysia’s marketing website where shopping and food gastronomic experience are listed as the top activities that can be done in KLBD. Besides that, the higher number of repeated tourists (62.5%) that become the respondents of the study also contribute to the justification why such image popular in the mind of the respondents since they already has a past experience in Kuala Lumpur.

Table 3. Mean score of respondents’ cognitive image towards Kuala Lumpur.

Element of Cognitive Image in Urban Destination	Frequency (N=384)	
	Mean	Rank
Higher possibilities for shopping.	4.49	1
The diverse offer of local cuisine.	4.45	2
The destination can be easily reached.	4.42	3
Friendliness of the local people	4.41	4
Good overall cleanliness of the destination	4.35	5
Good organisation of the local transportation services.	4.32	6
Good personal safety and security	4.25	7
Diversity of cultural/historical attraction (Architecture, tradition and custom, cultural and etc.)	4.19	8
Good quality of the accommodation (hotel, motel, apartment and etc.)	4.07	9
Night life and entertainment	3.84	10
Pleasant climate conditions.	3.60	11
Higher opportunity for rest.	3.35	12

4.2.2. *Affective image.* Table 4 shows the mean score of 384 respondents in regard to their motive for making the decision to travel to KLBD. Although motivation is explain through push and pull factors, the study only acknowledge the pull factors of motivation since the pull factor represent the image of Kuala Lumpur in influencing the travel decision. The mean score shows that more than half of the respondents stated that ‘culture’ (n=234) was the main motivation for their coming to Kuala Lumpur. ‘shopping’ (n=192), ‘food’ (n=160), and ‘affordable tourist destination’ motives were next, all of which were the top motivation when respondents decided to visit Kuala Lumpur. These results show a difference in respondent perceived image when it comes to the cognitive image and affective image of KLBD.

Table 4. Mean score of respondents’ motivations towards Kuala Lumpur.

Motivation Towards Destination	Frequency (N=384)			
	N	Mean	Rank	%
Culture	234	0.61	1	60.9
Shopping	192	0.50	2	50.0
Food	160	0.42	3	41.7
Affordable Tourist Destination	148	0.39	4	38.5
Fun/Entertainment	88	0.23	5	22.9
Unique Atmosphere	30	0.08	6	7.8
Recreation and Landscape	18	0.05	7	4.7

4.3. During-visit perceived image by respondents

4.3.1. Manifest content. The manifest content of photos taken by the respondents using VEP technique can also be referred as the cognitive image, where Chaudhary [27] suggested that perceptual or cognitive quality refers to the evaluation of physical features of environments, while the affective meaning refers to the evaluation of the emotion stimulated by these environments. Table 5 shows the score of manifest content perceived by respondents when experiencing KLBD. The photos taken by the respondents are mostly images of a certain place where 31.70% (n=2281) out of 7,196 photos were a type of attraction in KLBD. This is followed by 18.40% (n=1324) of images of crowds, 12.94% (n=931) of images of food and beverages, and 11.31% (n=814) of images of respondents shopping. On the other hand, an image that showed 'fun', 'transportation and infrastructure' and 'recreational' activities were among the fewer images the respondents took when experiencing Kuala Lumpur. A photo of a Manifest Place is a photo taken by the respondents that clearly shows a sign or landmark of a place without involving any kind of specific activities. This category reflects the place of attractions available in Kuala Lumpur but shows no specific activities.

Table 5. Score of manifest content in the photos taken in Kuala Lumpur.

Content of Photo Taken by Tourist during Visit	Frequency (N=7,196)			
	N	Mean	Rank	%
Manifest Place	2281	5.94	1	31.70
Manifest People	1324	3.45	2	18.40
Manifest Food	931	2.42	3	12.94
Manifest Shopping	814	2.12	4	11.31
Manifest Architecture	762	1.98	5	10.59
Manifest Culture	463	1.21	6	6.43
Manifest Fun	289	0.75	7	4.02
Manifest Transport and Infrastructure	169	0.44	8	2.35
Manifest Recreation	163	0.42	9	2.27

4.3.2. Latent content. Each of the photos taken has manifest and latent content. As opposed to manifest content that can clearly be seen on the surface of the photos captured by respondents during visitation, latent content is hidden within the photo. The latent content of photos can also be referred to as the affective image perceived by respondents during their visit of KLBD. From the total 7,196 photos the respondents took during their visit to KLBD, Table 6 illustrates the latent content of photos captured in KLBD. Based on the results, there are 12 latent content variables that were considered in the photos captured by the respondents. The highest latent content of photos captured in KLBD was the latent content indicating festive emotions, making up to 34.05% (n=2450) of the total photos taken. The latent content triggering festive emotions occurred in particular places or activities, which showed a joyful and merry environment. In the case of KLBD, images that represent latent content are images that show manifest content of place and cultural activities. Since Manifest Place is the majority manifest content of the photos, Latent Festive also indirectly becomes dominant in the latent content of these type of photos.

'Active' latent content comes second with 23.75% (n=1709) of the photos taken, followed by Latent Crowd 15.72% (n=1131), Latent Majestic 7.68% (n=553), Latent Exciting 4.77% (n=343), Latent Unique 4.73% (n=340), Latent Comfortable 2.69% (n=194), Latent Hectic 2.49% (n=179), Latent Unsafe 1.28% (n=92), Latent Beautiful 1.18% (n=85), Latent Dirty 0.94% (n=68), and Latent Frustration representing 0.74% (n=53) of the total photos captured by the respondents. Latent Active is an emotion that involves high levels of active emotions with positive attitude. It basically refers to the highest active emotion when an individual perceives something. In KLBD, shopping and food experience are activities that respondents do that showed the highest level of active emotion. Due to that, images that represent Manifest Shopping and Manifest Food are also images that represent Latent Active.

Table 6. Score of latent content in photo taken at Kuala Lumpur.

Content of Photo Taken by Tourist during Visit	N	Frequency (N=7,196)		
		Mean	Rank	%
Latent Festive	2450	6.38	1	34.05
Latent Active	1709	4.45	2	23.75
Latent Crowd	1131	2.95	3	15.72
Latent Majestic	553	1.44	4	7.68
Latent Exciting	343	0.89	5	4.77
Latent Unique	340	0.89	6	4.73
Latent Comfortable	194	0.51	7	2.69
Latent Hectic	179	0.47	8	2.49
Latent Unsafe	92	0.24	9	1.28
Latent Beautiful	85	0.22	10	1.18
Latent Dirty	68	0.18	11	0.94
Latent Frustration	53	0.14	12	0.74

5. Discussion

Based on the findings, there are differences on how respondents perceive KLBD before and during their visitation. Figure 1 shows the changes in the images of KLBD, as perceived by respondents before and during their visitation. In the context of this research, the variable of 'easy to reach' and 'cleanliness' also refer to the place of attraction since these variables are mostly shown in photos of Manifest Place when respondents experience the city. Additionally, the variable of 'friendliness' is closely related to the hospitality of individuals. So, this variable can be recognised in Manifest People type of photos, which show images of people in KLBD. Looking at the cognitive element of Kuala Lumpur image before and during visit, respondents' perceived image changed positively by 40.5%. Respondents' cognitive perception of KLBD as a shopping destination increased from 9% (pre) to 11.3% (during), an increase of 2.3%. For food variables, respondents' cognitive perception increased from 8.9% (pre) to 12.9% (during), an increment of 4%.

'Easy to reach' and 'cleanliness' variables are also recognised as a Place. These show an increase of 14.1% from 17.6% (pre) to 31.7% (during). The variables of 'friendliness' or People also recorded an increment of 9.5% from 8.9% (pre) to 18.4% (during). Not only that, variables that were previously not at the top of respondent cognitive attributes towards KLBD shifted to top place and this is the Architecture variable. However, during the visit, the image of architecture made up 10.6% of total images recorded, an increase of 10.6%. Based on the result, the image that respondents perceived in their mind before the visitation plays an important role that influences their expectation and satisfaction. This is because respondent's action as they try to do all the activities during visitation of Kuala Lumpur is based on the image they had before they arrived.

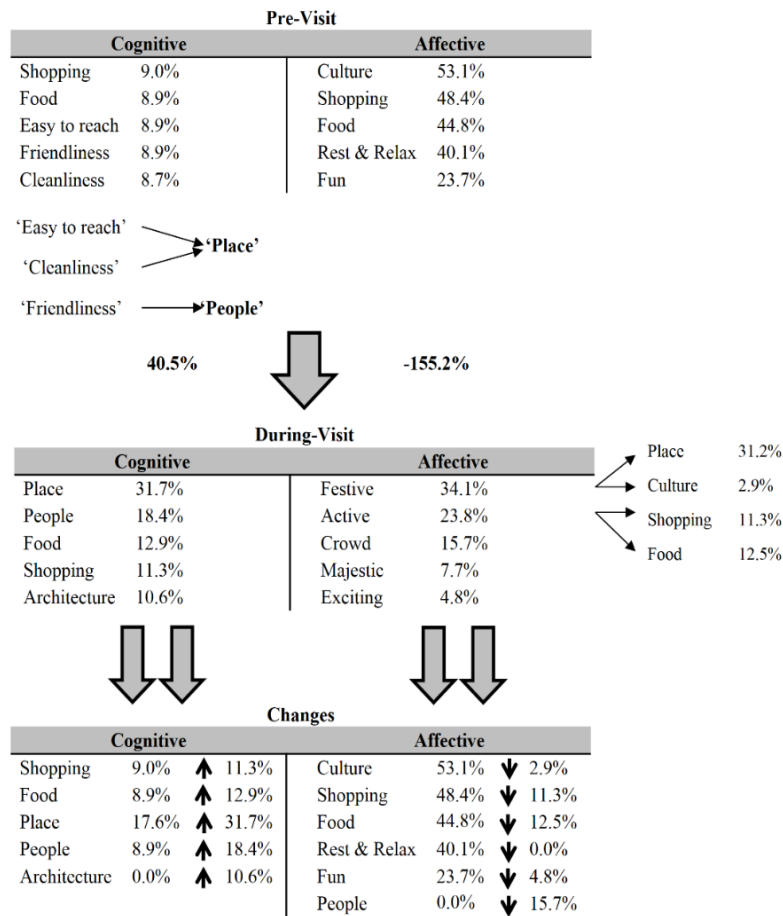


Figure 1. Changes in tourist perceived image towards Kuala Lumpur.

In contrast, affective elements of Kuala Lumpur’s image show massive changes where tourists affectively perceived KLBD differently between their before and during visitation of the city. The changes between respondents’ perceived image from the view of affective elements before and during the visit showed a negative change of -155.2%. The variable of culture showed the highest decrement of 50.2% from 53.1% (pre) to only 2.9% (during). Another variable that showed a high decrement is shopping (37.1%), where previously 48.4% of respondents were motivated to do shopping activities before the visit but only 11.3% actually did some shopping activities during the visit. The food variable also showed a decrease between the images perceived before and during the respondents’ visit. Before the visit, the respondents were motivated to join food activities (44.8%), and this changed into 12.5% during the visitation, which is a 32.3% decrease.

The ‘unique atmosphere’ variable is also amongst the variables that showed a high decrement. Before the visit, 40.1% of the respondents made ‘unique atmosphere’ as their main motive for coming to Kuala Lumpur, which then changed during their visitation where none of the images taken showed those activities. However, there are also variables that show an increment when respondents perceived KLBD affectively before and during the visit. Variables of people and architecture showed an increment where both of these variables were previously not at the top of the motive list before the visit but during the visit, an additional 15.7% and 7.7%, were recorded, respectively. Based on this result, it can be clarified that affective elements of an image are highly influenced by cognitive elements since the image that respondents perceive during the visit are mostly reflective of the cognitive elements of the pre-visit image.

However, the huge change or decrement in the affective elements of images between and during visit has not marked Kuala Lumpur as a definitely negative destination. Referring to the respondent’s post-image, the feedback on destination satisfaction, recommendation, and loyalty (conative elements) towards KLBD showed a very positive attitude. The highly positive attitude clarifies that although KLBD has faced huge changes with perceived image before and during visit, the after-visit image showed that the respondents are pleased with the changes that occurred during visitation. Taking into account respondents’ perceived image of KLBD before, during, and after the visits, it can be said that the image that the respondents perceived during the visitation is the actual image of KLBD.

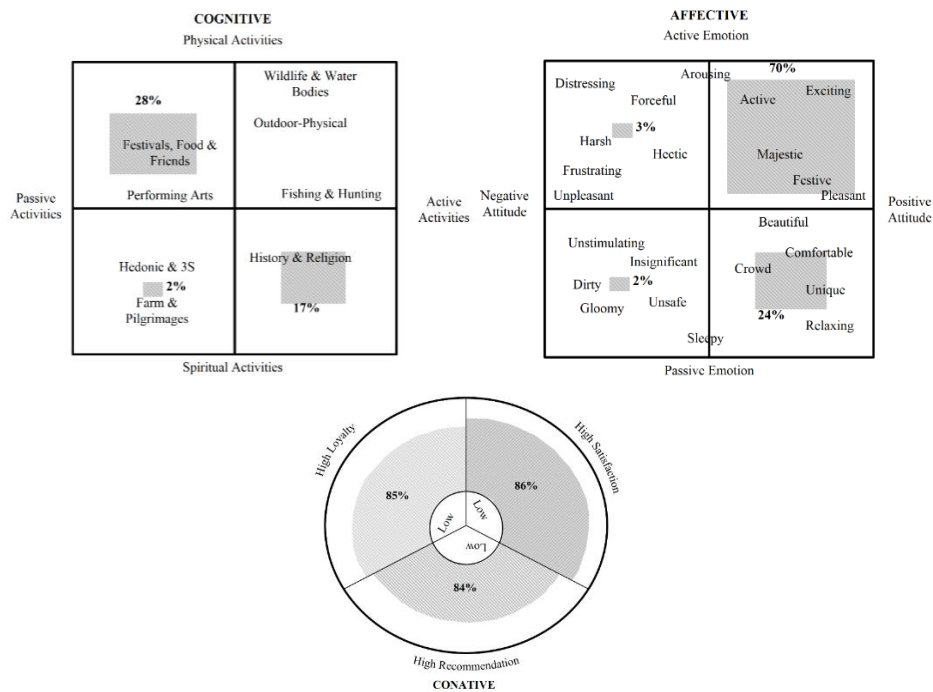


Figure 2. Kuala Lumpur’s actual image as an urban tourism.

Figure 2 illustrates the actual image of KLBD as perceived by the respondents, which consists of the cognitive, affective, and conative elements of the destination image. The overall evaluation of tourist perceived image before, during, and after visitation shows that KLBD is a destination that offers mainly passive and active activities with physical attributes (cognitive) that triggers positive and negative attitudes. KLBD is also perceived as a destination that generates active emotions (affective) and high destination satisfaction, recommendation, and loyalty.

6. Implications and further research

The findings revealed in this study also contribute to the practical implications of the process of image making and destination marketing for tourism authorities and stakeholders in Kuala Lumpur. The most significant practical implication that can be found in this study is the identification of the actual image of Kuala Lumpur perceived by tourists, which helps in promoting an accurate tourism image. This study also shows that different tourist segments have different needs and preferences, which leads to different perceived images of the destination. Moreover, the findings indicate that Kuala Lumpur’s tourism authorities and marketers need to create specific destination images that can attract different tourist groups according to their socio-demographic profiles and travel characteristics.

For example, the repeat tourist is a segment that must not be neglected since this group of tourists perceives Kuala Lumpur positively from the beginning of the visit, during the visit, and even after the visit. With a positive attitude towards the destination, this group of tourist is more satisfied with the

destination, has more possibility of recommending the destination to friends and family, as well as has a higher intention to re-visit the destination compared to first-timers. Although repeat tourists do not perceive Kuala Lumpur differently than the first-time tourists when visiting the city, the higher positive attitude of repeat tourists indicate that they are indeed a promising segment. Basically, intention to revisit the destination can be divide into two cases where 'repeat activities' or 'unfinished activities'.

If a repeat tourists coming back to Kuala Lumpur to experience the same activities that they consume in the previous visit, these segment of tourist can be acknowledge as special interest tourist where tourism marketers should promote an image and packages that has higher intensity of that interested activities. On the other hand, if the repeat tourists revisit Kuala Lumpur due to unfinished visitation from the previous visit, tourism marketers still can use the image or packages which are same in attracting the first-time tourist. Based on the overall findings, it is clear that to promote an accurate image with high destination satisfaction, high recommendation, as well as high destination loyalty, several perspectives of the destination image that represent the destination is needed compared to only one image. Therefore, if Kuala Lumpur wants to become the top urban tourism destination in the world, KLCH as the responsible authority, should formulate a variety of Kuala Lumpur images, which can attract the appropriate tourist segments.

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