



**UNIVERSITI PUTRA MALAYSIA**

***EFFECTS OF MEMORABLE TOURISM EXPERIENCES AS MEDIATORS  
ON VISITS TO MULU NATIONAL PARK SARAWAK, MALAYSIA***

**MAZLINA BINTI MAHDZAR**

**IPTPH 2016 4**



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ON VISITS TO MULU NATIONAL PARK SARAWAK, MALAYSIA**

By

**MAZLINA BINTI MAHDZAR**

**Thesis Submitted to the School of Graduate Studies, Universiti Putra Malaysia,  
in Fulfilment of the Requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy**

**December 2016**

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Abstract of thesis presented to the Senate of Universiti Putra Malaysia in fulfilment of the requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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**Chairman : Professor Ahmad bin Shuib, PhD**  
**Institute : Agricultural and Food Policy Studies**

Tourism experience at a destination is a powerful driver of future behaviour because it determines satisfaction and memorable experience. Studies have shown that satisfying tourism experience alone is not sufficient for tourist to remain loyal to a destination as statistics on Mulu National Park shown they switched to alternative parks. Furthermore, previous research conducted in Mulu National Park, were done on satisfaction but not on experience. This study had identified factors of Memorable Tourism Experience (MTE) which is unique to Mulu National Park, Sarawak. The study further examines the impact of perceived quality, destination attributes on tourist memorable tourism experiences and their revisit intentions. A total of 349 questionnaires were collected with convenience sampling and used in the analysis. AMOS 21 was utilized to examine the psychometric properties of the model via confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) and test the hypothesized theoretical relationships of the model through structural equation modeling (SEM). The result indicates perceived quality significantly impact tourists memorable tourism experiences but not on their intentions to revisit. However, results for destination attributes significantly impact both tourists' memorable tourism experiences and their intentions to revisit and recommend Mulu National Park. Therefore it can be concluded that memorable tourism experiences are mediator linking the relationship between both destination attributes and intentions to revisit and between perceived quality and revisit intentions. Hence, nature-based tourism marketers should design, manage and stage the experiential offering to enhance park tourists' experiences. Moreover, the national park itself offers experiences that are unique and memorable that is observed to be the most significant dimensions of tourists experience. Park destination management should also focus on the additional facilities and services and ensure that the provision of learning and educational opportunities at the site so that the motivation experiences of nature-based tourists is fulfilled.

Abstrak tesis yang dikemukakan kepada Senat Universiti Putra Malaysia  
sebagai memenuhi keperluan untuk Ijazah Doktor Falsafah

**KESAN PENGALAMAN PELANCONGAN BERMAKNA KEATAS  
PENENTUAN KUNJUNGAN KE TAMAN NEGARA MULU SARAWAK**

Oleh

**MAZLINA BINTI MAHDZAR**

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Pengalaman pelancongan di sesebuah destinasi merupakan pemacu utama dalam menentukan sikap pelancong pada masa depan. Ia mempengaruhi tahap kepuasan dan pengalaman yang bermakna kepada mereka. Kajian menunjukkan pengalaman pelancongan yang memuaskan sahaja tidak mencukupi untuk pelancong kekal setia berkunjung ke sesebuah destinasi. Statistik kajian ke atas Taman Negara Mulu menunjukkan mereka mempunyai alternatif lain. Tambahan pula, kajian lepas di Taman Negara Mulu dijalankan ke atas aspek kepuasan dan bukannya pengalaman. Kajian ini mengenal pasti faktor-faktor pengalaman pelancongan bermakna (*Memorable Tourism Experience – MTE*) yang unik di Taman Negara Mulu, Sarawak. Seterusnya, kajian ini menilai impak tanggapan kualiti, ciri-ciri destinasi yang bermakna, dan niat kunjungan ulangan bagi pelancong. Sebanyak 349 keping borang soal selidik telah diperolehi menggunakan teknik pensampelan mudah. AMOS 21 pula digunakan untuk memeriksa sifat-sifat psikometri model melalui analisis faktor pengesahan (*confirmatory factor analysis – CFA*) dan untuk menguji hubungan teoretikal model tersebut menggunakan model persamaan struktur (*structural equation modelling – SEM*). Keputusan menunjukkan tanggapan kualiti mempunyai impak yang signifikan ke atas MTE dan bukannya ke atas niat kunjungan ulangan. Namun begitu, ciri-ciri destinasi meninggalkan impak yang signifikan terhadap pelancong serta hasrat mereka untuk kembali berkunjung dan turut mempromosikan Taman Negara Mulu. Kajian ini membuat kesimpulan bahawa MTE merupakan pengantara yang menghubungkan antara “ciri-ciri destinasi dengan niat kunjungan ulangan” serta “tanggapan kualiti dengan niat kunjungan ulangan”. Oleh itu, pemasar pelancongan berasaskan alam semula jadi harus mereka bentuk, mengurus, dan membuat tawaran pelancongan untuk meluaskan pengalaman pelancong di kawasan taman. Tambahan pula, taman negara sendiri menawarkan pengalaman yang unik dan bermakna. Ini merupakan aspek paling signifikan dalam dimensi pengalaman pelancong. Pihak pengurusan taman juga perlu memberi tumpuan terhadap kemudahan dan perkhidmatan tambahan, serta memastikan terdapatnya peluang pembelajaran di kawasan tersebut agar motivasi pengalaman pelancong berasaskan alam semula jadi dapat dipenuhi.

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This dissertation is dedicated to the memory of my late father, Hj. Mahdzar Jalaludin. May Allah bless him and grant him peace.

I certify that a Thesis Examination Committee has met on 9 December 2016 to conduct the final examination of Mazlina bt Mahdzar on her thesis entitled "Effects of Memorable Tourism Experiences as Mediators on Visits to Mulu National Park Sarawak, Malaysia" in accordance with the Universities and University Colleges Act 1971 and the Constitution of the Universiti Putra Malaysia [P.U.(A) 106] 15 March 1998. The Committee recommends that the student be awarded the Doctor of Philosophy.

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# CHAPTER 1

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Background of Study

The review on the stages of economic evolution makes it clear that early consumers mainly wanted commodities and services to meet their survival needs. Later, they moved to the demanding knowledge and problem solving ability for their daily lives. In this day and age, consumers are searching for a lifestyle that is stimulating by trying out new things and visiting new places as well as having a high desire for entertainment and pleasure. In other words, they are not only searching for products and services, but more to experiences (Darmer & Sundbo, 2008).

The phenomena of experience with dissimilar settings are ubiquitous in our economic and social life. Beginning with Pine & Gilmore's (1999) announcement on the arrival of the experience economy era, the studies of experience in a variety of contexts and settings have stirred people's interests. Tourism sector is no exception (Quan & Wang, 2004). In the effort to be successful based on the increasing competition and globalisation in today's marketplace, it is vital for tourism companies and destination organisations to know how to distinguish their product offerings from their opponents' in order to sustain their competitive advantages. From the academic and theoretical viewpoint, tourism researchers also need to know the role of experience in constructing relevant theoretical frameworks. Hence, it is really important for tourism experts and practitioners to understand the experiential phenomena in tourism-related activities.

The idea of Customer Experience originated from Pine & Gilmore's book, entitled the Experience Economy (1999). The authors treat 'experience' as a new economic offering, despite the commodities, goods, and services that have long been provided to satisfy consumers' needs. Experience has now developed as a determining factor in consumers brand preferences and purchase decisions (Gentile, Spiller, & Noci, 2007). As inferred by Hovedstadens (2005), the experience economy might become a mega-trend for global economy and may spread across various industries. Referring to the occurrence of experience, Pine & Gilmore (1998) point out that it takes place "when a company intentionally uses services as the stage, goods as props to engage individual customers in a way that creates a memorable event". Therefore, it is an essential strategic concern that acts as a new value attribute.

The idea of experience economy is rather new; however, experience itself is not a new phenomenon. Its related activities have already been studied in the context of tourism, leisure, hospitality, culture, Information Technology, service, education, entertainment and many others (Darmer & Sundbo, 2008). Quan & Wang (2004) also claim that tourism is recognised as one of the leading industries of experience



economy. This acknowledgement reveals that the economic offerings of tourism and travel industry are inherently experiential (Tsaur, Chiu, & Wang, 2006).

The concept of tourism experience has become a focal point for the current tourism research and management (Tung & Ritchie, 2011). Researchers have put many efforts in conceptualising and measuring tourism experiences (Oh et al., 2007; Otto & Ritchie, 1996). In their conceptual works, they had taken in a number of different construct dimensions such as hedonics, peace of mind, involvement, recognition, entertainment, escapism, aesthetics, and education (Kim, 2009). Other outlines used to examine the dimensions of tourist experience are based on the stages of the experience, influences on the experience, and the outcomes of the experience (Morgan et al., 2010).

Antecedent, travel to, on-site, travel back, and recollection are the multi-phase nature of tourist experience, however, researchers argue that memory should be incorporated with tourism experience because experiences are valuable only when they are stored and remembered through the recollection phase. Clawson & Knetsch (1966) added that memory is a mediator of consumer behaviour that influences one's future behaviour. Tourism experiences are said to be short-lived and may provide passing feelings, but experiences stored in human memory can provide nostalgia as individuals can repeatedly reflect on their visit. Current research on memory with the creation of memorable tourism experiences (MTE) is vital for competitiveness in the tourism firms. To date, only few studies have explored the components of experience that are most likely to be recalled from ecotourists' memories and little explanation on the factors that characterised MTE.

For example, in one of the study on the components of experiences by Hosany & Gilbert (2010), they have developed Destination Emotion Scale items, namely joy, love, and positive surprise. The study adopted a rigorous scale development procedure as well as exploratory and factor analysis to come up with the constructs that play a role in tourists' emotional experiences.

Another study conducted by Kim et al. (2012) has developed an instrument known as the Memorable Tourism Experiences Scale (MTEs) to tap on the construct of MTE. The study, specifically the scale development for MTE has noted the first empirical examination of the concept. The Memorable Tourism Experiences Scale (MTEs) was developed using a pool of items, expert reviews of the items, and scientific item elimination procedures. The study included 16 experiential constructs proposed as the components of MTE, namely hedonism, relaxation stimulation, refreshment, adverse feelings, social interaction, happiness, meaningfulness, knowledge, challenge, assessment of value, assessment of service, unexpected happenings, personal relevance, novelty, and participation. Kim et al. (2012) conducted an exploratory study as a preliminary step in developing the MTE scale items. With the expert reviews and scientific elimination procedures, a total of 85 items were constructed representing different components of the MTE. In addition, 8

behavioural intention questions, 4 demographic questions, and 7 questions related to the trip were included at the end of the questionnaire, producing a 101 item questionnaire.

Kim's (2012) study employed the convenience sampling method. Data were collected using a 101item self-administered survey questionnaire conducted on 562 college students of Midwestern University in US. The results of the study composed of seven constructs, namely hedonism, refreshment, local culture, meaningfulness, knowledge, involvement, and novelty as the representative dimensions of MTE and 24 relevant indicators that measure each dimension. The seven constructs are said to be important components of the tourism experience and are likely to affect a person's memory. The authors claim that the 24-item MTE scale is applicable to most destination areas. Therefore, this study attempts to explore its conceptualisation among eco-tourists population to Mulu National Park as the park offer potential tourism resources that are highly experiential. This study also attempts to observe whether the data obtained from different population or from participants of different tourism activities would result in the same MTE dimensions found in the previous study. This is due to one culture as the notion 'experiences' that might have different meanings to different people (Azedevo, 2009). The reason is because consumers particularly differ in terms of their background and demographics - age, gender, nationality (Kleynhans, 2003). Furthermore, experiences can occur in an infinite range of places, which is not limited to one specific place or encounter (O'Dell, 2005).

## **1.2 Tourism Development in Mulu, Sarawak**

The tourism development in Malaysia as to compare with many other countries in the region is a rather newcomer to the promotion of tourism. However, the Malaysian government nowadays recognises the importance of tourism to economic growth, foreign exchange earnings, employment creation, and regional development (Walton, 1993). The promotion of tourism in Malaysia was not carried out until after the downturn of the nations' economy in the 1980s. In 1987, the government established the Ministry of Culture and Tourism to promote Malaysian tourism at the international level. The impact of aggressive promotional effort done by the ministry has resulted in the increased number of tourists arrivals in the later years. This is evidenced by the highly successful Visit Malaysia Year in 1990 with over six million arrivals recorded in that year alone. In the year 2000, the number of visitors increased to 10.2 million, and in the year 2011, the number of tourist was more than double recorded at 24.7 million.

Malaysia's Second Outline Perspective Plan 1991–2000 states that the prime strategy for the tourism sector is to create a distinct and unique image of the country's natural heritage and cultural resources. This strategy involves developing more new tourism products in their original and traditional settings, regardless in urban or rural areas, rather than to recreate the original products in an artificial and

unnatural environment. For example, the tourism products such as old lifestyles or natural beauty can be found in the rural areas such as in the state of Sarawak.

Tourism industry is often linked with indigenous communities. Foreign tourists are interested to see and experience the lifestyles and cultures of different indigenous communities. As such, apart from the natural landscapes, the indigenous people's culture is seen as one of the primary products that the tourism industry is selling. In Sarawak, the establishment of longhouses and national parks as tourists' destinations had directly or indirectly involved the indigenous people to participate in the state tourism industry. Mulu National Park (MNP) in Sarawak has a unique set of tourism assets. The main tourist attraction in the National Park is its natural caves. These natural landscapes and their rich flora and fauna has attracted tourists to MNP, many of whom are foreigners from Europe, Australia, the United States, Japan, and many other countries.

Tourism developments are noted to bring changes to the local indigenous people and their environment as well as believed to have created many job opportunities. It does not only create direct employment in the industries related to tourism such as hotels and shops, but also in other industries such as agriculture and handicraft. The local indigenous people who reside in and around the vicinity of MNP are mainly from the ethnic of Berawan and Penan communities. They are mostly employed either by the Park Management or work in the Royal Mulu Resort, while others become boat drivers, tour guides, and porters. A few individuals are involved in small enterprising businesses such as operating a canteen and/or a karaoke pub as well as transporting tourists by boat to the caves. This employment represents the core economic activity of the Mulu region.

Studying tourist experiences within a tourism destination context seen from the tourists' perspective provides a desirable setting because tourist destinations are rich in terms of experiential attributes (Otto & Ritchie, 1996). MNP is identical with its caves, in which the 'Mulu experience' is not limited to its underground attractions. MNP is seen as a versatile travel destination that provides the opportunity for tourist to experience the culture of local indigenous people.

Sarawak Tourism Board's aims to increase the number of tourist arrivals into the state of Sarawak and positions them as a prime destination in the areas of culture, nature, and adventure tourism. New Sarawak Tribune (2014) reports that National Parks has continued to be the most preferred destinations among both local and foreign visitors. Moreover, the feedbacks gathered from tourists who came to Mulu stated their contentment with the variety of resources available in MNP. According to the reviews from 124 visitors for Mulu National Park on [www.tripadvisor.com.my](http://www.tripadvisor.com.my), it was reported that the visitors had 'amazing, incredible, memorable, and interesting experiences' when sharing their destination experiences. Out of the 124 reviews, 81 of them rate 'excellent', 27 rate 'very good', 18 rate 'average', 5 rate 'poor', while none of them rate having a 'terrible' experience.

Besides the reviews compiled by trip advisor, travel bloggers have also shared their satisfactory experience at MNP. Quotes such as ‘The best part about the MNP is that you can just walk for hours and hours admiring the natural beauty of the rainforest, taking in the fresh smells and listening to the jungle sounds, peaceful and bliss!’ are among hundreds of views and comments made regarding Mulu experience.

Currently, the total number of visitors to National Parks of Sarawak as of October 2013 was 338,463. Semenggoh (Orangutan) Wildlife Centre recorded the highest number of visitors of 79,390, followed by Bako National Park 40,149, Niah National Park 21,209, Wind Caves 20,853, Matang Wildlife Centre 18,539, while Mulu National Park recorded the lowest number of visitors of 16,178 (New Sarawak Tribune, 2014). Although Sarawak Tourism Board intends to increase the number of tourist arrival, the statistics on total visitors’ arrival to their national parks shows a declining trend. Table 1 and Table 2 shows the decline in the total number of visitors to Mulu from year 2010-2013.

**Table 1.1: Visitors arrival at Sarawak National Park**

<b>Visitor Arrivals</b>			
<b>Year</b>	<b>Domestic Visitors</b>	<b>Foreign Visitors</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>2010</b>	302,579	111,855	414,434
<b>2011</b>	365,039	122,550	487,589
<b>2012</b>	311,645	119,860	431,505
<b>2013</b>	301,493	107,919	409,412

(Source: Sarawak Forestry Corporation/Forest Department, Sarawak, 2014)

**Table 1.2: Visitors arrival at Mulu National Park**

	<b>2010</b>	<b>2011</b>	<b>2012</b>	<b>2013</b>
<b>Domestic visitors</b>	7,661	7,099	2,377	6,286
<b>Foreign visitors</b>	22,665	22,326	15,708	12,871
<b>Total</b>	30,326	29,425	18,085	19,157

(Source: Sarawak Forestry Corporation/Forest Department, Sarawak, 2014)

Previous studies have stated that the delivery of satisfactory experiences itself cannot ensure future revenue (Jones & Sasser, 1995; Keiningham & Vavra, 2001; Reichheld, 1993) and revisitation (McDougall & Munro as cited in Weaver et al., 2007). Kim (2009) states such satisfactory experiences may not be recalled during the decision-making process and are unlikely to provide a sustainable competitive advantage to businesses in the destination areas. Hence, it may be hard for destination managers to expect positive consequences from such experiences. There is no guarantee that a satisfied customer will return, but an unhappy customer will almost certainly not return (Hosany & Witham, 2010). This is consistent with the idea of this study that although tourists generally expressed their satisfactory experience of MNP, the number of visitors arrival to Mulu shows otherwise. This suggests that those tourists may not be getting enough tourism experiences that are deemed memorable to sustain MNP as the prime tourist destination.

The relationship between satisfactory experience and loyalty is also expected to be dependent upon the quality of the product and services. The same scenario arises as other researchers have identified satisfaction as an evaluation of emotion because it reflects the degree to which it believes will provoke positive feelings among customers who use the products and services. Hence, tourist's perception has been noted as the main factor in determining the service quality for the destination to remain competitive. In order to measure service quality, it is deemed important to explore the nature of the services. For instance, the services provided by MNP can be classified according to its resource conditions, recreational activities, facilities, management factors, and related personnel.

Besides perceived service quality, the essential of having memorable tourism experiences to enhance visitation to MNP is probably another factor that will affect tourists' experience. A tourist's experience when travelling to nature based destinations will be affected by the destination attributes. MNP have various destination attributes that can affect tourists at different stages. Destination attributes significantly influence the formation of the image of the destination (Assaf & Josiassen, 2012). For example, a favourable image of a destination is formed by the combination of the destination attributes such as beautiful landscape, cultural exchange, infrastructure, safety, and activities, which can significantly affect individual's destination choice. Moreover, the performance of destination attributes determines the visitor's satisfaction and future behaviour such as increase visitations (Chi & Qu, 2009; Ozdemir et al., 2012).

In order to keep up with the trends and the needs of tourists, it is also worthwhile for a destination to investigate the information on tourists' characteristics, preferences, and motivation. In the increasingly competitive ecotourism market, it has been noted that tourist satisfaction is a very important factor to improve the destination image, attract more consumption of products and services, and generate repeat visits. Further insights into the demographic profile of tourists to nature-based products can benefit tourism marketers, specifically with regard to market segmentation, product development, service quality evaluation, image development, and promotional activities (Fodness, 1994; Yoon & Uysal, 2005; Kozak, 2001).

Exploring what tourist remembers from their tourism experiences and the findings of the study may benefit both the national park management and tourists. It helps the national park management in enhancing the probability of delivering those experiences that are special, cherished, and truly memorable to the niche markets or mainstream travellers (Verma et al., 2002; Mossberg, 2007; Pine & Gilmore, 1999; Zehrer, 2009; Tung & Ritchie, 2011). This permits further opportunities for new activities, alliances, and packages. The tourists will also benefit by getting special experience as opposed to a simply pleasant trip (Murray et al., 2010).

This study uses Pine and Gilmore (1999) concept which emphasises the consumption of experiences rather than the products as a basis to examine the

outcomes of memorable experiences and how to measure them. In the review of marketing literature, researchers have suggested that memory which mediates behavioural intentions needs to be incorporated into the study of consumer experiences. Moreover, remembered experiences greatly influence future behaviour. In order to develop future behavioural intention to revisit a destination, MNP should seek to create conditions that facilitate the realisation of positive memorable tourism experiences. As proposed by Kim et al. (2012), the seven components of the tourism experience will affect a person's memory.

### 1.3 Problem Statement

Mulu National Park (MNP) has many activities that offer unique experiences. Research suggests that experiencing something new, unique, or different leads to a strong memory of the travel experience (Kim, 2010; Hallab et al., 2012; Ritchie et al., 2012). Many tourists coming to MNP are reported to be satisfied. This is evidenced from the feedback of tourists gained from social media when sharing their positive holiday experiences to people.

However, the statistics from Ministry of Tourism Sarawak (2014) on the number of visitors to Mulu National Park show a decreasing number in arrivals. Although tourists are reported to be satisfied, research has shown that they switched to another destination after visiting the park. This implies that individuals may change their perceptions of the destination after the trip based on their on-site experiences. Tourists' experiences at the destination are a more powerful driver of future behavior because these experiences determine customer satisfaction and memorable experiences.

The past few decades have produced a substantial body of research on factors affecting tourist experience, which include the service quality that has been recognised as the major determinant of tourist experiences (Crompton & Mackay, 1989; Kyle, Absher, & Chancellor, 2005; Palmer & O'Neill, 2003). The decrease in the number of visitation to MNP could be due to their expectations of perceived quality that are not met.

The expectation and satisfaction relationship can be defined with the estimation made by the tourists while receiving the service (Oliver, 1981). If the tourists' expectation is understood, it will help the destination to improve their products and services for the tourists accordingly in order to satisfy their needs. Different tourists have different needs, thus making their level of expectations and satisfaction different. For example, a study by Jusoh et al. (2015) suggests that tourists are reportedly satisfied with their experience at a heritage attraction but the level of satisfaction differs between the first-time tourists and return tourists. Hence, it is important to identify whether the given satisfaction level of product meets the expectations from the tourists' perspectives. Furthermore, the level of expectation

and satisfaction are the key indicators to identify deficiencies and advantages of a particular destination for the purpose of improving the development and increasing visitations.

The decreasing trend also suggests that the tourism industry is facing the changing in societal factors. Nowadays, tourists look for unique, authentic, interactive, personalised, and diverse experiences. This trend is linked to the idea of experience economy, which involves the shift in the source of economic value from commodities to goods to services to experiences. For example, wildlife attraction is very famous at national parks; however, comparing it with other national parks in Sarawak, wildlife viewing in Mulu is more difficult because the animals in Mulu do not have enough experience of being disturbed by people because visitors only began to come to the park in large numbers since 1990s. Furthermore, caves are their main attraction; hence, most of their resources have been spent on building safe walkways and lighting in the caves which requires maintenance and ties up a lot of money. Therefore, limited number of platforms for the observation of wildlife is available. In terms of its differences in conservation area, Mulu differs from the rest of national parks because there are many species of flora and fauna that cannot be found and seen in other conservation areas. However, the difference is not significant because it was reported that Kinabalu Park has roughly 20% more species (Sayer et al., 2000).

Mulu National Park also offers similar activity with the rest of its competitors which allows visitors to make treks and climbs up to Gunung Mulu, and the Pinnacles are unique for its landscape. Nevertheless, Mulu is regarded as a unique place in Malaysia and having enough attractions that could make it a distinctive destination.

Researchers also indicate that providing visitors with memorable tourism experiences is vital for achieving success in the highly competitive tourism marketplace (Kim, Hallab, et al., 2012; Kim, Ritchie, et al., 2012). Research by Kim (2014) has been conducted to identify the role of destination attributes associated with MTE. The results of this study indicate that the destination attributes of MTEs include the following 10 dimensions: local culture, the variety of activities, hospitality, infrastructure, environment management, accessibility, the quality of service, physiography, place attachment, and superstructure.

The increased competitions of national parks have caused the tourists to have more choice because they want to have a bigger role and be better informed in choosing and creating their tourism experience, which is believed to have resulted in their decision of not turning to MNP as their travel destination.

Therefore, given the importance of experiential component of a destination, MNP have to respond to these changes and provide memorable positive experiences to attract potential new visitors to come to MNP and also make existing visitors to

revisit the park. Furthermore, with the identification of factors that characterised tourists' memorable tourism experiences, destination specific attributes that affect tourist experience, assessment of its services, and information on their socio-demographic factors that influence travel behaviour could help MNP to be different from the rest of the national parks and gain competitive advantage.

Therefore, this research will apply the concept of memorable tourism experiences suggested by Kim (2012), but will be conducted in an eco-tourism setting. Kim's (2012) constructs of Memorable Tourism Experiences such as hedonism, refreshment, local culture, meaningfulness, knowledge, involvement, and novelty are sought for measuring tourist experience so the destination management can facilitate them to create memorable experiences. However, for some studies, the constructs may not be limited to just seven but subjected to additional elements. For example, different culture of different geographical regions may have different perspectives and more elements of memorable experiences. In other words, tourists' memory of each of their tourism experiences at various situations or destinations are very different. Furthermore, Kim's (2012) scale was created and tested on students as the sample of the study that do not represent actual tourist. To address this research gap, this study developed a specific scale for measuring factors affecting memorable tourists experience at a national park. Besides, this thesis also investigates the influence of tourists' perception regarding the quality and destination attributes on their visitation to MNP. The use of tourists' perception to evaluate the consumption of experiences has been investigated and found in the literature review; however, research in the tourism sector has not yet examined this influence on memorable experiences.

#### **1.4 Objectives of Study**

The purpose of this study is to find out the dimensions of memorable tourism experiences which are unique to tourists visiting Mulu National Park. This study also assesses the inter-relationships among four constructs, namely Perceived Quality, Destination Attributes, Memorable Tourism Experiences, and Behavioural Intentions.

Therefore there are five objectives that are being carried out in this study as follows:

- a) To identify the dimensions of memorable tourism experiences among tourists visiting MNP and adapt appropriate scale that can be applied to a destination.
- b) To determine the influence of perceived quality on memorable tourism experiences and tourists' post behavioural intentions towards Mulu National Park.



- c) To determine the influence of destination attributes on memorable tourism experiences and tourists' post behavioural intentions towards Mulu National Park.
- d) To determine the mediating influence of memorable tourism experiences between destination attributes and tourists' post behavioural intentions towards Mulu National Park.
- e) To determine the mediating influence of memorable tourism experiences between perceived quality and tourists' post behavioural intentions towards Mulu National Park.

## **1.5 Definition of Terms**

### **1.5.1 Memorable Tourism Experiences**

Meaning of memorable tourism experiences has been proposed as the delivering variety of tourism experiential offerings to tourists such as hedonism, refreshment, local culture, meaningfulness, knowledge, involvement and novelty (Kim, et al., 2012).

### **1.5.2 Perceived Quality**

Perceived service quality is the result of tourist's belief about different service dimensions of a tourism product and service given regard to two product-based and performance-based dimensions. Thus, perceived quality is an intangible, overall feeling about a product or service (Aarker, 1991).

### **1.5.3 Destination Attributes**

Destinations attributes can be viewed as the various attributes of a destination that significantly affect visitors at different stages. Examples of a destination attributes includes in its beautiful landscape, shopping opportunities, cultural exchange, infrastructure, safety, and activities may significantly affects individuals' destination choices (e.g., Chi & Qu, 2008; Echtner & Ritchie, 1993; Kim, Hallab et al., 2012)

### **1.5.4 Post Behavioural Intentions**

Intention is the individual's subjective probability that he or she will perform a specific behaviour (Fishbein and Ajzen (1975). Tourists' revisit intentions can be viewed as an individual's anticipated future travel behaviour. In other words, having a better predictive technique and explanation of tourists' revisit intentions may be helpful in understanding their future behavior (Ajzen and Driver, 1992).

## **1.6 Scope of Study**

This study focused on tourists' perception on quality of services and attributes of a destination towards their post behavioural intentions to Mulu National Park. Additionally, this study also refers to the relationship of the mediating variable of memorable tourism experiences and future intention to revisit, recommend or alternative intentions after experiencing Mulu National Park.

## **1.7 Significance of the Study**

This study contributes towards an understanding of tourists' perceived evaluation on service quality and the attributes of the destination and their behavioural intentions towards ecotourism destination. The results will also help to gain understanding of the role of memorable tourism experiences in enhancing tourist future behavioural intentions. On top of that, the significance of this study can be viewed from both practical and academic perspectives.

- **Practical perspectives**

This study will assist destination managers and marketers to effectively promote the park with the understanding of what aspects of memorable tourism experiences, service quality and destination attributes that they should focus on. The study will provide guidelines to destination managers in understanding the needs of tourists and the ability to satisfy their needs in order for the tourists to become loyal to the destination and for the destination to become competitive.

- **Academic perspectives**

Academically, this study offers contributions to the body of knowledge especially factors influencing memorable tourism experiences and revisit intentions among ecotourists. The relationship between perceived quality, destination attributes, memorable tourism experiences and revisit intentions will add value to academicians in terms of validating these findings in ecotourism destination with the use of all constructs.

## **1.8 Summary**

As a conclusion for this chapter, the problem statement, research objectives, definition of terms, scope and significance of study is discussed. Overall, this study assumes that memorable tourism experiences mediates tourists' perception of quality and destination attributes on visitation to MNP. The portions of the thesis have provided the practical and academic contributions to the field of tourism marketing. The details presented in this thesis can provide insights for marketers regarding the

influence of tourists' perceptions of the quality and attributes of a destination through memorable experiences on their future revisit intentions. Further contribution of the study is discussed in Chapter 6. The future elements of each variable used for this study is discussed in Chapter 2.



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Mazlina has been a consultant for private and government institutions in Malaysia such as Mayflower Sdn. Bhd. and GIATMARA to develop short courses, certificate and diploma courses on tourism management. She was a certified Tour Guide and obtained her license in 2005.

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