Evaluating the quality experience of ecotourist in Taman Negara Pahang

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Abstract. Tourists that travel to a destination will gain different kinds of experiences due to several conditions of a destination. To identify what are the Quality Experience that a tourist gained, certain characteristics of experiences will be determined by using Memorable Tourism Experience (MTE). Taman Negara Pahang a National Park in Malaysia which rich in the natural habitat which is considered as an ecotourism destination. Thus, the purpose of this study is to understand the Quality Experience of eco-tourist in Taman Negara Pahang by using the Memorable Tourism Experience (MTE). This study will be focusing on the main objective which is to determine the most influential Quality Experience of eco-tourists in Taman Negara Pahang. This study is a quantitative study and an online survey was used as the data collection instrument for the 130 respondents. This study shows that the preferred Quality Experience of eco-tourist is Hedonism while the least preferred Quality Experience is Local Culture. This study contributes to identify the Quality Experience of eco-tourist gained after they have visited an ecotourism destination. Therefore, the results of this study can offer a quality contribution towards any responsible parties to manage Taman Negara Pahang in terms of services, and management.

1. Introduction

One of the ways to gain any experiences is by visiting any destination that offered various kinds of activities. There are a lot of destinations over the globe that have unique characteristic and lead to becoming a unique selling proposition (USP) for a country to develop the tourism industry [1]. Moreover, each of tourism destination characteristic such as the culture of a destination and activities based on natural resources of a destination will offer a different kind of experiences. Hence, the tourists will gain the Quality Experience after visiting a destination on a certain characteristic of their own experience. The meaningful experience that is remembered and selectively reconstruct by an individual when describing their experience of travelling is named as Memorable Tourism Experience (MTE) [2]. Moreover, a study indicated when a tourist gains a good positive food experience; they will develop memories of the wonderful and meaningful experience [3]. Every tourist that travels from their usual environment will gain experience from the journey that will become a unique moment for
them. Some of the experience that the tourist gains either good or bad experience is depending on the journey [4]. Thus, the meaningful experience will be remembered if the individual experience something meaningfully different from their daily routine.

Different kind of activities and settings of a destination will strengthen the characteristics of a destination. For instance, Taman Negara Pahang, Malaysia which is popular as an ecotourism destination and becomes a tourist preferred ecotourism destination in Malaysia. Over the year, various studies have been done which focus on many aspects in Taman Negara Pahang such as the tourist’s motivation for visiting Malaysia’s national park where Taman Negara Pahang is included as one of National Park in Malaysia [5].

However, the research regarding Quality Experience by using MTE in Taman Negara Pahang is never been done. There is limited research to discover the adopted Quality Experience of eco-tourist in Taman Negara Pahang. Thus, this research is aiming to study the Quality Experience of eco-tourists in Taman Negara Pahang by using MTE assessment. Therefore, this research paper is focusing on eco-tourists who had visited and stayed in Taman Negara Pahang, Taman Negara Pahang is one of the preferred ecotourism destinations in Malaysia that offer a variety of ecotourism activities and provide an unforgettable experience for the tourists [6]. So, Taman Negara Pahang is a suitable destination for this research due to the ecotourism elements that will influence the Quality Experience of eco-tourist through the MTE assessment. This study will contribute to the exploration of the Quality Experience based on MTE assessment in Taman Negara Pahang, Malaysia. Hence, the result of this study will offer a clear picture of the classification of eco-tourist’s Quality Experience in Taman Negara Pahang.

2. Quality experience and Memorable Tourism Experience (MTE)
Experience Quality is subjective in term of measurement [7]. Previously, service performance at the attribute level refers for service quality. Meanwhile, while experience quality refers to the psychological result from the tourist participation in tourism industries [7]. Moreover, experience gains during visitation to a destination are depending on the tourist [8]. Not all tourists gain same and specific experience before, during and after the trip [9]. Those experiences can be categorized into various components in MTE [2]. The MTE is connected with Quality Experience because the experience itself reflect and portray the unique moments by an individual that are considered a tourist as well as eco-tourists in any destination [10].

Memorable Tourism Experience (MTE) is referred to a tourism experience which positively remembered and recalled after the event has occurred [11]. MTE is derived from the services, consumer experience and transform it into a meaningful feeling and an unforgettable moment [11]. The MTE is selectively constructed by a person who goes to a place based on the evaluation their own to experience regarding tourism. The tourist experience is a subjective and psychological perception of the tourists in any service encounter during the vacation or journey [11]. Tourists have different interest and background can lead to various interpretations of each single tourist product [11]. Thus, the MTE becomes a tool in order to classify and organize the Quality Experience for the tourist after the trip.

Hedonism is attempted to find sensual desire [7]. The hedonistic factor is considered as the emotional value of the tourist’s consumption experience and represented the return gained in terms of fun. There are four items in Hedonism for MTE which are the tourists were thrilled about gaining a different involvement in tourism activities, indulging in the service in the destination, enjoying the tourism experience and the destination is an exciting destination [11].

Novelty is the contrast in the degree of visitor participation explored by the tourist to a tourism place when differentiate with experience [3]. Other than that, a key construct in tourism industry is novelty which is described by different life [11]. Novel experience is core information for concepts. Therefore, there are four items in this variable namely once in a lifetime, the uniqueness of the destination, gaining different from previous experience and the tourists can gain a new experience that related to something in any new attraction [11].
Local Culture is defined as the local community or an important element of socializing included in the destination [12]. This component is briefly about the tourists’ experience are continually mediated for social communication among the gap between local and tourists [3]. Thus, the three items related to the Local Culture are good impression about the local people, the tourist’s involvement in the local community in the destination and the friendliness of the community in a destination [11].

Relaxation or it is called refreshment is one of the vital motivational factors for tourism practice in leaving from the daily habit that is in stressful environments [13]. Refreshment is focusing on the state of mind of experiential involvement. Individual extremely value refreshment as a psychological advantaged from their experiences. Thus, three items that will be evaluated in this variable which are the tourist feel free to do anything that they like in the destination the enjoyment of freedom while in the destination, feel refresh with nature of the destination and the tourist feel re-energized after visiting the destination [11].

Meaningfulness is referred to as an individual who finds meaning through tourism experience [14]. Meaningfulness can guide to a tourist’s advancement after experienced and coming back to their usual place as they are adopting a new action which they gained during the vacation and trip. Thus, the two items that will be evaluated are the tourists wish to do something meaningful in the destination and the tourist is being able to learn about themselves during their stay in the destination [11].

Involvement is the level of vital a consumer attributes to a thing, a movement and the excitement that is created [15]. Other than that, Involvement related to the extent to which tourist is involved in an action and their effective answers from the project [11]. Therefore, two items that will be evaluated are the tourists are visiting a place where they really desired to visit, and the tourists enjoyed the recreation which they wanted to involve the activities [11].

Knowledge is referred to as a cognitive aspect of the tourist experience which includes guidance during the vacation [3]. Travel experiences give unique experiences knowing possibilities for the visitor such as new practical skills, practical experience [3]. Thus, exploration in the destination allows the tourists to gain know more knowledge; the tourists get any knowledge throughout the trip in the destination and the tourists gain new knowledge regarding the culture in the destination are the items in this variable [11].

The framework of the study has basically discussed the Quality Experience based on the MTE assessment. Furthermore, this study is mainly focused on to construct the model of the Quality Experience of Eco tourists in Taman Negara Pahang by using MTE. Therefore, Figure 1 shows the overall framework of this study.

![Figure 1. Framework of the study.](image-url)
3. Taman Negara Pahang

Taman Negara Pahang that covers the largest size at 2,477 square kilometres [5]. According to statistics of tourist arrival by Tourism Pahang (2018) [16], there are 83,350 tourists for both domestic and international tourists visited Taman Negara Pahang in 2018. The statistics also show the number of tourist arrival in Taman Negara Pahang for domestic tourists in 2018 was 34,482 tourists [16]. Other than that, there are 47,592 international tourists visited Taman Negara Pahang in 2018 [16]. Basically, tourist who visited and stayed in Taman Negara Pahang is focused on experiencing the ecotourism activities.

Previously, a study has been conducted to explore the influential factors that shape the locals’ view on preservation activities in Kuala Tahan surrounding [6]. The outcome of the study is the ecotourism activities have affected the increase of local support for nature conservation and indirectly, the local community had earned economic benefits from the tourists [4]. Therefore, it is suggested that the ecotourism development should be enhanced the promotional activities to attract more tourists and the local infrastructures need to be improved to gain the local support in achieving the conservation objectives.

Other than that, a research that has been done in Taman Negara Pahang is aimed to examine the kind of intangible values that had motivated tourist Taman Negara Pahang [1]. Therefore, the result of this study is the managers involved in the tourism industry in Taman Negara Pahang need to learn on profiling its customers and implement the effective positioning and market segmentation strategies [1]. Hence, based on these two studies, there is a limited study has been done regarding Memorable Tourism Experience (MTE) in any National Park in Malaysia. Therefore, this paper is intended to understand the Quality Experience based on Memorable Tourism Experience (MTE) in Taman Negara Pahang, Malaysia.

4. Study methodology

The sample in this research is 130 respondents of eco-tourists that have experienced Taman Negara Pahang. The sampling technique used for this research is Convenience Sampling to ensure that an equal chance of individual as eco-tourists in Taman Negara Pahang to be the selected sample. The instrument for this study is a set of questionnaire which divided into three sections. Section A is to identify the demographics of the respondent, while Section B is the close-ended questions and Likert scale that covered the awareness of eco-tourists towards Taman Negara Pahang as an ecotourism destination. Section C is the characteristics and items of Quality Experience based on the MTE assessment in Taman Negara Pahang. The data were analysed, and the outcomes were generated by using SPSS software version 25.

The Likert scale was used for Section B and Section C. In this study, 1 represents Strongly Disagree, 2 represents Disagree, 3 represent Neutral, 4 represent Agree and finally 5 represents Strongly Agree. The mean and mean ranges were used to position the level of preferred Quality Experiences in Taman Negara Pahang. Next, the mean values will be classified according to the mean range of 5-point scale which is Strongly Disagree, Disagree, Neutral, Agree and Strongly Agree [17]. Then, the result will be ranked to the highest and lowest MTE in identifying the quality of tourist experience.

| Weight/Scale | Mean Range   | Verbal Interpretation         |
|--------------|--------------|------------------------------|
| 5            | 4.51 – 5.00  | Strongly Agree               |
| 4            | 3.51 – 4.00  | Agree                        |
| 3            | 2.51 – 3.50  | Neutral                      |
| 2            | 1.51 – 2.50  | Disagree                     |
| 1            | 1.00 – 1.50  | Strongly Disagree            |

Table 1. The 5-point scale, its mean range, and verbal interpretation.
5. Findings and Discussion
As shown in Table 2, respondents were mainly female (53.8%) and the range of age is 18-24 years old with 45%. Of the 130 respondents, the highest number of local tourists is from Kelantan with 13.1% (N=17) while the highest number of international tourists is from Japan with 4.6% (N=6). For the occupation, 50% (N=65) of the respondents were students.

Table 2. Profiles of the respondents.

| Dimension       | Items                                      | Frequencies | Percent |
|-----------------|--------------------------------------------|-------------|---------|
| Gender          | Male                                       | 60          | 46.2%   |
|                 | Female                                     | 70          | 53.8%   |
| Age             | 13 – 17                                    | 22          | 16.9%   |
|                 | 18 – 24                                    | 45          | 34.9%   |
|                 | 25 – 40                                    | 33          | 25.4%   |
|                 | 41 - 60                                    | 21          | 16.2%   |
|                 | >60                                        | 9           | 6.9%    |
| Nationality     | Johor                                      | 7           | 5.4%    |
|                 | Kedah                                      | 9           | 6.9%    |
|                 | Kelantan                                   | 17          | 13.1%   |
|                 | Melaka                                     | 2           | 1.5%    |
|                 | Negeri Sembilan                            | 7           | 5.4%    |
|                 | Pahang                                     | 13          | 10.0%   |
|                 | Perak                                      | 4           | 3.1%    |
|                 | Perlis                                     | 3           | 2.3%    |
|                 | Pulau Pinang                               | 6           | 4.6%    |
|                 | Sabah                                      | 1           | 0.8%    |
|                 | Sarawak                                    | 2           | 1.5%    |
|                 | Selangor                                   | 15          | 11.5%   |
|                 | Terengganu                                 | 6           | 4.6%    |
|                 | Wilayah Persekutuan Kuala Lumpur           | 5           | 3.8%    |
|                 | Wilayah Persekutuan Labuan                 | 2           | 1.5%    |
|                 | Wilayah Persekutuan Putrajaya              | 3           | 2.3%    |
|                 | Iceland                                    | 1           | 0.8%    |
|                 | Japan                                      | 6           | 4.6%    |
|                 | China                                      | 3           | 2.3%    |
|                 | Vietnam                                    | 1           | 0.8%    |
|                 | Indonesia                                  | 1           | 0.8%    |
|                 | Pakistan                                   | 1           | 0.8%    |
|                 | Egypt                                      | 3           | 2.3%    |
|                 | Thailand                                   | 1           | 0.8%    |
|                 | Singapore                                  | 1           | 0.8%    |
|                 | Korea                                      | 2           | 1.5%    |
|                 | Ukraine                                    | 2           | 1.5%    |
|                 | Spain                                      | 1           | 0.8%    |
|                 | United States of America                   | 1           | 0.8%    |
|                 | Portugal                                   | 1           | 0.8%    |
|                 | England                                    | 1           | 0.8%    |
|                 | France                                     | 2           | 1.5%    |
| Occupation      | Student                                    | 65          | 50.0%   |
|                 | Doctor                                     | 6           | 4.6%    |
|                 | Lawyer                                     | 12          | 9.2%    |
|                 | Researcher                                 | 26          | 20.0%   |
|                 | Lecturer                                   | 17          | 13.1%   |
|                 | Self employed                              | 2           | 1.5%    |
|                 | Tourist Guide                              | 1           | 0.8%    |
|                 | Entrepreneur                               | 1           | 0.8%    |
The mean scores for all Quality Experiences were calculated to gain the highest and lowest mean values in order to find the MTE of eco tourist in Taman Negara Pahang. Table 3 shows a summary of the mean scores for MTE.

Table 3. The result of quality experience.

| Variables     | Items                                      | Mean    | Average Mean |
|---------------|--------------------------------------------|---------|--------------|
| Hedonism      | - Thrilled about having a new experience   | 4.01    | 3.94         |
|               | - Indulged in the activities               | 3.86    |              |
|               | - Really enjoyed this tourism experience   | 3.93    |              |
|               | - Exciting                                 | 3.95    |              |
| Novelty       | - Once in a lifetime                       | 3.92    | 3.92         |
|               | - Unique                                   | 3.97    |              |
|               | - Different from previous experience       | 3.85    |              |
|               | - Experienced something new                | 3.95    |              |
| Local Culture | - Good impression about the local people  | 3.78    | 3.76         |
|               | - Closely experienced the local culture   | 3.72    |              |
|               | - Local people in a destination were friendly | 3.79   |              |
| Refreshment   | - Liberating                               | 3.65    | 3.81         |
|               | - Enjoyed the sense of freedom             | 3.84    |              |
|               | - Refreshing                               | 3.89    |              |
|               | - Revitalized                              | 3.85    |              |
| Knowledge     | - Exploratory                              | 3.78    | 3.78         |
|               | - Knowledge                                | 3.82    |              |
|               | - New Culture                              | 3.75    |              |
| Meaningfulness| - I did something meaningful               | 3.85    | 3.82         |
|               | - Learned about myself                     | 3.79    |              |
| Involvement   | - I visited a place where I really wanted to go | 3.86   | 3.86         |
|               | - I enjoyed the activities which I really wanted to do | 3.86 | |

Based on Table 3, the highest mean score is Hedonism with the mean score of 3.94 (ranked 1), followed by Novelty with the mean score of 3.92 (ranked 2). Next, Quality Experience of Involvement has a mean score of 3.86 (ranked 3), followed by Meaningfulness with the mean score of 3.82 (ranked 4). The bottom three Quality Experience is Refreshment with 3.80 (ranked 5), Knowledge with 3.78 (ranked 6) and finally the Local Culture with 3.76 (ranked 7). Hence, Taman Negara Pahang provides Hedonism for the highest Quality Experience and the least Quality Experience in Taman Negara Pahang is Local Culture.

According to the findings that have been discussed before, these are recommendations that can be used for the future development of the industry in Taman Negara Pahang in order to provide more standard Quality Experience that can influence the tourist in Taman Negara.

The rationale to know the most preferred and the least preferred of Quality Experiences based on Memorable Tourism Experience (MTE) is to determine the preferred Quality Experience in Taman Negara Pahang. As mentioned in the previous chapter, Local Culture is the least preferred Quality Experience which this variable has the lowest mean value compared to other Quality Experiences in this research. Thus, the engagement between tourists and local peoples of Taman Negara Pahang need to be improved in order to give a better experience towards the tourists. There are several factors need to be improved in Taman Negara Pahang which is the local people need to show a good impression towards the domestic and international tourists in order to give the tourists a good sense of welcoming to the destination. In addition, the effort of local people to show good impression towards both domestic and international tourists can lead them to become friendlier between the local people and tourists. The friendliness between tourist and local peoples can be improved by the local peoples upgrade their communication standard in order to communicate well especially in the English Language due to most tourists in Taman Negara Pahang is an international tourist all over the world which used the English Language as the main language to communicate.
There is some recommendation regarding Knowledge as Quality Experience in Taman Negara Pahang. In this research, Knowledge Quality Experience is the second least preferred. Thus, there are several suggestions in order to upgrade Knowledge as one of the top Quality Experience in Taman Negara Pahang. First and foremost, all Tour Guide need to be Qualified and passed the examination from Ministry of Tourism, Arts and Culture Malaysia (MOTAC) in order to spread the information’s to both international tourist and domestic tourist so that they can gain the fruitful information from those qualified Tourist Guide during their guiding the trip in Taman Negara Pahang. Other than that, the Tour Guide organization in Taman Negara Pahang must make sure all of the Tour Guide is able to speak in English fluently. This is because the fluent English delivered by the Tour Guide to all the tourist can lead the tourist’s gain more information and lead to increase their Knowledge.

Refreshment Quality Experience is one of the least preferred Quality Experience in Taman Negara Pahang. There are several factors need to be looked in this variable in order to lead refreshment is one of Quality Experience can be gained by the tourists. Taman Negara Pahang is well known for its nature including Flora and Fauna which is become the pulling factor to attract tourist to visit and stay in Taman Negara. Therefore, Local people of Taman Negara Pahang are one of the responsible parties to maintain the nature of Taman Negara Pahang which is located in Kuala Tahan Village. Other than that, the Malaysian government needs to take action of any wrongdoings that can damage the ecosystem in Taman Negara Pahang for example illegal logging and illegal hunting. This is because the nature in Taman Negara Pahang need to be sustained in order to tourist that visit the destination can feel refresh with nature and automatically feel re-energized after visiting Taman Negara Pahang.

This study has its own limitations and the limitation can be overcome by improving several factors. This study has referred and reviewed only Memorable Tourism Experience (MTE) as the model that contains various dimensions Quality Experience. However, in this research, there are only seven variables which are Hedonism, Novelty, Meaningfulness, Involvement, Local Culture, Refreshment and Local culture that has been used in Taman Negara. Based on Memorable Tourism Experience (MTE) model, there are other variables that can be used the Quality Experience in this research such as happiness, challenging and participation [3]. Therefore, the first recommendation to improve for future research is by using all the Quality Experiences in Memorable Tourism Experience (MTE) as mentioned in this research. In addition, exploring other model related to Quality Experience that has been constructed or created by other scholars also one of the recommendations for future research.

On the other hand, this research is only focusing on the eco-tourist in Taman Negara Pahang as the main group of respondents. There are many types of eco-tourist according different kind of ecotourism destinations. Different kind of eco-tourists will gain different kind of Quality Experience. However, the eco-tourists that visited Taman Negara Pahang were been used as the target respondents due to the destination is a popular ecotourism destination. Thus, the result of the findings of the research is limited towards the eco-tourists in Taman Negara Pahang. Hence, future study might include any type of eco-tourist in an ecotourism destination as general in order to have a general whole view the dimension of Memorable Tourism Experience (MTE).

Finally, the approach of this study is a Quantitative Approach. This kind of approach will not be able to gain an in-depth understanding of the Quality Experience in Taman Negara Pahang. Thus, future study might use other approaches such as Qualitative approach which will use interview approach. In addition, the mixed method between qualitative and quantitative approaches is one of the recommendations in order to gain the results more comprehensive and detailed.

6. Conclusion
Taman Negara Pahang is a popular destination due to the uniqueness of its characteristic as an ecotourism destination. Therefore, Taman Negara Pahang is a destination that can give the tourists a different kind of Quality Experience. It is a potential for Taman Negara Pahang to gain a higher number of tourist arrival if the destination maintains its uniqueness, so that the tourist will gain a high quality of tourism experience throughout their trip in Taman Negara Pahang. It is important to preserve Taman Negara Pahang since there is an increase in number of tourists every year. This study
provides an overview of eco-tourist’s Quality Experience in Taman Negara Pahang. This study adopted the Memorable Tourism Experience (MTE) assessment to understand the overall quality of tourist experience in Taman Negara Pahang. Thus, Taman Negara Pahang can offer a lot of experiences to the tourists while they are visiting and staying in Taman Negara Pahang. As mentioned in the findings, Local Culture is the least preferred Quality Experience in comparison to other aspects of the MTE. Hence, the engagement between tourists and local people of Taman Negara Pahang need to be improved in order to give a better quality of experience towards the eco-tourists. Due to that, tourists will experience a good sense of welcoming to the destination and this will ensure that they are having a good quality of ecotourism experience in Taman Negara Pahang.

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