

PROPOSING A CONCEPTUAL MODEL OF DESTINATION LOYALTY: TWO PARALLEL MEDIATORS OF PLACE ATTACHMENT AND TOURIST MOTIVATION

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Highlights: This study proposes a new comprehensive conceptual model consisting of involvement, place attachment, tourist motivation that could be implemented to improve tourist loyalty among domestic tourists visiting Kelantan. This model comprises two parallel mediators that will be tested using the phantom approach model. This model is considered an innovation in mitigating tourist loyalty issue.

Key words: *Destination loyalty, Parallel mediators, Involvement, Tourism Kelantan.*

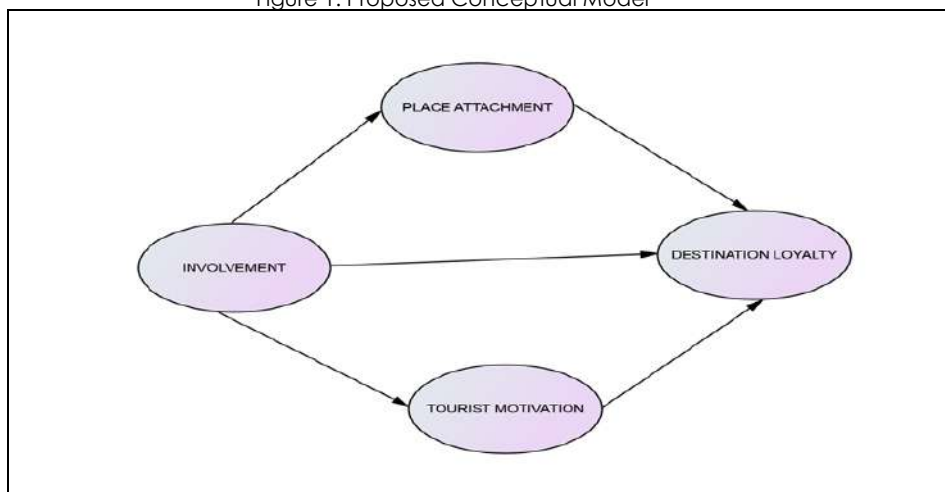
Introduction

The tourism destination in Kelantan is experiencing among the least number of domestic visitors arrivals and receipts in Malaysia (Department of Statistics Malaysia, 2019). Hence, this issue can be solved by improving destination loyalty among domestic visitors to Kelantan since loyal tourists will demonstrate repeat visits (Prayag et al. 2017) and spread positive word of mouth to the other potential tourists (Cheng et al., 2016). Involvement (Di-Clemente, 2020), tourist motivation (Gurbaskan Akyuz, 2019) and place attachment (Hosany et al., 2017) were found to be appropriate predictors to gauge destination loyalty. When the tourists start to be loyal to the tourist destination, it will increase the number of domestic arrivals to Kelantan. They also tend to spend more during their trip, which could increase tourist receipts in Kelantan. Therefore, this study introduces a new conceptual model by testing the interrelationships between involvement, tourist motivation, place attachment, and destination loyalty. Most importantly, this study will test two parallel mediators, namely, tourist motivation and place attachment, simultaneously using the phantom approach.

Content

Figure 1 highlights the proposed new conceptual model whereby involvement and destination loyalty are the independent and dependent variables respectively. Meanwhile, place attachment and tourist motivation are parallel mediators.

Figure 1: Proposed Conceptual Model



Several past studies in tourism research such as Lee & Shen (2013), Xu & Zhang (2016), Hosany et al. (2017), Song et al. (2017), Chen (2018), Yuan et al. (2019), Gurbaskan Akyuz (2019), Di-Clemente (2020) and Japutra (2020) have investigated these four constructs. However, these constructs have been investigated separately, and none of past studies has tested and compared parallel mediators of place attachment and tourist motivation using a phantom model. Thus, this study integrated these four constructs in one model to be tested and compared parallel mediators of place attachment and tourist motivation using the phantom approach model. The present study provides new insight into which aspect the scholars should focus on whenever they have confirmed the model with the empirical data. Furthermore, the proposed model provides a platform for future researchers to extend the model in future research. This model also serves as a guideline, especially to the local community and tourism management in Kelantan, to improve the level of loyalty of domestic visitors to this state. Based on this model, the stakeholders would notice that encouraging tourists to be involved in local activities and consuming tourism products and services could lead to positive or negative feelings on their overall trip experience to Kelantan. It is expected that highly involved/participated tourists would develop a strong personal connection between tourists and the destination. Highly involved tourists also are expected to be more motivated. Consequently, the tourists will be more loyal to the destination by spreading positive word of mouth and revisiting Kelantan soon. This model has high commercial value, especially when researchers intend to understand the predictors that affect destination loyalty. This model also compares the effect of two mediators (place attachment and tourist motivation) using the phantom approach, which rarely past models proposed this test. So, this model will be highly demanded by the stakeholders in the tourism industry.

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