

## **ANALYSING THE HOLIDAY PATTERN AND TRAVEL DEMAND OF REPEAT TRAVELLERS: THE CASE OF PENANG**

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### **ABSTRACT**

The purpose of this paper is to analyse the travel characteristics as well as tourism attributes that are perceived as important amid repeat travellers in Penang, paying attention on comparison between first time and repeat travellers among international tourists. A comprehensive 55-item survey was developed that solicited data in four major areas: respondents' demographics, travel behaviour, perceived activities of importance, as well as evaluation on the level of satisfaction. The establishment of holiday pattern will lead to possible demand among the samples of study. This information is regarded as valuable resource that could be used by those in tourism planning to better determine the most preferred activities of these repeat travellers and how destination managers and developers might better attract and accommodate them. Suggestion will be made based on the findings to identify the marketing strategies, resource allocation as well as operational changes that could be effectively implemented out of both first time and repeat travellers current holiday behaviour within the study area.

**Field of Research:** Travel behaviour, travel demand, repeat travellers, international tourist, Penang.

### **INTRODUCTION**

In an increasingly competitive international tourism market with emerging new destinations, established tourist destination can gain a competitive advantage through repeat visitation. Repeat travellers are a stable market for a destination. In addition repeat travellers could also provide free advertising in the form of word-of-mouth recommendations to family members and friends (Lau and McKercher, 2004). To promote repeat visits to a destination, it is crucial to understand the international tourists' behaviour and travel characteristics with the purpose of acknowledging the features and attributes that are most likely to influence repeat visitation.

Since retaining tourists is as important as attracting new ones, it is necessary to comprehend travellers' profile, travel characteristics, activities of preference as well as expenditure pattern in order to design promotional campaigns and tour packages to attract and retain them. Marshall's (1920) theories on consumer heterogeneity and the need to find each individual's demand curve. This approach towards tourism demand acknowledge that a human is a rational being who behaves in terms of maximum satisfaction with decisions based on in-depth knowledge of all possible alternatives. Most of empirical studies on travel behaviour and characteristics have focused on North American and European countries. Although Penang is one of the popular tourist destinations in Asia, there is, to the authors' knowledge, no empirical study identifying the travel behaviour and characteristics of international travellers to Penang, neither the study on travel behaviour and characteristics of repeat travellers.

With the conduct of this study, the researchers expect to acknowledge the significant profile and travel characteristics of international repeat travellers in Penang. In addition, the study also intends to reveal the differences of first time and repeat travellers' expenditure pattern, their perceived important attributes in relation to Penang as a tourism destination as well as their level of satisfaction. The establishment of holiday pattern will lead to possible demand among the samples of study. With the reveal of current holiday pattern, it is then feasible to identify the marketing strategies and operational changes that could be effectively implemented out of current

holiday behaviour and spending pattern within the study area. With the reveal of current holiday pattern, it is then feasible to identify the marketing strategies and operational changes that could be effectively implemented out of current holiday behaviour and spending pattern within the study area. Another rationale of doing this study is because tourists' travel characteristics and behavioural pattern changes over time. Martin and Mason (1998) suggest that constant change is likely to affect tourism demand by influencing the availability of time and financial resources as well as the choice of tourism activities and the destinations at which they are undertaken. Thus, it is one of the study intentions to acknowledge on the latest development related to tourism activities and behavioural pattern within Penang and identify possible actions that could be done to meet with the current international tourists' needs and demand.

Penang Island is very popular for its tourism destination. Every year the island received thousands of tourist arrival. Among these arrivals are international tourist from around the world especially from the UK, Australia, Netherland, the United States, Japan and Singapore (1<sup>st</sup> Penang Strategic Development Plan, 2001). International tourists contribute a huge part of tourist arrival and that had led to sustain growth of tourism in Penang. However small scale of study has been done to uncover the travel characteristic as well as perceived importance attributes of international tourists who choose Penang as their holiday destination. As a result, proper and effective marketing strategies as well as destination development could not be implemented because of insufficient information is known about the behaviour and demand of current holiday takers.

If destination and tourism suppliers in Penang want to remain successful in promoting their product and services they need to be aware of the differences that may be apparent in the travel characteristics, tourists perceived importance attributes and satisfaction destination development. They also need to be aware of the differences that may be apparent in the demand profiles of specific generation groups. If there are significant changes in tourism demand that can be attributed to changes in the generation composition of the visitor base, there may be clear market advantages to be gained by suppliers and destinations that are willing to adapt their products and services to the current tourism needs.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

The consumer, as a rational human being, possesses dynamic behaviour with increasingly sophisticated needs and complex motivations. Within the context of tourism, the situation grows where destination diversity, accommodation, recreation, means of transport and motivation all complete for equal use. A tourist decides according to a destination attributes, his or her intrinsic motivations, and destination knowledge learned (Howard and Sheth, 1969). The study of tourist profiles and expenditure pattern is a key element in the analysis of tourism returns in a destination and in the formulation of marketing strategies and policies (Nicolau, J., Mas, F., 2005). For example, a destination may decide to design marketing strategies, which will attract "quality tourists", who will spend more during their stay, as opposed to attracting numerous tourists with less intention to spend. Knowing tourists profiles would lead to determining the most appropriate marketing strategies. Advertisers and marketers can use such profiles to segment consumers into viable and profitable clusters (Durvasula *et al.*, 1993).

Tourists experience a medley of services such as hotels, restaurants, shops, attractions, etc.; and they may evaluate each service element separately. Satisfaction with various components of the destination leads to overall satisfaction (Kozak and Rimmington 2000). Oppermann (2000) found a significant relationship between previous experience and future tourist visitation behaviour. Sonmez and Graefe (1998) showed that past travel experiences have a powerful influence on behavioural intentions. Chen (1998) stated that past trip experiences often influence tourists' choice behaviours directly and / or indirectly. The more satisfied the customers are, the more likely they are to repurchase the product / service and to encourage others to become customers. (Gengqing, 1993) Positive experiences of service, products, and other resources provided by tourism destinations could produce repeat visits as well as positive word-of-mouth effects to friends and / or relatives (Gengqing, 1993).

Attracting or finding new customer is essential, however, as it is more desirable and much less expensive to retain current customers. Customer retention has long been an important marketing goal upon which businesses focus to sustain their competitive advantage (Bharadwaj *et al.*, 1993). The cost of attracting new customer is up to six times higher than the cost of retaining existing ones (Rosenburg and Czepiel, 1983). Research has shown that in the short run, loyal customers are more profitable because they spend more and are less price sensitive (O' Brien and Jones, 1995). Since past trip experiences often influence tourists' choice behaviours, this study intend to identify the types of activities incurred by international tourists who revisit Penang more than once. The purpose is to identify the determinants of the intention to return. It is within the researchers' intention to evaluate numerous service elements separately.

In relation to travel behaviour researchers found that first-times and repeat visitors have significantly different motives for travelling. In Lau and McKercher's study (2004), first-time visitors were motivated to explore, while repeat visitors intended to shop, dine, and spend time with family and friends. Gitelson and Crompton (1984) suggest that first-timers sought new cultural experiences while repeat visitors were more likely to relax. Past research also suggest that first time visitors are more likely to be younger visitors (Petrick and Backman, 1998).

In conclusion, tourists can be persuaded by certain characteristics of a destination to revisit. Moreover, tourist needs can be fulfilled by visiting particular destinations. This study intends to signify the characteristics of Penang that have persuaded international tourists to revisit Penang. To promote repeat visits to a destination, it is crucial to identify the determinants of the intention to return. In this way, the factors that influence this variable can be improved in order to increase the likelihood of repeat visits there. In literature on tourism where this subject has been analysed, the decision to revisit a destination is seen to be a complex decision that involves numerous interrelated factors (satisfaction with the stay, tourist motivations, prior experience of the destination, etc.).

## **METHODOLOGY**

This study employed a descriptive research design using a cross-sectional sample survey, aiming at developing a conceptual 'travel characteristics' model, in which hypothesis were advanced and tested to confirm causal relationship. A self-administered questionnaire was developed including both structured and open-ended questions. The target population of this study was the randomly selected international tourists who spend their holiday in Penang during a three-month survey period. A one-stage sampling approach including stratified proportionate sampling, and systematic random sampling (SRS) was applied.

The survey instrument was designed to achieve the objectives. Firstly, the questionnaire captured the main constructs in building trip characteristic and travel behaviour model: international tourists' demographic and psychographic variables. Demographic consists of variables such as origin, age, marital status, education level and occupation while psychographic consists of variables such as experience, activities of preference, satisfaction level and motivation. The study approaches is to assign consumers into groups based on the number of time they travelled to Penang (first time or repeat traveller); and then the similarities and differences between both groups are analyzed. Nevertheless the study is not interested in making comparison concerning to travellers profile. Comparison between first time and repeat travellers will only be made pertaining to expenditure pattern, activities of importance and level of satisfaction. In addition, separate evaluations on first time and repeat travellers will also be made in regard assessment on Important Performance Analysis (IPA).

Frequency analysis is used to determine the dominance of each characteristic based on their percentage performance. The percentage is obtained through comparison with characteristics within the same group. Lastly, the questionnaire assessed tourists' perceived important activities and satisfaction level concerning a list of destination attributes. Importance-Performance Analysis was applied to investigate tourists' attitude towards salient service attributes and determine the most appropriate marketing as well as development strategies that should be applied to various distinct groups.

The survey questionnaire consisted of the following major sections: questions relating to the tourist’s profile; questions on information about tourist’s visit and activities and question about tourists’ overall evaluation on destination.

Motivations to travel to Penang attractions and some trip-related characteristics were measured using nominal scales. Satisfaction regarding Penang destination attributes and activity preference were measured using likert scales. The method of measurement associated with each item dictated the analysis methods used later in the study.

**RESULT AND ANALYSIS**

**Demographic Profile and Travel Pattern**

A total of 190 questionnaires were returned which was 95% of the targeted sample size. As mentioned before, the study only concentrates repeat travelers data within the evaluation of visitors’ demographic and travel pattern. Researchers are not interested in making comparison between first-timers and repeaters concerning to travellers profile. Within the sample, repeat visitors recorded a higher percentage of mid-age travellers (60%) aged between 25 to 45 years old. Mature travellers (aged 46 to 65) claimed the second highest percentage with 25%. There were a small percentage of young travellers which occupy only 11.67% of overall repeat travellers. Elderly travellers (aged above 65 years old) recorded the lowest percentage with only 3.33%.

There was an equal distribution of percentage between male and female travellers. The percentage of male and female tied at 50.0%. In other word, there was equal number of male and female among repeat visitors. In regard to marital status, there was a slightly higher percentage of repeat travelers who are married (53.33%) compared to those who are single (46.67%).

Repeat visitors registered a highest percentage of visitors who come from Europe (50%). There were a high number of those from the UK among the European. Second highest were those came from Oceania with 25% in total. There were a high number of those from Australia from this group. The Middle East filed a moderate percentage (16.67%) while Asia (6.67%) and North America (1.67%) recorded a very low percentage.

The majority visitors of repeaters were university educated where the percentage of these visitors utmost any other level of education. Referring to Figure III, those with university education had an enormous 66.67% compared to secondary education with 23.81% and basic education with only 9.52%.

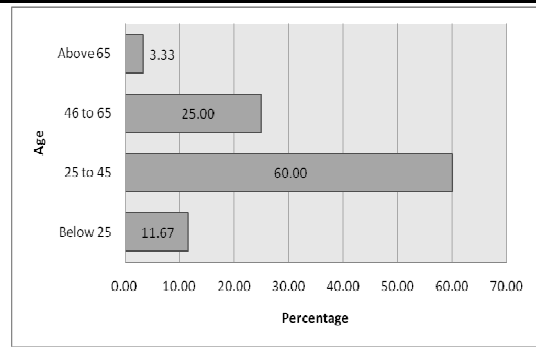


Figure I: Repeat Travellers’ Age Distribution

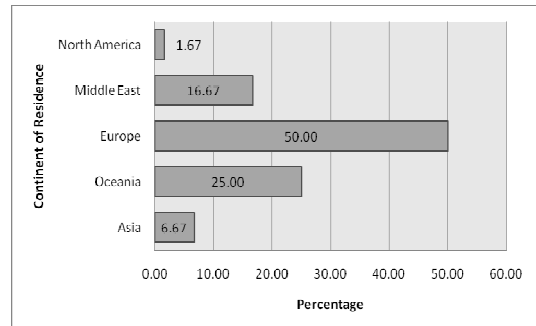


Figure II: Repeat Travellers’ Country of Origin

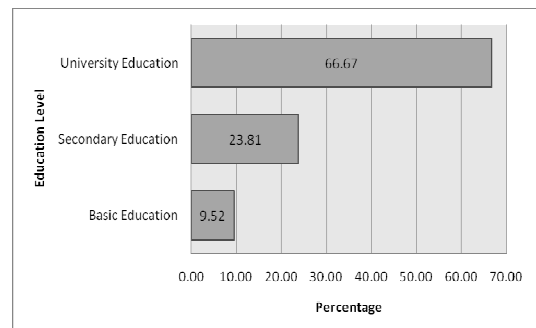


Figure III: Repeat Travellers’ Level of Education

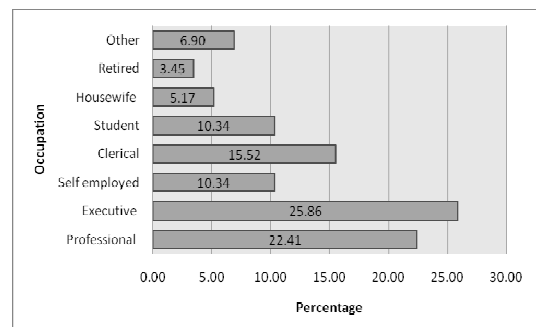
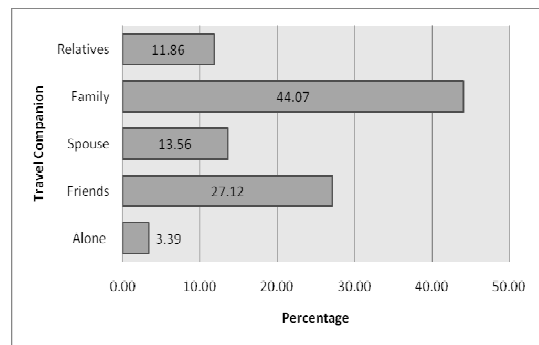


Figure IV: Repeat Travellers’ Occupation

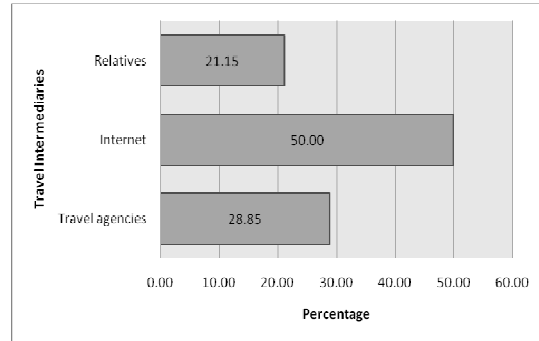
Repeat visitors recorded a high percentage of visitors who work as executives (25.86%) and professionals (22.41%). There were medium percentage of those who work as clerical staff (15.52%), self employed (10.34) and students (10.34%). In contrast, housewife and retirees registered a very low percentage with 5.17% and 3.45% respectively. Repeat visitors had a higher average household income (RM 30,492.24 per month) compared to first time travellers (23,660.16 per month).

According to Figure V, repeaters documented a high percentage of visitors travelling with family (44.07%) and friends (27.12%). There were a reasonable percentage of those who travelled with their spouse and relatives with 13.56% and 11.86% respectively. Finally, there were a very small percentage of those who travelled alone with only 3.39%.



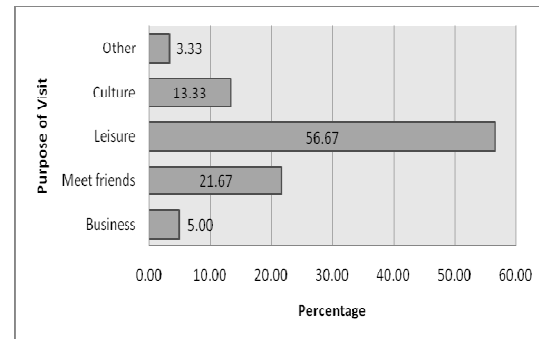
**Figure V: Repeat Travellers' Travel Companionship**

The internet has been the most accepted intermediaries used to make travel arrangement. Referring to Figure VI, half of repeaters (50%) relied heavily on the internet as travel intermediaries. Travel agencies have also been the main intermediaries used where it had a fair usage percentage of 28.85%. Relatively low percentage (21.15%) of repeaters referred to their relatives as a playmaker for their travel arrangement.



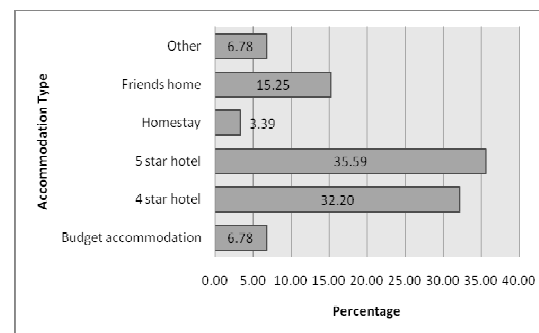
**Figure VI: Intermediaries used by Repeat Travellers**

Leisure was quoted as the major purpose of visiting Penang. Excessive high percentage of repeat visitors (56.67%) proclaimed that the purpose of their visit primarily was to engage with leisure related activities. Other somewhat important reasons were to meet distant friends (21.67%) and to engage in cultural related activities (13.33). Small percentage of repeaters proclaimed that their purpose of visiting Penang was to engage in business activities.



**Figure VII: Repeat Travellers' Purpose of Visit**

Luxury hotel in the likes of 5-star and 4-star hotel have been the preferred choice among repeat visitors. High percentage repeat visitors stayed at 5-star hotels (35.59%) and 4-star hotels (32.20%). A reasonable percentage of repeat visitors (15.25%) stayed at their friends' home. There were a moderate percentage of those who stayed at budget hotel (6.78%). Homestay was definitely unpopular among repeat visitors with the percentage as low as 3.39%. Repeat visitors tend to stay longer at the destination with an average of 11.72 days while first time visitors tend to stay shorter with an average of 9.50 days.



**Figure VIII: Repeat Travellers' Accommodation Preference**

**Expenditure Pattern**

A competitive destination like Penang should have an adequate mix of both repeaters and first timers despite perceptions that repeat visitations bring positive business sign and that of attracting repeaters draw positive business strategy. As

Oppermann (1999) pointed out, a destination market will eventually flop if it only relies on repeat customers. This is due to the tendency of some repeat customers to ‘defect’ to other destinations, while others might even stop travelling. Hence destinations managers, marketers and developers should try to constantly attract and open up new markets in order to sustain its long-term viability. Because of this reason, the study is determined to make comparison between first time and repeat travellers is made within the aspects of expenditure pattern, activities of importance, level of satisfaction and important performance analysis (IPA). The data and information gained are vital in determining appropriate marketing strategies as well as allocation of resources.

International visitors were shown categories of expenditures that tourists are likely to spend their money on. They were asked to indicate the proportion of money that they spent on each category during their holiday in Penang. Five-point likert scales were used and the scale varied from 1 – extremely low to 5 – extremely high. The average level of expenditure (average mean) within these categories of expenditure is calculated for each group under study.

Repeat visitors used most of their money on to pay for food (3.81). This is followed by accommodation (3.79), entertainment (3.35), souvenirs (3.25), shopping (3.62), transportation (3.05), and tour packages (2.66). First time visitors, alternatively, acknowledged that they spend most of their money on accommodation (3.90). This is followed by food (3.66), shopping (3.57), transportations (3.15), entertainment (3.07), tour packages (2.98) and souvenirs (2.93). On average, repeat visitors consumed more money while travelling (RM 931.69 per day) compared to first time travellers (RM 765.62 per day).

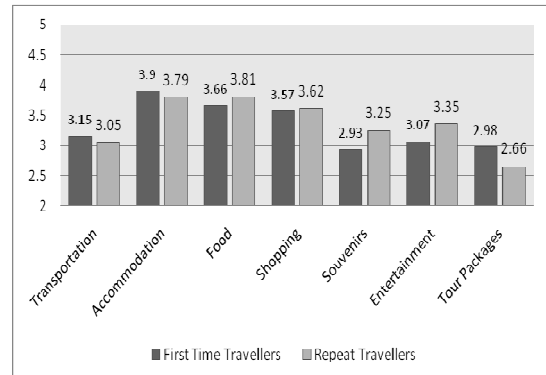


Figure IX: Comparison on Expenditure Pattern between First Time and Repeat Travellers

**Activities of Importance**

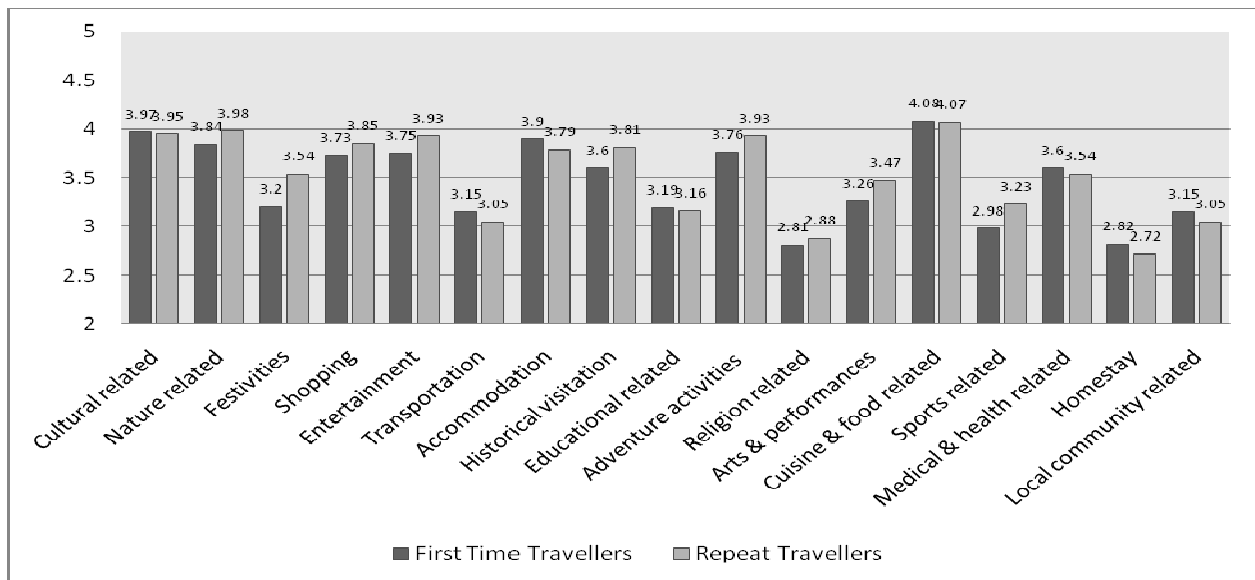


Figure X: Comparison on Activities of Importance between First Time and Repeat Travellers

Visitors were shown a list of Penang service element, and were asked to indicate how important were these component to the visitors’ holiday. Five-point likert scales were used and the scale varied from 1 – not very important to 5 – extremely important. The average level of importance (average mean) with various aspects of Penang experience was calculated for each group.

Referring to Figure X, the top five attributes that perceived as important elements for first time visitors were cuisine and food (4.08), culture (3.97), accommodation (3.90), nature related activities (3.84) and adventure related activities (3.76). The top five attributes that were perceived as not important for first time visitors were religion related activities (2.81), homestay (2.82), sports related activities (2.98), local community related activities and transportation (both tied at 3.15).

As for repeat visitors, the top five attributes that perceived as important elements for them were cuisine and food (4.07), nature related activities (3.98), culture (3.95) as well as entertainment and adventure (both tied at 3.93). The top five attributes that were perceived as not important for repeat visitors were homestay (2.72), religion related activities (2.88), local community related activities and transportation (both tied at 3.05) and educational trip (3.16).

**Level of Satisfaction**

Visitors from both genders were shown a list of Penang service element, and were asked to indicate how satisfied they were with these components. Five-point likert scales were used and the satisfaction scale varied from 1 – very dissatisfied to 5 – very satisfied. The average level of satisfaction (average mean) with various aspects of Penang experience was calculated for both groups.

Referring to Figure XI, the attributes that pleased first time visitors the most were accommodation services (4.05), cuisine taste (4.03), shopping facilities (4.01), transportation (3.98) and safety (3.91). Attributes that disappointed first time visitors the most were cleanliness (3.36), ancillary services from local organization (3.47), signs and directions (3.58), public facilities and entertainment availability (both tied at 3.64).

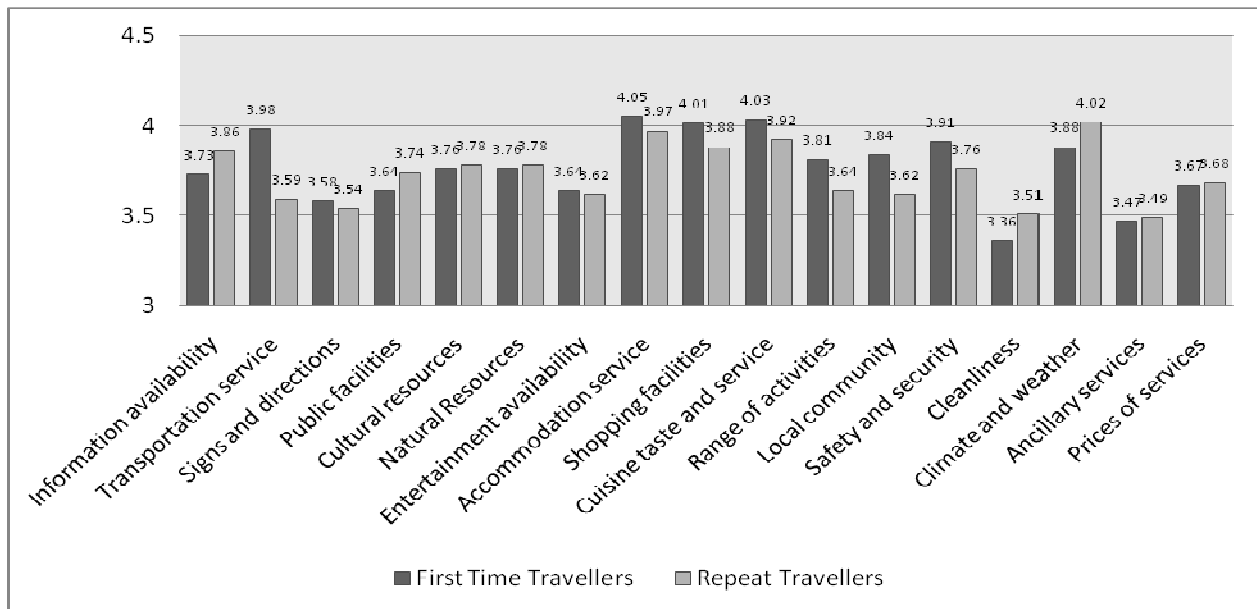


Figure XI: Comparison on Level of Satisfaction between First Time and Repeat Travellers

Repeat visitors on the other hand appreciated climate and weather (4.02) the most. This is followed by accommodation (3.97), cuisine taste (3.92), shopping facilities (3.88) and information availability (3.86). They were unhappy with ancillary services from local organization (3.49), cleanliness (3.51), signs and directions (3.54), transportation availability (3.59) and entertainment availability and local community interaction (both tied at 3.62).

Satisfaction with various components of the destination leads to overall satisfaction (Kozak and Rimmington 2000). The overall satisfaction of both groups were acquired through adding up all the average score of each attributes and divide the figure with seventeen; the total number of attributes being evaluated. Out of both groups, first time visitors (3.77) were the most satisfied with their overall vacation in Penang. Repeat visitors were slightly dissatisfied with the average mean of 3.73, the average of 0.04 below first time visitors.

### **ANALYSIS OF IMPORTANT PERFORMANCE ANALYSIS (IPA) GRID**

The IPA Grid is utilized to uncover the mean importance and satisfaction levels for both groups under study. To further analyze the pinpoint where the strength and weaknesses were for both groups, IPA grids were plotted. For each individual grid, the mean values of the importance and satisfaction ratings for each group were computed and used as the coordinates. The grand means of importance and satisfaction levels for each group were set as the crosshairs and determined the placement of the axes on the grids. Therefore each individual IPA grids had different crossing points.

#### ***First Time Travellers***

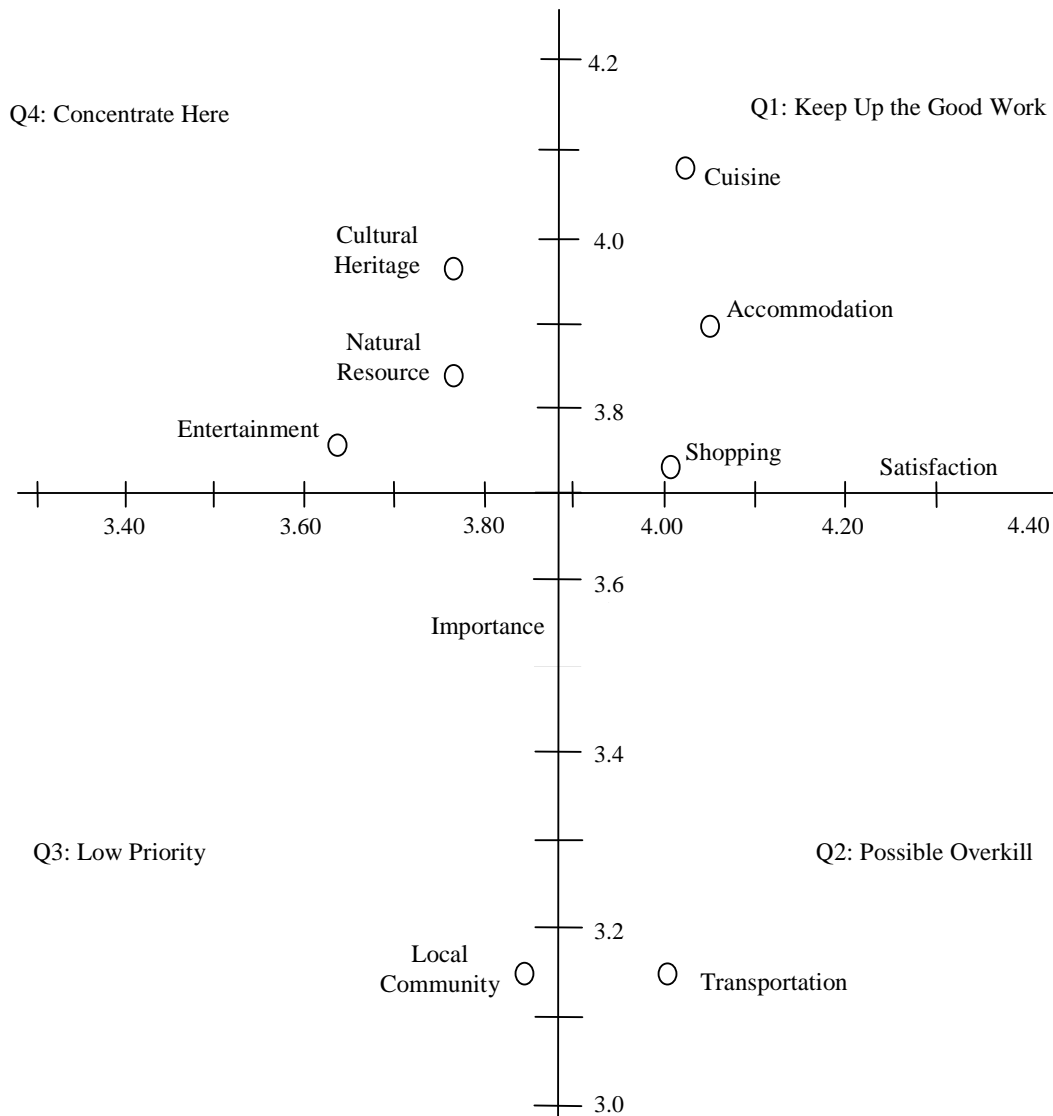
Referring to Figure XII, entertainment (importance = 3.75; satisfaction = 3.64), natural resource (importance = 3.84; satisfaction = 3.76) and cultural heritage (importance = 3.97; satisfaction = 3.76) were the major weakness of Penang for first timers. These three components were important but first timers were only moderately satisfied with these features. It was here where major improvement was required. Accommodation (importance = 3.90; satisfaction = 4.05), shopping facilities and services (importance = 3.73; satisfaction = 4.01) and cuisine (importance = 4.08; satisfaction = 4.03) were elements of high importance that also enjoyed high satisfaction. These were the major strengths of the destination that marketers and developers wanted to emphasize in. Local community activities (importance = 3.15; satisfaction = 3.84) was the element with low satisfaction level that were not salient to visitors. While important to know and to be aware of, Penang should not invest too much in them owing to their low importance. Transportation (importance = 3.15; satisfaction = 3.98) fell in the low importance high satisfaction quadrant, suggesting a possible over-employment of efforts and resources being spent in this element.

Table I: Importance Performance Means of First Time Travellers

Components	Importance	Satisfaction	Mean Diff.
Natural Resources	3.84	3.76	-0.08
Cultural and Heritage	3.97	3.76	-0.21
Entertainment	3.75	3.64	-0.11
Shopping	3.73	4.01	0.28
Cuisine	4.08	4.03	-0.05
Transportation	3.15	3.98	0.83
Accommodation	3.90	4.05	0.15
Local Community Activities	3.15	3.84	0.69
Grand Mean	3.70	3.88	0.18



Figure XII: Importance Performance Analysis Grid of First Time Travellers



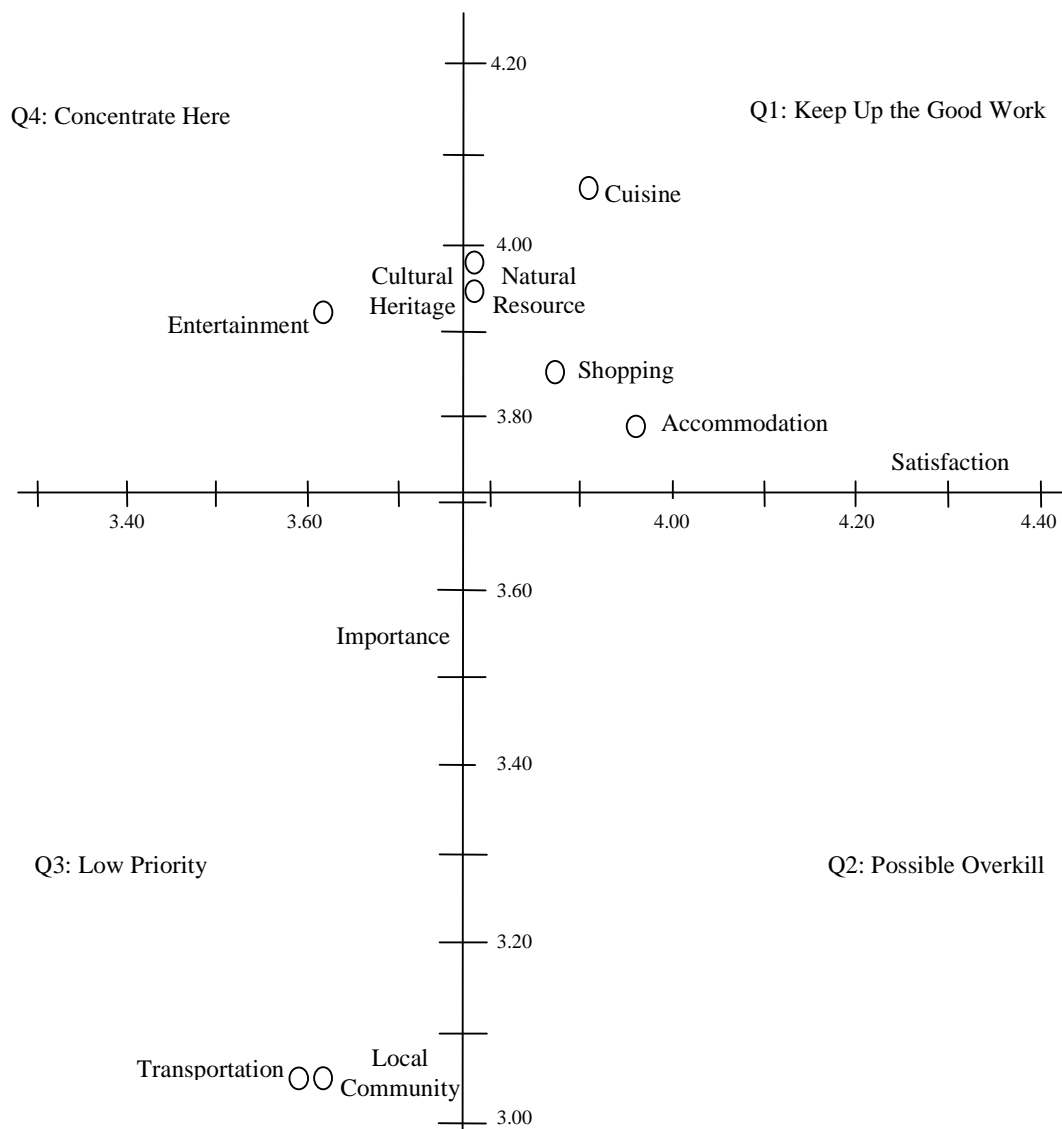
**Repeat Travellers**

Referring to Figure XIII, repeaters felt that entertainment (importance = 3.93; satisfaction = 3.62) was very important but indicated satisfaction scores were lower than grand mean score for satisfaction; therefore entertainment should be given top priority in improvement effort. Repeaters valued culture and heritage (importance = 3.95; satisfaction = 3.78), natural resources (importance = 3.98; satisfaction = 3.78), shopping (importance = 3.85; satisfaction = 3.88), accommodation (importance = 3.79; satisfaction = 3.97) and cuisine (importance = 4.07; satisfaction = 3.92); destination developers and marketers should keep up the good work over these elements. Although visitors were satisfied with transport (importance = 3.05; satisfaction = 3.59) and local community (importance = 3.05; satisfaction = 3.62) in Penang, they were low priority elements because visitors placed relative low importance on these features.

Table II: Importance Performance Means of Repeat Travellers

Components	Importance	Satisfaction	Mean Diff.
Natural Resources	3.98	3.78	-0.20
Cultural and Heritage	3.95	3.78	-0.17
Entertainment	3.93	3.62	-0.31
Shopping	3.85	3.88	0.03
Cuisine	4.07	3.92	-0.15
Transportation	3.05	3.59	0.54
Accommodation	3.79	3.97	0.18
Local Community Activities	3.05	3.62	0.57
Grand Mean	3.71	3.77	0.06

Figure XIII: Importance Performance Analysis Grid of Repeat Travellers



## DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATION

From the results and findings, it is obvious that first-time and repeat travellers have a relatively distinct demands and requirements regarding the products and services offered by a destination. Thus marketing effort directed primarily at attracting new visitors to Penang might not be suitable for persuading previous visitors to return. As a result it is necessary for destination marketing bodies to develop different tourism activities as well as marketing strategies customized to the demands of novice and experienced travelers. The implementation of effective functional activities and promotion tailored to first-time and repeat travellers requires a good understanding of these two different groups.

The study showed that for first time travellers, accommodation, shopping facilities and cuisine were elements of high importance and also the tourism attributes that give them high satisfaction. For first time visitors satisfaction is the key determinant leading to loyalty. This strengthens the importance of first impressions, and suggests to the related destination managers such as hotels and restaurants that priority should be placed on providing satisfying experience to first timers to return. Destination managers who provide entertainment, nature and cultural related activities major improvement are required need to strengthen their quality of their product and service to generate satisfaction in the future.

As for repeat travellers, they valued natural resources, shopping, accommodation, cuisine, culture and heritage with the indication that destination developers and marketers should keep up the good work for these attributes. Nevertheless, for the repeaters, satisfaction is no longer the major factor in leading loyalty. This study has not empirically investigated the unique determinants for repeaters' loyalty, however previous researches have revealed significant variations in the common 'satisfaction builds loyalty' equation. For instance McAlexander *et al.* (2003) revealed that brand community integration becomes more powerful in building loyalty compared to satisfaction as customers gain more experienced to a destination. Garbarino and Johnson (1999) found that repeat visitation and loyalty established through trust and commitment. Petrick and Sirakaya (2004) indicated that attachment rather than satisfaction is factor that influence repeat tourists. On the other hand, Oliver (1999) speculated that a convergence of product, personal, and social force can lead to loyalty within the eyes of repeat customers, unlike satisfaction that only makes important contribution to loyalty early in the ownership cycle. These findings highlight the importance of fostering trust, commitment and attachment among repeat travelers. Destination manager should support brand communities that can encourage consumer-destination relationships, thus intensify their loyalty towards the destination.

The researchers believe to increase loyalty among repeat travellers, the formation of consumer communities and clubs should be under serious consideration among destination managers. This is done with the purpose of keep repeat travellers in the long-term engagement with the destination. Airlines should encourage their 'frequent flyer programs' and hotels should foster 'frequent guest programs' with both programs seek out to retain repeat customers and eventually winning their loyalty. Coalition of tourism suppliers with the intention of initiating programs that would produce loyal travellers should be encouraged. The programs should promote emotional involvement and friendship build around product / service consumption. In addition, integration of product / service into extended self-concept will help create higher exit barriers and maintain an ongoing relationship with repeat travellers. Tourists will surely return to the same destination over and over again when they start to discover themselves within the destination. Other than that, it is an added bonus if destination managers can provide special discount prices or special first class treatments to repeat travellers.

The finding of the study clearly indicated that high percentage (50%) of repeat travellers relied on the internet as a source of information. It is within the mind of the researchers to highly recommend the internet as an important tool of enhancing and cultivating destination loyalty. Separate web page should be created for first-time and repeat travelers highlighting on the differences of tourism options available for their choices. With the help of the internet, reservation information and customer database can easily be kept and reviewed by the destination marketing organizations. This information is very important and could be of help in creating the most suitable tourism product / service targeted at distinctive repeat market segments. In addition, online chat room, online newsletter, and other approaches could be incorporated within these destination websites. This will bring first

time and repeat travellers together discussing travel related or unrelated problems and finding solutions and sharing their traveling experiences. This will help establish the brand community surrounding mentioned earlier and at the same time keep first time and repeat travellers in a cohesive family.

Indeed it is very difficult and possibly expensive to practice programs that require high coordinating efforts due to the fragmentation of the hospitality and tourism industry. Nevertheless, the returns of such programs are enormous bearing in mind that it is less costly to sustain repeat visitors than to attract new customers. In addition repeat travellers are more likely to remain loyal and share their positive experiences with other people thus creating free 'word of mouth' advertising. Referring to these statements it is obvious that many attractions and destination managers beginning rely on repeat clientele for the development of their tourism development.

## **CONCLUSION**

Studying the travel characteristics of repeat travellers is an area of crucial importance, particularly in the case of mature destinations like Penang where repeat travellers constitute an important part of total number of tourist arrivals. Repeat tourists are a key asset for mature tourist destinations and they should be one of the key focuses of attention in restructuring processes. Given how interested decision-makers at destinations are in increasing the likelihood of future visits by international tourists, it should encourage them to dedicate more effort to improving and updating the products and services on offer in order to increase satisfaction levels.

In the literature, although it has been acknowledged that travel characteristics is important, little has been done to investigate its measurement, or its structural relationship with satisfaction. This study revealed and confirmed the existence of the critical relationship among travel characteristics, tourists perceived importance attributes and satisfaction destination development. The findings suggested that it would be worthwhile for destination managers to make greater investments in their tourism destination resources, in order to continue to enhance tourists' experiences. It is believed that this study has a capability for generating precise application for both first-time and repeat travellers related to marketing as well as destination development concept based on their perceived important attributes and level of satisfaction.

Competition and the challenges are getting greater and it is important for destinations to be able to provide satisfaction which the key determinant that lead to destination loyalty. In addition, destination managers need to realize that they need to go beyond that and develop trust, commitment and attachment especially among repeat travelers. Destination manager should support brand communities that can encourage consumer-destination relationships, thus intensify their loyalty towards the destination. As a core practice, it is significant to start at gaining a better understanding of travellers characteristics to a destination and what are their perceived importance as well as their level of satisfaction on various components of destination. The major findings of this study have essential managerial implications for tourism and hospitality developers and marketers.

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