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Choice of Malaysia as an Edu-Tourist Destination among International Edu-tourists: An Exploratory Factor Analysis

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ABSTRACT

This article examined the underlying dimensions that influence the choice of Malaysia as a preferred edu-tourist destination. About 500 international edu-tourists from Africa, Asia and the Middle East were sampled in 13 public and private Malaysian universities through the use of questionnaires. An Exploratory Factor Analysis was applied. The results of the principal component analysis (PCA) revealed the emergence of five dimensions with eigenvalues > 1. An inspection of the scree plot revealed a clear break in the five dimensions, explained by a variance of 59.04% with Malaysia's edu-tourism image contributing (30.99%), socio-cultural factors (10.60%), economic factors (6.94%), significant others (6.10%), and environmental factors (4.42%). The results of the Varimax rotation revealed that the structure of the five dimensions of Edu-tourism Destination Country of Choice (EDCC) with strong loadings determine the choice of Malaysia as a preferred edu-tourist destination among international edu-tourists from emerging countries. Since the focus of the Malaysian government is on making Malaysia the edu-tourist destination hub of South East Asia, the factors that are capable of attracting international edu-tourists from other emerging countries need to be identified. This will enable the government of Malaysia and managers of the Malaysian edu-tourist industry to develop appropriate feasible policies and strategies that are capable of attracting edu-tourists. This paper provides an extensive block of 25 indicators, split into five dimensions, which are capable of determining the choice of Malaysia as an edu-tourist destination.a.

Keywords: Edu-tourism, destination country, edu-tourist, international edu-tourists

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INTRODUCTION

Edu-tourism can be defined as the movement of people to a location outside their original place of domicile with the aim of acquiring new knowledge (Ritchie, Carr & Cooper, 2003; Pittman, 2003; Bodger, 1998). The various forms of edu-tourism include participation in academic conferences (Dwyer, 2002; Leipe et al., 2000; Oppermann, 1996), adult study tours / lifelong learning (Wood, 2001; Kalinowski & Weiler, 1992), international and domestic university studies (Corigliano, 2011; Shi et al., 2010; Armstrong, King and Michael, 2004), secondary school student travels, and exchange programs (Smith & Jenner, 1997). The index for the above revealed that tourism based on the need to explore educational resources that is translated into learning experiences gives rise to the concept of edu-tourism.

The present study focused on edu-tourism that is motivated by participation in international university studies, the reason being that this type of edu-tourism is gradually becoming an attractive economic activity due to its economic contributions to host countries (Shanka et al., 2005; Anthony et al., 2004). International university studies, a subset of the edu-tourist industry, have now become a multi-billion-dollar business in many countries (Cheung et al., 2011) and in the global economy. Globally, the number of edu-tourists seeking cross-border university education services was 4.1 million in 2010, and the figure is forecasted to hit 7.2 million by the year 2020, thus, creating a market worth of US$ 40-50 billion (Bohm et al., 2012).

The demand for edu-tourism services globally has been characterised by high edu-tourist mobility from emerging countries to the west (Becker & Kolster, 2012). This is popularly known as the traditional edu-tourist mobility (Becker & Kolster, 2012). Countries such as the United States, the United Kingdom, Canada, and Australia (Becker and Kolster, 2012; Verbik and Lasanowski, 2007) are the major benefactors of traditional mobility trends. It is pertinent to state that the global edu-tourism market is now witnessing a reversal in edu-tourist mobility trends. Hence, edu-tourists from emerging economies are now choosing to study in other emerging economies (Becker and Kolster, 2012; Chen, 2007). This is the case in emerging countries like Malaysia, where the country now hosts international edu-tourists from other emerging countries, leading to the contemporary edu-tourist mobility. The quality indices of a country have been identified as one of the pull factors that attract edu-tourists from emerging countries to choose a country for edu-tourism (Chen, 2007; Mazzarol and Soutar, 2002). This implies that the quality indices of Malaysia might have been responsible for the choice of Malaysia as a preferred edu-tourism destination among international edu-tourists from other emerging countries. The sustaining of this new edu-tourist mobility trend in Malaysia requires adequate understanding of the dimensions that influence the choice of Malaysia as a preferred edu-tourist destination (Jason et al., 2011; Siti et al., 2010).

Much research was conducted on the dimensions that influence the choice of edu-tourist destinations from emerging economies to advance economies (Chen, 2007; Mazzarol and Soutar, 2002; McMahon, 1992). Despite the fact that the majority of international edu-tourists who come to Malaysia are from emerging countries, studies on the dimensions of choice of Malaysia as a preferred edu-tourist host country among international edu-tourists had not generated much excitement among edu-tourist researchers in Malaysia (Jason et al., 2011; Siti et al., 2010). This is a gap that this study intends to fill. It is reported that the quality indices (dimensions) of a host country that determine the choice of international edu-tourists from emerging economies to study in an advance country (traditional edu-tourist mobility) might differ for an emerging country (contemporary edu-tourist mobility) (Marianne, 2014; Becker and Kolster, 2012). There is a need to explore the plausible dimensions that determine the selection behaviour of international edu-tourists from emerging economies to choose Malaysia as a preferred edu-tourist destination.

Theoretical Orientation: Dimensions Influencing The Choice of Malaysia as an Edu-Tourist Destination of Choice among International Edu-Tourists

Numerous empirical studies have applied the push and pull theory, especially in tourism motivation studies (Krippendorf, 1986; Crompton, 1979). Recently, this theory has been utilised and extended in several empirical studies to explain the international edu-tourists' choice of countries with advance economies as edu-tourist destinations (Marianne, 2014; Becker and Kolster, 2012; Chen, 2007; Mazzarol and Soutar, 2002). The theory indicates that international edu-tourists from emerging countries choose to study overseas because of internal forces and external forces (Mazzarol and Soutar, 2002). The push factors are related to the country of origin, including the intrinsic desires of individual edu-tourists. The pull factors, on the contrary, emerge from the attractiveness of the host country as perceived by the edu-tourists. The above information shows that the pull factors are important determinants of the international edu-tourist's choice of an edu-tourist destination country. Some of the pull factors reported in the literature are highlighted in the following paragraphs.

Significant Others

International edu-tourists choose a particular country as a preferred edu-tourist destination when they have a personal tie with the host country (Chen, 2007). Hence, if the edu-tourist's family / spouse is living in that country, they may be attracted to go to that country to study. Also, the recommendations of parents, friends, agents, and alumni who have experienced the quality indices of a country may motivate other edu-tourists to choose a country. This implies that the abovementioned indicators are measures of the significant others that determine the edu-

tourist's decision to choose a host country. In view of this, the present study assumes that the significant others are a plausible dimension of Malaysia as a preferred edu-tourist destination among international edu-tourists from other emerging countries.

Economic Factors of the Host Country

Factors such as affordability of the destination country or the living expenses (Mazzarol and Soutar, 2002), future opportunity to stay and work (Chen, 2007; Mazzarol and Soutar, 2002), economic links between sending and receiving country (Mazzarol and Soutar, 2002; Mc Mahon, 1992), favourable immigration policy, and availability of part-time work in the host country (Mazzarol and Soutar, 2002; Mc Mahon, 1992), have been identified as indicators that determine the choice of the edu-tourist's destination country. This study suggests that the economic factors in Malaysia make it a destination of choice among international edu-tourists from emerging countries.

Host Country Edu-tourism Image

The image of an edu-tourist destination country as perceived by international edu-tourists determines the choice of a country for study (Chen, 2007, Mazzarol and Soutar, 2002). The authors identified quality education in the host country, ease of access to visas from the host country, knowledge of the host country at the home country, and the host country's' recognition of the certificates of the home country as indicators of the host country's edu-tourism image. Hence, these factors may also be determinants of the choice of a country as a study destination among international edu-tourists from emerging countries.

Socio-cultural Factors

Previous studies on the choice of edu-tourist destinations revealed the links between the socio-cultural factors of the country and the choice of the country among international edu-tourists (Chen, 2007; Mazzarol and Soutar, 2002). Items such as commonality of culture, language and religion were identified as socio-cultural indicators (Mazzarol and Soutar, 2002). Others include the historical link between the host and the home country, political ties between the host and the home country, diversity and tolerance of the host country towards international edu-tourists (De Mooij, 2004; Cateora and Graham, 1999). Based on the above submissions, the present study assumes that socio-cultural factors are a plausible dimension of Malaysia being the choice destination of international edu-tourists.

Environmental / Geographical Factors

Environmental and geographical factors are a dimension of the edu-tourists' choice of a host country (USCDCP, 2009). Weather and climate are emerging indicators of the destination choice of edu-tourists (Alvord et al., 2008). The perceptions of edu-tourists regarding environmental safety and security of the country, the proximity of the edu-

tourists' home country to the host country, and the degree of racial discrimination at the destination country are considered as strong items that measure environmental / geographical factors determining the choice of country to study (Kleckley, 2008).

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The traditional edu-tourism mobility instrument developed by Chen (2007) was used to explain the four dimensions that determine the choice of a host country among international edu-tourists from emerging economies. These dimensions include student characteristics, significant others, external push factors (home country), and pull factors (host country). Chen's (2007) model was modified, making it suitable for explaining the choice of emerging edu-tourist destinations among international edu-tourists from emerging economies (Africa, Asia and Middle East) who choose to study in Malaysia. In the present study, the student characteristics in Chen's framework were excluded from the new framework because they did not reflect the quality indices of the host country. Rather, they represented the intrinsic desires and personal features of the edu-tourists, which may not motivate them to choose a host country.

The push dimension in Chen's framework was excluded because the international edu-tourist's choice of a host country was not likely to be determined by push factors (Chen, 2007) rather than the pull factors. Also, excluded from Chen's framework were the pull factors dimension. This is because using the pull factors as a dimension was beyond the scope of the present study. Therefore, based on the literature, the present study considered 25 indicators that explain the choice of Malaysia as an edu-tourist destination among international edu-tourists. The study adopted a 5-point Likert scale ranging from "Strongly disagree" to "Strongly agree" in response to the items in the questionnaire. In order to distinguish between the revised instrument and the customised version for the present study, the latter is referred to as the "Edu-tourism Destination Country Choice (EDCC)" instrument.

Study Population

The research population consisted of 16,205 international edu-tourists from China, Indonesia, Iran, Nigeria, Sudan and Yemen, in 14 selected Malaysian universities. The edu-tourists, who comprised both undergraduates and postgraduates from these six countries, were chosen for the present study because: (i) The six countries have consistently topped the list of countries that generate international edu-tourists to Malaysian universities over the last six years, as shown in Table 1; (ii) The classification of these six countries as emerging countries. The Gross National Income (GNI) per capita is popularly used for the classification of the economic status of countries (Kushnirs, 2013). By using the GNI per capita criterion, all the six selected countries met the status of emerging countries, as shown in Table 2.

The 14 Malaysian universities in this study comprised 7 public and 7 private

universities. These universities were selected based on their global recognition and popularity among international edu-tourists from emerging economies as shown in Table 3 and Table 4.

Table 1
Enrolment of International Edu-tourists from Selected Countries in Africa, Asia and the Middle East in Malaysian Universities

Country	2013	2012	2011	2010	2009	2008
Iran	5009	5,981	9888	11823	10932	6604
Indonesia	3942	3,636	8569	9889	9812	9358
China	2382	1,909	7394	10214	9177	7977
Nigeria	1692	1,240	5632	5817	5969	5424
Yemen	1726	1,651	3552	5866	4931	4282
Sudan	642	511	2091	2837	2443	2307

Note: Ministry of Education Malaysia (2014); Ministry of Higher Education Malaysia (2010, 2009a, b)

Table 2
Gross National Income (GNI) Per Capita in Billion Dollars of Selected Countries in Emerging Countries

Country	2013	2012	2011	2010	2009	2008	Remarks
China	6594.4	5939.3	5299.1	4341.8	3686.4	3387.6	Upper Middle Income
Indonesia	3367.5	3446.1	3368.6	2864.3	2192.5	2100.6	Lower Middle Income
Iran	6321.6	7233.7	7615.4	5620.4	4931.4	4963.1	Lower Middle Income
Nigeria	2663.3	2440.2	2235.2	2074.4	1604.9	2052.9	Lower Middle Income
Sudan	1497.9	1451.1	1582.3	1576.1	1394.8	1468.3	Lower Middle Income
Yemen	1360.2	1294.3	1238.3	1282.7	1231.4	1317.7	Lower Middle Income

Note: Kushnirs (2013)

Table 3
The Top 7 Malaysian Public Universities with High Enrolments of International Edu-tourists

S/n	University	Enrolment of International Edu-tourists Per Year				
		2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
1	Universiti Utara Malaysia	4545	4940	4891	1904	2318
2	International Islamic University	2818	2995	3973	5408	5576
3	Universiti Malaya	2925	3208	3286	3289	3770
4	Universiti Putra Malaysia	2622	2829	3154	3555	3704
5	Universiti Sains Malaysia	2388	2474	2804	2520	2215
6	Universiti Teknologi Malaysia	2890	2918	2217	4103	3779
7	Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia	2554	2847	2823	2379	3087

Note: MOEM (2014); National Education Statistics Malaysia (2012)

Table 4
The Top 7 Malaysian Private Universities with High Enrolments of International Edu-tourists

S/n	University	Enrolment of International Edu-tourists Per Year			
		2009	2010	2011	2012
1	Limkokwing University of Technology	4473	4461	4611	9295
2	Multimedia University (MMU)	4085	4586	4508	3811
3	Al-Madinah International University	-	1246	1448	2973
4	Linton University	1053	2139	2139	2203
5	Taylor's University	1190	2555	2936	2156
6	Asia Pacific University	2350	4884	4884	1955
7	INTI International University	1238	3011	3257	1864

Note: MOEM (2014); National Education Statistics Malaysia (2012)

Sample Size and Sampling Method

To determine the exact sample size for the present study, the suggestion of MacCallum et al. (1999) that a e size of 500 or more observations is adequate for a factor analysis, was adopted. To determine how many samples were to be selected from each of the 14 selected universities, the study utilized the method of proportional allocation, as suggested by Kothari (1990). The enrolment statistics of the international edu-tourists, both the undergraduates and postgraduates, from each of the six selected countries and 14 universities in 2013/2014 for the second semester of the academic session were obtained.

The proportion of international edu-tourists from each of the six selected countries (i.e. $P_{i....5,}$) to be drawn from the population (N) of 16,205 edu-tourists was determined. Hence, $P_{i....5,}$ / N. The sample size of each of the six selected countries (i.e. $n_{i.....5}$) was determined by multiplying the sample size (n) for this study, put at 500, with the enrolment proportion of international edu-tourists for each of the countries. Hence, $P_{i....5,}$/ n. The process was repeated in the 13 universities to determine the sample size for international edu-tourists per country, per university and level of programme, except for one university, whose edu-tourist enrolment data were not released.

Instrument for Data Collection

A self-administered, structured questionnaire was adopted as the data collection instrument for the study. Chen's synthetic questionnaire was modified based on previous studies in the domain of the edu-tourist destination choice process (Roberts, Chou and Ching, 2010; Chen, 2007; Mazzarol and Soutar, 2002; Hossler and Gallagher, 1987). The modified questionnaire had 25 indicators qualifying the proposed dimensions of the edu-tourist's choice of emerging countries like Malaysia among international edu-tourists from other emerging countries. The specific items of the questionnaire are shown in Table 5.

Table 5
Indicators of Dimensions of Edu-tourist's Choice of Edu-tourist Destination Country among International Edu-tourists From Emerging Countries

Indicators
Employer / Parents' recommendation motivated me to choose Malaysia as a preferred edu-tourist destination country.
Professors' recommendation motivated me to choose Malaysia as a preferred edu-tourist destination country.
Friends / Other edu-tourists' suggestion motivated me to choose Malaysia as a preferred edu-tourist destination country.
Family / Spouse living in Malaysia motivated me to choose Malaysia as a preferred edu-tourist destination country.
Alumni's suggestion motivated me to choose Malaysia as a preferred edu-tourist destination country.
Affordable living expenses at host country motivated me to choose Malaysia as a preferred edu-tourist destination country.
Availability of part- time work for international students motivated me to choose Malaysia as a preferred edu-tourist destination country.
Opportunity to stay and work after my programme motivated me to choose Malaysia as a preferred edu-tourist destination country.
Favourable Immigration policy for international edu-tourists motivated me to choose Malaysia as a preferred edu-tourist destination country.
Economic links between Malaysia and my country of origin motivated me to choose Malaysia as a preferred edu-tourist destination country.
Recognition of Malaysian degrees in my country motivated me to choose Malaysia as a preferred edu-tourist destination country.
Degree of internationalization of Malaysian edu-tourism system motivated me to choose Malaysia as a preferred edu-tourist destination country.
Knowledge / Awareness of Malaysia in my country of origin motivated me to choose Malaysia as a preferred edu-tourist destination country.
Recognition of Malaysia's quality of education in my country of origin motivated me to choose Malaysia as a preferred edu-tourist destination country.
Ease of access to a Malaysian visa motivated me to choose Malaysia as a preferred edu-tourist destination country.
Historical links between Malaysia and my country of origin motivated me to choose Malaysia as a preferred edu-tourist destination country.
Commonality of language and culture between Malaysia and my country of origin motivated me to choose Malaysia as a preferred edu-tourist destination country.
Political ties between Malaysia and my country of origin motivated me to choose Malaysia as a preferred edu-tourist destination country.
Geographic proximity of Malaysia to my country of origin motivated me to choose Malaysia as a preferred edu-tourist destination country.
Diversity / Tolerance of Malaysians towards foreigners motivated me to choose Malaysia as a preferred edu-tourist destination country.
Safety and security system motivated me to choose Malaysia as a preferred edu-tourist destination country.
Low racial discrimination in Malaysia motivated me to choose the country as a preferred edu-tourist destination country.

Table 5
Indicators of Dimensions of Edu-tourist's Choice of Edu-tourist Destination Country among International Edu-tourists From Emerging Countries - continue

Indicators
Enhanced public amenities and infrastructure in Malaysia motivated me to choose Malaysia as a preferred edu-tourist destination country.
Favourable weather and climate in Malaysia motivated me to choose Malaysia as a preferred edu-tourist destination country.

The questionnaire was pre-tested on a sample of 55 international edu-tourists from the targeted countries in one of the universities through stratified sampling, and following Hair et al. (2010) that a minimum of 30 respondents is sufficient for pre-testing. Following this procedure questionnaires were administered personally to the sampled respondents of the 13 universities apart from Al-Madinah University since the edu-tourist enrolment data were not available.

METHOD OF DATA ANALYSIS

The three main issues of concern in the EFA, namely the assessment of the suitability of the data for a factor analysis (FA), the factor extraction, and the factor rotation and interpretation, were considered in this study (Pallant, 2010; Coakes et al., 2009). To assess the suitability of the data for a FA, two factorability requirements, namely the sample size and the strength of the relationship among the variables or items, were considered (Pallant, 2010). While there is little agreement concerning how large a sample should be, Pallant (2010) suggested that the larger the sample, the better. Tabacknick and Fidell (2007) argued that at least 300 cases are needed for a FA. Furthermore, the factorability requirement of sample adequacy for individual items can also be examined using the anti-image correlation matrix. The majority of the values shown along the diagonal of the matrix are expected to meet the acceptable threshold of 0.5 (Coakes et al., 2009).

The second issue that determines the suitability of data for a FA is the strength of the inter-correlation among the items (Tabachnick and Fidell, 2007). An inspection of the correlation matrix for evidence of dominance of association is a coefficient > 3 (Tabachnick and Fidell, 2007). Bartlett's test of sphericity, and the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) test, that can also be used to determine the factorability of the data, were also considered (Pallant, 2010; Coakes et al., 2009). The rule of thumb suggests that Bartlett's test of sphericity should be significant ($p < .05$), and the KMO > .6 (Tabachnick and Fidell, 2007; Chatfield and Collins, 1992).

The next important step in the EFA is the factor extraction to determine the smallest number of factors that can be used to best represent the relationships among variables (Pallant, 2010). A list of the factor extraction methods includes: principal components, principal factors, image factoring, maximum likelihood factoring, and generalised least

square (Pallant, 2010). However, in this study, the most common factor extraction method, i.e. principal component analysis (PCA), was applied. To determine the exact number of factors to be extracted, Kaiser's criterion and the scree plot were adopted (Hair et al, 2006). Kaiser's criterion or the Eigenvalue rule suggests that factors with an eigenvalue ≥1 should be retained. Another approach, the scree plot test, requires retaining factors above the elbow, hence, suggesting that those factors contributed the most to the explanation of the variance in the data set (Hair et al., 2006; Kline, 2005).

Another important factorability is factor rotation and interpretation. Hence, various factor rotation approaches include: Orthogonal, Direct Oblimin, Promax, Equamax and Quartimax (Tabachnick and Fidell, 2007). The most commonly used orthogonal approach, the Varimax approach, was used in this study to obtain an interpretable factor pattern of items that converge together. The choice of rotation method for the present study was based on a prior expectation that the dimensions concerned were structurally correlated (Pallant, 2010). Thus, the constructs for the choice of an edu-tourism destination country with respect to international edu-tourists in Malaysia were established.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

An exploratory factor analysis (EFA) was conducted on the 25 indicators of the dimensions of the edu-tourist's choice of a host country (Malaysia). The first factorability prerequisite for the suitability of the data for the FA (i.e. sample size) was met, as evidenced by the sample size of 500 used for the study (Tabachnick and Fidell, 2007; Westland, 2010). In addition, the sample adequacy factorability requirements of individual items were examined using the anti-image correlation matrix, as shown in Appendix 1. The value of the anti-image correlation matrix shown along the diagonal ranged from 0.605 to 0.976, was greater than the least acceptable threshold of 0.5 (Coakes et al., 2009). This implied that all the items were sufficiently sampled to permit the FA of the choice of Malaysia among international edu-tourists.

The second factorability requirement that determined the strength of the inter-correlations among the items was assessed. Hence, the correlation matrix was assessed for evidence of coefficients ≥ 0.3. The results showed that this factorability requirement was met, as shown in Appendix 2. Besides, the results of the KMO as well as Bartlett's test of sphericity to determine the factorability of the data, as reported in Table 6, were found to be within the acceptable thresholds, hence, justifying the factorability of the items.

Table 6
Overall Item Measure of Sample Adequacy of Edu-Tourists' Choice of Malaysia among International Edu-Tourists

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling KMO)	.900
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	
Approx. Chi-Square	6217.367
Degree of Freedom	253
P-value	.000

In addition, the Kaiser Criterion or Eigenvalue rule was assessed to determine the exact number of dimensions of edu-tourists' choice of a country (Malaysia) among international edu-tourists. The results showed the presence of five dimensions with eigenvalues > 1, explaining 30.99%, 10.60%, 6.94%, 6.10%, and 4.42% of the variance, respectively, as shown in Table 7.

Table 7
Total Variance Explained and Components' Extraction Based on Eigenvalues

	Initial Eigenvalues			Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings		
Component	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %
1	7.127	30.988	30.988	7.127	30.988	30.988
2	2.437	10.597	41.585	2.437	10.597	41.585
3	1.596	6.939	48.524	1.596	6.939	48.524
4	1.403	6.102	54.626	1.403	6.102	54.626
5	1.015	4.415	59.041	1.015	4.415	59.041
6	.976	4.244	63.285			
7	.831	3.613	66.897			
8	.705	3.067	69.964			
9	.647	2.814	72.778			
10	.623	2.707	75.485			
11	.590	2.563	78.049			
12	.569	2.476	80.525			
13	.544	2.367	82.891			
14	.508	2.209	85.100			
15	.493	2.141	87.241			
16	.427	1.858	89.099			
17	.397	1.726	90.826			
18	.388	1.688	92.514			
19	.378	1.644	94.158			
20	.363	1.579	95.736			
21	.340	1.477	97.213			
22	.336	1.459	98.672			
23	.305	1.328	100.000			

An inspection of the scree plot revealed a clear break after the fifth dimension. While it was possible to be subjective regarding where the elbow began on the screen plot, as shown in Figure 1, the eigenvalue shown in Table 7 suggested a five-dimensional solution that explained a total of 59.04% of the variance, with the edu-tourism image of Malaysia contributing 30.99%, socio-cultural factors (10.60%), economic factors (6.94%), significant others (6.10%), and environmental factors (4.42%)

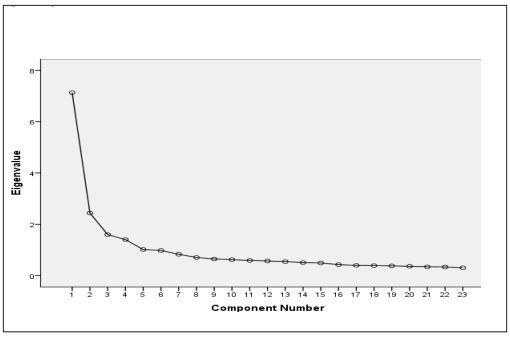

Figure 1. Extracted Dimensions of Edu-tourists' Choice of Malaysia among International Edu-tourists Based on Cattell's Scree Plot

The results of the rotated component matrix, as summarised in Appendix 3, statistically yielded a 5-dimensional structure that determined the international edu-tourists' choice of Malaysia. The first factor generated was "Host Country Edu-tourist Image", which accounted for 30.99%, followed by the "Socio-cultural Factors of Malaysia", which accounted for about 10.60% of the total variance. The third generated dimension from the result was "Economic factors of Malaysia", which accounted for 6.94% of the total variance. The fourth dimension was "Significant Others", which accounted for 6.10% of the total variance, while the fifth factor was "Environmental / Geographical Factors", which accounted for about 4.42% of the total variance.

The reliability of the 5 extracted dimensions of the international edu-tourist's choice of Malaysia as a host country was assessed using Cronbach's alpha. The reliability value of all the individual items ranged between 0.706 - 0.823. This suggested that all the items measured the underlying dimensions consistently (Coakes et al., 2009). The composite reliability score for each of the five aggregate dimensions ranged from 0.778 - 0.827. Hence, Significant Others (α=0.798), Economic Factors of the Host Country (α=0.793), Edu-tourist Image of the Host Country (α=0.827), Socio-cultural factors of the Host Country (α= 0.817), and Environmental factors of the host country (α=0.778) were all considered to be statistically reliable as shown in Table 8.

CONCLUSIONS

The results of this study revealed that the image of education quality in Malaysia motivates its selection as a preferred edu-tourism destination among international edu-tourists. Specifically, the indices of Malaysia as having a favourable immigration policy for international edu-tourists, economic links with edu-tourist's country of origin, and affordable living expenses, are the extrinsic pull factors. Ramazan and Sule (2011) pointed out that destinations with strong and positive economic indices, including brands of tourist products, will gain greater share of the tourist market. Since education tourism is one of the key export industries for Malaysia, this study suggests that the government of Malaysia should strengthen the historical, economic, and political links between Malaysia and the edu-tourists' countries of origin.

The study further shows the relevance of socio-cultural factors in Malaysia to be important in attracting international edu-tourists. The study posits that international edu-tourists are attracted to Malaysia

Table 8
Summary of Reliability of Dimensions and Items of International Edu-tourists' Choice of Malaysia

Dimensions	Initial Cronbach's Alpha	Initial Individual Items Cronbach's Alpha	Final Cronbach's Alpha	Final Individual Items Cronbach's Alpha
Significant Others	-	-	798	-
□ SIGOH 1				.757
□ SIGOH 2				.728
□ SIGOH 3				.814
□ SIGOH 4				.757
□ SIGOH 5				.728
Economic Factors of Host Country	-	-	.793	-
□ ECNFT 1				.819
□ ECNFT 2				.734
□ ECNFT 3				.736
□ ECNFT 4				.727
□ ECNFT 5				.735
Edu-tourists' Image of Host Country	-	-	.827	-
□ HCEDU 1				.793
□ HCEDU 2				.776
□ HCEDU 3				.789
□ HCEDU 4				.823
□ HCEDU 5				.784
Socio-cultural Factors of Host Country	-	-	.817	-
□ HCSCF 1				.824
□ HCSCF 2				.780
□ HCSCF 3				.757
□ HCSCF 4				.782
□ HCSCF 5				.759
Environmental Factors of Host Country	-	-	.778	-
□ EVNGF 1				.728
□ EVNGF 2				.773
□ EVNGF 3				.706
□ EVNGF 4				.732
□ EVNGF 5				.745

because of the religious affiliation between Malaysia and their country of origin. The commonality of language and culture, the historical links between Malaysia and the edu-tourists' country of origin, the diversity / tolerance of Malaysians towards foreigners, and the political ties between Malaysia and the edu-tourists' country of origin have been established in the study. The above findings reconfirm the existing literature that tourists' travel behaviour could be driven by socio-cultural factors (Al-Haj Mohamad, and

Mat-Some, 2010; Chen, 2007). To sustain the inflow of international edu-tourists from other emerging countries the Ministry of Tourism Malaysia, in collaboration with the Ministry of Higher Education, can explore a new thrust of culture-based or adventure-type of tourism to attract this specific niche market of education-oriented travellers.

The relevance of Malaysia's education image as it relates to the recognition of Malaysian degrees, internationalization of the Malaysian edu-tourism system, knowledge / awareness of Malaysia, and the ease of getting Malaysian visas among edu-tourists from emerging countries was established in this study. Al-Haj Mohamad and Mat-Som (2010) argued that the image of a destination is an important tourism asset. Therefore, an attractive edu-tourism image of Malaysia among international edu-tourists from other emerging economies can be used as a tourism asset to attract more international edu-tourists. In view of this, the government of Malaysia, and tourism operators should make the most of the tourism asset of the image of Malaysia among international edu-tourists to design a marketing strategy for the country.

In addition, the environmental factors in Malaysia can be explored to attract more international edu-tourists. Hence, focus should be given to edu-tourists whose countries share geographic proximity to Malaysia. Emphasis should be given as well to safety and security in Malaysia, including aggressive campaigns against racial discrimination. The relevance of significant others to attracting more edu-tourists to Malaysia can also be enhanced if quality edu-tourist services, which are capable of attracting loyal edu-tourists, are sustained, thus, leading to Malaysia being recommended to other potential edu-tourists.

LIMITATIONS OF STUDY AND DIRECTION FOR FUTURE STUDIES

The current study examined the dimensions that determine the choice of Malaysia as an edu-tourist destination among international edu-tourists. The limitations of the study is its exclusive focus on international edu-tourists from emerging economies. Edu-tourists from six countries were investigated in the current study and can be extended to other edu-tourist source countries in Malaysian universities. Other limitations of the study include non-investigation of the leisure trips of university students in Malaysia, that is, other tourism products that are often in demand by international students in Malaysia aside from the learning at their respective universities. This is a suggestion for future study.

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APPENDIX 1

Individual Item's Measure of Sample Adequacy of Edu-Tourist's Choice of a Host Country among International Edu-Tourists in Malaysia

SIGOH1	.976[a]																								
SIGOH2	.283	.927[a]																							
SIGOH3	.249	.585	665[a]																						
SIGOH4	.976	.283	.249	.976[a]																					
SIGOH5	.283	.927	.585	.283	.927[a]																				
ECNFT1	.062	.230	.222	.062	.230	.609[a]																			
ECNFT2	.184	.226	.110	.184	.226	.342	.621[a]																		
ECNFT3	.245	.293	.131	.245	.293	.298	.612	.628[a]																	
ECNFT4	.306	.303	.145	.306	.303	.281	.644	.655	.721[a]																
ECNFT5	.173	.341	.223	.173	.341	.386	.608	.603	.629	.642[a]															
HCEDU1	.067	.124	.154	.067	.124	.431	.294	.261	.175	.334	.605[a]														
HCEDU2	.079	.123	.160	.079	.123	.419	.208	.178	.070	.249	.637	.699[a]													
HCEDU3	.039	.118	.122	.039	.118	.374	.252	.237	.135	.288	.575	.616	.768[a]												
HCEDU4	.014	.229	.197	.014	.229	.370	.320	.310	.246	.384	.478	.478	.461	.741[a]											
HCEDU5	.094	.203	.188	.094	.203	.411	.276	.263	.165	.324	.601	.643	.587	.487	.616[a]										
HCSCF1	.056	.231	.029	.056	.231	.148	.203	.257	.147	.186	.343	.391	.402	.294	.408	.692[a]									
HCSCF2	.372	.362	.088	.372	.362	.043	.330	.431	.394	.308	.131	.124	.192	.180	.209	.493	.685[a]								
HCSCF3	.256	.333	.106	.256	.333	.101	.322	.415	.349	.334	.235	.232	.297	.283	.311	.512	.634	.646[a]							
HCSCF4	.188	.245	.120	.188	.245	.134	.328	.403	.347	.381	.258	.232	.304	.331	.314	.376	.502	.572	.611[a]						
HCSCF5	.254	.335	.126	.254	.335	.124	.397	.483	.444	.422	.208	.173	.256	.291	.271	.424	.603	.623	.598	.642[a]					
EVNGF1	.148	.139	.158	.148	.139	.171	.161	.203	.131	.250	.333	.340	.358	.350	.371	.246	.257	.380	.488	.399	.626[a]				
EVNGF2	.443	.172	.092	.443	.172	.051	.266	.344	.327	.285	.147	.128	.181	.189	.194	.265	.481	.488	.499	.509	.387	.717[a]			
EVNGF3	.211	.166	.234	.211	.166	.258	.215	.240	.184	.328	.400	.395	.397	.409	.422	.173	.191	.332	.487	.377	.570	.394	.661a		
EVNGF4	.253	.180	.199	.253	.180	.205	.335	.372	.361	.427	.265	.212	.261	.338	.281	.112	.270	.371	.527	.458	.514	.454	.598	.638[a]	
EVNGF5	.051	.164	.218	.051	.164	.285	.196	.205	.135	.307	.426	.428	.422	.425	.443	.194	.129	.282	.423	.314	.514	.287	.594	.508	.867[a]

APPENDIX 2

Strength of the Inter-correlation among the items of Edu-Tourist's Choice of Malaysia among International Edu-Tourists

SIGOH1																									
SIGOH2	.285																								
SIGOH3	.214	.405																							
SIGOH4	1.000	.285	.214																						
SIGOH5	.285	1.000	.405	.285																					
ECNFT1	.063	.196	.198	.063	.196																				
ECNFT2	.170	.259	.112	.170	.259	.280																			
ECNFT3	.243	.295	.149	.243	.295	.284	.551																		
ECNFT4	.296	.300	.163	.296	.300	.191	.559	.534																	
ECNFT5	.194	.320	.215	.194	.320	.311	.461	.478	.601																
HCEDU1	.043	.147	.142	.043	.147	.372	.269	.253	.167	.337															
HCEDU2	.058	.135	.169	.058	.135	.339	.224	.172	.101	.252	.601														
HCEDU3	.037	.142	.128	.037	.142	.252	.273	.239	.150	.259	.463	.569													
HCEDU4	.050	.198	.208	.050	.198	.307	.209	.303	.236	.392	.392	.403	.462												
HCEDU5	.089	.216	.150	.089	.216	.305	.268	.276	.191	.335	.516	.559	.523	.457											
HCSCF1	.085	.205	.064	.085	.205	.207	.235	.215	.180	.235	.274	.284	.318	.263	.357										
HCSCF2	.339	.331	.155	.339	.331	.078	.322	.406	.396	.308	.149	.119	.183	.189	.197	.436									
HCSCF3	.260	.299	.164	.260	.299	.176	.295	.425	.338	.350	.262	.257	.262	.250	.265	.394	.549								
HCSCF4	.220	.239	.133	.220	.239	.166	.298	.365	.325	.388	.250	.280	.326	.346	.330	.310	.407	.550							
HCSCF5	.280	.303	.167	.280	.303	.166	.324	.473	.412	.423	.223	.197	.246	.338	.270	.354	.509	.596	.626						
EVNGF1	.139	.159	.120	.139	.159	.232	.217	.253	.168	.221	.333	.335	.283	.326	.357	.251	.262	.351	.386	.324					
EVNGF2	.362	.207	.112	.362	.207	.068	.333	.328	.312	.250	.206	.152	.203	.164	.211	.183	.486	.432	.392	.408	.433				
EVNGF3	.204	.174	.194	.204	.174	.283	.251	.261	.189	.315	.395	.337	.355	.355	.422	.277	.218	.346	.400	.341	.480	.351			
EVNGF4	.256	.206	.145	.256	.206	.185	.314	.336	.332	.407	.278	.226	.335	.343	.267	.199	.310	.300	.531	.421	.368	.386	.535		
EVNGF5	.077	.164	.174	.077	.164	.246	.244	.211	.181	.311	.374	.421	.391	.301	.435	.259	.163	.308	.340	.300	.449	.208	.541	.415	

APPENDIX 3

Measure of Edu-tourist's Choice of a Malaysia among International Edu-tourists

Items	Edu-tourist Image of Host a Country	Socio / Cultural Factor of a Host Country	Economic Factor of Host Country	Significant Others	Environmental / Geographical Factor
Recognitions of Malaysia's' Degree in home Country motivated me to choose Malaysia.	0.793				
Degree of Internationalisation of Malaysian Edu-tourism System motivated me to choose Malaysia.	0.724				
Knowledge / Awareness of Malaysia in Origin Country motivated me to choose Malaysia.	0.708				
Quality of Education in Malaysia has been Perceived in Origin Country motivated me to choose Malaysia	0.705				
Ease to Access Malaysian Visa motivated me to choose Malaysia.	0.571				
Historical link between Malaysia and my origin country motivated me to choose Malaysia.		0.758			
Commonality of language and culture of Malaysia and origin country motivated me to choose Malaysia.		0.736			
Political ties between Malaysia and origin country motivated me to choose Malaysia.		0.672			
Geographic proximity of Malaysia and origin country motivated me to choose Malaysia.		0.584			
Diversity / Tolerance of Malaysians towards foreigners motivated me to choose Malaysia.		0.565			
Availability of part- time work for international students motivated me to choose Malaysia.			0.795		
Opportunity to stay and work after my programme motivated me to choose Malaysia.			0.741		
Favourable Immigration policy for international edu-tourists motivated me to choose Malaysia.			0.698	0.757	

APPENDIX 3

Measure of Edu-tourist's Choice of a Malaysia among International Edu-tourists - continue

Items	Edu-tourist Image of Host a Country	Socio / Cultural Factor of a Host Country	Economic Factor of Host Country	Significant Others	Environmental / Geographical Factor
Economic link between Malaysia and origin country motivated me to choose Malaysia.			0.655	0.742	
Affordable living expenses motivated my choice of Malaysia.			0.645	0.667	
Employer / Parents' recommendation motivated me to choose Malaysia.				0.607	0.732
Professors' recommendation motivated me to choose Malaysia.				0.593	0.757
Friends / Other edu-tourist's suggestion motivated me to choose Malaysia.					0.695
Family / Spouse lives in Malaysia motivated me to choose Malaysia.					0.605
Alumni's' suggestion motivated me to choose Malaysia.					0.600
Safety and Security System motivated me to choose Malaysia.					
Low racial discrimination in Malaysia motivated me to choose the country.					
Enhanced public amenities and infrastructure in Malaysia motivated me to choose Malaysia.					
Favourable weather and climate in Malaysia motivated me to choose Malaysia.					
Geographic proximity of Malaysia and origin country motivated me to choose Malaysia.					
Eigenvalue	7.130	2.437	1.600	1.403	1.015
% Variance	30.99	10.60	06.94	6.10	4.42
Cronbach's Alpha	.806	.806	.809	.747	.769