

INTERNATIONAL TOURISTS PERCEPTION AND SATISFACTION ON YANGON DESTINATION AREA

Win Pa PaMyo¹, Myo Myo Khine² and Khin Khin Soe³

Abstract

This paper attempts to investigate the antecedents of international tourist satisfaction. The focus of the study is Yangon Area, a well-known tourist destination in Myanmar. It tries to present international tourist perception on Yangon area from the geographical point of view. The study area has many attraction sites such as cultural and heritage attraction sites. This area is extremely easy to reach with several modes of transportation. The main objectives of this study area are to assess on international tourist arrival, to evaluate the international tourist perception and satisfaction on attraction sites and to predict future prospect on international tourist attraction sites. The research uses both quantitative and qualitative methods. Questionnaires are distributed to foreign tourists of the study area. Only 250 questionnaires were distributed to international tourists. Primary data is conducted by interviews and discussions with international tourists. Secondary data are also applied in this research; these data are obtained from Ministry of Hotel and Tourism Departments. The findings of this study could provide guidelines for tourism development and destination operators to further develop better strategies to satisfy travellers to Yangon.

Keywords: international tourist, tourist attraction sites and tourist perception

Introduction

Yangon Region is industrially and commercially the most developed region among the States and Regions of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar. Yangon is a region of importance nestled on the south-central part of Myanmar. Yangon was the old capital of Myanmar. It is also the current commercial capital of the country. Yangon is one of the gateways to Myanmar for international tourists. The city houses a large number of colonial-era buildings in Southeast Asia and has a unique colonial-era urban core that has been maintained over the years. Generally, the age of Yangon is over 2500 years. Then, the area have gone through different experiences such as civil state period, town of trade, seaport of Myanmar King period, the capital of British, the capital of independent Myanmar, and the commercial city. Therefore, many diverse colors of religion, ethnic, activity has existed (Phray Reh Linn Naing, 2010). The interesting tourist attraction sites are various in Yangon.

International tourist perception is the assessment of the trip to specific tourist attractions and thus it can somehow support tourism management for further development. The success of the tourism industry is dependent on tourist attraction sites. The perception of international tourist is revealed by the recipe of the attributes of the attractions and visions of the tourists.

The accessibility is improved within the area, thus providing ease of travel to the destinations. Yangon possesses better infrastructure for tourism industry. Yangon is the main entry point of international tourists.

Aim

The main aim is to develop tourism of Yangon area by applying findings of the research paper.

¹ Dr, Associate Professor, Department of Geography, Yangon University of Distance Education.

² Dr, Professor (Head), Department of Geography, Yangon University of Distance Education.

³ Dr, Professor, Department of Geography, Sittway University

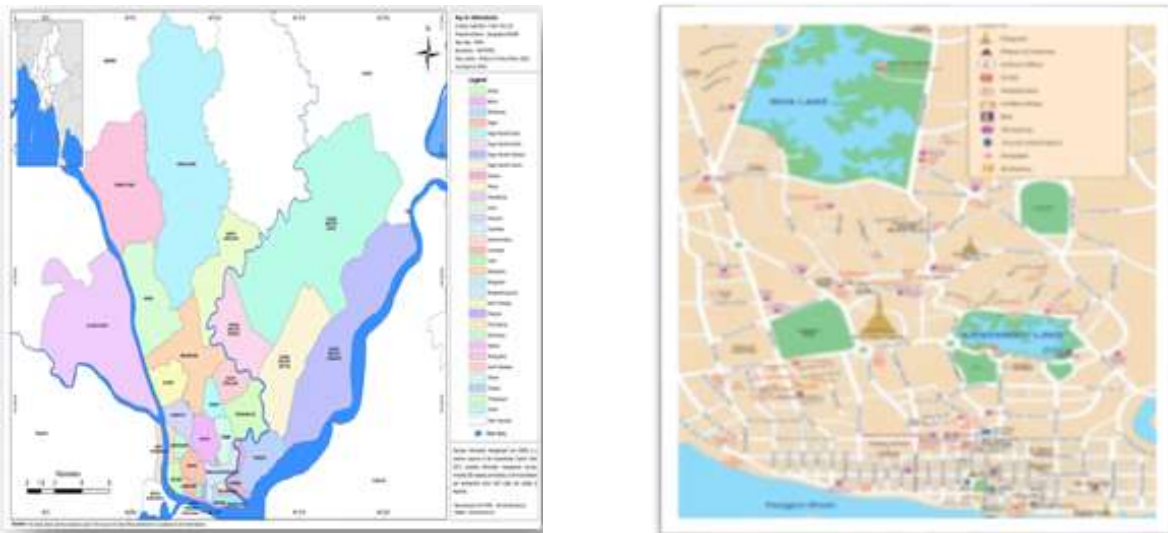
Objectives

The objectives are:

- to assess on international tourist arrival,
- to describe the tourist attraction sites of Yangon Area, and
- to examine the international tourist perception and satisfaction on visiting Yangon

Study Area

This research paper study mainly focuses on tourism of Yangon Area. Yangon Region has an area of 10,170 square kilometers (3,927 square miles). Yangon Region is located between North Latitude 14° and 17°50' and East Longitude 93° 15' and 96° 50'. It is bordered by Bago Region on the north and east, by Gulf of Moattama on the south, and by Ayeyarwaddy Region on the west. Yangon Region is the smallest Region in Myanmar. Yangon City is located in the midst of Yangon Region. Figure 1. Yangon City is included in Yangon Region. It is a former capital city in Myanmar and it is the city of commercial, largest and living place of diverse nationalities of Myanmar. Commercially, Yangon City is the hub of the whole country. The exports and imports mainly pass through Yangon port and Thilawa port. Yangon Region is well-connected with roads, railways, waterway and airway. The area is highly accessible with several mode of transportation.



Source: Myanmar Survey Department

Figure 1 Location of Yangon Region.

Methodology

This research used both qualitative and quantitative approaches. Both primary and secondary data are used for this research. Research methods included observatory, exploratory, questionnaires and interviews with structured and unstructured interviews.

Questionnaire and interview have been conducted in the period from December 2019 to February 2020. Secondary data are collected from the government departments, Ministry of Hotels and Tourism (Nay Pyi Taw and Yangon), journals, theses, newspapers, internet and Google map. The total sample size is 250. The questionnaires and personal interviews are conducted to have different perception of international tourist concerning the overall conditions of the tourism attractions under study.

The data from 250 respondents were analyzed in the study. In the analysis of tourist characteristics, included purpose of travel, length of stay, employment status and demographic data such as gender, age group, occupation, nationality and level of education. Interviews and field surveys are also conducted in this research. The assessment of tourists' satisfaction levels is based on five point- (1) very high satisfaction (2) high satisfaction, (3) medium satisfaction, (4) low satisfaction and (5) very low satisfaction. The facts and data available are tabulated, calculated and presented in diagrams.

Findings

International Tourist Arrivals to Yangon Area

In order to promote the tourism industry in the country and to encourage local and foreign entrepreneurs to take part in the business, the SLORC promulgated the Myanmar Hotels and Tourism Law in October 23, 1993.

On 24th September, 1992, the government formed the Ministry of Hotels and Tourism and licenses were issued to the private entrepreneurs for the registration of hotels and motels which were suitable for the accommodation of foreign tourists. Tourism Department and Management Committee (TDMC) was formed on 27th April, 1994 and the term of visa was extended from 28 days to 70 days. In order to boost the tourism industry, the year 1996 was recognized as Visit Myanmar Year (MOHT, Yangon).

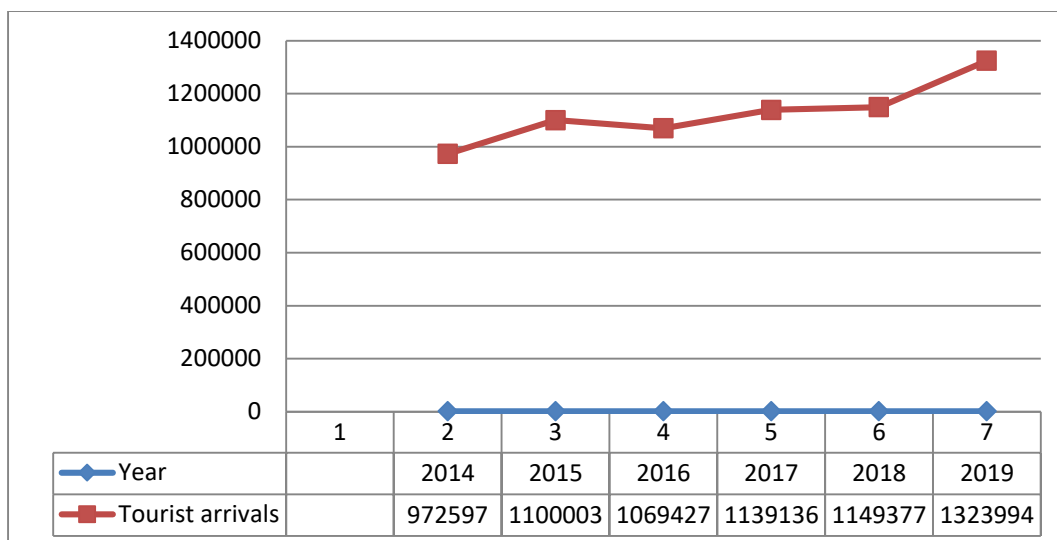
International tourists arrived in Yangon through airport with various visa types such as Foreign Individual Tourist, Group, Business, Social Visit and others.

Table 1 Number of International Tourist Arrivals in Yangon (from 2014 to 2019)

Year	F.I.T (Individual)	Group	EVB (Business)	EV (Social Visit)	Others	Total
2014	311865	156673	186239	45974	271846	972597
2015	274996	141806	170559	49444	463198	1100003
2016	264602	153169	171098	43876	436682	1069427
2017	247308	171169	151951	38116	530585	1139136
2018	229592	184481	218518	29517	487269	1149377
2019	270105	292321	239121	34648	487799	1323994

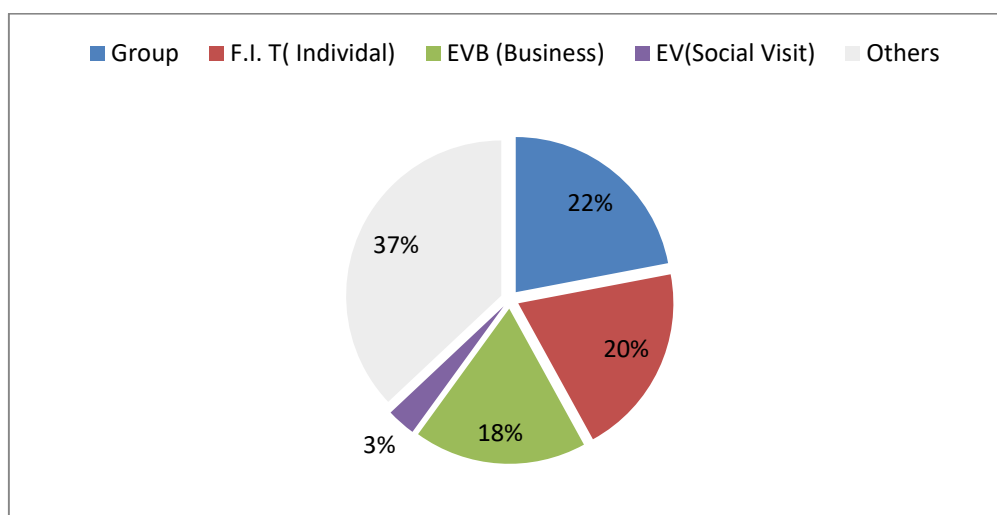
Source: Ministry of Hotels and Tourism, Nay Pyi Taw

According to table 1, the number of international tourist that visited Yangon City was 972,597 in 2014; it increased to 1100003, 1069427, 1139136, 1149377 and 1323994 from 2015 to 2019 respectively. The number of visitors has increased up to two times within 2014 to 2019. According to figure 3, group tours was the highest number with 292,321 (22 percent) in 2019 and the second highest was F. I. T (or) Individual with 270,105 (20 percent). The third highest was EVB or Business with 239,121(18 percent). The lowest number was E.V (Social Visit) with 34,648 (3 percent).



Source: Based on table 1

Figure 2 International Tourist Arrivals in Yangon from 2014 to 2019



Source : Based on Table 1

Figure 3 Percentage of International Tourist Arrival to Yangon in 2019

International Tourist Arrivals by Tourist Generating Regions

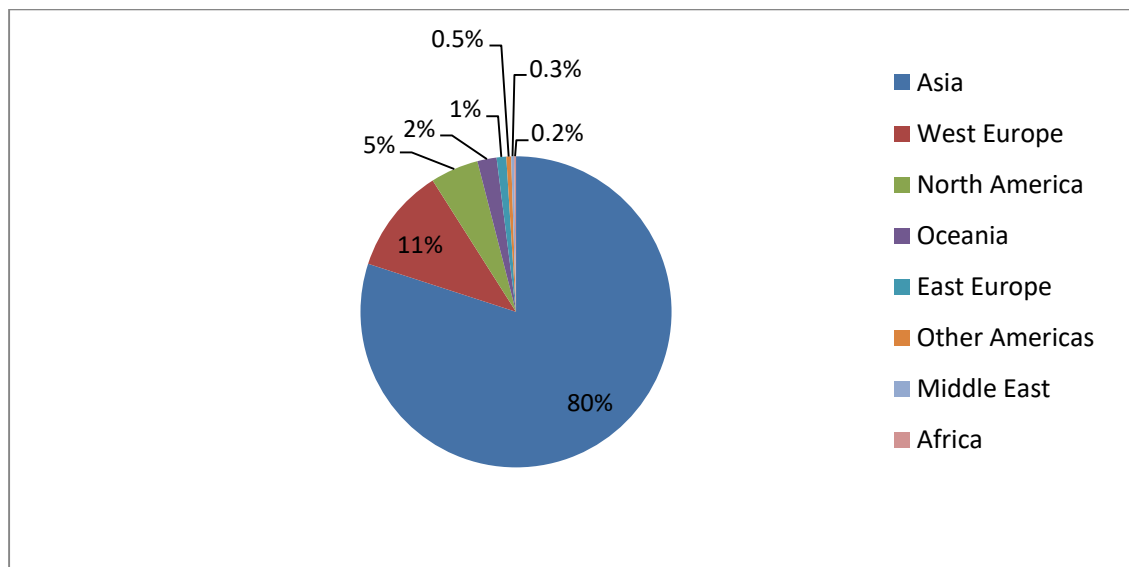
The international tourists visit Yangon Area in 2019, it can be grouped into 8 tourist generating regions and these are Asia, West Europe, North America, Oceania, East Europe, Other Americas, Middle East and Africa. These are shown in Table 2 and Figure 4. Comparatively, the share of tourists from Asia was the largest number with 1,060,396 or 80 percent, followed by West Europe with 142,443 or 11 percent, North America with 65,510 or 5 percent, Oceania was 25,654 or 2 percent and East Europe was 13,538 or 1 percent.

Tourists from other regions have been relatively too small in numbers, only 8036 or 0.5 percent from Other Americas, 4,558 or 0.3 percent from Middle East and 3,859 or 0.2 percent from Africa and respectively. Table 2

Table 2 Number of International Tourist Arrival in Yangon Area by Tourist Generating Region (2019)

No.	Nationalities	Tourist arrival	Percentage to total
1.	Asia	1060396	80
2.	West Europe	142443	11
3.	North America	65510	5
4.	Oceania	25654	2
5.	East Europe	13538	1
6.	Other Americas	8036	0.5
7.	Middle East	4558	0.3
8.	Africa	3859	0.2
Total		1323994	100

Source: Ministry of Hotels and Tourism, (Nay Pyi Taw)



Source: Based on Table 2

Figure 4 Percentage of International Tourist Arrival by Tourists Generating Regions

As shown above, Asian was ranked first in the number of tourists who frequently visited the study area. Among the Asian tourists, China was the largest in numbers, sharing 32 percent of total Asian tourists, followed by Thailand with 22 percent and Japan with 11 percent. The other Asian countries that visited Yangon include Korea, Singapore, Vietnam, India, Malaysia, Taiwan, Hong Kong and Philippine. The number of tourists from Asian countries like China, Korea and Japan has significantly increased. The number of tourists from other countries has slightly increased, but the number of tourists from Thailand has significantly decreased compared to last year (2018). During the period 2014 to 2019, the number of international tourists' arrival was greatest in December and the lowest in June.

Seasonal International Tourist Arrivals

Generally, tourists like to travel in the dry season for recreation or other purposes. The months October, November, December, January, February, March and April and May are the dry season for research area, whereas the rainy months of June, July, August and September are rainy season for the study area. Table .3

In 2019, the research was visited by 1323994 tourists. The season is divided into three seasons, via; normal season, high season and peak season. Normal season is from June to September, and high season is October, February, March, April and May. The peak season is the best time of the year for foreign tourists and it begins from November, December and January. The number of tourists usually increases during Christmas and New Year time. Every year, November and December tops the list in the number of tourists.

Table 3 Seasonal international tourist arrivals by monthly and yearly. (2014 - 2019).

No	Months	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
1	January	91760	104422	102373	117043	112806	119990
2	February	89167	101113	103638	113785	103632	123990
3	March	89214	97877	94655	102082	107908	118005
4	April	71644	72552	69136	79176	82523	99193
5	May	68659	74787	74702	78096	83894	96047
6	June	60030	67267	66774	72662	75488	87063
7	July	69695	74795	78726	81445	81133	99042
8	August	67701	81705	75365	78493	78425	98249
9	September	69137	84663	75845	79366	77032	94215
10	October	90317	107586	99959	102060	101201	115739
11	November	103589	115864	111702	118611	120257	133339
12	December	101684	117372	116552	116310	125078	139122
	Total	972597	1100003	1069427	1139129	1149377	1323994

Source: Ministry of Hotels and Tourism, (Nay Pyi Taw)

Types of Tourist Attraction Sites in Yangon Area

Tourist attraction sites of study area are based on three sites such as religious sites, recreation sites and architecture buildings. Yangon was an economic hub and former capital of Myanmar for more than 120 years before the administrative capital officially moved to Nay Pyi Taw in 2007. It has rich and diverse heritage buildings. In May 1996, Yangon City Development Committee issued a list of 189 heritage buildings in Yangon. It included religious building such as pagoda, monasteries, churches, mosques, Hindu and Chinese temples, building of administrative and institutional nature, commercial and educational building and ethnic communities. Therefore, there is no doubt that the international tourists take more and more interest in the study area.

(a) Religious Sites

There are many religious tourist attraction sites in the city of Yangon. These religious sites are Shwedagon, Botahtaung, Sule, Kohtatkyi, Chauk Htak Gyi, Maha Wizaya, Kabaaye Pagodas and Nga Htat Gyi Buddha Image. Most of the Christians visit St. Marry's Cathedral and some

Christians visit Judson Church at Yangon University. Islam, Sunni Mosque is at downtown. Chinese, Kheng Hock Keong Temple at Lanmadaw Township. Hindu, Sri Kali near Bogyoke Aung San Market.

(b) Recreation Sites

Yangon area has many recreation sites. These are Kandawgyi Garden, Karaweik Hall, Zoological Garden, The people's square and park, Hlawga National Park, Maha Bandula Park, Htauk Kyant War Cemetery, Bogyoke Aung San Market, National Museum, Myanmar Gems Meuseum, Drug Elimination Museum, Bogyoke Aung San Museum, China Town, Inya Lake and Yangon University and National Race Village.

(c) Architecture Building

Yangon is widely known for having the highest density of colonial period buildings in Southeast Asia. The Yangon City heritage building list consists of religious structures, ancient pagodas and British colonial buildings. The imposing red brick high court, the legendary strand hotel, the sprawling victoria elegance of the secretariat and Yangon City Hall are most visit places.

Assessment on the International Tourist Perception and Satisfaction

The perception and satisfaction of international tourist are based on the existing cultural and natural attraction sites, demographic characteristics of the tourists, their travel behaviours, opinions, and level of satisfaction. Tourist satisfaction is important to successful destination marketing, because it influences the choice of destination, the consumption of products and services, and the likelihood of returning to that destination (Kozak & Rimmington, 2000).

Questionnaires are distributed to international tourists of the study area as well as to those who are moving around the three main attraction sites, to know whether they intend to satisfy site attributes. Questionnaire and interview are conducted to have different perception of tourist concerning the conduction of the international tourist attractions under the study. Demographic data are used for the analysis of tourist characteristics. Demographics data includes gender, age group, occupation and level of education. Table .4

Table 4 Percentage of International Tourists' Characteristics (N=250)

No.	Item	Sub item	No of results	Percentages
1	Gender	Male	172	69
		Female	78	31
2	Age- group	Under 20	36	14
		between 21 and 50 years	175	70
		51 and above	39	16
3	Occupation	Employed	65	26
		Self- employed	98	39
		Retired	30	12
		Students	54	22
		Other	3	1
4	Education	Graduate	149	60
		Post-Graduate	28	11
		Undergraduate	64	26
		Others	9	3

Source: Questionnaires Survey and interviews (2019)

According to table 3, the gender distribution of the respondents was uneven, 69 percent are male and 31 percent are female. The numbers of males exceed females. The average age group of between 21 and 50 is the most dominant consisting of 70 percent. Generally, in occupation, self-employed is highest in percent at 39 %. According to the level of education, the highest are graduated level with 60 percent. Everyone who has been to Yangon visited Shwedagon Pagoda, as the majorities are Buddhists and the highest numbers of international tourists are from China. All international tourists visited the Shwedagon Pagoda; what is the most attractive place for tourists. The second most attractive place is the downtown area of Yangon. International tourists are very interested in colonial buildings such as Churches, temples, rail ways station, offices, resident's houses and markets. The lowest attraction places are museums. This suggest that it requires an updated and need more skill labours (i.e tour guides) to explain about history in museums.

Table 5 Percentage of International Tourists' Travel Behaviour Characteristics (N= 250)

No.	Item	Sub item	No of results	Percentages
1	Frequency of visit to Myanmar	once	128	51
		2 to 3 times	73	29
		4 to 5 times	13	5
		More than 5 times	36	15
2	Length of stay in Yangon	1 to 5 days	130	52
		Over a week	69	28
		Over a month	31	12
		Over a Year	20	8
3	Stay in	Hotel	136	54
		Motel, Inn, Guesthouse	55	22
		Relative House	50	20
		Others	9	4
4	Purpose of Travel	Vacation	135	54
		Business	77	31
		Pilgrimage	13	5
		Others	25	10

Source: Questionnaires Survey and interviews (2019)

International Tourists' arrival according to Frequency of visit to Myanmar, are shown in table 4. 51 percentages of international tourists have never been to Myanmar are first time visitors, whereas the remaining 29 percent have been revisited 2 to 3 times, 5 percent have been 4 to 5 times and 15 percent have been over 5 times.

Length of stay is also an important aspect for tourism, only 52 percent of international tourists spent one to five days in Yangon, it is the highest. With regards to accommodation, the largest numbers of tourist choose hotels, having 54 percent. The purposes of international tourists visiting as a vacation are 54 percent. There are 31 percent of total international tourists going to Yangon for business reasons and 13 percent of respondents visit Yangon for pilgrimage. According to these results, the main purpose is for vacation. Table 5

The questionnaire was structured with satisfaction levels based on five point- (1) very high satisfaction (2) high satisfaction, (3) medium satisfaction, (4) low satisfaction and (5) very low satisfaction.

Table 6 Tourists Satisfaction level in Yangon Area and its Vicinity. (2019)

Satisfaction levels	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Very high satisfaction	53	21
High satisfaction	122	49
Medium satisfaction	42	17
Low satisfaction	23	9
Very low satisfaction	10	4
Total	250	100

Source: Questionnaires Survey and interviews (2019)

As a result, most of the respondents were highly satisfied with 49 percentages. The lowest percentages are very low satisfaction with 4 percent. The perception of international tourist on tourism related supporting factors are mostly positive. The most satisfied are accessibility and accommodation because travellers can directly access by car, rail way, water ways and air way from Yangon to other places. About 80 percent was satisfied with hotel facilities, and services. Among them, the 80 percent were interested in cultural heritage or colonial buildings. There are comfortable accommodation facilities in all tourist destination of the study area that is popular among the international tourists. Only 10 percentages of the respondents were not satisfied with the existing communication facilities due to extremely high rates charged for internet used, and slow Internet connections. To get more satisfaction, the tourism authority and respective tourism operators should control the price, services and well internet connections.

Discussion

Tourist arrivals from Asia are the highest number. Therefore, the development of tourism in the Yangon City largely depends on the tourist generating area of Asian countries. The shares of international tourists from tourist generating regions suggest that, the development of tourism in the Yangon Area depends mainly on pagodas, religious buildings, heritage buildings, architectural style of ancient buildings, historical sites, culture and recreation sites that attract visitors from Asian and European countries.

Visitors from China and Thailand are interested in culture, especially "architecture of pagodas", arts and culture. The Japanese visitors are more concerned with business and partly with culture. The location of Yangon as the commercial city and its beautiful environments attract tourists to visit. Tourists especially, prefer visit at the pagoda. Other tourists from the affluent countries are also attracted by the grandeur of some historical sites. Asians tourists are more satisfied with attributes concerning attractions, accommodation, and activities while European tourists are less satisfied with such attributes. Tourist attractions are indeed the factors supporting the development of tourism (Khin Thandar Oo, 2017).

Conclusion

In Myanmar, many of the tourist attraction sites in Yangon are known for the Tourism industry. Yangon is the gateway for all type of tourist and is a transit point for tourism of Myanmar. In Yangon there are historical sites, religious and colonial building, recreation, museums, national park and cultural events. Most of the international tourists arrive in Yangon and later they visit to other attraction sites of Myanmar. Therefore, Yangon is the focal point for the development of tourism in Myanmar.

The arrival of international tourists in Yangon City varies both spatially and seasonally. Generally, the number of tourists decreases in the rainy season from June to September. Among the hotels, motels and restaurants that can arrange quality European cuisine, the waiters and waitresses should wear Myanmar costume and the quality of restaurants should be upgraded.

Asian countries rank first among the tourist generating areas for Yangon, while Middle East and Africa are listed at the bottom. The variations in the number of tourists from different tourist generating zones reflect the differing preferences, likes and dislikes of different nationalities. Generally, the westerners take interest in local traditional culture and in nature whereas the easterners enjoy viewing urban life styles and religious structures. Some shops located nearby to the Buddha images in certain sites should be moved a little further away. Some sellers sleep in the shops within the pagoda compound and dump food waste near their shops. Such scenes tarnish the image of the pagoda and make unfavorable conditions. There are no interpreters who can explain about museums, historical sites and history of the study area.

International tourist's perception and satisfaction are important for tourism development in Yangon destination area. As tourist satisfaction is high on attraction attributes, monitoring of tourist satisfaction should be implemented and focused on to promote the Myanmar culture and custom, but also encourage people to be aware of proper preservation of the national heritage of the country. The findings suggest that international tourists from various regions have different levels of satisfaction with five levels. The perceptions of international tourist on the famous sites are mostly positive. The tourism potential of Yangon City would remain high in the future, because of its excellent beauty scene, ancient cultural, trait and religious structures.

Acknowledgement

First, we would like to thank to Dr. Myo Myo Khine (Professor and Head of Geography Department), for her permission to carry out this project. We wish to record thank to Dr. Maung Maung Nyunt (Professor, Geography Department) and all the staff in our university who in diverse ways contributed to our research.

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