

UNIVERSITI TEKNOLOGI MARA

**EXAMINING EDUCATIONAL
TOURIST MOTIVATION FACETS,
EMOTION, COGNITIVE IMAGE AND
DESTINATION SELECTION
BEHAVIOUR IN AN EXTENDED
STIMULUS-ORGANISM-RESPONSE
MODEL**

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ABSTRACT

The significant growth of new educational tourism destinations, as well as the development of higher education, intensifies competition in this industry. Recommendation has been identified as a significant factor in the tourism industry's survival and growth. Consequently, this research examined the relationships between educational tourists' motivational facets, emotions, cognitive images, and destination selection behaviour. Previous studies have produced a range of results regarding the effect of the mediator destination image operated by emotion and cognitive image. In various environments and study settings, destination image is said to be a predictor of destination selection behaviour. The role of destination images as mediators within the Stimulus-Organism-Response (S-O-R) theory is, however, limited in an educational tourism context. Since environmental stimuli and international educational tourists' perceptions of destination image and behaviour are complex processes, this study aims to validate and extend research areas in an educational tourism setting by integrating theories, models, and constructs within the behavioural context of educational tourism. The S-O-R theory was chosen as the underpinning theory, and the conceptual framework for this study was a modified Mehrabian-Russell model. A survey of 208 international educational tourists residing in Malaysia was used to evaluate the theoretical framework empirically. Partial Least Squares methods (PLS-SEM) was used to analyse the resulting data. In this evaluation, the measurement models were tested for convergent and discriminant validity and then the structural model. The findings supported the modified Mehrabian-Russell model of environmental psychology theory in the context of educational tourism. The empirical results indicated that nine significant relationships between the five constructs (intrinsic motivation, extrinsic motivation, emotion, cognitive image, and destination selection behaviour), while three were insignificant. Unexpectedly, the mediation analysis showed that cognitive image had no mediating effect on the relationship between intrinsic motivation and destination selection behaviour. However, when emotion and cognitive images were incorporated into the model, the results of the mediation analysis showed that the paths between extrinsic motivation and destination selection behaviour provide partial mediation. In terms of predictive power, cognitive images outperformed emotions regardless of behaviour type. Future research on educational tourism can examine the destination image consumption experience dimension using the conceptual framework used in this study as a good starting point. These findings have implications from a theoretical, methodological, industrial, and practical perspective.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Preamble

This chapter provides an introduction to the thesis by offering a background on the research, the research problems and gaps that lead to the identified research questions. The aims and objectives of this research have been established as the foundation of the study. This chapter also underlines the justification of the research and the reason for studying motivation facets, emotion, cognitive image, and destination selection behaviour in an extended Stimulus-Organism-Response (S-O-R) Model in educational tourism context. The operational definitions of key elements applied in this study are briefly outlined, and finally the structure of the thesis is described at the end of this chapter.

1.2 Background of Study

Global education market growth is fuelled by rising incomes and the establishment of new higher education institutions in developing countries. Due to this global demand, enrolment of international students in the tertiary education sector has increased. Moreover, the tourism sector can encourage educational investment and facilitate worker mobility through cross-border agreements on qualifications, standards, and certification, as recommended by the UNWTO Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs): Tourism in 2030 Agenda. According to the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), international students enrolled in tertiary education reached 3.9 million in 2018, comprising 65% undergraduate students, 13% and 22% of all master's and doctoral degree (PhD) enrolments, respectively (Marginson, 2018). In 2018, over 1.5 million tertiary student visas were issued, a 3% increase from the previous year.

Consequently, most students seek cheaper and more affordable education elsewhere, such as Malaysia, Singapore, China, or Australia, because international education is highly valued, and the cost of education is higher in their native countries