

## **FACTORS INFLUENCING PERCEIVED SERVICE QUALITY AMONG HOMESTAYS IN PENANG**

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### **ABSTRACT**

The research is to conduct a study to evaluate the factors that influence the perceived service quality among the homestays in Penang. It is to determine whether there is a positive relationship between tangibles, location, responsiveness and perceived service quality of homestays in Penang. Homestay is a contrast between hospitality facilities and stay experience and converted from the landed residential or residential condominium. A research framework had been established with Dependent Variable (Perceived Service Quality) and the Independent Variables (Tangibles, Location, and Responsiveness). The convenience sampling method has been used for the data collection by using the survey questionnaire. The study population is mainly tourists who have experienced staying in a homestay in Penang. SPSS results indicated that tangibles, location, and responsiveness are significantly influencing the perceived service quality among the homestays in Penang. There are a few suggestions for the future implication of the research. First, increase the sample size for future research studies. Second, look for a financial sponsor to conduct a survey questionnaire directly with the tourists at the tourist attraction spots and give a local souvenir for tourists who answer the survey questionnaire. Then, suggested co-operating with homestays hosts to gather the samples from their customers. The scope of the research study can be expanded to other regions or the whole of Malaysia for future research. The last suggestion is to use different factors to evaluate the relationship with perceived service quality among the homestays in Penang in future research.

**Key Words:** Perceived Service Quality, Tangibles, Location, Responsiveness

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## 1.0 Introduction

In Penang, there are several types of hospitality accommodation such as hotels, capsule design hotels, heritage style hotels, hostels, and homestay accommodations. This is attributed to the various kinds of aspects and attitudes of visitors that could impact tourists' decision-making on lodging choices. Compared to the hotel, homestay is a contrast between hospitality facilities and stay experience. The homestay host turned their owned or rental landed residential or residential condominium into homestay accommodation in Penang, Malaysia (Talib and Sulieman 2017).

This means that the guests would not appreciate the warmth of the hotel, such as the front desk, room facilities, and instant homestay host services. However, the homestay guests will still enjoy the amenities such as a gym area, swimming pool, jogging track, and so on when guests choose to stay at the condominium type of homestay. The choice of selecting an accommodation depends on various factors such as tangibles, location, and responsiveness.

A group of people would be more suited to stay in the homestay rather than the hotels (Talib and Sulieman 2017). Homestay accommodations are located all over Penang while hotel locations are more concentrated in a certain area. The guests can depend on their desire and the affordable price of the homestay to choose a location to stay in. Homestay can be located at places like center city, rural area, and local residential community. Foreign guests prefer homestays which enables them to experience the local lifestyle and culture (Talib and Sulieman 2017). In order for the homestay host to be competitive and gain a strategic advantage in the market, a good standard of service is necessary to please their homestay guests to get reasonable or better feedback to attract more guests to stay in. It is necessary for the homestay hosts to sustain good service quality standards when extending the homestay business (Pakurár, Haddad, Nagy, Popp, Oláh 2019).

This study examines the factors that influence the perceived service quality among the homestay in Penang. In order to establish the variables influencing the perceived service quality among the homestay in Penang, demographic, multiple regression tests were used to analyse the findings to further understand the factors influencing the perceived service quality among the homestay in Penang (Juvan, Omerzel, & Maravić 2017).

### ***Problem Statement***

There are many of the local residents starting to participate in the homestay sector due to success. In order to encourage more visitors to stay at their homestay accommodation, the more facilities offered by the homestay host with reasonable price rates will be able to attract more visitors. The tangibles of the services are facilities, personnel, and communications resources. Some of the homestay hosts in order to earn more or reduce the pricing rate of the homestays, some of the facilities are not offered in the homestays. This caused an inconvenience for the homestay's guests (Pakurár, Haddad, Nagy, Popp, Oláh 2019). With the stiff competition from the pioneers in the market such as Airbnb, survival depends on the platform which is able to provide better tangible services to local homestay hosts (Guttentag 2013).

Another concern is that unauthorized homestay has taken complete advantage of the absence of legislation by legislatures and town councils. It has become a safety problem for all people residing in a community, or even for homeowners living in an environment with homestay visitors, and can impact the security of residents and homestay guests during their stay, impacting the enjoyment of the guests and the level of service offered. Indirectly, this has become an issue for homestay hosts to choose the location for their business (Hilmy 2020). Place facilities and protection are often part of the standard of operation, such as the business trip guests they will search for a secure location in terms of physical, confidentiality and financial security, and have access to the fitness facilities after their job (Vigolo 2017).

Next, the study explores the ability of the homestay hosts to be contacted and react to address the problem throughout the accommodation period. Examples of conflicts arise with the visitors and the administration of the property or the people. This is to guarantee our homestay guests in Penang a good business satisfaction on the service quality (Hilmy 2020). Homestay hosts could have several separate homestay property sites, which is a difficult and concern for them to react and respond to their guests. In addition, the distribution of cleaning facilities to various places often finishes their cleaning within the time period before the next visitors' check-in (Luvandwa, Damiannah and Odiara 2020). This would rely on the preparation plan and arrangement of the homestay hosts as some of the homestay hosts are either on "one-man show" or may not hire enough staff to cope with the booking of homestays, cleaning arrangement, respond to the guest

when require, help to check in and check out the visitors, and be friendly to the guests. It is a good business model to diversify the homestay business, but it also requires the readiness and ability to assist guests as the responsiveness would influence the satisfaction of the guests with the standard of service rendered (Luvandwa, Damiannah & Odiara, 2020).

### ***Research Objectives***

The research questions are formulated based on the problems and the researcher identified three important objectives which proved to be the motivation underlying the research.

There are three overarching aims of the study:

**RQ 1:** Is there a significant positive relationship between **tangibles** and perceived service quality of homestays in Penang?

**RQ 2:** Is there a significant positive relationship between **location** and perceived service quality of homestays in Penang?

**RQ 3:** Is there a significant positive relationship between **responsiveness** and perceived service quality of homestays in Penang?

### ***Research Questions***

There are three research questions raised by the researcher and they are as follows:

**RO 1:** To determine whether there is a positive relationship between **tangibles** and perceived service quality of homestays in Penang.

**RO 2:** To determine whether there is a positive relationship between **location** and perceived service quality of homestays in Penang.

**RO 3:** To determine whether there is a positive relationship between **responsiveness** and perceived service quality of homestays in Penang.

## 2.0 Literature Review

### *Perceived Service Quality*

Service quality has been extensively researched and implemented in various types of industries since the establishment of the service quality principle (SERVQUAL) by Parasuraman, Zeithaml, and Berry (1988). According to Roy et al. (2015), the perceived service quality is the overall assessment of the company's products or services by the consumer, whereas objective service quality is the aggregate value of the goods or services. According to Ding, Choo, Ng and Ng (2020), they mentioned that the perceived service quality of the Airbnb homestay differentiated itself from conventional hotels by offering a unique homestay's guests' stay experience through immersive perceptions of living like a local. Based on Narteh (2015) mentioned that people-delivered facilities-controlled perceived service quality analysis in the existing literature. The homestay's guests may view new dimensions of service quality as relevant in circumstances where computers are used to substitute employees in the service delivery phase. According to Su, Swanson and Chen (2016) that there is a connection between perceived service quality expectations and a variety of supportive consumer attitudes, the association is not always clear. Customer loyalty and customer-company identity are primarily determined by the relative benefit that receiving premium service brings to the customer, according to a value profit chain viewpoint.

In brief, the SERVQUAL tool is based on the distance principle and implies that the interpretation of service quality by a customer is a result of the discrepancy between his or her perceptions of the success of a general class of service providers and his or her appraisal of a single company's actual performance within that class (Ismail, Hanafiah, Aminuddin and Mustafa 2016). This is because different industries have different systems, researchers can carefully analyze which problems are essential for the quality of services in various industries and adjust the SERVQUAL scale accordingly (Ismail, Hanafiah, Aminuddin and Mustafa 2016).

This study aims to identify perceived service quality and evaluate the factors that influence the perceived service quality among the homestay sector in Penang. The rapid growth of the homestay sector in Penang has created a competitive environment and new opportunities for homestay owners to understand tourist perceptions of quality of service in order to attract more tourists in a competitive market (Pakurár, Haddad, Nagy, Popp, Oláh 2019).

### ***Tangibles***

The tangibles are one of the components of the SERVQUAL model and are defined as the physical quality, such as equipment, facilities and presence of staff (Parasuraman et al. 1988). Facilities such as a well-furnished reception desk or professional workers may affect consumer expectations of tangibles service quality, according to Yator (2012). Meanwhile, Alsaqre (2011) proposed in his research that all tangible variables of service quality should be provided with great attention because such variables have an effect on the standard of the service quality and this can bring homestay with more income and booking. The environmental environments that may involve paint, lighting, equipment and general cleanliness of the locations inside the homestays are another component of the tangible variables in homestay facilities. This is also demonstrated by Abdullah, Razak, Marzuki et al. (2013), evaluating five satisfaction evaluations for the facilities offered by the hosts, such as convenience, security, cleanliness, feasibility and functionality.

### ***Location***

Location or place is one of the components of the marketing mix pertaining to how to provide homestay guests with the services and where the strategic location for the business of homestay is and where the successful quality of services can be delivered (Manurung and Wahyono 2018). According to the study from Toh, Tan and Yeo (2016), a location of the homestays have to provide easy access to the car park and convenience to the traffic to the homestays guests to enjoy their holidays, which had proven there is a relationship in between location with the perceived service quality. The spacious homestay units and home feeling would be able to make homestays guests feel more relaxed during their stay time. The degree of comfort and the location's design influence the standard of the service quality of the homestays as well (Hu et al. 2012). In addition, the security and privacy of the location is another significant feature. Logically, the homestay visitors will not linger on the location that has a security risk that will impact their safety. Finally, it is the environment around the homestay location that could influence the service quality (Sohrabi, Vanani, Tahmasebipur & Fazli 2012).

### ***Responsiveness***

Responsiveness, which typically tests the capacity of the organization or company to respond to consumers with readiness and timely service, is another aspect of service quality (Parasuraman et

al. 1988). Studies of Mbuthia (2013) show there is a need to maintain service provision standards to meet the requirements of guests by ensuring that every contact or response with the guests is positive to satisfaction. Based on the research conducted by Risnawati et al. (2019), the responsiveness factor that needs to be strengthened is the degree of employee responsiveness in the provision of resources, the responsiveness of employees in the delivery of services that are required that can be done easily, and the level of service rate and effectiveness that been offered. Based on the studies of Virima et al. (2019) and Mohamad et al. (2014), it shows that the willingness to respond and quickly resolve the problem that homestay guests' address is a must as it is influencing the standard of the service quality that homestay hosts offered to the guests. It reflects the ability of workers to deliver resources in a prompt and timely manner. Responsiveness is a desire to serve consumers and to offer timely service. The consumer must see the service provider as ready and able to perform the said service.

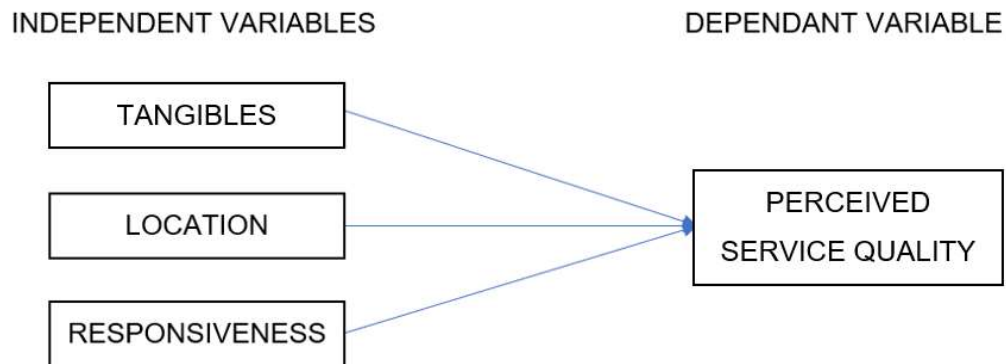


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework.

### 3.0 Methodology

200 respondents size were involved in the study and it is the optimal number of respondents required to ensure effectiveness for the data analysis. For the study, convenience sampling was employed to target the respondents from different locations. Furthermore, this is the most efficient and quick sampling approach to collect the required data (Sekaran and Bougie 2016). The target population is tourists who had experienced a stay in homestays in Penang. The data analysis is

conducted by using Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) was used to analyze the data collected from the questionnaire.

#### 4.0 Results

	Unstandardized Coefficients		t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error		
(Constant)	1.535	0.359	4.272	0.000
M_T	0.218	0.84	2.595	0.010
M_L	0.201	0.96	2.089	0.038
M_R	0.238	0.62	3.858	0.000

Table 1: Result of Multiple Regression Analysis

The relationship between the Independent Variables (Tangibles, Location, and Responsiveness) and the Dependent Variable (Perceived Service Quality) among the homestays in Penang was examined using Multiple Regression Analysis. Table 1 has shown a Beta value of 0.218 for Tangibles (M\_T) and at a value of 2.595 with a significant p-value of 0.010. As a result, the p-value is less than 0.05, indicating that tangibles have a strong significant relationship with perceived service quality. Results indicated that the location has a strong relationship with perceived service quality. This is because of its Beta value is 0.21, t value is 2.089, and p-value of 0.038 where a p-value is less than 0.05 signifies that Location has a strong significant relationship with Perceived Service Quality. Finally, the Responsiveness (M\_R) Beta value is 0.238, t value is 3.858, and with a significant p-value of 0.000. As a result, the relevant p-value is less than 0.05, indicating that Responsiveness has a strong significant relationship with Perceived Service Quality.

### *Summary of Finding*

<b>Hypothesis</b>	<b>Independent Variables</b>	<b>Beta Value</b>	<b>Significant Value</b>	<b>Determination</b>	<b>Result</b>
Hypothesis 1	Tangibles	0.218	0.010	Supported	Accepted
Hypothesis 2	Location	0.201	0.038	Supported	Accepted
Hypothesis 3	Responsiveness	0.238	0.000	Supported	Accepted

Table 2: Summary of the Hypothesis Result

According to Table 2, the result of the Multiple Regression Analysis had proven that Hypotheses 1, 2, and 3 are accepted. In the conclusion, all the three Independent Variables which are tangibles, location, and responsiveness are significantly proven that are influencing the perceived service quality among homestays in Penang.

## **5.0 Discussion and Conclusion**

### *Tangibles and Perceived Service Quality among Homestays in Penang*

There is a positive relationship between tangibles and the perceived service quality of homestays in Penang. Research Objective 1 is supported by the research outcome of the study that the tangibles have a significant influence on the Perceived Service Quality among the homestays in Penang. According to Yator (2012), the tangibles have affected the perceived service quality on the facilities such as a well-furnished reception desk or professional workers. Meanwhile, Alsaqre (2011) indicated his research that all the tangible variables have an effect on the standard of the service quality and this can bring homestay with more income and booking. Ransley and Ingram (2001) concluded that successful design will contribute to greater profitability and that by the design of the homestay, and the effective design can attract more homestay guests to stay in to generate more revenue.

### ***Location and Perceived Service Quality among Homestays in Penang***

There is a positive relationship between location and perceived service quality of homestays in Penang. Research Objective 2 is supported by the research outcome of the study that the location has a significant influence on the perceived service quality among the homestays in Penang. Chou, Hsu & Chen (2008) determined that the facilities of the location have significantly affected the perceived service quality. The facilities like the car park lots, fitness center, swimming pools, and so on do affect homestay guests towards the perceived service quality. Based on the study of Hu et al. (2012), there is a significant relationship between the location and perceived service quality. The spaciousness and the comfort levels of the homestay units have an influence on location to the perceived service quality. Additionally, the study also concluded that the security and privacy of the location are important for the homestays to ensure the guests are in a safe condition.

### ***Responsiveness and Perceived Service Quality among Homestays in Penang***

This is to determine there is a positive relationship between responsiveness and perceived service quality of homestays in Penang. Research Objective 3 is supported by the research outcome of the study that responsiveness has a significant influence on the perceived service quality among the homestays in Penang. The results of the research on the Fida, Ahmed, Al-Balushi and Singh (2020) revealed a positive relationship to responsiveness influence the perceived service quality. Based on the research conducted by Risnawati et al. (2019), the responsiveness factor has a positive significant effect on the perceived service quality.

### ***Contributions and Recommendations to the Industry***

It will provide a guideline for the homestays hosts to understand what the elements of the factors are influencing the perceived service quality among the homestays in Penang. This would assist them to be more competitive in the market and improve what are they lacking on the perceived service quality to attract homestay guests to improve their business. By understanding the variables of the studies, the homestay hosts are able to review their current homestays units' facilities, security, and ease of access, environment, and comfortable level of stay in order to make it even better in the future. The research would also bring benefits to the associated industry like the cleaning service agencies, laundry service owners, and local tourist agencies in order to work with homestays hosts to improve the perceived service quality.

### ***Contributions and Recommendations to the Academia***

The research had shown there are many previous researchers had been studied on the related topic. However, there is a lack of Perceived Service Quality analysis relating to homestays throughout the process of research and review of the current research. From the literature research been reviewed, most of the research found is related to how the quality of service impacts customer satisfaction. Furthermore, there is still a lack of research on the perceived service quality to the Penang area for homestays.

### ***Contributions to the Others***

It would be beneficial to other tourism business owners or the other industries or even to the properties investors as well. According to the previous research that the location of the homestay units near to the place of attraction and easy to get local food is a more high priority for the homestay guests to stay on. It is advisable that the food stall owners can take the chances to co-operate with the homestay hosts to provide food delivery to their homestay guests which brings more convenience for the homestay guests to get delicious Penang local street foods. Besides this, the research also brings benefits to the property developers and the investors. Since the homestays industry is rapidly growing, the property developers could follow the trend to build up the properties that fulfill the homestay requirement.

### ***Future Directions of Research***

There are few future research directions for the other researchers who are interested to study the related topic in future research studies. First, future research can co-operate with the homestay hosts in Penang to conduct the survey questionnaire directly with the homestay guests after their stay. Furthermore, can look for a financial sponsor to gain sponsorship funds in order to set up booths at the tourist attraction spots to conduct the survey questionnaire directly with the tourists and also prepare some local souvenirs to give to the tourists who answer the survey questionnaire as the token. The research study can be expanding the scope of study to regions or the whole of Malaysia in future research. Additionally, the researcher can use different factors that influence the perceived service quality in future research. This will be more comprehensive in future research when researching the different angles of the other factors.

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Appendix

Multiple Regression Analysis

**Variables Entered/Removed<sup>a</sup>**

Model	Variables Entered	Variables Removed	Method
1	M_R, M_T, M_L <sup>b</sup>	.	Enter

a. Dependent Variable: M\_DV

b. All requested variables entered.

**Model Summary<sup>b</sup>**

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Change Statistics				
					R Square Change	F Change	df1	df2	Sig. F Change
1	.516 <sup>a</sup>	.267	.255	.39458	.267	23.749	3	196	.000

a. Predictors: (Constant), M\_R, M\_T, M\_L

b. Dependent Variable: M\_DV

**ANOVA<sup>a</sup>**

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	11.093	3	3.698	23.749	.000 <sup>b</sup>
	Residual	30.516	196	.156		
	Total	41.609	199			

a. Dependent Variable: M\_DV

b. Predictors: (Constant), M\_R, M\_T, M\_L

**Coefficients<sup>a</sup>**

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	Collinearity Statistics	
		B	Std. Error	Beta			Tolerance	VIF
1	(Constant)	1.535	.359		4.272	.000		
	M_T	.218	.084	.197	2.595	.010	.651	1.535
	M_L	.201	.096	.173	2.089	.038	.546	1.831
	M_R	.238	.062	.273	3.858	.000	.745	1.342

a. Dependent Variable: M\_DV

**Collinearity Diagnostics<sup>a</sup>**

Model	Dimension	Eigenvalue	Condition Index	Variance Proportions			
				(Constant)	M_T	M_L	M_R
1	1	3.984	1.000	.00	.00	.00	.00
	2	.008	21.841	.06	.12	.01	.88
	3	.004	30.509	.93	.32	.08	.00
	4	.003	36.383	.01	.56	.91	.12

a. Dependent Variable: M\_DV

**Residuals Statistics<sup>a</sup>**

	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Predicted Value	3.7690	4.8186	4.4660	.23610	200
Residual	-1.25627	.74284	.00000	.39160	200
Std. Predicted Value	-2.952	1.494	.000	1.000	200
Std. Residual	-3.184	1.883	.000	.992	200

a. Dependent Variable: M\_DV

**Histogram**

**Dependent Variable: M\_DV**

