

LEARNING THROUGH EXAMINING THE TOURIST EXPERIENCE

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Abstract

In the field of travel and tourism, scholars with interest in consumer behaviour studies have explored different variables and linked them with individual tourist behaviour. Variables such as destination image, environmental awareness, service perception, preferences, and motivations for travel are commonly used to understand and predict destination selections and travel behaviour. This study is intended to shed some further light on this issue and contribute to knowledge in this area. A survey that gained a total of 1340 respondents was carried out in three destinations in Sarawak between 2006 and 2008 to gain an understanding of their behaviours travelling into Sarawak. Regional tourism organizations can also play an important role in destination marketing and tourism product development and to recommend appropriate marketing strategies that could be adopted by tourist organizations based on a further understanding of travel behaviour. As shown from the analysis, Sarawak tourism market is not big enough to have very many segments; therefore the different regions need to have common and coordinated marketing strategies in order to gain market share.

Introduction

There are many theories of tourist behaviour. Studies on consumer behaviour mostly refer to five stages in the process of making decisions. Identification of needs, information gathering, evaluation of alternatives, process of choosing, and post purchase (Bentler and Speckart, 1981, Moutinho, 1982; Um and Crompton, 1990; Crompton, 1992; Crompton and Ankomah, 1993; Middleton, 1994; Ryan, 1994; Solomon, 1996) are stages of the destination decision making process. Within these, there have been more minute studies to determine the process in more detail.

Globalization has opened new opportunities for developments in tourism. Globalization has facilitated growth in tourism through developments in electronic technology, communication, and transportation. It has affected worldwide suppliers and computerized information and reservation systems, which have become more flexible and cost-effective; decreased costs of air travel; and offered easier access to destinations (Peric, 2005). The rapid spread of information technology has improved the efficiency of the industry's operations as well as the quality of services provided to consumers.

It has also generated increased demand for new travel services, such as computerized hotel and car bookings, online reservation services, teleconferencing, video brochures, smart cards, and electronic funds transfer. The increasing use of the Internet in destination marketing, direct sales, and

bookings has given rise to electronic tourism markets. The development of sophisticated websites has allowed for the direct dissemination of travel information to potential clients. The Internet has made travel products globally accessible at much lower costs. As a result, customer demand has become more technology and Internet-driven. In fact, the Internet has become the most sought-after amenity in hotel rooms, airports, travel information and entertainment centres, and educational institutions. The impact of technology and the Internet has dramatically affected all operations of the travel industry and significantly reduced the need for travel intermediaries.

Within this framework, the main purpose of this particular article is to learn from the experiences of these tourists that have visited Sarawak. These particular experiences that are considered as focal point for this research: namely, the pre departure experience including the kick start feeling period of wanting to travel, saving that these particular tourists did before the travel, the variety of destinations they have in their mind, the process of seeking on information of those particular destinations, the period of the stay, the pull factors of the destinations and choosing the desired destinations that they wished to go to.

At the same time, while they were at the destination, research covered their behaviour by investigating their frequency of travel to Sarawak, activities that they have participated in, the places other than Sarawak that they wish to visit in that particular trip, the choices of accommodation and flights made, and the demography of the respondents. All of the data gathered from this article is used to translate these experiences into possible marketing strategies.

Sarawak is one of the thirteen states in Malaysia. Its location is separated by the South China Sea with Indonesia, Brunei and Sabah placed within the Island of Borneo. Tourism is seen as a new industry complementing timber and oil which contribute fifty five percent of the state's economic activity. In the earlier years, there was not even a ministry under the federal government that looked after tourism; however the establishment of Tourist Development Corporation assisted the marketing of tourism for Malaysia. It is the It was only after the Pacific Asia Travel Agents (PATA) meeting in Kuala Lumpur in late 1988 that Malaysia started to look at tourism as an alternative industry supplementing other existing industries which were agriculture and mining.

In the academic world there are researchers who look at the effectiveness of marketing, the process of marketing, and the elements of marketing (especially in the focus of marketing mix namely pricing, promotion, place and the product). In the consumer behaviour field however, the focus of the discipline is more on to stages of consumer decision making, and variables such as need recognition, information search, and evaluation of alternatives, purchase and consumption and post-purchase evaluation.

However, in the tourism industry, to bring the contrast of the first two fields, however the activities undertaken by marketing agents to promote tourism in each country vary. The Sarawak Tourism Board (STB) for example, seems to just market their destination by seeking intelligence from secondary sources as the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), information from Malaysian Tourism Promotion Board (Tourism Malaysia) and the Immigration Department of Malaysia.

A definition of marketing by the Chartered Institute of Marketing, UK suggests that 'marketing is the management process responsible for identifying anticipating and satisfying customer requirements profitably' (CIMA, 1992). Seaton et al (1996) have detailed what marketing is in a

tourism perspective. In doing this, they have noted that Crosier (1975), reviewed 49 different definitions of marketing, and came up with the following elements:

- A directive, management function targeted at consumers in order to generate profit. This emphasizes the importance of identifying the target consumer but suggests that the customer is merely a passive stooge to be aimed at;
- A management function for consumers rather than just targeted at them. Emphasis is on offering services that meet consumer's needs rather than just setting them up as passive targets;
- A transactional exchange in which consumer needs, as well as those of the company, must be balanced. This increases the focus on marketing as an interaction based on reciprocal rewards and mutual self-interest between an organization and its consumers;
- A philosophy or a state of mind. This emphasizes marketing as a broad orientation to business which involves putting the consumer at the centre of things.

In another definition, Kotler et al. 2003 suggested that tourism marketing 'is a social and managerial process by which individuals and groups obtain what they need and want through creating and exchanging products and value with others'. By looking at both definitions, tourism marketing and marketing per se, suggests that in order for a marketing activity to realize, a producer (either of a product or a service such as tourism) needs to be able to create a product that can satisfy the needs of the customers.

In 2004 however, the American Marketing Association defined marketing as 'an organizational function and a set of processes for creating, communicating and delivering value to customers and for managing customer relationships in ways that benefit organization and its stakeholders' (AMA,2004). This means that a lot has changed when it comes to marketing tourism as the element of creating; communicating and delivering value are used as definitions and analysts no longer using terms such as satisfying customers' needs and wants etc. With this acknowledgement in the new definition, marketers are more focused on communicating the availability of tourism products to the customers.

In 2011, Kotler came up with another definition of marketing. For this author, marketing is defined as 'an organizational function and a set of processes for creating, communicating, and delivering value to customers and for managing customer relationships in ways that benefit the organization and its stakeholders'.

In recent years, tourists are very sensitive with the destinations they are going to and how the management of these destinations manages the tourist attractions. Sustainability and eco-friendly management styles are being heavily considered when tourists were making decisions. The study of motivation is to ask the "why" of actions. It is an attempt to eventually influence one's behaviour; and "from many perspectives, it is an effort to minimize discomfort...a hallmark of modern societies is the effort to improve people's lives, including the debilities of advanced age" (Furchtgott & Furchtgott, 1999, p. 2).

A motivation is often viewed as an internal factor that directs and integrates an individual's behaviour (Iso-Ahola, 1980). There are three frequently used theoretical frameworks to explain tourism motivation. First, Maslow's (1970) needs of hierarchy model have affected a great number

of tourist motivation studies (Chon, 1989; Pearce, 1982; Ryan, 1997). Second, Iso-Ahola's (1982) dichotomous model (seeking/escaping, personal/interpersonal) has provided another theoretical facet for tourist motivation study. Within this model, "escaping" motivation indicates the desire to leave everyday life, while "seeking" motivation indicates the desire to obtain intrinsic reward for future behaviours. These two motivational factors are also divided into two dimensions, namely, the personal dimension and the interpersonal dimension. This has been a popular model for tourist motivation studies (Crompton & McKay, 1997; Mannell & Iso-Ahola 1987; Ross & Iso-Ahola, 1991).

Lastly, there has been an attempt to understand tourism motivations through the notion of disequilibrium (Crompton, 1979; Lee & Crompton, 1992). The argument is based on the assumption that human beings have a desire to keep the equilibrium state where no tension between expectation and performance arises. The disturbance of equilibrium within this theoretical framework is the impetus to take a course of action.

Crompton and McKay (1997) studied visitor motivation within the festival content for the following reasons: (1) it allows matching the festival's program to visitors' needs; (2) it helps safeguard visitor satisfaction by increasing the chance of meeting the visitors' diverse needs; and (3) it warrants repeat visitation, which is essential for the viability of the festival. In sum, understanding the motivation of visitors allows festival managers to cater to the specific needs of target markets and to develop more appropriate marketing strategy.

Generating markers are bits of information gathered before departure, transit markers are encountered en route, and contiguous markers are located at the nucleus to which they relate. There should be a relationship among motivation, the type of nucleus visited, and the kind of marker encountered. Leiper argues that "at least one *generating marker* is necessary, referring to some kind of phenomenon that acts as a *primary nucleus*, before an individual can become motivated to set off on a touristic trip" (1990:379; italics in original).

Tourists are motivated to visit a destination by information received from a generating marker that matches their needs and wants. En route they can encounter transit markers that lead to other attractions, or in the destination they can find contiguous markers of yet more nuclei. In contrast to Gunn's concept of attraction magnetism, for Leiper tourists are not "attracted" or "pulled" towards an attraction, but "are *pushed* ... by their own motivation towards the places and/or events where they expect their needs will be satisfied" (2004). He summarizes this system in a "common example" which shows how linkages occur among the different elements of the system, how attractions are created, and the movement of tourists within the system (Figure 1).

In particular Urry's (1990) concept of the "tourist gaze" expanded on MacCannell's analysis of the sightseeing ritual by emphasizing the importance of visual forms of consumption. Urry points to the power relations inherent in the gaze, which enables individuals to visually possess the objects of tourism, but at the same time determines In Leiper's 1990 model (Figure 1.1), a number of factors might be expected to affect the way in which tourists encounter markers and nuclei. In particular, the idea that tourists are "pushed" towards attractions by their motivations suggests that there is a strong relationship among motivation and attraction visits and use of markers.

For example, the degree of motivation among “cultural tourists” varies from those who have only a passing interest in local culture, to those who driven by their specific interests to seek out a particular destination (Richards, 1996). In terms of such attractions, it might be argued that the stronger the motivation, the more likely it is that cultural attractions will be used as generating markers. Tourists and their motivation, and their use of markers, should also vary according to the type of attraction visited. closely to the abstract “universal” culture represented by the high arts. Leiper’s model postulates that the information from a generating marker interacts with their needs to produce a positive motivation to visit the destination.

Thus, one might expect those who use an attraction as a generating marker to have a stronger motivation than other tourists. In addition to motivation, Leiper’s model assumes that other causal factors, such as available time and economic resources, will have an influence on the decision to travel. Thus, there should be specific relationships between the quantitative aspects of the journey, such as distance travelled, length of stay, and travel form and the markers used and the attractions visited. In terms of distance, for example, tourists who travel further to the destination might be expected to have less knowledge of it than those who live close by, and are less likely to know specific markers (Fakeye and Crompton 1991).

The stimulus-avoidance, the intellectual and social factors discussed by Ragheb and Beard (1983) are present, albeit within a different framework. Thus intellectual components motivate "learning and exploring" which may be of different places or people (a "pull/social interaction" component in Iso-Ahola's model), while Beard and Ragheb's "stimulus avoidance" is a "push/social denial/intrinsic searching" mode of behaviour. However, while Iso-Ahola notes the dialectical tensions, and the potential for movement by tourists between motivational states, he notes: “Tourism is a dialectical--developmental process--individuals change through inner experience of contradiction and conflict Tourism behaviour is a dialectical optimising process--it seeks to avoid and to acquire a new experience (Iso-Ahola 1982:261)”.

According to Crompton (1979), most discussions of tourism motivation have tended to revolve around the concepts of “pull” and “push”. The latter factors for a vacation are socio-psychological motives, the former, motives aroused by the destination that do not come from tourists themselves. Traditionally, push motives have been useful for explaining the desire to go on a vacation, while pull motives have usefully explained the choice of destination. From a marketing communication point of view, for example, it is understandable that researchers focus attention on the pull factors of tourist behaviour, since they represent the specific attractions of the destination which induce travel there once the decision has been made (Dann 1981).

The push and pull factors of tourist behaviour are two sides of the same motivational coin. The psychological factor that connects both sides is the concept of emotion. From this perspective, consumers, and in particular tourists, are pushed by their (emotional) needs and pulled by the (emotional) benefits of leisure services and destinations. Consequently, emotional and experiential needs are relevant in pleasure-seeking and choice behaviour.

“Push” and “pull” factors and their importance in shaping tourist motivations were emphasised in Crompton’s (1979) study. Most authors accept this model highlighted by Crompton. “Push” factors are intangible factors that pushes a tourist away from home, while “pull” factors are tangible characteristics pulling tourists towards the destination, referring to what makes a

destination attractive for potential visitors' including historical and cultural resources, beaches, and accommodation (Andreu, Bigne', & Cooper, 2000). These factors are relevant in the current study, as they provide a framework for understanding tourist motivations. Other studies (e.g., Dann, 1977; Kozak, 2002) have relied on this framework (push and pull factors), and have been discussed below in order to provide the background on which this study is based.

In particular, experiential processes, such as imagining, daydreams, emotions, and desires, play an important role in hedonic consumption (Hirshman and Holbrook 1982). In this context, it is reasonable to assume that when consumers imagine touristic behaviour, for example, they direct their attention to desirable feelings and leisure experiences. Emotions and feelings about destination attributes probably motivate tourists to plan a trip. In short, if marketers want a full understanding of the motivational mechanism that triggers the destination choice process; these factors have to be incorporated in models.

The five reasons for travel can be described in terms of the potential that a functional approach holds for understanding, predicting, and influencing the relationship between tourist motivation and behaviour. These are:

- "knowledge" function (or cultural and educational motives);
- the utilitarian functions "punishment minimization" (or, the need to escape or stimulus avoidance)
- "reward maximization" (or pleasure and sensation seeking);
- the value-expressive functions regarding "self-esteem"
- "ego enhancement" (or social prestige)

Fodness' research results indicate that these five dimensions are useful for market segmentation. In addition, he was able to integrate the existing tourism motivation literature into the functional framework suggested by the results of his study. All in all, basic motivation theory describes a dynamic process of internal psychological factors (needs, wants, and goals) that generate an uncomfortable level of tension within individuals' minds and bodies. These inner needs and the resulting tension lead to actions designed to release tension, which thereby satisfy the needs. From a marketing perspective, tourism services and complementary products can be "designed" and marketed as solutions to consumers' needs.

Tourism managers and policy makers ought to know the effect of their marketing communication strategies, product innovations, and the like. By measuring the response of the target group to the marketing policy, the organization can better determine the success of its policy.

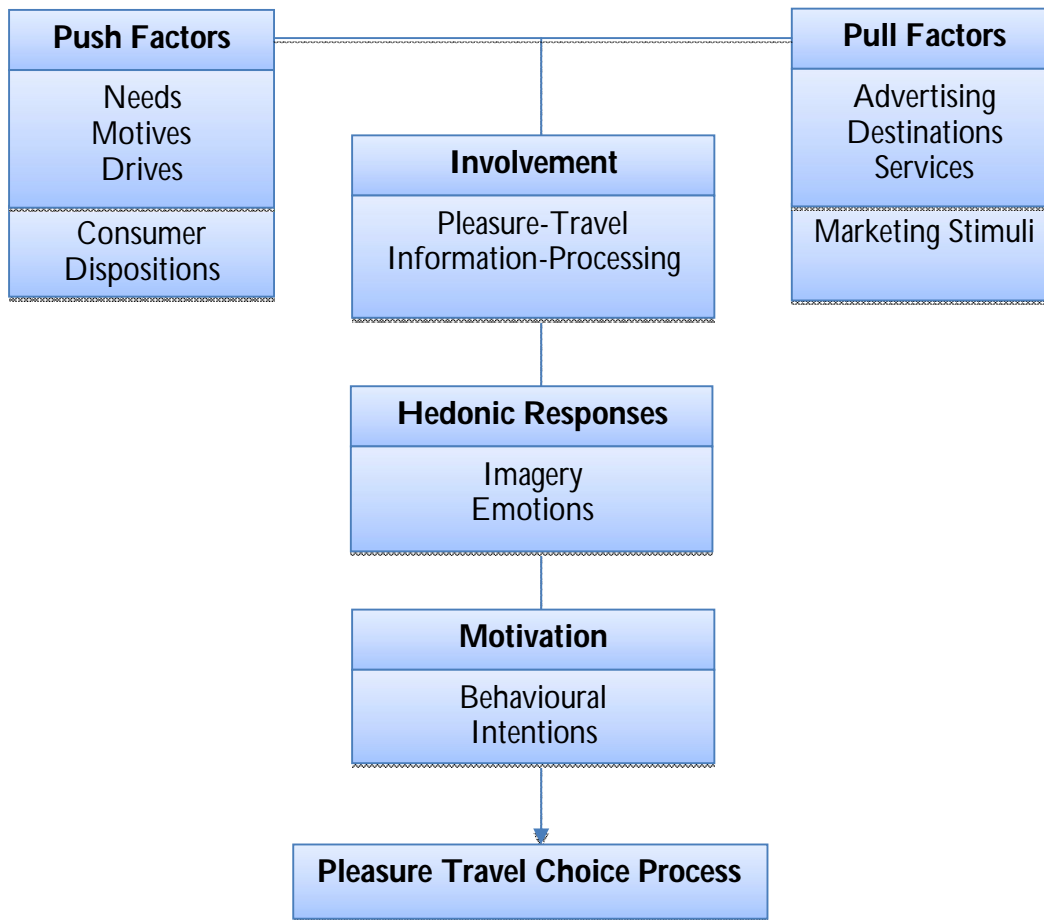
Figure 1.1 Hedonic Tourism Motivational Model

Figure 1.1, for instance, can be used to structure this kind of marketing effectiveness research. The left side of this "disposition-stimulus-response" model displays the consumer's needs and motives-dispositions or "push factors". Lee and Crompton (1992), for instance, developed a scale to measure four interrelated but distinctive dimensions of the novelty construct related to vacations: thrill (excitement, sensation), change from routine, boredom alleviation, and surprise. These socio-psychological dimensions are also push factors.

The right side of Figure 1.1 displays some environmental variables confronting the consumer, such as the marketing mix provided by the producers, including the supply of tourism services, sites, destinations, advertising, brands, and symbols. Rojek (1990), for example, argued that in postmodern society the superstructure of advertising, television, fashion, lifestyle magazines, and designer values has become more important than the economic substructure in explaining human desire and behaviour. In a similar vein, Schofield (1996) stated that, in Baudrillard's view, hyperreal society is dominated by advertising and electronic mass media, by highly processed communication, and by highly simulated pleasure and spectacle. He argues that one no longer consumes products, but signs and images.

In Figure 1.1, those factors are marketing stimuli or pull factors for the consumer. In a tourism context, Dann (1981) argued, that pull factors of the resort (such as sunshine, relaxed tempo, and friendly natives) both respond to and reinforce push factor motivation. According to Gnoth (1997) the push factors are internally generated drives causing the tourist to search for signs in objects, situations, and events that contain the promise of reducing prevalent drives.

In turn, pull factors are generated by the knowledge about goal attributes which he holds. Mansfeld (1992) emphasized that tourism motivation is generally considered the stage that triggers the whole decision process and channels it accordingly. Figure 1 employs an interactionistic perspective (Hirshman and Holbrook 1986). In this context, the push and pull factors melt together in the brain of the consumer, so to speak, and the individual is motivated, or not, to take advantage of the supply in the market.

The "involvement" concept in particular plays a central role in integrating the push and pull factors. In general, involvement is defined as an unobservable state of motivation, arousal, or interest. It is evoked by a particular stimulus or situation, and has driven properties. Its consequences are types of searching, information-processing, and decision-making (Rothschild 1984).

According to Bandura (1986), human behaviour is mostly purposive, and regulated by forethought. Through the exercise of forethought, people motivate themselves and guide their actions anticipatorily. Images of desirable future events tend to foster the behaviour most likely to bring about their realization. The emotional and experiential aspects of consumption play an important role in consumer choice behaviour. Specifically, the concept "affective choice mode" is developed to reflect decision processes for highly-involving products that do not lend themselves to extensive (cognitive) information processing. This construct is contrasted with the conventional "information processing mode" (Mittal 1994:506).

Alternatively, this study assumes a moderating role of motivations in the effects of distance and price on destination choice. The underlying logic is that tourist motivations can become the main generators of utility when visiting distant or expensive destinations. Tourist habits have recently changed and these changes seem to have become permanent. Tourists spend more or less and travel further or closer depending on their wishes at a specific time. Accordingly, the effects of distance and price on destination could alter in function of the motivation of the tourist. The literature of Consumer Behaviour considers that motivations represent individual internal forces that lead to action (Schiffman & Kanuk, 1978).

In this respect, tourist motivations are characteristics of individuals that influence the choice of destinations, since they act as push factors leading to the realisation of tourist travel (Gartner, 1993; Kim & Lee, 2002; Moutinho, 1987; Sirakaya, 1992; Sirakaya, McLellan, & Uysal, 1996). It is important to stress that the selection of a certain holiday destination implies a desire for some kind of benefit. Because of this, motivations play a fundamental role in destination choice, as they constitute internal thoughts which lead tourist behaviour towards certain ends (Nahab, 1975); in other words, they are the reasons why people take a holiday (Santos, 1983).

These motivations have been classified according to the following typology by McIntosh and Goeldner (1984): (i) physical, such as relaxation; (ii) cultural, such as discovering new geographical

areas; (iii) interpersonal, such as socialising and meeting new people; and (iv) prestige, such as self-esteem and self-actualisation.

The relationship between leisure and tourism motivation remains a topic of discussion in the literature. Iso-Ahola (1992) criticized previous tourism researchers, who neglected to examine the mechanisms of leisure motivation; he proposed that tourism motivation is part of leisure motivation. Building on this argument Ryan and Glendon (1998) tried to show the applicability of a leisure motivation scale (Beard & Ragheb, 1987) in a tourism context (holidaymakers). These authors applied a gap analysis by measuring the importance of specific motives as driving forces towards visiting specific holiday destinations and measured the degree of satisfaction of these motives. By producing specific clusters of visitors and further testing their differences on destination attributes, they concluded that leisure motivations are applicable in the context of mainstream tourist activities.

In the context of active recreation, the Recreation Experience Preference scale (Manfredo, et al., 1997) has been widely applied. Recreation experience was viewed as ‘the package or bundle of psychological outcomes desired from a recreation engagement’ (p. 189). This simply means that individuals are engaged in recreation activities (e.g., trekking) in order to achieve certain psychological outcomes (e.g., stress relief).

New consumers have shown a completely different behaviour pattern. They have become more globally oriented. As a result of developments in communication and information technology, and increased social and economic exchanges, they have been exposed to different cultures and developed new ideas and viewpoints. They have multiple demands, often borrowed from other cultures. They have become more dependent on information technology, self-service and personal reservation tools. The new self-sufficient consumer has become more individualistic and requires more customized and highly developed products; greater choice, quality, and variety; and good value for money.

Consumers have also begun to demand easier access to information technology, lower-cost transportation, and greater flexibility in travel (Akpinar, 2003). Moreover, after September 11, 2001, the fear of the unexpected, such as wars, political conflicts, terrorism, or incurable diseases, has increased consumers’ desire for safety, social stability, and order. Consumers have begun to re-evaluate their consumption behaviours, use of time, and attitudes toward leisure. They have chosen a new balance between career and family, and work and play.

They have developed a new “wait and see” attitude, facilitated by “last-minute-purchase” web sites, resulting in late bookings. Also, the emergence of “search for experiences” as a travel motivator, as well as increased environmental awareness, has led travellers to modify their behaviour and to look for alternative forms of travel. These changes in consumer behaviour have generated demand for new experiences. Consumers have begun to demand authentic and genuine experiences. A new type of tourist called the “experiential” tourist has emerged. This type of tourist is interested in novelty, “strangeness,” authenticity, and all that is different and that creates unique experiences.

The identification of the specific needs of the individual customer has called for product diversification, customization, and exploitation of niche marketing. To market tourism services and destinations well, marketers must understand the factors that lead to decisions and consumption

behaviour. Consumer researchers argue that the "experiential" aspects of consumption, like consumer fantasies, feelings, and fun, play an important role in consumer choice behaviour.

Objectives of the study

Although tourism is making its way in Sarawak and other parts of the world, there should be a way for marketing to be more effective to not only the researchers but also the people in the industry. At the same time, there are also researchers that look into behaviours of tourists i.e. tourism typologies. However, these researchers end at the detailing part and not the actual usage of these data for the purpose of marketing.

However, research should respond to the idea that in order to enhance a destination's image. Policy makers, marketers and the industry alike need to look at how a tourist behaves in the pre-departure stage of his/her journey. This paper remedies this deficiency by concentrating on the results of a large sample of recent travellers on these questions.

Specific aims

With respect to the above statements, the focus of the research aims to achieve the followings:

1. To investigate which source of information were used by the tourists in choosing a destination.
2. To identify which variables (factors) were determinants for tourists to travel.
3. To analyse competition in terms of tourist destinations.
4. To recommend appropriate marketing strategies that could be adopted by the tourist organization.

Contribution to Knowledge

This study on learning through tourist experience and using this information for marketing purposes may assist tourism boards as it may prove to be more practical using theoretical applications. The paper should be a reference for the people of the industry to employ the framework in their marketing applications. It is important for a marketing agent to understand the stages a tourist experiences during pre-departure in order to have an impact on the marketing initiatives.

There is a distinct difference between the marketing of products and the marketing of services. Table 1.1 illustrates the difference between these two. By looking at Table 1.1, we can see that these characteristics of services like tourism products are different from those of normal products. Product evaluation continuum (Zeithaml et al, 2006) presents a separation between most "physical" goods like products that are easy to evaluate on one side, and on the other, most services that tend to be more difficult to evaluate. Along that continuum, on one extreme, "pure" products like clothing possess essentially search qualities (Nelson in Parasuraman et al. 1985); on the other extreme, in which "pure" services such as Medical Diagnosis fit, the Credence qualities. (Darby and Karni in Parasuraman et al. 1985) are abundant; the intermediate area of the continuum includes offerings with a mix of products and services that have essentially Experience qualities (Nelson in Parasuraman et al. 1985).

Table 1.1: Difference between a product and a service

Goods	Services	Resulting Implication
Tangible	Intangible	Services cannot be inventoried
		Services cannot be patented
		Services cannot be readily displayed or communicated
		Pricing is difficult
Standardized	Heterogeneous	Service delivery and customer satisfaction depend on employee actions.
		Service quality depends on many uncontrollable factors
		There is no sure knowledge that the service delivered matches what was planned and promoted
Production separate from consumption	Simultaneous production and consumption	Customers participate in and affect the transaction
		Customers affect each other
		Employee affects the service outcome.
		Decentralization may be essential
		Mass product is difficult
Non Perishable	Perishable	It is difficult to synchronise supply and demand with services
		Services cannot be returned or resold
		Source: <i>Parasuraman et al (1985)</i>

Source: Parasuraman et al (1985)

Often, tourism is a collaborative effort of several different parties in providing it as a product. It is assumed that with these suppliers come in a variation of competencies, expertise, safety standards and hospitality. A state tourism board such as STB cannot dictate what attractions are to be launched in their areas or how hoteliers design their product, though it may be able to exercise some influence on accommodation standards through grading awards. Moreover, consumers play a decisive role in the design of tourism product by the way in which they experience it. Tourism is a complex, extended product experience with no predictable critical evaluation point. Tourism experience can extend over several weeks or months depending on the trips and involve pre-trip anticipation and post trip retrospective reflection. Tourism is often appraised and reappraised at different moments before, during and after it has taken place.

Tourism is also a high involvement, high risk product to its consumers. Holidays involve encounters with the unknown in terms of destinations, accommodation, transport, food, natural disasters and increasingly terrorism. Although some of the negative encounters are not planned neither by a travel agent nor the individual tourists, the tourists are prone to participate highly and at some point with some high risk involved.

Tourist motivations have also been studied extensively in the literature (Bansal & Eiselt, 2004; Crompton, 1979; Dann, 1981; Fodness, 1994; Hanqin & Lam, 1999; Iso-Ahola, 1982; Josiam, Mattson, & Sullivan, 2004; Kozak, 2002; Nicholson & Pearce, 2001; Oh, Uysal, & Weaver, 1995; Uysal & Jurovski, 1994). It is important for any studies in tourism to relate motivation as a variable for people to travel. However, it is also important to know how to relate tourism motivation to

marketing in order to essentially put into place the right tools influencing and maximizing the motivation to travel. Collier (1991) explains that travel motivators tend to relate to the discipline of psychology and can be thought as intrinsic or internal factors indicative of the individual's particular travel behaviour. In the tourism motivation literature, a distinction is often made between person-specific motivations and motivations related to attributes of the destination (e.g. wanderlust and sun lust).

It can be seen that the literature pertaining to motivation, behaviour and of marketing in academic research does not sync with one another. The pioneering models of consumer behaviour (Howard, 1994, Runyon, 1980) and Engel et al (1968), Howard and Seth (1969), and Gilbert (1991) provide the earliest models of consumer behaviour. In general, authors have reported their conclusions on decision making into a series of step by step concepts. However, this is merely looking at behaviour with a few hints of how a concept of marketing can be merged into what we can call the organic adaptability of marketing strategy.

Mansfeld argues that this represents confusion between 'push motivations and pull motivations and images of a given destination (1992). Tourism has also been defined as 'the set of ideas, the theories or ideologies, for being a tourist, and it is the behaviour of people in touristic roles when the ideas are put into place' (Lieper, 1990). Lundberg (1972) started basic research on 'why people travel'. He suggested that somehow or rather, travellers' opinions on their motivation to travel may only be reflections of deeper needs, needs which she himself does not understand nor with to articulate.

The literature on consumer behaviour argues that motivations represent individual internal forces that lead to action (Schiffman & Kanuk, 1978). Investigating reasons or motivations for travel contribute to an understanding of tourism as a social and psychological phenomenon (Cohen, 1974) and offer practical managerial insights (Wight, 1996; Young, 1999). In this respect, the motivation to travel refers to a set of needs that cause a person to participate in a tourism based activity.

Dann (1981) suggests that tourists prior to the trip plan a series of projected acts which strikes them as meaningful. Goodall (1991) illustrates various factors influencing an individual's choice of holidays. In general, a choice is exercised by using personal needs and desires to the variety of available products. If one product is selected it also means that particular product will best meet those personal needs. He added that a distinction should be made between the roles of motivation which pushes a holiday maker into a decision and the attraction exercised by holiday images which pull the holiday maker towards toward a particular holiday and destination. These push and pull factors are fundamental to an understanding of holiday behaviour.

When determining motivation in terms of individuals and their cultural conditioning, researchers have come up with two intellectual tasks (Buck 1977, 1978; Cohen 1972; Crompton 1979; Dann 1976, 1977, Pearce 1979, Pizam et al. 1979). First they identify the home environment and its conditioning to the tourists. They note the various needs and pressures which dispose the potential traveller towards trip taking. Second, they analyse the subsequent act of travel and destination area in terms of response to such needs and pressures.

In particular, experiential processes, such as imagining, daydreams, emotions, and desires, play an important role in hedonic consumption (Hirshman and Holbrook 1982). In this context, it is reasonable to assume that when consumers imagine touristic behaviour, for example, they direct their attention to desirable feelings and leisure experiences. Emotions and feelings about destination

attributes probably motivate tourists to plan a trip. In short, if marketers want a full understanding of the motivational mechanism that triggers the destination choice process; these factors have to be incorporated in models.

According to Fodness (1994), effective tourism marketing is impossible without an understanding of consumers' motivations. But a widely-accepted integrated theory of the needs and personal goals behind these reasons is lacking. In this context, Fodness stated that motivation is one of the least researched areas in tourism, both conceptually and empirically. Based on a review of prior studies conducted in the area of tourist behaviour, Lundberg (1971) constructed a list of 18 motivational factors, which included factors reflecting educational and educational motives (e.g., attending special events, visiting historical sites); relaxation and pleasure seeking motives (e.g., having a good time, or a romantic experience); ethnic motives (e.g., visiting places of family origin); and a group of sundry motives (e.g., sports, conformity with neighbours/relatives).

Based on the concept of benefit segmentation, Shoemaker (1994) identified three distinct market segments among tourists based on the perceived benefits that they sought to achieve from a particular destination. Hence, their motivation to choose a particular destination would be influenced by whether they were the Get Away/Family Travellers, the Adventurous Travellers, or the Gambler/Fun Travellers. These results were found to be consistent with earlier research that had sought to classify tourists into various segments based on their motivations; see, e.g., Young, Leland, and Feigin (1978).

The writings in the area of information search indicated tourists' are likely to utilize internal and external information searches to make vacation decisions. Tourists making decisions to choose a vacation destination are likely to be influenced by several factors. One factor that is likely to influence tourists to decide where to go, what to do and which place to stay is their prior product knowledge. The prior product knowledge has two components which are familiarity and expertise. Literatures (Danaher & Arweiler, 1996; Dorfman, 1979; Goodrich, 1977, 1978; Loundsbury & Hoopes, 1985; Pizam et al., 1978; Whipple & Thach, 1988) also suggested that tourists' familiarity and expertise and tourists' information search are likely to be influenced by previous visits, involvement, learning and the cost of information search behaviour. There are also suggestions by Westbrook (1979, 1980) and Bitner and Hubbert (1994) that while visits are taken place, previous visits are likely to influence travellers' involvement and their involvement is likely to influence their learning.

Ryan (1995) has a guide to what a researcher wants to do in his or her research. He pointed out that a research study for some can be very difficult to undertake as there is not always a single answer and certainly not a single book that can actually assist a particular study. The steps that have been taken by the researcher are very much the same as those recommended by Ryan (1995) however, the researcher has come up with two different surveys.

One survey was targeted to the tourists that are already in Sarawak. This research observes the behaviour of tourists choosing Sarawak as one of their travel destinations. The researcher prepared two sets of questionnaires in English and in Japanese. The second survey was targeted for tourists who are at other destinations outside Malaysia. This survey was simpler than the first one as it was only organized to find out what are the pull and push factors involved in decision making to visit destinations other than Sarawak.

Reflections on the tourist experience

In order for tourism in any country to develop and flourish, the support from the government, the private sector, the host community and largely, the tourists has to be strengthened. Developing countries such as Malaysia need to learn and create strategies to survive in the industry. Countries that are already in the tourism market, such as Thailand and Indonesia have historically successfully developed niche markets. No matter how vulnerable tourism is to natural disasters, pandemic outbreaks and terrorism, travel activity has outgrown global exports of goods and services.

Therefore, to be competitive, tourism organizations in countries like Malaysia have to have a marketing strategy that is in line with the trends. They have to have marketing plans and do environmental analysis to determine the perks of their tourism products. They have to think of what would be the best access to these markets and who would be the best target for their existing products. If their products are not suitable for the kind of market that they wanted, the organisations have to find ways that they could do to still attract these potential tourists to a particular product or destination.

There are many ways for any tourist organizations to be competitive. One is to adapt what others have been doing. For example, if Thailand has a visit Thai Year in 1989, Malaysia could adapt the same campaign by having Visit Malaysia Year 1990. Another option is to buy intelligence data from a third party source, translate these into a marketing strategy and implement it. A third is to get consultants to help with branding image and the list goes on.

This research has been about learning from tourists experience and translating these experiential activities into marketing strategies. Learning about tourist behaviour has been one specialized area of studies in the tourism academics for the past two decades. The reading of this specialized material commands an understanding of how tourist makes decisions on their travel, the factors that influenced their decisions, the process of pre decisions, process of decisions and the process of post purchase evaluation.

The Surveys

1340 tourists were interviewed over a span of 2 years. Though the data were not taken every day for the duration of 2 years, the intensity of the survey was desirable for the completion of the article; however the enumerators found difficulty in conducting the survey. The literatures have proved the kind of methodology to use to reveal the objectives of the article.

An investigation to find out the pre departure behaviour of tourists was conducted. From the study, it was revealed that tourists seek certain types of information before leaving their countries. There were a combination of tools that were used by the respondents to access the information on Sarawak and other places. Though the respondents were given ample space and time to add other sources of their search for information, all the respondents were using the same provided options which were newspapers, magazines, brochures, and websites and tour agents.

In 2006 and 2007, Tourism Malaysia spent money for commercials via satellite television worldwide. Hence, there were a few respondents that took notice of the Tourism Malaysia commercials via cable and satellite television and acted to seek information on Malaysia. It can be concluded from this that there is a growing demand in tourist seeking information via websites

rather than the orthodox way. Almost all respondents were in favour of seeking information on their travel through websites not allowing other sources to compete.

When surveyed on their behaviour of accessing information on Sarawak, it can be concluded that the respondents prefer to seek guidance from Tourism Malaysia's website, though the numbers accessing Sarawak Tourism's website was about the same. The survey also showed that respondents were also accessing blogs on tourism to get opinions from others on their trips to Sarawak. Some of them have also used Tourism Malaysia offices located at their home countries and some called or went to Malaysia Airlines in their home countries to get information on Sarawak.

Looking at these tourists' behaviour, it may be safe to conclude that tourists are getting very technology savvy. National and regional tourist organizations may have to consider focusing on promoting tourism products and services via the internet. It was revealed that Tourism Malaysia had more access than STB in gaining information on tourism. Though Tourism Malaysia can be considered as the parent organization on tourism, in order for Sarawak to be competitive, STB has to learn the competitive advantages that Tourism Malaysia has; and improve its content and accessibility to the interest of the tourists.

At the moment, STB's website is updated every one month except for important updates on events; however Tourism Malaysia is updated fortnightly. The STB website has about the same content as Tourism Malaysia however through the observation of the researcher, the available direct links to hotels, restaurants, tourist attractions and land transport are very limited. The usage of promoting tourism products via internet in Sarawak therefore seems to be underutilized. The management of this tourist organization may have to consider improvising their website in order to attract more tourists to access it.

From the researchers' view, the STB website is lacking interactivity. For example, an interface that allows planning of activities for their itinerary based on their plans for a particular period would be interesting for the tourists. The tourists could plan their visit to Sarawak; tick activities that they wished to participate in and receive two or three different itineraries based on their desires. In return, STB could understand the behaviour of their tourists better, providing the tourists with up to date events and gaining information for product development.

Although expenses for collateral materials were not in the main objectives of the study, the percentage for producing collateral materials based on this study was considered expensive for a state tourist organization. The collateral materials however are related to information search in the study, which based on the research outcome shows that fewer tourists prefer to use them for information search at the pre-departure stage. In the light of the research that was conducted, only 20% were using tourist brochures to find data on their soon-to-be trip.

The number of tourists using brochures seemed not to justify the hefty cost of printing as it took on average 25% to 35% of the total budget of promotions. Tourist organizations have also provided budget for other tourism promotional related activities. These would include; funding familiarization trips for agents and media, travel expenses to local and international trade and consumer travel fairs, marketing support for local and international agents, working closely by partnering with major airlines that serve Sarawak, initiating corporate social responsibility programs with the local agents and organizing mega events.

Perhaps a decrease in collateral material publication expenses could be considered since this study has revealed the minimum usage for that particular promotional tool. If the percentage can be reduced, the other activities under the jurisdiction of the tourist organization could be focused on and more money be allocated for the other activities.

However, there is also a concern about whether the reducing of the budget for collateral materials has any impact on tourism development. Collateral materials are as important as other promotional tools. Therefore, the kind of collateral materials that could gain attention and be used by these tourists for a longer lifespan is considered more meaningful in terms of budget constraint.

Determinants of Travel

The other objective for this article was to ascertain which variables (factors) provided in the survey were determinants for tourists to travel. This means that tourists were asked from different angles the kind of variables that were of their concern for them to travel. In the last section, tourists that were randomly chosen stated their reasons for travelling to Sarawak. Only 7% of the tourists that came to Sarawak in the survey were working while visiting the state. The rest of the tourists surveyed were on their holidays though the reasons were very much elaborated into activities such as honeymoon, cultural events, sports event, visiting friends and families and outdoor activities.

These tourists planned their visits, also adding that they were also interested to participate in visiting museums, experiencing nature, camping at the national parks, trekking at highlands, exploring the jungles and meeting indigenous people. It can be concluded that tourists who came to Sarawak did not have only one motive to be there but have a variety of reasons to seek activities while they were there. Also, of the 48% of these tourists that had a close family a friend that have visited Sarawak, 36% of them were convinced that those who were close to them had influenced them to travel.

Thus word of mouth, by these family and friends influenced about one third of the respondents to visit Sarawak. This phenomenon did not mean that their families and friends 'forced' them to visit the destination, however, it can be assumed that stories, souvenirs and photos may have assisted the tourists to decide on coming to Sarawak.

In fact, there were 11% of these tourists who said that despite their close families' experiences in Sarawak; they made their own choice of selecting Sarawak as their particular destination. It is interesting to observe that although these tourists were interviewed in Sarawak, 37% claimed that Sarawak was not part of their plan in their decision making at the pre departure state. Perhaps these tourists gained interest in Sarawak while at other locations, talking to other tourists while participating on activities or even being attracted by Sarawak's posters in different locations.

Push Factors and Pull Factors

Dann (1977) concluded that there are two motivators namely 'push' (whether to travel) and 'pull' (where to travel) factors. Later in 1981, Dann provides comprehensive analysis of explaining the travel behaviour. The first is the main purpose of the trip and the second approach involves two related behavioural theories of travel motivation i.e. visitors desiring destination amenities 'sun lust' and those desiring destination cultures people and landscape 'wanderlust' (Gray, 1970).

The motivational factors are also known as destination attractiveness, such as beaches, recreation facilities, cultural attractions, entertainment, natural scenery, shopping and parks. These destination attributes (Claxton, 1989) can be seen everywhere in Sarawak. During the course of data collection, the tourists have agreed that Sarawak has destination attributes that contributed for the tourists to travel to Sarawak.

The study has also determined the push factors that initiated the kick start feeling to travel. Though the push factors were a combination of feelings, the tourists generally felt that they were curious with Sarawak and they wanted to understand life while travelling. The other push factors that were determined from the study were knowledge, new cultures, new environment and boredom. If we could discuss these push factors with the 11% didn't plan for their trip to Sarawak, perhaps this combination of feelings still did assist them to decide to change their pre departure decisions.

Demographical Discussion

In the two years of data collection, it is seen that most of the tourist who visited Sarawak came from the age of 25 and above. This also means that these people are people with careers and have money to spend. These are the people with more than USD 2000 per month. However, when we observe from their employment records, more than 300 respondents were students. Retirees, advertising and people who are working in the hospitality industry support Sarawak by visiting the state within those two years. We could also make to understand that the people working for the agriculture, computers, insurance, medical health services and telecommunications are among the average visiting professions to Sarawak.

It is also important to realise that those who are expatriates residing in Singapore and Malaysia visited Sarawak during those two years. The Germans and the British make the biggest contributor of the data collection compared to the other nationalities. More than 60% of the number of respondents came to Sarawak as individual travellers and they have chosen Kuala Lumpur as their airport of origin; making Sabah, Singapore and Johor Bharu as their alternative airports to access Sarawak.

Travel Behaviours

A majority of travellers to Sarawak could spend only 3 days in the state. However, there are travellers who could spend nearly a month in Sarawak but their focus is spreading their travel plans to the inner part of Sarawak. The travellers are using Malaysia Airlines as their optional airline followed by Air Asia and only a few used Silk Air as their departures are from Singapore. It is observed that these respondents there are repetitive travellers to the state. However, the first timers are closed to 500 respondents within those two years.

Those travellers who came to Sarawak have a few motivational factors to be here. Nearly 300 of the respondents informed the enumerators that they were here for visiting friends and families. This could also translate into a possibility that migration level is high among the Sarawakians and supporting the tourism industry. Sport events and trade fairs are in a low numbers implicating those events although being heavily promoted by the Sarawak State government has not yet being received by the general public.

Those who plan well ahead for travelling between three to six months are in majority if compared to those who have impulse reflex to travelling. Those who are planning to travel within a few days are the ones that could only get holidays for a shorter period. Those who wish to have longer holidays are the ones that plan ahead in order to get holidays and find destinations that could satisfy their wants. The respondents chose Singapore Airlines as their preferred airline when travelling. However, since they could not access Singapore Airlines into Sarawak, they preferred Air Asia rather than MAS in their choices of airlines.

In terms of costs, the tourist planned their holidays with intentions of saving their money beforehand. There seems to be a trend among these travellers to save more than 3 years before travelling to a destination. However, a majority of these travellers saved from 3 months to a year prior to their travel.

Accessibility or transportation proved to be the biggest spending item while travelling. Second biggest spending item in terms of tourist spending is accommodation for this particular research. Food, souvenir and tours are average items in terms of expenses among the travellers.

Selecting Destinations and Media for Information.

In the two years of data collecting, it can be revealed that within the ASEAN Countries, Brunei is the least preferred destination for these travellers. Thailand and Indonesia are the biggest rivals for Sarawak in terms of destination choice. Singapore and Sabah have the average number of holiday makers in the survey. Other places such as Myanmar, Laos, Cambodia, the Philippines and Vietnam were chosen by these respondents showing the potential of these destinations as competitors to Sarawak in the future.

Increasingly, websites play a vital role for these tourists when they travel. It is revealed in the analysis that brochures, magazines and newspapers did not contribute towards giving information to the tourist visiting Sarawak during those two years. Tour agents can be seen as a medium for tourists to seek information but the travellers did not see any TV commercials on Sarawak. The STB and Tourism Malaysia sites were accessed by these tourist while and during their stay in Sarawak to get travel information. The tourists have also indicated that some of them referred to blogs based on Sarawak Tourism if they wish to find information on Sarawak.

Brochures on Sarawak were the least they could access when they wish to find information. Magazines and Malaysia Airlines at their home countries assisted them in disseminating information while Tourism Malaysia at their home countries contributed as a media for them to get information. Tourism Malaysia's website recorded the best in giving out travel information compared to STB website.

Motivating Travel Factors

The natural surroundings of Sarawak are the prime factor where tourists feel attracted to visit Sarawak. National Parks, indigenous people and jungles are the main attractions for travellers to visit Sarawak. 52% of these travellers revealed that they did not know whether their friends or families have come to Sarawak. This means that the tourists came in on their own without anyone influencing them. However, the other 48% revealed that 75% of their friends contributed for their decisions to select Sarawak as a destination for them to travel. Only 158 of these tourist felt that even though their friends informed them of their travels, they came to Sarawak on their own merits.

847 travellers that were surveyed within those two years planned their trip to Sarawak while the other 493 only chose to come to Sarawak while they were en route to other destinations.

Safety at a destination proved to be very important among the respondents. The timing of the travel comes in second and currency cheaper than of their own currency the third. These show the concerns of the travellers when they are at one particular destination. Culture and Language is one of the least important factors for these tourists as they knew what to expect when they are at the particular destination.

A lot of the tourists felt that land and water transport around Sarawak is really bad. Airport facilities were also in this category as Kuching Airport was under construction at during those two years. Museums, frequency of flights into Sarawak and safety were their main concerns although the information centre, information on Sarawak food and the national parks received good ratings by these tourists.

Recommendations for the Travel Industry

This particular research and its findings has proven to be able to help the industry understand better on what the tourist are experiencing while they are in Sarawak. These particular travellers were given a chance to share their opinions on the strategy taken by the Ministry of Tourism Sarawak and the STB in getting them to the state. STB has not taken any initiatives to understand the tourists' needs and wants let alone finding out which kind of tourists support their efforts in getting them over to Sarawak.

This particular research could assist the STB and the MOT to design marketing strategies to woo more tourists in. It is giving the industry a new idea of continuing the tourist behaviour research not only for academic purposes but also for them to expedite new strategies. Below are some of the recommendations that this research could reveal to get positive response from the tourist market.

1. Strategizing its marketing techniques to tourist who are above 25 years old since these target groups are the ones with career which can translate into a bigger buying power.
2. Below 25 years of age can also be targeted but the choices of Marketing Mix should be more for schools and universities.
3. From the survey conducted, Johor Bharu, Kota Kinabalu and Singapore can be regarded complimentary destinations to promote Sarawak as they are the only Airports that can be accessed to Sarawak. If and when other airports are being introduced, such as Penang Airport, additional considerations to get these airports to be complimenting the promotional effort should be established.
4. By creating events that could lengthen the stay of the travellers, it could also create a new wave for new products to be introduced to the tourism industry. This can create a demand in a new type of accommodation for the tourists at the same time galvanising the economy of the state.
5. The creation of Sarawak Convention Bureau and its objective to increase the number of conventions and events in Sarawak should be highlighted. Trade fairs, business meetings and sporting events are some of the major considerations that the Sarawak Convention Bureau could take in order to attract more visitors to Sarawak.
6. Increasing repeat visitors to the state at the same time increasing the loyalty to a particular destination or products.

7. The STB and other tourism bodies need to design events that could appeal to the tourism statistics. They need to understand which months are slow in the number of tourist arrivals and find ways to get these periods to be taken up by special events. They need to understand which market is sensitive to timing.
8. Same as number 3, the tourist industry in Sarawak needs to consider Thailand, Singapore and Indonesia as the place where they could promote Sarawak.
9. An interactive and updated tourist website should be established. This website should be a one stop centre for tourist to gather information about Sarawak. Printed materials such as brochures can be scrapped off slowly as it is proven that these tourists are now technology savvy and publication of these brochures will only hurt the image of Sarawak as being ecologically friendly.
10. There should be to separate promotions for Sarawak. One on domestic front and the other for the international market. For the international market, the greenery and the natural attractions should be highlighted with emphasis on the multi indigenous people of Sarawak. For the domestic market, Sarawak should be portrayed as a well developing state at par with the rest of the other states in Malaysia.
11. More flights into Sarawak to all the major airports should be lobbied. It is important for the tourists to have options on which airlines they wish to travel.
12. The authorities of Land and Water Services, the Malaysia Airports, Museums and the National Parks need to strategies its development and improve the quality of services that they are providing to the travellers.

Recommendations for Future Research

During the course of developing this research up until the finishing part of the article, the researcher has found a few niches and gaps that could deepen the knowledge of learning from the tourists. The tourism authority has to be able to allocate a budget on tourism research and development so as to not get this data collecting on ad hoc basis. The Ministry of Tourism Sarawak should encourage the research on any tourism related fields as to enrich their knowledge and utilise these information to strengthen their decision making process. Here are some of the recommendations for future research that would be helpful to develop strong research based information for their decision making.

1. Cluster research on events that are created by the Sarawak organisers in every part of Sarawak by looking at the perceptions, opinions and tourist experiential processes.
2. Focusing on major markets such as UK and German tourists' behaviours and their pre-planned and actual activities could also give some insights on the knowledge of behaviours among tourists to Sarawak.
3. A research on focused individual tourists and the activities that they ventured while they are in Sarawak. This could also be focusing on the shorter visit travellers and comparing them with the longer visit travellers.
4. A study on the effectiveness of Sarawak tourism related website and their contribution to influence the tourists to travel into Sarawak and the tourist dependency on these websites.

Summary

The concept of learning from the tourists has been adapted by many academicians from the 1990s in the western world. These bodies of knowledge are growing into the Asian Region in recent years. It is difficult for any researcher to generalise the data that was caught during the data collection, since these cannot be representing the whole idea of tourist behaviour and the importance of learning from them. Nevertheless, it is vital for any researcher to have a supported view on what are the things the tourists go through before they leave their homes, what are they looking for when visiting a destination and how do they compare their experiences while travelling at a particular destination.

This article has given the opportunity for researchers to learn about the tourists' opinions therefore giving an avenue for academics and the tourism industry to communicate on a better passage to developing a successful tourism industry in the future.

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