AUGMENTED S-O-R MODEL ON EDUCATIONAL TOURISM IN MALAYSIA: EDUCATIONAL TOURIST, INSTITUTIONAL AND DESTINATION PERSPECTIVES

Alfian Thomas¹, Hassnah Wee², Faiz Izwan Anuar³ & Norliza Aminudin⁴

¹Department of Polytechnic and Community College Education Malaysia,
Ministry of Higher Education, 62200 Putrajaya, Malaysia

^{2,3,4}Faculty of Hotel & Tourism Management, Universiti Teknologi MARA (Selangor)
(alfian.thomas@gmail.com, hassnah739@uitm.edu.my, norliza@salam.edu.my,
faizwanuar@salam.edu.my)

ABSTRACT

The Novel Corona Virus 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic outbreak has decreased international students' enrolment in public and private educational institutions. The educational tourism industry can achieve better benefits if the service providers and policymakers become more proactive in understanding educational tourist behaviour when dealing with challenges during the pandemic. This study examines whether educational tourist and institutional physiognomies affect the relationship between motivation facets and destination selection behaviour within an augmented Stimuli-Organism-Response (S-O-R) model. This paper analyses the issues and objectives for the forthcoming study through several works of literature from various disciplines. The outcomes of the review proposed a conceptual framework to extend the S-O-R model in future research focusing on the relationship between educational tourist motivational facets, educational tourist and institution physiognomies, and destination selection behaviour.

KEYWORDS: Educational Tourism, Motivation Facet, Destination Selection Behaviour, SOR Model

PURPOSE AND BACKGROUND

The World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) (2019) has defined educational tourism as a form of tourism that encompasses different types of tourism, which are related to the motivations of tourists to travel, participate, and engage themselves in various trainings, self-improvement processes, intellectual growth, and development of different and diverse skills. With that definition, educational tourism represents a wide range of products and services related to academic research, skills acquisition holidays, school trips, sports trainings, career development courses and language courses. Thus, this conceptual paper is intended to identify the links between motivation facets, educational tourist and institutional physiognomy and destination selection behaviour among ASEAN postgraduates in Malaysia. As such, the research questions that will be addressed are:

- i. What are the relationships between motivation facets, educational tourist physiognomy, and educational tourism destination selection behaviour in the extended S-O-R model?
- ii. Does educational tourist physiognomy mediate the relationship between motivation facets and educational tourism destination selection behaviour in the extended S-O-R model?
- iii. Does institutional physiognomy moderate the relationship between motivation facets and educational tourism destination selection behaviour in the extended S-O-R model?
- iv. How does educational tourism destination selection behaviour affect the S-O-R model?

PROBLEM STATEMENT

The central problem to be investigated in the proposed study is the lack of admittance, emotion due to sudden changes in the environment, institutional image, as well as limited research on student motivation, which may affect educational tourists' behaviour in selecting Malaysia as their educational tourism destination. Therefore, it is crucial for the educational tourism industry to find out the factors contributing to the decreasing trend of international educational tourists to Malaysian universities.

In view of the above discussed issues, this study aims to examine educational tourist motivation facets, physiognomies, and destination selection behaviour among ASEAN postgraduates in Malaysian public universities by using an integrated Stimulus-Organism-Response (S-O-R) model. The outcomes of this study would contribute to the identification of motivational facets of international students who are desirable to a host country, which in the long-term would sustain the number of international students enrolled in public universities.

PROPOSED ADAPTED THEORY

The S-O-R model was implemented in different research frameworks by using different research methods and theories. Physical stimuli on human emotions and behavioural responses, according to Mehrabian and Russell (1974), can be used to investigate the outcome using the S-O-R model.

The S-O-R model includes a stimulus as an independent variable, an organism as a mediator, and a response as the dependent variable (Pandita *et al.*, 2020). Therefore, it could enhance the understanding of the mediating role of affective states, which are consumer emotions and responses, through the S-O-R model. In this present study, there are two applications of theories, which are the application of motivational theory and behavioural theory to support the Self-determination Theory with the S-O-R Theory to develop the research model.

Each theory has its own role to play, either as an overall contribution to the theories or as a component of achieving the research objectives. The application of theories will assist the researchers to decide on the usefulness of motivation as a force mechanism for travel.

CONCLUSION

The findings provide a gateway to the study of the relationship between motivation facets, educational tourist and institutional physiognomy, and educational tourism destination selection behaviour in the Malaysian context. To proceed with empirical research, a wider range of literature must be examined to gain useful information.

Even though this is a conceptual paper, it is hoped that the endeavour will contribute as supplemental literature for scholarly reference as well as have a substantial impact on educational tourism service providers and policy makers until research is completed.

IMPLICATION AND FUTURE STUDY

The conceptual paper is significant as it will provide a better understanding of educational tourist behaviour in selecting educational tourism destinations. The proposed future study attempts to investigate the relationship between motivation facets and destination selection behaviour among ASEAN postgraduates in the public universities in Malaysia. The study will also investigate the mediating effect of educational tourist physiognomy (emotion) between motivation facets and destination selection behaviour.

Furthermore, this study expands on the S-O-R model of stimulus, organism, and responses by introducing an external source of information (institutional image) as a critical factor in educational tourism destination selection behaviour. Therefore, the present conceptual paper will contribute to the limited literature on the involvement of educational tourists and institutional physiognomy and broaden understanding regarding educational tourism destination selection behaviour.

The result of these linkages may provide information benefits to both education service providers as well as key players in the tourism industry on how to attract more educational tourists to choose Malaysia as an educational tourism destination. This study is also relevant to policymakers who design support mechanisms and schemes to promote the continuous growth of the educational tourism industry. Last but not least, this conceptual paper can contribute as literature for scholars as a reference and also as a future study.

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