

# Choosing the Perfect Stay: Factors Influencing Tourist Hotel Decisions-Making

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Received: April 30, 2024    Accepted: June 10, 2024    Published: June 17, 2024

doi:10.5296/ijssr.v12i2.21900    URL: <https://doi.org/10.5296/ijssr.v12i2.21900>

## Abstract

Tourists employ a variety of factors in their decision-making process when selecting hotels. Every hotel visitor must undergoes an evaluation process before deciding on which hotel to stay in. The objective of this study is to ascertain the factors that impact the choice of hotels from the viewpoint of tourist decision-making. This process is essential for tourists as they must carefully consider their preferences while selecting a hotel. The decision-making process that visitors undergo to express their preferences is multifaceted. Therefore, tourists invariably consider many elements and criteria before making a selection. This study employed a quantitative technique, utilizing survey questionnaires delivered to a sample of 385 respondents representing the tourist population in Kedah, Malaysia. The data analyses

were performed utilising SPSS and employing multiple regression analysis. The findings indicate that visitors' decision-making in selecting hotels is influenced by theme and design, location, and room characteristics. Specifically, the location of the hotel has been identified as the most significant factor considered by tourists when choosing hotels in Kedah, Malaysia. The results of this study are advantageous for stakeholders, particularly those in the hotel business, in enhancing their goods and services. This study also provides recommendations for further research based on its findings.

**Keywords:** decision making, hotel, tourists, theme and design, location, room features

## 1. Introduction

The preliminary compilation of yearly global statistics by the International Civil Aviation Organisation (ICAO) reveals a remarkable growth in the number of passengers in the hotel business. In 2019, the total passenger count on scheduled flights experienced a 3.6 percent growth, reaching a total of 4.5 billion. In addition, there was a 1.7 percent increase in the number of departures, reaching a total of 38.3 million (ICAO, 2019). Due to the significant increase in the number of travelers, the hotel industry must now focus on a new push and pull factors in order to optimize profits and attract target consumers. The growth of the economy, rise in income, and worldwide economic expansion have led to a positive change in consumer spending power. This, in turn, has resulted in more tourist visits and higher revenue in the hotel industry. One of the most challenging elements of the tourists' decision-making process is selecting their place of lodging. An all-encompassing hotel selection model could aid hotel owners, general managers, and the tourism sector in making improved judgments by utilizing more efficient indicators of exceptional service quality and a greater level of satisfaction (Wu et al., 2024).

The focus of this study is to examine the variables that affect tourists' decisions while choosing hotels. It explores how and why people choose a specific hotel and what their motivations and justifications are for making a purchasing decision. These are some of the questions that marketing management, as well as psychology, marketing, and consumer behavior theories, are interested in (Mohammed et al., 2024). Adiningtyas and Millanyani (2024) have demonstrated the use of product features in forecasting consumer preferences and segmenting markets in recent research into the hotel business while Raza S. A. et al. (2020) examined the most significant factors to consider when choosing a hotel. For example, they established the baseline of hotel selection criteria for the business and leisure segments. Furthermore, the majority of research ignores the distinction between pre and post-purchase decision-making (Vives & Ostrovskaya, 2023; Wu et al., 2024).

However, this study aims to determine the factors that influence the selection of hotels in customers' decision-making. The objectives for this study are to understand the overall perception of tourists toward hotels in Kedah, to identify the tourists' behavior in decision-making when choosing a hotel, and to identify the factors that lead to tourists' decision-making in selecting hotels. Additionally, it explores possible decision-making processes and crucial factors affecting choice for a particular market segment, specifically leisure and business travelers. This research paper will primarily concentrate on a comprehensive analysis of the theoretical framework, accompanied by a comprehensive assessment of the literature. The literature review will encompass a synthesis of both existing and newly discovered material pertaining to the subject matter. This study will help tourists by emphasizing the factors that they should take into account when making decisions. It will also help business owners by ensuring that they understand consumers' preferences in order to enhance their business.

## 2. Literature Review

Making travel plans and obtaining information might be challenging for a tourist. Hotel

selection is of high priority and significance for tourists (Wu et al., 2024). Individuals allocate a substantial amount of their time and energy toward the process of carefully choosing the most suitable hotel for their needs. Tourists' preferences are inherently volatile, subject to constant fluctuations, and have the potential to significantly impact the operational outcomes of hotel establishments. It's a challenging experience since there's a lot of data out there, and tourists frequently combine different portions of it (Shaikh et al., 2020). There have been several studies published that look at the variables influencing customers to select the hotel of their choice (He et al., 2024; Alvarez Leon et al., 2021; Ewanlen & Asaolu, 2021). The studies utilized diverse methodologies to ascertain the requirements of clients, encompassing various forms of tourism, and focused on different countries/destinations such as Thailand, Taiwan, Tehran, and Hong Kong. Furthermore, this study specifically examines the impact of three variables, namely location, theme & design, and room characteristics, on tourists' decision-making process while choosing a hotel Figure 1 displays the conceptual framework used in this investigation. Based on this, the following research hypotheses are proposed:

H1: There is a relationship between the location of the hotel and tourists' decision-making.

H2: There is a relationship between hotel themes and design and tourists' decision-making.

H3: There is a relationship between hotel room features and tourists' decision-making.

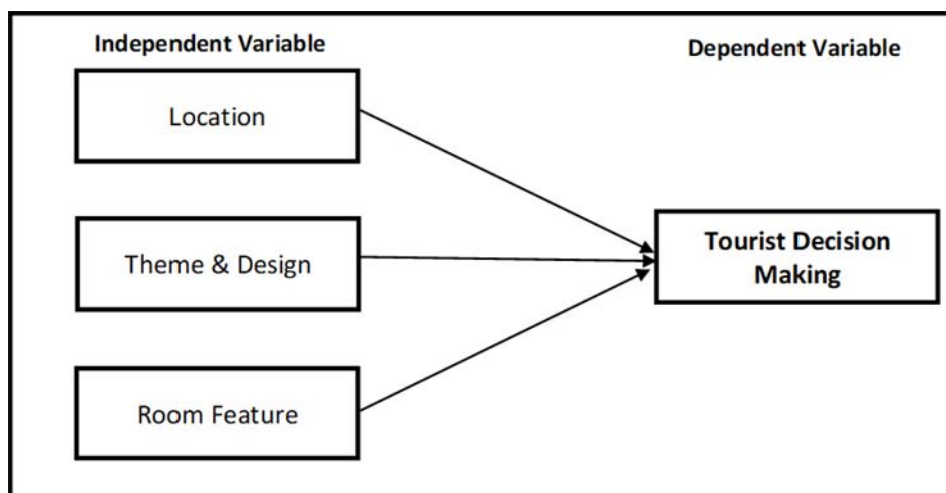


Figure 1. Theoretical framework

### 2.1 Location

The important challenge for the hotel sector is how to choose an acceptable hotel location, as each decision has several implications for the hotel's future operations (Popovic et al., 2019). Besides that, the hotel's excellent performance in terms of income generation, both short and long term, will be aided by its strategic location (Assaf & Tsionas, 2018; Nicolau & Sharma, 2022). One of the most important tasks is to choose an acceptable location for the

construction of a new tourist hotel because the location of the hotel has a significant impact on the success of the investment (Popovic et al., 2019). This is because the location of the hotel itself is suitable for investment decisions in hotels, which shows the reality that location variables that can be identified have a positive and significant impact on the hotel's business. As observed, the tourist will be debating the advantages of staying in a hotel nearer to an attraction versus staying in a hotel further away, which would be less expensive, but it would require transportation and vehicle costs that might outweigh any savings on a room if guests chose a hotel further away from all attractions. In contrast, if the tourist chooses a hotel near to attraction place it does not involve transportation costs but the rate is more expensive. The location can also be influenced by the types of the guests such as the business group, married guest, family trip guest, and others. For example, a significant interest derived from a focus group has ties to a variety of categories, including "price," "town," "city," and, in some ways, "business" (Cró & Martins, 2018). Because of the city's attractions, and the ease with which guests can get there, the hotel's location in the city is perfect for all types of guests. In addition, hotels, being part of the service business, prioritise locations in close proximity to their target markets in order to stimulate demand from potential clients. Hernández-Guedes et al. (2024) found that hotels situated in close proximity to a potential market have superior efficiency compared to those with limited accessibility.

## *2.2 Theme and Design*

Hotel themes are now extensively available in most world-class destinations, notably vacation resorts. A themed hotel has a distinct theme that runs through all areas of the establishment, including the décor, dining, and staff. While design focuses on the aesthetics of style and décor, as well as the visual concept, architecture, and interior decoration. Recently, the concept of theme hotels has gained significant popularity as a unique and attractive segment in the accommodation industry (Chen et al., 2022). Many aspects of a servicescape, such as its layout, music, and aroma, are important in establishing a themed experience. The concept of theme, on the other hand, can extend beyond the limits of a servicescape in the hotel business (Chen et al., 2022). Theme hotels distinguish themselves from other categories of hotels, such as extended-stay, limited-service, and suite hotels, by placing a higher emphasis on creating distinctive theme experiences through specialist designs, goods, and services (He et al., 2024; Chandran, 2024; Wu, 2023). The theme of the hotels is unique compared to other hotels. It offers attractive choices to business and leisure travelers who don't desire standardized or indistinguishable hotel services to influence their decision making towards the theme hotel. A concept design, rather than opulent facilities or a high level of service, determines the construction of a theme (Wu, 2023; Chen et al., 2022). In Langkawi, Kedah, the theme resort that we can see is Meritus Pelangi Resort and Spa where the design and concept based on the traditional Malay's house that mixes a traditional chalet façade with modern conveniences, pleasures, and amenities to make their guests feel relaxed with the Malay traditional environment. As a result, all hotels, from budget to luxury, business to the resorts, might gain a competitive advantage by successfully using this innovation.

## *2.3 The Room Features*

In-room technology amenities are becoming more widely available and growing at a rapid rate (Demirciftci et al., 2024). To stand out in a competitive market, hotels need to improve technology features in guestrooms to attract business and leisure travelers to stay at the hotel because of the technology that the hotel offers to the guest. Cutting-edge in-room technologies enhance the tangible visitor experience by allowing guests to modify the room's physical features, including as colour, music, and fragrance, utilizing advanced technology. (Yang et al., 2021). The technical features of a hotel have the ability to significantly impact a guest's overall satisfaction and can directly predict their future behaviours, such as their intention to revisit (Cain et al., 2024). When a hotel emphasizes its unique room offerings and meets guests' needs, it can boost income by encouraging repeat visits based on positive past experiences. Recent research conducted by Hao et al. (2023) indicates that in-room technology ranks as the third most valuable amenity for hotel visitors, following bathroom facilities and linen. As a result, it is critical to have technology in each room to meet the needs and desires of guests, so that they will choose their accommodation based on the room amenities rather than the location. Hotels that offer advanced technology are highly regarded by guests, as this technology significantly influences their overall pleasure, purchasing decisions, and likelihood of returning to the hotel. (Mihai et al., 2023). In the current Covid-19 pandemic, hospitality companies have the option to employ robots for tasks such as room service, cleaning, food and parcel delivery, autonomous vehicles, delivery drones, and providing other similar services. By utilising these robots, physical contact between tourists and employees can be eliminated, reducing the risk of infection (Adim et al., 2020). Due to the improved technology, the hotel can raise its lodging rates, thus boosting the business's profit. This shows that room features are one of the factors that will influence the guest selection process in making their decision.

### 3. Method

This study adopted a quantitative research design for examining the factors influencing tourists' decision-making in selecting hotels in Kedah, Malaysia. In order to obtain a representative sample, the study utilised a simple random sampling technique. The data were gathered using an online survey that was conducted in conjunction with the study's context. A pilot study was done with a sample of 30 respondents to provide insight into their perspectives on the tested items. For this study a total of 385 respondents agreed to provide feedback through the Likert-scale questionnaires distributed. The questionnaire was divided into four (4) sections. The initial section, section A of the questionnaire was designed to gather the demographic data of the participants, encompassing their age, gender, occupation, marital status, and educational attainment. Section B identified the decision-making behavior of the respondents when selecting hotels followed by section C regarding the tourists' perception of hotels when deciding to stay in hotels. Finally, the gathered data were analysed using statistical techniques provided by IBM SPSS Statistics. The study's methodology was meticulously planned and implemented, employing suitable approaches and sample sizes to guarantee precise and dependable outcomes.

## 4. Research Finding

### 4.1 Demographic Profile

The descriptive analysis in Table 1 revealed that 67.3% of respondents were aged between 17 and 25 years old. Among the 385 respondents, the majority were female, comprising 62.1%. The statistics showed that 58.8% of respondents were employed, allowing them to stay in hotels for both leisure and business trips. The majority of respondents stated that they were single in terms of their marital status (70.1%). Finally, the vast majority of respondents were undergoing tertiary education (88.3%).

Table 1. Demographic Profile

Variables Categories		Frequency	Percentage (%)
<b>Age</b>	17-25 years	259	67.3
	25-30 years	113	29.4
	30 years and above	13	3.4
<b>Gender</b>	Male	146	37.9
	Female	239	62.1
<b>Occupation</b>	Employed Full Time	185	48.1
	Employed Part-Time	33	8.6
	Unemployed	159	4.7
	Self-Employed	8	41.3
	Retired	0	0
<b>Marital Status</b>	Single	273	70.9
	Married	112	29.1
<b>Education Level</b>	SPM	36	9.4
	Diploma	176	45.7
	Undergraduate	148	38.4
	Post-Graduate	16	4.2
Others		9	2.3
<b>Total</b>		<b>385</b>	<b>100</b>

### 4.2 Reliability Analysis

Cronbach's alpha values for both independent and dependent variables were computed using SPSS. The alpha coefficient values for elements influencing guest decision-making were 0.792 for the hotel's location and 0.895 for the hotel's theme and design. The room features were characterized by a coefficient value of 0.859. The coefficient value for the dependent variable in this study was 0.827, representing the tourist's decision-making. Table 2 shows Cronbach's Alpha scores, indicating that all items were reliable in measuring the relevant variable in this study.

Table 2. Cronbach’s Alpha

Variables	Number of Items	Cronbach Alpha
Decision Making	2	0.827
Location	6	0.792
Themes and Design	6	0.895
Room Features	6	0.859

### 4.3 Multiple Regression Analysis

This study used multiple regression analysis to measure the hypothesis of a relationship between various independent factors and the dependent variables. The total sample size for this study of 385 is sufficient for multiple linear regression analysis.

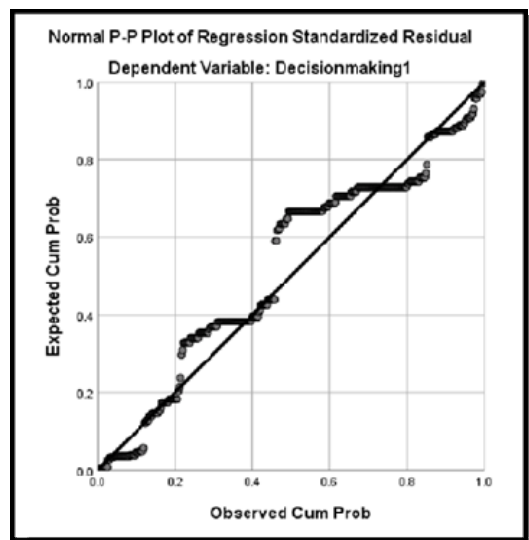


Figure 2. Normal Probability Plot of Regression Standardised Residual of Dependent variable



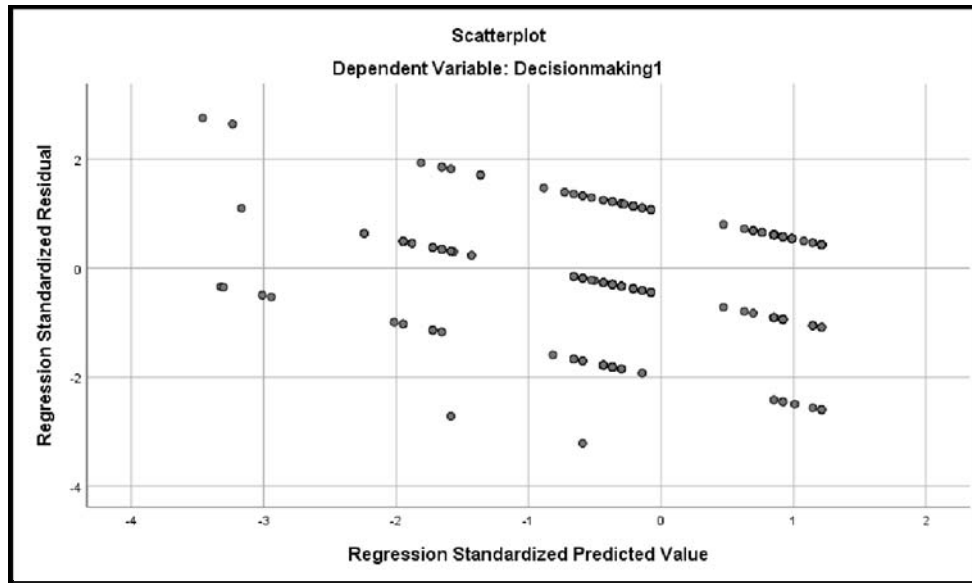


Figure 3. Scatterplot of Dependent variable

Figure 2 clearly illustrates that all points form a diagonal line that deviates significantly from normality, running from the bottom left to the top right. Figure 3 demonstrates that the score value ranges from more than -3 to more than 1, Outliers were found in the samples, however, they were within acceptable limits.

Table 3. Coefficient value of the Model

Change Statistics						
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. The error of the Estimate	R Square Change	F Change
1	0.447 <sup>a</sup>	0.2	0.194	0.66	0.2	31.763

Note. a Predictor: (Constant), Room Features, Themes and Design, Location; b Dependent Variable: Decision Making.

Table 3 displays a correlation coefficient (R) of 0.447, suggesting a somewhat positive association between the predictors and the dependent variable. The coefficient of determination (R Square) is 0.2, indicating that 20% of the variability in decision making can be accounted for by the model. The Adjusted R Square has slightly decreased to 0.194, taking into consideration the number of predictors in the model. The standard error of the estimate is 0.66, representing the average difference between the observed data and the regression line. The R Square Change is 0.2, which represents the proportion of variation that is accounted for by the model. The F Change is 31.763, suggesting that the model is statistically significant in predicting decision making.

Table 4. ANOVA Test Results

	Model	Sum of Square	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	41.554	3	13.851	31.763	0
	Residual	166.15	381	0.436		
	Total	207.704	384			

*Note.* a Dependent Variable: Decision Making; b Predictor: (Constant), Room Features, Themes and Design, Location.

Table 4 displays that the regression component has a sum of squares of 41.554 with 3 degrees of freedom, leading to a mean square of 13.851. The residual component has a sum of squares of 166.15 with 38 degrees of freedom and a mean square of 0.436. The F-value of 31.763 and the p-value of 0.000 suggest that the model is statistically significant. This means that the predictors together have a significant and considerable impact on decision making.

Table 5. Coefficient of Dependent Variable

	Model	Unstandardized Coefficient		Standardized Coefficients		
		$\beta$	Std. Error	$\beta$	T	Sig.
1	(Constant)	2.119	0.268	7.903		0
	Location	0.424	0.048	0.419	8.867	0
	Themes	0.074	0.048	0.074	1.545	0.123
	Room Features	0.022	0.042	0.025	0.537	0.591

Table 5 indicates that among the variables, location is identified as a key influence. The coefficient for Location is 0.424, and its standard error is 0.048. The standardized coefficient for Location is 0.419, indicating the magnitude of its influence compared to the other factors. The T-value for the variable “location” is 8.867, with a p-value of 0.000, which indicates that “Location” is a predictor that has a high level of significance. This discovery highlights the significant influence of location on the dependent variable, indicating that enhancements or modifications in Location have a significant impact. However, the variables themes and room features do not show any statistical significance in predicting the dependent variable. The themes exhibit a coefficient of 0.074 that is not standardized, as well as a standardized coefficient of 0.074, both of which have a standard error of 0.048. The T-value for Themes is 1.545, and the p-value is 0.123, which above the customary threshold of 0.05 for statistical significance. This suggests that the themes have no substantial impact on the dependent variable in this model.

## 5. Discussion & Conclusions

Based on all the results in the research findings, this study accomplished its goals by investigating tourists’ views on hotels in Kedah, analyzing their decision-making process in

selecting a hotel, and determining the factors that impact their decision-making. The multiple regression analysis conducted using SPSS revealed a favourable association between the dependent variable and the three key independent variables. The hotel's location, room design, and theme, as well as the amenities of the rooms, are closely linked to tourists' decision-making. The main factor influencing a tourist's decision-making is the hotel's location, as indicated by the Beta coefficient value ( $\beta=.419$ ,  $p<0.001$ ), supporting the hypothesis.

The multiple regression analysis also showed that the independent variables involved in this study, which are location, themes & design, and room features have a significant influence on the dependent variable, decision making. As shown in Table 3, the R Square value is 0.2/20%. Table 4 also proves that the analysis done is significant and valid based on the significant value ( $p<0.1$ ). From Table 5, it can be seen that the theme and room features of a hotel in Kedah do not influence the tourists' decision making when selecting a hotel in Kedah as the p-value is greater than 0.05 ( $p>0.05$ ).

According to Popovic et al (2019), the hotel's location plays a crucial role in determining the success of the investment. Their study has shown that the majority of hotel customers in Kedah prioritise location when making their decisions. The hotel's location convenience and accessibility frequently influence consumer decisions. Hoteliers should prioritise properties in strategic locations to attract tourists, as this finding highlights their value.

While regarding the themes and design of a hotel, even though Chen, Y. et al, (2022). mentioned that the hotel theme has become one of the most fascinating new accommodation segments, the study showed that it is the second factor that will be considered. Lastly, the study revealed that room features are the least significant aspect when choosing hotels in Kedah. This underscores the necessity for businesses to improve their technology capabilities in order to distinguish themselves in a competitive market. This may lead hotel operators to review their investment objectives and consider reallocating money to areas that have a greater influence on consumer behaviour, such as upgrading facilities or boosting service quality.

The hospitality business is currently experiencing rapid and distinctive growth worldwide, making it imperative to undertake this study in a significant direction. Currently, academics are emphasising tourists' choices during the choosing selection process rather than decision-making. This shift presents challenges in evaluating the topic because of its complexity and subjectivity. The research investigates the aspects influencing tourists' decision-making, such as the hotel's location, room characteristics, design, and theme. The papers utilised in the literature review are content analyses focusing on the elements influencing tourists' decision-making in Kedah.

For future research, this study recommends conducting more segmented research based on geographical evaluation in other nations, instead of solely focusing on tourists in Malaysia. The study found significant distinctions in how people from different countries choose hotels. Future research should priorities the decision-making process impacted by the tourist rather than the attributes of the choice. In addition, future research should conduct research using

qualitative or mixed methods to ensure the results of the research conducted are accurate and clear.

This study provides valuable insights into the factors that influence the decision-making process of tourists when selecting a hotel in Kedah. The hotel's location emerged as the most critical factor, while room themes and features were found to be less significant. These findings can guide hotel managers in resource allocation and strategic planning to better meet the preferences of tourists and enhance their competitiveness in the hospitality market, as well as refine their marketing strategies and operational focus to better meet the preferences and needs of their target clientele.

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