

## Multi-Dimensional Risk Components Influencing Hotel Patronage Decision

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### ABSTRACT

*Obtaining customer's patronage is important for hotels to generate profit and business sustainability. As such there is a critical need to understand that customers' decision to patronize a hotel is often associated with a variety of perceived risks. If high risks were perceived, patronage will not take place and vice versa. Thus, it is important to manage risks since low-risk perception will convince customers to patronize a hotel. This study examined the relationship between perceived risks and customers' hotel patronage decision. The influence of performance risk, financial risk, psychological risk, social risk and physical risk on hotel's patronage decision was examined in this study. A total of 100 business customers were selected for this study. The Google Form Survey was used to distribute questionnaires using WhatsApp application to customers' mobile phone with the hotel's assistance. 80 valid responses were obtained. Results of the study showed that performance risk, financial risk, social risk and psychological risk have significantly influenced customers' hotel patronage decision. The results of the study postulated the need for an integrated approach such as providing periodic training to employees, offering privilege card to loyal guests and differentiating the hotel amongst key competitors as initiatives to minimize the said risks more efficiently and improve the hotel's patronage.*

*Keywords: financial, patronage decision, performance, psychological, social and physical risk*

### INTRODUCTION

The Eleventh Malaysia Plan, 2016-2020 has earmarked the hotel industry to be a key driver of economic growth (EPU, 2017). However, the hotel industry is currently experiencing volatility and increasing uncertainties parallel to the global economy (Sham, 2016). Stiff competition from numerous hospitality providers has also plagued the hotel industry (Tan, 2016). Homestays with the 'Airbnb model' pose a disruption to hoteliers' market causing a decline in occupancy rates among the local hotels (Ng, 2016). Hotels are struggling to satisfy and retain customers for their long-term survival. One avenue hotel's need to thread into is to identify which risks affect's customers' hotel patronage so as to optimize investments by reducing such risks (Ladhari & Michaud, 2015). Buying process of hospitality services

such as hotel services can be risky due to characteristics like intangibility, heterogeneity, perishability and inseparability nature of services (Souza et al., 2016). In view of this hoteliers need to institute initiatives to ascertain the extent to which consumer's perceive risks each time service consumption takes place. According to risk researchers most consumers use their intuitive risk judgment to evaluate risk, which is typically referred to as risk perception (Slovic et al., 1982). Customer's perceived risk is the intuitive, individual perception of certain adverse impact on the financial, physical, and social consequences of their consumption experience (Jin et al., 2016). Tseng Wang (2016) postulated consumer's perceived risk as the subjective belief that a loss may occur when seeking desirable results from a product or service. This study defines perceived risk as a variety of perceptions consumers' form pertaining to the uncertainties and negative results related to the purchase of a hotel services since most customers are confronted with the feeling of uncertainty during their purchase process as they are unable to foresee the potential outcomes of their purchase, especially in the context of hotel services, where their intangibility makes them difficult to evaluate (Mitchell, 2001).

Customer's patronage behavior could be affected by their perceived risk as it creates a feeling of uncertainty in them (Gjerald & Lyngstad, 2015). In fact, customer's risk perception is the best predictor of customers' purchase behaviour for services (Pedro et al., 2014). The unfavorable result that customers perceive as expected loss is the characteristics and sum of the risk expected from their patronage (Munnukka & Järvi, 2015). Literature on customers marketing has conceptualized perceived risk to encompass social, psychological, physical risks performance risk and financial risk that directly affects customers' purchase-related value perception and satisfaction that contributes to the uncertainty in their purchase outcomes (Gjerald & Lyngstad, 2015; Pedro et al., 2014). Since customers need to deal with the uncertain probability of negative consequences when purchasing a hotel's service, it is important to empirically examined the relationship between types of perceived risks and customers' hotel patronage. This would heighten hotel management's understanding of customer's risk perception and aid in the formulation of appropriate service marketing management strategies to mitigate these risks effectively (Souza et al., 2016).

Customer patronage constitutes a purchase action by customer's and focuses on attracting and keeping customers longer at a destination (Nwulu & Asiegbu, 2015; Nadube & Akahome, 2017). Customers will avoid patronizing a hotel if they think the hotel will cause problems to them (Yang & Nair, 2014). Past studies revealed that customers will patronize a hotel if they see similarities between them and other customers. In addition, if customers feel that their service choice has a higher certainty to perform and less likely to experience financial loss, they will certainly choose the hotel again. Hence it is important that customers leave the hotel with satisfaction as this will lead to future patronage of the hotel (Nadube & Akahome, 2017).

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### Multi-dimensional components of risks types and hotel patronage decision

It is critical for hotel managers to understand customer's buying decision process that eventually leads to their patronage decision. Theoretically there are five stages, namely need recognition, information search, alternative evaluation, purchase and post purchase stages (Anjali, 2022; Alina, 2017). However, not every stage will be pursued depending on whether the patronage decision one that is encountered for the first time or repeat purchase. It is important for hotel managers to understand salient elements prevailing in each of the five stages leading to their final patronage decision (choice).

Stage one entails need recognition/arousal. At this stage customers recognizes a need deficiency. When visiting a city for business or vacation a traveller needs a hotel room. At this point

the core service they are looking for could be just a place to rest/sleep, security or comfort. Thus, it is critical for hotel managers to isolate the real reason why customers patronize their hotel and package their service to cater to those exact needs and wants. Stage two is where customers engage in information search for possible hotel alternatives available in the area they intend to visit. The extensiveness of this search depends of the price and complexity of the purchase. For instance, information search for a budget hotel would be less intensive and time consuming as compared to a vacation resort. At this juncture, identifying the likely information sources potential customers would utilize in their information quest is important. They may range from advertisements in a variety of media especially social media, brochures and alike and personal sources such as friends, family members and travel professionals before arriving at their final patronage decision. According to Krishnamoorthy (2001) information sources such as word-of-mouth and customized information offers good guidance that can reduce risk perception and facilitate consumer patronage choice. It is important to note that information is relatively more critical for first-time customers in comparison to existing customers. Stage three is where alternative choices of hotels will be evaluated based on attributes important to the customers such as, price, location, facilities, reputation, room size/design, service (functional/interpersonal) as well as food and beverage services. Additionally potential risks encompassing social risk, psychological risk, physical risks, performance risk and financial risk too would be given consideration. Alternative hotel choices will be evaluated against the selected attributes with each given a different weightage. The alternative with the highest overall score will ultimately become their patronage choice. Once choice has been made consumers would proceed to stage four where they would execute their patronage choice by checking into the said hotel. Finally stage five is where the customer would assess their use and stay of the hotel room as a hotel guest. Satisfaction or dissatisfaction will prevail at this stage. If their perception meets or exceeds their expectation of the hotel then satisfaction will be derived and vice versa. Positive word-of-mouth will ensue if a hotel guest has derived satisfaction from their stay and if dissatisfaction prevails then negativities will potentially be spread about the hotel. These complaints can be made officially to the hotel management or made public which can be detrimental to the hotel's reputation.

Earlier studies have investigated perceived risk through the overall and multidimensional perspectives. Dowling and Staelin (1994) and Stone and Grønhaug (1993) examined perceived risk through the overall perspective, with the assumption that consumers will combine all risk factors of a product in their mind. However, the multi-dimensional approach of investigating perceived risk is more complex and comprises of a variety of interrelated risk dimensions, where each dimension represents different types of risk. The incorporation of multi dimensions would reflect customer's perception in greater depth and details. This study has investigated consumer's perceived risk from the multi-dimensional perspective. With the inclusion of five dimensions, each dimension represented the following types of risk, namely performance risk, financial risk, psychological risk, social risk and physical risk (Peter & Tarpey, 1975; Jacoby and Kaplan, 1972).

Performance risk is customer's concern pertaining to the correct function of a hotel's service, as they are fearful of not receiving the proper service as promised (Souza et al., 2016). Customers often perceive a higher performance risk prior to acquiring a hotel's service as there is ambiguity with intrinsic attributes and uncertainty with the quality and functionality of the service (Ramulu & Sapna, 2015). This study has described performance risks as the perceived outcome of the hotel's service that was unable to meet customers' expectation since it was not performed as promised (Justin et al., 2012). For instance, the hotel's facilities may malfunction during customers stay (Choo et al., 2016). Additionally, each customer may expect a different range of service quality from the hotel provider as different customers have different needs, circle of exposure and past experiences (Nadube & Akahome, 2017). As such, there is always a chance that the service performed does not meet their expectations (Ng, 2016). More so, sometimes customers still feel disappointed even after having positive experience because their experience did not match their high expectation (Souza et al., 2016). Today's hotel customers often refer to the e-Word-of-Mouth (e-WOM) or reviews from previous customers to get a rough idea about a hotel's service quality and performance. TripAdvisor shared that 53% of customers

will not proceed with the booking until they read reviews and 77% of customers will usually read reviews before they arriving at their patronage decision of a hotel (Xie et al., 2016). This finding shows that customers do worry about the service performance they will receive following their patronage.

On the other hand, financial risk is the monetary loss experienced when a customer did not receive the service purchased as promised (Kurtz & Clow, 1998). This could be attributed to a wrong purchase decision, hidden costs, maintenance costs or lack of warranty (Kushwaha & Shankar, 2013). Nisa et al. (2020), in their study uncovered that increasing awareness of financial risk leads people to better compliance with protective measures, meaning hotels' active protective measures against possible service failures along the service delivery process, service components or people engaged in service delivery would lower potential customers perception of possible financial risk. As the price of a hotel's service increases, customers are more conscious of the financial risk as they will lose more if the service fails. The inception of online booking for hotel's through Agoda, Trivago, Expedia and hotel's webpage have increased customers perceived financial risk as they may mistakenly book a room at a higher price, on the wrong date, their credit card information may be stolen or put to wrong use by the service provider (Souza et al., 2016).

Psychological risk is customer's perception that a hotel's brand name of service does not meet their individual standard hence resulting in loss of their self-image. It is also related to their self-esteem or ego due to the disappointment of not meeting their patronage objective (Kushwaha & Shankar, 2013; Chehimi, 2013). Customers' frustration stemming from a poor service selection due to their emotional and psychological stress arising from uncertainties surrounding the service offered may also constitute their psychological risk (Justin et al., 2012). Hotel's with good reputation will elevate customer's confidence that a good purchase choice has been made thus lowering their psychological risk (Sun, 2014). The presence of important people at the hotel would influence customers' self-esteem and induce the believe that the hotel is of a high standard (Dorothea & Benkenstein, 2014). Lastly the possibility of personal information leaks or unsuccessful online transaction can also generate psychological pressure and can be a source of psychological risk in a hotel's context (Chang, 2008).

Social risk will prevail when a service purchase results in the loss of image or status because they were negatively evaluated by other service users (Justin et al., 2012; Sun, 2014). When customer perceive a purchase to have an important impact on their image or status, they will execute the purchase and vice versa. Additionally, the extent to which people who are important to the customers, disfavours a service would influence their social risk (Kurtz & Clow, 1998). Hence those with high social consciousness tend to feel unnecessary tension when family and close friends do not agree to their hotel choice. They too will tend to feel embarrassed if seen staying at a hotel that is not approve by their social circle and may feel threatened if their brand choices do not perform well (Sun, 2014). By way of contrast when customer's see similarities between them and other purchasers, their patronage intentions will increase.

If a service does not function properly, it could potentially cause physical harm to the customer (Ramulu & Sapna, 2015; Munnukka & Järvi, 2015). Physical risk is the physical harm, injury, or sickness sustained by customers while enjoying the services and may relate to the physical constraints concerning security and safety at the destination where the service was purchased (Chew & Jahari, 2014). Hotel customers may possibly sustain physical injury when using the hotel's recreational facilities such as swimming pool, steam room, gymnasium and many others (Bharwani & Mathews, 2012). Hotel customers too are exposed to the risk of fire, explosion gas leaks from the kitchen of the hotel where they are staying. As the hotel operations run twenty-hours seven days a week, the building structure needs a regular check to avoid any untowed incident. In addition, customers are also at risk from utilizing a hotel's in-house infrastructure such as elevators/escalators and air-conditioning (Chang, 2008). Besides exposure to direct physical harm, there is also an indirect physical harm such as food poisoning. Thus, hotel's management is duty bound to ensure that food preparation process does comply with hygiene standards to avoid customers from being exposed to food poisoning.

## METHODOLOGY

This is a descriptive study aimed at determining the influence of customers' risk perception on hotel patronage decision. Specifically, the study examined the relationship between performance risk, financial risk, psychological risk, social risk and physical risk and customer's patronage decision for a hotel. The unit of analysis in this research are individual business customers. The target population are business customers who have stayed for a minimum one night at the hotel for business event. A total of 100 customers who matched the aforesaid criteria were conveniently selected as the study's respondents with the assistance of the hotel manager.

Instrument for data collection included a questionnaire with sections on respondent's demographic profile, types of perceived risk among a hotel's patron namely performance risk, financial risk, psychological risk, social risk and physical risk and hotel's patronage. A five-point Likert Scale was adopted as it is good enough for market research questionnaires since it offers enough choice for respondents to address their level of agreement or disagreement on the subject matter (Johns, 2010). The questionnaire was pre-tested among 5 respondents to ensure it was clearly worded and well designed. The Google Form Survey was used where the questionnaires were sent using WhatsApp application to customers' phone number with the hotel's assistance. Respondents were requested to fill-in their phone number to ensure they did not respond more than once to this survey. A total of 80 respondents provide feedback from the initial 100 WhatsApp blasted.

The overall Cronbach's Alpha value obtained was 0.774, customers' patronage:0.797, financial risk: 0.636, performance risk:0.896, physical risk:0.875, psychological risk:0.747 and social risk:0.625. A Cronbach's Alpha value of more than 0.6 indicates moderate internal consistency reliability while values of 0.70 or higher is considered acceptable in most social science research situation (Taber, 2017) (Vaske et al., 2017).

**Table 1: Overall Mean and Standard Deviation for Multi-Dimensional Components of Risk Types and Hotel Patronage Decision**

Types of Risk	Mean	Standard Deviation	Rank (based on mean)
Performance	3.21	1.13	5
Financial	4.15	0.95	1
Psychological	3.54	1.20	2
Social	3.45	1.16	3
Physical	3.32	1.19	4
Customers' Patronage	2.68	1.03	

The highest mean value was 4.15, while the lowest was 3.21. This indicates that a majority of respondents have agreed that financial risk, psychological risk and social risk were their key concern in making their decision to patronize the hotel.

## FINDINGS

Results of the regression analysis showed the presence of a significant relationship of 0.05 between types of perceived risks and customers' hotel patronage. The adjusted R<sup>2</sup> indicated that 43% of the variance on customers' patronage was explained by customers perceived performance risk, financial risk, psychological risk, social risk and physical risk. Furthermore, performance risk, financial risk, psychological risk and social risk were significant were significant at 0.05 with the following p-value; performance risk (0.000), financial risk (0.000), psychological risk (0.047) and social risk (0.003).

**Table 2: Regression analysis for Types of Risks and Hotel Patronage**

Item	Standardize Beta	(t)	Significant (p)
Performance	-.395	-3.650	.000 *
Financial	-.391	-3.821	.000 *
Psychological	-.251	-2.019	.047 *
Social	.348	3.037	.003 *
Physical	-.074	-.545	.590
R-square			.466
Adjusted R-Square			.430
F-Value			11.621
p-Value			.000

Note: \*p-value less than 0.05

## DISCUSSION

Social risk recorded a positive Standardize Beta value of (0.348), indicating if social risk increases, customers' patronage would increase. Social risk takes into consideration how society can influence a customer's decision-making process (Justin et al., 2012). In the context of this study where patrons perceived the hotel is not of high standard, business customers would still patronize the hotel as they had to attend event/s organized by their company. Hence, even if their perception of social risk increased, they would still patronize the hotel. However, performance risk (-.395), financial risk (-.391), and psychological risk (-.251) indicated an inverse relationship with customers' patronage. This implies that when customers perceive low performance risk, financial risk, and psychological risk, their hotel patronage will increase. Dorothea Brack and Benkenstein postulated that performance risk will impact a customer's patronage decision especially when the service performed did not meet their expectations (Dorothea & Benkenstein, 2014). Thus, as performance risks increased, customers' patronage will decline and vice versa. Ramulu and Sapna highlighted that as customer's perceived an increase in financial risks their hotel patronage will drop (Ramulu & Sapna, 2015). Consequently, psychological risk occurs when the hotel does not meet customer's expectation hence resulting in the impairment of their self-image if the service is consumed (Choo et al., 2016). On a similar note, as psychological risk perception increases, customer's patronage will decline. Contrastingly, physical risk was not significant in affecting customers' hotel patronage. There is a good possibility that customers did not sustain any physical injury when using the hotel recreational facilities such as swimming pool, steam room, gymnasium and others (Bharwani & Mathews, 2012). This could be possible because the hotel's management has institutes effective operating procedures or baseline for their daily maintenance to ensure the facilities are kept orderly for the safety of their patrons.

## CONTRIBUTION

A key contribution of this study is to master the understanding of customer's perceived risk for hotel services through specific modification of multi-dimensional risk components of perceived risk and establish their influence on patronage decision for choice of hotel. This is important as the hotel service is of different nature and hence imposes different connotation as well as structure of perceived risk dimensions which is essential to help hotel managers have a comprehensive and in-depth understanding of perceived risk influencing customer's patronage decision of a hotel.

The application of multi-dimensional risk components suggests that hotel management should maintain high standards in all aspects of hotel service to minimize perception of risk, for example maintaining service consistency, on time delivery of service and deliver service as promised. Customer's perception of each risk component that has been ascertained would facilitate hotel managers to develop separate risk reduction strategies for these risks. Initiatives to offer memorable experiences to customers would help to minimize negative effects of perceived risk. Collectively all these efforts may in turn affect customer's revisit intention.

## **LIMITATION**

One limitation of this study is the use of only business customers sample as the study sample, as hotels cater to various segments of customers. In addition, these business customers have patronized the hotel as attendees of their company's function, which means organizational policies and guidelines may have infringed on their hotel's patronage decision. Moreover, only business customers of one hotel was included in this study. This limits the generalizability of the findings reported in this study.

## **CONCLUSION**

To sum performance and financial risk have demonstrated the strongest influence on consumers hotel patronage decision followed by psychological risks. Thus, it would be necessary for the hotel management to formulate appropriate strategies to mitigate these risks to elevate patronage to their hotel. This is critical in view of the heightened competitiveness that has prevailed in the Malaysian hotel industry with the strong entry of Airbnb segment.

## **FUTURE RESEARCH**

Limited studies have manipulated risk by experimental design. Henceforth, there should be more research experimentally manipulating services and patronage/use situations (e.g. use by end user, organizational buyer, online purchase versus in-store). Such research designs will address theoretical relationships within the risk model (e.g. types of risks and preference for risk relievers).

Literature has suggested that perceived risk is a function of intrapersonal variables (e.g. personality, attitude, motivation), product/service differences (hotels are categorized by star) and situation differences (e.g. for "self", "family" or for "organization"). As such a more comprehensive research design could be conceptualized by simultaneously incorporating these variables. This would enable variations in demographic composition of subjects across studies to be recognized and addressed accordingly.

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## **AUTHORS' CONTRIBUTION**

Nooraini, M., Puspa Melati Kasi, Nurul Alia Shaharuddin and Mohamad Firdaus Awang Kecil conceived and planned the survey instrument. Puspa Melati Kasi, Nurul Alia Shaharuddin and Mohamad Firdaus Awang Kecil carried out the survey and data preparation. Nooraini, M., Puspa Melati Kasi, Nurul Alia Shaharuddin and Mohamad Firdaus Awang Kecil contributed to the interpretation of the results. Nooraini, M. took the lead in writing the manuscript while Siti Zaleha assisted. Siti Zaleha

too was responsible to edit and format the paper and ensure all are orderly for submission. All authors provided critical feedback and helped shape the research, analysis and manuscript.

## CONFLICT OF INTEREST DECLARATION

We certify that the article is the Authors' and Co-Authors' original work. The article has not received prior publication and is not under consideration for publication elsewhere. This research/manuscript has not been submitted for publication nor has it been published in whole or in part elsewhere. We testify to the fact that all Authors have contributed significantly to the work, validity and legitimacy of the data and its interpretation for submission to Jurnal Intelek.

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