



UNIVERSITI PUTRA MALAYSIA

***FOREIGN AND DOMESTIC VISITORS' PERCEIVED SATISFACTION OF
THE ROLES OF NATURE GUIDE AT PAHANG NATIONAL PARK,
MALAYSIA***

MUSTAKIM BIN HASHIM

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MALAYSIA**

By
MUSTAKIM BIN HASHIM

**Thesis Submitted to the School of Graduate Studies, Universiti Putra
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Science**

September 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 Master of Science

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September 2016

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Ecotourism in Malaysia is emerging as one of the most popular tourism niches and attracts a lot of tourists to the country. In line with its rising importance, preservative actions must also be conducted to ensure the sustainability of the ecotourism sites. Naturally, the most suitable person to deliver this objective is the nature guide as they are the front liners that meet, greet and accompany the visitors to designated sites. However, there are complaints regarding the services provided by the guides. Therefore, this study tries to explore how nature guide can play their role in order to meet the visitors' expectations and ensure their satisfaction at the Pahang National Park (PNP). In achieving the objective, the study applies a framework based on the extended Modern Tour Guide Model (MTGM). This study explores the visitors' expectation towards the roles played by the nature guide and simultaneously evaluates the performance of the guides. In addition, the Disconfirmation Theory was adapted as the basis to examine visitors' satisfaction by using the discrepancies between expectation and the performance (P-E). Gap analysis was further used to examine the satisfaction level among the visitors. 384 visitors of Pahang National Park in Kuala Tahan who used the nature guide service completed the distributed questionnaires. The analyses involved in this study are the descriptive analysis, paired and independent sample T-tests, and gap analysis. Findings of this study show high expectations among the visitors of PNP and the performance of the nature guide was highly rated. Comparing the feedback from the local and foreign visitors, local visitors demonstrated higher expectations as well as higher rating for the nature guide's performance compared to their foreign counterparts. The overall result shows the visitors of PNP are satisfied with all the roles played by the nature guides except as the motivator of responsible behaviour. The gap values for the roles that are satisfied by the visitors range from 0.39 to 0.02. The only negative value recorded is for the motivator of responsible behaviour role which is -0.07. Further investigation reveals that the roles in resource management are worthy for consideration. Therefore, results for roles involving the

environment were not significant. These findings highlight the need for the nature guide to overcome this situation. Specific or focused training like environmental interpretation can help in improving the services of the nature guide at TNP. This kind of training can be implemented in the continuous tourism-related education (CTRE) courses that are compulsory during licenses renewal.



Abstrak tesis yang dikemukakan kepada Senat Universiti Putra Malaysia
sebagai memenuhi keperluan untuk ijazah Sarjana Sains

**KEPUASAN PELAWAT ASING DAN DOMESTIK TERHADAP PERANAN
PERKHIDMATAN PEMANDU PELANCONG ALAM SEMULAJADI DI
TAMAN NEGARA PAHANG, MALAYSIA**

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Ekopelancongan di Malaysia kini muncul sebagai salah satu pelancongan khusus yang paling popular dan menarik ramai pelancong ke negara ini. Selaras dengan kepentingannya yang semakin meningkat, tindakan susulan ke arah pemuliharaan juga perlu dijalankan untuk memastikan kemapanan tapak-tapak ekopelancongan. Sememangnya, individu yang paling sesuai untuk menyampaikan matlamat ini adalah pemandu pelancong alam semulajadi kerana mereka adalah barisan hadapan yang bertemu, menyambut dan mengiringi pelawat ke kawasan yang ditetapkan. Walau bagaimanapun, terdapat aduan mengenai perkhidmatan yang disediakan oleh pemandu pelancong. Oleh itu, kajian ini cuba untuk meneroka bagaimana pemandu pelancong alam semulajadi boleh memainkan peranan mereka bagi memenuhi kehendak pelancong dan memastikan kepuasan mereka di Taman Negara Pahang (TNP). Untuk mencapai matlamat tersebut, kajian ini telah menggunakan rangka kerja berasaskan model pemandu pelancong moden. Kajian ini meneroka jangkaan pelancong terhadap peranan yang dimainkan oleh pemandu pelancong alam semulajadi dan pada masa yang sama menilai prestasi mereka. Di samping itu, teori *Disconfirmation* telah diadaptasi sebagai asas untuk mengkaji kepuasan pelawat dengan menggunakan perbezaan di antara jangkaan dan prestasi (P-E). Analisis jurang terus digunakan untuk mengkaji tahap kepuasan di kalangan pengunjung. 384 pengunjung Taman Negara Pahang yang menggunakan perkhidmatan pemandu pelancong alam semulajadi telah melengkapkan soal selidik yang diedarkan. Analisis yang terlibat dalam kajian ini ialah analisis deskriptif, ujian T berpasangan dan sampel bebas, dan analisis jurang. Hasil kajian ini menunjukkan jangkaan di kalangan pengunjung PNP dan prestasi pemandu pelancong alam semulajadi yang dinilai adalah tinggi. Perbandingan maklum balas daripada pelancong tempatan dan luar negara, pelancong tempatan menunjukkan jangkaan terhadap pemandu pelancong dan menilai prestasi mereka lebih tinggi berbanding dengan pelancong dari luar negara. Keputusan keseluruhan

menunjukkan pengunjung TNP berpuas hati dengan semua peranan yang dimainkan oleh pemandu pelancong alam semulajadi kecuali menjadi penggerak tingkah laku bertanggungjawab. Nilai jurang untuk peranan yang pengunjung berpuas hati berjumlah di antara 0.39 dan 0.02. Satu-satunya nilai negatif yang dicatatkan adalah untuk penggerak tingkahlaku bertanggungjawab iaitu -0.07. Kajian lanjut menunjukkan bahawa peranan dalam pengurusan sumber juga patut dipertimbangkan. Oleh itu, keputusan bagi peranan yang melibatkan alam sekitar adalah tidak signifikan. Kesemua dapatan ini menunjukkan bahawa adanya keperluan untuk pemandu pelancong alam semulajadi mengatasi keadaan ini. Latihan khusus atau berfokus seperti interpretasi alam sekitar boleh membantu dalam meningkatkan mutu perkhidmatan pemandu pelancong alam semulajadi di TNP. Jenis latihan ini boleh dilaksanakan dalam kursus berterusan pendidikan berkaitan pelancongan (*CTRE*) yang wajib diambil semasa memperbaharui lesen.



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I certify that a Thesis Examination Committee has met on 9 September 2016 to conduct the final examination of Mustakim bin Hashim on his thesis entitled "Foreign and Domestic Visitors' Perceived Satisfaction of the Roles of Nature Guide at Pahang National Park, 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 Master of Science.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

MOTAC	Ministry of Tourism and Culture Malaysia
DWNP	Department of Wildlife and National Parks Peninsular Malaysia
WFTGA	The World Federation of Tour Guides Associations
UNWTO	World Tourism Organization
NPS	National Park Service
MTGM	Modern Tour Guide Model



CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

Ecotourism in Malaysia is emerging as one of the tourism, popular niches that attract many tourists to come and visit Malaysia. Ministry of Tourism Malaysia in the latest Tourism Satellite Accounting (Department of Statistic, 2014) reported that in 2013, the number of tourists that came to Malaysia was about 25.7 million. One of the primary reasons why those visitors are attracted to Malaysia is due to the diverse attractions available for them to experience including ecotourism resources. Resources such as national parks and reserves, beaches and mountains, waterfalls and lakes, marine parks and islands, limestone hills and caves, mangroves, recreational forests and also rivers contribute to the growth of this industry. These resources that are offered in Malaysia, give tourists the opportunity to experience the ecotourism themselves. However, the increasing number of visitors from year to year can leave negative impacts to the sustainability of certain places visited.

In order to avoid damages and promote sustainability, action must be taken to protect the places (Nor`ain, Nor Asmalina, & Lim, 2010). In their study, Skanavis and Giannoulis (2010) suggested a specific management tool that is called environmental interpretation. This interpretation can be carried out by those who deliver the programmes. They can be referred to as interpreters, educators, naturalists, nature guides, tour guides and other suitable terms that fit the criteria.

In their study, Peake, Innes, and Dyer (2009) found three factors that influence the effective conservation messages that is individual characteristic, the interpreter information about the impact of conservation and two ways communication process. For Weiler and Ham (2002), they used the term 'interpretive guiding' in their study on the training of the tour guide in ecotourism. In this context, it means that the tour guides are capable of promoting the sustainable development of the places that they are assigned to take care of. There are many researchers who agree that interpretation is the main component of the guiding process and to deliver the conservation message (Hu & Wall, 2012; Moscardo, Woods, & Saltzer, 2004; Pereira & Mykletun, 2012; Weiler & Smith, 2009).

The best person to deliver the conservation message to visitors is the nature guides (Armstrong & Weiler, 2002; Peake et al., 2009). This is because they are the front lines that meet visitors daily in their jobs (El-Sharkawy, 2007; Haig & McIntyre, 2002). They communicate and treat visitors as part of their routine jobs. Besides, they also play important roles in influencing the

satisfaction level among tourists from their tour experience (McDonnell, 2001; Rääkkönen & Honkanen, 2013).

Moreover, there are various studies on the tour guides both in mass tourism and the ecotourism itself, that is culture transfer/breaker (Gelbman & Maoz, 2012; Lin, Ting, Hsu, & Wu, 2014; McDonnell, 2001), ecotourism benefits and promote conservation awareness (Ormsby & Mannle, 2006), eco tour guide training (Black, Ham, & Weiler, 2001), indigenous tour guide (Howard, Thwaites, & Smith, 2001), knowledge and skills (El-Sharkawy, 2007), communication competency (Arslanturk & Altunoz, 2012; Leclerc & Martin, 2004) and quality of tour guiding (Black & Ham, 2005).

Some researchers did studies based on Cohen's (1985) model role of modern tour guide that proposed two spheres in the roles of tour guides. Those two spheres which is leadership and mediatory include four sub-roles of guiding. The two orientations of the model are "outer-directed" and "inner-directed". "Outer-directed" role has instrumental and instructional elements, whereas inner-directed has social and communicative elements. Cohen's model then was extended by the work of Weiler and Davis (1993) which added resource management sphere that includes two more important roles which is motivator and environmental interpreter. Another study done by Pereira and Mykletun (2012) added an economy sphere to the model to accomplish sustainable principles. The role in the sphere suggested that tour guides should become the promoter and philanthropy.

Generally, satisfaction is the fulfilment of one's wishes, expectations and needs. In service industry, there are various definitions of customers' satisfaction but the easiest way to understand it is when the customer's expectations of the services being offered or provided matches his/her perception of the actual services (Parasuraman, Zeithaml, & Berry, 1985). Therefore, it is important to study customers' satisfaction in order to know how well the organizations or individuals perform (Latu & Everett, 2000). Meanwhile, Arabatzis and Grigoroudis (2010) stated that it is the most reliable information for the performance evaluation. More importantly, the organizations can determine future actions and improvement of the programmes based on the end user view that is customers' voices.

There are many studies that have acknowledged nature guides as the main role in the ecotourism industry. He/she plays an important role in shaping tourists' experience (Gelbman & Maoz, 2012; Haig & McIntyre, 2002; Howard et al., 2001; Huang, Hsu, & Chan, 2010; Randall & Rollins, 2009) and understanding of a destination and its culture (Gelbman & Maoz, 2012; Lin et al., 2014). Guides also play important role in fulfilling tourists' satisfaction (Arabatzis & Grigoroudis, 2010; Barutcu, Dogan, & Unguren, 2011; Torres-Sovero, Gonzalez, Martin-Lopez, & Kirkby, 2012; Yoon & Uysal, 2005). There was also a study that stated conservation is one of the roles that must be portrayed by the nature guides (Peake et al., 2009) to give great satisfaction to visitors'.

Till now, studies that examine the performance of the nature guides are limited (Rokenes, Schumann, & Rose, 2015) hence, focusing on the roles specifically (Randall & Rollins, 2009). Furthermore, there have been little discussions showing on how performance of nature guides can shape visitors' experience in order to get satisfaction in the trip to natural areas guided by them. Arslanturk and Altunoz (2012) stated that although travel agencies collected the data subsequently but there were only a few studies focused on guided tours and satisfaction from customers' view. As a result, there is less evidence on the visitors' satisfaction with nature guides services in performing roles at ecotourism destination.

1.2 Problem Statement

Former minister of Ministry of Tourism and Culture Malaysia (MOTAC) Dr. Ng Yen Yen stated that in 2010 the ministry had received many complaints from tourists' that suffered bad treatment from guides (Bernama, 2011). There were about 255 complaints received by the ministry regarding on the quality and attitudes from nature guides such as lack of knowledge in their tourism product, lacking proficiency in English as well as cheating foreign tourists'. A review at the popular web page for travellers called "Tripadvisor Malaysia" found out that there were many complaints on the frontlines at Pahang National Park, Kuala Tahan (Tripadvisor, 2016). Such poor reviews from dissatisfied visitors' definitely affects the good image of our ecotourism destinations. With the current technology, it will be worsened if tourists' can read such review before they come to our country. The front liners including the guides are supposed to respect and treat tourists' with courtesy because they represent our country as well as the tourism industry. When they fail to perform, it will affect the quality experiences that will lead to tourists' dissatisfaction when they come to our country. Therefore, there is an urgency to evaluate visitors' satisfaction on nature guides in terms of their performing roles to overcome the weaknesses that may arise. Given this situation, the study tried to explore tourists' satisfaction on the performance of nature guides in shaping their experiences in Pahang National Park, Kuala Tahan. Specifically, this study also tried to measure visitors' satisfaction towards nature guides in their performing roles.

1.3 Research Questions

The research questions examined in this study were based on the Cohen's Modern Tour Guides Model:

- What are the tourists' expectations on the important roles of nature guides on a guided tour?
- How do tourists' rate the performance of the roles of nature guides on a guided tour?

- What are the differences between expectations and performance of the roles of nature guides on a guided tour?
- Does such gap (expectations-performance) differ between domestic and foreign tourists?

1.4 Objectives of the Study

The general objectives of this study are to measure tourists' expectations towards the roles of nature guide, the performance of nature guides and its gap. Whereas, the specific objectives are;

- to measure tourists' expectations on the roles of nature guides on a guided tour.
- to measure the performance by nature guides in the service encountered.
- to investigate the gaps between expectations and the actual performance of the role of the guides in guided tour.
- to examine differences in such gaps between domestic and foreign tourists.

1.5 Significance of the Study

This study will contribute some insight on the expanding of the knowledge of visitors' satisfaction towards the roles of nature guides at ecotourism destination, particularly in Malaysia. In order to have satisfied visitors, efforts to study further in detail about the roles played by the guides are required. The current study can serve as initial examination on the highlighted issue and hopefully will point to some directions afterwards.

The findings from this study can also be utilized as guidance in order to improve tourists' satisfaction and at the same time enhancing nature guides services which is going to focus on the roles itself. This study will provide information on the roles of nature guides as well as how it can be played by them. The findings in the present study can also be used as a guideline to nature guides to plan their trips more efficiently.

In terms of knowledge contribution, the findings of this study will provide some form of empirical data as a guide for future research in this area. The applicable model that can fit to the analysis of satisfaction can act as measurement tools. The analysis can be used to find out the active roles that are played by nature guides in order to get visitors' satisfaction. It can also provide future direction for those who are interested to examine the roles that should be played by the guides needed in guided trips.

1.6 Definition and Measurement of key terms

1.6.1 Ecotourism

Ecotourism in The International Ecotourism Society (1990) is "responsible travel to natural areas that conserves the environment and improves the well-being of local people". According to Blamey (2001), he stated that ecotourism is nature based, environmentally educated and sustainably managed.

In this study, researcher intends to use the term ecotourism as tourism that includes visits to the natural area that offers sustainability, which is Pahang National Park, Kuala Tahan, Pahang.

1.6.2 Nature Guide

The World Federation of Tour Guides Associations (WFTGA) defines a tour guide as a person who guides visitors in the language of their choice and interprets the cultural and natural heritage of an area. It usually needs a person who normally possesses a specific qualification usually issued and/or recognized by the appropriate authorities. Skanavis and Gianoulis (2010) refer nature guide as a person who delivers interpretive programmes that aims in fostering a sense of care and stewardship among visitors' towards the reserve they visit to. While for Black et al. (2001) defines it as someone who is employed on a paid or voluntary basis that conducts paying or non-paying tourists' around an area or site of natural area.

In this study, researcher aims to use the nature guide who is referred to as someone who already attended the Localised Nature Guide Level II Course organised by DWNP, registered and licensed with park administration and eligible to accompany park visitors'.

1.6.3 Visitors

A definition by World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) suggests that visitor is any person visiting a country other than his own usual place of residence for a period not exceeding one year and for any reason other than following an occupation remunerated from within the country visited.

In this context, those people who are willing to travel, spend time and participate in the activities offered at Pahang National Park, Kuala Tahan, were considered as visitors at least for the purpose of this study. The term visitors and tourists were used interchangeably in this study.

1.6.4 Satisfaction

Satisfaction is the result of the relationship between tourists' expectations on the destinations based on their previous destination images and their evaluation of the outcome of their experiences at the destination area or performance (Lin, Lee, & Wang, 2012). Latu and Everett (2000) give some

perspectives that differ from one another such as international visitor, domestic visitor, conservation manager, specialist expert and future generation.

In this study, expectations were measured using scale developed from the Modern Tour Guide Model (MTGM) by Cohen (1985) extended by Weiler and Davis (1993) and Pereira and Mykletun (2012). This model consists of eight roles which is instrumental, social, instructional, communicative, motivator of responsible behaviour, environmental interpreter, promoter and philanthropy. The seven point likert scale was used from one (1) "not all important" to seven (7) "extremely important". Similarly, performance was measured using the same model of Modern Tour Guide but at this time the scale was anchored from one (1) 'strongly disagree" to seven (7) "strongly agree". In the end, the measurement of visitors' satisfaction was obtained by gap value performance minus expectations (P-E).



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