The Role of Destination Attributes and Memorable Tourism Experience in Understanding Tourist Revisit Intentions

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Abstract: The objective of this study is to examine the influence of destination attributes, memorable tourism experience and revisit intentions in Mulu National Park, Malaysia. A convenient sampling technique was used to select the sample. A total of 349 questionnaires were distributed to tourists at Mulu National Airport and were returned. The result from the finding suggests that tourists who have higher perceptions of the destination attributes of Mulu National Park are more likely to have positive memorable tourism experience, increasing behavioural intentions to revisit. Therefore, national parks need to pay attention to provide customers with unique experiences in order to elicit positive memorable tourism experience and ensure their relationship with customer through repeat visitation.

Key words: Tourism · Memorable Tourism Experience · Destination Attributes · Behavioural Intentions

INTRODUCTION

Destination attributes, a mixture of the different elementsthat attract travellers [1] to a destination, are critically important for several reasons. First, tourists compare the attributes of destinations when selecting a specific destination. Specifically, the ability of a destination to attract visitors depends on its perceived ability to provide individual benefits. For example, tourists choose a destination with attributes that the tourists find important [2]. Past research has acknowledged the importance of destination attributes in supporting the performance of tourism and significantly influences the formation of the image of the destination [3]. According to Crompton [4], the image of the destination is "the sum of beliefs, ideas and impressions that a person has of a destination"; and this image significantly affects tourists' behaviors [5, 6]. There are various aspects of attributes of destinations in relation to the destination image that has been studied. Some studies have ascertaining specific

attributes of destination that influence the formation of the image of the destination. For example, studies by Beerli & Martin [7]; Kim, Hallab, & Kim [8] have shown that although the image of the destination is one of the strongest influences on future behavior, tourists' experiences at a destination affect the formation of tourists' image of the destination. This indicates that individuals may change their perceptions of the destination after the trip based on these on-site experiences. Tourists' experiences at the destination are a more influential driver of future behaviour because these experiences determine customer satisfaction and memorable experiences. Furthermore, tourists are initially attracted by a destination's attributes engage intourism-related activities and/or travel within the destination. Later, the attributes then become experiential components, which affect the formation of visitors' experiences. Therefore, knowing the importance of the experiential component of a destination's attributes, it is important to deliver pleasantly memorable tourism experiences (MTEs).

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For example, Tung and Ritchie [9] noted that the critical role of a destination manager is to "facilitate the development of an environment (i.e., destination) that enhances the likelihood that tourists can create their own MTE" (p. 3).

In previous MTE studies, researchers have discussed the components of MTEs (e.g., Kim [10]; Kim, Ritchie, & McCormick [11]; Tung & Ritchie [9]. Kim, Hallab, *et al*. [8] and Kim, Ritchie, *et al*. [11] suggest that seven experiential factors (i.e., hedonism, novelty, knowledge, meaningfulness, involvement, local culture and refreshment) lead to strong memorability. The lacking of practical guidelines of the way to develop effective programs that deliver MTE is therefore an important task for destination managers to achieve their goal.

This study aims to assess the attributes of the destination that provides memorable experience to tourists at a National Park and its effects on their post-consumption evaluations. The present study expands understanding of the tourist experience by examining how MTE operate together with multiple dimensions of their tourism experience at a National Park to develop their behaviour intentions.

Conceptual Framework and Research Hypothesis
Destination Attributes: Destinations are comprised of various attributes that significantly affect visitors at different stages. For example, a favourable image of a destination formed by a combination of the destination's attributes (e.g., beautiful landscape, shopping opportunities, cultural exchange, infrastructure, safety and activities) significantly affects individuals' destination choices (e.g., Chi&Qu [12]; Echtner &Ritchie [13]; Kim, Hallab, *et al*.[8]). Moreover, the performance of destination attributes determines visitors' satisfaction and future behavior, such as revisits and word-of-mouth publicity (e.g., Chi & Qu [14]; Ozdemir *et al*. [15]). Given the versatile roles of destination attributes, researchers have widely studied the attributes of destinations and have developed a destination competitiveness model grounded in the various factors of destinations (e.g., Crouch& Ritchie [16]; Dwyer & Kim [17]; Enright & Newton [18]; Ritchie & Crouch [19]). These studies have advanced our understanding of the critical roles of the destination attributes in maintaining a competitive edge in a highly competitive market place. In the context of tourist experience, Dwyer & Kim [17] indicate that destination competitiveness is "the ability of a destination to deliver goods and services that perform better than other destinations on those aspects of the tourism experience

considered being important by tourists" (p. 375). Moreover, Crouch and Ritchie [20] proposed that the competitiveness of a destination is derived from the delivery of pleasant, memorable experiences.

Memorable Tourism Experience and Loyalty: The importance of delivering memorable experiences is well-documented in the previous literature (Kozak [21]; Lehto, O'Leary, & Morrision [22]; Wirtz *et al*.[23]). For example, Tung and Ritchie [9] stated that a hedonic and entertaining experience that can enhance knowledge of the tourist can end up with positive memories and positive behaviours such as revisits and recommendations to friends and family etc. [10]. Furthermore, Kim, Hallab, *et al*.[8] and Kim, Ritchie, *et al*. [11] after their work on the MTE scale (MTES) suggested that MTEs are composed of the following seven dimensions: hedonism, refreshment, social interaction and local culture, meaningfulness, knowledge, involvement and novelty. It has also been advised that tourist consumption of experiences result in strong memories and positive behaviours. These favourable behavioural intentions are also stated as loyalty intentions by some researchers. Customers' previous experiences with a product or service results in formation of an attitude toward the provider that is greatly associated with consumer intentions to repurchase and recommend [24].

Thepresent study explores the influence exerted by the current image of a destination on the future behaviour of tourists, using MTE as mediating variables.This study is basedonthepremise that destination attributes plays an important role in services that are complex to evaluate such as tourist destinations. For tourist destinations, the attributes can be asignificant factor in conditioning customers' strong memory of the destination and their consequent intended positive future behaviours. The hypotheses, therefore, are:

H1 Destination attributes has significant and direct influence on revisit intentions
H2 Destination has a significant and direct influence on memorable tourism experience
H3 Memorable tourism experience has significant and direct influence on revisit intentions

Methods
Study Settings: Mulu National Park (MNP) is home to an impressive collection of natural treasures, including razor-sharp limestone spikes called The Pinnacles and Sarawak Chamber, the world's largest cave chamber. Mulu National

Park is covered in rich primary rainforest and offers a whole range of nature-based activities. Activities at the park include four show-caves tours (Deer, Lang, Clearwater and Wind), Bat Exodus, Garden of Eden Valley Walk, adventure caving (Racer Cave, Langang Cave, The Connection of Clearwater/Wind Cave, Sarawak Chamber). Forest activities including longboat river trips and guided walks (Canopy Sky Walk, Night Shift, Paku Waterfall, Camp 1, The Summit, Long Langsat) and from Camp 5 activities (the Pinnacle trail, exploring the Kerangas forest, Melinau Gorge forest walk and Head Hunter's Trail). Mulu National Park is a UNESCO World Heritage site situated in Sarawak, Malaysia. Mulu was selected as one of 27 sites declared as ASEAN Heritage Park and was inscribed as UNESCO World Heritage site in November 2000. This site offers unique, nature and cultural experience for nature based tourist.

Measures: Destination attributes items were adapted and modified from Kim J-H (2014) destination attributes of MTEs scale. The destination attributes of MTEs consists of three constructs identified as Hospitality, Value and Activities. Hospitality was measured using three items. Value and activities constructs were captured using four and two items respectively. Respondents had to rate the degree to which they agreed based on their recent visit to Mulu National Park on each of items of a 5-point scale ranging from (1) Strongly Disagree to (5) Strongly Agree.

Memorable Tourism Experience was operationalized using 4 constructs (Novelty, Interaction, Involvement and Meaningful) adapted and modified from Kim J-H [25] and measuredusing a 5 point scale ranging from (1) Strongly Disagree and (5) Strongly Agree.

In this study, three-item measures were employed to assess tourist revisit intentions as the ultimate dependent construct: tourists' willingness to revisit Mulu National Park; "Would you be willing to visit this park again?", "Would you be willing to make plans to revisit MNP?"; and "Would you willing to have a high likelihood of revisiting?" with a 5-point likert scale (1=Completely Unwilling; 5=Completely Willing).

The data for this study were collected using a self-administered questionnaire in Mulu National Airport. The population of this study consisted of local and international tourists aged 18 and above who travelled individually or in groups. The field researcher approached travellers at the departure hall while they are waiting for their flight, outlined the purpose of the research project and invited them to participate in the survey. After consenting, a self-administered on-site questionnaire was given for themto share their travel experiences and memories of Mulu National Park. A total of 349 questionnaires were collected with convenience sampling, coded and used in the analysis.

Data Analysis: The Statistical Package for the Social Science 21.0 was employed for descriptive statistics for socio-demographics. AMOS 21 was also utilized to examine psychometric properties of the model via confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) and test the hypothesized theoretical relationships of the model through structural equation modeling (SEM).

RESULTS

Demographic profile of participants Table 1 shows the demographic characteristics of participants. A slight majority of the participants were female visitors (54.2%). In terms of age group, 41.8% were 18–30 years followed by 31–50 years (40.7%) and 51 years and above (17.5%).

Measurement Model: To assess the constructs, CFA, shown in Table 2, was employed to establish confidence in the measurementmodel. Proper evaluation of the measurement model is a prerequisite to the evaluation of the structural model. Convergent validity was examined and verified when all items in a measurement model are statistically significant and average variance extracted (AVE) were all □0.50. As shown in Table 2, most indicators had significant factor loadings higher than 0.70 (p<0.01). Average variances extracted ranged from 0.49 to 0.80, showing strong convergent validity. The construct reliability (CR) values were all well above the suggested standard of 0.70. Therefore, it can be concluded that all latent constructs possess sufficient reliability. According to Hair *et al*. (2010), discriminant validity can be established when the AVE values for the latent constructs are compared with the squared correlations between the corresponding constructs and none of the squared correlations surpass the AVE. These tests indicated that the discriminant validitywas upheld for all constructs.

Structural Model: Prior to estimating path coefficients for the hypothesized structural model, a structural model with three constructs was estimated (Figure 1). A structural model was estimated to test the hypotheses from H1 to H3. The goodness-of-fit statistics of the proposed model showed that the model reasonably fits the current data. Chi-square value of the model ($x2 = 361.828$, df = 197, p = 0.000) and other goodness of
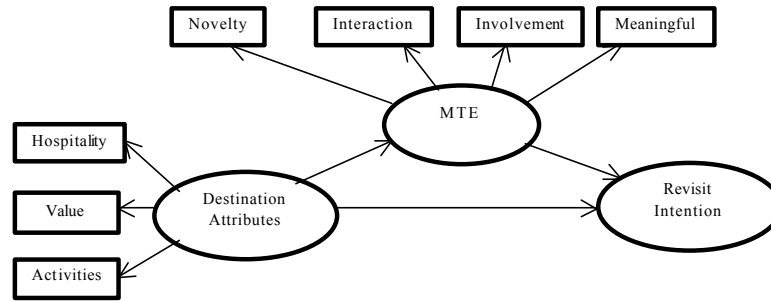
Fig. 1: Structural Model
  Notes: x2 = 361.828, CMIN/df = 1.837, GFI = 0.915, CFI = 0.956, RMSEA = 0.050

Table 1: Respondent profile (N=349)

Variables	Category	Frequency	%
Gender	Male	160	45.8
	Female	189	54.2
Age Group	18-30	146	41.8
	31-50	142	40.7
	51 and above	61	17.5
Nationality	Local (Malaysian)	168	48.1
	Foreigners	181	51.9
Number of nights	1 night	36	10.3
	2 nights	161	46.1
	3 nights	85	24.4
	4 nights	30	8.6
	5 and above nights	37	10.6

Table 2: Confirmatory Factor Analysis

Constructs	Loadings	Construct Reliability	Average Variance Extracted
Factor 1: Hospitality		0.751	0.601
The local people of Mulu were friendly	.76		
The local people of Mulu were willing to share information about MNP	.78		
Factor 2: Value		0.728	0.573
MNP is a value for money destination	.70		
It is worth spending the amount of money for unique products available in MNP	.81		
Factor 3: Activities		0.792	0.656
MNP has many attractions that I have been interested in doing	.82		
MNP offers different kinds of recreational activities	.80		
Factor 4: Novelty		0.820	0.489
I had an exciting experience	.75		
I had once in a lifetime experience	.72		
I had a unique experience	.67		
I had experienced different kind of experience	.59		
I had a refreshing experience	.67		
Factor 5: Interaction		0.798	0.570
I had a good impression about the local culture here	.75		
I had the chance to closely experienced the local culture of MNP	.79		
I experienced new culture	.73		
Factor 6: Involvement		0.795	0.566
I visited the place that I really wanted to go	.68		
I enjoyed doing the activities that I really wanted to do	.83		
I was interested with the main activities offered to me	.74		
Factor 7: Meaningful		0.846	0.733
I felt I did something meaningful in MNP	.80		
I felt I did something important in MNP	.92		
Factor 8: Revisit Intention		0.920	0.795
Would you be willing to visit this park again	.86		
Would you be willing to make plans to revisit MNP	.95		
Would you be willing to have a high likelihood of revisiting	.86		

Table 3: Results of the Structural Model

Hypotheses	Construct	Path	Construct	Estimate	P-value	Decision
H1	Revisit Intention	←	Destination Attributes	.40	***	Supported
H2	MTE	←	Destination Attributes	.74	***	Supported
H3	Revisit Intention	←	MTE	.27	.008	Supported

*** indicate a highly significant at <0.001

Table 4: The result of direct effect of Destination Attributes on Revisit Intentions

Construct	Path	Construct	Estimate	P-value	Result
Post Behavioural Intention	←	Destination Attributes	0.61	***	Significant

*** indicate a highly significant at <0.001

fit indices (RMSEA = 0.050; CFI = 0.956; GFI = 0.915) revealed that the model fit the data reasonably well. The hypothesized structural model was estimated to examine the hypotheses with regard to the effect of destination image and memorable tourism experience factors on revisit intention. The tested model included three latent variables representing destination attributes and four latent variables representing memorable tourism experience. The result as summarised in Table 3 indicates all three direct effects of hypotheses were found to be significant. The standardized direct effects of destinationattributes had a positive influence on revisit intentions (b=0.40, p<0.001), thus H1 is supported. The standardized direct effects of destination attributes were found to exert a positive influence on memorable tourism experience (b=0.74, p<0.001). Therefore, hypotheses 2 are also supported. Hypotheses 3 dealt with the direct effects of memorable tourism experience on revisit intentions. The finding revealed that the direct effect of memorable tourism experience on revisit intentions had a positive relationship (b= 0.27, p<0.08), indicating that H3 is supported.

Mediating Effects of MTE: To test the mediating effect of memorable tourism experience on the relationship between destination attributes and revisit intentions, the analysis the analysis follow Zainudin, A [26] classic approach. First of all, the direct effect of independent variable on dependent variable has to be significant. However, when the mediating variable enters the model, the effect would be reduced. If it is reduced but still significant, then the mediation effect is called 'partial mediation'. However, if the effect is reduced up to the level where it is no longer significant, the mediation effect in this case is called 'complete mediation'. The direct effect model for relationship of Destination attributes on revisit intention is assessed. The result is summarized in Table 4. The beta coefficient for the direct effect is 0.61 and significant (p<0.001). The second step is to include the mediating variable (memorable tourism experience) into the model. The result from Table 3 shows that the beta coefficient is

reduced from 0.61 to 0.40. Significant relationship was established between destination attributes and revisit intentions. Mediation exists if path coefficients between destination attribute dimensions and revisit intentions are reduced when the indirect path via memorable tourism experience is introduced into the model. The type of mediation occurs is partial mediation since the direct effect of destination attributes on revisit intentions is still significant after memorable tourism experience entered the model. In summary, findings support the mediating role of memorable tourism on the relationship between destination attributes and revisit intentions.

DISCUSSIONS AND CONCLUSION

In recent years, the study of MTEs has received attention from researchers and has gained a wide acceptance from the academicians as well as practitioners. Due to the phenomenal growth of destination competition, therefore providing visitors with memorable tourism experiences is vital for achieving success in the highly competitive tourism marketplace [8, 11]. In defining destination competitiveness, Ritchie and Crouch [19] further suggest that "what makes a tourism destination truly competitive is its ability to increase tourism expenditure, to increasingly attract visitors while providing them with satisfying, memorable experiences and to do so in a profitable way" (p. 2). Despite the acknowledged importance of destination competiteness, previous studies have not discussed the factors of destination competitiveness associated with MTEs. Moreover, study on MTE is relatively a new area, the literature remains sparse and the discussion is primarily limited to understanding MTEs' components. This study fills this gap by investigating the effect of destination attributes on MTE and future behavioural intentions within the Mulu National Park in Sarawak. The SEM approach was used to test the constructs framework that destination attributes, MTE and behavioural intentions were influenced by the perception of destination

attributes of the national park. As a consequence, one significant contribution of this study is that the findings add to a growing body of literature on the attributes of destinations involved in MTEs.

A total of three hypotheses were developed and tested using SEM. All of the three hypotheses were upheld. The results indicated that all the variables had appropriate reliability and each independent variable has a positive significant influence over the dependent variables. In particular, destination attributes influence tourists memorable tourism experience and behavioural intentions positively and significantly. Finding of this study suggests that perceptions regarding locals' hospitality, value and onsite activities affect MTEs. In support of this finding, Chandralal and Valenzuela [27] indicate that tourists tend to have random encounters with local residents, whose friendliness and hospitality towards travellers creates long-lasting memories. Thus, local hospitality would affect tourists because hospitality can be developed as an image of a destination and/or a place that individuals will remember for a long time. Moreover, these findings were also consistent with Crouch [28] that a variety of activities (i.e. diverse tourism programs enables a destination to cater to different types of tourists) and value for money for products (i.e. corresponding to the quality of products in a destination) of a destination is an important destination attribute.The influence of these attributes of a destination on the tourists' memories of their experiences is supported by previous MTE research [25]. The findings also show that respondents who had pleasant memories of the destination attributes were more likely to revisit a destination and recommend the national park. These findings are in line with those of previous studies (Ali *et al*.[29]; Hung *et al*.[30]; Kim [10]; Liu *et al*. [31]; Tan *et al*. [32]; Tung & Ritchie [9]). This study suggests that Novelty, Interaction, Involvement and Meaningful brought by the destination attributes make experiences particularly memorable and satisfying. This study also support that pleasant memory of the destination is another important predictor of positive behavioural intention and confirmed that memorable tourism experience results in revisit intention.

Managerial Implications: In line with the previous studies, this study verified that destination attributes had an impact on tourist memorable tourism experience and revisit intentions. Thus, Mulu National Park, as addressed in the National Ecotourism Plan [33] should make an effort to enhance tourist experience by designing and maintaining good destination attributes, which leads to favourable revisit intentions. For example, park providers could emphasise perceived unique experiences delivering and creating tourism products. This will make tourist feel very excited with the activities they participated in. For example, tourists may feel excited and beyond satisfaction if they have the chance to interact with local people and dress up as local inhabitants used for the activities they are performing. These enjoyable and pleasant moments may serve as a catalyst to sharing their memorable experiences with others as well as to revisit. As stated earlier, national parks shouldtherefore emphasise more on the novelty, interaction, involvement and meaningful aspects of tourism experiences through an attributes that reflects hospitality, value for money for products and mix activities to create more leisurely and pleasant surroundings. Moreover, in satisfying the experiential needs of tourist, they need to be involved in the service experience. Interactivity with staff is also an important dimension of memorable tourism experience, including personal care, knowledge, willingness to serve and being friendly. Park managers in determining issues pertaining rural tourism management policies [34-37] as in the setting of Mulu National Park, should be particularly aware of the significance of their employees in delivering services to tourists. Therefore, managers should focus on enhancing the knowledge, skills and commitment of their employees by providing regular training and incentives.

It should be noted that although the results of the current study shed light on several important issues, some limitations need to be considered in future research. This study focused on the memories of tourists of Mulu National Park immediately after their experience at the park was over. Therefore, the tourists must have recent memories of their visit. Further studies should explore this concept in more detail. Furthermore, this study used at only one Malaysian state in Sarawak; results, therefore, may not be generalized.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

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