



***EFFECTS OF SERVICESCAPE ON TOURIST EXPERIENCE, EMOTION,
PERCEIVED VALUE AND SATISFACTION ON BEHAVIOURAL
INTENTION TO VISIT ECOTOURISM PARKS IN MALAYSIA***

CHOK NYEN VUI

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By

CHOK NYEN VUI

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

August 2018

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DEDICATION

I dedicate my dissertation work to my family and many friends. A special feeling of gratitude to my loving parents, Chok Choon Fah & Lim Yun Len whose words of encouragement and push for tenacity ring in my ears. My sisters Chok Suh Fui and Chok Suh Yie have never left my side and are very special.

I also dedicate this dissertation to my many friends who have supported me throughout the process. I will always appreciate all they have done, especially Dr Joseph Kuah, Kenneth Foong and Mr Totto Chang for helping me in collecting data for analysis.

I dedicate this work and give special thanks to my best friend Dr Lai Kong Seng for being there for me throughout the entire doctorate program. You have been my best research leader.



Abstract of thesis presented to the senate of Universiti Putra Malaysia in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

EFFECTS OF SERVICESCAPE ON TOURIST EXPERIENCE, EMOTION, PERCEIVED VALUE AND SATISFACTION ON BEHAVIOURAL INTENTION TO VISIT ECOTOURISM PARKS IN MALAYSIA

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August 2018

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Tourism is a significant industry within most parts of the worldwide. This industry provides economic contributions that impact on other industries like hotel and accommodation, transportation, entertainment and attractions, and other forms of commercial. Malaysia is one of the many countries that reap the economic benefits from this sector. The tourism industry in Malaysia has grown rapidly because of globalisation. Certain determinants have transformed the ecotourism environment and effortlessly improved its competitiveness. Prompt changes to the determinants of such changing environment are vital for keeping the leisure and tourism organisations competitive. Accordingly, for the ecotourism industry, understanding the determinants of tourists' post-trip responses is essential. Given the significance of ecotourism competitiveness, service organisations should attempt to acquire resources and undertake efforts to increase the awareness of tourist behaviour and maintain their advantage.

In response to the determinants of tourist behavioural intention, an interrelationship among marketing and socio-psychology constructs was included in this work. Hence, the core contribution of this study is a framework that empirically depicts marketing and socio-psychology concepts and their influence on tourist behavioural intention within the ecotourism industry.

With regard to research aims, this study proposed a conceptual model encapsulating six constructs, namely, servicescape (SS), experience (EX), emotion (EM), perceived value (PV), satisfaction (SA) and behavioural intention (BI). The model entailed interconnected hypothetical relationships between the proposed constructs. This research further employed a quantitative research approach to assess the suggested conceptual framework. Multivariate statistical analysis was applied to

ensure model robustness. Statistical techniques such as CFA and SEM were employed. CFA aimed to assist, refine and validate the measurement model by uncovering its robustness. By contrast, SEM assessed the conceptual framework by evaluating the relationships between constructs.

For validation of mode, this research provided an empirical examination of the hypotheses. Firstly, the interrelationships between the constructs (1) SS–EX path, (2) EX–BI path and (3) SS–BI path were examined. Among the three hypotheses proposed, only the association between servicescape (SS) and experience (EX) was statistically proven. Secondly, this study further examined the mediation effect between constructs. Sufficient evidence proved that mediation effect occurred.

The empirical findings in this study offered several implications. Firstly, this work added to the extant body of knowledge by expanding the studies of Chen and Chen (2010), Wang *et al.* (2012) and Brunner-Sperdin, Peter and Strobl (2012). Secondly, a service organisation should effectively manage its servicescape and the related components by taking care of the flora and fauna, upholding professionalism among service staff and maintaining the quality standards of diving equipment.

Thirdly, in sustain ecotourism and its competitiveness, firms should pay attention and understand the elements of servicescape, experience, emotion, perceive value and satisfaction during the service consumption among tourists. This study contributes the finding that service organisations should construct and design services by considering the tourists' service consumption experience and the corresponding values travellers obtain. Likewise, favourable responses are likely to be achieved by effectively facilitating the said determinants.

Lastly, a refinement of policy practices should not be ignored. Such improvement further fosters the sustainability of the tourism industry through the enforcement of relevant rules and regulations. Policy implementation is crucial as regards encouraging ecotourism activities without jeopardising valuable natural resources through appropriate tourism practices.

Hence, this study contributes to the body of knowledge by expanding prior research and extending the existing literature of marketing and sociopsychology within the ecotourism context. Significantly, the robustness of the theoretical model provides practical guidance for not just service organisations but also the tourism industry by maintaining competitiveness as a priority. In conclusion, the findings provide significant support for the proposed conceptual framework. Exploiting the market extensively by enhancing the servicescape and tourist experience is suggested. Thus, realising a positive intention must be in line with the activities of their independent dimensions, along with the support from organisations.

Abstrak tesis yang dikemukakan kepada Senat Universiti Putra Malaysia Sebagai memenuhi keperluan untuk ijazah Doktor Falsafah

**KESAN SERVICESCAPE TERHADAP PENGALAMAN PELANCONG,
EMOSI, NILAI DAN KEPUASAN TERHADAP NIAT TINGKAH LAKU
UNTUK MELAWAN DESTINASI ECOTOURISM DI MALAYSIA**

Oleh

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Industri pelancongan merupakan satu industri yang penting di dunia. Setiap tahun industri ini memberikan sumbangan ekonomi daripada segi impak terhadap bidang akomodasi, pengangkutan, hiburan dan tempat tarikan pelancong. Negara Malaysia merupakan salah satu negara yang menerima faedah ekonomi daripada industri ini. Industri perlancongan berkembang di Malaysia akibat globalisasi. Pelbagai penentu telah mengubah persekitaran ekoperlancongan menyebabkan ia lebih berdaya saing. Perubahan penentu di dalam persekitaran yang sentiasa berubah adalah penting supaya organisasi percutian dan perlancongan sentiasa berdaya saing tinggi. Ini menunjukkan bahawa pemahaman tentang penentu terhadap respons pelancong adalah penting di dalam industri ekoperlancongan. Di atas kesedaran terhadap kepentingan mencapai daya saing di dalam industry ekoperlancongan, organisasi perkhidmatan menyumbang sumber dan tenaga untuk memahami tingkah laku pelancong supaya mereka sentiasa berdaya saing tinggi. Kajian ini mengabungkan hubungan di antara konstruk-konstruk pemasaran dan socio-psikologi untuk memenuhi keperluan memahami penentu niat tingkah laku pelancong. Oleh itu, sumbangan utama kajian ini ialah pembentukan satu rangka yang menunjukkan aspek pemasaran dan socio-psikologi dan pengaruh mereka terhadap tingkah laku pelancong di dalam industri ekoperlancongan secara empirikal.

Sehubungan dengan matlamat kajian ini, kajian ini mencadangkan satu model konseptual yang merangkumi enam konstruk iaitu servicescape (SS), pengalaman (EX), emosi (EM), nilai tanggapan (PV), kepuasan (SA) daripada segi niat tingkah laku (BI). Kajian ini menggunakan pendekatan kuantitatif untuk menilai rangka konseptual yang telah dibentuk. Teknik analisis statistik multivariat telah digunakan untuk memastikan keteguhan model. Teknik statistik seperti Analisis Faktor Pengesahan (CFA) dan Pemodelan Persamaan Struktur (SEM) telah digunakan. CFA

bertujuan membantu, menyempurna dan menyesah dalam mengukuhkan model pengukuran.

Kajian ini membolehkan pemeriksaan hipotesis secara empirikal. Pertama, pemeriksaan terhadap hubungan di antara konstruk iaitu (1) lintasan SS-EX (2) lintasan EX-BI dan (3) lintasan SS-BI. Di antara tiga hipotesis yang telah dicadangkan, hanya hubungan servicescape (SS) dan pengalaman (EX) dibuktikan secara statistik. Kedua, kajian ini juga meneliti kesan pengantaraan di antara konstruk-konstruk. Bukti-bukti yang menyokong kesan pengantaraan di antara konstruk-konstruk adalah mencukupi. Penemuan empirikal daripada kajian ini membawa beberapa implikasi. Pertama, kajian ini menyumbang kepada badan pengetahuan melalui perkembangan kajian yang dibuat Chen and Chen (2010), Wang et al (2012) dan Brunner-Sperdin, Peter dan Strobl (2012). Kedua, organisasi perkhidmatan patut mengendalikan servicescape dan komponen-komponen yang berkaitan secara berkesan melalui pemeliharaan flora and fauna persekitaran, pengekalan tahap professionalism di kalangan kakitangan perkhidmatan dan pengekalan standard kualiti peralatan penyelaman.

Firma perlu memberi perhatian dan memahami elemen-elemen servicescape, pengalaman, emosi dan nilai tanggapan dan kepuasan pelanggan semasa penggunaan perkhidmatan bagi tujuan mengekalkan industry ekopelancongan dan daya saing industry ini. Organisasi perkhidmatan patut membina dan membentuk perkhidmatan yang mempertimbangkan pengalaman penggunaan perkhidmatan pelancong dan nilai yang didapati semasa penggunaan perkhidmatan. Begitu juga, respons yang baik mungkin akan didapati melalui pemudahan penentu yang efektif.

Akhirnya, penguatkuasaan polisi patut dipertimbangkan. Penguatkuasaan peraturan dan undang-undang yang relevan juga akan melanjutkan kemampaman industry ekopelancongan. Penguatkuasaan polisi ini menggalakkan aktiviti ekopelancongan denagn tidak menjejaskan sumber asli yang terharga.

Secara keseluruhan, kajian ini menyumbang kepada badan pengetahuan melalui pengembangan kajian lepas, melanjutkan literature pemasaran dan socio-psikologi semasa di dalam konteks ekopelancungan. Lebih-lebih lagi, model teoretikal yang kukuh memberikan panduan praktis bukan hanya kepada organisasi perkhidmatan tetapi juga terutamanya bagi industry ekopelancongan dan daya saing industry ini. Kesimpulannya, penemuan kajian telah memberikan sokongan penting terhadap rangka konseptual yang dicadangkan.

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I certify that a Thesis Examination Committee has met on 17 August 2018 to conduct the final examination of Chok Nyen Vui on his thesis entitled “Effects of Servicescape on Tourist Experience, Emotion, Perceived Value and Satisfaction on Behavioural Intention to Visit Ecotourism Parks in Malaysia” in accordance with the Universities and University College 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 Chapter overview

This chapter provides an overview of the whole study and involves several sections that begin with the background of the study, followed by the problem statement in Section 1.3. Section 1.4 emphasises on the motivation for this thesis. The next section discusses the objectives of the research, the research questions and the research significances of this study. This chapter ends with chapter summary after the organisation of the whole study according to the chapters. This study aims to examine the concept of servicescape, which leads to a tourist's experience and then potentially influence perceived values, emotions and satisfaction towards behavioural intentions. This study has broadened the concept of servicescape and experience, which is relevant to the tourism paradigm that requires more investigation. In addition, the present study attempts to introduce servicescape and tourist experience concepts in association with behavioural intentions in an ecotourism setting.

1.2 Background of the study

Tourism has been recognised as one of the growing industries that contribute significantly to Malaysia's economic development. Apart from the foreign exchange, rapid growth of the tourism industry over the years has increased the employment opportunities in the tourism sector. According to the Malaysia Tourism Satellite Account (2005-2013), the employment share had increased to 16.8% in 2013, which reflects approximately 2 million employment opportunities accounted for in the tourism sector.

In the past decade, the manufacturing sector was riding the momentum of the Malaysian economy. As noted earlier, the services sector does contribute to the Malaysian economy. The tourism industry, for instance, is among the contributors to the economy besides the manufacturing industry (Choy & Lazim, 2014). Besides its economic role, the tourism industry has contributed through foreign exchange returns as well (NTP2004-2010 Main Report, 2004. pg. 9). Notwithstanding its importance, the tourism industry has mainly focused on beaches and islands as tourist destinations. In accordance with the development of the tourism industry, the tourism paradigm has shifted to shopping, theme parks and nature-based attractions.

The changes in the tourism paradigm and the development of various tourism products have contributed to the increased number of tourists. Based on United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO, 2017), outperform of Tourism

Malaysia reported an increment of international tourist arrivals at 4.13%. Moreover, the performance of tourism Malaysia is also projected to witness 1800 million international tourist arrivals by year 2030 (UNWTO, 2016).

However, Malaysia is ranked in the top nine compared to other ASIAN countries and has received 24.7 million and 25 million visitors in 2011 and 2012, respectively (UNWTO, 2012). A comparison of visitor's arrival has shown an increase of 1.2 per cent. Hence, this shows the potential of the Malaysian tourism industry in attracting international tourists. Yet, Malaysia's ranking among other ASEAN countries has fallen one rank to 10th. As reported by Ministry of Tourism And Culture (MOTAC, 2013), Malaysia has fallen into rank 11th. These statistics indicate the existence of a gap and more attention is required to face-lift Malaysia's tourism industry. An increase of tourist arrivals simultaneously increases foreign exchange revenue. Thus, increase of revenue in 2012 (RM60.6 billion) compared to 2011 (RM58.3 billion) approximately shows a total receipt of 3.9%. According to the Malaysian Tourism Satellite Account (2005-2012), 131.0 million visitors were reported in 2011 compare to 115.5 million in 2010, which is an increase of 13.4%. The tourist spots included urban (88.4 million) and rural (42.6 million) areas.

One of the tourist attractions in Malaysia is its richness in assorted natural resources, which has become one of the valuable assets of the country. According to the World Travel & Tourism Council (WTTC, 2013), Malaysia has a potential in the tourism industry with its diverse natural attractions and well-preserved destinations. The natural geographical area of Malaysia is surrounded by sea with adjacent islands and beautiful beaches and the interior includes natural resources such as tropical rainforests that possess some unique flora and fauna. Due to the rapid development process, the birth of ecotourism not just promotes nature but also includes the biological protection of natural resources. The integration of ecology ("eco") and tourism has given birth to a new term called ecotourism. Generally, ecotourism consists of a wide range of natural resources such as lakes, mangroves, limestone caves, mountains, waterfalls, island and wildlife. Ecotourism is an important tourism industry, enriched with natural assets that perfectly meet the demand of this developing industry. Having a say, island tourism is contribute income to Malaysia (Ho, Chia, Ng & Ramachandran., 2017). Tourism in Malaysia potentially generates the economic growth (Ng, Chia, Ho & Ramachandran., 2017; Habibi, Rahim, Ramchandran & Chin., 2009) and hypothetically perform better than manufacturing industry in the coming future (Choy & Lazim, 2014; Mazumder, Ahmed, & Al-Amin, 2009). Contribution of Tourism Malaysia also includes the increase of job opportunities in the related field.

From a hospitality and tourism perspective, the consumer or tourist would ultimately make the experience occur. In other words, the tourist exchanges products and services within the circumstances of a consumer-related experience rather than encounter experiences that are outside or beyond the market setting (Caru & Cova, 2003). Under common circumstances, an experience could occur when there is an engagement between tourists and the servicescape. Tourists who are involved in ecotourism activities could potentially have an experience after their participation

and engagement. The uniqueness of such tourist experience cannot be granted by an organization but could only be created by an environment in particular circumstances (Mossberg, 2007). Based on previous literature on the environment, physical surroundings and the environment could have an impact on customer experience.

Ecotourism is part of the tourism product and is different from other tourism products. From an ecotourism aspect, servicescape is the salient attribute that attracts tourists (Ho, Chia, Ng & Ramachandran, 2017). The ecotourism servicescape includes signs, symbols and artefacts, space and function, ambience, cleanliness, service staff, flora, fauna, and these elements hypothetically stimulate the occurrence of an experience. If an ecotourism site with its destroyed servicescape and unmaintained facilities, the destination is unable to draw attention among potential tourists.

This phenomenon is further guided and explained by the stimulus-organism and response (SOR) model. Servicescape has the potential to motivate and attract tourists to visit a destination (Jaafar & Maideen, 2012). Hsu, Cai and Li (2010) have highlighted the need to investigate the tourist's statement for this study. Next section will highlight the discussion of problem statement.

1.2 Problem statement

In the digital era, online reviews aids numerous needs of Internet users (Qazi, Syed, Raj, Cambria, Tahir, & Alghazzawi., 2016). Thus, understanding the impact of tourist experience is pivotal. Nevertheless, tourists are depending on suggestions of others reviewers to build their decision making. Criticisms by tourists through established website (Trip Advisor) and Newspapers (The Star, New strait times and Borneo Post) include poor quality of service staff, particularly tour guides who lacked knowledge of the local destinations could jeopardize the image of an ecotourism destination. Some common complaints include the incompatibility in standards of facilities and accommodations and prices changed, (Trip Advisor, 2017). Complaints on facilities include diving equipment that was poorly managed, unclean and unmaintained (Trip Advisor, 2017). Other negative reviews emphasized services provided by dive operator, specifically arrangement of diving services is poorly organized (Trip Advisor, 2017). Unmanageable of tourism facilities and unmet tourist expected standard would lead to tourist dissatisfaction (Arabatzis & Grigoroudis, 2010). Unsolved of ecotourism environmental issues leads to the low revisit intention among repeater tourists (Hassan, Azhar & Farhana, 2017). All these reports points to the importance of managing a destination servicescape (staff's capability, flora and fauna) in giving pleasant tourist experience.

To date, ecotourism research had focused on the area of ecology (Baum, 2007; Choo and Jamal, 2009), sustainability (Ibrahim, Shuib, Ramachandran & Afandi., 2015; Azima, Suhana, Habibah, Hussain, Hamzah, Er, & Fuad., 2012; Jaafar & Maideen, 2012; Chin, Moore & Wallington, 2000; Ashok, Tewari, Behera & Majumdar, 2017;

Rhormens, Pedrini & Ghilardi-Lopes, 2017; Ng, Chia, Ho & Ramachandran, 2017; Ho, Chia, Ng & Ramachandran, 2017), marketing (Jaafar, Aziz & Sukarno, 2012; Weaver & Lawton, 2007), visitor's experience (Cini, Kruger & Ellis, 2012; Chan & Baum, 2007; Higham & Carr, 2002, Sarkar, 2016) and other field of study (eg: Kunjuraman, & Hussin, 2017; Sadatiseyedmahalleh, Rahman, & Mohamed, 2016). However, research on servicescape and its effect on tourist experience has been overlooked. Limited knowledge and lack of understanding regards ecotourism experience in an ecotourism environment. Moreover, understanding of experience role between ecotourism environment and tourist's behavior is largely been ignored.

There are three theoretical shortcomings in the existing literature of tourist behavioral intention. Firstly, existing measurements of servicescape had focused more on the internal environment context such as organisation physical surrounding (Bitner, 1992), restaurant (Ryu & Jang., 2007; Kim & Moon., 2009; Ryu & Han., 2011), airport (Newman, 2007), leisure services (Wakefield & Blodgett., 1996; 1999) and not on external environment, particularly in tourism setting, which is relatively not been fully examined. Furthermore, servicescape measurement that focuses holistically on the service settings is evident in the context of ecotourism like restaurant (Ryu and Jang, 2007, Kim & Moon, 2009); organisation physical surrounding (Baker *et al.*, 1992) and shopping atmospheric (Morrin & Chebat, 2005). Servicescape on ecotourism service setting is largely been ignored, and environmental impact of eco-tourist sites on experience gained have been rarely confirmatory. Thus, limited research on servicescape in the aspect of ecotourism has resulted in the poor conceptualization (Chebat & Dube 2000; Hoffman & Turley 2002).

The second shortcoming is limited literature on servicescape and tourist experience (Pine & Gilmore, 1999). There is lack of research on consumer experience (Pine & Gilmore, 1999; Knutson *et al.*, 2007; Titz 2007), likewise "tourist experience" remains under-researched (Larsen, 2007). Moreover, the servicescape examination from a tourist's perspective is under-explored (Wang, Chen, Fan & Lu, 2012) and its association with tourist experience is scarce. Thus, the relationship of 'tourist experience' with servicescape remains unanswered (Edvardsson *et al.*, 2005). Moreover, limited knowledge about what contributes to memorable experiences, particularly regards to the subjective and personal nature of experiences is evident (Knobloch, Robertson & Aitken, 2017).

The third shortcoming is marketing scholars have overlooked the construct of 'experience' and its significance. The scarcity of conceptualization and measurement of 'tourist experience' (Hosany & Witham, 2010) has raised questions on the level of understanding and the authenticity of the construct itself (Olsen, 2007). In the hospitality and tourism context, limited and insufficient knowledge of 'tourist experience' is evident (Oh *et al.*, 2007; Wallsa *et al.*, 2011; Faullant, Matzler & Mooradian., 2011). An understanding of consumer experience remains scarce (Wallsa *et al.*, 2011; Faullant, Matzler & Mooradian., 2011). Additionally, 'memory experience' has been examined from a psychological viewpoint (Tung & Ritchie, 2011) and has yet to be studied from a marketing perspective though the necessity

for such studies is forthcoming.

Referring to previous research, limited studies on mediating role in explaining how experience influences behavioral intention. The mediator role of emotion, perceived value and satisfaction in addressing the experience-behavioral intention path were inconclusive. Extant literature has evidenced an inconsistencies mediation result in (1) emotion (Mediation effect: Su & Hsu, 2013; han & Jeong, 2013, no mediation test: Faullant, Matzler & Mooradian., 2011), (2) perceived value (mediation effect: Song, Lee, Park, Hwang and Reisinger., 2015; Chen & Chen, 2010, no mediation test: Mehmetoglu & Engen, 2011), and (3) satisfaction (full mediation: Su, Swanson & Chen., 2016; Cole & Scott, 2004; Lee, Lee & Yoo, 2000, partial mediation: Walsh *et al.*, 2011, no mediation: Baker & Crompton, 2000), indicating literature gaps that need research attention. Hence, mediation role of emotion in tourism experience and post behaviour is overlooked in literature (Hosany, Prayag, Van Der Veen, Huang, & Deesilatham., 2016). This gaps lead to limited knowledge and understanding of mediator role in tourist behaviour studies, especially in the ecotourism context.

The incorporation of 'satisfaction' and 'perceived value' in forecasting behavioural intention is not new (Petrick, Morais & Norman, 2001; Petrick, 2004). However, previous models of behavioural intention have overlooked the cognitive element of 'tourist experience' and the affection components when predicting behavioural intention. Although mediating role of emotion, satisfaction and perceived value were examined, but the results were mixed (eg: Su & Hsu, 2013; Han & Jeong, 2013; Song, Lee, Park, Hwang & Reisinger., 2015; Mehmetoglu & Engen, 2011; Su, Swanson & Chen., 2016; Cole & scott, 2004). Furthermore, some previous literature has overlooked the mediation effect of perceived value (Mehmetoglu & Engen, 2011).

An awareness of Attitude theory and SOR model were operationalized in areas of psychology studies, but in the context of marketing and ecotourism perspective was largely been not examined. Moreover, mediation effect of its component (Attitude Theory/SOR model) was rarely been examined.

From the literature gap and industry review, it seems that mechanism of ecotourism servicescape, tourist experience and affective components (emotion, perceived value and satisfaction) in shaping behavioural intention has not been fully investigated empirically. In addition, Servicescape and 'tourist experience' measurements were said to suffer from some weaknesses. Further exploration is required to provide a comprehensive understanding of behavioural intentions in light of the literature gaps highlighted above. Hence, the present study attempts to propose the investigation of servicescape, tourist experience, emotions, satisfaction and perceived values that are associated with behavioural intention in the ecotourism context in Malaysia.

1.3 Motivation of research

The motivation of this research was derived from the concern of stakeholders and the immediate actions needed to improve existing ecotourism practices. Understanding current tourism impediments from the aspects of economic development (tourism business and operator) who manage servicescape, monitor servicescape and how they influence tourist behavioural intention, is important that advancing the knowledge of managerial practitioners. Non-Governmental Organisation (NGO) is important to tourism stakeholders in improving their practices using Malaysia as a case study, the present research investigates the effect of servicescape on tourist experience, emotion, perceived value and satisfaction and it's implication on behavioural intention. The motivation of this study, is portrayed in figure 1.1.

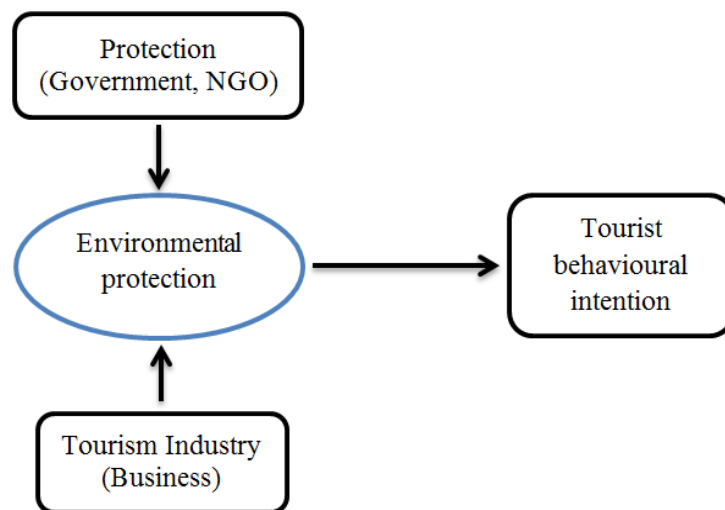


Figure 1.1: Motivation of research

1.5 Research objectives

The general objective is to investigate the effect of servicescape towards tourist experience, emotions, satisfaction, perceived values and behaviour intentions in the Malaysian ecotourism industry. Hence, this could provide significance results in understanding tourist's behaviour toward a holistic ecotourism product. A comprehensive model could be beneficial to the different interest groups, particularly planning and executing marketing activities in the ecotourism sector.

More precisely, the present study aims to achieve the following objectives:

1. To examine the interrelationship between servicescape, experience and behavioural intention.
2. To investigate the mediation effect of experience between servicescape and behavioural intention.
3. To examine the mediation effect of emotion, perceived value and satisfaction between experience and behavioural intention.

1.6 Research questions

Therefore, based on the research objectives mentioned earlier, the expected findings would focus on answering these questions:

1. What is the relationship between servicescape, experience and behavioural intention?
2. Does experience mediate the relationship between servicescape and behavioural intention?
3. What are the mediation effect of emotion, perceived value and satisfaction between experience and behavioural intention?

1.7 Significance of the study

This study aims to contribute to the existing corpus of knowledge through the investigation results or attempts to solve problems (Lapp *et al*, 2003). The contributions would enhance the literature concerning marketing studies and provide a better understanding of marketing practices besides the theoretical philosophy. This study aims to propose theoretical and managerial significances that deliberated in the following subsections.

1.7.1 Theoretical

There are three theoretical significances provided by this study. Firstly, the quantitative method applied in this study verifies the important factors that affect a tourists' experience. Servicescape has been identified as the salient contributor towards a tourists' experience. The examination here concerns the impact towards experience and its consequences, including emotions, perceived values, satisfaction and behavioural intention. Expected theoretical value provide in this study includes identifying servicescape dimensions in order to explore how they affect the specific tourist experience and thus post-trip behavioural intention.

Second, this study attempts to test the application of SOR model (Mehrabian & Russell, 1974) predicting behavioural intention. The SOR model proposes that servicescape (stimulus) affects the experience (organism) gained by tourists, which leads to their intention (response). This study aims to extend SOR model by examining "organism" role as a mediator in the stimulus-responses path. Thus, this also attempts in advancing knowledge and literature of SOR model.

Third, this study tests applicability of Attitude Theory (Bagozzi, 1982; Bagozzi and Burnkrant, 1985) in explaining tourist behaviour. Attitude Theory (Bagozzi and Burnkrant, 1985) suggests that the cognitive component (experience) results in affective components (emotion, perceived value and satisfaction) which ultimately

lead to response components (behavioural intention). This study extends Attitude Theory body of knowledge by identifying affective components (Emotion, perceived value and satisfaction) that play significance mediator role.

In summary, the 'exploration of experience' concept and other relevant constructs are able to assist academics and researchers to answer numerous inquiries by having a more clear and understandable framework of consumer behaviour. The expected findings could assist marketers in better predicting a tourist's future behavioural pattern and provides information in customizing and delivering a great leisure experience based on tourists' preferences.

1.7.2 Managerial Significance

This study aims to provide constructive suggestions to stakeholders such as destination managers, destination marketers and policy makers in managing destination's servicescape to achieve competitiveness in ecotourism industry. An understanding of ecotourism servicescape is able to create a memorable experience through the engagement between tourists and servicescape elements. The findings help tourism practitioners to influence tourists' attitudes through the provision of interesting experiences at ecotourism sites. The design of effective tourist experience is able to capture tourists' attention and influence their behavioural intention.

First, the understanding of which servicescape dimensions provides memorable service experience to tourists would be helpful to destination managers in identifying which dimensions of the destination needs to maintain. For example, if flora and fauna dimension of servicescape is found to be the main determinant to experience, then destination managers are advised to give more attention in allocate budget in maintaining Flora and Fauna.

Second, this research contributes new insights to the national policy makers in drafting their strategies aiming to assist tourism industry. Ministry of Tourism and Culture Malaysia (MOTAC) as one of the policy makers regulates its policy for tourism sector. The result of this study designates a new direction for planning and maintaining the quality of service delivery and valuable natural resources, particularly in the context of ecotourism. A refinement of policy is among one of the options for MOTAC to maintain the ecologies from being ruined while embarking on the magnificent potential of ecotourism. With government attentions and supports, maximization of eco-tourist experience is feasible. Hence, a positive projected outlook of the ecotourism sector, indirectly contributed to overall growth of Malaysia tourism industry.

Third, predictable findings aim to provide new perspectives for diving training association. In relate with the training and diving courses provided, diving

associations such as Professional Association of Diving Instructors (PADI) and National Association of Underwater Instructors (NAUI) would gain relevant knowledge in deliver tourist's preferences. Also, it gives indications on how important diving facilities contribute to overall experience. This information is important for diving association to negotiate for more government assistance.

Based on the preceding discussion, table 1.1 provides a mapping of research problems, academic gaps found from existing literature, research objectives and significances for this study.



Table 1.1: Mapping of Research Problems, Gaps, Objectives and Significances.

Research Problem	Research Gaps	Research Objectives	Research Significance
<p>Some common complaints include the incompatibility in standards of facilities and accommodations and prices changed, (Trip Advisor, 2017).</p> <p>Complaints on facilities include diving equipment that was poorly managed, unclean and unmaintained (Trip Advisor, 2017).</p> <p>Other negative reviews emphasized services provided by dive operator, specifically arrangement of diving services is poorly organized (Trip Advisor, 2017). All these reports points to the importance of managing a destination servicescape (staff's capability, flora and fauna) in giving pleasant tourist experience.</p>	<p>The development of tourism industry, service marketing concept specifically servicescape has been largely been overlooked in the literature. There is a minimal attention focuses on ecotourism from the marketing perspective is evidence. Hence, ecotourism is still in a state of adolescence from academic point of view.</p> <p>Limited knowledge about what contributes to memorable experiences, particularly regards to the personal nature of experiences (Knobloch, Robertson & Aitken, 2017). Limited and insufficient knowledge of 'tourist experience' is evident (Oh <i>et al.</i>, 2007; Wallsa <i>et al.</i>, 2011; Faullant <i>et al.</i>, 2011)</p> <p>Servicescape on ecotourism service setting is largely been ignored, and environmental impact of ecotourist sites on experience gained have been rarely confirmatory. Thus, limited research on servicescape in the aspect of ecotourism has resulted in the poor conceptualization (Bitner, 1992; Chebat & Dube 2000; Hoffman & Turley 2002).</p> <p>Limited empirical research that has examined the antecedents of servicescape attributes and its influence on customer post-behavioural intentions (Cronin, 2003; Foxall & Yani-de-Soriano, 2005).</p> <p>Limited research on consumer experience in associate with other factors (Wallsa <i>et al.</i>, 2011).</p>	<p>RO1: Examine the interrelationship between servicescape, experience and behavioural intention</p>	<p>This study extends the servicescape knowledge that emphasized by Bitner (1992) by providing a distinctive value added to the existing literature. The extension regards the knowledge of servicescape includes investigation of its consequences and filling up the gaps of insufficient study, particularly in ecotourism setting.</p> <p>This study contributes new insights to the national policy makers in drafting their strategies aiming to assist tourism industry. Ministry of Tourism and Culture Malaysia (MOTAC) as one of the policy makers regulates its policy for tourism sector</p> <p>Comprehensive understanding of the servicescape and experience concept could pose an advantage for marketers on designing advertising message where worthwhile experience is used as central message to attract tourist's attention.</p>

Research Problem	Research Gaps	Research Objectives	Research Significance
<p>Limited knowledge and lack of understanding regards ecotourism experience in an ecotourism environment. Moreover, understanding of experience role between between ecotourism environment and tourist's behavior is largely been ignored.</p>	<p>Limited application of SOR model in context of marketing and ecotourism perspective was not evident. Moreover, mediation effect of its component "Organism" role in SOR model was rarely been examined.</p> <p>Tourist experience in the present study has been posited to mediate between servicescape and behavioural intentions, which has not been explored previously. Thus, very limited knowledge on tourist experience in mediate the relationship between servicescape and behavioural intentions.</p> <p>The servicescape examination from a tourist's perspective is under-explored (Wang, Chen, Fan & Lu, 2012) and its association with tourist experience is scarce. Thus, the relationship of 'tourist experience' with servicescape remains unanswered (Edvardsson <i>et al.</i>, 2005). Moreover, limited knowledge about what contributes to memorable experiences, particularly regards to the subjective and personal nature of experiences is evident (Knobloch <i>et al.</i>, 2017).</p>	<p>RO2: Investigate the mediation effect of experience between servicescape and behavioural intention</p>	<p>Significances of this study lies on ecotourism managerial perspective to provide an improvements and enhancement of current ecotourism practices by provide a better marketing guidelines.</p> <p>This study attempts to offer information regards memorable tourist's experience which valuable for ecotourism sustainability.</p> <p>This research attempts to enrich SR theory and SOR model through statistical analysis. "Organism" component is further examined its mediation effect to deepen the understanding of tourist's intention. Thus, this empirical examination shed lights on servicescape, experience and tourist's behavioural intention literatures</p>

Research Problem	Research Gaps	Research Objectives	Research Significance
<p>Unmanageable and insufficient for tourism facilities and infrastructure, and unmet tourist expected standard would lead to tourist dissatisfaction (Arabatzis & Grigoroudis, 2010).</p> <p>Another issue raised by tourists was overcrowding (Borneo Post, 2013). As reported by Borneo Post (2012), environmental pollution is also one of the challenges faced by the state tourism sector, specifically in Marine Parks.</p> <p>Unsolved of ecotourism environmental issues leads to the low revisit intention among repeater tourists (Hassan, Azhar & Farhana, 2017).</p>	<p>Little evidence has been provided on the association between tourist experience and emotions. Emotion evaluation of tourism products, particularly tourists' post-consumption experience, seems largely under explored. Empirical research has done little to examine perceived value from an experiential perspective, predominantly in the tourism and hospitality context setting (Walls, 2009). Experiential element that effects the satisfaction perceived by customers is unexpectedly limited (Wu & Liang, 2011).</p> <p>Extant literature has evidenced an inconsistency mediation result in (1) emotion (Mediation effect: Su & Hsu, 2013; han & Jeong, 2013, no mediation test: Faullant <i>et al.</i>, 2011), (2) perceived value (mediation effect: Song <i>et al.</i>, 2015; Chen & Chen, 2010, no mediation test: Mehmetoglu & Engen, 2011), and (3) satisfaction (full mediation: Su, Swanson & Chen., 2016; Cole & Scott, 2004; Lee, Lee & Yoo, 2000, partial mediation: Walsh <i>et al.</i>, 2011, no mediation: Baker & Crompton, 2000)</p> <p>Limited application of Attitude Theory in context of marketing and ecotourism perspective was evident with limited knowledge about mediation role of "cognitive" component.</p>	<p>RO3: Examine the mediation effect of emotion, perceived value and satisfaction between experience and behavioural intention</p>	<p>This study extends the Attitude Theory by add knowledge to the existing literature. The existing is enriching by performing mediation examination for affective component in explaining tourist behaviour.</p>

1.8 Scope of study

Servicescape has been identified and applied in the current study and serves as antecedent for tourist experience. Indeed, servicescape dimensions have mainly focused on human-made settings (Bitner, 1992) and natural resources that attract tourists to visit the destination.

Targeted samples for the current study are the international and local tourists. Valid samples chosen are based on tourists who visit Marine Park destinations in Malaysia and spend at least two days one night for the visitation. Targeted samples or respondents are divers who have engaged and participated in Marine Park ecotourism activities. Data collection from targeted respondents is focus on three Marine Park destinations. Two destinations are located in peninsular Malaysia, including Tioman Island Marine Park in Pahang and Perhentian Island in Terengganu. While, collection of data also included samples from Sipadan Island located in Sabah in East Malaysia due to its world heritage site status and high visitation rate. Furthermore, the Marine Park destinations of Sipadan, Perhentian and Tioman Island have been selected based on the ranking of top 10 diving spots in Malaysia (www.wonderfulmalaysia.com; [The Star Online, 2013](#)).

1.9 Definitions of the key Terms

This section refers to terminologies used in this research that need to be justified and explained clearly. Hence, this would avoid ambiguous and misunderstanding of terms. Thus, a clear meaning of terms could further enhance the understanding of each term before being associated with the conceptual framework in chapter 4. Key terms are displayed in the following paragraph.

Servicescape

In the current study setting, servicescape refers to the service setting as the main service concept delivery (Bitner, 1992). The service setting refers to the surrounding and physical environment in which the service is offered and fulfilled.

Tourist experience

Consumer's experiences refer to enjoyment, engagement, memorable encounters for event consumption (Oh *et al*, 2007) that are mobilized in order to communicate with the tourist world.

Emotion

Emotions are affective states characterized by episodes of intense feelings associated with a specific referent & instigate specific response behaviours (Cohen & Areni, 1991).

Tourist satisfaction

Tourist satisfaction is a tourist's post-purchase evaluation, which assesses between performance and expectation (Oliver, 1981).

Perceived value

Perceived value is recognized as one of the most critical factors and measures for gaining a competitive edge in a successful business (Parasuraman *et al*, 1997).

Behavioural intention

Behavioural intention refers to favourable behavioural intentions frequently representing a customer's conative loyalty (Chen & Chen 2010).

1.9 Organisation of the Thesis

This research paper is presented in five chapters and the structure is organised as follow:

Chapter 1 is the first chapter which provides an overview of the study. Topics start with the background of the study, outlining potential issues and problems faced, identifying research objectives that have an impact and importance to the study. This chapter ends with the organization of the thesis, which describes the vivid and systematic flow of the research process.

Chapter 2 reviews the tourism industry from a global perspective. Further discussion covers the study of ecotourism in Malaysia, particularly Marine Parks. The significance of Marine Park studies has underlined the gaps occurring in the industry and has evaluated prospective advantages and disadvantages of Marine Parks. This chapter end with past research of ecotourism.

Chapter 3 covers the review and relevancy of previous studies. The topics discussed are related to the salient constructs of this study, which includes an intensive discussion of the servicescape, experience, emotions, perceived values, satisfaction and purchasing intention. The discussion also entails previous studies of each construct respectively. Gaps are identified at the end of the chapter to highlight the motivation needed for the current study.

Chapter 4 underlines on formation for conceptual framework in this thesis. The discussion covers the underpinning theory and previous models guided the framework of this study. The relationship of relevant variables would be discussed and justified. The research hypotheses would also be discussed in this chapter.

Chapter 5 discusses the methodology adopted in the study together with research instruments, sampling design, questionnaire design, data collection methods, and analysis tools. Adequate justification for the methods applied and relevant analysis tool used for this research is provided. The chapter also presents pre-test and relevant

analytical techniques with its analysis criteria in assess and validate the proposed conceptual framework of this study.

Chapter 6 focuses on analysing data empirically. Discussion begins with analysis strategy. The chapter presents preliminary data analysis, which consists of data preparation, data screening, assumption of multivariate analysis in Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) and descriptive analysis. In phrase II, confirmatory (CFA) techniques are detailed. Assessment of measurement model and structural model that provides empirical result and details. Statistical results are obtained in accordance to support or not support hypothesis empirically.

Chapter 7 is the last chapter that covers the findings for this study is explained in associate with the research objectives developed in chapter 1. Discussion also covers the implication from theoretical and managerial perspectives. Research limitations and future recommendations for this study would also be discussed.

1.10 Chapter Summary

In sum, this chapter outlines the introduction of this study. The discussion begins with background of study, statement of problems that associate with academic, industry and relevant theory. Upon the statement of problem identification, research objectives and questions were addressed. The development of the research problem, objectives and questions that help in constructing a theoretical model, which would serve as a core value for this study. Therefore, the proposed conceptual model by incorporating servicescape, tourist experience, emotions, perceived value, satisfaction and behavioural intentions are all worth exploring. Furthermore, scope and significance of study were included in this study. Terms and construct definition were identified following with organisation of this thesis. The next chapter will further deliberated the tourism industry in Malaysia.

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