



Research Article

## Foreigners' Satisfaction on the Country's Rail Services and Its Impact on Their Stay in Malaysia

Gudelia C. Saporna<sup>1\*</sup>, Ryan A. Claveria<sup>2</sup> and Smitha Geetha<sup>1</sup>

### Abstract

One of the factors looked into by a tourist or investor is the accessibility of transportation facilities at the destination. A country which has all the means of transportation has a competitive advantage. Thus, governments invest in transportation particularly on rail transit since it attracts more investments and tourists as well. Malaysia is one of the many countries which give emphasis on the role of rail transit in its development plan. Rail-based transit is a necessity for modern cities like Kuala Lumpur (KL) due to its burgeoning population and number of tourist arrivals. Since the Draft Structure Plan Kuala Lumpur 2020 envisions turning KL into a world class city, the study is very timely. Moreover, there has been no specific study on the impact of rail services in Kuala Lumpur. It is in this context that the researchers delve into assessing the satisfaction of the foreigners on the rail services and its impact in terms of their stay in Malaysia. The researchers made use of 130 randomly selected foreigners as their respondents. The results of the study showed that the present status of the rail services influenced the level of satisfaction of the foreigners on the rail transport. Likewise, foreigners' satisfaction with the services of KTM and Monorail has positive impact to them in terms of their stay in Malaysia.

**Keywords:** Status of rail services; Satisfaction; Foreigners; Impact

### Introduction

Kuala Lumpur is the capital of Malaysia with an area of 243 km<sup>2</sup> and a population of 1.4 million. Kuala Lumpur is the center of economic activity in Malaysia with approximately 838,000 employed people and 12.4% contribution to Malaysia's total GDP. With the rapid growth of vehicle approximately 8% per annum, the government embarked on major developments in transportation [1]. For the last 10 years, developments of new rail-based transport systems like KTM Komuter, LRT (Light Rail Transit) and the ERL (Express Rail Link) for the new International Airport were tangible.

To date, the rail transport in Malaysia comprises heavy rail, light rail transit, monorail and funicular railway line. Heavy rail (including high-speed rail) is mostly used for intercity passenger and freight transport. Light rail transit is used for urban public transport while

the High-speed railway line links Kuala Lumpur to the Kuala Lumpur International Airport. The monorail line in the country is used for public transport in Kuala Lumpur only. The Funicular railway line is operational in Penang.

The rail network in Malaysia covers most of its states. In Kuala Lumpur, an extensive rail transport system links the major parts of the city. The rail services available are the Putra and Star Light Rail Transit, KL Monorail, ERL and KTM Komuter. Five transit lines are available in Malaysia that link major cities and places of interest within Kuala Lumpur and Selangor. The LRT is provided by MY Rapid Company while Monorail by KL Monorail Sdn Bhd. On the other hand, the KTM Komuter is a city train under KTM Company, a corporation owned by the Malaysian government. Lastly, the ERL is operated by Express Rail Link Sdn Bhd. Feeder bus services are available from the train stations to designated tourist destinations. All lines converge at the KL Sentral Station except the STAR LRT.

The best to get around Kuala Lumpur very fast and avoid traffic is to take Malaysia's rail transport. It is fast, inexpensive and mostly elevated metro system. With the increasing number of tourists, the government studying the feasibility of expanding its route by covering Damansara, Cheras, Kepong, Sri Petaling, Bukit Jalil and many more areas.

And since there has been no specific study on the impact of rail services in Kuala Lumpur [1], the researchers delved into assessing the status and level of satisfaction of the foreigners on the rail services in Malaysia. Likewise, the impact of rail services to them in terms of their stay in Malaysia was also examined.

### Related Literature

The researchers, in the process of their quest for the related literature, jumped across national boundaries after finding limited studies in Malaysia using books and internet. Though, the literature review focused more on the development of rail transport globally, still they provide a sound foundation for this research.

Feifer [2] describes what some people thought about the advent of rail travel as "*the railway burst upon the 19<sup>th</sup> century which revolutionized ideas about where and how humanity can travel. Thundering, massive, belching smoke and hurtling along at unprecedented speeds, the train was a monstrous apparition across the gentle hills of England*".

The railways grew so fast in Britain. In 1835, the first express route was developed "Great Western Railway (GWR) linking London with the Seaport of Bristol. In 1841, the first rail tour was introduced by Thomas Cook who chartered train that run from Loughborough to Leicester in England. Because of the long distance involved, U.S. and Russia used train sleeping car in 1859 "The Delmonico" in U.S. In Europe, the Orient Express was introduced and ran from Paris to Istanbul. It was a sumptuous train with silk-walled carriages, mosaic-tiled bathrooms etc. Likewise, a popular low-cost method of rail travel in Europe is the Eurailpass which provides the holder with unlimited first class rail travel without any fast train surcharges in sixteen European countries. In Japan, super trains known as "bullet trains" travel at a speed of 300 kph. On the other hand, Britain is using a

\*Corresponding author: Gudelia C. Saporna, Senior Lecturer, School of Hospitality, Taylors University Lakeside Campus, Malaysia, E-mail: GudeliaCruz.Saporna@taylors.edu.my

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unique form of transportation known as the railbus, a highway bus body on a railway frame and is powered by a turbo-charged bus engine [3].

In the early 1970s, the U.S. Government established a private corporation known as Amtrak and the Canadian Government a similar one known as Via Rail, to rent the tracks from the railway owners and run passenger trains on them. According to McIntosh and Goeldner [4] Amtrak not only strive for profit but aims to provide modern efficient intercity rail passenger service within the nation's basic rail system and employ innovative operating and marketing concepts to develop the potential of modern rail service in meeting intercity needs. Amtrak offers service to practically every major city in the United States. Many business travelers prefer to take the trip by high-speed rail because of the high-speed service, spacious work tables and business amenities on board such as phones and laptop outlets at each seat. In 1998, Amtrak and Via Rail Canada joined forces and developed a rail pass (North America Rail Pass) for domestic and international visitors in the USA and Canada [5].

In Korea, the Korean Train Express, a high speed rail system had started its commercial service on April 1, 2004, with 300 kilometers per hour speed. Its goal is to provide additional rail capacity in Seoul and Busan corridor and acquire technology for high speed rail system. With the commission of the KTX (Korea Train Express), both project goals were satisfied, they solved the problem of congestion due to lack of transport capacity between Seoul and Busan corridor which is said to be the backbone of the Korean economy [6].

Some studies were undertaken to determine the impact of rail services. One is the paper of Mohamad [1] which shows a positive impact on rail services in Malaysia. Road congestion has not worsened significantly, suggesting that the introduction of KTM, LRT and ERL have contributed towards encouraging more people to use public transport. The urban rail services also created a new image for public transport. The increasing number of commuters is attributed to punctuality, comfort and cleanliness of rail transport. In this regard, Kuala Lumpur is undertaking feasibility studies on a high-speed rail connecting Kuala Lumpur and Singapore, spanning around 400 km. Likewise, the high-speed rail is expected to have a positive impact on the country's tourism industry, have a time-saving factor and further unlock the property values in Kuala Lumpur [7]. Moreover, the Malaysian government has approved a project to build a direct railway connection between KL Sentral and Subang Airport/ Subang Skypark within 2 years [8].

Meanwhile, in an analysis of the operation of Orient-Express, one of the world's premier travel brands, it shows that its operation has a positive to the tourists translated in the significant increase in the earnings of the company from US\$40.9 million in 2001 to US\$ 45.3 million in 2002 and US\$48.7 million in 2003 [9].

Similarly, in an investigation of the performance of Great North Eastern Railways (GNER) operating a high-speed train service over London-Scotland routes, it shows that the company has been consistently ranked as one of the UK's best long-distance train operating companies. The satisfaction of the passengers is attributed to the facilities provided by the operator which include better wheelchair access, new toilet compartments, improved luggage storage, ground coffee machines and bar areas. Likewise, punctuality of its services about 84% compared to domestic air services can be observed [9].

Prideaux [10], identified areas that are appealing to the tourists when traveling by train such as speed, comfort, amenities and sociability. He pointed out those infrequent services, lack of reliability in keeping to the published schedules, slow nature of train travel led to a downward trend in the number of passengers taking trains in Australia. In an investigation of the success of Queensland Rail by Prideaux [11] it shows that the development of promotional themes to sell individual services, where a number of segments were carefully nurtured, contributed to the customer's satisfaction, which made the company received high customer satisfaction scores.

In a study conducted by Edge Tourism Solutions [12], the following factors have contributed to the success of rail tourism service operation in the world: high facility and service standards; importance of advertising media; innovation in the use of marketing channels; the appeal and market position of rail transport and the different price points in order to attract both the economy and premium passengers.

Another study conducted by Tennyson [13] shows that rail transit attracts higher ridership than bus when other factors are about equal. Likewise, the expanded use of public transit can sharply reduce the use of automobiles and resulting pollution.

Case studies on the impact of new high-speed rail lines confirm that new travelers are attracted to it. More so, EU Commissioner has sketched vision in 2050 in which rail is the dominant mode for long-distance transport and has also a strong position in regional passenger transport [14].

Given the related literature, this research paper aims to answer the following hypotheses:

H<sub>1</sub>: There is no relationship between the status of rail services (KTM, LRT, Monorail) and level of satisfaction of foreigners.

H<sub>2</sub>: There in no relationship between the level of satisfaction of foreigners on the rail services and its impact in terms of their stay in Malaysia.

## Methodology

The main objective of the study is to examine the status of the rail services in Malaysia as perceived by the foreigners, their level of satisfaction and its impact in terms of their stay in Malaysia. The researchers considered only KTM, LRT and Monorail in the study primarily because these are the most commonly used modes of transportation by the foreigners.

The study made use of the descriptive-correlational research design. The descriptive method was used to determine the status, level of satisfaction and impact while the correlation research was utilized to explain the relationship among variables. Descriptive-correlation according to Ariola [15] is used to determine whether or not there is a relationship that exists between two or more quantifiable variables, and if there is, to what extent is the degree of relationship.

The researchers made use of 130 randomly selected foreigners as their respondents. Questionnaires were distributed in the areas of Subang Jaya, Petaling Jaya, Sha Alam and Kuala Lumpur.

The researchers prepared a two-page survey questionnaire to gather the information needed to achieve the desired objectives of the study. The questionnaire was structured into four parts. Part 1 focused on the profile of the respondents. Part 2 dealt with the status

of the rail services as perceived by the foreigners. Part 3 was designed to determine the level of satisfaction with the rail services in Malaysia. Lastly, Part 4 centered on the impact of rail services to the foreigners in terms of their stay in Malaysia. The five-point Likert Scale [16] with 5 as the highest and 1 as lowest was used.

## Findings

### Respondents' profile

To address the issue, the researchers made use of 130 randomly selected respondents. From the 150 survey questionnaires distributed, only 130 were considered valid. Results of survey showed that majority of the respondents (87%) are in Malaysia for study purposes; five percent (5%) of them are employed; four percent (4%) are in Malaysia to visit their family and another four percent (4%) come to Malaysia for business and leisure purposes.

Since most of the respondents are in Malaysia to study, results of the survey indicate that 87% of them stay in Malaysia for more than six months; five percent (5%) ranged from 4 to 6 months, they are the employed foreigners and the remaining eight (8%) are in Malaysia for not more than three months. Basically, those who stay in Malaysia for not more than three months are the tourists.

In terms of nationality, forty percent (40%) of the respondents are Chinese; seventeen percent (17%) Indonesian; ten percent (10%) Koreans; seven percent (7%) Europeans; five percent (5%) are Africans; four percent (4%) Pakistani; four percent (4%) Maldivians; while the remaining respondents about thirteen percent (13%) are from the rest of Asia and Middle East.

When respondents were grouped according to their frequency of taking the rail transport, on the average, the respondents often take the KTM; seldom have they taken LRT and Monorail.

### Status of rail services in Malaysia

Table 1 shows the perception of the foreigners on the rail services in Malaysia. Based on the data presented, the three rail transport stations were perceived to be moderately accessible by the respondents as revealed by the mean scores of KTM (3.15); LRT (3.14); and Monorail (3.11). In terms of schedule, KTM got a mean score of 2.71 while monorail was rated the lowest (2.56). It only shows that the schedule of trips is not that regular. Facility wise, all rail transports were rated to a "moderate extent" which means that facilities in terms of cleanliness and safety are not that excellent yet. Lastly, in terms of fares, monorail got the lowest rating (3.36). Among the three rail transports, KTM was given the highest overall rating (3.06) by the foreigners.

### Level of satisfaction of foreigners on the rail services of Malaysia

Table 2 presents the level of satisfaction of the foreigners on the rail services in Malaysia. In terms of accessibility, though the three rail transports got a moderately satisfying rating, the respondents gave monorail the highest mean score (3.47) and KTM with the lowest mean (3.00). Further, the respondents are also moderately satisfied with the schedule of trips. However, the foreigners are more satisfied with the monorail's schedule as evidenced by a mean score of 3.48. Figures also indicate that, facility wise, the respondents are more satisfied with monorail (3.45) though it is to a moderate degree only. The table also reveals that among the three rail transports,

the respondents are more satisfied with the fares of monorail as manifested in the mean score of 3.26. The overall mean suggests that foreigners are moderately satisfied with the rail services in Malaysia. It clearly shows that monorail garnered the highest mean score (3.42) while KTM got the lowest mean (2.87).

### Rail services impact to foreigners in terms of stay in Malaysia

Table 3 describes the impact of rail services to foreigner's stay in Malaysia. It is evident that it is only to a moderate extent that the rail services have influenced the foreigner's stay in Malaysia as manifested in the overall mean score of 3.16. To a moderate extent, the respondents find it cheaper (3.35) and convenient (3.07) to travel in Malaysia because of the availability of rail transport. Likewise, it is also to a moderate extent (3.29) that they find rail transport an effective means of promoting tourism in Malaysia. Overall assessment shows that foreigners are satisfied with their stay in Malaysia as revealed by the mean score of 3.23.

### Relationship between status of rail services and level of satisfaction of foreigners

Table 4 shows the r and r<sup>2</sup> values. As reflected in the table, there is a moderate degree of relationship between the status of rail services and level of satisfaction in KTM. This is indicated by the computed r-value of 0.46 which exceeded the critical p-value of 0.195 using the 0.05 level of significance with 128 degrees of freedom. It only implies

Table 1: Mean Perception Profile of the Respondents on the Status of Rail Services in Malaysia.

	Status of Rail Services		
	KTM	LRT	Monorail
	Mean	Mean	Mean
Accessibility of stations	3.15	3.14	3.11
Schedule of Trips	2.71	2.70	2.56
Facilities	2.91	2.92	2.86
Fares	3.46	3.45	3.36
<b>Overall Mean</b>	<b>3.06</b>	<b>3.05</b>	<b>2.97</b>

Table 2: Level of Satisfaction of Foreigners on the Rail Services of Malaysia.

Status of Rail Services	Level of Satisfaction		
	KTM	LRT	Monorail
	Mean	Mean	Mean
Accessibility of stations	3.00	3.23	3.47
Schedule of trips	2.74	3.29	3.48
Facilities	2.60	3.31	3.45
Fares	3.12	3.25	3.26
<b>Overall Mean</b>	<b>2.87</b>	<b>3.27</b>	<b>3.42</b>

Table 3: Rail Services Impact to Foreigners in terms of Stay in Malaysia.

	Impact in terms of Stay in Malaysia
1. It is convenient to travel in Malaysia because of the rail transport	3.07
2. It is safe and fast to travel in Malaysia because of the availability of rail transport	2.85
3. Rail transport is an effective means of promoting tourism in Malaysia	3.29
4. It is cheaper to travel in Malaysia because of the availability of rail transport	3.35
5. Overall, I am satisfied with my stay in Malaysia	3.23
<b>Overall Mean</b>	<b>3.16</b>

that the level of satisfaction with KTM is influenced by the status of rail services. On the other hand, no relationship can be observed for LRT and Monorail as indicated by the computed r-values of 0.17 and 0.20 respectively which are below the critical p-values of 0.232 and 0.217 using the 0.05 level of significance. With this, the null hypotheses are accepted.

### Level of satisfaction of foreigners on rail services and its impact on their stay in Malaysia

Table 5 shows the table of r and r<sup>2</sup> for the level of satisfaction of foreigners on rail services and its impact on their stay in Malaysia. It can be noted that there is a low to moderate degree of relationship between the level of satisfaction on KTM and Monorail services and its impact on their stay in Malaysia. This is indicated by the computed r-values of KTM (0.39) and Monorail (0.30) which exceeded the critical p-values of 0.195 and 0.217 respectively. Figures imply that the foreigner's stay in Malaysia is moderately affected by their level of satisfaction with the rail services. The result of the study partially supports the observations of Mohamad [1]. On the other hand, no relationship can be observed between the level of satisfaction in LRT and its impact on their stay in Malaysia as manifested in the computed r-values of 0.0894.

### Conclusions and Recommendations

The results of the current study clearly showed that the foreigners are moderately satisfied with the rail services in Malaysia in terms of accessibility of stations, schedule of trips, facilities and fare structure. Likewise, it is also evident that foreigner's stay in Malaysia is moderately influenced by the rail services. The correlation analysis indicates that there is a moderate degree of relationship between the status of rail services and the level of satisfaction of foreigners in KTM. No relationship can be observed with LRT and Monorail. It can also be noted that there is low to moderate degree of relationship between level of satisfaction on KTM and Monorail and its impact on their stay in Malaysia. On the other hand, no relationship between the two variables can be noted in the case of LRT.

Though a moderate degree of relationship can be seen, there is still a need to improve the present condition of the rail transport services particularly in terms of regularity and punctuality in schedules. It is also suggested to have frequent trips during peak hours. Policies should be enhanced in terms of security like providing more space or a separate coach for the disabled and elders or having an on-board security for every trip. To maintain the cleanliness, cooperation of

the general public should be encouraged. Likewise, there is also a need to review the current fare structure to make it more attractive and affordable not only to the foreigners but to all commuters. The government should also consider pursuing their development plan in extending their lines.

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### Author Affiliations

Top

<sup>1</sup>School of Hospitality, Taylors University Lakeside Campus, Malaysia  
<sup>2</sup>College of Business Administration, Divine Word College of Calapan, Philippines


Table 4: Table of r and r<sup>2</sup>.

IV	DV: Level of Satisfaction					
	KTM		LRT		Monorail	
	r	r <sup>2</sup>	r	r <sup>2</sup>	r	r <sup>2</sup>
Status of rail services	.46	.21	.17	.03	.20	.04
Level of significance=0.05						
df	128	78	86			
Critical p-values	0.195	0.232	0.217			

Table 5: Table of r and r<sup>2</sup>.

IV: Level of Satisfaction	DV: Impact in Terms of Stay	
	r	r <sup>2</sup>
KTM	0.39	0.152
LRT	0.0894	7.99 <sup>-3</sup>
Monorail	0.30	0.09

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