

**DESTINATION ATTRIBUTES AND  
SATISFACTION OF TOURIST GROUPS FOR  
REDANG ISLAND BASED ON ONLINE REVIEW**

**MARJIHAH BINTI MOHD AZAM**

**UNIVERSITI SAINS MALAYSIA**

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by

**MARJIHAH BINTI MOHD AZAM**

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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

TSI	Tourism Satisfaction Index
WOM	Word of Mouth
eWOM	Electronic Word of Mouth
NLP	Natural Language Processing
BTM	Biterm Topic Modelling

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# **ATRIBUT DESTINASI DAN KEPUASAN KUMPULAN PELANCONG DI PULAU REDANG BERDASARKAN ULASAN ATAS TALIAN**

## **ABSTRAK**

Perkara paling penting dalam pengurusan destinasi pelancongan ialah kepuasan hati pelancong. Hal ini dapat mengekalkan daya saing dalam sektor pelancongan terutamanya pelancongan pulau. Sejak kebelakangan ini, ramai penyelidik telah menggunakan ulasan dalam talian sebagai kaedah untuk menilai tahap kepuasan pelancong bagi membantu mengurangkan asimetri maklumat. Ulasan dalam talian bukan sahaja menyenaraikan maklumat tentang destinasi, bahkan dapat memberikan gambaran perasaan, kepuasan, dan pandangan pelancong terhadap destinasi tersebut. Kajian ini memberi tumpuan kepada Pulau Redang iaitu salah satu destinasi pelancongan popular yang telah mengalami penurunan bilangan pelawat sejak tahun 2018. Tambahan pula, faktor cuaca yang tidak menentu telah menghadkan akses ke pulau tersebut. Oleh itu, kajian ini bertujuan untuk menilai tahap kepuasan pelancong di Pulau Redang dengan menggunakan data ulasan dalam talian sebagai sumber maklumat. Kajian ini juga bertujuan untuk mengenal pasti atribut yang menjadi keutamaan bagi pelancong ke Pulau Redang dan membezakan atribut ini mengikut kumpulan pelancong yang pelbagai. Analisis data telah dilakukan menggunakan kaedah campuran iaitu gabungan kaedah kuantitatif bagi penilaian bintang dan kualitatif bagi ulasan teks. Analisis kekerapan mendapati kebanyakan pelancong berpuas hati dengan pengalaman mereka di Pulau Redang. Sebanyak 60.82% memberikan penilaian 5 bintang, manakala 29.38% lagi memberikan 4 bintang. Atribut destinasi yang paling signifikan telah diekstrak daripada korpus ulasan dalam talian menggunakan teknik pemprosesan bahasa semula jadi dan

pemodelan topik *biterm*. Sebanyak 15 atribut telah dikenal pasti sebagai atribut penting dalam kalangan pelancong Pulau Redang, iaitu: pantai, aktiviti, hidupan marin, perkhidmatan penduduk tempatan, pengalaman, pakej percutian, kemudahan membeli-belah dan hiburan, penginapan, kebersihan, pengangkutan dan kebolehcapaian, masa lawatan, nilai wang, makanan dan minuman, tarikan pulau dan keselamatan. Hasil kajian menunjukkan pantai merupakan tarikan utama bagi keseluruhan pelancong yang mengunjungi Pulau Redang. Keputusan kajian juga mendapati keutamaan pelancong berbeza mengikut kumpulan. Pelancong bersama pasangan dan rakan-rakan cenderung mengutamakan aktiviti, pelancong solo lebih memilih pantai, manakala keluarga menghargai pulau itu secara keseluruhan. Penemuan kajian ini dapat memberikan pandangan yang bernilai kepada kepada pihak yang terlibat dalam industri pelancongan, termasuk pengurus destinasi, agensi pelancongan, dan penyedia perkhidmatan. Melalui dapatan ini, mereka dapat meningkatkan kualiti pengalaman pelancong dan merancang strategi pemasaran yang lebih berfokus dan berkesan. Di samping itu, kajian ini membantu pihak berkepentingan memahami keperluan dan kepuasan pelancong terhadap sesebuah destinasi dalam konteks pelancongan pulau. Penyelidik dan pemasar pelancongan dapat mengenal pasti kumpulan pelancong yang kerap mengunjungi Pulau Redang dan menyediakan perkhidmatan berdasarkan ciri-ciri atau atribut yang bersesuaian dengan mereka seterusnya merancakkan semula industri pelancongan Pulau Redang.

# **DESTINATION ATTRIBUTES AND SATISFACTION OF TOURIST GROUPS FOR REDANG ISLAND BASED ON ONLINE REVIEW**

## **ABSTRACT**

Ensuring tourist satisfaction is essential for destination management, especially in maintaining a competitive advantage in island tourism. Recently, researchers have been utilizing online reviews as a medium to assess tourist satisfaction, as it mitigates information asymmetry. Online reviews provide information about the place and also reflecting the tourist's feelings, satisfaction, and opinions regarding the destination. This study focuses on Redang Island, a competitive destination that has experienced a decline in tourism since 2018. Furthermore, the fluctuations of weather have limited access to the island. Therefore, this study aims to assess tourist satisfaction in Redang Island by utilizing online review data as a valuable resource. This study seeks to identify essential destination attributes valued by travelers to Redang Island and to distinguish these attributes across various travel groups. The research employed a mixed-methods approach to analyze data from star ratings (quantitative) and text reviews (qualitative). A frequency analysis was performed to assess tourists' overall satisfaction through an analysis of the star ratings given by the tourists. The frequency analysis revealed that most tourists expressed satisfaction with their trip experience on Redang Island, rated 5 stars (60.82%) and 4 stars (29.38%). The most significant destination attributes from the corpus of online reviews has been extracted using natural language processing and biterm topic modeling techniques. The data analysis identified 15 significant attributes for travellers to Redang Island including beach, activity, marine life, people, experience, package, shopping and entertainment, accommodation, hygiene, transportation and accessibility, time of visit, value for

money, food and beverages, attraction, and safety and security. Research findings found that the beach serves as the principal attraction for tourists visiting Redang Island. In addition, the findings indicate that travelers accompanied by couples and friends prioritize activities, while solo travelers prefer beaches, and families are more prone towards the island as their destination. This research findings believed could provide valuable insights for destination managers, travel authorities, and service providers to improve the quality of the tourist experience and develop effective and targeted marketing strategies. This study improves understanding of tourist satisfaction in island tourism and provides valuable insights for stakeholders regarding destinations. Researchers and tourism marketers can identify tourist travel groups that frequently visit Redang Island and offer attributes align with their preferences. This will enhance tourist satisfaction according to the specific travel group thereby revitalizing the tourism industry of Redang Island.



# **CHAPTER 1**

## **INTRODUCTION**

### **1.1 Introduction**

This chapter introduces the research problem of tourist satisfaction and destination attributes on Redang Island. It highlights the theoretical and practical gaps in understanding tourist satisfaction via online reviews and formulates research objectives. At the end of the chapter, the significance of the research and key terms are discussed, emphasizing the study's importance in the context of destination management and tourism marketing.

### **1.2 Background of Study**

The internet's pervasive influence has profoundly reshaped the landscape of the tourism industry, impacting how destinations are perceived and experienced (Verma et al., 2021). With the advent of the internet, consumers have gained unprecedented access to information, significantly influencing their decision-making process (Myat et al., 2019). Online reviews have emerged as a pivotal source of reliable information, guiding tourists in their quest for detailed insights into destinations, accommodations, and services (Zhang et al., 2018). Platforms like TripAdvisor, Google Reviews, Expedia, and Facebook have become veritable hubs where travelers actively share their experiences, providing a global audience with invaluable perspectives on various travel-related aspects. The significance of online reviews in shaping tourist satisfaction cannot be overstated, particularly in empowering potential travelers to Redang Island, allowing them to plan their trips based on the collective experiences of others.

Tourist satisfaction, a linchpin in shaping travel behavior, is intricately linked to these online reviews. Positive experiences often manifest in glowing reviews

through high-star ratings, affirmative textual feedback, or both (Tian et al., 2021). Satisfied tourists contribute positive reviews and become ambassadors, enthusiastically recommending destinations to others (Zhao et al., 2024). Therefore, understanding the attributes that underpin tourist satisfaction becomes paramount.

Studies such as Saikia et al. (2019) highlight the critical role of destination-specific attributes in shaping visitor satisfaction and enhancing a destination's competitiveness in the tourism market. These attributes, typically categorized as tangible (pertaining to physical elements available at the destination) and intangible (encompassing emotions, ambiance, stories, and legends associated with the destination) (Chin et al., 2020), play a crucial role in shaping the overall tourist experience. Redang Island's unique blend of tangible and intangible elements is a prime example of how these attributes contribute to tourists' overall satisfaction as a tourism destination. In light of this, leveraging online review data from platforms like TripAdvisor becomes pivotal in discerning the nuanced facets of tourist satisfaction specific to Redang Island. By harnessing both quantitative (star ratings) and qualitative (textual reviews) data, this research endeavors to dissect and understand the multifaceted attributes that drive satisfaction among diverse travel groups.

Thus, this study aims to delineate the key attributes that shape tourist satisfaction on Redang Island and explain how different travel groups prioritize these attributes. The insights from this study, which are based on the experiences and feedback of actual tourists, will be invaluable for tourism stakeholders. By discerning these preferences, stakeholders can tailor their offerings, optimize visitor experiences, and plan targeted marketing strategies to augment the island's global appeal. The audience's role in shaping the study's findings is crucial and greatly appreciated.

### **1.3 Redang Island**

Redang Island is one of the most well-liked tourist destinations for those who enjoy spending time in nature. It is home to various corals (Razak et al., 2024). It is situated 45 km off the coast of Kuala Terengganu in Kuala Nerus District, Terengganu, Malaysia, and has been gazetted as a marine park. Redang Island is the largest protected island in the area. As one of the famous island destinations in Malaysia, Redang Island has been frequently visited by tourists.

Redang Island offers high-quality ecotourism products that allowed it to be the best destination for snorkeling, SCUBA diving, honeymoon, family trips, or even short escapes till it has been ranked as one of the most popular beaches to be visited in Malaysia by Rahman et al. (2021) and Razak et al. (2024). Redang Island is famous as a nesting area for turtles. Despite the beauty of the island, one of the reasons Redang Island is attracting more tourists is due to the presence of turtles. Tourists are interested in watching turtles laying their eggs, which has indirectly allowed the locals at Redang Island to generate more income through tourism (Poti et al., 2021). It is essential to sustain Redang Island as a tourism destination since it has terrific resources as a tourism product and is one of the local sources of income. To maintain the destination, the stakeholders have to understand the attributes that have been attracting tourists to the destination since the attributes are one of the factors that have motivated tourists to travel to the destination.

### **1.4 Problem Statement**

The evolution of technology has sparked a paradigm shift in tourism industry research, particularly in analyzing online reviews to comprehend satisfaction toward destinations (Ahani et al., 2021). Notably, online reviews serve as a more comprehensive and unbiased data source than traditional survey methods, enabling a

holistic understanding of tourist experiences (Sutherland et al., 2020). The efficiency and relevance of gauging tourist satisfaction through online platforms outweigh conventional measures, offering flexibility and genuine, unaltered tourist opinions (Alrawadieh and Law, 2019). Consequently, reducing information asymmetry, these reviews reflect tourists' experiences, distinct from providers' influence (Kim & Kim, 2022). While traditional methods suffer from measurement errors linked to survey forms, online reviews present a more relevant means of assessing tourist satisfaction (Kim et al., 2021). Acknowledging the pivotal role of destination attributes in influencing satisfaction during visits (Fajriyati et al., 2022) since understanding these attributes becomes imperative for sustaining a destination's appeal (Liao & Chuang, 2019). Each destination's unique attributes define its allure (Kim et al., 2019). Despite consensus on the relevance of online review analysis in measuring tourist satisfaction, there remains a need for more research in this domain (Kim et al., 2021). Moreover, specific investigations into online reviews concerning island destinations, including Malaysia's, could be more robust (Oliveira et al., 2019).

Given Malaysia's rich collection of stunning islands and its promotion as a tourism hotspot, exploring the attributes contributing to tourist satisfaction assumes paramount importance. This research objectively identifies the attributes that satisfactorily entice tourists to Malaysian islands, with a particular focus on Redang Island, without bias. It is important to note that destination attributes influencing satisfaction evolve (Zhang & Ha, 2022), warranting continual investigation. Destinations strive to appeal to diverse tourists, but there needs to be an understanding of how various travel groups prioritize and assess the importance of destination attributes (Xu, 2018). The lack of a systematic approach to distinguishing significant destination attributes based on different characteristics of travel groups impedes the

advancement of tailored marketing strategies and personalized experiences (Nessel et al., 2021). Destinations may allocate investments towards attributes that do not correspond to the target audience's preferences. The absence of customized options might lead to diminished visitor satisfaction, thus reducing the likelihood of revisits and positive word-of-mouth reviews (Tao and You, 2022).

Redang Island, renowned for its pristine beauty, faces a few issues. This island could only be visited from March until October due to climate changes (Nik et al., 2023). The unprecedented effects of climate change impact the growth of the tourism industry, specifically regarding safety issues and plans for adapting to unforeseen weather events (Arabadzhyan et al., 2020). Plus, climate change may affect tourism development if the attributes of the destination disappear (Belias et al., 2022). A few other islands could be visited at certain times due to climate changes, such as Perhentian Island and Kapas Island, which are also located in Terengganu. Redang Island has to compete with these islands to attract tourists to visit the island. Redang Island is experiencing a post-pandemic tourism boom, but it has yet quite to hit its pre-COVID stride. After the pandemic, the island received only 146,026 tourists in 2023 (Nazdy, 2023), which is still below the number of tourists (162,817 tourists in 2019) before the pandemic. Going deeper, before the pandemic, the island had already experienced a decline in the number of tourists. According to the Terengganu State Government statistics, tourist arrivals on the island peaked in 2017 at 174,567, followed by 172,150 in 2018 and 162,817 in 2019 (Ahmad Azizi, 2021). This shows the trend of declination. Tourism providers have taken a few steps to encourage tourists to visit the island. Berjaya Air has offered more flights to travel directly to Redang Island to attract more tourists (Bernama, 2024). However, the number of tourists on Redang Island after the pandemic is still less than that of tourists after the pandemic.

Thus, understanding destination attributes becomes pivotal in mitigating these challenges (Serra-Cantalops, 2021) to ensure Redang Island can compete with its competitors in attracting tourists to visit the island. To comprehensively comprehend Redang Island's appeal, this study proposes an evaluation of tourists' overall satisfaction through an analysis of star ratings and textual reviews on TripAdvisor. Employing text mining techniques like biterm topic modeling, the study aims to identify the predominant attributes underpinning tourist satisfaction, addressing the research gaps related to objectives one, two, and three. Addressing the issue of tourist satisfaction through online reviews, this study aims to bridge the gap in research, especially in the context of Redang Island. It aligns with the evolving dynamics of tourist preferences and seeks to provide stakeholders with nuanced insights into satisfying tourists based on their diverse travel group compositions. Understanding these preferences among different groups can significantly aid in tailoring tourism products and experiences, thereby enriching stakeholders' strategies and enhancing the competitiveness of these destinations in the global market.

## **1.5 Research Questions**

This research will answer the following questions:

1. Based on online tourist reviews, what is the overall tourist satisfaction level for Redang Island based on the travel group?
2. What are Redang Island's destination attributes based on online reviews?
3. What are the differences in essential destination attributes according to different travel group characteristics?

## **1.6 Research Objectives**

The research objective of this study would be:

1. To evaluate the satisfaction level of overall tourists and based on travel group for Redang Island via an online review.
2. To identify the destination attributes of Redang Island based on online reviews.
3. To differentiate important destination attributes according to different travel group characteristics.

## **1.7 Significance of Research**

The prevalence of online reviews in the tourism landscape has significantly altered how tourists share their experiences, offering a valuable reservoir of data for understanding satisfaction levels (Sutherland et al., 2020). Online reviews influence prospective travelers, guiding their decisions and fostering confidence in choosing destinations or services. The online review has authentic, firsthand accounts that aid in making informed choices and influencing consumer behavior and purchase decisions (Chen et al., 2020). The reliability of online reviews in gauging tourist satisfaction is a critical aspect emphasized in Section 1.4. These reviews provide

unfiltered opinions and experiences, free from external influences, contributing to a more accurate portrayal of tourists' perceptions and sentiments (Park et al., 2019). Consequently, these authentic narratives serve as a robust data source for stakeholders keen on understanding tourist satisfaction levels, enabling them to strategize effectively. For stakeholders in the tourism industry, optimizing their online platforms to collect comprehensive and reliable review data becomes imperative. Designing user-friendly interfaces that encourage and incentivize tourists to leave reviews can enhance the quantity and quality of the feedback received (Sutherland et al., 2020). Implementing mechanisms that verify the authenticity of reviews while allowing for diverse perspectives can further enhance the credibility of the data collected (Abuamoud et al., 2018). By employing these strategies, stakeholders can curate a repository of genuine, reliable reviews that accurately reflect tourists' experiences and satisfaction levels.

This research, digging into the analysis of online reviews for Redang Island, holds substantial implications for stakeholders. Understanding the attributes that drive satisfaction on Redang Island becomes pivotal for destination management. By leveraging the insights from online reviews, stakeholders can identify and enhance attributes that resonate most with tourists (Chang et al., 2022). This informed approach facilitates the improvement of specific attributes and aids in the broader development of tourism products and services tailored to meet tourists' expectations. Moreover, this research also benefits tourists themselves. By contributing to enhancing Redang Island's offerings based on their satisfaction factors, tourists can anticipate an improved and more tailored experience on their subsequent visits. This reciprocal relationship fosters a positive cycle wherein tourists' needs are better met, encouraging continued patronage and positive word-of-mouth recommendations. In essence, the



reliability of online reviews as a reflection of tourist satisfaction underscores the importance of strategic data collection for stakeholders while fostering a mutually beneficial environment for both stakeholders and tourists.

## **1.8 Scope of Research**

The scope of this study is to identify tourist satisfaction and attributes that lead to tourist satisfaction in Redang Island via an online review that tourists highlighted through the TripAdvisor website. The researcher has collected the primary data through TripAdvisor. (Ma and Kirilenko, 2021; Alaimo et al.,2020; Hamdi, 2018). Data based on online tourist reviews were collected from 2011 until March 2020. This research only collects reviews written in English to ensure the reviews are not falsely analyzed or interpreted. To meet the research objectives, the reviews are collected from domestic and international tourists. They are also classified into travel groups: solo travelers, family travelers, couple travelers, and a group of friends.

In this study, the researcher applied mixed methods to collect quantitative (closed-ended) and qualitative (open-ended) data types. Researchers then integrated the two and made interpretations based on the combination of both sets of data, as stated by Egresi (2017), Brochado and Brochado (2019), and Lee et al. (2022). The measurement of tourist overall satisfaction is based on quantitative analysis, which involves rating the trip. Online ratings are quantitatively analyzed as the collected data are based on a Likert scale from one to five. Even research conducted by Glaveli et al. (2023) stated that a study involving tourist ratings showing overall satisfaction is a quantitative method.

The qualitative side of this research is when data collected and analyzed is taken from textual reviews written by tourists on the website, as stated by Burkov and Gorgadze (2023). In the textual review, tourists' data signaled would be the attributes

they feel are essential to be acknowledged, managed, and improved (Cassar, 2023; Guerrero-Rodriguez et al., 2023). Since Redang Island is one of Malaysia's tourist hotspots, it is crucial to understand the destination from the visitor's point of view. Tourist satisfaction towards Redang Island has been analyzed through online reviews stated by tourists on TripAdvisor, as the reviews written by tourists are based on their experience in Redang Island. Through this, important destination attributes in Redang Island that are classified as tangible and intangible are identified after the analysis through R software.

## **1.9 Key Terms Definition**

This study adopts and adapts definitions given by specific scholars, as stated below.

### **1.9.1 Online Review**

The experience of tourists towards destinations is shared via the TripAdvisor website by the different backgrounds of people in textual statements and ratings based on scale (Baka, 2016).

### **1.9.2 Destination Attribute**

Destination attributes are tangible and intangible characteristics or values that are available to be offered by particular destinations towards their visitor (Kim et al., 2019). In this study, specific destinations are referred to as Redang Island.

### **1.9.3 Tourist Satisfaction**

Tourist satisfaction could be defined as tourist judgment in terms of review and rating given towards a destination after visiting Redang Island (adapted from Jeong and Kim, 2019)

#### **1.9.4 Travel Group**

Travel groups are defined as solo travelers and travelers traveling with partners that can either be with friends, family, or couples.

#### **1.10 Arrangement of Chapters**

The research is structured and segmented into five chapters. The first chapter starts with an introduction and includes the study's background, a summary of Redang Island, the problem statement, the goals and research questions, the significance of the findings, the scope of the investigation, and definitions of important words.

The second chapter provides an overview of the current body of literature on tourist satisfaction and the research methodology used to measure visitor satisfaction, encompassing traditional methods and Internet reviews. In addition, chapter two also examined signal theory, which has been applied in this research. This chapter also covers a comprehensive analysis of destination features and travel groups. In this chapter, the literature gap and framework are also emphasized.

The third chapter outlines the methodology employed in this study, encompassing the research design, research approach, research site, population, sample frame, and necessary sample size. The process of collecting and analyzing data is also addressed. Subsequently, the fourth chapter provides a comprehensive account of the findings derived from the data analysis.

The fifth chapter of the study presents and supports the conclusions using relevant evidence and literature. The report provides additional analysis and justification of past research findings. The chapter finishes with a concise summary, a discussion of the study's limitations, and recommendations for future research.

## **CHAPTER 2**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

#### **2.1 Introduction**

This section's focal point revolves around delving into the essence of tourist satisfaction. It encapsulates an exploration of various dimensions of this fundamental concept, encompassing its definition and the diverse methodologies utilized in its measurement. The conventional methods employed in assessing tourist satisfaction are highlighted, shedding light on their relevance in this context. Moreover, a comprehensive discussion unfolds regarding the pivotal role of online reviews in tourism and their integral part in assessing tourist satisfaction. The significance of these reviews in capturing and gauging tourists' experiences is elucidated, emphasizing their role as a contemporary tool for understanding and measuring satisfaction levels.

Destination attributes, constituting the core components of tourist experiences, are extensively addressed. The definitions, conceptualization, and intricate relationships with tourist satisfaction have been thoroughly explored. Their influence on shaping tourists' perceptions and overall satisfaction is critical to this section's narrative. Another facet of this section revolves around the discourse on travel, elucidating the diverse dimensions and compositions of travel groups. This discussion is vital in understanding traveler cohorts' varied preferences and expectations, contributing to the nuanced understanding of tourist satisfaction.

Towards the culmination of this chapter, a critical assessment of research gaps in the existing literature is undertaken. This evaluation catalyzes the formulation and proposal of a research framework. This framework, an essential blueprint for the study, integrates the multifaceted elements of tourist satisfaction, online reviews, destination

attributes, and the diverse dimensions of travel, orchestrating a coherent pathway to explore these intertwined concepts comprehensively.

After this section, drawing from the nuanced discussions and amalgamation of various perspectives, this section proposes a contextualized definition of tourist satisfaction. This definition encapsulates the essence of tourist experiences, their interactions with destination attributes, and the pivotal role of online reviews in shaping their perceptions and overall satisfaction within the study's focus.

## **2.2 Tourist Satisfaction**

Tourists could achieve satisfaction by rationalizing decisions based on enough information from online reviews (Ullah et al., 2019). According to the World Tourism Organization (WTO), satisfaction is a psychological concept involving well-being and pleasure from consuming an appealing product or service (Lu & Stepchenkova, 2012). Pizam et al. (1978) defined tourist satisfaction as the interaction between a tourist's experience at the destination area and his expectations about that destination. When performance exceeds tourist expectations, tourists would feel satisfied. However, when expectations exceed performance, the dissatisfaction occurs (Ullah et al., 2019).

Kim et al. (2021) believe that it is essential to distinguish between tourist satisfaction and dissatisfaction, where satisfaction leads to a positive attitude, and dissatisfaction leads to a negative attitude. Jeong and Kim (2019) believe that tourist satisfaction is positive feedback about the destination post-visit. Meanwhile, this study identifies tourist satisfaction as tourist judgment regarding reviews and ratings tourists give after visiting Redang Island (Zhou & Yao, 2023).

Understanding tourist satisfaction in tourism destinations is a crucial aspect that can be specified on specific attributes or towards overall satisfaction. McDowall (2010) defines tourist satisfaction as a collection of tourists' attitudes toward

destination attributes based on their vacation experience that gives an overall experience towards a destination. Mikulic et al. (2023) believed that satisfaction with an attribute might influence tourists' overall satisfaction towards a destination. Herle (2019) noted that tourist satisfaction with a destination is measured based on the attributes available and the ability to meet tourists' expectations. Once tourism providers can acknowledge the attributes influencing tourist satisfaction, they could provide a better experience and lead toward maximum satisfaction (Crames et al., 2023).

Tourist satisfaction dramatically influences the choice of destination, the consumption of goods and services, the number of repeat visits, word-of-mouth publicity, and destination loyalty (Munajat et al., 2022). Aliman et al. (2016) noted that the main reason for measuring and explaining tourist satisfaction is to understand suppliers' abilities at a particular destination in recognizing and responding to the needs of its visitors. Also, measuring tourist satisfaction helps identify which elements of the destination's offer need improvement (Constantoglou, 2020). The impact of tourist satisfaction reverberates across various dimensions, influencing destination choice, consumption patterns, repeat visits, word-of-mouth publicity, and destination loyalty (Hosany et al., 2017). Ghosh et al. (2024) accentuate that measuring and comprehending tourist satisfaction aids in recognizing and responding to visitor needs while identifying areas for destination improvement. Consequently, monitoring tourist satisfaction is imperative for destination authorities to preemptively address issues that could negatively impact future visits (Moro et al., 2019).

This comprehensive understanding of tourist satisfaction forms the bedrock for the subsequent discussion on the research approach to measuring tourist satisfaction,

elucidating the methodologies employed to gauge and comprehend this multifaceted phenomenon.

### **2.3 Research Approach in Measuring Tourist Satisfaction**

Studies on tourist satisfaction have been conducted for years and are a mature research area. A study on tourist satisfaction is usually conducted to measure tourist satisfaction toward a destination, hotel, or restaurant (Wu, 2016; Adinegara et al., 2021). Measuring tourists' satisfaction is theoretically or empirically difficult (Martin et al., 2019). However, technology has led to a new revolution in measuring tourist satisfaction with tourism products. Instead of depending on conventional measures of tourist satisfaction, researchers can expand their research area by measuring tourist satisfaction through online reviews. Traditional methods for measuring tourist satisfaction involve several well-established approaches based on surveys and questionnaires, such as the tourist satisfaction index and SERVQUAL (Park, 2023). In conventional methods, Likert scales are often used, where tourists rate satisfaction from “very dissatisfied” to “very satisfied” (Rasoolimanesh et al., 2022). Plus, in conventional methods, the setting of survey questions is usually based on previous studies (Guo et al., 2017), which is not conducive to identifying attributes not mentioned in previous questionnaires (Ding et al., 2021). Conventional methods differ from online reviews as online reviews are considered to be spontaneous tourism-generated content that provides a more authentic tourist point of view compared to surveys and case studies (Lucini et al., 2020).

Measuring tourist satisfaction via online review involved incorporating tourist-generated content from social media and review platforms to gauge satisfaction more dynamically and in real-time, complementing traditional survey methods with more prosperous, more nuanced data (Rasoolimanesh et al., 2022). However, the

measurement approach depends on measuring satisfaction and the level of insights a destination wants to obtain (Ryu & Kwon, 2021).

Table 2.1 shows a few studies that measured tourist satisfaction in tourism destinations. The table clearly shows the movement of researcher approaches in measuring tourist satisfaction. Instead of using a conventional method based on the expectancy disconfirmation approach, tourist satisfaction index, and SERVQUAL, most researchers have started to use online reviews in measuring tourist satisfaction, such as Aljahdali (2016); Kim et al. (2019); Taecharungroj and Mathayomchan (2019); Zhao et al. (2019) and Sun et al., (2020). It can be seen from the table that research conducted through conventional methods in measuring tourist satisfaction used a survey as their research approach. In contrast, research conducted through online review used content analysis and text mining.

The table also highlighted the theory used by previous scholars. A few theories have been applied. The table listing various studies on tourist satisfaction uses a mix of methodologies, theories, and approaches to measure tourist satisfaction across different research contexts. Looking at the theories or models employed by researchers, while various approaches have been utilized, Signal Theory emerges as a notable framework in studies focusing on measuring tourist satisfaction through online reviews. For instance, Kim et al. (2019) applied Signal Theory to investigate tourists' perceptions through content analysis of their experiences on social media. Similarly, Zhao et al. (2019) forecasted overall customer satisfaction using Signal Theory and text-mining techniques from online textual reviews and customer participation in review communities.

However, it is essential to note that these studies also showcase diverse approaches and models. For instance, some studies followed conventional methods



like SERVQUAL (e.g., Castro et al., 2017; Ghose & Johann, 2018) or combined the Expectancy Disconfirmation Approach and Word of Mouth (Kaosiri et al., 2019) for survey-based analysis. On the other hand, several studies incorporated advanced techniques such as machine learning, content analysis, and sentiment analysis using sophisticated models like BERT, LDA, Naïve Bayes, and regression analysis to scrutinize online review data (Taecharungroj & Mathayomchan, 2019; Sun et al., 2020; Zhang et al., 2022; Cao et al., 2023). This diverse spectrum of methodologies and theoretical frameworks signifies the evolving landscape of measuring tourist satisfaction. The utilization of online reviews, Signal Theory, and advanced analytical techniques demonstrate a paradigm shift towards harnessing digital data to understand better tourists' sentiments and satisfaction levels in contemporary research endeavors.

Table 2.1 Studies on Various Methods, Theories, and Approaches in Measuring Tourist Satisfaction on Tourism Destination

<b>Authors</b>	<b>Purpose &amp; Context</b>	<b>Method</b>	<b>Theory/Model</b>	<b>Approaches</b>
Aljahdali (2016)	To determine and identify the personal context, social context, and physical contexts of visits to the George Eastman Museum	Online Review	Interactive Experience	Content Analysis
Castro et al., (2017)	To measure tourist satisfaction and to evaluate its determinants	Conventional	SERVQUAL	Survey
Abuamoud et al., (2018)	To measure tourist satisfaction with the services at two tourist sites in Jordan	Conventional	Tourist Satisfaction Index	Survey
Ghose and Johann (2018)	The study of the impact of tourism product attributes on tourist satisfaction and tourist behavioral intentions.	Conventional	SERVQUAL	Survey
Kim et al. (2019)	To investigate tourists' perceptions of destination offerings for a micro-scale tourist site based on their written review of their experience on social media	Online Review	Signal	Content Analysis
Kaosiri et al., (2019)	To study the influence of UCG as a source for tourist expectations and the impact of UCG on satisfaction	Conventional	Combination of Expectancy Disconfirmation Approach and Word of Mouth	Survey

Taecharungroj and Mathayomchan, (2019)	To develop a methodology that can analyze online reviews using a machine-learning technique	Online Review	Online Review Analytical Framework	Machine-learning techniques use LDA and Naïve Bayes
Zhao et al. (2019)	To forecast overall customer satisfaction using the technical attributes of online textual reviews and customers' participation in the review community	Online Review	Signal	Text-mining
Maleki and Gholamian, (2020)	The moderating role of ethnic identity on the relationship between tourist satisfaction and its consequences is identified.	Conventional	Expectancy Disconfirmation Approach	Survey
Sun et al. (2020)	To evaluate the tourist satisfaction of wetland ecotourism in Zhalong National Nature Reserve (ZNNR)	Online Review	Online Review Analytical Framework	Text-mining with LDA model, sentiment analysis, and TSE model
Thi et al. (2020)	To identify tourist satisfaction and loyalty through the SERVQUAL model in Vietnam	Conventional	SERVQUAL	Survey
Williady et al. (2022)	To analyze the factors that are related to customer satisfaction post-COVID-19 in Bali's resorts	Online Review	Expectancy Disconfirmation Approach	Text Mining
Zhang et al. (2022)	To explore the asymmetric effects of attribute performance ( <i>Value, Cleanliness, Location, Rooms, Service, and Sleep Quality</i> ) on customer satisfaction with different geographic and cultural	Online Review	Penalty-reward contrast analysis (PRCA)	Regression Analysis

	backgrounds using review data from hotels in Shanghai, Seoul, and New York			
Cao et al. (2023)	To formulate differentiated service and improve tourist satisfaction	Online Review	BERT model	Sentiment Analysis

## 2.4 Online Review

The arrival of electronic media and internet usage revolutionized the study of tourist satisfaction. It has been noted that before purchasing certain products, most consumers check online reviews to understand or gain as many details as possible about the product. Moro et al. (2019) identified online reviews as a proxy for customer experience and tourist satisfaction. The online review consists of textual comments, imagery, and numerical ratings that lead customers to understand the product better and visualize the service (Tran, 2020). Liang et al. (2020) define online review as a platform where buyers mostly use textual data to express their feelings after consuming a product. Online reviews are feedback on products from many users that have been posted either on the company's website or a third-party website (Zhang et al., 2021). In this research, an online review is identified as the experience of tourists toward destinations shared via the TripAdvisor website by people with different backgrounds in textual statements and ratings based on scale (Baka, 2016).

Zhang et al. (2023) identify two values for online review: positive or negative statements available to anyone through the internet and stated by potential, actual, or former tourists about a tourism product or company. Sun et al. (2019) also support the statement that online reviews could either be positive or negative depending on consumer evaluation of a product or service. Xu (2018) has noted that a positive textual review may mean something other than that tourists are satisfied with their trip. Positive textual review is an expression expressed by tourists towards attributes they feel delighted about during their trip but not on the overall trip (Gunasekar & Sudhakar, 2019). Due to this, it is important to analyze both textual reviews and valance ratings to measure tourist satisfaction. Plus, San and Lai (2023) believed that

opinions expressed openly through online reviews are among the most effective ways to measure customer satisfaction.

A report by the Malaysian Communications and Multimedia Commission (MCMC) in 2018 shows that 87.2% of research respondents seek knowledge on the products before they proceed with online purchasing, and about 70.5% use search engines to find product information. The research also stated that 64.2% of respondents browsed retailers' websites for product details and reviews before purchasing. The report also said that about 37.9% of online sales in Malaysia are from the tourism sector, including the purchase of accommodations and travel tickets. This might be because the information provided through the online review is more informative compared to tourism providers' websites, as through online review, tourists tend to share information that has not been shared by tourism providers (Dickinger, 2011; Chen et al., 2022).

#### **2.4.1 Online Review in Tourism**

Tourist-generated content (TGC) is online review content (Gottschalk & Mafael, 2017). Research conducted by Mak (2017) believed that content which is related to travel that is uploaded and shared by tourists through social media and the internet should be known as "Tourist Generated Content" (TGC) instead of User Generated Content (UGC) even though both refer to similar subjects. This study used terms of TGC as the content would be based on tourist generated and fitted with Mak's (2017) and Gottschalk's and Mafael's (2017) definitions. TGC could be an image, video, or text review of tourism products or services shared through social media or websites (Bigne et al., 2019).

Among TGC content, online review plays an important role in an online environment (Gottschalk & Mafael, 2017). Consumers frequently employ online

reviews as an information hub during their information search as they tend to provide information about experiences of a product or service (Lopes et al., 2022). The impact of online reviews on tourist decision-making and behavior towards a product or service is a significant area of study in tourism research. Belarmino et al. (2020) and Baek and Cho (2020) highlighted that two key aspects of online reviews, namely valence and volume, play a role in influencing tourist behavior. Valence refers to the ratings or sentiments expressed in the reviews regarding a product or service. Positive valence indicates favorable reviews, while negative valence signifies less favorable or critical reviews. Research by Kordrostami et al. (2021) underscores that the overall tone or sentiment conveyed in these reviews affects how willing tourists are to pay for a particular product or service.

Conversely, volume represents the quantity or number of reviews available for a specific product or service. Bouzas et al. (2018) argued that tourists might not necessarily consider the number of reviews when making decisions. However, Liu et al. (2021) emphasized that a larger volume of reviews provides more information, which can be crucial for tourists. Within this volume, there can be a mix of positive and negative reviews (Zhang et al., 2023). The presence of diverse reviews within a large volume can give tourists a comprehensive view of others' experiences, offering a more balanced perspective on the tourism product or service.

These studies collectively suggest that while the sheer quantity of reviews might not directly influence decision-making, the sentiment expressed in these reviews (valence) and the diversity within a larger volume can significantly impact tourists' perceptions and, subsequently, their willingness to pay for a given product or service. A study by Rita et al. (2022) showed that positive online reviews helped hotels receive more bookings. This is supported by Akhtar et al. (2019), who stated that tourists avoid

staying at hotels without any review or lack of review. From a tourism destination perspective, Kislali et al. (2020) mentioned that online reviews influence potential tourist decisions towards a destination.

Online reviews are crucial for tourists, as they face challenges in evaluating the quality of intangible things prior to their firsthand experience (Dediu, 2016). Therefore, as Matikiti-Manyevere and Kruger (2019) suggest, utilizing reviews from individuals who have previously experienced service can provide potential tourists with indirect information and allow them to gauge the quality of the services they are considering. This can help manage and lower their expectations. This has also been corroborated by Trung (2023), who asserted that consumers desire to comprehend the product's prior or current customer experiences, which might subsequently impact consumer behavior towards the product. Bigne et al. (2019) argue that tourists develop expectations about a destination after acquiring all necessary information from internet reviews. Tourists are more likely to focus on a tourism product if there are many reviews, as a larger quantity of reviews positively impacts customers' perceptions of credibility (Choi & Leon, 2020). Furthermore, internet reviews serve as a potent marketing tool that enables tourism providers to promote their products effectively.

Online reviews can assist suppliers in diminishing marketing expenses and expanding their access to a global audience of potential customers (Torabi, 2021). Specifically, online reviews assist tourist providers in comprehending the desires and requirements of their customers, ultimately resulting in contentment. Online evaluations typically consist of a textual review and a rating. By conducting a textual analysis, tourism providers can find the specific characteristics of their products that can effectively meet the needs and desires of their customers (Pantano et al., 2017). Online evaluations that contain written feedback not only assist in finding content



customers but also aid in discerning their preferences. Tourists typically evaluate their satisfaction level by assessing the destination's various features. Traditionally, tourist satisfaction is determined by a rating of 1–5 provided by tourists while evaluating their satisfaction with the characteristics of the place and the whole trip (Auliya & Prianti, 2022). For various reasons, examining online reviews has become essential in comprehending tourist contentment with venues. According to Ahani et al. (2019), these reviews directly indicate how satisfied tourists are with a specific site. They provide an unedited and honest representation of their experiences, offering a comprehensive and detailed source of information about the particular characteristics of the destination that have a favorable effect on tourists.

Furthermore, a comprehensive investigation carried out by Brochado (2019) analyzed a significant volume of evaluations from platforms such as TripAdvisor to identify the precise attributes that contribute to the contentment of tourists. This type of analysis goes beyond overall satisfaction ratings and delves further into comprehending which site characteristics are crucial in guaranteeing a favorable tourist experience. Destination management needs to identify these traits to improve and advertise the features that tourists find most enjoyable. In addition, a study by Truetescu and Nicolaie (2024) examined reviews from several platforms to assess the overall level of customer satisfaction. By including many review websites, this comprehensive approach offers a more thorough picture of how travelers perceive places across diverse platforms, providing a broader perspective on satisfaction trends.

The examination of Internet evaluations is a valuable source of information for individuals involved in tourism management. It offers helpful information about the characteristics that improve visitor happiness, enabling destinations to customize their services to meet and surpass visitor expectations. Acquiring a comprehensive

understanding of these observations enhances tourism experiences, which in turn attracts more tourists and guarantees their contentment. Ultimately, this contributes to the long-term growth and progress of tourist sites. While online customer reviews primarily reflect customer satisfaction with a product rather than its quality (Xu, 2020), tourism and service providers can still utilize these ratings to assess their current business performance. Additionally, they can leverage textual reviews to enhance and improve their product or service, particularly about destination attributes (Kim et al., 2019). Online textual reviews from customers serve as a more reliable indicator of their contentment or dissatisfaction with hotels compared to the total consumer ratings. This is because textual information provides a more robust customer experience evaluation. This implies that analyzing assessment makes it possible to identify the characteristics that contribute to customer happiness and discontent (Berezina et al., 2016).

#### **2.4.2 Online Review in Measuring Tourist Satisfaction**

In order to assess tourist satisfaction through online reviews, most online review platforms collect evaluations from visitors using a star system that typically spans from one to five, along with a written description (Banerjee & Chua, 2016). The consensus among researchers (Alrawadied and Law, 2019; Williady, 2022; Riswanto & Kim, 2023), is that overall satisfaction may be determined by analyzing the valence of online ratings. This is because the valence of online evaluations reflects the general opinions of tourists towards the products (Sim et al., 2021). In order to identify tourist levels of satisfaction, Khorsand et al. (2020) conducted a frequency analysis of the star ratings given by tourists on the TripAdvisor website. The star rating is divided into two groups, which are 1 to 3-star ratings as low satisfaction and 4 to 5-star ratings as high satisfaction (Pjero & Gjermëni, 2020). Still, it is important to acknowledge that