

THE MEDIATING ROLE OF PLACE ATTACHMENT ON THE PERCEIVED VALUE AND DESTINATION LOYALTY RELATIONSHIP: A CONCEPTUAL MODEL

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Article history

Received date : 22-9-2021

Revised date : 22-9-2021

Accepted date : 1-1-2022

Published date : 4-1-2022

To cite this document:

Nasir, M. N. M., and Ghani, N. (2021). The Mediating Role of Place Attachment on The Perceived Value and Destination Loyalty Relationship: A Conceptual Model. *Jurnal Penyelidikan Islam dan Kontemporari (JOIRC)*, 4(9),8 - 13.

Abstract: *Terengganu is one of the states in Malaysia that possesses the advantages of having beautiful islands and delicious local foods. Despite having these competitive advantages, recent statistics reported that Terengganu shows decline in number of domestic tourist arrivals from the year 2019 to 2020. Therefore, it is important to improve destination loyalty to increase domestic tourist arrivals to Terengganu. Hence, the study's main objective is to develop a new conceptual model comprising the relationship of perceived value, place attachment, and destination loyalty among domestic tourists in Terengganu. Most importantly, this study proposes to examine the mediating effect of place attachment on the relationship between perceived value and destination loyalty because limited number of studies have tested this mediating effect. Thus, the study introduces a new conceptual model to researchers and practitioners to better understand the concept of perceived value and place attachment to enhance domestic tourists' loyalty to Terengganu.*

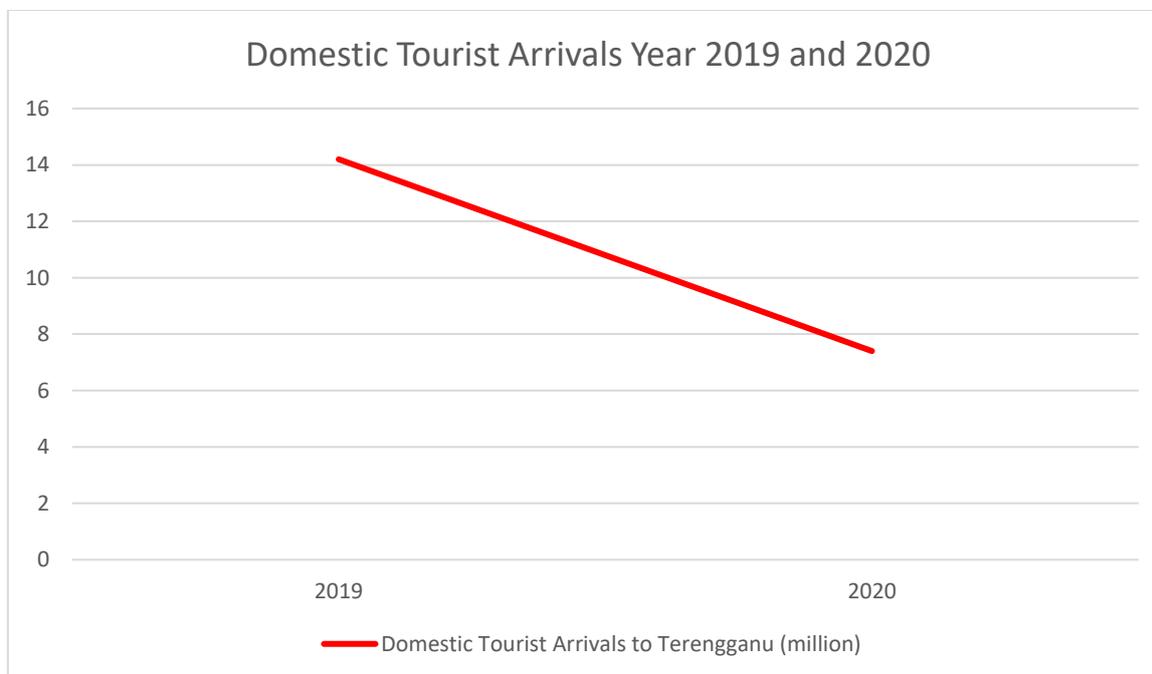
Keywords: *Destination Loyalty, Place Attachment, Perceived Value, Terengganu, Tourism*

Introduction

Malaysia is renowned as a popular tourist destination in Asia and Asia Pacific (Nasir et al., 2021). In 2019, Malaysia was nominated as the second friendliest city in the world Top 50 (Tourism Malaysia, 2021). This is due to the easy-going temperament of locals towards tourists which makes the visitors feel more welcome when they visit any states in Malaysia. Terengganu is a destination in Malaysia that is renowned for its picturesque beaches and Islands such as Perhentian, Redang, Tenggol and Bidong. Furthermore, Kuala Terengganu is considered as a waterfront city comprising of historical buildings which lead this state to be selected as a main attraction for tourism as well as a corridor for investors (Ab Ghani et al., 2021). Apart from that, tourists visit Terengganu because of its delicious local cuisines served by the locals, such as nasi dagang, keropok lekor (made up from groundfish), sata (made up from spiced fish and ginger) and Nekbat (sweet dessert). Even though Terengganu has all of these advantages, it

shows decline in number of tourist arrivals from year 2019 to 2020. Figure 1 illustrates the number of domestic tourist arrivals to Terengganu from 2019 to 2020.

Mohamad et al. (2019) claimed that increasing tourists' loyalty toward the destination is the focal point as it may result in extraordinary benefits to the people in the future. Hence, the tourists will be loyal to certain destination when the study would be able to identify the factors that influence the destination loyalty among tourists. It is found that when the tourists feel it is worth the value that they sacrifice in terms of monetary and non-monetary, it will lead to a strong personal connection between the tourists and destination (Jiang & Hong, 2021), and they also will be more loyal to the destination (Huang et al., 2019). A strong personal connection between the tourists and the destination would also lead to the development of destination loyalty (Nurbasari et al., 2021). Hence, the main objective of the present study is to propose a conceptual model comprising of perceived value, place attachment and destination loyalty.



Source: Department of Statistics Malaysia (2021)

Figure 1: Domestic Tourist Arrivals in 2020 for all States Malaysia

Literature Review

Definition and Concepts of Destination Loyalty

Studies on the concept of tourist loyalty in destination context have emphasized its attention on how tourists are associated with destinations and have tried to develop lasting and beneficial connections between them (Almeida-Santana & Moreno-Gil, 2018). Hence, it is essential to enhance loyalty among tourists to guarantee the sustainability of the tourism industry (Kawada & Naoi, 2018, Nasir et al., 2021).

The concept of destination loyalty within the tourism literature has been explained broadly in terms of the desire to repeat visits (Prayag et al., 2017; Morais & Lin, 2010) and intention to recommend (Cheng et al., 2016; Morais & Lin, 2010). Therefore, Chen and Tsai (2007) claimed that the concept of destination loyalty is defined as tourists decision to repeat visits to the same destination and their willingness to recommend to others. Hence, when the tourists have a

preference to revisit and recommend to their families, friends and colleagues, this indicates their loyalty to a certain destination.

Definition and Concepts of Perceived Value

According to Wen (2011), the concept of perceived value refers to the tourists' sacrifice, which includes monetary and non-monetary to obtain a product or service. The key elements in this definition are monetary and non-monetary. Monetary comprises of money spent by the tourists to pay for accommodation, transportation, entertainment, and foods. Meanwhile, non-monetary relates to the time the tourists sacrifice such as taking leave from working. This construct has a significant effect on the others. For instance, perceived value can be an appropriate measure to gauge place attachment (Yi et al., 2021) and destination loyalty (Sato et al., 2018; Nadarajah & Ramalu, 2018; Huang et al., 2019). Based on the findings of the past studies, this study constructs two hypotheses:

H1a: Perceived value has a significant impact on place attachment

H1b: Perceived value has a significant impact on destination loyalty

Definition and Concepts of Place Attachment

Suntikul and Jachna (2016) claimed that place attachment is related to an individual's personal connection with one particular destination. In other words, this concept emphasizes how the human interaction with the destination could build a strong emotional bond between them. Therefore, strengthening place attachment among tourists is an essential marketing tool to increase market share and frequent repeat visits among them (Tsai, 2012). Place attachment is a crucial element affecting destination loyalty (Chou, & Chang 2017; Patwardhan et al., 2020; Reitsamer & Brunner-Sperdin, 2021). Based on past studies, perceived value can be an appropriate predictor to gauge place attachment (Yi, Fu, So, & Zheng, 2021) and destination loyalty (Sato et al., 2018; Nadarajah & Ramalu, 2018; Huang et al., 2019). Moreover, place attachment is an important element to influence the destination loyalty (Chou, & Chang 2017; Patwardhan et al., 2020; Nasir et al., 2020; Reitsamer & Brunner-Sperdin, 2021; Yi et al., 2021; Nurbasari et al., 2021). However, these studies only examined the direct effects among constructs, but the mediating effect of place attachment on the relationship between perceived value and destination loyalty was not tested. Hence, this is a research gap that needs to be filled in by this research. Based on this background, this study proposes another two hypotheses: one direct and another one is the mediating effect (research gap).

H2: Place attachment has a significant impact on destination loyalty

H3: The mediating effect of place attachment on the relationship between perceived value and destination loyalty.

Table 1: Identifying the relationship which has not yet been investigated in the past studies (research gap)

No.	Researchers	PV -> P (H1a)	PV -> DL (H1b)	P -> DL (H2)	PV -> P -> DL (H3)
1	Chou & Chang (2017)	X	X	/	X
2.	Sato et al. (2018)	X	/	X	X
3.	Nadarajah & Ramalu (2018)	X	/	X	X
4.	Huang et al. (2019)	X	/	X	X
5.	Patwardhan et al. (2020)	X	X	/	X
6.	Nasir et al. (2020)	X	X	/	X
7.	Reitsamer & Brunner-Sperdin (2021)	X	X	/	X

8.	Yi et al. (2021)	X	X	/	X
9.	Nurbasari et al. (2021)	X	X	/	X
10.	Jiang & Hong (2021)	/	X	X	X
11.	Current Study	/	/	/	/

Note: Perceived Value (PV), Place Attachment (P), Destination Loyalty (DL), The relationship that has been tested (/), The relationship that has not been tested (x)

Table 1 above explained on the relationships that have been studied in the past studies between these three constructs: perceived value, place attachment and destination loyalty. However, none of the past study in Table 1 has tested these three constructs simultaneously in one research model. Most importantly, none of the past studies in Table 1 has examined the mediating effect of place attachment on the relationship between perceived value and destination loyalty relationship. Hence, it is crucial to bridge the gap in the past studies in the current study. Therefore, based on the research gap highlighted in Table 1 above, this study proposes a research model comprising of perceived value, place attachment and destination loyalty, as illustrated in Figure 2.

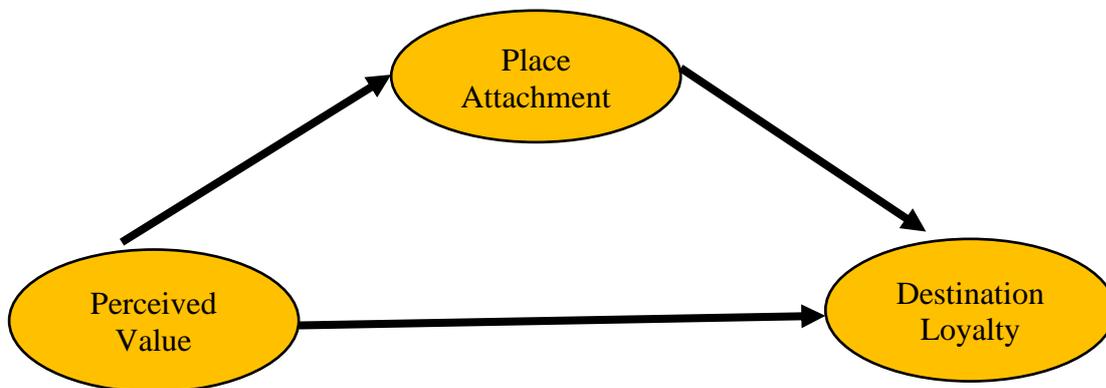


Figure 2: Research Model

Conclusion

The present study suggests a new conceptual model comprising of perceived value, place attachment and destination loyalty. Furthermore, this study enlightens the scholars to test the mediating effect of place attachment on the relationship between perceived value and destination loyalty in the context of domestic tourists in Terengganu. Hence, this model is important for future researchers who are interested in improving the level of loyalty among local tourists visiting Terengganu. Since this paper is just a research project proposal, the following step is to execute Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) using pilot data and Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) and Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) using the data collected from fieldwork. This analysis is crucial to confirm the relationship among the constructs.

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