

## PSYCHOLOGICAL FACTORS AFFECTING VISITOR'S VISITATION DECISION OF MUSEUMS IN KEDAH

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**Abstract:** Museums have been preserving and conserving thousands of artefacts that contributed to our generation current knowledge of the past. Kedah has 6 museums with different purposes and the most significant and profitable museum is the Muzium Padi. Despite having 6 museums scattered in the district, on an estimated 301,045 visitors were recorded in 2016. This depressing numbers could clearly show that the Kedah Museum Management faces problems in attracting visitors although efforts were said to have been made by them. Ringgits spent on attractive marketing promotions and events were not able to change people's perspective of Kedah museums. Based on that fact as well as on observation, it is fair to say that museums in Kedah are unable to attract visitors because they failed to understand reasons behind decision making of museum visitation. The management holds a responsibility to understand that people engage in museum visits for different reasons or motives. In this study, psychological influence in visitation is examined and is defined into 6 different perspective. These perspectives include motivation, perception, lifestyle, learning, personality and value, belief and attitude. Understanding all these perspectives are the key factors in capturing visitor's visitation. This research was done in the state of Kedah to find out what psychological perspective has an effect on visitor's visitation decision. Findings showed that personality perspective is the most dominant and significance psychological that influence visitor's visitation to museum.

**Keywords:** Museum; Visitor; Kedah Museum Management; Visitation Decision; Psychological Influences;

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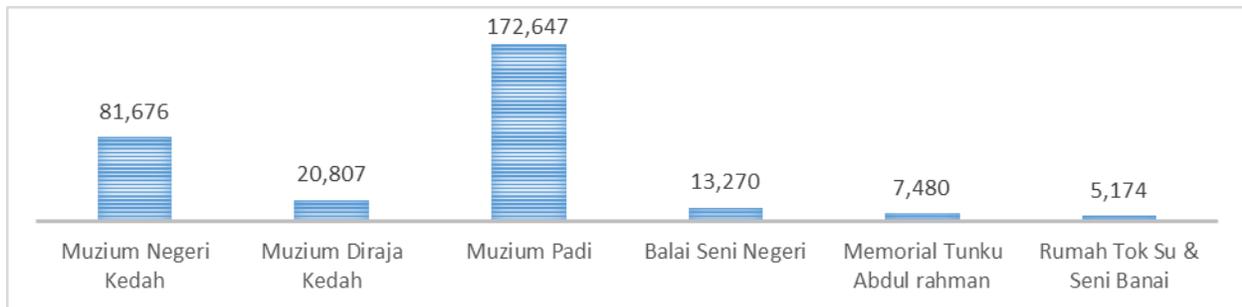
## Introduction

Cultural tourism promotes heritage sites, cultural centers and museums that represents a country's lifestyle, history, religion, and other elements that shape the locals. It is significant as it celebrates, preserve and promote a state's unique heritage, and boost economic development. In Malaysia, as early as the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the country has established a vast number of cultural tourisms with the establishment of museums throughout the country. Museums were built in every state as an effort to preserve the national identity and heritage, and to educate the community. The state of Kedah has six (6) museums with each museum having their own different purpose. Despite of having 6 museums, visitation statistics of museums in Kedah showed that the numbers of visitors are unsatisfactory. Only an estimated of 301,045 visitors were recorded in 2016. This depressing numbers could clearly show that the Kedah Museum Management faces problems in attracting visitors although efforts were said to have been made by them. Ringgits spent on attractive marketing promotions and events were not able to change people's perspective of Kedah museums.

## Museums

Visitor's demand changes with different generation with different needs. Museums are left with no choice but to keep up with them. Museums had to develop sophisticated method that can help to encourage visitor's visitation (B Mohamed, 2008). When all lifestyle and life attitude are changing, the philosophy and objectives of museum follows to change. To date however, these museums have found that general public is less keen on paying attention or getting interested towards museum's exhibition.

Kotler & Kotler (2000) mentioned that by the early 20th century, museums have redefined its objective towards educational purposes. Museums have evolved better in providing memorable experience for the audience. Visitors expect to get involve actively in any exhibition, to learn while having fun and get entertained at the same time (Caulton, 1998).



**Figure 1: Kedah Museums Statistic**

Kedah has 6 museums with different purposes and the most significant and profitable museum is the *Muzium Padi*. Kedah museum management couldn't explain the imbalance figure of visitors towards all six museums under its management (refer figure 1). Mr Zulhiberi bin Mat, Senior Assistant Curator at Kedah Museums explained that many efforts have been made by the management to balance the figures but somehow the figures still heavily flowed towards *Muzium Padi* (Mat, Zulhiberi, personal communication, June 12,

2013). This had left the museum management puzzled as the location of *Muzium Padi* is out of town and it is nine kilometers away from the main museum (*Muzium Negeri Kedah*) where else all the other museums such as *Balai Senilukis Negeri Kedah*, *Muzium Diraja Kedah* and *Memorial Tunku Abdul Rahman* are located less than two kilometers away from the main museum. This has created a gap to the problem and there's a significant need to understand the problem from visitor's side of view. Before answering to this question, research need to be done to recognize what influence the visitors for visiting. It is significant for all to understand visitor's psychological visitation influences with visitor's visitation decision and in future to plan and strategize better in segregating the visitors equally to all museums in Kedah.

With reference to the above-mentioned problem, undeniably there is a link between perspective under psychological influences with visitor's visitation decision making. And it is important for Museums in Kedah to identify whether this influence's perspective perceived important by visitors in making their visitation decisions. It was claimed that if this influence is present during the museum visitation decision process, visitor will have the tendency to visit museums more. Therefore, this research will try to uncover the psychological influence in visitation decision. This research hopes to give museums in the state of Kedah the opportunity to understand the dimensions of influence to ensure better numbers of museum visitations thus making them understand better on the visitor's demands and needs.

### **Decision Making**

How does visitor make decision where and why to visit museums? Richarme (2005) explained that visitors are viewed as rational decision makers that have self-interest in their mind. These visitors are able to estimate the probabilistic outcomes of uncertain decisions and select the outcome which maximized their well-being. According to Theory of Buyer Behavior used in this paper, this theory sophisticatedly integrates various social, psychological and marketing influences on consumer choice into a coherent sequence of information processing (Bray, 2008). Consumers or visitors are subjected to environmental stimuli through various sources. Among the stimuli are significative stimuli, symbolic stimuli and social stimuli. Significative stimuli are the actual products that consumers confront while symbolic stimuli are the representations of products as featured by marketers through marketing effort and social stimuli are the family, peer and reference group influences. These influences are assumed by consumers even before they act on their decision-making process. Thus, supporting this research problem statement which is to understand visitor's visitation decision.

### **Psychological Influences**

Mey and Badaruddin (2010) noted that there are few studies that take into account visitors' perspectives to museums in Malaysia. People are involved in museum trips for different motives. Studies has shown that psychological variables such as why people visited a museum, or what they expect from their visit would be a significant influence to visitation decision of a visitor (Thyne, M., 2001). In another research by Ratneshwar et al. (2000), their study also showed that psychological variables explain the reason of decision making when purchasing goods and services. They further included psychological variables like motives,

goals and desire has brought to why people make decision visit museums (Ratneshwar et al., 2000). A research done by Maneesaeng and Wall (2017) on factors influencing tourist visitation decision to visit a tourist destination revealed that psychology factor does has a relationship with visitor decision making. It was found that motivation, learning and attitude have a positive regression in visitation decision making. This study was found in line with a research done by Praipisut (2014) who studied travel behavior and marketing mix towards Thai visitation decision making of Asiatique. In this study, psychological factors are defined into six different perspectives. These perspectives include motivation, perception, learning, values, belief and attitude, and lifestyle.

Motivation has been accepted as a key concept in understanding the travel behavior and destination choice process. It is defined by Baloglou & McCleary (1999) that motivation is a sociopolitical force that raises the individuals predispose to select and participate in tourism activities. When individuals decide to visit the museum, they do so for different reasons or motivations, understood as a power that reduces the state of tension in the minds of visitors, due to psychological needs. As suggested by Um and Crompton (1992), motivation is an internal factor defined as the benefits and advantages that individuals seek when they decide to visit the museum.

In addition to motivation, perception also affects people's psychological influence. Perceptions include exposure activity, attention and interpretation of external stimuli. This activity relies on individual stimuli and internal factors (Hawkins et al, 2003). The poor perception seen by visitors will prevent any visitors to visit. Ruyter et al. (1997) identified service at the entrance, fixed collection, temporary collection, restaurant, and museum shop as a factor of motivation to visitors who considered to visit.

The third psychological perspective is personality. Personality is a reflection of the permanent and unique characteristics of someone. When the destination image is associated with a traveler's personality or image, the latter describes the behavior of tourists (Bigley et al, 2010). Jiaru Ren (2010) says that many visitors are motivated to achieve the state of being the museum as their "ideal self" reflection. Individuals have different perceptions and ideas when it comes to giving opinions. With different social and educational backgrounds, opinions differ accordingly hence influence visitation decision.

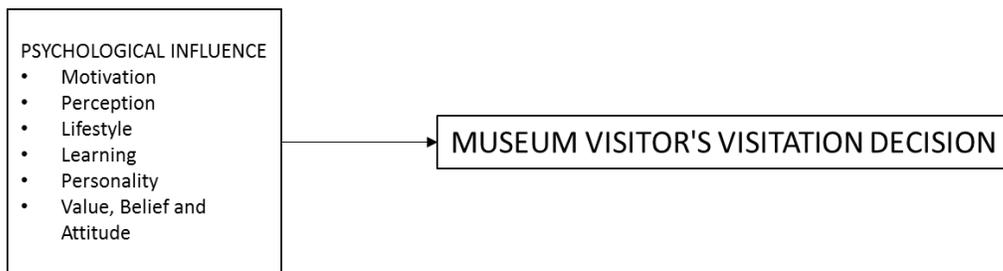
Psychological influence also consists of value, trust and attitude. It is important for Kedah Museum to oversee their quality of service towards visitors. Doering (1999) notes that museums are in progress, leisure activities may have a deeper meaning for the participants than a momentary focus on the quality of the experience. Every past visit has left visitors with perceptions and beliefs about the museums visited. This may be negative if the previously visited museums are unpleasant as expected and this will give a bad impression to all museum communities.

Learning is the fifth perspective under the influence of psychology. Rojas and Camarero (2007) said in their research that visitors are looking for overall experience, including leisure, culture, education, and social interaction. To create a positive experience in learning for

visitors, the museum needs to organize large-scale events and provides a wealth of learning experiences. Experience of the visit is more than just exhibition examinations, but opportunities for further explanation on visitor understanding (Colbert, 2003).

The last perspective under psychological influence is lifestyle. The Gallup Gallus Research conducted in Germany by Schafer (1996) asked people how they collected information about history. The results suggest eleven categories of "reading books on history" to "watching TV" to "speak with the contemporary". Naturally, the result also includes "go to the museum". "Watching TV" finished first and "Going to the museum" was a disappointing 9th place. Comparative study was done using the same category several years later. Once again, "watching TV" finished first and "going to the museum" was completed in a strong third place. It changes throughout the year, possibly different from the lifestyle value of different generations.

### Framework



### Result

After a distribution of questionnaires to two hundred random respondents from all around Kedah, data were analyzed. These respondents vary from eighteen years old to 40 years old consist of different profession and background.

#### *Reliability Analysis*

The result for Visitation Decision Variables showed that the Cronbach's alpha for all Psychological Influence's factors are good and acceptable as there are more than 0.5 (Table 1). Reliability is excellent as the alpha value is near to 1.00 (George & Mallery, 2003)

**Table 1: Reliability coefficients for the Major Variables**

Variable		Number of Items	Items deleted	Cronbach's Alpha after items deleted
Psychological Influence	Motivation	7	-	.872
	Perception	6	1	.841
	Lifestyle	7	-	.655
	Learning	8	-	.855
	Personality	5	-	.899

	Values, Belief and attitude	6	-	.809
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**Correlation Analysis**

In this study, the relationship between and among variables are examined using Pearson correlation test. Correlation analysis is run to determine the strength of the association and the direction of linear relationship amongst variable under study. Hair et al. (2007) noted that the Pearson Correlation Coefficient (Table 2) indicates the direction, strength and significance of the bivariate relationships among all the variables. Table 3 demonstrates the value of correlation for each element under psychological influences. It can be concluded that all elements under study show positive relationship ranges between moderate to high association among each other's.

**Table 2: Coefficient Range Strength of Association**

± 0.91 to ± 1.00	Very Strong
± 0.71 to ± 0.90	High
± 0.41 to ± 0.70	Moderate
± 0.21 to ±0.40	Small but definite relationship
± 0.00 to ±0.20	Slight, almost negligible

**Table 3: Relationship Between Each Elements Under Psychological Influences Correlations**

		Motivation	Perception	Lifestyle	Learning	Personality	Value, Belief & Attitude
Motivation	Pearson Correlation	1	.772**	.496**	.640**	.816**	.676**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000	.000	.000	.000	.000
	N	204	204	204	204	204	204
Perception	Pearson Correlation	.772**	1	.336**	.731**	.673**	.718**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000		.000	.000	.000	.000
	N	204	204	204	204	204	204
Lifestyle	Pearson Correlation	.496**	.336**	1	.397**	.448**	.313**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000		.000	.000	.000

	N	204	204	204	204	204	204
Learning	Pearson Correlation	.640**	.731**	.397**	1	.497**	.711**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000		.000	.000
	N	204	204	204	204	204	204
Personality	Pearson Correlation	.816**	.673**	.448**	.497**	1	.570**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.000		.000
	N	204	204	204	204	204	204
Value, Belief & Attitude	Pearson Correlation	.676**	.718**	.313**	.711**	.570**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	
	N	204	204	204	204	204	204

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Table 4 shows the existence relationship between independent and dependent variables. The Pearson Correlation shows the relationship between Psychological Influence and Visitation Decision. The r value of 0.803 or 80.3% at 99% confidence interval indicates a very good relationship between these two variables. According to the rule of thumb, an alpha coefficient range of 0.8 -< 0.9 has a very good strength of association in variables (Hair et al., 2003).

#### *Relationship Between Psychological Influences and Visitation Decision*

**Table 4: Pearson Correlation Results**

		Psychological Influence
<b>Visitation</b>	Pearson Correlation	.803**
<b>Decision</b>	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

#### **Discussions and Conclusions**

The significant of this research was merely based on the problems found within Kedah State Museums itself. Aimed to help improve and sustain the relevance of Museums in Kedah for future state benefit, this research tried to find answers to why visitors are keener on visiting Muzium Padi instead of other primary museums available like Muzium Negeri Kedah. Since psychological influence was found to be a strong affecting factor in visitation decision,

visitor's motivation, perception, lifestyle, learning, personality and values, belief and attitude should be among the elements to be focused when program and activities are conducted in museums.

Personality of an individual are known to be reflected on his/her cultural activities. Such behavior may be considered as unmediated participation in culture, where individuals will be looking for specific uses and gratifications as well. Visitor with high curiosity personality tend to raise questions on almost every aspect of life. This type of visitors does not believe what they read or see on virtual world until they see it with their own eyes.

Learning is a measureless topic being debated by academician and teachers all over the world. Each day new technique or method of teaching is developed by various researchers. As learning is limitless without any boundary, visitors will go anywhere to find answers to their question which in this case, museum. Having different exhibition from time to time attracted visitors who are keen to know new things.

When a visitor perceived a museum as a recreational knowledge visit, the tendency to visit is higher. The stronger an individual's perception of museum as "useful", the stronger they intend to visit museum. 'Useful' in this context explains into few deeper explanations, besides gaining knowledge visitors also looks into the satisfaction gained. This can be summarized as the time consumed and knowledge gained had fulfilled the visitor's expectation. Perception happens when we select, organize and interpret information to produce meaning. These information inputs are sensation received through our sensory receptors.

All these leads to the creation of values, beliefs and attitude. Every civilization in the world teaches their younger generation to learn and seek knowledge even to the end of their life. These values were natured in one's growing process thus become beliefs. The belief of perceiving knowledge as power later become attitude. Visitors with strong family relation and background were thought from beginning that knowledge is far valuable than money. And whenever the knowledge is, they will go and seek for it. Besides going to library or gallery, museums provide the exact needs of information covering from past to present.

As museum visitors seek experience that crosses the boundaries of learning and recreation, different visitors seek different benefits, values and unique experiences that at least suit their personality and motivation. This, thus explains why psychology influences visitors the most.

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