

Gender Differences in Perceived Importance and Performance of Penang Island Attributes

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Abstract. This paper examines the gender differences in perceived importance and performance of Penang Island attributes. The data was drawn from questionnaire survey of 801 international tourists who visited the island between August and November 2012. Previous studies related to gender differences in Malaysian destinations are found scarce and neglected, thus this paper aims to bridge this knowledge gap. The needs to study gender differences are related to the suggestions that men and women engage in different leisure activities, possess different travel motivations and perceive differently when embarking for holiday. The study found a number of gender similarities and differences between the men and women tourists, in terms of their travel style and perceptions of importance and performance of destination attributes. These results indicate that gender may not be the only influence on behaviour and perceptions, and those men and women should not be regarded as homogenous groups.

1 Introduction

The way to which the individuals identify with masculine and feminine identity is believed to have an impact on consumer behaviour. This topic has received attentions from consumer researchers for nearly more than 40 years yet it requires more studies [1]. Gender was acknowledged as a potentially functional variable for market segmentation as it meets [2] criteria for segmentation. The segments of male and female are substantial adequate and worthy to develop marketing strategies for, comparatively easy to measure and uncomplicated to access. However, Bem [3] and Spence [4] have introduced two fundamental gender identity theories to explain the effect of gender on consumption behaviour. The Bem's gender schema theory explains that individual behaviour, attitudes and traits are consistent with their gender identity. While Spence's theory considered gender identity as a predictive factor when gender related traits are likely to have impact. Both of these theories emphasized that gender is significantly linked to different consumer variables such as leisure activities and preferences as well as shopping behaviour. As claimed by Deem [5], girls are tended to spend a considerable proportion of their leisure activity for dancing, shopping and visiting relatives, compared to boys. Therefore, the understanding on the relationship between gender and tourist behaviour is important to the tourism industry. Although it is commonly believed that in modern times, the differences between the travel patterns of men and women are much less pronounced than before, gender differences related to travel and tourism still remain substantive [6].

In the context of tourism industry, the failure to understand and implement gender perspective can lead the service providers into a gender-blind market and dissatisfaction [7]. Gender differences in

everyday leisure behaviour environment have received more attention compare to tourism context, for instance, participation in leisure activities [8], tourists travel pattern [9], travel preferences and experiences [9-10], travel motivation [11], and travel decision making processes [12]. Kinnaird and Hall [13] touches on the tourism development perspective focusing on the gender perspective where it is learned that tourism processes were constructed from gendered societies, ordered by gender relations. Further, gender relations over time inform, and are informed by the interconnected economic, politic, social, cultural and environmental dimensions of all societies engaged in tourism development. Issues of power, control and equalities were then articulated through race, class and gender relation in the tourism practices.

Differences in the gender behaviour may be related to the socio-cultural norms [14], the social-power relations [15] and values associated with the places in which they live. Tourists' perceptions are influenced by the comparisons that they make with facilities, attractions, and service standards that they have encountered elsewhere [16]. Leontidou and Kinnaird [17] mentioned that boundaries between work and leisure, host and guest, and women and men shift in response to the impacts of tourism. Gibson and Yiannakis [18] discussed the concept of tourism and leisure motivation in understanding tourist behaviour and it has been widely studied since the 1970s. McGehee et al. [19] found that women were more likely to be motivated by culture, opportunities for family bonding and prestige, while men placed more importance on sports and adventure when engaging in the pleasure travel experience. While men seek action and adventure which taking risks, women are more likely searching for cultural and educational experiences, with security and safety as a priority [20]. Freysinger [21] suggested meaning of leisure itself differ between men and women in midlife. Mattila et al. [22] investigated the influence of gender and religion on potential health-risk behaviour and on destination-related expectations of college students on spring break vacation. Sirakaya and Sonmez [22] found that females were depicted in such 'traditional stereotypical' poses as subordinate, submissive and dependent disproportionately more often than males.

To date, researches and discussions in gender differences in tourism context are still lacking [23]. Indeed, gender related studies in the setting of Malaysian destinations were also negligence. In light of these considerations, this study attempts to provide some gendered insights into tourist's travel purpose to Penang Island. In particular, the study intends to examine the gender differences in perceived importance and performance of destination attributes among international tourists.

2 Methodology

Targeting the international tourists with minimum age of 18 who visited the Penang Island between August-November 2012, this paper has managed to gather information from 801 international tourists by means of questionnaire survey (443 male, 358 women), of which, accounted for 80.1% response rate. The respondents were approached at several tourist spots throughout the island as well as at the gateways namely the airport, bus terminal, ferry jetty and cruise pier. The survey instrument went through content validity by a panel consisting of tourism stakeholders such as hotel managers, travel agents, airline officials, airport staff and tourist attraction representatives. The instrument was then prepared in five languages included English, Malay, Mandarin, Arabic and Japanese. The respondents were asked to provide information on the purpose of trip taken, duration of stay, mode of travel, source of information, perceived image of Penang and travel arrangement. In addition, the respondents were required to rate 12 attributes of destination importance and 12 attributes of destination performance, based on a 5-point Likert scale. Simple frequencies, cross tabulation analysis and chi-square test were computed on the respondents' demographic, travelling characteristic and expenditure pattern. The significance level used for chi-square test was 0.05%. In the second stage, the reliability test was performed on each 12 attributes of destination importance and performance, to test the stability of variables. The Cronbach's Alpha for 12 attributes of destination importance for male group was 0.872 and 0.877 for female group. While the reliability value for 12 attributes of performance for male group was 0.885 and 0.872 for female group. All items which indicated strong homogeneity of the items, appeared to be worthy of retention. In the third stage, the importance-performance analysis

(IPA) was applied to determine how the international tourists (both male and female groups) rate the importance and performance of Penang attributes. In addition to IPA, a paired sample *t*-test was performed to determine whether any significant difference existed between the perceived importance and performance attributes of Penang Island from male and female tourists' point of view. While, an independent sample *t*-test was performed to identify the significant difference on perceived importance and performance of Penang's destination attributes between male and female.

3 Findings

3.1 Demographics of the Segments

The findings indicate that majority of tourists were from ASEAN region (20.4% male, 28.1% female). The average age of male travellers was 35 years old and female travellers was 32 years old indicating the dominant of young travellers in both groups. In terms of marital status, 59.0% male travellers were married while female travellers record a near balance percentage. Table 1 shows that more than 50% of female respondents reported a monthly income of more than RM5,000 and only 37.5% of male travellers recorded monthly income more than that ($X^2 = 16.5, p = .002$). In terms of educational level 49.8% male travels had higher degree and 47.3% of female travellers hold a tertiary education. No significant difference was detected in terms of educational level between female and male respondents ($X^2 = 6.79, p = .147$). This is while a significant difference was reported in terms of occupation ($X^2 = 57.21, p < .001$). Male travellers were mostly professionals (44.1%) compare to female travellers. The result shows that female travellers record higher degree of unemployment compare to male travellers (36.5%).

Table 1. A Comparison of Education and Career Attainment of Male and Female International Tourists

Demographic Profile	Gender	
	Male (N=443)	Female (N=358)
Education attainment		
Higher degree	49.8%	38.9%
Tertiary education	41.9%	47.3%
Secondary education	6.3%	12.7%
Primary education	1.4%	0.6%
No formal education	0.7%	0.6%
	$X^2 = 16.5, p = .002$	
Monthly income (equivalent to RM)		
< RM5,000	37.5%	50.3%
RM5,001 – RM10,000	25.5%	20.3%
RM10,001 – RM50,000	32.2%	25.2%
RM50,001 – RM100,000	1.9%	2.8%
> RM100,001	2.9%	1.4%
Average	RM15,382.36	RM12,335.17
Maximum	RM222,380.00	RM306,250.00
	$X^2 = 6.79, p = .147$	
Occupation		
Legislators, senior officials & managers	10.4%	5.5%
Professionals	44.1%	23.5%
Technicians & associate professionals	16.0%	22.5%
Clerical workers	2.8%	5.1%
Service workers & shop sales workers	3.7%	6.1%
Craft & related trades workers	2.0%	0.0%
Skilled agricultural & fishery workers	0.8%	0.0%
Plant & machine-operators & assemblers	0.6%	0.7%
Unemployed (e.g. retiree, homemaker, student)	19.7%	36.5%
	$X^2 = 57.21, p < .001$	

3.2 Purpose of Trips Taken

In general, a significant difference was detected between male and female travellers (Table 2). Interestingly, despite the similar visitation trend for both genders (leisure, recreation and holidays), male travellers record higher number for business and professional purposes. Of importance, 0.7% of male travellers travelled to Penang with the purpose of religion/pilgrimages but none of female travellers travelled with the same reason.

Table 2. A Comparison of Trip Purposes of Male and Female International Tourists

Purpose of visit	Gender	
	Male (N=443)	Female (N=358)
Leisure/recreation/holidays	50.1%	55.0%
Business/professional	14.0%	5.0%
Visit friends/relatives (VFR)	12.9%	12.6%
Education/study/teaching	9.9%	10.9%
Honeymoon	3.8%	3.6%
Health treatment	2.9%	5.0%
Convention/conference/trade show	2.3%	2.2%
Incentive travel	1.4%	1.4%
Government affairs/official mission	1.1%	0.6%
Shopping	0.7%	2.2%
Religion/pilgrimages	0.7%	0.0%
Sporting tournament/event	0.2%	1.1%

$X^2 = 26.70, p = .005$

3.3 Image of Penang as Perceived by the Segments

Penang cuisine (20.7%), world heritage site (20.8%), sandy beach (19.9%), and multicultural society (17.8%) were associated to the image of Penang as perceived by female travellers. Same attributes shaped the image of Penang for male travellers as well indicating that their perception is not different.

Table 3. A Comparison of Penang Images as Perceived by Male and Female International Tourists

Image of Penang	Gender	
	Male (N=443)	Female (N=358)
Local cuisine	20.1%	20.7%
Sandy beach	19.9%	19.9%
World heritage site	19.7%	20.8%
Multicultural society	18.0%	17.8%
Shopping paradise	10.3%	9.4%
International events	4.6%	3.9%
Health services	4.6%	4.2%
Folkdance/cultural performance	2.3%	2.7%
Others (education centre, national park & business)	0.6%	0.6%

3.4 Importance-Performance Analysis

For the international male travellers, the mean importance for the plotted data was 3.72 and the mean performance rating was 3.65. “Safety and security” and “image of destination” scored high as most important attributes of Penang perceived by international male travellers. On the other hand, for the international male travellers, the mean importance for the plotted data was 3.82 and the mean performance rating was 3.68. In line with international male tourists, “safety and security” was the most importance attributes with high level of performance. This is followed by “image of destination” which scored high in both importance and performance (Table 4).

Table 4. Mean Ratings of Importance and Performance of Destination Attributes

Attribute	Importance (I)				Performance (P)				Difference (MP – MI)	
	Mean (M)		Std. Dev.		Mean (M)		Std. Dev.		Male	Female
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female		
(1) Image of destination	3.90	3.94	0.948	0.935	3.87	3.88	0.793	0.776	-0.03	-0.06
(2) Variety of tourism attractions	3.84	3.91	0.961	0.927	3.76	3.74	0.839	0.859	-0.08	-0.17
(3) Cultural/historical uniqueness	3.67	3.75	1.059	1.014	3.76	3.71	0.887	0.970	0.09	-0.04
(4) Value for money	3.79	3.85	0.992	0.944	3.72	3.77	0.840	0.844	-0.07	-0.08
(5) Safety and security	4.01	4.10	0.958	0.955	3.88	3.88	0.847	0.796	-0.13	-0.22
(6) Accessibility to the destination	3.83	3.95	0.961	0.902	3.65	3.76	0.855	0.832	-0.18	-0.19
(7) Friendliness of the people	3.77	3.77	1.013	0.977	3.78	3.87	0.966	0.993	0.01	0.10
(8) Availability of information	3.62	3.73	0.968	0.911	3.51	3.63	0.913	0.884	-0.11	-0.10
(9) Ease of communication	3.39	3.55	1.101	1.042	3.57	3.65	0.974	0.944	0.18	0.10
(10) Cleanliness of destination	3.62	3.75	1.010	0.983	3.42	3.32	0.986	1.012	-0.20	-0.43
(11) Accommodation services	3.69	3.84	1.015	0.952	3.63	3.66	0.921	0.890	-0.06	-0.18
(12) Local transport services	3.54	3.68	1.070	1.047	3.27	3.33	1.060	0.987	-0.27	-0.35
Total	44.67	45.82	-	-	43.82	44.20	-	-	-	-1.62
Central line	3.72	3.82	-	-	3.65	3.68	-	-	-	-

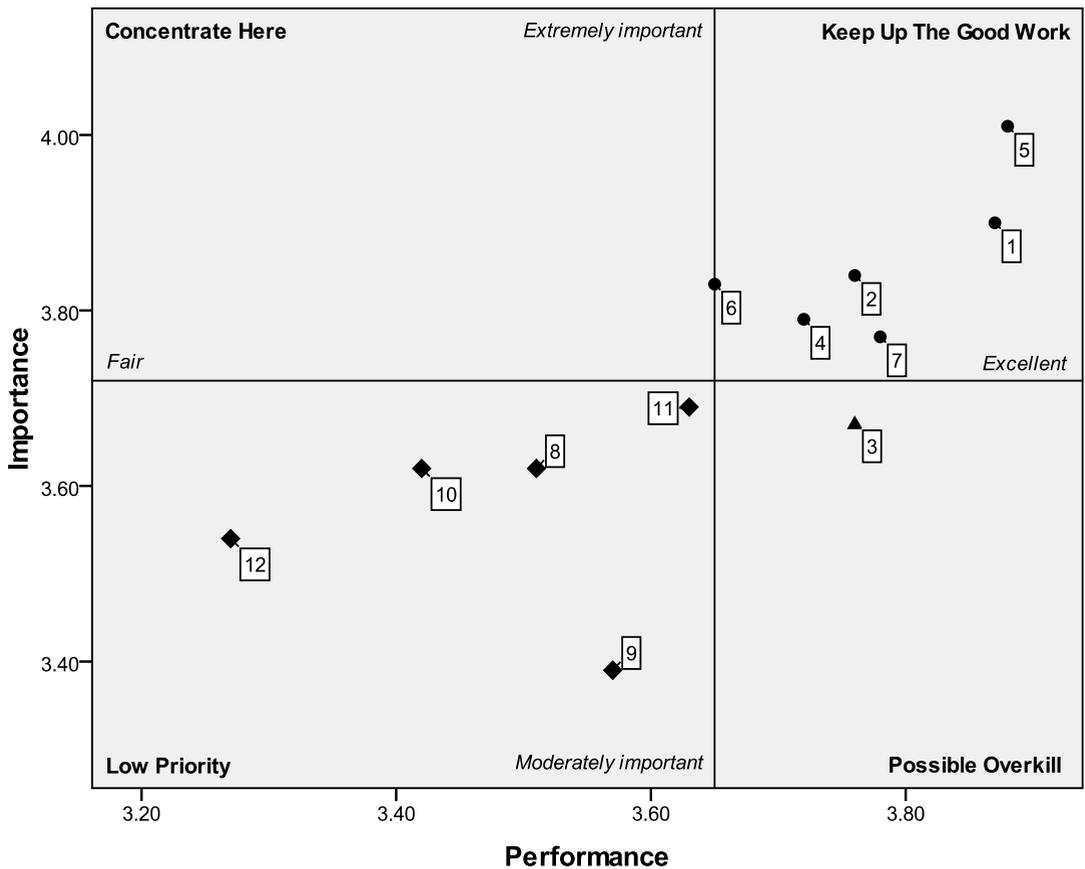


Figure 1. Importance-Performance Analysis Grid (male travellers).

From Figure 1, none of the items were identified in the Concentrate Here quadrant. The “image of destination”, “variety of tourism attractions”, “value for money”, “safety and security”, “accessibility to the destination” and “friendliness of the people” were plotted in the Keep Up the Good Work quadrant. The “availability of information”, “ease of communication”, “cleanliness of destination”, “accommodation services” and “local transport services” fall into the Low Priority quadrant. Furthermore “cultural/historical uniqueness” was plotted in Possible Overkill quadrant.

Figure 2 illustrates the results of the Importance-Performance Analysis grid for the sample group of international female tourists. As presented in the following figure, “image of destination”, “variety of tourism attractions”, “value for money”, “safety and security” and “accessibility to the destination”, were all classified in the Keep Up the Good Work quadrant. “Friendliness of the people” and “cultural/historical uniqueness” were plotted in the Possible Overkill quadrant and “availability of information”, “ease of communication”, “cleanliness of destination”, and “local transport services” fall into the Low Priority quadrant. “Accommodation services” was considered to fall into Concentrate here quadrant.

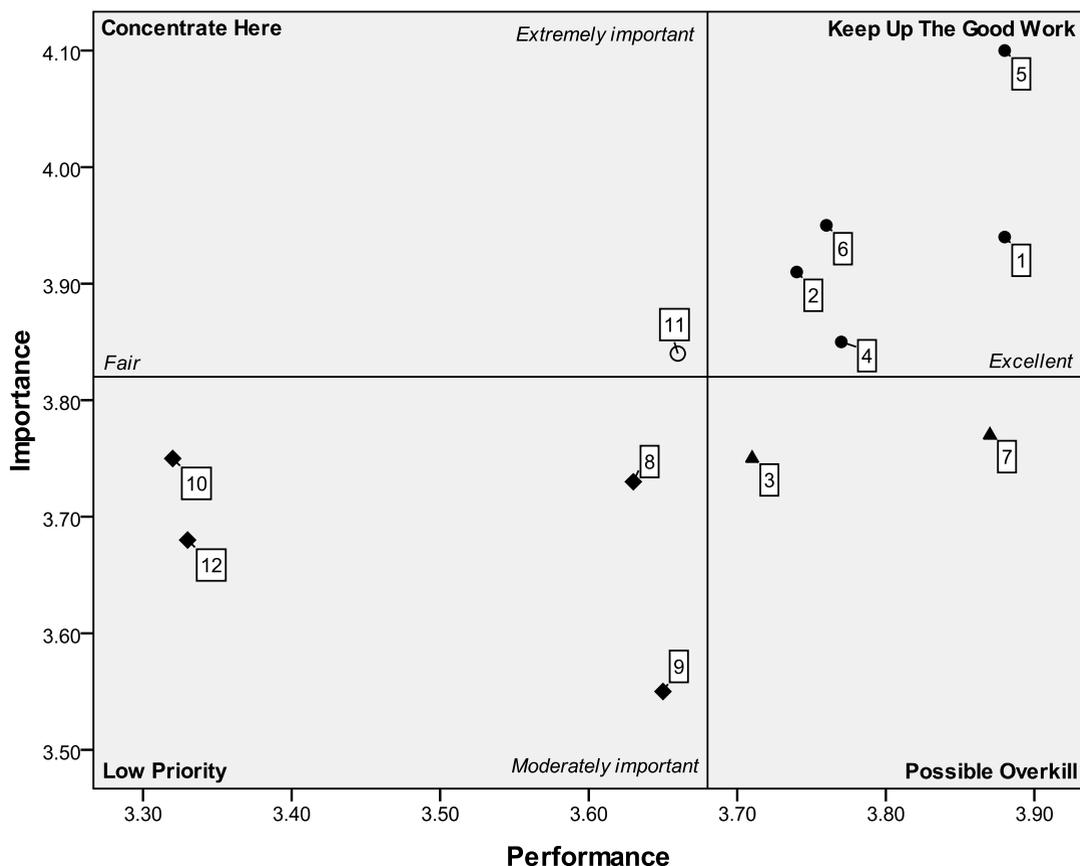


Figure 2. Importance-Performance Analysis Grid (female travellers)

To assess significant differences between male travellers' perceived importance and performance of Penang's attributes, a paired sample t-test was conducted. The results revealed that safety and security ($t = 2.591$), accessibility to the destination ($t = 3.304$), availability of information ($t = 2.071$), ease of communication ($t = -2.897$), cleanliness of destination ($t = 3.211$) and local transport services ($t = 4.201$) were found to be statistically significant, with $p < 0.05$. Another paired sample t-test found that variety of tourism attractions ($t = 3.205$), safety and security ($t = 3.802$), cleanliness of destination ($t = 6.471$), accommodation services ($t = 3.225$) and local transport services ($t = 5.954$) were statistically significant ($p < 0.001$) between female traveller's perceived importance and performance of Penang's attributes. In addition, an independent sample t-test was performed to identify the significant difference on perceived importance of destination attributes between male and female travellers. The results revealed that ease of communication ($t = -2.119$) and accommodation services ($t = -2.155$) were found to be statistically significant ($p < 0.005$). Nevertheless, there found to be no statistically significant difference on perceived performance of Penang's attributes between male and female.

4 Discussions and Conclusion

Similarly to Collins and Tisdell [6] in relation to purpose of visit, this paper observes male travellers present a higher result for business while at the same time, record identical result with female travellers for leisure. As genders are lowly depending on tour package, appropriate information centres and other source of information on site are indeed imperative. In cases of perceived image,

both genders associated Penang Island with cuisine, sandy beach, and multicultural society; with female travellers strongly interlink these images with world heritage site, compared to male travellers. Mieczkowski [19] argues that this happens as women are more motivated by cultural attributes of the destination. Despite the different requirements regarding some of the destination attributes (see also [23-24]), both genders agreed on selecting “image of destination”, “variety of tourism attractions”, “value for money”, “safety and security” and “accessibility to the destination”, as the most important attributes that at the same time performed well and satisfied tourists. Having said this, the Penang Island marketers are advised to further enhance these attributes. Although “cultural/historical uniqueness” was reported with over focused attribute by both groups while “friendliness of people” was grouped into overkilled quadrant by female travellers, these factors should not be neglected by the tourism marketers. Female travellers selected “accommodation services” to put under more concentration as the availability of safe, comfortable and affordable accommodation aspects are of their concerns [25]. Within this paper knowledge, these findings could assist Penang managers and marketers to prioritize the allocation consistent with their customer preference and priority. However, applying IPA coupled with other variables such as region, age or education level could be other practices for the further study. Inspecting the perception of different market segment towards the quality of destinations attributes can assist marketers to tackle the exact preferences of each group.

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