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Table of contents

URL: https://bookshelf.vitalsource.com/reader/books/9781000619096/pageid/230

Page: 210-216

Perceptions and attitudes of Indonesian employees in hospitality industry towards tourists from China

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ABSTRACT: The increasing number of Chinese tourists in Indonesia should anticipated service quality improvement. In this case, a study on hospitality workers' perceptions and attitudes is crucial since they affect the workers' behavior in providing service. This study aims to examine the employee's perceptions and attitudes when they deal with Chinese tourists at work. A survey was conducted with a sample of 312 hospitality industry employees in Jakarta and its surrounding areas, who have prior interaction with Chinese tourists at work. Quantitative data analysis revealed that out of thirty indicators for perception, the hospitality workers mostly showed a positive perception, while negative perceptions were only found in five indicators. In terms of attitude, there were no noticeable differences in employee attitudes when handling Chinese tourists. This study adds to the conceptual literature on service and human resource management by adding new empirical evidence to the present literature.

Keywords: Employees' Perception; Employees' Attitudes; Hospitality Industry; Tourists from China.

1 INTRODUCTION

Statistically, China's outbound departures grew from 10 million in 2000 to over 97 million in 2013, making the country the world's fastest-growing market. China's expenditure on outbound travel reached US$102 billion in 2012, making it the first tourism source market in the world in terms of spending (UNWTO 2013). Additionally, the growing number of Chinese tourists visiting Indonesia, in particular, was partly due to the promotional events sponsored by the Ministry of Tourism in major Chinese cities. The number of Chinese tourists who arrived was 214,427, which was higher than the 205,855 Malaysian tourists, 125,153 Singaporese, 123,777 from Timor Leste, and 42,680 from India (Tempo 2018). Numerous empirical research on outbound tourism from China has been conducted during the previous two decades. Collectively, this research examined a broad range of contexts. The quantity of findings demonstrates academics' significant interest in Chinese outbound tourism, the existence of numerous research fields, and the need to understand this critical market. In general, the research mostly comprises three areas: (1) destination-related, (2) tourist-related, and (3) source market-related (Tse 2015).

Research on destination-related topics mostly focused on the destination preference development that is most likely visited by Chinese tourists. Additionally, Zhang and Heung (2002) reported three stages of destination development. The first stage began in 1983 when Hong Kong and Macau became popular tourist destinations for visiting friends and relatives. The second stage began in 1990, with the fame of Southeast Asian countries such as Singapore, Malaysia, and Thailand. The third stage began in 1999, with the recognition of non-Asian countries such as Australia and New Zealand as "acceptable destinations" (Zhang & Heung 2002). Meanwhile,

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tourist-related research mostly deals with who they are, why they travel, and how they act at a destination. The research area is diverse: some Chinese tourist studies are undertaken regardless of destination, while others are conducted within the context of a specific destination. The wide array of this research range from travel activity preferences (Chow & Murphy 2008), independent tourists' characteristics (Xiang 2013), intention to consume local food (Suntikul et al. 2020), and food habit and consumption (Lin et al. 2020). The last area is source market-related. China is fundamentally a socialist state exercising political control from the center, and such control is also evident in outbound tourism. Conventional destination-related research could not adequately explain the phenomenon. The approved destination status policy and individual visit scheme are effectively a kind of state control on tourist flow (Tse 2015). The samples involve study on tourists between China and India via a geopolitical lens, demonstrating how such an approach allows us to better comprehend the global politics (Hannam 2013), how the outbound tourism is in line with political agenda, and a form of soft power (Tse 2013; Xu et al. 2020), and the analysis of how the social and bureaucracy on oversea travel trigger the birth of "new" Chinese tourists (Arlt 2013).

Although the arrival of Chinese tourists in Indonesia was skyrocketed, studies on Chinese tourists remain scarce. While navigating with the keyword of "Chinese tourist in Indonesia", recent studies report about cultural touristic experiences (Darma Putra et al. 2021), and purchasing intentions (Budi et al. 2021). We argue that one of the crucial areas that need to be investigated is the readiness of the hospitality industry workers in handling Chinese tourists. The language barrier and cultural difference might present a barrier to providing service, and negatively affect tourists' experience (Ying et al. 2018). What is more, the worker's perceptions of the Chinese tourists, regarding the negative news in the media (Fernquest 2016; Mariano 2019; Tatlow 2016) should be comprehensively investigated since they will affect their attitude in providing successful service quality. In other words, an employee's attitude toward a certain object is determined by his or her perspectives (Robbins 2003; Robbins & Judge 2017). In short, tourists' contentment is influenced by services when they engage with officers throughout the holidays. For instance, when communicating with the airport, transportation, hotel, or tourist attraction officers (Yeung & Leung 2007). Due to the scarcity of such critical research, particularly in the Indonesian context, this study investigates the perceptions and attitudes of Indonesian hospitality industry workers, as well as the effect of perception on employee attitudes toward Chinese tourists.

2 LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 *Perception*

Perception is the process by which an individual organizes and interprets his impressions to give meaning to his environment (Robbins & Judge 2013). What a person perceives may be different from reality. For example, an employee has a perception of Chinese tourists that they provide high income for the local government; or Chinese tourists spend large sums of money while on vacation in Indonesia, or the arrival of Chinese tourists to Indonesia creates job opportunities. The employee's perception is not necessarily by reality. Everyone's perception is different. The difference is caused by the situation, perceiver, and target of the person. Whereas a person's attitude is based on the employee's perception (Robbins & Judge 2013). In practice at work, employees judge guests based on their bias perception, such as selective perception (judge someone based on interest), halo effect (judge someone based on a single characteristic), contrast effects (judge someone based on comparing to another person), and stereotyping (judge someone based on the group that person belongs. Front-liners who serve the guests directly must aware of their subjective judgments (Yeung & Leung 2007).

A person's perception can include perceptions in economic, social, and ecological aspects (Ministry of Tourism & Creative Economy 2012; Rasoolimanesh et al. 2019; Ritchie & Crouch 2003; UNWTO 2021). Perceptions in the economic aspect are related to the economic impact obtained by the arrival of Chinese tourists. While the social aspect is related to the social impact that arises with the arrival of Chinese tourists. The ecological aspect is related to the impact of environmental

211

sustainability on the arrival of Chinese tourists. Based on that theory, this study intends to see whether employees' perceptions of Chinese tourists affect their attitudes towards these tourists. Rasoolimanesh et al. (2019) found that people's perceptions are affected by the negative impacts of tourism.

2.2 Attitude

Attitude is an evaluative statement or assessment of certain objects, people, or activities. Attitudes are divided into cognitive, affective, and behavioral aspects (Robbins & Judge 2013). Cognitive components are opinions, beliefs, ideas, knowledge, or information about certain objects (Robbins & Judge 2013; Yeung & Leung 2007). The cognitive stage is the evaluation stage. Indicators at the cognitive stage involve verbal expressions of beliefs or thoughts or non-verbal perceptual reactions, for example, "the arrival of Chinese tourists provides high income for local governments." The affective component concerns a person's feelings based on the cognitive component. This aspect concerns verbal expressions that are felt related to objects, psychological reactions, facial expressions, and other non-verbal indicators of positive and negative feelings, for example "I am happy with tourist arrivals from China because it provides high income for local governments." While the behavioral component is an action that appears based on cognitive and affective components. This component concerns intentions, plans, commitments, for example, "I hope tourists from China continue to come to Indonesia, I want more tourists from China than tourists from other countries, I prefer tourists from China than tourists from other countries." Considering that the cognitive aspect has been described in the perception variable, the attitude variable in this study only uses affective and behavioral aspects.

Simbine and Tukamushaba (2020) found that hotel employees' attitudes (and perceptions) are the predictors of their behavior. They argue that employees' behavior impacts organizational competitiveness. In this case, managers must reward the employees with financial and non-financial incentives to motivate them for positive perception and attitude. The higher employees' job satisfaction will improve the service quality, such as express positive attitude.
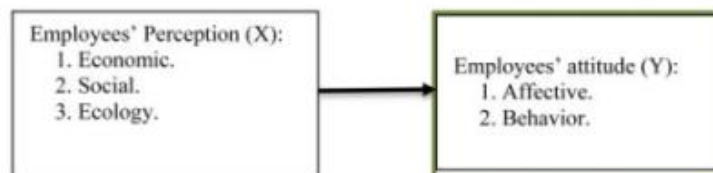
Figure 1. Research framework.

We developed a hypothesis (H1) to guide the research objectives:

Ho: There is no positive and significant influence of perception on attitudes of employees in the hospitality industry towards Chinese tourists.

Ha: There is a positive and significant influence of perception on attitudes of employees in the hospitality industry about Chinese tourists.

3 METHOD

This study adopted a survey as research methodology with quantitative descriptive analysis (Easterby-Smith et al. 2015). Thus, a questionnaire was distributed for hotel industry employees in Jakarta and its adjacent areas, with prior interaction with Chinese tourists serving as an inclusion criterion. Since there was no precise data of the population, a random sample of 312 research participants was considered representative and fit the criteria (Hair et al. 2018). Convenience sampling is adopted to generate a representation of the total population (Neuman 2014).

To reach the participants, both online and offline questionnaires were distributed with the assistance of the authors' professional networking. The research instrument is comprised of two sections. The first section discusses the respondents' characteristics, including their gender, age, income, formal education, type of business, position at work, years of service, and domicile. The second section contains data concerning the participants' perception as the independent variable (X) and attitude as the dependent variable (Y). Economic, social, and ecological factors all influence staff perceptions of Chinese tourists in the hospitality business. Attitude encompasses both affective and behavioral components.

The instruments for perception were adapted from (Rasoolimanesh et al. 2019), while instruments of attitude were from Robbins and Judge (2013), four-Likert Scale was utilized with 1 showing strongly disagree and 4 showing strongly agree. SPSS 23 was adopted to analyze the data to investigate the validity, reliability, descriptive tests (frequency and mean), correlation tests, simple linear regression tests, and t-test.

4 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Validity and reliability test

The validity test was performed using $df = n - 2 = 312 - 2 = 310$ respondents. With a tolerance level of 5%, the r-table is 0.113. All statements in the perception variable (X) had values greater than the r table, ranging from 0.156 to 0.602. Thus, all statements are valid. The attitude variable statement (Y) had a range of 0.273 to 0.651 or > r table. Thus, all statements are also valid. The reliability test for both variables is 0.856 and 0.921, confirming that the reliability is satisfactory (Cronbach's Alpha > 0.8).

4.2 Respondents' profile

The respondents were male (51 %) and female (49%). The respondents' age were 18–28 years (72.8%), 29–39 years (12.5%), 40–49 years (8.3%), above 49 years (6.4%). The respondents' income was various among under IDR 3.7 million (34.6%), IDR 3.7–4.7 million (24.4%), above IDR 4.7 million (41%). The respondents' educational were high school (24.7%), diploma I/II/III (21.5%), diploma IV/undergraduate degree (48.1%), master's degree (5.4%), and others (0.3%). The respondents work with a wide range of service providers. The worked in accommodation (47.1%), restaurants (18.3%), travel agents (18.6%), transportation (1.6%), and others (14.4%). The respondents' positions at work were operational staff (71.8%), supervisor (16%), and others (12.2%). The respondents' length of work was less than a year (68.9%), 1–5 years (19.2%), 6–19 years (11.2%), 11–15 years (0.3%), and 16-20 years (0.3%). The domicile of the respondents was in Jakarta (66%), outside Jakarta (29.8%), and abroad (4.2%).

4.3 Descriptive analysis

Variable X (perception) is analyzed based on economic, social, and ecological aspects. In terms of the economic aspect, the majority of respondents agree with the statements that (1) Chinese tourists spend large amounts of money while on vacation in Indonesia.'; (2) The arrival of Chinese tourists to Indonesia creates job opportunities; On the contrary, the majority of respondents do not agree with the statements that (1) the arrival of Chinese tourists to Indonesia affects the future of their work careers; (2) their income increases with the arrival of Chinese tourists to Indonesia, and (3) the visit of Chinese tourists to Indonesia increases their standard of living.

Based on the social aspect, the majority of respondents disagree that (1) There is no problem communicating with Chinese tourists; In other words, it shows that there is a problem in communicating with Chinese tourists. Meanwhile, the majority of respondents agree that Chinese tourists enjoy interacting with Indonesian people and the arrival of Chinese tourists has a positive influence. Finally, the results based on ecological aspects show that the majority of respondents disagreed with

213

the statements: (1) Chinese tourists like cleanliness; (2) Chinese tourists do not litter; Meanwhile, the majority of respondents agree that (1) Chinese tourists do not make vandalism in tourist destinations; (2) Chinese tourists care about environmental sustainability. Based on the frequency and mean value of the perception variable, it can be seen that the majority of respondents have positive perceptions in terms of economic (mean 2.53) and ecological aspects (mean 2.59) but tend to have negative perceptions in social aspects about the arrival of Chinese tourists in Indonesia (mean 2.49).

Variable Y (attitude) is divided into affective and behavioral aspects. The results of the analysis related to affective attitudes show that the majority of respondents agree with most of the affective statements: (1) I am happy because the arrival of Chinese tourists provides high income for local governments; (2) I am happy that Chinese tourists spend large sums of money while on vacation in Indonesia; (3) I am glad that the visit of Chinese tourists creates job opportunities for me; (4) I am happy that the visit of Chinese tourists causes my income to increase; (5) I feel the friendship when communicating with Chinese tourists; (6) I am impressed that Chinese tourists enjoy interacting with people in Indonesia; (7) I am happy because the arrival of Chinese tourists gives positive influence on me; (8) I am impressed that Chinese tourists like cleanliness; (9) I am impressed that Chinese tourists do not litter; (10) I am impressed that Chinese tourists do not make vandalism in tourist destinations; (11) I am impressed that Chinese tourists care about environmental sustainability. Meanwhile, there are only a small number of affective statements where respondents disagree, namely: (1) I am happy that the visit of Chinese tourists affects the future of my work career; and (2) I am happy that the visit of Chinese tourists to Indonesia improves my standard of living. Furthermore, the respondents strongly agreed with the statement "I'm impressed those Chinese tourists don't do vandalism in tourist destinations" (mean 2.83) but disagree with the statement "I am glad that the visit of Chinese tourists affects the future of my work career" (mean 2.45). The respondents' affective attitude showed that the respondents think that Chinese tourists don't do vandalism, but their visits don't affect respondents' future careers.

Table 1. Mean of perception and attitude.

No.	Variable	Sub-variable	The highest mean	The lowest mean	The average mean
1	Perception	Economic aspects	Chinese tourists give high income to Indonesia (mean 2.83).	My income increases with the arrival of Chinese tourists to Indonesia (mean 2.23).	2.53
		Social aspects	Chinese tourists' arrival gives me positive impact (mean 2.61).	There is no problem to communicate with Chinese tourists (mean 2.29).	2.49
		Ecological Aspects	Chinese tourists don't do vandalism in tourist destinations (mean 2.90).	Chinese tourists like cleanliness (mean 2.40). Chinese tourists don't litter (mean 2.40).	2.59
2	Attitude	Affective	I'm impressed that Chinese tourist don't do vandalism in tourist destinations (mean 2.83).	I am glad that the visit of Chinese tourists affects the future of my work career (mean 2.45).	2.60
		Behavior	I hope tourists from China continue to come to Indonesia (mean 2.87).	I prefer tourists from China to tourists from other countries (mean 2.02).	2.41

The analysis related to *behavioral aspects* of attitude shows that the respondents disagree with the statement "I prefer tourists from China to tourists from other countries (mean 2.02)". Meanwhile, they agreed with the statement: I hope tourists from China continue to come to Indonesia (mean 2.87). The results of the analysis show that most respondents do not want more tourists from China, do not prefer Chinese tourists compared to other tourists, but on the contrary, they expect Chinese tourists to continue to come and influence Chinese tourists to visit again. This implies that the most of respondents do not choose Chinese tourists as a priority to visit Indonesia.

4.4 *Correlation test and coefficient determination test*

The correlation test for perception variables on employee attitudes in the hospitality industry using the Pearson correlation is weak (correlation test 0.448 or below 0.5). Meanwhile, R Square showed that the influence of perception toward an attitude of employees in the hospitality industry was 20%, while the remaining 80% was influenced by other variables beyond this research.

4.5 *T-test*

Hypothesis testing using a t-test (simple regression coefficient test) was calculated for the following hypothesis:

Ho: There is no positive and significant influence of perception on attitudes of employees in the hospitality industry towards Chinese tourists.
Ha: There is a positive and significant influence of perception on attitudes of employees in the hospitality industry about Chinese tourists.

Based on the simple regression coefficient test, the t count was 8.815 > + t table. Therefore, Ho was rejected, and Ha was accepted. The significance value was 0.000 < 0.05. The result showed that there was a positive and significant influence of perceptions on attitudes of employees in the hospitality industry towards Chinese tourists.

5 CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

The perception of employees in the hospitality industry about Chinese tourists shows that on average employees have positive perceptions in economic and ecological aspects but have negative perceptions in social aspects about the arrival of Chinese tourists in Indonesia. Based on the Pearson correlation test, the relationship between perception variables and employee attitudes in the hospitality industry is weak. The contribution of employees' perceptions to their attitudes is only 20%, while the remaining 80% is influenced by other variables. However, the simple regression coefficient test shows that there is a positive and significant influence of employees' perceptions on their attitude toward Chinese tourists.

In terms of the economic aspect, there must be created the product and the services that attract the attention the Chinese tourists to spend some more money when they visit Indonesia. For the social aspect, the service provider (e.g., hotels, restaurants, or travel agents) is better to learn the Mandarin language to solve communication problems. For the ecological aspect, the service providers should inform the Chinese tourist to have environmental awareness politely. Finally, since perception has a positive and significant effect on the attitudes of employees in the hospitality industry about Chinese tourists, the supervisor in the hospitality industry needs to influence subordinates to have a positive mindset about Chinese tourists.

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