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PROFILING THE SATISFACTION OF TOURISTS VISITING MABUL ISLAND AS A TOURIST DESTINATION BASED ON DEMOGRAPHIC FACTORS

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Abstract:

The study aims to examine whether the satisfaction of the tourists in visiting Mabul Island as a tourist destination can be influence by demographic variables. The study involves primary data collection where questionnaire was used as the instrument to collect information. The questionnaire was distributed both physically in the island and also through Google Form. The questionnaire was distributed to 169 respondents selected through nonprobability sampling, purposive sampling method. The questionnaire was divided into 2 sections. The first section enquires information on the demography of the respondents. Section 2 measures the satisfaction of the tourists. The satisfaction was measured using 5 dimensions. The information was analysed using descriptive and inferential statistics. The result revealed that the profiling the satisfaction of tourists in choosing Mabul Island as a tourist destination were insignificant based on the demographic variables.

Keywords:

Demographic Variables, Satisfaction, Tourists Destination, Promotion, Market Segmentation.

Background of Study

Mabul island is one of the small islands located a few kilometres away from the mainland of the coastal town called Semporna. It is at a tropical marine water called Coral Triangle. This means it is located between three countries, Malaysia, Indonesia and Philippines. It is recognised as a global centre for marine biodiversity by World Wildlife Fund (WWF) organisation. The island is also referred as Amazons of the Sea. It only takes an individual to walk for 15 minutes from one end to the other in the island. The island is 26 hectares on the reef. The island is surrounded by one of the richest underwater ecosystems in the world. It has many rare and endangered species that can only be found in this area. It's clear water and sun-drenched beaches makes it an ideal location for vacation. Thus, it cannot be denied that the geographical location of Mabul Island itself provides the niche in this island-based tourism. Mabul Island has two views. One view is the view that is usually used to promote island as a tourist destination for divers. There are dive resorts located in the area making it a complement to the diving experience that aimed to be promoted by the government or tour operators. The other side of the island is the large floating village that extends from the shoreline. It is known as the Suluk Village. The Suluk Village is the largest village compared to the two village in the island. The village is said to be occupied by the illegal immigrants.

Starting with only 130 people, currently Mabul has more than 3,000 residents. The number keeps changing because the residents always ccommute from the Southern Philippines to Mabul. There are three distinct ethnic groups in the village, namely Bajau Laut, Bajau Darat or Bajau Semporna and Suluk. Each community speaks a different language and has its own set of customs and ceremonies. Most of the people in the community are Suluk (Tausug) from the southern Philippines. They are Muslims, and they usually live near the coast. Some of them build their homes on stilts on the water, while the others build them on land. Primary education was the highest level of education attained by the Suluks in 2015. This is due to the fact that they do not have identification card and there is no secondary school on the island. To obtain secondary level education, the children must travel by boat to a nearby island known as Bum-Bum or to Semporna town itself. 28% from the total population in Mabul island (3145) is Malaysian citizens with identification documents, while the remainder is non-Malaysian citizens, who could be refugees from the southern Philippine islands or sea gypsy people who have settled in Celebes waters. In terms of age distribution, Mabul island's population is dominated by those under the age of 30, who account for more than 75% of the total population. In terms of gender distribution, the percentage of males and females is nearly equal. According to the 2010 census statistics, the household income is around RM482 and the number of dwellings is 504, but interviews with the Village Head revealed that the number of dwellings has increased to 582 houses, an increase of 8.6% over a 12-year period. Most Suluk and Bajau islanders work as fishermen, earning around RM500-RM600 per month, and the value of formal education is not instilled due to financial difficulties in the family and a lack of proper identification documents, making it more difficult for them to obtain a formal secondary education. They are unable to find well-paying jobs in the island's tourism industry. As a result, despite their skill in craft and construction in building homes, resorts, and chalets, as well as boats, the primary source of income for the islanders is the capture of marine fisheries.

Some of the women support their families by washing clothes and running a small shop that sells necessities. The shops were built with the intention of cultivating an entrepreneurial culture in order to increase the sustainability of women on the island. TEKUN provided the start-up capital for the business. Unfortunately, the shops that these women have opened are

not appealing, and the products they sell are not distinguishable from one another. The product they sell lacks both innovation and creativity. It appears that they are involved in the shop's opening solely to inform the authorities that the start-up capital provided by TEKUN was used as specified. It cannot be denied that not all women would have received the start-up capital, but only those with the appropriate identification document.

Not to mention the sea gipsies, also known as Bajau Laut nomads, who live on the sea. These sea gipsies make a living by capturing marine produce such as fish, prawns, crabs, mussels, and lobsters. They usually sell these items to make some money. Their entire lives are riding on the rickety wooden boat. If they leave the waters, they become land sick.

The tourist's inflow both domestic and international increased dramatically to Mabul island. Mabul island is chosen as a tourist destination due to its nature which is enriched by the beautiful beaches and the marine life. The influx of tourists brings sustainable income for the local community, tourism business owners as well as the local government, the satisfaction of the tourists should be given utmost importance. Tourists satisfaction is important for successful destination marketing because it influences the choice of destination, the consumption of products and services and the decision to return. Satisfaction in the context of tourism is basically the comparison of the customer's expectation before and after consumption of a product or service. Tourists profiling can be useful to help predict tourists behaviour, their choice of holiday or destination and their ways of experiencing the destination. Demography is the most important external factor that will shape the future of the tourism. Current demographic trends will change the demand for tourism and the available workforces which will fundamentally impact on how the industries are structured, how they operate and how they develop in a sustainable manner. Since demography is the key to business today, it is essential that the effort for profiling will help to identify the individual members of consumer by selecting the key characteristics, wants and needs. This will help the tourism business owners to tailor their efforts based on particular segments of their customer base. A demographic refers to distinct characteristics of a population. Researchers use demographic profiling or analysis to analyze whole societies or just groups of people. Some examples of demographics are age, gender, education, nationality, ethnicity and religion. In marketing, demographics are used for customer segmentation. Targeting specific groups of customers enables more efficient allocation of marketing resources and increase opportunities for cross and up selling. Therefore this study aimed to segment the customers that choose Mabul island as a tourist destination based on demographic analysis on their satisfaction of visiting Mabul island.

Obejctives of The Study
The study aims to examine the demographic profiling on the satisfaction of the tourists in visiting Mabul Island as a tourist destination. The specific objective was to determine whether demographic variables (age, gender, level of education, income, job sector, type of occupation and the state of origin or residence) have a significant difference in tourists satisfaction in choosing Mabul island as a tourist destination.

Literature Review
Satisfaction of tourists plays an important role in the success of tourism destination marketing. This is because it influences the choices on returning to the destination, consumption pattern for goods and services in the location and the choice of the destination itself. Tourists satisfaction can touch five important elements, the access (road conditions), the natural

attraction, the cost for visiting the destination, the infrastructure like clean water, proper waste disposal management, accommodation, electricity and last but not least the artificial attraction that covers mall, cinema, handicraft and so on. Researchers claim that discontent takes place when the customers expectation does not meet the real quality of service provided.

Demographic characteristics are one of the crucial factors in analysing tourists satisfaction. First, gender seems to be an important feature in tourism research. Some studies indicated that gender does not significantly influence tourists satisfaction but for others the findings seems to reveal otherwise. Second is age. Age reflects the experience, physical fitness, taste and preference, attachment and interest and the level of activity. A significant amount of studies also indicated that age does not influence tourists satisfaction. Third, level of education. Level of education helps to increase the tendencies to travel and the number of trips. Many studies have shown that the level of education has a significant influence on tourists satisfaction. It influences the very satisfied and the least satisfied. Marital status was also found to influence tourists satisfaction. This was followed by the employment status. Employment status influences the time preferred to travel and the traveling experience.

Among the demographic variables, the common demographic variables found to have a significant impact were marital status, age and the state of residence. Marital status was found to be an important element because it helps to design the promotional package of the vacation for the tourists. Marital status indirectly defines the type of accommodation needed and the facilities required to support the family. It must be convenient but also affordable for the family to choose the destination. The activities that support the core experience must be catered to family based activities. Similarly, age also determines the type of activities preferred by the customers. Senior customers would prefer a serene environment where they indulge themselves in the beauty of the surroundings. In contrast for a younger customer, activities that are adventurous and challenging are preferred. State of residence do play an important role too. This is especially the case during pandemics where restriction is imposed in human mobility. Thus the destination is usually chosen by the residence from the state where the tourists destination is located. State of residence can also influence the level of satisfaction where the tourists comes from a state that has the same characteristics as the destination spot. Psychologically a comparison will be made. If the tourists comes from an island, he or she will start making comparison with the tourist destination which is also an island.

The destination image refers to the impression the tourists perceive at a psychological level. The impression will influence the tourists to have a preconceived expectation and prompt them to consider them to revisit the destination. Researchers claim that tourist destination has three components. First is the intangible asset that comprise of the core experience the tourists gain from the nature, physical environment, historical and cultural environment. Second, the services and the facilities provided by the environment like restaurant, entertainment and so on. Third is the human related factors like the friendliness of the residence at the location, evaluation of the local goods and services.

Methodology
The targeted population of the study was the tourists who chooses Mabul island as their tourist destination. It comprised both domestic or local tourists and international tourists. A sample of 169 tourists were chosen through purposive sampling who were in vacation at the island and also through social media for those who have visited the island for the last 5 years.

Questionnaire was used as the instrument to collect the information. The questionnaire consists of two sections. Section A enquired the information on the age, gender, education, income, state of origin, occupation and job sector. Section B questioned the satisfaction of the tourists from visiting Mabul island as a tourist destination. The response for the satisfaction was measured using Likert scale from 1 to 5. 1 represent strongly disagree, 2 was disagree, 3 was neutral, 4 represent agree and 5 was strongly agree. The dimensions of the tourists satisfaction were experience and perception, services provided, information and communication, ethics and professionalism and sustainable practices. Descriptive analysis in the form of frequencies and percentage were used to display the trend and the composition of the tourists based on the categories defined in each demographic variable. The data was further analyzed using the ANOVA test. The mean differences between the categories define for each demographic variables towards the satisfaction of the tourists were analysed with this inferential Statistics. If the mean differences did exists between the groups, thus the tourists can be segmented according to the demographic classification.

Demographic profiling of the tourists on the satisfaction of visiting Mabul Island from various stakeholders helps to separate the tourists into various segments. The segmentation will help the marketers to identify characteristics of tourist that frequently visits Mabul in terms of their age, gender, job sector, occupation, education, income and the state of residence to determine the appropriate marketing channels to use to deliver the information and promote the destination.

Findings

Gender
There are 5 dimensions used in this research to measure the satisfaction of the tourists, perspective and experience encountered by the tourists, services provided by the villagers, tour operators and other service providers, information and communications delivered to the tourists, ethics and professionalism shown by the service providers and finally the sustainable practices implemented by the service providers. Based on gender, the female tourists seems to have a greater agreement on the satisfaction obtained through experience and perception (4.0251) compared to the male tourists (3.9110). Similar situation can be seen for the sustainable practices, where the female tourists have a greater agreement on the satisfaction obtained from sustainable practices in Mabul Island (4.0056) compared to male tourists (3.9708). In all other dimensions, the Male tourist seems to be more agreeable compared to the female tourists for service provided (Male: 3.8993, Female: 3.8696), information and communication (Male: 3.9194, Female: 3.7401) and ethics and professionalism (Male: 3.9124, Female: 3.8759) that provided them the satisfaction as a tourists. This indicates that female tourists are more concern on the experience and the sustainable practices in conserving and preserving the environment compared to male tourists. But the male tourists are more focused in the services provided, information and communication from the service providers and also the ethics and professionalism. No doubt the preferences differ on the dimensions that provide them the satisfaction of Mabul as a tourist destination but the mean differences are very small and seems to be insignificant.

Table 1 Shows the F Statistic Values Whether Gender Can Influence the Dimensions of Satisfaction Where Visiting Mabul Island as Tourist Destination.

Dimensions to measure whether Mabul Island is a tourist destination	F statistics	Significance	t value	df	Significance (two tail)
Perception and Experience	0.233	0.630	-1.603	167	0.289
			-1.806	166.970	0.279
Service Provided	1.165	0.282	0.302	167	0.763
			0.306	166.04	0.760
Information and Communication	0.054	0.817	1.897	167	0.060
			1.892	158.638	0.060
Ethics and professionalism	0.010	0.919	0.359	167	0.0365
			0.360	161.731	0.0365
Sustainable practices	0.010	0.919	-0.315	167	0.0348
			-0.311	150.284	0.0348

Table 1 shows whether gender, male or female has a significance difference for each dimensions in providing the satisfaction of visiting Mabul Island as a tourist destination from the perspective of tourists. All the dimensions has an estimated F Statistics which was lower than the critical value of F Statistics. This means gender whether male or female was insignificant in influencing the satisfaction of visiting Mabul Island as a tourist destination. Gender was insignificant in influencing the dimensions [Perception and experience (F=0.233, Sig=0.630), service provided (F=1.165, Sig=0.282), information and communication (F=0.054, Sig =0.817), ethics and professionalism (F=0.010, Sig=0.919) and sustainable practices (F=0.010, Sig=0.919) in accepting Mabul Island as tourist destination preferred by tourists at 5% significance level.

Age

Age was distinguished into 3 categories, 30 years old and less, 31 to 40 years old and 41 to 50 years old. Around 41.42% of the tourists belong to 30 years old and below. Followed by the age category of 31 to 40 years old(38.46%) and finally 41 to 50 years old with 20.11%. The means score for the age group of 41 to 50 years old (4.0882) was greater than 31 to 40 years old (3.9832) and 30 years old and less (3.8818). Thus the older age category of tourists seem to agree that perception and experience is the vital part that influences their satisfaction. Similar situation can be seen for the service provided. The age category of 41 to 50 years old agree (3.9679) that quality services were provided to them compared to those in the age category of 31 to 40 years old (3.8853) and for those who belong to 30 years old and less (3.8468). The older tourists that belong to age category of 41 to 50 years old also stressed that they agree the sustainable practices were implemented by the tour operators in Mabul Island in comparison to 31 to 40 years old (4.0066) and tourists who belong to 30 years and less (3.8755) influenced the satisfaction of tourists in Mabul Island. In addition information and communication from the service provided were perceived to be effective by those between 41 to 50 years old (3.9485). Those in the age category of 31 to 40 years old and those whose age was 30 years old and less with a mean value of 3.8462 and 3.7786 respectively. In contrast the higher age category seem to think otherwise for ethical and professionalism The age category between 31 to 40 years old seems to be more agreeable (3.9758) that the personnel

were ethical and professional compared to age category 41 to 50 years old (3.8739) and those tourists who were 30 years old and less (3.8327). Thus it can be concluded that the older the tourists the greater they perceive the experience, services provided, information and communication, and sustainable practices makes Mabul Island a preferable tourist destination. But the means differences between the age categories were not much. Thus, the ANOVA test conducted confirms that the estimated F Statistics for all the dimensions were less than the critical value of F. (Refer to Table 2) Thus it can be concluded that age of the tourists does not significantly influence the satisfaction of visiting Mabul Island.

Table 2 Shows Whether Age of the Tourists Can Influence the 5 Dimensions Used to Measure the Satisfaction of Visiting Mabul Island as Tourists' Destination.

Dimensions to measure whether Mabul Island is a tourist destination	F statistics	Significance
Perception and Experience	1.059	0.349
Service Provided	0.414	0.662
Information and Communication	0.878	0.417
Ethics and professionalism	0.828	0.439
Sustainable practices	2.112	0.124

Job Sector

Table 3 Shows Whether Job Sector Influences the 5 Dimensions Used to Measure The Satisfaction of The Tourist Visiting Mabul Island.

Dimensions to measure whether Mabul Island is a tourist destination	F statistics	Significance
Perception and Experience	0.936	0.375
Service Provided	1.179	0.310
Information and Communication	0.069	0.933
Ethics and professionalism	0.162	0.851
Sustainable practices	0.239	0.787

Table 3 shows the estimated F Statistics values to determine whether job sector influences the satisfaction of the tourists visiting Mabul Island. The job sector in the study was divided into

government, private and others. The estimated F Statistics were found to be less than the critical value of F at 5 percent significance level. Thus, it can be concluded that it does not matter whether the tourists works with government, private or other sectors. Their job sectors where they work does not influence the satisfaction of visiting Mabul Island. Based on percentage 46.7% of the tourists worked for government, 46.7% worked in the private sector and another 6.6% worked in the category of others. Thus, it can be concluded the satisfaction obtain in visiting Mabul Island was not influence by the sector the tourist worked.

Type of Occupation

Table 4 Shows Whether the Type of Occupation Can Influence the 5 Dimensions to Measure the Satisfaction of the Tourists Visiting Mabul Island.

Dimensions to measure whether Mabul Island is a tourist destination	F statistics	Significance
Perception and Experience	0.453	0.842
Service Provided	1.071	0.382
Information and Communication	0.553	0.767
Ethics and professionalism	0.453	0.842
Sustainable practices	0.507	0.802

Table 4 shows whether the type of occupation can influence the 5 dimensions used to measure the satisfaction of the tourists visiting Mabul Island. The type of occupations included in the questionnaire were professionals, business owners, employees working at the management level, students, retired employees, homemakers and others. 29.58% of the tourist who answered the questionnaire worked as professionals, 12.42% were business owners, 37.86% were employees working at the management level, 7.1% were students and 1.7% were respectively retirees and also homemakers. Finally, 9.46% of the respondents occupation was other than those listed in the questionnaire. The estimated F statistics value were found to be less than the critical value of F at 5 percent significant level. Therefore, it can be concluded that the type of occupation does not influence the satisfaction of the tourists in Mabul Island which was measured using 5 dimensions.

State of Residence

Table 5 Shows Whether The State of Residence Influences the 5 Dimensions Used to Measure the Satisfaction of the Tourists Visiting Mabul Island.

Dimensions to measure whether Mabul Island is a tourist destination	F statistics	Significance
Perception and Experience	2.323	0.011
Service Provided	1.365	0.194
Information and Communication	0.962	0.484
Ethics and professionalism	1.115	0.353
Sustainable practices	1.789	0.060

Table 5 shows whether the tourists state of residence can influence the 5 dimension used in measuring the satisfaction of the tourists visiting Mabul Island. Based on the 169 tourists that was interviewed, majority of the tourists were Sabahans (66.27%). This could be due to the pandemic that restricted movement between states during the study. Tourists from Selangor consists of 12.42%. 6.5% of the tourists came from Kuala Lumpur meanwhile tourists that originated from Johor and Melaka were 3.5% from each state. No doubt Sarawak was nearer to Sabah but the number of tourists that originated from Sarawak were only 2.3%. Tourists from the state of Labuan, Negeri Sembilan and Kedah were only 1.1% each. In addition tourists from Kelantan and Penang only comprise of 0.59% each. The distribution of tourists from various states only in Malaysia was due to the movement control order and also the standard operating procedure that restricts tourists to move from one state to the other. There was only one foreign tourists (0.59%). To determine whether the tourists state of residence can influence the 5 dimensions used to measure the satisfaction of the tourists in visiting Mabul Island, the estimated F Statistics was compared to the critical value of F Statistics at 5 % significance level. Other than perception and experience, all other dimensions were found to be insignificant in influencing the satisfaction of the tourists visiting Mabul Island. This is because the estimated F Statistics was less than the critical value of F for all other dimensions except for perception and experience. The highest mean of satisfaction (4.2273) was obtained from the tourists who originated from Johor. The lowest mean of satisfaction (2.7273) was obtained from Penang.

Level of Education

Table 6 Shows Whether the Level of Education Can Influence the 5 Dimensions Used to Measure the Satisfaction of Tourists Visiting Mabul Island.

Dimensions to measure whether Mabul Island is a tourist destination	F statistics	Significance
Perception and Experience	0.603	0.614
Service Provided	0.905	0.440
Information and Communication	0.719	0.542
Ethics and professionalism	0.549	0.649
Sustainable practices	0.523	0.667

Table 6 shows whether the level of education can influence the 5 dimensions used to measure the satisfaction of tourists visiting Mabul Island. The level of education was divided into no formal education, primary, secondary, bachelors degree and postgraduate. Among the tourists interviewed, there were no tourists who only had primary level education. Around 1.1% had no formal education. 60.35% obtained at least a bachelors degree. 20.7% received a secondary level education meanwhile 17.7% received education until postgraduate level. The ANOVA test was conducted to determine whether the level of education had a significant influence on the satisfaction of the tourists visiting Mabul Island. The estimated F Statistics for all the dimension clearly shows that education does not influence the satisfaction of the tourists visiting Mabul Island. The estimated F Statistics were less than the critical F value at 5% significance level for all the dimensions.

Income

Table 7 Shows Whether Income can Influence the 5 Dimensions That Measure the Satisfaction of the Tourists Visiting Mabul Island

Dimensions to measure whether Mabul Island is a tourist destination	F statistics	Significance
Perception and Experience	0.764	0.550
Service Provided	0.423	0.792
Information and Communication	1.174	0.324
Ethics and professionalism	2.225	0.065

Sustainable practices	0.705	0.589

Table 7 shows whether income can influence the 5 dimensions that measure the satisfaction of the tourists visiting Mabul Island. The income was distinguished into 4 categories, RM3,000 and less, between RM3001 to RM5000, RM5001 to RM7,000, RM7,001 to RM9,000 and more than RM9,000. 37.86% of the tourists belong to RM3,000 and less income category. The highest number of tourists visiting the island during the research belong RM3,000 and less income group. Followed by 23.07% belong to RM3,001 to RM5,000 and 20.71% in the category of RM5,001 to RM7,000. Only 7.6% and 10.65% belong to RM7,001 to RM9,000 and more than RM9,000 respectively. To determine whether income category influences the satisfaction of the tourists visiting Mabul Island, the ANOVA test was used. The estimated F Statistics for all the 5 dimensions were less than the critical F at 5% significance level. Therefore, it can be concluded that income category does not influence the satisfaction of tourists visiting Mabul Island. Thus, it can be concluded that it is not necessary to segment the market because the mean difference between the responses were found to be insignificant for all demographic variables.
(Refer to Table 8)

Conclusion
It can be concluded that when the study was profiled using demographic variables on the satisfaction of tourists visiting Mabul Island as tourists' destination. Questionnaire was used to collect information from 169 respondents selected using non-probability sampling, purposive sampling. The information was analysed using descriptive analysis and inferential Statistics, ANOVA. The outcome of the thesis reveals that demographic variables does not influence the satisfaction of the tourists in choosing Mabul Island as tourists destination.

Table 8 Shows The Summary of The Findings Whether Demographic Variables can Influence the Satisfaction of the Tourists Visiting Mabul Island

Demographic variables	Responses	Percentage	Findings
Gender	Male Female	55 45	Gender does not influence the satisfaction of the tourists visiting Mabul Island.
Age	30 years old and less 31 to 40 years old 41 to 50 years old	41.42 38.46 20.11	Age does not influence the satisfaction of the tourists visiting Mabul Island
Job sector	Government Private Others	46.7 46.7 6.6	Job sector does not influence the satisfaction of the tourists visiting Mabul Island
Type of Occupation	Professionals Business Owners Management	29.58 12.42 37.86	Type of occupation does not influence the satisfaction of

	Students	7.1	tourists visiting
	Retired employees	1.7	Mabul Island
	Homemakers	1.7	
	Others	9.46	
State of residence	Sabah	66.27	State of residence does not influence the satisfaction of the tourists visiting Mabul Island
	Selangor	12.42	
	Kuala Lumpur	6.5	
	Johor	3.5	
	Melaka	3.5	
	Kedah	1.1	
	Pulau Pinang	0.59	
	Negeri Sembilan	1.1	
	Labuan	1.1	
	Sarawak	2.3	
	Kelantan	0.59	
	Foreigner	0.59	
Level of Education	No formal education	1.1	Level of education does not influence the satisfaction of the tourists visiting Mabul Island.
	Primary	0	
	Secondary	20.7	
	Bachelors degree	60.35	
	Postgraduate	17.7	
Income Category	RM3000 and less	37.86	Income category does not influence the satisfaction of tourists visiting Mabul Island
	RM3001 to RM5000	23.07	
	RM5001 to RM7000	20.71	
	RM7001 to RM9000	7.6	
	RM 9000 and more	10.65	

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