

A Preliminary Study of Edu-tourist Perceived Values in Edu-tourism Packages

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Abstract

Edu-tourism packages is an emergent program developed to produce knowledgeable, skilled, creative and innovative human capital in the tourism and culture sector. Recent practice in Malaysian edu-tourism packages has shown that universities only gave emphases to provision of general physical facilities compared to the facilities and services that will meet and satisfy the edu-tourists' needs. Furthermore, previous studies in this field have focused mostly on the decision making behavior and choices of universities among international students, while other issues like edu-tourists' perceived values were not sufficiently studied. Therefore, this research aims to provide a preliminary examination of edu-tourists' perceived values in Malaysian edu-tourism packages. A purposive sampling was used to choose 32 respondents in the state of Kuala Lumpur and Perak, and they were presented with a questionnaire to assess their perceived values on the edu-tourism packages and programs. The results has able to reveal the dimensions and attributes perceived important to them as students. This findings has able to contribute some insights for better development and organization of edu-tourism packages and programs in Malaysia.

Keywords: Edu-Tourism Packages, Edu-Tourist, Perceived Value, Preliminary Study

Introduction

The trend of visiting other country or state because of education is an evolving form of tourism known as edu-tourism. Motivation for edu-tourism may range from general interest while traveling to a determination for learning and traveling. Ritchie, Carr and Cooper, (2003) stated that edu-tourism involved international university studies program, general tourism and adult study tours, secondary school students' travel as well as exchange programs. In this sense, edu-tourism is referred to informal education programs which can be independently or formally conducted in a natural or human-made settings (Ritchie, et.al.,2003). Just as in many other countries, edu-tourism offers opportunities for generating and diversifying revenue for Malaysian universities. In response to the emergence, Ministry of Higher Education Malaysia in collaboration with Tourism Malaysia officially launched "Malaysia 101 Edu-tourism Package (M1EP)" to burst the edu-tourism industry in 2015.

In line with that notion, edu-tourism is one of the growing components of tourism and has drawn amassed attention in the industry (Ankomah & Larson, 2000; Gallarza & Saura, 2006; Lam, Ariffin, & Ahmad, 2011; Ledden, Kalafatis & Samouel, 2007; Ojo & Yusufu, 2013). Some considerations were made that edu-tourism is the lead in the global tourism industry due to its ability to attract millions of international tourists and contribute billions of dollars to the country (Naidoo, 2007; UNESCO, 2014). It is undeniable that demands for edu-tourism are trending. Despite this, based on the Ministry of Tourism and Culture (MOTAC) records, it shows that only three universities out of 11 universities participated in M1EP managed to generate revenue from the activities (Hishamuddin, 2016). This unpleasant start is seen as a downward to targeted tourism revenue.

Remaining to the importance of edu-tourism as a one of revenue generator for the industry, various initiatives are being undertaken to sustain the activities. One of the alternative step in government's effort is M1EP to promote Malaysia on a universal platform as the combination of tourism and education to boost tourism industry performance (MOHE, 2015). As the objective of M1EP is to be a global promotion for tourism in the country, it is important to assess the value of edu-tourism in the perspective of participants in M1EP, to understand how various perceived values affect participants' satisfaction with their educational experience. Thus this paper aims to develop a preliminary concept of edu-tourist perceived values in edu-tourism packages in Malaysia.

Literature Review

Perceived Value

The concept of perceived value has received extensive consideration by researchers since the 2000s, (Gallarza & Saura, 2006; Jamal, Othman, & Muhammad, 2011; Shen, 2016; Yi, Day & Cai, 2014). Researchers interpret perceived value from two perspectives: one-dimensional and multi-dimensional. The former indicates that value is a consumer's overall evaluation of a product or service (Yi, Day & Cai, 2014). However, it has been argued for centuries that consumers make their decisions by evaluating the characteristics or dimensions of a good (Lancaster, 1966). As studied by Sheth, Newman and Gross, (1991) and Williams and Soutar, (2009), the overall evaluation could be examined based on different dimensions. Many studies have used the approach using multi-dimensional (Al-sabbahy, Ekinci, & Riley, 2004; Lam, Ariffin, & Ahmad, 2011; Shen, 2016) to examine people's perspective values on products and services. According to Gallarza and Gil (2008), the concept of value is one of the earliest and familiar area to study consumer behaviour. Nevertheless, this value concept was changed after 1990 when many organisations found it vital to reconstruct their strategic planning toward consumer value delivery (Band, 1991; Day, 1990; Gale, 1994; Naumann, 1995). The word perceived is proposed related to experiential view, in which it is believed that value conclusion is dependent upon consumer's experience (Gill, Byslma & Ouschan, 2007).

Ever since, consumer perceived value has been well-thought-out as the essential management practice in attracting consumers, after consumer quality, satisfaction and loyalty. Cengiz and Kirkbir (2007) stated that this is due to the globalisation of competitive environment and due to increased consumer demand. This is supported by Aydin (2014), which mentioned that the customers' expectations from the organizers are towards the

forward of the information also during the transmission of products or services to themselves. Perceived value is defined in this study as a difference between total benefits and total sacrifices perceived by edu-tourists in experiencing the edu-tourism packages. Therefore, edu-tourist perceived values in edu-tourism packages will be influenced by the concept of value, given the importance of the experiential aspect of value in all facets of the tourism industry. This study's impact is not limited to a single context, but advances the literature more broadly by including the experiential aspect of value in addition to the functional dimension in examining tourists' value perceptions.

Edu-Tourism

The word edu-tourism derived from education and tourism (edu-tourism) which are commonly considered as service industries or sectors that can be shaped and regulated at many geographic levels. As indicated by Gibson, (1998), Holdnak and Holland, (1996), Kalinowski, Weiler and Hall, (1992), edu-tourism has been recognized in the tourism industry and treated as "service" or "tertiary" sectors, is increasing from time to time. Basically, edu-tourism refers to a person traveling to a location as an individual or group with the purpose of engaging in learning precisely related to the area (Bhuiyana, Islam, Siwar, & Ismail, 2010). Similarly, Ritchie and Crouch, (2005), stated that educational tourism involved activity participated by tourist concerning excursion as education and learning, while having an overnight stay and the activity are principal or minor part of their journey. Laguador and Dotong, (2014) indicated from the studies that there is a great extent in terms of knowledge and practice when the participant experience education implementation. The development of edu-tourism started when people could get the knowledge of things happening around the world through tourism.

Methodology

A non-probability sampling method was administered to select the respondents for the study. This method was chosen due to some difficulties with gaining access to respondents. A purposive sampling was then employed, where this type of sampling allows the researcher to select a sample based on particular characteristics for the specified purpose (Brick, 2014). 32 respondents were selected from Kuala Lumpur and Perak, since these two states acquire a high density of edu-tourism programs offered in the region. They were selected based on pre-determined perimeters including their involvement and first hand experiences in edu-tourism packages. The distribution of questionnaires was conducted for the period of two months, starting on 1 September to 30 October 2017. It was done in some strategic locations such as Universiti Putra Malaysia, Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia, and Kolej Komuniti Malaysia.

The questionnaires were analyzed using the Statistic Package for Social Science (SPSS) Version 20 for frequency, percentage and mean. Analysis of the reliability was conducted using Alpha Cronbach scale. According to DeVellis (2003), Nunnally and Bernstein (1994) and Pallant (2013), a robust scale should have a Cronbach's alpha coefficient greater than 0.70. Table 1 below present the value of more than 0.7 on the scale of reliability for all the dimensions under study.

Table 1

Reliability of scales (pilot test)

Scale	Number of items	Cronbach's alpha
Perceived value functional	13	0.816
Perceived value education	7	0.706
Perceived value experiential	14	0.866
Social value	5	0.878
Overall satisfaction	6	0.862
Perceived risk	4	0.966
Revisit intentions	6	0.823
Word-of-mouth	4	0.939

Results and Discussion

Based on the analysis, slightly more than half of domestic tourists were female (81.2%), and remaining were male (18.8.7%). Most of the respondent's falls between the age of 15-30 (53.1%), 31-40 (40.6%) and 41-50 (6.3%). Regarding their occupation background, employed respondents represent the biggest group which is 56.2% and students 43.8%. In terms of education levels, more than 90.6% of the respondents attain at least tertiary education (those holding a diploma, bachelor degree and above). The majority of the respondents were originated from Perak (56.3%), Kedah (18.7%), Johor (12.5%) and remaining were from Negeri Sembilan, Perlis and Pahang (12.5%). Most of the respondents had participated in 1-3 days edu-tourism packages (78.1%) and 4-6 days (21.9%). Majority of the respondents had gained the information about the edu-tourism packages through internet (50%). They preferred to experience the edu-tourism packages with friends as travelling partner (56.3%), family (40.6%) and alone (3.1%). In terms of preferred university for such programs, majority of the respondents chose Universiti Putra Malaysia (50%).

The Important of Items in Each Dimensions to Develop Edu-tourist Perceived Value in Edu-tourism Packages.

The result in Table 2 below showed mean scores for each attribute in the component dimensions; functional value (establishment), functional value (service quality), functional value (the image), functional value (price), experiential value (Universities/edu-tourist interaction), experiential value (Activity, culture and knowledge), social value, overall satisfaction, perceived risk and behavioral intentions (revisit intentions and word-of-mouth). These attributes, not only gauge the level of interest, but also act as a measurement of edu-tourism packages in Malaysia. The result showed that the level of attributes was rated on "important" and "very important" to overall mean value range 3.45 to 6.44. In addition, the questionnaire reliability analysis using the Alpha Cronbach's scale has able to indicate reliabilities of 0.966 and 0.939; which equates to a very high reliability. These linked with an overall mean value of each dimension attributes that indicates a range of 3.45 to 6.44 of the measurement, is "important" and "very important". It shows that the dimensions of each component are important in measuring edu-tourist perceived value in edu-tourism packages.

It can be concluded that the attributes in each component dimensions were perceived important by the respondents to rate their value towards edu-tourism in Malaysia.

Furthermore, this preliminary study has proven that the attributes and dimensions examined can be used to measure an edu-tourist perceived values in edu-tourism packages.

Table 2

Analysis of different Perspectives

Dimensions	Items	Means	Cronbach's alpha
Functional value (Establishment)	I think the learning venue was clean	6.06	0.816
	I get more satisfaction when learning venue was comfortable	6.44	
	I enjoy doing activities when the facilities were appropriate operating	6.41	
	I found the learning session was interesting	6.13	
Functional value (Service quality)	All activities conducted by the universities are well organized	5.81	
	I agree that the EP facilitator was very informative	6.19	
	The EP facilitator is well trained in their job	6.09	
Functional Value (The image)	I have heard positive things about EP program in this university	6.28	
	The reputation of EP program influence the value of my certificate	6.22	
	The image projected by EP in this university has an influence on the value of my certificate.	6.13	
Functional value (Price)	The service offered by EP reasonably price	5.94	
	The price was the main concern for the decision.	5.84	
	The EP activities offered by the universities was good value for the price	6.00	
Education value	The course material has been clearly explain by the EP facilitator	5.94	0.706
	The EP activities increased my intellectual enrichment	6.03	
	The EP activities inspire me to participate in entrepreneurship	6.00	
	The EP activities enhance my creativity	6.13	
	The EP activities boost my confidence level	6.06	
	The EP activities stimulate my critical thinking skills	6.06	
	The EP activities improved my communication skills	6.00	
Experiential value	The learning session was lifetime experience	6.29	0.706
	The facilitators in charge in EP were friendly.	6.16	

Universities /edu-tourist interaction	The facilitators on duty during EP showed good attitude to me	6.10	
	I had a good relationship with the facilitators in charge in EP	6.29	
	It is easy for me to follow all instructions given by the EP facilitators to participate in the activities	6.16	
	The activity in this EP was a memorable experience	6.03	
	The tour activity around the EP area is informative	6.13	
Experiential value (Activity, culture and knowledge)	Participating in my EP activities in this university is more important to me than doing them in any other place	5.81	
	The visiting experience was something new	6.19	
	I gained new skill from this EP visit	6.26	
	The activity organized by the universities were unique	6.13	
	I enjoy natural attractions during the visits (eg: lake/orchard/hill)	6.35	
	I enjoy learning basic local dialects	6.19	
	The activities meet my needs	6.19	
Social value	Participating in the activities build up my feeling of belonging to the group	6.19	0.878
	I have a better knowledge of my group	6.23	
	I was being socially accepted in the group	6.29	
	Working in a groups has a positive effect on the value of my education experience	6.23	
	I find activities more interesting when doing it together with someone that I'm familiar with.	6.16	
Overall Satisfaction	A visit to EP to this university is worthwhile	6.13	0.862
	A visit to this university was good as I expected	6.23	
	A visit to this university was satisfying	6.23	
	I am satisfied with all the experience while participate with this EP	6.26	
	I am satisfied with all the services provided by universities in conducting the program	6.19	
	Overall, I am satisfied with the university handling of EP	6.06	
Perceived risk	I fear of possibility that travel experience will not provide value for money spent.	3.90	0.966
	I fear of possibility suffering any disease while travelling	3.77	

	I fear possibility of having physical injury	3.58	
	I fear of possibility that EP experience will take too much time	3.45	
Behavioral Intention (Revisit intention)	I will make an effort to return to this university in the future	6.29	0.823
	I will consider visiting other university in the future	6.19	
	I will definitely revisit this university to experience more of this EP program in the near future	6.19	
	I will recommend this EP program to others	6.32	
	I will encourage others to experience this EP program	6.32	
	I will choose EP program in future because this is a great opportunity to combine my educational trip with a vacation	6.39	
Behavioral Intention (Word-of-mouth)	I am willing to say positive things about EP in Malaysia to other people	6.23	0.939
	I will say positive things about my edu-tourism experience in Malaysia to people who seek advice	6.32	
	I will speak highly about EP and their quality of service	6.29	
	I will speak highly about Malaysia as an edu-tourism destination	6.39	

Conclusion

Edu-tourism packages, is a program that is very much needed by the domestic and international edu-tourists to acquire new skills, enhance their critical thinking abilities and explore a new things in life. This study attempted to assess the edu-tourists perceived values on each dimension and the change of the condition of an attribute, established by the previous researcher. This change is due to the different levels of attribute importance; based on the needs and requirements of edu-tourists when participating in edu-tourism packages. Even though, there is a change in the attributes of each component, the importance of each attribute is considered to measure the level of edu-tourist perceived value in that particular matter. Accordingly, the analysis revealed that the dimensions of each component in perceived value, overall satisfaction, perceived risk and behavioral intentions dimension are important to the underlying development of edu-tourist perceived value. Therefore, it is recommended that the edu-tourism organizer and policy planners should consider these aspects when planning and developing edu-tourism packages and programs for the university.

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