

UNIVERSITI TEKNOLOGI MARA

**DESTINATION IMAGE, PERCEIVED
VALUE, SATISFACTION AND
QUALITY OF LIFE: DOMESTIC
ECOTOURIST PERSPECTIVE ON
KUALA TAHAN NATIONAL PARK**

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ABSTRACT

In the pre-Covid-19 era, tourism was one of the burgeoning and fastest-growing economic sectors globally. Thus, contributing to the economic progress of developing countries such as Malaysia, with one of the flourishing sub-sectors of tourism, ecotourism. It is believed that ecotourism in nature-based surroundings provides positive and valuable experiences and enhances lives, precisely the quality of life. However, the recent pandemic has affected the previous progress and the future ecotourism trend, especially on the ecotourist future behaviour in protected areas such as National Park. One of Malaysia's most famous National Parks statistically reported on declining ecotourist arrival before and during the recent pandemic was Kuala Tahan National Park (KTNP). Hence, this study aims to analyse the current perception and the interrelationship between destination image, perceived value, satisfaction, and quality of life of domestic ecotourists at the KTNP. This study introduced new dimensions: pandemic environment image in the destination image construct and health and wellbeing value in the perceived value construct. Both dimensions have not previously been employed in any prior research. Therefore, the structural relationship was explored by examining the integrated framework of the Expectancy-Disconfirmation Theory (EDT) and Bottom-up Spill Over theoretical model, as reflected in the literature review. One hundred fifty valid responses from domestic ecotourists were analysed using SmartPLS 3.2.8 software. Partial least square-structural equation modelling (PLS-SEM) and important-performance map analysis (IPMA) was used to gain more insight into the performance of each perceived value dimension. Findings from SEM analysis revealed that destination image has a highly positive relationship with perceived value but vice versa with satisfaction and quality of life. On the other hand, perceived value has a highly significant relationship with satisfaction. Thus, satisfaction also plays a significant relationship in quality of life. This study also proved that the mediating role of perceived value between destination image and satisfaction was successfully achieved. However, the data only supported the role of satisfaction as a mediator between perceived value and quality of life and vice versa between destination image and quality of life. Further, the IPMA shows that health and wellbeing are the most essential and high-performance values. Thus, this study proved the innovative concept of the national parks as a catalyst for fostering health and wellbeing more than merely existing roles. This study also provides insight into the experiential nature of national parks and offers significant practical implications to the stakeholders.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
CONFIRMATION BY PANEL OF EXAMINERS	ii
AUTHOR'S DECLARATION	iii
ABSTRACT	iv
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT	v
TABLE OF CONTENTS	vi
LIST OF TABLES	xi
LIST OF FIGURES	xiv
LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS	xv
CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION	1
1.1 Preamble	1
1.2 Background of the study	1
1.2.1 The Covid-19 Outbreak - Impact and Opportunity	6
1.2.2 Reignite Domestic Tourism	9
1.3 Problem Statement	11
1.4 Research Objective and Research Questions	15
1.5 Significance of Study	16
1.6 Scope of the Study	17
1.7 The Relationship Between RO, RQ and Significance of Study	18
1.8 Definition of Terms	20
1.8.1 Destination Image	20
1.8.2 Perceived Value	20
1.8.3 Satisfaction	20
1.8.4 Quality of Life	20
1.8.5 Ecotourist	20
1.8.6 Tourist	21
1.9 Summary	21

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW	22
2.1 Preamble	22
2.2 The Tourism Industry	22
2.2.1 Tourism Industry in Malaysia	25
2.3 Destination Image	27
2.4 Perceived Value	35
2.4.1 Uni-Dimensional of Perceived Value	38
2.4.2 Multi-Dimensional of Perceived Value	39
2.4.2.1 Theory of Consumption Value (TCV)	42
2.4.3 Perceived Value in Tourism	44
2.4.4 Perceived Value in Ecotourism	46
2.4.4.1 Functional Value	49
2.4.4.2 Economic Value	50
2.4.4.3 Novelty Value	51
2.4.4.4 Health and Wellbeing Value	52
2.5 Satisfaction	55
2.5.1 Ecotourist Satisfaction	57
2.6 Quality of Life	59
2.6.1 Quality of Life Research in Tourism	60
2.7 Ecotourism	65
2.7.1 Malaysia in Ecotourism	70
2.7.1.1 National Ecotourism Plan and Covid-19 Effect	72
2.7.2 Defining and Classifying Ecotourist	74
2.7.3 Taman Negara National Park (TNNP)	79
2.7.3.1 Taman Negara Pahang (TNP) in TNNP	82
2.7.3.2 Prior Research on Ecotourism in Taman Negara Pahang	85
2.8 Theoretical Background and Hypothesis Development	86
2.8.1 Underpinning Theory	87
2.8.2 Hypothesis Development	91
2.8.2.1 Mediating Effect of Perceived Value	99
2.8.2.2 Mediating Effect of Satisfaction	99
2.9 Summary	102