

UNIVERSITI TEKNOLOGI MARA

**PANDA TOURISM IN MALAYSIA:
THE MEDIATING EFFECT OF
DESTINATION IMAGE TOWARDS
THE RELATIONSHIP OF
CONSUMPTION VALUES AND
VISITORS' BEHAVIOURAL
INTENTION**

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ABSTRACT

Malaysia received two endangered giant pandas as a diplomatic gift from the government of China as to mark 40 years of strong diplomatic ties between the two countries. Hence, the Giant Panda Conservation Centre (GPCC) in Zoo Negara was established to show Malaysia's commitment towards China's governmental efforts in increasing the number of the endangered species worldwide and establishing a distinctly new niche tourism attraction called Panda Tourism attraction (PT). The attraction has pulled many local and international visitors different countries across Asia, Europe, North America, and Australia. However, research on the rationale, benefits, issues and future of PT initiative remains under-explored. The present study attempts to understand the PT concept by measuring the consumption value dimensions of PT, namely; functional, social, emotional, epistemic and conditional and how these dimensions affect Visitors' Behavioural Intention to visit other PTs throughout the world. In addition, the study measured the mediation effect of destination image towards the relationship of consumption values and Visitors' Behavioural Intention. The findings of this study will be an early attempt to better understand the rationale, benefits, and potentials of Panda Tourism as a niche tourism concept in Malaysia. The study employed a survey questionnaire to gather quantitative data. Data were analysed using SmartPLS3 software. The results of the analysis identified conditional, functional, and social as the significant determinants of Consumption Value towards Visitors' Behavioural Intention to visit Panda Tourism attractions. Furthermore, functional value proved to have significant direct as well as indirect influence on the Visitors' Behavioural Intention.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

This chapter introduces the arrival of giant pandas in Malaysia through a strategic partnership between Malaysia and China. The section also discusses on Panda Tourism (PT) values and attributes beginning with the background of the study and followed by the problem statement. Moving on, the chapter discusses the research objectives and research questions. In concluding the chapter, the significance of the study is elaborated.

1.2 Research Background

There are millions of tourists visited Panda Tourism attractions each year. From zoos to breeding facilities, pandas serve as a major draw for tourists, pulling many local and international visitors from different countries across Asia, Europe, North America, and Australia. Nonetheless, empirical research in this area remains limited. In Malaysia, the first publication on Giant Panda Conservation Centre (GPCC) was in 2015 by Shuib, Ramachandran, Afandi, Samdin, Ling, & Johari. The research focussed on the visitors' willingness to pay for giant panda conservation. A year then, several researches done at GPCC with added of tourism perspective elements (e.g: Ashaari & Johari, 2016; Bahari & Ling, 2016; Ing & Kunasekaran, 2016; Nordin & Ling, 2016;; Ramli & Ramachandran, 2016; Yee & Shazali, 2016). Most importantly, the research highlighted that the interest for this giant pandas research in conservation and tourism areas has been growing. Hence, it raises the need for a more in-depth investigation on the topic in many different areas of research such as consumer behaviour and tourists' attitudes that could further benefit the conservation of Panda Tourism.

The government of Malaysia had officially received two giant pandas named Feng and Fu on May 21st, 2014. The giant pandas were reportedly delivered to Malaysia as per requested by Former Prime Minister, Najib Razak to symbolize the 40th anniversary of China and Malaysia for being in diplomatic relations (Shuib,