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**Satisfaction Level of Visitors Staying in a Boutique Hotel: A Case Study of Penang Museum Hotel**

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**Pelancongan Warisan di Tapak Warisan Dunia**

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EDITORIAL NOTE

This volume features six articles with various themes on heritage, conservation, tourism and government efforts encompassing different perspectives from the public, tourists, attorneys and policy makers. In economics, equilibrium is achieved where demand equals supply. Incidentally, heritage equilibrium is realized when demand of heritage by individuals and society matches the supply of heritage through proper preservation and conservation to maintain long-lasting history, retain unique architectural topographies and uphold exceptional cultural values. This volume provides readers with different case studies of tangible and intangible heritage from boutique hotels to underwater cultural heritage, the Indonesian-Malaysia cultural heritage similarities and the effort and laws governing preservation and conservation efforts.

The first paper on 'Satisfaction level of visitors staying in a Boutique Hotel: A Case Study of Penang Museum Hotel' by Ong Choon Yong and Thum Kar Men investigates the satisfaction level of visitors staying at Penang Museum Hotel. Penang Museum Hotel is one of the many newly arising boutique hotels that features unique heritage architecture that blends with the surrounding location and characterizes luxury lodge experience. Incidentally, uniqueness was ranked first of the satisfaction criteria by visitors. This was followed by hospitality, Penang's experiences, services booking and facilities and overall satisfaction. This paper concludes that policy makers should focus more on conserving and maintaining the unique features of old buildings as boutique hotels given the demand of such accommodations and the distinct features they hold.

The second paper by Norhanani Ahmad and Noor Azwa Syahida Mat Suhaimi focuses on heritage tourism in George Town, World Heritage Site. This paper was comprehensive enough to portray the behavior of tourists in respond to existing cultural tangible heritage in George Town. The survey showed that geographical location of heritage buildings play a role in influencing tourists visits. This is so because the survey found that Indian culture was mostly visited if visitors visited a Chinese heritage or Muslim heritage. This was partly explained by the location of most Indian culture at the center of George Town surrounded by the other heritage culture.

Paper by Nazariah Amran discusses the issues of commercialization of underwater cultural heritage. The 2001 UNESCO's Convention on the Protection of Underwater Cultural Heritage (CPUCH) disallows any commercialization activities in effort to protect all
underwater artifacts. While such convention is needed for the preservation and conservation of heritage, such doings may deny historians, archeologists or even the general public from retrieving, disseminating, sharing and understanding the unique history and underlying stories of such artifacts. Hence, this paper argues on the potential benefits of underwater cultural heritage commercialization by sharing with readers the recent discoveries and display efforts of underwater cultural heritage development.

Mohd Shahrom Idris provided readers with brief insight on government's continuous effort on the preservation and conservation of national cultural heritage. While Malaysian government has clear rules and regulations on handling heritage matters, sometimes, the enforcement could still be loose due to irresponsible behaviors of certain group of individuals. It is therefore vital that Malaysia take a more affirmative actions such as enforcement of property rights and ownership of heritage artifacts. It is vital that outreach and education programs involving the public to enhance conservation knowledge on the preservation and conservation of heritage is further enhanced. The paper provided some conservation effort done by related agencies such as that done by the Melaka government that could easily be replicated or adopted by others in ensuring the sustainability and lasting of national heritage.

In continuing reading this issue, readers are exposed to some of the heritage disputes confronted by Indonesia and Malaysia. Being countries with much similar and shared culture, the disputes are common for these two countries but prolong disputes without proper declaration may lead to further tension that may jeopardize the harmonic relationships of the two countries. In this paper, Suzarika Sahak shared some of the many legal and non-legal approaches in solving the arising disputes.

Another similar issue on heritage disputes between Malaysia and Indonesia is well articulated by Sollehuddin Muzaid in this next article. Sollehudin Muzaid, however, focuses on the intangible heritage that include local performances such as wayang kulit, cuisines such as rendang, popiah and soto and local poems such as pantun and syair. While the heritage may be differentiated by names, their rituals, ceremonials and practices show many similarities. Instances of conflict mainly focus on the ownership of such intangible heritage. And this arises from the fact that most intangible cultural heritage would fail the test of “originality” as intangible cultural heritage is largely based on pre-existing tradition, custom, and belief which have evolved over passage of time. Hence, as
put forward by the author, it is imperative that the two countries have a proper discussion on the matter or personalize the element of the intangible heritage and resolve the ownership dispute.

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SATISFACTION LEVEL OF VISITORS STAYING IN A BOUTIQUE HOTEL: A CASE STUDY OF PENANG MUSEUM HOTEL

Ong Choon Yong
Thum Kar Men

Abstract

Boutique hotel is a new concept of lodging that emphasizes on a comfortable and luxurious stay. The focus of this study is to determine the satisfaction level of visitors staying in the boutique hotel (Penang Museum Hotel) and to examine the factors affecting the satisfaction level of the visitors. The satisfaction factors included are location, quality, uniqueness, services, booking and facilities, personalized services, Penang’s experiences and ambience of surrounding, hospitality and overall satisfaction. This study targets visitors who stayed in Penang Museum Hotel for at least one night. Descriptive analysis is used to study the profile of the respondents who filled up the survey form. Satisfaction level of visitors is measured by using five levels Likert scale method and scoring method is used to sum up the total score of satisfaction level. Among the 8 satisfaction factors, uniqueness has the highest mean score, followed by hospitality; Penang’s experiences and ambience of surrounding; service, booking and facilities; overall satisfaction; personalized services; quality and location. Future market expansion plans should focus on uniqueness, personalized services and hospitality as these three factors are significant in determining the overall satisfaction. Lastly, there is a need on policies about the conservation of boutique hotels and to maintain and renovate existing buildings as boutique hotels as it is crucial to maintain the authenticity of Penang’s Georgetown heritage area.

Keywords: boutique hotels, satisfaction level, scoring method

Introduction

Hotels are properties that offer fully serviced guest rooms with en-suite bathrooms (excluding pubs). Guests expect the availability of daily housekeeping services, as well as access to a dedicated reception area or service desk during their stay (STAR Ratings Australia, 2014). Apart from that, a hotel includes a boarding-house, lodging-house, guest-house and any buildings or premises not being a public institution and contain
not less than 4 rooms in which people are harboured or lodged where any domestic service is provided by the owner, lessee, tenant, occupier or manager for the person who harbour or lodge (Hotels Licensing Board, Singapore, 2012). Hotels can be categorized into luxury hotels (five stars and above), star rating hotels (one, two, three or four stars), boutique hotel and budget hotels.

Regardless of which type of hotel, all hotels have the same objective which is to provide their customers the best accommodation and lodging experience. The basic amenities such as private bathroom, colour television, telephone, air conditioning, small refrigerator, safety deposit box (normally at a small daily rental fee), housekeeping services, 24-hour front desk and swimming pool are provided. However, some hotels might not have one or more of these amenities (Types of Hotel, n.d.). Based on the criteria of qualitative and aesthetic requirements, all hotels must be safe, functional and well-maintained (Malaysian Association of Hotels, 2012).

The definition of boutique hotel varies (Aggett, 2007). Boutique hotel unites traditional architecture with the comfort and luxury of modernism, without losing the personality of the local community. According to Niculescu and Rabontu (2009), boutique hotel can be defined by approaching its two components separately. Boutique describes a small, luxurious store that sells products in small quantities, while a hotel is a building in which travellers stay for a short time in furnished rooms. By combining these definitions, one can define a boutique hotel as a small, luxurious hotel that has furnished rooms. A boutique hotel represents a new way to look at the hospitality industry with a special emphasis on a pleasant reception and customized services.

There are two branches of boutique hotel which are boutique hotels located in city destination and boutique hotels located in resort destination. Boutique hotels offer good and exceptional personal services. It generally targets customers who are in their 20s to mid-50s with middle to upper income (Anhar, 2001). Ministry of Tourism and Culture Malaysia (2014) proposed Boutique Hotel Criteria as a 5-stars rated hotel with total number of rooms between 10 and 100, the minimum room rate is RM 1000, one staff per one guest room, additional rating for thematic, exquisite décor, warmth, luxurious furniture and fittings, intimate and unique atmosphere. Nowadays, the concept of boutique hotels has spread throughout the world, including European countries and East Asian countries.

The general objective of this paper is to examine the satisfaction level of visitors staying in a boutique hotel. Specifically, the objectives are
Boutique Hotels in George Town, Penang

Boutique hotels located in Georgetown’s heritage area are 1881 Chong Tian Hotel, 23 Love Lane, Banana Boutique Hotel, Campbell House, Cheong Fatt Tze Mansion, Chulia Heritage Hotel, Clove Hall, Coffee Atelier, Hotel Penaga, Muntri Mews, Macalister Mansion, Mango Tree Place Georgetown, Museum Hotel, Nordin Mews, Seven Terraces Hotel, Sinkeh, Straits Collection Georgetown, The Boutique Residence Hotel and Yeng Keng Hotel.

Boutique hotels with heritage theme are OZO Hotel, Victoria Street Hotel and unnamed hotel projects in Magazine Road are under the progress of completion. Contemporary themed hotels are The Rice Miller Hotel & Godowns, the Wembley-St Giles Premier Hotel and the Cititel Express Penang are scheduled to start operations by the end of 2014. The five-storey Victoria Street Hotel is an infill development of a nineteen-century colonial commercial building facade while the unnamed RM80mil hotel project is an infill development scheme with a colonial facade. The Rice Miller Hotel & Godowns is a partial infill development and restoration project (Tan, 2014).

As written by Tan (2014), Malaysian Association of Hotels (MAH) Penang vice-chairman, Andy Fong says that what attracts foreign visitors to boutique heritage hotels in inner Georgetown is the way the projects are being restored for adaptive commercial use. The intricacies of restoration work and the antique furniture used determine the pricing of the rooms per night. Overseas visitors comprise of 70% of guests in boutique heritage hotels, while the remainder is domestic travellers.

Generally, boutique hotels are more expensive than other types of hotel. This might be due to the unique ambiences, intimate settings and exceptional personal services provided in boutique hotels. However, some hotels especially the luxury hotels might have a higher room rate compared to the boutique hotels, depending on the room type. A comparison of room price for different hotels in Penang is shown in Table 1 below:
Table 1: Room price comparison between three hotels in Penang

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Rooms in 23 Love Lane</th>
<th>Price of first night in 23 Love Lane (RM)</th>
<th>Type of Rooms in Lone Pine Hotel</th>
<th>Price of first night in Lone Pine Hotel (RM)</th>
<th>Type of Rooms in Hotel Equatorial</th>
<th>Price of first night in Hotel Equatorial (RM)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Heritage Room 1920's Jack Roof Annexe</td>
<td>800</td>
<td>Deluxe</td>
<td>920</td>
<td>Premier</td>
<td>655</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Straits Eclectic</td>
<td>800</td>
<td>Super Deluxe</td>
<td>1 010</td>
<td>Club Premier Deluxe</td>
<td>770</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anglo Indian Bungalow</td>
<td>800</td>
<td>Premier</td>
<td>1 110</td>
<td>Junior Suite</td>
<td>900</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indian Shophouse</td>
<td>1 200</td>
<td>Premier-Garden</td>
<td>1 210</td>
<td>Premier Suite</td>
<td>1 000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>65 Stewart Lane Suite</td>
<td>1 200</td>
<td>Deluxe Suite</td>
<td>1 510</td>
<td>Executive Suite</td>
<td>1 500</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: a23 Love Lane, 2014; bLone Pine Hotel, 2014; cHotel Equatorial, 2014
Note: The type of room in each row is almost the same based on authors various sources of information.

From Table 1, Lone Pine Hotel, a luxury hotel, generally offers a higher room price compared to 23 Love Lane, a boutique hotel. On the other hand, the price difference is inconsistent between 23 Love Lane and Hotel Equatorial, which is also a luxury hotel in Penang. 23 Love Lane offers higher room price in certain types of rooms such as Heritage Room 1920’s Jack Roof Annexe (equivalent to Premier room in Hotel Equatorial), Straits Eclectic (equivalent to Club Premier Deluxe in Hotel Equatorial) and Indian Shophouse (equivalent to Premier Suite in Hotel Equatorial). For the room price comparison between the two luxury hotels, Lone Pine Hotel offers higher room price when compared to Hotel Equatorial. The Lone Pine Hotel is located near to the BatuFeringghi beach area while Hotel Equatorial is located in the city area. This indicates that the hotel location does affect the room price offered.

Tan (2014) cited Andy Fong, who is also the general manager of 23 Love Lane, a boutique heritage hotel commented guests were interested in the details of the restoration and do not mind the room rates, which are still very competitive compared to a similar range of hotels in the region. In 23 Love Lane, the furniture used comes from the 19th century Straits Settlement period.

Besides that, Macalister Mansion which is named after Penang’s British Governor Colonel Norman Macalister opened in 2012, attracts a