

REVIEW ARTICLE

Effective factors in evaluating tourism marketing performance

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ABSTRACT

Given that the survival of organizations depends on their ability to create value and value is defined by customers. Marketing is a tool to attract customers and it is contributing to the long-term commercial success and therefore, evaluating their performance is a crucial task for management. Due to the fact that there is lack of specific criteria and indicators to evaluate marketing performance, this paper proposes the criteria and related indicators for performance evaluation of tourism marketing by adopting meta-synthesis method and grounded and multi grounded theories. The statistical population included academic and industrial experts were identified from universities and tourism sector activists in Malaysia. This study introduces 11 main criteria and 40 indicators for each aspect in order to evaluate the performance of tourist attraction.

Keywords: performance evaluation; performance indicator; tourism marketing; meta-synthesis; multi grounded theory; grounded theory

1. Introduction

Performance is defined by Sigala et al.^[1] and Linna et al.^[2] as an umbrella containing quality, efficiency, effectiveness, and other performance dimensions. Performance evaluation attracted widespread attention in marketing and it has remained as a vital issue in many organizations, it is one of the research priorities supported by the Institute of Marketing Science for the past decade. Such significance is due to the assumption that increased marketing responsibility enhances organizational performance and thus enhances marketing credibility. As organizations' survival depends on their ability to create value and value is defined through customers^[3] marketing creates, therefore, a key partnership for long-term business success. Hence evaluating marketing performance is a main task for management^[4].

Traditionally, marketing productivity analysis (from the perspective of efficiency) and the concept of marketing audit (from the perspective of effectiveness) are the dominant approaches to evaluating marketing performance, but neither of these approaches, because of their conceptual and executive limitations, provides a complete framework for comprehensive evaluation^[5]. These two approaches have only focused on metrics and financial indicators, such as profit, sales, and cash flow, while during 1970 to 1980 performance appraisal

ARTICLE INFO

Received: 21 March 2023 | Accepted: 22 April 2023 | Available online: 22 May 2023

CITATION

Jalaliyoon N, Farsijani H, Hamidzadeh H. Effective factors in evaluating tourism marketing performance. *Smart Tourism* 2023; 4(1): 2259. doi: 10.54517/st.v4i1.2259

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systems shifted to non-financial measures, such as market share, customer satisfaction, customer loyalty, and brand value, as intermediaries between marketing input and financial results^[6].

A historical examination of the evaluation of marketing performance reveals that marketing criteria have evolved in three consecutive directions in recent years:

- 1) from financial criteria to non-financial criteria;
- 2) from the output criteria to the input criteria;
- 3) from one-dimensional criteria to multi-dimensional criteria.

With increasing demand for travel and tourism in order to attract potential tourists each country needs to strive for socio-economic development and infrastructure growth^[7]. For the sake of succeeding in this field and achieving the material and immaterial benefits, understanding the tourism and their dimensions and effects is essential. In a market that is moving towards saturation, competitive tourism destination require to redesign their marketing strategies in an attempt to increase loyalty and establish long-term relationships with customers. Studies show that performance appraisal is one of the factors contributing tourism development^[8]. The volatility of the global economy, global competition and rapid technological change, therefore, the importance of measuring and analyzing marketing have increased^[9,10]. Designing a business performance evaluation metrics is particularly significant in this industry because it is not possible to determine whether an industry has been successful or not. Multiple metrics may provide different result from the success or failure of an industry, so identifying and integrating metrics are bound to provide an appropriate assessment tool. Likewise, a scientific study of defining criteria's helps executives to better understand their strengths and weaknesses with the object of planning for the development of the tourism industry. Marketing evaluation provides feedback from marketing performance^[11] and inputs for decision making for the sake of planning for the future.

2. Research methodology

The purpose of this study is to design a framework of criteria for evaluating marketing performance in tourism industry. The approach adopted and implemented is grounded theory. The first step of the research is to reach a preliminary framework by using the meta-synthesis method. In the second step, the findings of the research are improved by utilizing the grounded theory and the multi grounded approach.

The statistical population of this study is scientific and research articles published in Scopus, Web of Science, Google Scholar citation database during 2000 to 2022 years and also academic and industrial experts who have been identified among academics and tourism activists in Malaysia; a total of nine participants in the study were selected through using targeted sampling method.

2.1. Meta-synthesis approach

The meta-synthesis approach seeks to integrate the results of different studies which are interrelated. The seven-step approach for meta-synthesis developed by Sandelowski and Barroso^[12] as follows (**Figure 1**).

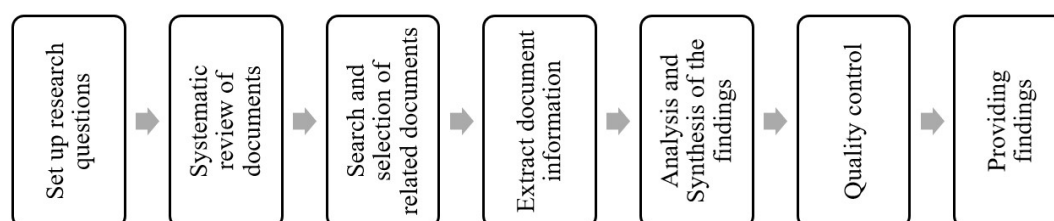


Figure 1. Meta-synthesis approach.

2.2. Grounded theory

The grounded theory stipulates that the process on data analysis involves three coding. These are open, axial and selective. First, data from the interviews are analyzed on a sentence by sentence basis using open coding^[13]. This means that since many questions were raised and discussed during the open coding, the interviewing notes are analyzed based on a few key words. Relationships between these key words were identified and collated to develop axial coding. An axial coding refers to a process of collating key words in categories and sub-categories according to nature and properties. Strauss and Corbin^[13] explain that axial coding is a set of procedures whereby data are put back together in new ways after open coding, by making connections between categories. The final process of the grounded theory involves selecting coding. Categories and subcategories that bear similar nature and properties are grouped, refined and reshuffled for re-grouping. This process of grouping will continue until the individual categories can be distinctively identified, readily expressed in causal conditions, environmental conditions, organizational conditions, management strategies and consequences, and more importantly, meet the aims of investigation. Due to criticism by Goldkuhl and Cronholm^[14] which refer to the current knowledge of grounded theory, in this research, both the meta-synthesis and the grounded theory is used simultaneously. Some researches call it as a multi grounded approach because of the effects that meta-synthesis can have on expert opinions^[15].

2.3. Multi Grounded Theory (MGT)

MGT can be characterized as an extended alternative approach for data analysis and theory development. MGT is not only empirically grounded; it goes beyond pure inductivism and adds theoretical grounding to empirical grounding. MGT uses explicitly existing theories in the grounding process. The aim of MGT is combine aspects from inductivism and deductivism^[14].

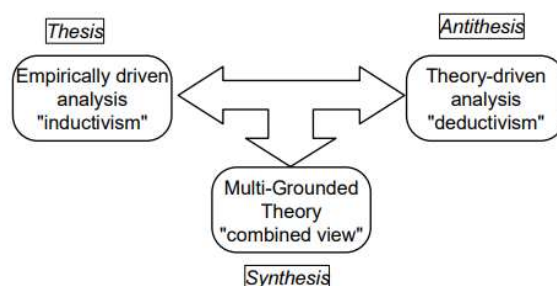


Figure 2. Multi-grounded theory as a dialectical synthesis between inductivism (GT) and deductivism.

As the **Figure 2** above illustrates in this research the meta synthesis approach is applied at first stage and then it is followed by the grounded theory.

3. Data gathering and analysis

Selecting and screening the related articles and documents are the primary steps of gathering data. For this purpose, thorough study of the abstracts (185 articles), 91 documents were identified as eligible for the entire content review. The next step of selection process was the screening of full content of the documentations. 24 documents, therefore, were identified as input to the meta-synthesis process.

In order to make sure about the quality of selected papers before entering document to MAXQDA (MAX Qualitative Data Analysis) software, the Critical Appraisal Skills Programme (CASP) was used. For this intention, a questionnaire was created from the CASP evaluation criteria and each question was given a score based on the content of each article.

After applying meta-synthesis, as shown in **Table 1**, 8 theme 34 codes were identified. (In the present

study, first all the factors extracted from the study of articles were considered as code. These codes were then categorized into a similar concept according to their meaning and content).

Table 1. Results of identifying performance appraisal criteria's and indicators.

Theme	Code	References
Brand (83)	1)	Tourism brand identification [16]
	2)	Tourism perceived quality [17]
	3)	Tourism brand image [17,18]
	4)	Tourism brand value [17,19,20]
	5)	Tourism brand credibility [21]
Financial (45)	6)	Market share in tourism field [22,23]
	7)	Market size in tourism field [23]
	8)	Market growth [22]
	9)	Competition in tourism field [24]
	10)	Profitability of tourism [25]
	11)	Value added of tourism [8,26]
Stakeholders and social responsibility (44)	12)	Environmental support [8,27]
	13)	Society support [27]
	14)	Tourist support [28]
Tourist related (52)	15)	Tourist satisfaction [20,29]
	16)	Tourist loyalty [20,30]
	17)	Tourist length of stay [31]
Process and organizational factors (85)	18)	Cooperation between relevant organizations [32]
	19)	Manage communication with tourist [33]
	20)	The rate of innovation in tourism services [32,34]
	21)	Private sector involvement [29]
	22)	Pricing of tourism services [18]
	23)	Tourism demand management [29]
Learning and growth (47)	24)	Training of tourism staff [35]
	25)	Tourism staff creativity [34]
	26)	Employees' use of information technology [35]
	27)	Satisfaction of tourism staff [29]
	28)	Deployment of tourism promotion system [25]
	29)	Tourism culture [36]
Tourist infrastructure (58)	30)	Tourism service provider centers [35,37]
	31)	Tourism security [28,35]
	32)	Tour guided [29]
	33)	Urban management [37]
Technology (15)	34)	Smart tourism services [28,38]

The numbers in parentheses represent the frequency of referencing codes for each topic.

The kappa index was used to assess internal reliability. Kappa index more than (0.6) indicates an acceptable level of internal reliability^[39]. In this research, this index was 0.63.

In the grounded theory phase, data were collected through a semi-structured interview and participants in the interview were 9 experts in the field of marketing and tourism.

In order to prevent repetition of concepts, the results are not displayed separately and the outputs of multi-grounded theory has been combined with the meta-synthesis method.

4. Findings from multi-grounded theory

In this step, by combining the codes obtained from the meta-synthesis and the data of the grounded theory, some new codes were obtained and some categories were edited, therefore, the results can be seen in the **Table 2** below.

Table 2. Result of multi-grounded theory.

Theme	Code
Brand	1) Tourism brand identification
	2) Tourism perceived quality
	3) Tourism brand image
	4) Tourism brand value
	5) Tourism brand credibility
Market	6) Market share in tourism field
	7) Market size in tourism field
	8) Market growth
	9) Competition in tourism field
Innovation	10) The rate of innovation in tourism services
	11) New services efficiency
	12) New services profit margin
Financial	13) New services sales share
	14) Profitability of tourism
Stakeholders and social responsibility	15) Value added of tourism
	16) Environmental support
	17) Society support
Tourist related	18) Tourist support
	19) Tourist satisfaction
	20) Tourist loyalty
	21) Tourist length of stay
Process and organizational factors	22) Collaboration between relevant organizations
	23) Manage communication with tourist
	24) Private sector involvement
	25) Pricing of tourism services
	26) Tourism demand management
	27) Training of tourism staff
Learning and growth (LandG)	28) Knowledge sharing of tourism staff
	29) Employees' use of information technology
	30) Tourism staff knowledge
	31) Deployment of tourism promotion system

Table 2. (Continued).

Theme	Code
Employee	32) Tourism culture
	33) Satisfaction of tourism staff
	34) Productivity of tourism staff
	35) Staff employment rate in tourism industry
	36) Tour leader
Tourist infrastructure	37) Tourism service provider centers
	38) Tourism security
	39) Urban management
Technology	40) Smart tourism services

In order to provide a clearer picture of the effective criteria for performance evaluation of marketing the **Figure 3** has been depicted

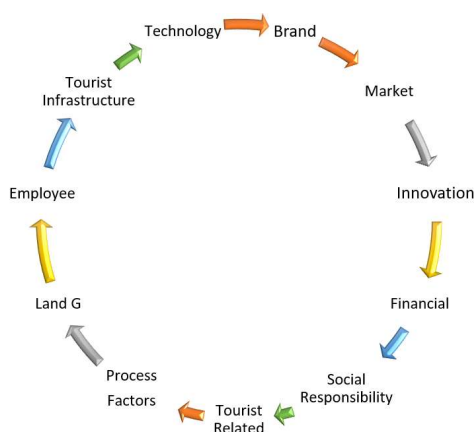


Figure 3. Effective criteria for performance evaluation of marketing.

5. Determining the validity of the theoretical model

One of the evaluating methods of the data validity in grounded theory researches is to examine the two indicators including appropriateness and applicability of the findings and also to study on the experimental basis of the research^[13]. In order to measure the validity of the model, a theoretical comparison was made during data collection and at each stage of coding, and at each stage, by obtaining more abstract words, the categories created were compared with the data. Finally, by extracting the research model, the model was given to five interviewees and they were surveyed about the adaptability of their model. In this study, the interviewees were asked about the appropriateness and usefulness of the model, which is as follows:

Appropriateness: All five interviewees discussed about how the pattern matched the real world of the industry, and a consensus was reached, and eventually the names of a number of categories were changed.

Applicability: By continuously comparing the data with the backgrounds and theoretical foundations of the research and consulting the interviewees, in the form of questions at each stage of the interviews, the dimension of its applicability is also covered.

6. Discussion and conclusion

The purpose of this study is to design a framework for measuring the performance of marketing in the tourism industry. Based on interviews with academic and industrial experts in this study, the eleven criteria

for evaluating marketing performance including brand, market, innovation, financial, stakeholders and social responsibility, tourist, organizational and process factors, learning and growth, employees, tourism-related infrastructure and ultimately technology have been identified. Each criteria including:

Brand: Brand is one of the most important elements of marketing and it is an image that introduces the organization with all its dimensions and creates an image of what is or tend to be in the mind of the viewer, customers, consumers. A brand image is a perception of a brand that is reflected in the consumer's mind by the brand's associates. Research has introduced brand image as one of the factors affecting customer loyalty. Also, brand valuation, as the main intangible assets of the organization, plays an essential role in calculating the overall value of the organization. Therefore, providing a suitable model for brand valuation in the long run is considered a tool for measuring performance. Brand identity also refers to a set of unique brand relationships in the form of slogans or promises that companies give to the customer and create a new identity or improve their previous identity. This identity can affect customer loyalty. Perceived quality is defined as the consumers' judgement of the superiority or excellence of a brand. The fact that consumers have high awareness of a branded product/service does not necessarily imply that they will perceive it to be of high quality. Perceived quality shapes brand image, increases the perceived value of the given brand in consumers' minds. Finally, in today's highly competitive environment, brand credibility is one of the most effective factors in achieving the desired mental position. Research shows that brand credibility affects customer satisfaction and loyalty. Therefore, according to the presented materials and the results of the interviews, brand image, brand value, brand identity, brand perceived quality and brand credibility are effective indicators for evaluating the marketing performance in the tourism industry.

Marketing: Marketing is not just a tool for advertising and sales that can force consumers to buy, but also marketing activities are much broader and includes process from pre-sales to after-sales. For example, market share, market size, market growth and competition play an important role in marketing field. Most of the interviewees in evaluating marketing performance, have considered the market criterion can be used both for the current situation and for predicting future performance.

Innovation: The organization's ability to innovate is one of the most important non-financial criteria for measuring marketing performance. Since the business environment is changing, organizations need to be able to change with them. The ability to adapt or innovate is suggested as one of the foundations of a marketing strategy. The indicators of innovation, which have been identified in the literature review, are: the rate of innovation in tourism services, new services efficiency, new services profit margin, new services sales share.

Financial: The role and importance of investment in the process of economic growth and development of societies has been emphasized in most aspects of economic growth and development. Regarding the lack of investment resources and the need for optimal allocation of these resources to stimulate economic growth, it is necessary to identify the relative advantages of each country. One of these advantages is the tourism industry. Tourism activities require economic expenditures that includes direct costs for tourism businesses and government to build and improve infrastructure and superstructure. Therefore, the study of the economic effects on tourism is an important consideration in marketing and management decisions and in general in economic development and community planning. Hence, according to the interviews, the profitability and economic value added that is obtained from the field of tourism are proposed indicators for evaluating the performance of marketing in the tourism industry.

Stakeholders and social responsibility: In today's marketing system, focusing solely on the customer and generating revenue does not make the business success. In addition, other goals such as focusing on addressing community and environmental concerns are also essential to the success of organizations. Accordingly,

today's environmental behavior of tourists in the path of achieving tourism development has become very significant and essential. During interview it is also emphasized that the issue of community, tourism and environment is important in evaluating marketing performance.

Tourist related: Modern management philosophy considers customer satisfaction as the main line of performance for any business organization. Tourist Satisfaction is expressed as a degree of positive emotions activated through experiences gained in a tourist destination and can be considered as an important source of competitive advantage. Loyalty is one of the best indicators of any organization's success. Loyalty indicates that past experience affects today's and tomorrow's tourism decisions and invites tourists to visit and revisit the place. Therefore, according to the stated contents and the results of the interviews, measuring the satisfaction of the tourist and the degree of their loyalty can be an important indicator in evaluating the marketing performance in this industry. The length of stay is effective in the distribution of tourist destination. Most interviewees acknowledged that, given the declining duration of tourists due to the fact that tourist sustainability may lead to income generation therefore, it is important to measure this criterion in evaluating marketing performance.

Process and organizational factors: One of the factors influencing the development of tourism is the level of collaboration between the decision-making bodies in the field of tourism. The interviewees also mentioned that cooperation between various executive bodies and centers is one of the significant factors in evaluating the marketing performance in the tourism industry. Therefore, this is one of the important factors in evaluating the performance of marketing in the tourism industry. In the new period of marketing, the aim of long-term and reciprocal communications with stakeholders is; retaining more consumers which in turn increases market share and corporate profitability. This point has also been emphasized by experts and interviewees and has been mentioned as one of the indicators for evaluating the performance of the tourism industry. Predicting the number of tourists (tourism demand) are of particular importance for tourism and related activities. Because forecasting is an indicator of future demand, it provides basic information for planning and successive policies. Most of the interviewees emphasized that responding to the demands of tourists and tourism is important and is a key indicator for measuring performance. According to most of the interviewees, the pricing of tourism services is an indicator that the institution providing tourism services should pay attention to.

Economic growth and development are major and fundamental goals of countries. Given the importance of this important goal and in order to increase the well-being of individuals in society, countries use different ways and strategies to achieve economic development. One of these strategies is privatization. The interviewees acknowledged that the transfer of various parts of the industry would lead to the development of the industry. Therefore, one of the criteria for evaluating performance is the level of private sector participation in the tourism industry.

Learning and growth: One of the most important issues in recent economic studies is the issue of human capital. Human capital, or in other words, the quality of labor or knowledge invested in human beings, increases the production and economic growth of countries. Quality education will improve productivity and will lead to more production of goods and services and faster economic growth. It is also important to create and use knowledge to innovate, develop and adapt to changes in the competitive tourism industry. During cultural education about tourism, it is important to learn what is meant by world events and the behavior of others in order to properly understand and respond to events. This theory is very important in the relationship between individuals and the development of tourism, because in order to attract cultural tourists, while valuing the local culture, the culture of the other side should also be respected. As can be seen from the description of growth and learning metrics, and according to the interviewees, the role of tourism staff is very crucial. Their education and knowledge, their attention to cultural diversity, the establishment of a proper promotion system

and the use of information and information technology are considered as key indicators in performance appraisal. Since improving the status of employees, which is the main capital of the organization can lead to good performance so it is important to measure.

Employee: In marketing literature, having motivated and active employees, who are in touch with customers, is considered as a sustainable competitive advantage. Therefore, human resource development programs, which are at the core of the job design process, should be designed to satisfy and motivate employees. The development of human resources and improving the standard of living of human and also establishing of more prosperous societies have been a great goal for all governments and organizations. One of the indicators of organizational development in human resources is productivity. Employee productivity depends on analyzing, measuring, and improving human resource efficiency. According to the interviewees, employees have a significant impact on the industry, so employee satisfaction, productivity and ultimately the amount of employment created in the industry are known indicators of marketing performance in this industry. Among the manpower employed in the tourism sector, tour guides are effective in guiding and meeting the material and spiritual needs of tourists. Abilities of tour leader are bound to boost the flow of tourism in any country. It is worth noting that the importance of tour guides in the satisfaction of tourists, the development of sustainable tourism and the creation of a positive image, has led some countries to develop strategies to monitor, train, evaluate and standardize their tour guide activities. According to the results of the interviews, the tourism guide is also one of the indicators of evaluating the marketing performance in this industry due to its impact on their performance.

Tourism infrastructure: Security and tourism are the parameters of an equation that are directly related to each other. In general, there is no journey until security is established. Security is the most important factor in developing tourism strategies in the world. On the other hand, the presence of tourists in a country, in addition to economic development and cultural exchanges, is the most effective advertisement for the existence of security in that country. Almost all interviewees considered the existence of security is the key parameter in evaluating performance. The growth and development of tourism in cities has not only contributed to the protection and development of the city, but also requires efficient and effective management to consider all aspects of urban tourism and manage environmental and tourism protection simultaneously. The interviewees also cited urban management and tourist service provider are indicators for evaluating marketing performance, because with this infrastructure, tourists are created and maintained.

Technology: Today, the impact of information technology is evident in all fields and there is no exception for tourism industry as well. The development and improvement of information and communication technology infrastructure in the tourism industry as (e-tourism) will greatly help to improve the situation of such industry. The World Tourism Organization believes that in the near future, countries without adequate information and communication technology infrastructure will be virtually eliminated from the cycle of global and regional tourism competitions. It is also stated in the interviews, the necessity of paying attention to smart tourism technologies.

Conflict of interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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