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# Customer Satisfaction towards Hotel Industry in Malaysia: A Systematic Review of Pre-Covid19 Era

## Norliza Aminudin[1], Nita Abdul Hassan[2], Nurul Fatiah Aishah Shaukani[3] and Salamiah A Jamal[4]

*Tourism Department, Universiti Teknologi MARA Cawangan Selangor, Malaysia*

Email:  norliza@uitm.edu.my[1], nitahassan0728@gmail.com[2],
nurulfatiahaishah@gmail.com[3], drsalamiah@uitm.edu.my[4]

## ABSTRACT

*Customer satisfaction is a significant segment in the tourism and hospitality sector which resulted in increased attention to studies being conducted in all pillars of tourism including in the accommodation sector. This study aims to present the state of academic research in customer satisfaction attributes in the Malaysian hotel during the pre-Covid era. To achieve this aim, the objectives of this study are to provide a systematic review of the literature published on consumer satisfaction towards the hotel industry in Malaysia. A systematic literature review is conducted, and in a total of 17 key journal articles in the Scopus database up from 2000 until 2019, 20-years period taken into consideration, in which the review protocol proposed in this study makes use of specific techniques such as PRISMA, applied thematic analysis and bibliographic documentary review. The findings reveal that the staff prompt and courtesy of front desk attributes are frequently examined by researchers, followed by comfort and value for room attributes, accessibility of the facilities at the hotel and a variety of food and beverages were the important attributes for the customer satisfaction towards Malaysian hotel industry. The theoretical contribution of this study includes the presentation of a systematic review of the literature, different research approaches and perspectives on customer satisfaction towards the hotel industry, through which it helps to enrich knowledge in the area of hotel attributes on customer satisfaction in the hotel business.*

## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

The hospitality and tourism industry worldwide have developed into a truly global industry in which both consumers and producers are spread worldwide (Lahap, Ramli, Said, Radzi & Zain, 2016). Cheng, Gan, Imrie, and Mansori (2019) added that over six decades, tourism continues to expand and diversify, becoming one of the fastest growing and largest economic sectors in the world. This is in line with what was mentioned by Swarbrooke (1999), there are five different sectors in tourism which are a tourist destination, visitor attractions, tour operations, transport, and hospitality.In addition, the hotel industry is one of the tourism sectors that has been exponentially growing and is one of the most significant contributors to the advancement of the tourism industry (Cheng, et al., 2019). In 2017, The Malaysian Association of Hotels (MAH) recorded a total of 900 hotels with a total of 155,287 hotels rooms to cater to the inflow of international tourist and domestic consumption. The hotel industry in Malaysia has undergone a process of transformation that brought phenomenal economic expansion towards the Malaysian economy (Lahap, Said, Rose, Sumarjan& Mohi, 2014). Xie and Chaipoopirutana (2014) pointed out that the key to the hotel's success is tourists' satisfaction.

Customer satisfaction can be seen as a customer's perspectives in which his or her needs, wants, and expectations throughout the product or service life cycle have been met or surpassed, bringing about ensuring repurchase and delay unwaveringness. Customer satisfaction needs to be reviewed from time to time in every hospitality industry as stated by Poon and Low (2005) that customer satisfaction is the most important criterion in determining the quality of service delivered to customers through the products or services and other supplementary services. An increase in the number of visitors can lead to an increase in business revenues. Amirreza et al., (2013) agreed that customer satisfaction leads to various effects and it was known to be an indicator of a company's future income and profit. However, Dominici and Guzzo (2010) stressed that as the cost of attracting new customers is higher than the cost of retaining existing ones, therefore, managers must focus on retaining existing customers by improving policies and procedures in managing customer satisfaction and customer loyalty. Furthermore, tourists who are satisfied are more likely to have the intention of revisiting and repurchasing if the service provider achieves or exceeds their expectations (Shah Alam & Mohd Yasin, 2010). This also can be proved by Angelova and Zekiri (2011) that a satisfied customer has a positive effect on an organization in terms of profitability, repeat purchases, brand loyalty and positive word of mouth.

Given its importance as a marketing construct, it is not surprising that some of the reviews of the literature on customer satisfaction have appeared across many disciplines over the years (Prayag, Hassibi & Nunkoo, 2019). As an example, Malaysian researchers are not excluded in this field of studies, and Poon and Lock (2005) recorded the highest citation to 285 times thus far. Their article was titled, "Are travelers satisfied with Malaysian hotels?" with a few criteria established. From the outset, the terms "consumer satisfaction", "customer satisfaction" and simply "satisfaction" is used interchangeably without any justification for the use of any term (Giese & Cote, 2000).A systematic review is a rigorous and transparent approach that ensures the selection of the most pertinent publications (Kitchenham 2004; Staples & Niazi, 2007), which is essential for the analysis of sometimes contradicting results. Systematic reviews are widely used as an aid to evidence-based decision making (Petticrew, 2001) outside of the field of tourism and hospitality.

This can be proved by Scopus (2019) that studies systematic literature review of the hotel industry in Malaysia under a low average. In fact, there are existing studies in tourism and hospitality field that merge with the concept of systematic literature reviews by Ladeira, Branda, and Costa (2016) that satisfaction correlates with several antecedents such as service quality, destination image, and perceived value among others as well as outcomes such as loyalty and word-of-mouth. However, these studies did not meet a standard in the definition of customer satisfaction towards the hotel industry in Malaysia and not being able to further the studies in the future. In addition, there has not been any systematic literature review done on Malaysian hotel customer satisfaction that leads to a gap existing of systematic literature review in customer satisfaction towards the hotel industry in Malaysia.

The aim of this paper is, therefore, to present the state of systematic literature review in customer satisfaction attributes in the Malaysian hotel. This study decided to perform the literature search on a manuscript published from 2000 until 2019 in line with the studies of Cohen et al. (2014) and Oh and Kim (2017) that reviewed published articles from the year 2000, the present study covers all articles published on consumer satisfaction between 2000 and 2016 in the five leading hospitality journals as stated by Mulrow 1994; Chalmers, Hedges & Cooper, 2002) that a single study should not be considered in isolation, but positioned within the 'totality' of research in a field to give a more complete picture. A summary of the listed reviewed studies (see Table 1) is provided in this study.

## 2.0 METHOD

A systematic literature review is an examination of a formulated question that uses systematic and explicit methods to identify, select and critically appraise relevant research and to collect and analyze data from studies that are included in the review. Not just that, it was highlighted that via a systematic literature review, the author's claims of rigor in their research can be justified, allowing for identification of gaps, and needed directions for future research. Many studies were conducted usingsystematic literature reviews such as in health and medical (Griffiths, Saville, Ball, Jones, Pattison & Monks, 2020), science and technology (Qi, Yang, Newcombe, Peng, Yang & Zhao, 2020),Law (Mauerhofer, 2019), tourism and hospitality (Bore, Rutherford, Glasgow, Taheri & Antony, 2017) religious tourism (Rashid, 2018) andhotel industry (Leite-Pereira, Brandao& Costa, 2019). This study adopted the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) flowchart (Moher, Liberati, Tetzlaff& Altman., 2010) in conducting the review.

This study has relied on Scopus journal databases and the keywords for the search terms were constructed from main databases using the following term: (Customer), (Consumer), (Satisfaction), (Hotel), (Hotel Industry) and (Malaysia); the time period considered from 2000 to 2019, including studies that were available by December 2019. A total of 17 out of 48 studies were identified after excluding the studies that did not meet the standard of inclusive criteria: unstated customer satisfaction was carried out rather than in Malaysia and in the Hotel Industry. The remaining 17 studies were screened to ensure the content was related to customer satisfaction towards the hotel industry in Malaysia. A total of 17 studies were retained for the systematic literature review.

### Table1: List of Reviewed Studies

| No | Author | Year | Titles | Journal | Method | Sample Size |
|----|--------|------|--------|---------|--------|-------------|
| 1 | Poon and Lock-Teng Low | 2005 | Are travelers satisfied with Malaysian hotels? | International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management | Mixed | 200 |
| 2 | Rashid et al., | 2011 | Influence of relationship quality on hotel guests' loyalty: a case study of a Malaysian budget hotel | Canadian Journal on Scientific and Industrial Research | Quant | 200 |
| 3 | Ariffin, Nameghi, & Zakaria | 2013 | The effect of hospitableness and servicescape on guest satisfaction in the hotel industry | Canadian Journal of Administrative Sciences | Quant | 500 |
| 4 | Hassan, Hussain, & Rahman | 2013 | Exploring the usefulness of CRM and it in the Malaysian hotel industry: a qualitative approach | Journal of ICT | Qual | 33 |

| 5 | Amirreza, Zadeh & Gilani | 2013 | Customer Satisfaction in the Hospitality Industry: Middle East Tourists at 3star Hotels in Malaysia | Research Journal of Applied Sciences, Engineering, and Technology | Quant | 200 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 6 | Amin, Yahya, Ismayatim, Nasharuddin, & Kassim | 2013 | Service quality dimensions and customer satisfaction: an empirical study in the Malaysian hotel industry | International Business School | Quant | 250 |
| 7 | Sobihah, Mohamad, Salim, & Ismail | 2014 | Relationship Between E-Commerce Service Quality, Satisfaction, Trust, and Customer Loyalty in the Hotel Industry in the East Coast of Peninsular Malaysia | Global Illuminators | Mixed | 300 |
| 8 | Liat., Mansori, & Huei | 2014 | The Associations Between Service Quality, Corporate Image, Customer Satisfaction, and Loyalty: Evidence From the Malaysian Hotel Industry | Journal of Hospitality Marketing & Management | Quant | 200 |
| 9 | Khoo-Lattimore & Ekiz | 2014 | Power in praise: Exploring online compliments on luxury hotels in Malaysia | Tourism and Hospitality Research | Qual | 220 |
| 10 | Sobihah, Mohamad, Mat Ali & Ismail | 2015 | E-commerce service quality on customer satisfaction, belief and loyalty: A proposal | Mediterranean Journal of Social Sciences | Quant | 100 |
| 11 | Goh | 2015 | Investigating revisit intentions for the boutique hotels of Penang- Unesco world heritage sites | Asian Social Science | Mixed | 300 |
| 12 | Keshavarz & Ali | 2015 | The Service Quality Evaluation on Tourist Loyalty in Malaysian Hotels by the Mediating Role of Tourist Satisfaction | Mediterranean Journal of Social Sciences | Quant | 500 |
| 13 | Ali, Hussain, & Omar | 2016 | Diagnosing customers experience, emotions, and satisfaction in Malaysian Resort hotels | European Journal of Tourism Research | Mixed | 600 |
| 14 | Cheng, Gan, Imrie, & Mansori | 2018 | Service recovery, customer satisfaction, and customer loyalty: evidence from Malaysia's hotel industry | International Journal of Quality and Service Sciences | Quant | 500 |
| 15 | Padma & Ahn | 2019 | Guest satisfaction & dissatisfaction in luxury hotels: An application of big data | International Journal of Hospitality Management | Quant | 800 |
| 16 | Padlee, Cheong and Zulkifli | 2019 | The relationship between service quality, customer satisfaction and behavioral intentions in the hospitality industry | Tourism and Hospitality Management | Qual | 300 |
| 17 | Shafiq, Mostafiz, and Taniguchi | 2019 | Using SERVQUAL to determine Generation Y's satisfaction towards hoteling industry in Malaysia | Journal of Tourism Futures | Quant | 400 |

Note:
1. (n=17)
2. (Quant=Quantitative method, Qual=Qualitative method and Mixed).

## 3.0 FINDINGS

### 3.1 General Trends of Data

General studies that did not specify the location and categories of the hotel in Malaysia received the highest citation including studies by Shafiq et al., (2019), Padlee et al., (2019), Cheng et al., (2019), Liat, Mansori, and Huei, (2014), Sobihah, Mohamad, Salim, and Ismail, (2015), Amin, et al., (2013), Ariffin, Nameghi, and Zakaria, (2013), and Poon and Lock, (2005). Meanwhile, 'Others' that covered 29% as the first highest citation, the second-highest would be 24% for Kuala Lumpur and the third highest will be Penang that represents 20% in the location of studies. There are the main group of respondents which 'Malaysian Gen Y', 'Malaysian', 'International', 'Both' and 'Others' were discovered. It was found that 'Both' are the first highest percentage that included Malaysian and International respondents in 17 studies. In addition, there are 12 studies that fall in different type of an accommodation and location such as Padlee et al., (2019), Padma and Ahn, (2020), Cheng et al., (2019), Ali et al., (2016), Goh, (2015), amin et al., (2015), Khoo and Ekiz, (2014), Amirreza et al., (2013), Ariffin et al., (2013), Rashid et al., (2011), and Poon and Lock, (2005).

Temporal data collection is also very important to define a result from the customer whether 'Pre-Post', 'During', and 'Post'. It was discovered that all the studies used the cross-sectional data approach with 'Post' represent 82% as the first highest value percentage which the data for 14 studies are collected. Some of the previous researchers did distribute their questionnaires to guests at different times of the day by using face to face interaction (Ali et al., 2016) and placed the questionnaires in the guest rooms every evening from about 7.00 p.m. to 8.30 p.m. with the assistance of the housekeeper and under the supervision of the research team (Rashid et al., 2011).

### 3.2 Rank Attributes among Hotels in Malaysia

The review has resulted among hotels in Malaysia that presented four main categories in rank attributes which are 'Food and Beverages', 'Front Desk', 'Room', and 'Facilities'. Additionally, there are subcategories: Price, Fresh Food, Variety of Food, Services, Staff, Efficient, Friendly and Communicative, Appearance, Prompt and Courtesy, Well Maintenance, Cleanliness, Comfort and Values, Amenities, Accessibility, Technology, Equipment, and Quality. As a result, the most cited attributes are 'Prompt and Courtesy' were the most cited attributes on Front desk as an important reason when it comes to the satisfaction of the

customer as supported by (Liat el al., 2014) that hotel operators should understand the needs of the customer in order to reinforce the customers' satisfaction (see Table 2). The scenario reveals that customers will be satisfied with the hotel if they feel that benefits from the hotel services have been restored to them in a rightful and fair manner and he added this demonstrates that customer satisfaction is directly influenced by the means of interaction; i.e. the degree of performance and behavior of the firm's staff to provide service recovery for customers (Cheng et al., 2019). 'Comfort and Value' were the second-highest cited attributes under Room attributes and Rashid et al., (2011) agreed that the advantage of this kind of relationship will result in more cost reduction and will be profitable to the organization through customized service and comfort rendered to the customer (see Table 2).

'Efficiency' and 'Well maintained' shares the same rank of attributes as the third most cited as highlighted on the Front desk and Room (see Table 2). Guests should experience enjoyable service encounters if the servicescape is impressive and hotel hospitality should be able to increase the level of guest satisfaction substantially (Ariffin et al., 2013). 'Accessibility' under facilities also leads to a good result in gathering customer satisfaction because Hassan et al., (2013) stated that information technology has helped the entire industry to prevent the wastage of resources and time by fulfilling optimum customer needs and demands. 'Services', 'fresh food' and 'price' under food and beverages as well as Amin et al., (2013) stressed that to further enhance their hotel service quality, other critical factors are the need for improvement in staff presentation and knowledge, food and beverage product and service quality, as well as reservation services. However, 'variety of food and beverages' also gained attention as requested by Al-Tit (2015) who found that the food quality also has a great influence on customer satisfaction. 'Equipment' and 'Quality' under Facilities can be concluded that Padlee et al., (2019) explained that in the context of the study, room amenities refer to comfortableness; room size; and quality room furnishings and facilities. Shafiq et al., (2019) exposed that Malaysian Gen Y is more concerned about the equipment and the facilities in the hotel.

**Table 2: Most Citations among Attributes of Hotels in Malaysia**

| Theme | Subtheme | Total |
|---|---|---|
| | Price of the Food | 2 |
| Food & Beverage | Variety of Food and Beverages | 6 |
| Attributes | Availability of Fresh Food | 3 |
| | Services provided | 4 |
| | Staff Efficient | 6 |
| Front Desk Attributes | Staff friendly and communicative | 6 |
| | The appearance of the staff | 1 |
| | Staff prompt and courtesy | 10 |
| | Well Maintained | 6 |
| | Cleanliness | 1 |
| Room attributes | Price | 1 |
| | Comforts & Value | 8 |
| | Amenities | 3 |
| Facilities Attributes | Accessibility | 4 |
| | Technology | 3 |
| | Equipment | 1 |
| | Quality | 2 |

# 4.0 IMPLICATION AND LIMITATION

## 4.1 Practical Implication

The results obtained from the data provide a valuable implication in helping hoteliers to identify which attributes that become important that influencing satisfaction among customers toward the hotel industry in Malaysia is discovered. This implication is important for the managers as a decision-maker which reinforces the need to view customer satisfaction from a strategic point of view. This action can encourage the positive staff behavior of firms and of tourism destinations, managers may need to facilitate the successful implementation of satisfaction processes. Other than that, to foster the satisfaction factors among customers at the hotel level, the need for clusters and network development was identified. Sharing and using knowledge is the key dimension for the hotel to identify the attributes that get the highest level for satisfaction among customers towards the hotel industry in Malaysia activities. The hotel industry can improve the hotel policy and management more efficiently by focusing on the most important factors which have shown in this research result that leads to customer satisfaction.

## 4.2 Theoretical Implication

There is the significance of studies which presented a systematic review of the literature, different research approaches and perspectives on customer satisfaction towards the hotel industry, through which it helps to enrich knowledge in the area of hotel attributes on customer satisfaction in the hotel business. There was research done on customer satisfaction of the hotel industry previously, but limited numbers of research done on customer satisfaction towards the hotel industry in Malaysia using a systematic review method. In addition, this study was grouping of existing papers according to five criteria: (1) the location in which the study was performed, (2) the methods used to collect data, (3) how the data were obtained, (4) levels of analysis and (5) type of hotel in Malaysia and categorization was followed by a detailed analysis of the reviewed studies, which were divided into five theme: (1) papers analyzing pricing for customer provided by hotel (2) papers dealing with staff at front desk related performance and (3) papers focusing on food and beverage attributes factors that can contribute to customer satisfaction in Malaysian hotel industry.

## 4.3 Limitation of the Study

Despite enhancing the researchers' understanding of customer satisfaction

towards the hotel in Malaysia, some of the limitations were discovered which Some of it might be criticisms of systematics reviews for others author with different background especially in Malaysia as mentioned by Pirrie (2001), there have been a number of attacks on the rationale of systematic reviews such as the methodology of systematic reviews has been criticized because it is founded on 'questionable' premises about the nature of reviewing and ideas about research. However, Gough, Oliver, and Thomas, (2012) argued that this range of methods is useful, but they realize that this diversity raises many complex issues, particularly in relation to mixing results from different research traditions. None of the systematics reviews paper is being done in the social sciences field in Malaysia as the researchers already screening all the papers in the electronic databases and also there will be critics as stressed by Gough et al (2012) which critics use those numbers of discarded studies to argue that studies are being ignored. He added that what is being ignored here, however, is that electronic searching is imprecise and captures many studies that employ the same terms without sharing the same focus.

## 5.0 CONCLUSIONS

The hotel industry needs to play its roles as accommodation components need to meet customer expectations that need to exceed their satisfaction. In these studies, an organization can figure out several important attributes that can contribute profits and repetition to their hotels. Throughout all the literature it has been proven that several attributes play their roles very well in every type of accommodation. During the 15 years period, five main themes emerged (in order of frequency): service quality, staff-related attributes, hotel-related attributes, food, and beverage attributes and room- related attributes. To achieve the objectives of this study, the researcher used the method called PRISMA, which includes reviewing articles from resources (Scopus).

Thus, this study emphasizes 'Prompt and Courtesy' under the front desk are the most valuable and relevant attributes that contribute by screening all the literature. The results revealed on these factors are precious not only to the customer but also hotel organization. With all of this commitment towards review of customer satisfaction, it totally can strengthen any hotel organization from different views and learn it from their weaknesses as adding by Cheng et al., (2019) that customer satisfaction positively affects customer loyalty in hotel services, indicating that service recovery is important for not only restoring customer satisfaction but also improving customer loyalty. Future studies in this area need to be addressed as a new concept due to lacking customer satisfaction in the hotel industry in Malaysia. The author also highlighted this action can expand the studies of customer satisfaction

towards any tourism component that getting involved in Malaysia because of the great quality of systematic review can lead to advance a field of inquiry regardless of disciplines.

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