

# **Tourists' Attitude Matters for the International Travelling Intention to Malaysia: A Study on Tourism Quality Experience and Travel Frequency as Determinant Factors**

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## **Abstract**

**Purpose:** This study explores the mediating role of attitude on tourism quality experience and travel frequency as the determinants of international tourists' intention to visit Malaysia.

**Design/methodology/approach:** This study used the quantitative survey analysis methodology to develop and test a structural model with partial least squares (PLS-SEM).

**Findings:** This study investigates the concepts of creating a positive tourist attitude to build a destinations' image, using Travel frequency that relies on traditional forms of travelling. The study highlights the importance of examining the influence of a credible and valuable source that can help build tourist quality experience towards a destination and its impact on the audience's intention to revisit the destination in Malaysia.

**Research limitations/implications:** The population of this study was limited to international tourists who visited tourism destinations in Malaysia. Therefore, the results from this study may not be generalised beyond this population.

**Practical implications:** The findings will help highlight the methods to develop destinations' revisit intention of travellers with their perceptions towards destination attributes and quality of experience.

**Originality/value:** This research reveals the underlying procedure of forming tourists' intention for taking their perception of experience quality, tourist attitude, and visit intention with a latent construct of travel frequency.

**Keywords:** Intention to visit, tourism quality experience, tourist satisfaction, tourist attitude, revisit intention, travel frequency.

## Introduction

International tourism has developed into one of the world's largest and most essential economic sectors, generating enormous amounts of people, goods, and cash. It is channelled via the forefront of globalisation. Tourism is constantly transferring consumer preferences, cultural traditions, businesspeople, and capital into new locations across the world (Hazbun, 2003). This business has been and continues to be a significant source of foreign money for a number of Southeast Asian countries. The increase in international visitors to Malaysia is mostly owing to an increase in European and, more specifically, Middle Eastern tourists. Reasons for this exponential increment are due to attractive and affordable packaging and promotional activities, especially in ASEAN countries. Thus, the country's major economy depends on tourism activities, mainly the international tourists. International tourist refers to travellers outside the host country with various purposes of travelling such as holiday, business, visiting family and friends and shopping (Omar & Ab. Karim, 2014).

In Southeast Asia Malaysia is one amongst most demanding tourist destination. Its strategic geographical location between Thailand, Singapore, and Indonesia has made Malaysia a centrepiece of Southeast Asia's exotic tourism destination. Malaysia offers travellers a tropical and warm climate throughout the year with a temperature range of 21°C - 32°C, beautiful beaches, diversity of culture, world heritage sites, and a variety of cuisines. These natural attributes are among the primary reasons that promote Malaysia as one of the world's most popular international tourist destinations. According to a UNWTO (2017) report, around 26.7 million international tourists arrived in Malaysia in 2016 from Singapore, Indonesia, China, and Thailand.

Furthermore, the report indicates that Malaysia faced a straight 7.4% rise in international tourists' arrival in 2018 from the previous year ([www.e-unwto.org](http://www.e-unwto.org), 2018). Malaysia gained gross earnings of USD 19,143 million in the same year from the tourism industry. The increasing earning inspires tourism industry players in Malaysia to examine possible determinant factors that could promote favourable memorable experiences for the international tourists during their visits. These efforts will provide valuable insights to encourage international tourists to visit or revisit the same destination for their next trip. Destination marketing emphasises that organisations should understand the tourists' behaviour and the possible factors that mooted their attitude and intention to visit the destination, ultimately contributing to economic growth. The travellers' attitude towards the destination and their quality experience can reflect their intention and number of visits to the same destination (Travel frequency). Due to the extreme competition in the context of tourism industry, almost every country takes count for arrival of tourist yearly. Indeed these records of data statics are beneficial for the analysis of growth in tourism sector. On the other hand the most lacking behind these data is the count of number of repeat visitors among them (Wahid et al., 2016). This information is crucial for marketing practitioners to develop strategic marketing promotions and market development in the tourism industry.

Nowadays, tourism agencies substantially concentrate on creating delightful experiences for their clients (Walls et al., 2011). Tourists simply do not purchase services as a product. Instead, they primarily focus on consuming the quality of experiences (Oh et al., 2007). Customer experience in the travel industry is characterised as the abstract individual responses and sentiments related to the travel activities (Chen & Chen, 2010). In that manner, everything a tourist receives is called an "experience" (Oh et al., 2007). The experience quality refers to "tourists' affective responses to their desired social-psychological benefits" (Chen & Chen, 2010). It can be seen as a personal contribution with occasions that occurred at any destination. Numerous studies indicate the quality of customer experiences sustained as a highlighted core value for tourism businesses. Thus, making an overall tourism quality experience is a significant objective for firms in the travel industry.

Past studies have found strong associations between the impact of destination attributes and perception of trip experiences among international tourists, which raised their satisfaction level and further led to revisit intention. The authors who at very beginning talked about repeat visitation, points out that there is a huge differentiation between repeat visitors and first-time visitors in terms of motivation. Som et al., 2012 claimed in their researches that repeat visitors are much more specific than the first time visitors while selecting any holiday location. The major differentiation between both kinds of tourists includes behavior characteristics, destination satisfaction, perception and image, motivation etc (Kruger et al., 2010). However, there is still a lack of research focused on some aforementioned factors like tourist attitude, quality experience and intention to visit as a determinant of tourism which further includes travel frequency (TRF) as a latent construct. Hence, to fill the research gap, this study examines relationships between tourism quality experience (TQE) and intention to visit (ITV) the destination. This study will explore how tourism quality experience and TRF influence the international tourists' intention to visit Malaysia. Further, this study will investigate the mediating effect of attitude between the TQE, TRF and intention. The findings will provide insightful information to tourism agencies, policymakers, marketers, and researchers to plan for proper marketing strategies in attracting and promoting Malaysia as one of the most popular and favourable tourist destinations in Southeast Asia.

## **Literature Review of Tourism Quality Experience**

The concept of quality experience has been employed in various business industries with the primary focus on building and managing better experiences for their consumers (Walls et al., 2011). In this regard, customers do not simply purchase products and services; instead, they are predominantly concerned about seeking and consuming good experiences (Oh et al., 2007). The tourism industry is necessarily a marketplace for experience, where visitors get "mental places" where experience usually happens. Therefore, appropriate measures are required to capture the determinants of quality experience among the tourists, leading to favourable intentions to visit the destination.

Tourists tend to bring a positive perception towards the destination when having satisfying experiences, including entertainment and attractions. Similar to the destination characteristics contributes as a major part in respect to tourist experiences.

Even so a measurable research gap tries to explore the link between tourists perception and attitude towards destination. This gap calls for further investigation of how travellers experience during their trips impacts on attitude and intention to visit the destination. Accordingly, this research considered quality experience as a variable to get an idea of travelers building procedure with an intention to visit.

## **2.1 The construct of tourism quality experience**

The tourism quality experience explains that tourists' affective response to their desired social-psychological benefits is voluntary and personally involved with events in destinations (Huybers & Crouch, 2015). For instance, according to Sanchez-Franco, et al., (2007), attitude formation towards brands is based on the quality of user experience. Consumers carrying previous experiences with the brands will significantly affect their attitude (Kara et al., 2009). Thus, strengthening the quality experience with brands can also help improve its perceived quality and the attitude towards brands (Diallo et al., 2015).

Similarly, attitude towards the destination depends on the quality of experience gained during the visit (Hsu et al., 2017). The higher the tourist's quality experience will lead to a greater favourable attitude towards the destination. Hence, tourism industry players in Malaysia should seek ways to enhance the destination brands, such as offering quality services in transportation, events and activities, various accommodation packages and related facilities.

Here the quality experience is considered in four dimensions as hedonics, peace of mind, recognition and involvement (Otto & Ritchie, 1996). Here the term hedonics can be explained as emotional aspect of destination experience that can be elaborate as fun and memory. Whereas, the peace of mind explained as psychological and physical state of comfortableness and relaxation at any place. Involvement can be explained as engagement of tourist under control with a complete procedure includes decision making and travel experiences as well. The diversion of any points getting away from the daily routine, is being actively engrossed in a destination and helps to forgot the matter from everyday's life. From the standpoint of managerial marketing, emotional recall and positive memories may be an effective way to influence the intentions and decisions of travellers (Kovabara & Pillemer, 2010). Hence tourism industry agencies in Malaysia must evaluate travellers' subjective interpretation of quality experience, leading to their favourable attitude towards visiting the destination.

## **2.2 The construct of attitude formation**

In destination tourism, attitude can be described as a psychological tendency that tourists express positively and negatively while engaging in an affirmative manner (Schiffman & Kanuk, 1994). Numerous literature (Lin, Wu & Ling 2017) explain that the underlying theory of attitude formation is based on cognitive, affective, and behavioural domains. The cognitive domain represents how attitude is built. Affective reflects the psychological manner which expresses tourist preferences, and behavioural expresses the intention to visit the destination. The attitude of travellers and their behavioural intention are directly proportional to one another. Thus, attitude is a major explicate for the customer's behaviour (Lee & Hong, 2016). The more the tourists form a favourable attitude towards the behaviour, the stronger their intention to perform the behaviour (Lee, 2009). Attitudes and perceptions of a place emerge as imperative in paving the way towards generating interest and planning to visit for a holiday experience. Exploring the attitudes of international tourists towards possibly holidaying in Malaysia would offer vital insightful information for tourism service providers to design and implement suitable promotion holiday packages, exciting activities, attractive and unique accommodation that reflect the multi-racial of local cultures.

### **2.3 The construct of travel frequency**

Several academics have explored the links between attachment and place image among first-time and repeat travellers in tourism (Morais & Lin, 2010). The findings reveal that prior experience was a major predictor of desire to revisit, resistance to change one's favourite destination, and recommendation of the location to others. Correia and Oliveira (2008) assert that the destination image of first-time tourists is distinct from that of recurrent visitors. For the first time, being more activity-oriented and repeatable is more tourism-oriented. Schwarzer (2008) also mentioned that tendency to return to the same destination and likely to purchase during the trips among repeat visitors are high. Theoretically, the repeat visitation is aligned with behaviour intention that associates with attitudes toward buying any product or destination and quality of experience. Thus, repeat travellers to the same destination would be willing to pay higher rates, repurchase intention, and recommend products or services to others. Therefore, tourism service providers should explore the possible avenues to encourage repeat travellers to Malaysia, contributing to the country's economic growth. More specifically, this study will focus on understanding international travellers' attitudes towards Malaysia and the importance of their prior travel experiences. The possible differences between first time and repeat travellers will indicate their loyalty towards the destination. Therefore, the overall travellers' experience with its image is one of the major factors to induce TRF to the same destination.

### **Hypothesis Development**

The purpose of this study is to develop and test a higher-order model of TQE applied in the tourism industry, outlining relevant dimensions and outcomes (Klaus & Maklan, 2012). The cognitive theory has been used to support the research framework development indicates that tourist quality experience and TRF considerably affect attitude and behavioural intention. In this study, tourist intention is encouraged by their motivation, action, and planning to travel to a particular destination (Min et al., 2020), explained by the Stimulus Organism Response (SOR) model. The SOR explains that tourists' internal emotions (O) are shaped by the external environment's stimulus (S), which then triggers the tourist's response (R). SOR model is inextricably linked to cognitive theory, as it entails psychological relationships that are appropriate for explaining tourist behaviour.

#### **2.4.1 The effect of tourism quality experience on attitude and intention**

Prebensen et al. (2013) indicate service providers should thoroughly evaluate and review the resources allocation to derive the optimal TQE, leading to future consumer behaviours. The positive effect on tourist pleasant memories will act as a catalyst or customer motivation to revisit the tourism places (Buonincontri, 2017). Thus, this study postulates the following hypotheses:

Rathakrishnan et al. (2020) identified the memorable tourism experience model constructs for visitor loyalty in wildlife tourism from 193 international respondents from Australia, Britain, Canada, Denmark, Germany, the United Kingdom, and the USA. This study employed tourists who visited Sepilok Orangutan Rehabilitation Centre based on judgement sampling. The multiple linear regression analysis resulted in a significant relationship between novelty, wildlife tourism, stimulation, adverse feeling, and activity and visitor loyalty. Wildlife tourism and novelty were the two most potent influences on loyalty behaviour.



Mahdzar (2019) surveyed tourists' memorable experiences in revisiting Islamic tourism destinations in Shah Alam, Selangor. The memorable experience was measured by hedonism, involvement, meaningfulness, refreshment, knowledge, novelty, and social interaction. The result, which was dominant by local tourists (92%), highlighted that the experience positively influenced their revisit intentions. It is also found that the strongest factor influencing tourist revisit intention is hedonism and followed by meaningfulness.

H1: Tourism quality experiences have a significant positive impact on attitude.

Mahdzar and Ghani (2019) investigated the association between travellers' memorable tourism experience qualities and revisiting intention in a theme park located in Putrajaya, Malaysia. Hedonism, participation, meaningfulness, refreshment, knowledge, novelty, sociability, and interaction were the constructions of memorable experiences. A conducted survey was represented in the poll by a total of 227 foreign respondents including countries like China, United Arab Emirates, Singapore, Canada, and Japan. The findings indicated that memorable tourism experiences significantly influenced tourists' revisit intention in a theme park. Of all variables, the novelty was the strongest influence, followed by meaningfulness and a refreshing experience.

Wee and Ariffin (2021) investigated the determinants of behavioural intention in the historical city of Melaka based on service experience, novelty experience, and leisure experience towards revisiting intention in the context of cultural heritage tourism. Based on 300 responses, half of them were international tourists, and the result shows only service experience had a positive and significant effect on behavioural intention.

A study by Kunasegaran et al. (2019) focused on the experience of international tourists on healthy signature food in Melaka. The study used a semi-structured interview based on open-ended questions asking the tourists if they enjoy Malacca signature food. Twenty international tourists who had consumed food in either restaurants or street stalls in Jonker Street participated in the interview session. The findings revealed four themes: a memorable experience, food hygiene consciousness, cultural values, and tourist happiness. The international tourists agreed these themes had a direct impact on their satisfaction and revisit attention.

H2: Tourism quality experiences have a significant positive impact on travel intention.

#### **2.4.2 The effect of travel frequency on attitude and intention**

A traveller's total satisfaction with a place may be equated to a subjective assessment of all previous travel experiences in the destination. Numerous research (Baker & Crompton 2000; Ismail et al., 2020; Rosmini et al., 2021) demonstrate that the number of previous trips or TRF to a certain place may effectively reflect an individual's prior travel experience, which can be quantified objectively or subjectively. Kozak (2001) establishes that overall contentment and TRF have an effect on the intention to return, particularly to developed places. Hence, a favourable experience with tourism destinations' services, products, and other resources may result in return visits and positive word of mouth.

Ismail et al. (2020) surveyed popular Malaysian islands such as Perhentian, Redang, and Langkawi through self-administered 1285 tourists from Denmark, France, USA, UK, Italy, Germany and Netherland. Various ethnic groups behaved differently when it came to destination attributes. The majority of English and European tourists are more adventurous than

domestic tourists. The study suggested more promotion and marketing should increase the average length of stay in Malaysia. Ismail et al. (2020) proposed less popular islands like Kapas, Lang Tengah, Gemia, Tenggol, and Bidong should be promoted with Perhentian and Redang Islands as multiple destinations as they are so close to each other. Based on their findings, on average, European tourists stay on the islands for more than six (6) nights. In a study by Ismail et al. (2020), European and English tourists recorded the highest length of stay in small islands and Langkawi Island. The majority of European tourists come from the Netherlands, France, Sweden, Denmark, Switzerland and Italy. Chinese tourists were from China, Singapore, Hong Kong and Taiwan.

In another study of island tourism, Rosmini et al. (2021) studied on days average spending on accommodations for visitors to Perhentian Island. Demographic, trip-related, and psychographic characteristics were identified as significant determinant factors. A survey on 929 visitors consisted of 527 (57.4%) were international tourists, and the remaining 402 (42.59%) were domestic tourists. A two-step Chi-Square Automatic Interaction Detection algorithm was used to test international tourists from Asia, Europe, Oceania, Africa, and the Americas. The analysis revealed that the Italians have the highest average spending of any segment, USD185 per visit. In their study, Rosmini et al. (2021) found the international tourists' average stays were four nights, and domestic's two night stay.

While the association between tourist satisfaction and return intention has received considerable attention in the literature, the relationship between TRF and tourist attitude has received far less attention. As a result, this study makes the following hypotheses:

H3: Travel frequency has a significant positive impact on travel intention.

Yu et al. (2020) explored the influence of destination image, familiarity, information search behaviour, involvement, and travel motivation on ecotourism destination loyalty in the context of a developing country. Specifically, the research focused on Penang Hill. The sample size was 813 international tourists from various continents, Asia, Africa, Europe, North America, South America, and Oceania. Hypotheses were tested using Structural Equation Model. The findings show a positive relationship between ecotourists' information search behaviour and the influence of their destination loyalty. In addition, the results recorded that 49% of the tourists' length of stay was for less than three days, followed by 37.4% (4 days to a week). The author commented that destination managers should leverage ecotourists' information search behaviour by presenting interesting, positive images based on the findings.

H4: Travel frequency has a significant positive impact on attitude.

### **2.4.3 The effect of attitude**

Tourists will form some sort of both positive and negative psychological tendencies while engaging in a particular behaviour (Kraus, 1995). Attitude predisposes an individual to perform in a specific way. Attitude is a manipulative factor in determining whether a potential place is chosen as part of the evoked set and deciding the destination (Um & Crompton, 1990). In contrast, a few authors argued that there is no significant relationship between attitude and intention (Sparks, 2007).

Wong et al. (2019) studied the factors influencing tourists' intentions to behave environmentally responsible in marine parks. Of 103 responses, 22.3% was responded by international tourists but did not mention the origin of the countries. The study discovered that environmental awareness and destination image had a substantial effect on tourists' intentions

using the partial least squares approach. According to the report, the majority of visitors travelled for personal reasons (96.1 percent). Environmental consumption values were shown to have no discernible effect on tourists' intentions to behave ecologically. Tourists were hesitant to behave more ecologically responsibly in order to maximise their worth. This study proved that, despite a rising number of environmentally concerned tourists exist, they may not care about the environment while on vacation. Additionally, the data indicated that visitors' ultimate objective is to absorb the vacation experience and take use of the destination's amenities without being burdened by environmental duties.

Additionally, Abbasi et al. (2021) examined the elements that impact visitors' intention to return. 30% of the 330 responders were overseas travellers. The findings indicate that perceived behavioural control, perceived value, destination image, and contentment all have a substantial impact on visitors' inclination to revisit. The findings indicated that attitude had little impact on tourists' inclination to revisit Penang Hill.

Tourism-related attitudes are affected through destination image and behaviour accordingly, by reinforcing existing, developing new and changing them. Previous travel experiences can affect the attitude of tourists positively and negatively. In most instances, the visitors revisit intention is positively influenced by the travel experiences (Gomez-Jacinto et al., 1999). Similarly, Mazursky (1989) said that the number of TRF significantly affects future intention. Both general consumer behaviour and attitudinal studies explained the relationship between attitude, motivation, and behaviour intention. However, we found no studies to get insight into the impact of tourist attitude on intention to visit. Here we intend to analyse the impact of attitude on tourist visit intention and the mediating effect on tourism quality experience, TRF and travel intention. Hence, we postulate the following hypotheses:

H3: Attitude has a significant positive effect on travel intention.

Numerous researchers, including Fang and Ariffin (2021), undertook research to determine the relative influence of three distinct experiential constructs: novelty experience, service experience, and leisure experience. These encounters were evaluated to see if 300 tourists want to suggest and return to Melaka's old city. From a marketing experience viewpoint, this study examines the drivers of behavioural intention to visit a historical city in the context of cultural heritage tourism. This study was undertaken in Malacca, Malaysia, a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Multiple Regression Analysis was used to interview 300 respondents, half of them were international visitors who had visited Malacca for at least two (2) days. The findings of this study indicate that leisure and service experiences have a favourable effect on behavioural intention. Furthermore, while cultural heritage tourism goods are unique, they are not the major determinant of tourist revisit intention or favourable word-of-mouth.

Muniandy et al. (2019) did a study to ascertain the elements that influence consumers' decisions to stay in green hotels in Malaysia. The purpose of this study is to examine the relationship between subjective norms and attitude, the relationship between perceived behavioural control and attitude, the effects of attitude, subjective norms, and perceived behavioural control, the relationship between environmental concern and customer intention, and the mediating effect of the TPB on environmental concern and customer intention when it comes to choosing green hotels in Malaysia. The study surveyed travellers at Kuala Lumpur International Airport, Senai International Airport, and Penang International Airport through online and offline questionnaires. The findings demonstrated a favourable link between perceived behavioural control and attitude, based on 137 valid responses. There is a positive correlation between attitude and intention, and environmental concern has an effect on the intention to stay in a green hotel.



According to Ahmad et al. (2021), physical characteristics are the primary determinants of visitors' travel intention following the Covid-19 crisis recovery. This research surveyed Asian and European visitors aged 18 to 65 who visited Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, in March 2020. The results suggested that, out of 426 valid replies, destination image had a favourable effect as a mediating factor in the interactions between physical, socio-psychological, and economic contexts that influence post-crisis recovery visit intention. Physical characteristics were the most predictive of the association between these physical features and the travel intentions of Asian and European tourists. The association between destination image and intention to visit was found to be favourable, indicating that this relationship plays a substantial role in tourists' intention to visit.

H4: Attitude has a significant mediating effect on tourism quality experience and travel intention

According to Noradzhar, love is the most essential element affecting foreign visitors' attitudes regarding street cuisine in Malacca and their willingness to return to the city in 2021. The data was collected from 386 respondents using an online questionnaire (Google Forms) and a paper copy distributed to tourists on Jonker Walk and in the surrounding neighbourhoods. The purpose of this study was to ascertain the characteristics that impact international visitors' perceptions of Malacca's street cuisine. Attitudes such as love, cleanliness, meal quality, and service quality were shown to be positive and significant predictors of return intention.

Saragih and Jonathan (2019) conducted a study on the distinctive behaviour and proclivity of Indonesians who had medical tourism experiences in Malaysia to go abroad for healthcare treatments. The study enrolled 200 individuals who had been to Malaysia at least once for medical care related to a general check-up, cardiovascular, cancer, orthopaedics, neurological systems, or dental concerns. The findings indicate that behavioural beliefs, which encompass attitudes, subjective standards, and perceived behavioural control, affected Indonesian patients' attitudes and intentions to seek medical care in Malaysia. Additionally, the study discovered that patients' relationships with influential persons, such as family members or relatives, affected their propensity to seek treatment in Malaysia. According to this study, Indonesian patients travel to Malaysia for medical treatment on the advice of individuals they see as significant. The multidimensional framework for the research (Fig. 1) was built using selected domains from the tourist experience literature review.

H5: Attitude has a significant mediating effect on travel frequency and travel intention

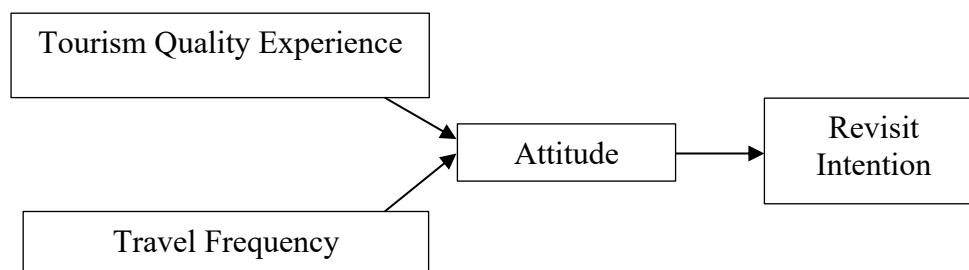


Fig. 1. Research Framework

## Methods

This study explored inbound tourism in Malaysia and the causality of international tourists' plans to return on another trip to this country. The international tourists participating in this study were from Africa, China, Europe, the Middle East, Oceania, and Southeast Asia. The respondents were selected by using a convenience sampling technique. A structured questionnaire was developed since this study investigates the effect of targeted latent constructs quantitatively, as suggested by Creswell (2014). The survey questions adapted question items from Maneerat (2016). The Likert 6-point scale (i.e. (1) = Strongly Disagree to (6) = Strongly Agree) was adopted to avoid the possibility of a midpoint, therefore ensuring that the response was set at a certain point (Croasmun & Ostrom, 2011). The Google Form has been used to obtain responses from international tourists. Google Forms act as a snowball sampling technique to identify potential international tourists as identifying them using the conventional survey would be difficult. The questionnaires were distributed to friends and relatives seeking answers from international tourists who visited Malaysia at least once.

Structural Equation Modeling with Partial Least Squares (i.e. PLS-SEM) estimation multivariate data technique was used for the statistical analysis since the researchers intend to explore the research framework of this study simultaneously (Hair et al., 2017). Besides that, one of the constructs in the research framework consists of one indicator for measuring the latent construct of travel frequency. According to Hair et al. (2017), the PLS-SEM statistical analysis allows one indicator latent variable in the variance-based structural equation modelling analysis.

Additionally, the significance test was performed using the Bootstrapping approach in this PLS-SEM study, which is regarded to be more robust than the usual t-test method (Hair et al., 2012). As proposed by Hair et al. (2017), 7000 replications of data were computed to get trustworthy findings for empirical t-statistics and Bias Corrected (i.e. BCa) bootstrap. Hair et al. (2017) recommended using bootstrapping to determine the mediating influence. To determine the mediating effect, Zhao et al. (2010) and Iacobucci et al. (2007) advise the following:

- 1) If the path of the independent variable to the dependent variable was not significant but the indirect effect was, the mediating effect was a full mediation effect.
- 2) If the independent variable's path to the dependent variable was significant and so was the indirect effect, the mediating effect was a partial mediation effect..

## Findings

### Demographic Profile

A total of 402 international tourists were agreed to participate in this study. Table 1 shows the descriptive analysis for the respondent's profile. The study indicated the majority of the respondents travelling to Malaysia are from the Middle East (22.9%) origin, followed by Southeast Asia (19.7%) and European (19.2%) origin. However, respondents from China (9.7%), followed by Oceania (12.2%) and African (16.4%), are the minority tourists population.

Table 1: Respondent's Profile

Profile	Frequency	Percentage
<b>Origin</b>		
African	66	16.4
China	39	9.7
European	77	19.2
Middle East	92	22.9
Oceania	49	12.2
Southeast Asia	79	19.7
<b>Gender</b>		
Female	199	49.5
Male	203	50.5
<b>Age</b>		
18 – 25 years old	108	26.8
26 – 35 years old	95	23.6
36 – 45 years old	127	31.6
46 – 55 years old	50	12.5
56 years old and above	22	5.5
<b>The Number of Times Travelled to Malaysia</b>		
1 time	92	22.9
2 times	136	33.8
3 times and more	174	43.3
<b>Time Duration Spent in Each Visit</b>		
1 – 3 days	103	25.6
4 – 6 days	180	44.8
7 days and above	119	29.6
<b>Preferred Style for Travelling</b>		
Casual	134	33.3
Formal	48	11.9
Pre-Organised	118	29.4
Backpacking	102	25.4
<b>Purpose of Travelling</b>		
Holiday	222	55.2
Business	83	20.6
Visiting Family and Friends	74	18.5
Shopping	23	5.7

In terms of gender, male respondents (50.5%) are the majority that participates in this study. Most of the respondents' age is between 36 to 45 years old (31.6%) category. Results also depicted most of the respondents have the number of TRF to Malaysia between 3 times and more (43.3%) and would spend around 4 to 6 days (44.8%) in each vacation to Malaysia. The descriptive analysis reported in Table 1 also indicated that the majority of the respondents preferred casual (33.3%) style for travelling, followed by pre-organised (29.4%) style, backpacking (25.4%) style and lastly, formal (11.9%) style. Besides that, in terms of travelling purpose to Malaysia, most of them indicated that they travel for a holiday (55.2%), followed by business (20.6%), visiting family and friends (18.5%) and lastly for the shopping (5.7%).

## Measurement Model Analysis

Table 2 indicated that all items used for measuring the targeted variables in the measurement model meet the minimum threshold value of .70 factor loading (Hair et al., 2017). Besides that, the Average Variance Explain (i.e. AVE) for each construct was above .50 (Hair et al., 2017), as well as both reliability tests (i.e. Composite Reliability and Cronbach's Alpha) for each targeted construct were also above .70 (Hair et al., 2017). Therefore, it confirms that each variable for this measurement model has an optimal uni-dimensionality validity (Hair et al., 2017).

Table 2: Convergent Validity for Measurement Model

Indicator	Loadin g	AVE	$\gamma$	A
<b>Tourism Quality Experience</b>				
Having quality service at the destination is important for a vacation (TQE1)	0.870	.705	.905	.861
Having quality accommodation choices are important for a vacation (TQE2)	0.859			
Having quality facility choices are important for a vacation (TQE3)	0.763			
Having a transportation facility is convenient for the vacation (TQE4)	0.862			
<b>Travel Frequency (TRF)</b>	Single Indicator Measurement			
<b>Attitude</b>				
I think a vacation within Malaysia would be fun (ATT1)	0.868	.679	.894	.842
I think that travel and tour within Malaysia would be interesting (ATT2)	0.883			
I think that travel and tour within Malaysia would be a good experience (ATT3)	0.772			
People's travelling experience will influence my interest to travel (ATT4)	0.766			
<b>Travel Intention</b>				
I am willing to travel and tour within Malaysia (TRI1)	0.856	.615	.864	.790
I am committed to travelling and touring within Malaysia (TRI2)	0.736			
I am interested in having a vacation within Malaysia (TRI3)	0.812			
There is a high chance that I would travel and tour within Malaysia (TRI4)	0.725			

Note: <sup>a</sup>It is a one indicator latent construct; AVE = Average Variance Explained;  $\gamma$  = Composite Reliability;  $\alpha$  = Cronbach's Alpha;  $p < .01$ .

As for the discriminant validity for this measurement model, Table 2 demonstrates that each latent variable totally discriminates from each other since each HTMT ratio value was below .90. Hence, the group of items used to measure specific latent construct is acceptable to really measure the targeted latent construct (Henseler et al., 2015).

Table 2: HTMT Discriminant Analysis for Measurement Model

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
(1)	-			
(2)	0.066	-		
(3)	0.608	0.112	-	
(4)	0.741	0.066	0.668	-

Note: (1) = Tourism Quality Experience; (2) = Travel Frequency; (3) = Attitude; (4) = Travel Intention.

### Structural Model Analysis

The structural model analysis indicated that TQE and TRF simultaneously could explain around 29% of variance explained toward Attitude mediator latent construct. The study also revealed that, in the same way, TQE, TRF, and Attitude factors could explain about 47.8% of variance explained toward Travel Intention endogenous latent construct.

In terms of effect size and predictive relevance analysis, Table 3 indicates that TQE has a large effect on attitude but a medium effect on Travel Intention. However, the study revealed that TRF was found to have a negligible effect on Attitude. Simultaneously, the attitude was also found to have a medium effect size and also medium size of predictive relevance size toward the Travel Intention.

Table 3: Structural Model for Measurement Model

Path	$\beta$	t-statistic	p-value	95% BCa Bootstrap	$f^2$	$q^2$	Remark
TQE → ATT	0.529	10.959*	<.01	(0.425, 0.615)	.393	.302	Large
TRF → ATT	-0.070	1.590 (NS)	.112	(-0.160, 0.012)	.007	.001	Small
ATT → TRI	0.325	6.399*	<.01	(0.222, 0.421)	.173	.151	Medium
TQE → TRI	0.462	10.365*	<.01	(0.371, 0.543)	.292	.127	Medium
TRF → TRI	0.117	3.318*	<.01	(0.044, 0.184)	.026	.006	Small

Note: TQE = Tourism Quality Experience; TRF = Travel Frequency; ATT = Attitude; TRI = Travel Intention;  $\beta$  = Standardized Beta Coefficient;  $f^2$  = Effect Size;  $q^2$  = Predictive Relevance; <sup>a</sup>The bootstrap samples was 5000 samples; NS = Not Significant; \*p <.01.

As for the structural path analysis, Table 3 shows that all respective paths had a statistically significant effect with a minimum 95% confidence level except for the TRF → ATT path. All the t-statistic values were above the 5% level of significance, which is t-statistic >1.96. Besides that, by referring to the Bootstrapping confidence interval analysis, the analysis also aligns with the t-statistical research, where the 95% confidence interval did not contain zero value.

More specifically, the analysis indicated that TQE ( $\beta = 0.529$ ,  $t = 10.959$ ,  $p <.01$ ) have a significant positive effect on attitude, whereas TRF ( $\beta = -0.070$ ,  $t = 1.590$ ,  $p = .112$ ) can be said did not having a significant effect toward attitude. Simultaneously, the analysis also indicated that the effect of TQE ( $\beta = 0.462$ ,  $t = 10.365$ ,  $p <.01$ ) and TRF ( $\beta = 0.117$ ,  $t = 3.318$ ,  $p <.01$ ) toward Travel Intention were found to have a significant positive effect. In the same



way, the analysis also revealed that, Attitude ( $\beta = 0.325$ ,  $t = 6.399$ ,  $p < .01$ ) was also found to have a significant positive effect on Travel Intention.

### Mediating Analysis

The mediating analysis reported in Table 4 indicated that Attitudes were statistically mediated the relationship between TQE  $\rightarrow$  TRI but not for the TRF  $\rightarrow$  TRI. It is because the indirect effect coefficient was significantly at a 5% level of error (t-statistics  $> 1.96$ ) as well as the 95% BCa Bootstrapping confidence interval did not include the zero value for the TQE  $\rightarrow$  ATT  $\rightarrow$  TRI except for the TRF  $\rightarrow$  ATT  $\rightarrow$  TRI. Since the direct effect of TQE  $\rightarrow$  TRI was statistically significant, the mediating path can be considered partially mediated. Figure 2 and Figure 3 shows the results of the analysis using PLS-SEM theory.

Table 4: Indirect Effect for Structural Model

Indirect Path	IEC	t-statistic	p-value	95% BCa Bootstrap	Direct Path
TQE $\rightarrow$ ATT $\rightarrow$ TRI	0.172	5.320**	<.01	(0.112, 0.239)	TQE $\rightarrow$ TRI*
TRF $\rightarrow$ ATT $\rightarrow$ TRI	-0.023	1.522 (NS)	.128	(-0.056, 0.003)	TRF $\rightarrow$ TRI*

Note: TQE = Tourism Quality Experience; TRF = Travel Frequency; ATT = Attitude; TRI = Travel Intention; IEC = Indirect Effect Coefficient; NS = Not Significant; \* $p < .01$ .

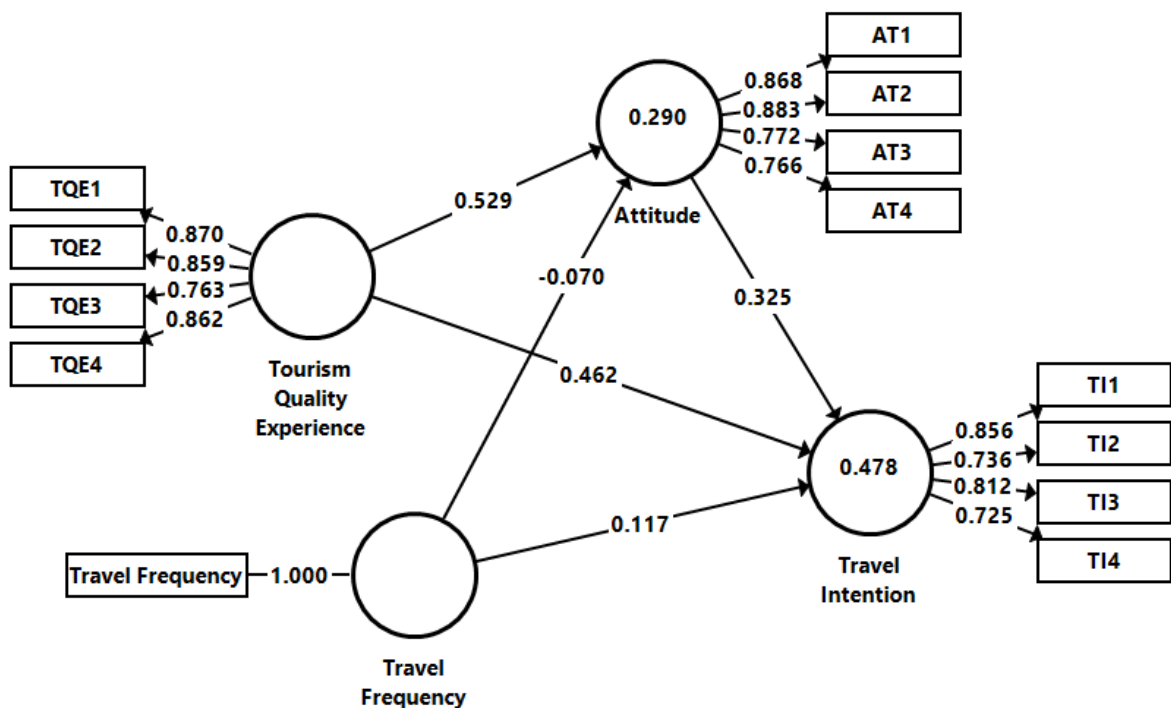


Figure 2: PLS SEM Analysis Output for Loading and Path Coefficient Values

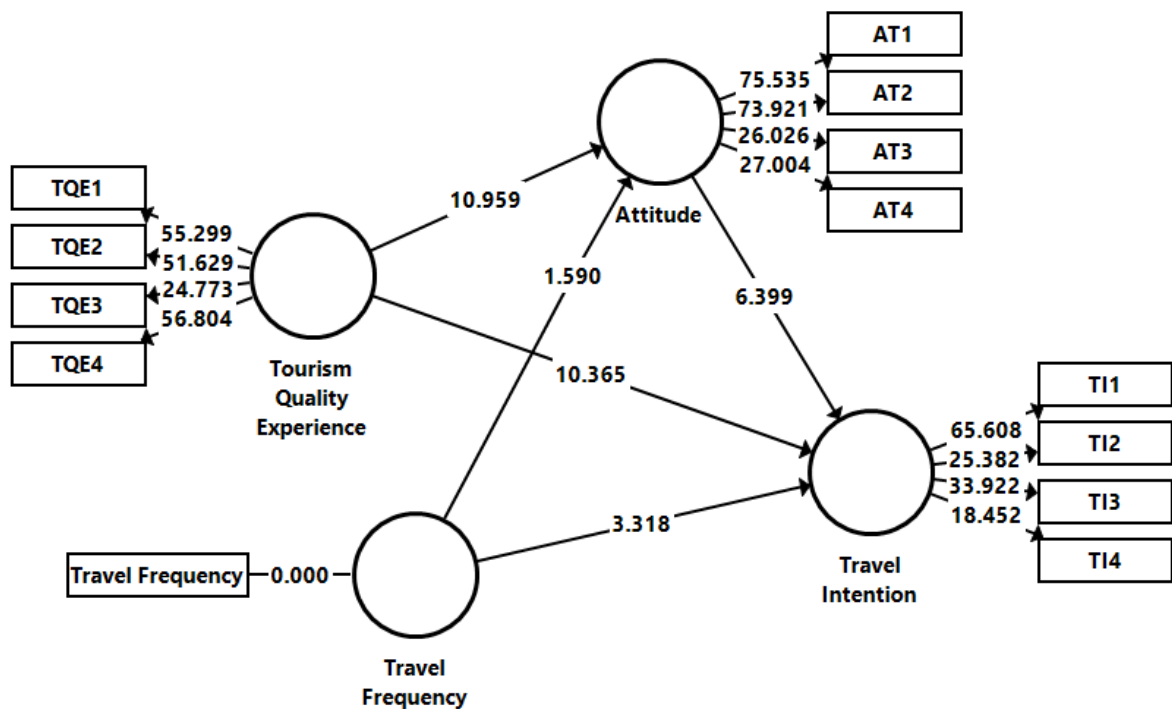


Figure 3: PLS SEM Analysis Output for t-statistic values via Bootstrapping Analysis

## Discussion and Conclusion

This research focuses on the relationship between TQE and intention to visit. The empirical evidence highlighted the impact of tourism quality experience with TRF on travellers visits intentions at a certain destination. Our study further elaborated some mediating effects of attitude towards TRF, travel intention and TQE. The results will give an insight for policymakers and tourism decision-makers. It can help plan marketing strategies and promote Malaysia as the most favourable destination to visit. This research fills the gap for investigating the impact of tourist experience and attitude on intention to revisit the destination. Hence the quality experience has been considered as the major variable to influence revisiting intention. The research highlighted the relationship between TQE and TRF and tourists' attitudes to international travel to Malaysia.

The study showed interesting findings when TQE and TRF were tested individually on tourists' attitudes. On the one hand, the level of tourism quality experience is high, and it was found that it had increased the level of tourists' attitude. The result is consistent with Alzahrani et al., 2009 and Hsu et al. (2017). On the other hand, table 3 shows that when the level of TRF is high (i.e. three times and more), it will decrease attitude. The result is not aligned to early findings i.e. Correia and Oliveira (2008) and Morais and Lin (2010). The results indicated that repeat visitors' attitudes are positively affected by destination attachment.

However, our analysis indicates that high levels of tourism quality experience and TRF affect the tourists' travel intention. Similarly, Buonincontri in 2017 mentioned that the gained memories of tourists could motivate their revisits intentions. It was observed that a high level of attitude would also increase the tendency of tourists to travel to Malaysia. The planned behaviour theory explained that attitude directly impacts the behavioural intention of tourists

(Ajzen, 1991). While Lee (2007) discussed that attitude could later on also modify external behaviours. Ajzen, in 2001, argued that the more positive attitude, the more vigorous behaviour intention. When attitude was tested as a mediator, the findings show that the international tourists' tendency to visit this country became higher.

### **Theoretical Implications**

This study has various theoretical implications for both practitioners and academicians. From a theoretical standpoint, the present study extends understanding of tourist perception about quality experience with respect to travel frequency. This research can provide helpful direction towards repeat visitor's challenges for tourist places. By observing the relationship between tourist quality experiences with travel frequency, also we examined the mediating effect of tourist attitude, this study helps to unfold the decision making process of repeat visitors. Our findings supports that greater the levels of quality experience, higher the affect of TRF on tourists' travel intention. The contribution on existing researches on factors that impacts on decision making process of tourist towards a destination by identifying high level of attitude to increase the tendency of tourists to travel to Malaysia. Theoretically, this study supports the SOR model that theorised on how the tourist responds to the external environment in surrounding psychology, involving the internal emotions of tourists, which are shaped by the stimulus of the external environment, which are later triggered the tourist response reflected through the attitude. The SOR model is closely related with cognitive related theory as it involves the psychological relationship, which is suitable to link to the behaviour of tourists in choosing tourism destinations.

### **Practical and Social Implications**

The study makes valuable contributions to the relevant literature and has functional, practical implications for tourist attitudes. This study highlights the methods to develop destinations' revisit intention of travellers with their perceptions of destination attributes and quality of experience. Practically, the study's significant findings can be used by the Tourism Ministry and tourism stakeholders such as tourism operators to inform business policies, plans, and strategies based on the attitude of international tourists toward returning to Malaysian tourism destinations. The positive mindset that comes with having a fun and interesting vacation or a memorable travel experience helped to increase the number of days and frequency of subsequent visits. For marketers, it is critical to increase positive word of mouth, particularly via social media. Social media has become a popular platform for many prospective tourists to plan their vacations. Nowadays, social media tourism influencers such as Jack Morris, Lauren Bullen, Murad Osmann, Chris Burkard, Mimi Haney, and many others have taken on the role of tourism destinations' ambassadors, collaborating with tourism organisations to promote the destinations because their postings on the destinations impress thousands of followers.

To obtain a better theoretical assessment of the relationship between the constructs, researchers have called for more studies that compare the tourism quality experience of travel intention. Our study contributes to the limited research that comparatively analyses the theoretical relationship between the TQE and TRF with tourists' attitudes associated with international travel to Malaysia. In particular, we analyse if the average level of attitude is directly proportional to the average level of travel intention.

### Limitations and Suggestions for Future Research

In this research there are several important implications, limitations and opportunities are available for future studies. For example the population considered in this research is restricted to specific tourist places of Malaysia. Henceforth, the findings of this research may not consider as generalized beyond the considered population of participants.

Likewise the research must be implicates to raise the result of general familiarity. This research has acquired a measure to assess the quality of tourism destination experience in the context of Malaysia. This can be use in similar studies in other developing countries to determine if it applies generally. Later the researchers can find out the further influence of demographic characteristics like age, gender or the number of visits. There are various other variables can effects the relationship between attitude, destination quality, behavioral intention etc. At last this research comes under cross-sectional survey, also the direction of causality must be interpret carefully. Some future research can be focused on longitudinal studies to explain the basic casual relationship between variables accurately.

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