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Exploring the Ecotourism Experience and Ecotourism Destination Loyalty in Selangor: Reliability and Factor Analysis Approach

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Abstract
This study uses reliability and factor analysis to research the relationship between ecotourism experience and destination loyalty in Selangor, Malaysia. The factors influencing ecotourism and loyalty were identified through a literature review and analyzed using IBM SPSS Statistics. The results reveal a strong correlation between tourist satisfaction and loyalty, focusing on the importance of eco-friendly experiences in nurturing commitment towards sustainable tourism. This research provides valuable insights for researchers and tourism industry players who aim to promote ecotourism in environmentally sensitive areas, contributing to the growing interest in knowledge on sustainable tourism..

Keywords: Sustainable Development; Ecological; Eco-friendly; Environmentally

1.0 Introduction

Selangor, a Malaysian state, has evolved as an ecotourism hotspot, emphasizing sustainable travel practices that prioritize the protection of natural habitats, biodiversity, and local cultures. Its diverse environments, including rainforests, mangroves, caverns, and beaches, provide the setting for various ecotourism activities. Educational opportunities abound, offering insights into local ecosystems and conservation efforts. Adventure activities such as jungle trekking and river cruises encourage sustainable exploration of the environment. Selangor also encourages responsible tourism, pushing for environmentally beneficial practices and cultural tolerance. The state government hopes to attract visitors through marketing efforts and eco-tour packages while ensuring the long-term viability of its ecotourism initiatives.

According to Latif et al. (2020), ecotourism is a distinct type of travel that necessitates improving the destination to promote relaxation. It is a type of sustainable development that integrates the conservation of natural resources with economic expansion. Ecotourism often includes activities beyond traditional nature-based tourism (Wardana et al., 2021). This distinct form of tourism serves

as a platform for environmental conservation and can stimulate economic growth in harmony with nature. Ecotourism involves the crucial link between visitor contentment and their commitment to a location, which are vital in establishing a sustainable tourism sector (Li et al., 2021).

It is crucial to comprehend the interplay between the ecotourism experience and destination loyalty in Selangor, Malaysia. Selangor, known for its abundant biodiversity and varied ecosystems, offers an excellent opportunity to delve into the complexities of ecotourism. As one of Malaysia's most advanced states, Selangor faces the dual task of conserving its natural heritage while meeting the increasing tourism needs. Therefore, exploring ecotourism opportunities and fostering loyalty to this location reveals the possibility of preserving the environment and plays a crucial role in achieving sustainable economic development.

This research explores the fundamental aspects of the ecotourism experience and destination loyalty in Selangor, Malaysia. The objectives of this study are: 1) to explore the relationship between ecotourism experience and destination loyalty, 2) to identify the key factors influencing ecotourism experiences and their impact on tourist loyalty, 3) to analyze how destination image and satisfaction mediate the relationship between ecotourism experiences and loyalty, 4) to examine the role of responsible tourism management and environmental beliefs in shaping tourists' loyalty to ecotourism destinations, and 5) to assess the influence of interactive social media on enhancing the ecotourism experience and fostering destination loyalty. This study aims to provide valuable insights into sustainable tourism management in the region by examining the complex factors influencing visitor experiences and their subsequent loyalty to ecotourism locations. This research also combines theoretical frameworks and empirical evidence to examine the relationship between ecotourism, sustainable development, and destination loyalty. By doing so, it seeks to contribute to the ongoing discussion on sustainable tourism practices.

Tourism sustainability has consistently posed a contradiction for tourism professionals, governments, scholars, and politicians. Establishing tourism amenities, infrastructure, and endeavours depends on using natural resources, particularly in ecotourism or destinations centred around nature. Therefore, balancing promoting tourism and preserving the environment is crucial for sustainable gdevelopment. This balance ensures that future generations can continue enjoying nature's beauty.

2.0 Literature Review

Ecotourism has become a centre of sustainable development in tourism, mainly in destinations where it offers rich natural resources and cultural heritage. In recent years, there has been a significant interest in ecotourism that contributes to environmental conservation and economic and social well-being. This study, focusing on Selangor, Malaysia, explores the relationship between ecotourism experiences, destination loyalty, and responsible tourism practices.

2.1 Ecotourism Destination Loyaty
Ecotourism sites influence destination loyalty through the experiences tourists have, which shape the post-trip destination image. These experiences include acting, fun learning, and emotional experiences influencing attribute-based and holistic destination images. The tourism experience indirectly affects loyalty through the mediating effects of destination image and satisfaction. It suggests that managing destination images and designing visitor experiences can enhance destination loyalty in ecotourism contexts (Ting et al.; Sinh et al., 2022). Ecotourism destination loyalty refers to the strong emotional connection and dedication that travellers form to specific ecotourism sites. It signifies more than a single visit; it encompasses a continuous commitment to revisiting and endorsing these sites over time. The ecotourism encounter carefully integrates multiple aspects to engender loyalty.

First and foremost, there is a strong admiration for environmental conservation, with tourists actively searching for sites that prioritize safeguarding and maintaining natural habitats and biodiversity. Certain ecotourists embark on journeys to fulfil their recreational and leisure requirements while gaining knowledge about regions (Carvache-Franco et al., 2022). Dewi and Abidin (2021) found that tourism service quality is linked to destination loyalty. However, this relationship is contingent upon tourists' perception of the destination image. Consequently, tourism service quality can influence tourist loyalty by acting as a mediator through the destination image. Destination loyalty can be enhanced by promoting tourist motivation and improving the perception of the destination (Dewi & Abidin, 2021).

2.2 Responsible Tourism Management
Practical, responsible tourism is crucial in safeguarding the environment and bolstering local communities. Environmental consciousness and destination perception are essential elements for good tourist management. Environmental belief pertains to the cognitive framework and principles visitors embrace regarding preserving the environment and promoting sustainability. The ecological attitudes of tourists have a direct influence on their perception of a location, as well as their intention to engage in responsible environmental activity. According to Li et al. (2021), positive destination pictures directly impact tourists' ecological concerns, influencing their decisions and intentions to visit. The destination image accurately forecasts future intentions to engage in responsible environmental conduct. Tourists who place a high value on ecological principles are more inclined to participate in responsible actions such as recycling, conserving water, and opting for sustainable modes of transportation.

Destination image refers to how a destination is seen and its reputation about its environmental practices and sustainability activities. An appealing perception of a location, marked by a dedication to preserving the environment, developing sustainable infrastructure, and

actively involving the local population, draws conscientious visitors looking for destinations that coincide with their environmental values (Tien et al., 2024).

2.3 Ecotourism Experience
The ecotourism experience provides tourists and visitors an interesting opportunity to blend with nature, live and learn about local cultures, and contribute to environmental conservation through government or community initiatives. Ecotourism emphasizes that the primary goal of responsible tourism is to educate travellers on how to reduce negative environmental impacts and help the local community with sustainability and conservation practices. Usually, ecotourism experiences are done in natural areas where visitors can explore beautiful landscapes, observe wildlife and nature, and engage in activities provided by ecotourism, from hiking to bird watching (Carvache-Franco et al., 2022). Adding to Yuliarni et al. (2023), ecotourism sites frequently offer possibilities for cultural exchange, allowing visitors to contact indigenous populations, learn about traditional lives, and contribute to local economies through responsible tourism practices. The ecotourism experience is more than just sightseeing; it builds a more profound respect for nature, raises environmental consciousness, and inspires visitors to become global stewards.

2.4 Interactive Social Media
Firman et al. (2022) found that tourism activities have become increasingly appealing to global visitors due to social media integration. Social media in ecotourism involves utilizing various social media platforms to establish connections with tourists and facilitate two-way communication. In the present era, the popularity of most locations is primarily attributed to the use of social media platforms. It indirectly encourages other tourists to visit that same destination. In addition to its promotional benefits, social media also plays a crucial role in promoting sustainable practices and enhancing the whole ecotourism experience for travellers. Industry leaders utilized social media platforms to establish a more intimate connection with visitors, gaining insights into their travel preferences and behaviours (Lengieza et al., 2022).

This study consolidated insights from the literature on ecotourism destination loyalty, responsible management, ecotourism experiences, and the role of social media to propose a comprehensive framework by underlining the factors that influence ecotourism loyalty in Selangor. By analyzing the relationships between the elements, the study aims to provide valuable insights for tourism stakeholders seeking to enhance destination loyalty, promote sustainable tourism practices, and effectively manage ecotourism experiences in the region. Ultimately, this research aims to contribute to the growing body of knowledge on sustainable tourism by examining how ecotourism sites can build lasting relationships with tourists while focusing on environmental conservation and local community benefits.

3.0 Methodology

3.1 Data Collection
The sites for this study were chosen based on their diversity, accessibility, and relevance to the research objectives. Known for its rich natural environment, Selangor offers various ecotourism elements, including forests and mangroves. The sites were selected to provide a comprehensive understanding of how different ecotourism experiences influence tourist loyalty and satisfaction while also aligning with Selangor's sustainable tourism efforts.

A pilot test was conducted at ten ecotourism locations in Selangor. Thirty surveys were distributed to tourists and visitors who either visited or stayed at the designated places. Data was gathered from all 10 locations for the sole purpose of conducting a pilot study. This study utilizes convenience sampling as a non-probability sampling technique. The decision to use convenience sampling was based on its practicality and accessibility, which enabled the effective gathering of data from tourists and visitors at several ecotourism locations in Selangor.

Participants were directed to assess their thoughts utilizing a 7-point Likert scale from 1 (indicating strongly disagree) to 7 (indicating strongly agree). As prior research suggests, the Likert scale is a unipolar scale that evaluates individuals' affirmative or adverse reactions to a statement (Kusmaryono et al., 2022). This study aims to thoroughly and systematically capture the viewpoints and experiences of tourists and visitors at ecotourism sites in Selangor. It employed convenience sampling and utilized a non-comparative scaling technique with a Likert scale. This comprehensive explanation offers a clear understanding of the process of participant selection, the methodology of data collecting, and the precise procedures employed to measure participants' replies. It enhances the study's transparency and repeatability.

Information was gathered using self-administered questionnaires. The survey comprised two primary sections, including assessing individuals' ecotourism encounters and evaluating their loyalty towards ecotourism destinations. The section on ecotourism experience encompassed factors about tourists' perceptions of their encounters at ecotourism destinations in Selangor. In contrast, the section on ecotourism destination loyalty encompassed factors about tourists' intentions to revisit and endorse ecotourism destinations in Selangor to others.

3.2 Data Analysis
For this research, data analysis was conducted in two main stages: reliability analysis and factor analysis. Before conducting factor analysis, the reliability of the measurement scales used in the questionnaire was assessed. Cronbach's alpha coefficient was computed to determine the internal consistency of the scales. A Cronbach's alpha value of 0.70 or above was considered acceptable. Exploratory

factor analysis (EFA) was conducted to identify the underlying dimensions or factors of ecotourism experience and destination loyalty. Principal component analysis (PCA) with Varimax rotation was employed to extract the factors. Factors with eigenvalues greater than 1.0 were retained, and items with factor loadings of 0.50 or higher were considered to load significantly onto a factor.

4.0 Findings

4.1 Demographic Analysis
The research included a sample of 30 respondents who visited the targeted venues, as shown in Table 1. This sample was diverse in demographics, including place of residence, gender, age group, marital status, nationality, educational level, employment status, and income level. Out of all the participants, the most significant proportion (23.3%) visited Kanching Eco Forest Park, while the second most popular destination was Broga Hill, Hulu Langat, with 16.7% of respondents.

Table 1. Ecotourism Site

Ecotourism Site	Frequencies	Percentages
Kanching Eco Forest Park	7	23.3
Broga Hill, Hulu Langat	5	16.7
Others	18	60

(Source: Questionnaire's Data Collection)

Table 2 shows the demographic characteristics of the respondents. The respondents' gender distribution was predominantly female, 70% female and 30% male. The most significant proportion of individuals was 41–50 years old, accounting for 36.7% of the total. The younger age group of 18–30 made up 30% of the sample, followed by the age group of 31–40 years old, which accounted for 26.7%. Most respondents (56.7%) were married, while the remaining respondents were either single (36.7%) or divorced (6.7%). All participants were Malaysian citizens who lived in the local area. Many respondents had obtained bachelor's degrees (63.3%), whereas a small percentage (3.3%) had completed secondary school education.

73.3% of the respondents held an employment position, 13.3% were self-employed, 10.0% were students, and 3.3% were unemployed. Most individuals had a monthly income between RM2001 and RM4000 (46.7%), while 20.0% earned between RM4001 and RM6000 per month. 13.3% of the remaining respondents had a monthly income exceeding RM6,000, while another 13.3% were unemployed. The primary aim of this study phase is to evaluate the accuracy of the items and the internal structure of the constructs that the instrument measures. We performed a factorial analysis to examine the factor structure of the scale. Subsequently, a reliability analysis was employed to assess the trustworthiness of the surveys. The data was collected and analysed using SPSS 26.0, utilising exploratory factor analysis (EFA) and reliability analysis.

Table 2. Demographic Characteristics

Variables	Descriptions	Frequencies	Percentages
Gender	Male	21	70
	Female	9	30
Age Group	18-30 years old	9	30
	31-40 years old	8	26.7
	41-50 years old	11	36.7
Marital Status	Married	17	56.7
	Single	11	36.7
	Divorced	2	6.7
Nationality	Malaysian	30	100
Educational Level	Master's Degree	10	33.4
	Bachelor's	19	63.3
	Degree	1	3.3
	Secondary		
	School		
Employment Status	Employed	22	73.3
	Self-employed	4	13.3
	Student	3	10.0
	Unemployed	1	3.3
Income Level	RM2001 -	14	46.7
	RM4000	6	20.0
	RM4001 -	4	13.3
	RM6000	4	13.3
	>RM6000		
	Unemployed		

4.2 Reliability Analysis

Cronbach's alpha (α) is a statistical measure that assesses the degree of internal consistency of an evaluation tool. This study comprehensively examined the research instrument to verify its reliability and quality. A study was conducted with the specific aim of quantifying Cronbach's alpha coefficient. The Cronbach's alpha coefficient for the intuitive scale in this exam ranged between 0.883 to 0.981, as shown in Table 3. Amirrudin et al. (2020) state that Cronbach's alpha is employed to analyze the internal consistency of assessment instruments with several items. This approach offers researchers a dependable means of collecting data. Cronbach's alpha is highly esteemed in psychometric literature due to its extensive and regular utilization as a measure of reliability.

Table 3. Measurement Items

Construct	N of Items	Cronbach's Alpha (CA)
Ecotourism Destination Loyalty	5	0.976
Responsible Tourist Management (Environmental Belief, Holistic Destination Image)	11	0.883
Ecotourism Experience (Tourism Experience)	26	0.963
Interactive social media	8	0.981

The study shows that destination loyalty, responsible tourism management, ecotourism experience, and interactive social media directly influence and encourage tourists to visit ecotourism destinations in Selangor. The findings show that participants were aware of their experiences during their location visits. The results of the validity and reliability tests show that all variables affect the loyalty and experience of tourists. The study acknowledged the importance of recognizing the validity and reliability of these dimensions as crucial metrics. These results are consistent with the findings of the White et al. (2023) study. The findings further emphasize the importance of considering all variables when analyzing tourist loyalty and experience.

Environmental ideology, comprehensive perception of the destination, personal encounters, and use of social media all contribute significantly to tourists' loyalty towards a particular destination. Returning to a place is linked to being environmentally conscious and the perception of the destination shown to visitors. A positive destination image not only prompts visitors to return but also indirectly educates them about the importance of sustainable practices at that location. Tosun et al. (2020) mentioned that tourism significantly impacts residents' lives intermittently and continuously, with positive and negative consequences. The primary expectation of tourist development is that it improves the quality of life for the local community by delivering economic, social, cultural, and environmental advantages.

4.3 Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA)

The acquired data underwent an exploratory factor analysis (EFA) to identify the dimensions of the scales. The investigation used principal axis factoring and varimax rotation as the extraction methods. This methodology allows the researcher to examine the main factors and construct a theory or model based on an extensive collection of hidden dimensions, often represented by a series of items (Goretzko et al., 2019).

Factor analysis is beneficial in determining the factors that underlie the variables by grouping related variables under the same factor. Table 4 illustrates the value of KMO statistics in the range of 0.752 to 0.854, indicating that sampling is adequate and the factor analysis is appropriate for the data. Bartlett's test of sphericity is one way to determine the correlation matrix. At least some of the variables in the correlation matrix have substantial correlations, as indicated by the very significant results of Bartlett's test of sphericity ($p < 0.001$). A factor analysis for the data set would be beneficial, as shown by the considerable value < 0.05.

Table 4. Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin and Bartlett's Test of Sphericity

	Ecotourism Destination Loyalty	Responsible Tourist Management (Environmental Belief, Holistic Destination Image)	Interactive social media
Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy	0.772	0.752	0.854

Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	291.365	457.465	475.775
	df	10	55	28
	Sig	0.000	0.000	0.000

The study also revealed that the tourist's experience significantly influences their loyalty to the place. Most ecotourism sites in Selangor include opportunities for adventurous activities and options for guests seeking more tranquil and soothing leisure activities. The diverse range of activities, including hiking and jogging, provides a compelling experience that entices people to return multiple times. Accessibility and other qualities are vital reasons why tourists return to the site. According to Abrehe et al. (2021), the proximity to cultural and historical sites, distance from roads, and proximity to rivers are essential for developing ecotourism. These natural attractions are the main reasons visitors visit and engage in activities offered at ecotourism sites.

There is no denying that social media has become increasingly significant in recent years. Xu et al. (2022) have observed that incorporating social media data has brought a fresh perspective to ecotourism research, particularly in applying social media data for quantifying the value of landscapes. Using social media data gives a fresh outlook on obtaining data for ecotourism study. Social media promotes loyal visitors to revisit that location. In contemporary times, individuals examine videos and images shared on social media platforms before deciding to visit an ecological destination. Positive reviews and interactive videos significantly impact a traveller's decision to visit a specific area. The popularity of platforms such as Instagram and YouTube has only heightened this trend.

4.0 Findings
Ultimately, this study's results provide insight into the complex factors that impact tourists' commitment to ecotourism destinations in Selangor. By thoroughly analysing destination loyalty, responsible tourism management, ecotourism experience, and interactive social media, it becomes clear that these elements substantially motivate tourists to return to and endorse these locations. This study emphasises the significance of acknowledging the validity and dependability of these dimensions as crucial measures for comprehending visitor behaviour. Furthermore, the findings are consistent with prior studies, emphasising the significant influence of environmental ideology, the impression of the location, human interactions, and the utilisation of social media on tourists' loyalty. The study highlights that tourists' experiences, encompassing a wide range of activities from thrilling adventures to peaceful leisure options, substantially influence their inclination to revisit ecotourism destinations.

5.0 D
iscussion
Upon evaluating the pilot survey results, numerous enhancements can be implemented. Increasing the sample size and broadening the site selection might improve the generalisability and representativeness of the data. Utilising random sampling and qualitative techniques, such as open-ended enquiries or interviews, may yield profound insights into tourist experiences and motivations.

Furthermore, utilising confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) would enhance the data analysis procedure and guarantee construct validity. A longitudinal method may be employed to monitor variations in destination loyalty over time. Ultimately, mitigating potential response bias through strategies such as anonymity or observational data would enhance the credibility of the results.

6.0 Conclusion & Recommendations
This study recognises certain constraints that may affect the generalisability of the results. The study utilised a limited sample size of 30 respondents from specific ecotourism destinations in Selangor, Malaysia, which may not adequately represent the larger community of ecotourism tourists. Secondly, the research utilised convenience sampling, which, although pragmatic, may result in sample bias due to the lack of a properly randomised participant selection.

The study also depended on self-reported data obtained via surveys, which may be prone to response bias. The investigation was confined to a pilot test at 10 ecotourism areas, potentially failing to encompass the complete range of experiences across all possible ecotourism sites in Selangor. The exclusive use of a singular research approach (questionnaires) may constrain the profundity of understanding about tourists' experiences and loyalty. Subsequent research

could be enhanced by a larger, more heterogeneous sample and the incorporation of qualitative methodologies to yield a deeper comprehension of the determinants affecting ecotourism destination loyalty.

Moreover, the accessibility and wide range of attractions in these destinations are significant aspects that encourage people to visit again. Furthermore, the impact of social media in fostering destination loyalty should not be underestimated, as platforms such as

Instagram and YouTube play a significant role in shaping travellers' impressions and choices. These findings offer helpful assistance to destination managers and stakeholders in Selangor who want to improve tourist loyalty and encourage sustainable tourism practices.

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Paper Contribution to Related Field of Study
This study would contribute to destination loyalty in the tourism industry.

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