

## LEARNING THROUGH EXAMINING THE TOURIST EXPERIENCE

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### **Abstract**

*In the field of travel and tourism, scholars with interest in consumer behaviour studies have explored different variables and linked them with individual tourist behaviour. Variables such as destination image, environmental awareness, service perception, preferences, and motivations for travel are commonly used to understand and predict destination selections and travel behaviour. This study is intended to shed some further light on this issue and contribute to knowledge in this area. A survey that gained a total of 1340 respondents was carried out in three destinations in Sarawak between 2006 and 2008 to gain an understanding of their behaviours travelling into Sarawak. Regional tourism organizations can also play an important role in destination marketing and tourism product development and to recommend appropriate marketing strategies that could be adopted by tourist organizations based on a further understanding of travel behaviour. As shown from the analysis, Sarawak tourism market is not big enough to have very many segments; therefore the different regions need to have common and coordinated marketing strategies in order to gain market share.*

### **Introduction**

There are many theories of tourist behaviour. Studies on consumer behaviour mostly refer to five stages in the process of making decisions. Identification of needs, information gathering, evaluation of alternatives, process of choosing, and post purchase (Bentler and Speckart, 1981, Moutinho, 1982; Um and Crompton, 1990; Crompton, 1992; Crompton and Ankomah, 1993; Middleton, 1994; Ryan, 1994; Solomon, 1996) are stages of the destination decision making process. Within these, there have been more minute studies to determine the process in more detail.

Globalization has opened new opportunities for developments in tourism. Globalization has facilitated growth in tourism through developments in electronic technology, communication, and transportation. It has affected worldwide suppliers and computerized information and reservation systems, which have become more flexible and cost-effective; decreased costs of air travel; and offered easier access to destinations (Peric, 2005). The rapid spread of information technology has improved the efficiency of the industry's operations as well as the quality of services provided to consumers.

It has also generated increased demand for new travel services, such as computerized hotel and car bookings, online reservation services, teleconferencing, video brochures, smart cards, and electronic funds transfer. The increasing use of the Internet in destination marketing, direct sales, and