

**EDU-TOURISM: LEISURE MOTIVATION,  
TRAVEL BEHAVIOUR AND TRAVEL  
SATISFACTION AMONG  
FOREIGN STUDENTS  
IN MALAYSIA**

**LEE CHOON KIN**

**ASIA e UNIVERSITY**

**2021**

EDU-TOURISM: LEISURE MOTIVATION, TRAVEL  
BEHAVIOUR AND TRAVEL SATISFACTION  
AMONG FOREIGN STUDENTS  
IN MALAYSIA

LEE CHOON KIN

A Thesis Submitted to Asia e University in  
Fulfilment of the Requirements for the  
Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

October 2021

## **ABSTRACT**

Malaysia's aspiration to be an international education hub has over the years attracted about 100,000 foreign students annually into institutions of higher learning, generating education revenues to the national economy. Moreover, travel and tourism activities among these foreign students add to the tourism revenues and also improve the attractiveness of Malaysia's education industry. To attract more foreign students and improve inbound tourism among them, this study assesses their leisure motivation, as leisure activities in whatever form is a basic need for well-being. This study evaluates how leisure motivation can influence their travel behaviour, and whether travel satisfaction would mediate it. Methodology used is quantitative research, with multi-stage cluster sampling and self-administered questionnaires for data collection. The sample size was 429. Hypotheses were tested using simple linear regression, multiple regression and canonical correlation analysis, to identify relationships among the three main variables leisure motivation, travel behaviour and travel satisfaction, and their sub-variables. Findings showed that leisure motivation significantly influences travel behaviour, and travel satisfaction has mediating influence on those relationships. Stimulus-avoidance factor is the strongest leisure motivator among foreign students, which significantly influences urban and adventure tourism. Intellectual factor, the second strongest, significantly influences urban and rural tourism. The third, competence-mastery factor, significantly influences sports, adventure and urban tourism. Lastly, social factor significantly influences rural tourism. Social factor has no significant influence on travel satisfaction. Adventure tourism has no significant influence on travel satisfaction.

## **APPROVAL**

I certify that I have supervised / read this study and that in my opinion it conforms to acceptable standards of scholarly presentation and is fully adequate, in quality and scope, as a thesis for the fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

Associate Professor Dr Oo Yu Hock  
**Supervisor**

### **Examination Committee:**

Assoc Prof Dr Wan Sabri Wan  
Hussin  
Asia e University  
Examiner

Professor Dr Nor'ain Othman  
  
Universiti Teknologi MARA  
Examiner

Dr Johan Afendi Ibrahim  
Universiti Utara Malaysia  
Examiner

Professor Dr Siow Heng Loke  
Chairman, Examination Committee

This thesis was submitted to Asia e University and is accepted as fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

Professor Dr Juhary Ali  
Dean,  
School of Management  
Asia e University

Professor Ts. Dr Titik Khawa Abdul Rahman  
Dean,  
School of Graduate Studies  
Asia e University

## **DECLARATION**

I hereby declare that the thesis submitted in fulfilment of the PhD degree is my own work and that all contributions from any other persons or sources are properly and duly cited. I further declare that the material has not been submitted either in whole or in part, for a degree at this or any other university. In making this declaration, I understand and acknowledge any breaches in this declaration constitute academic misconduct, which may result in my expulsion from the programme and/or exclusion from the award of the degree.

**Name:** Lee Choon Kin

**Signature of Candidate**

**Date:** 17 August 2021



## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

To Assoc Prof Dr Oo Yu Hock, my supervisor, I wish to express my utmost sincere thanks, for showing me the key pointers that enabled me to kick-start and complete the second stage of my thesis. His belief in my ability was a powerful dose of motivation for me. My gratitude goes to Assoc Prof Dr. Azilah Binti Kasim, who guided me in the initial stage of my study, to Ms. Swa Lee Lee and Ms. Siti Habsah Mat Diah, who diligently and unfailingly coordinated my studies from afar, to Ms Aida Azura Mohd Aris and her team who coordinated my viva voce, and also to Professor Dr Siow Heng Loke who always gave me solid support throughout my course of study.

Special thanks to my niece and nephew, Yati and Amin, who helped me distribute questionnaires in West Malaysia. I would also like to thank the management of the colleges and universities who have contributed to my data collection.

I also feel indebted to Asia e University for giving me the opportunity to study at the PhD level, a dream that would have been impossible to achieve, had it not been for the noble vision and mission enacted by the institution. My deepest appreciation to the examiners, Assoc Prof Dr Wan Sabri Wan Hussin, Prof Dr Norain Othman and Dr Johan Affendi Ibrahim, for their invaluable advice on improving my thesis.

Finally, I wish to acknowledge my children for understanding me and giving me the moral support at the times when I needed to focus on my PhD journey. Their love and understanding have given me peace of mind to chase my dream.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>ABSTRACT</b> .....	ii
<b>APPROVAL</b> .....	iii
<b>DECLARATION</b> .....	iv
<b>ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS</b> .....	vi
<b>TABLE OF CONTENTS</b> .....	vii
<b>LIST OF TABLES</b> .....	xi
<b>LIST OF FIGURES</b> .....	xiii
<b>LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS</b> .....	xiv

### CHAPTER

<b>1.0 INTRODUCTION</b> .....	1
1.1 Background of the Study .....	1
1.2 Background of Tourism Economy in Malaysia .....	6
1.3 Problem Statement .....	11
1.4 Research Objectives .....	16
1.5 Research Questions .....	18
1.6 Significance of the Study .....	19
1.6.1 Practical Contributions .....	19
1.6.2 Theoretical Contributions .....	21
1.6.3 Contribution to Methodology .....	22
1.7 Limitations of the Study .....	23
<b>2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW</b> .....	26
2.1 Tourism .....	26
2.2 Edu-tourism .....	28
2.3 Urban Tourism .....	32
2.4 Rural Tourism .....	34
2.5 Adventure Tourism .....	35
2.6 Sports Tourism .....	36
2.7 Leisure .....	38
2.8 Leisure Motivation .....	41
2.9 Leisure Motivation Scale .....	46
2.10 Consumer Behaviour .....	49
2.11 Travel Behaviour .....	52
2.12 Travel Satisfaction .....	56
2.13 Past Methodologies and Tools for Analysis .....	59
2.13.1 Normality Test .....	59
2.13.2 Reliability Test .....	60
2.13.3 Validity Test .....	61
2.13.4 Descriptive Analysis .....	61
2.13.5 Simple Linear Regression .....	62
2.13.6 Multiple Regression Analysis .....	63
2.13.7 Canonical Correlation Analysis .....	64



2.14	The Conceptual Framework .....	66
<b>3.0</b>	<b>METHODOLOGY .....</b>	<b>69</b>
3.1	Research Design .....	69
3.2	Population .....	71
3.3	Sample Size.....	72
3.4	Sampling Design.....	75
3.5	Measurement Instrument .....	78
3.6	Secondary Data .....	84
3.7	Pilot Test.....	85
3.8	Ethical Issues.....	86
3.9	Data Analysis.....	87
3.9.1	Normality Test for Data Distribution .....	87
3.9.2	Reliability and Validity Tests .....	88
3.9.3	Descriptive Analysis .....	88
3.9.4	Simple Linear Regression .....	89
3.9.5	Multiple Regression Analysis.....	93
3.9.6	Canonical Correlation Analysis.....	94
<b>4.0</b>	<b>RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS .....</b>	<b>96</b>
4.1	Response Rate.....	96
4.2	Screening Analysis of Respondents.....	96
4.2.1	Background of Respondents .....	96
4.2.2	Demographic Profile of Respondents.....	99
4.2.3	Leisure Time of Respondents .....	101
4.2.4	Leisure Activities of Respondents.....	103
4.2.5	Travel Intention, Travel Barrier and Travel Pattern .....	107
4.3	Results of Normality Tests .....	118
4.4	Results of Reliability Tests.....	127
4.5	Leisure Motivators of Foreign Students in Malaysia.....	130
4.5.1	Leisure Motivators of Respondents .....	130
4.5.2	Travel Behaviour of Respondents .....	137
4.5.3	Travel Satisfaction of Respondents .....	143
4.6	The Relationship Between Leisure Motivation and Travel Behaviour .....	145
4.6.1	The Influence of Leisure Motivation on Travel Behaviour.....	146
4.6.2	The Influence of Intellectual Factor on Urban Tourism.....	150
4.6.3	The Influence of Intellectual Factor on Rural Tourism .....	151
4.6.4	The Influence of Intellectual Factor on Adventure Tourism .....	152
4.6.5	The Influence of Intellectual Factor on Sports Tourism .....	153
4.6.6	The Influence of Social Factor on Urban Tourism.....	154
4.6.7	The Influence of Social Factor on Rural Tourism .....	155
4.6.8	The Influence of Social Factor on Adventure Tourism .....	156
4.6.9	The Influence of Social Factor on Sports Tourism .....	157
4.6.10	The Influence of Competence-mastery Factor on Urban Tourism .....	159
4.6.11	The Influence of Competence-mastery Factor on Rural Tourism .....	160
4.6.12	The Influence of Competence-mastery Factor on Adventure .....	

Tourism .....	160
4.6.13 The Influence of Competence-mastery Factor on Sports Tourism·	161
4.6.14 The Influence of Stimulus-avoidance Factor on Urban Tourism·	163
4.6.15 The Influence of Stimulus-avoidance Factor on Rural Tourism ·	164
4.6.16 The Influence of Stimulus-avoidance Factor on Adventure Tourism.....	165
4.6.17 The Influence of Stimulus-avoidance Factor on Sports Tourism ·	165
4.6.18 Summary of Bivariate Relationships ( $r > 0.3$ ) .....	167
4.6.19 Interrelationship Between Variables of Leisure Motivation and Variables of Travel Behaviour.....	169
4.7 The Relationship Between Leisure Motivation and Travel Satisfaction·	189
4.7.1 The Influence of Leisure Motivation on Travel Satisfaction .....	189
4.7.2 The Influence of Intellectual Factor on Travel Satisfaction .....	190
4.7.3 The Influence of Social Factor on Travel Satisfaction .....	191
4.7.4 The Influence of Competence-mastery Factor on Travel Satisfaction .....	191
4.7.5 The Influence of Stimulus-avoidance Factor on Travel Satisfaction	192
4.7.6 The Influence of Travel Satisfaction on Leisure Motivation .....	193
4.7.7 The Influence of Travel Satisfaction on Each Leisure Motivator·	193
4.7.8 Multiple Regression Analysis – Leisure Motivators and Travel Satisfaction .....	197
4.8 The Mediating Influence of Travel Satisfaction on the Relationship Between Leisure Motivation and Travel Behaviour.....	199
4.8.1 The Influence of Travel Satisfaction on Travel Behaviour .....	200
4.8.2 The Influence of Travel Satisfaction on Urban Tourism.....	201
4.8.3 The Influence of Travel Satisfaction on Rural Tourism.....	201
4.8.4 The Influence of Travel Satisfaction on Adventure Tourism .....	202
4.8.5 The Influence of Travel Satisfaction on Sports Tourism.....	203
4.8.6 The Influence of Travel Behaviour on Travel Satisfaction .....	204
4.8.7 The Influence of Each Category of Travel Behaviour on Travel Satisfaction .....	204
4.8.8 The Influence of Four Categories of Travel Behaviour on Travel Satisfaction .....	207
4.8.9 The Mediating Influence of Travel Satisfaction on Travel Behaviour .....	209
<b>5.0 CONCLUSIONS, IMPLICATIONS AND SUMMARY .....</b>	<b>213</b>
5.1 Conclusions.....	213
5.1.1 Leisure Motivators of Foreign Students in Malaysia .....	213
5.1.2 Relationship Between Leisure Motivation and Travel Behaviour·	214
5.1.3 Relationship Between Leisure Motivation and Travel Satisfaction ·	219
5.1.4 Mediating Influence of Travel Satisfaction on the Relationship Between Leisure Motivation and Travel Behaviour .....	221
5.1.5 Summary of Conclusions .....	222
5.2 Implications of Research Findings .....	227
5.2.1 Implementing Experiential Coursework.....	227

5.2.2 Incentives and Ratings for Institutions of Higher Learning .....	228
5.2.3 Promote Eco-tourism .....	229
5.2.4 Sports Events and Facilities .....	231
5.2.5 Collaboration Between Tourism Players and Education Institutions	232
5.2.6 Dialogues Between Tourism Players and Foreign Students .....	233
5.3 Summary of Hypotheses Tested and Outcomes .....	234
5.4 Recommendations for Future Research .....	237
<b>REFERENCES</b> .....	239
<b>APPENDICES</b> .....	253
Appendix A: Questionnaire .....	253
Appendix B: Results of Reliability Tests .....	259
Table B.1 Scale: Leisure motivation scale .....	259
Table B.2 Scale: Intellectual factor .....	260
Table B.3 Scale: Social factor .....	260
Table B.4 Scale: Competence-mastery factor .....	260
Table B.5 Scale: Stimulus-avoidance factor .....	261
Table B.6 Scale: Travel behaviour .....	261
Table B.7 Scale: Urban tourism .....	262
Table B.8 Scale: Rural tourism .....	262
Table B.9 Scale: Adventure tourism .....	262
Table B.10 Scale: Sports tourism .....	263
Table B.11 Scale: Travel satisfaction .....	263

## LIST OF TABLES

Table	Page
1.1	Number of Foreign Students in Malaysia by Country of Origin in 2019 ..... 6
1.2	Tourist Arrivals and Receipts in Malaysia ..... 9
4.1	Screening Analysis of Respondents .....98
4.2	Demographic Profile of Respondents ..... 100
4.3	Study Time and Leisure Time of Respondents ..... 102
4.4	Leisure Activities of Respondents ..... 106
4.5a	Leisure Travel Intention. Travel Barrier and Travel Pattern..... 109
4.5b	Respondents' Reasons for Travel Intention ..... 110
4.5c	Summary of Respondents' Desired Destinations ..... 111
4.5d	Summary of Reasons for Being Unable To Travel to Desired Destinations 111
4.6	Results of Kolmogorov-Smirnov and Shapiro-Wilk Test..... 121
4.7	Results of Normality Tests – Skewness and Kurtosis ..... 121
4.8	Summary of Cronbach's Reliability Coefficient ..... 128
4.9	Leisure Motivation of Respondents ..... 132
4.10	Travel Behaviour of Respondents ..... 140
4.11	Travel Satisfaction of Respondents ..... 144
4.12a	The Influence of Leisure Motivation on Travel Behaviour..... 146
4.12b	The Influence of the Four Leisure Motivators on Travel Behaviour..... 147
4.12c	The Influence of Travel Behaviour on Leisure Motivation..... 148
4.13	The Influence of Intellectual Factor on Urban Tourism..... 151
4.14	The Influence of Intellectual Factor on Rural Tourism ..... 152
4.15	The Influence of Intellectual Factor on Adventure Tourism ..... 152
4.16	The Influence of Intellectual Factor on Sports Tourism ..... 153
4.17	The Influence of Social Factor on Urban Tourism..... 155
4.18	The Influence of Social Factor on Rural Tourism..... 156
4.19	The Influence of Social Factor on Adventure Tourism ..... 157
4.20	The Influence of Social Factor on Sports Tourism..... 158
4.21	The Influence of Competence-mastery Factor on Urban Tourism..... 159
4.22	The Influence of Competence-mastery Factor on Rural Tourism ..... 160
4.23	The Influence of Competence-mastery Factor on Adventure Tourism ..... 161
4.24	The Influence of Competence-mastery Factor on Sports Tourism ..... 162
4.25	The Influence of Stimulus-avoidance Factor on Urban Tourism ..... 163
4.26	The Influence of Stimulus-avoidance Factor on Rural Tourism ..... 164
4.27	The Influence of Stimulus-avoidance Factor on Adventure Tourism ..... 165
4.28	The Influence of Stimulus-avoidance Factor on Sports Tourism ..... 166
4.29a	Test of Independence Between Two Sets of Variables..... 169
4.29b	Relationship Between the Two Canonical Variates Leisure Motivation and Travel Behaviour..... 170
4.29c	Significance of the Canonical Roots ..... 171
4.29d	Canonical Weights: Relationship Between Variables of Travel Behaviour· 172
4.29e	Canonical Weights: Relationship Between Variables of Leisure Motivation ..... 173

4.29f	Correlation Between Variables of Travel Behaviour .....	175
4.29g	Correlation Between Variables of Leisure Motivation .....	176
4.29h	Redundancy Analysis .....	177
4.29i	Relationship Between All Four Variables of Leisure Motivation and Each Variable of Travel Behaviour .....	180
4.29j	Summary of Significant Relationships in Multiple Regression Within Canonical Correlation Analysis .....	182
4.30	The Influence of Leisure Motivation on Travel Satisfaction .....	190
4.31	The Influence of Intellectual Factor on Travel Satisfaction .....	190
4.32	The Influence of Social Factor on Travel Satisfaction .....	191
4.33	The Influence of Competence-mastery Factor on Travel Satisfaction .....	192
4.34	The Influence of Stimulus-avoidance Factor on Travel Satisfaction .....	193
4.35	The Influence of Travel Satisfaction on Leisure Motivation .....	193
4.36	The Influence of Travel Satisfaction on Intellectual Factor .....	194
4.37	The Influence of Travel Satisfaction on Social Factor .....	194
4.38	The Influence of Travel Satisfaction on Competence-mastery Factor .....	194
4.39	The Influence of Travel Satisfaction on Stimulus-avoidance Factor .....	195
4.40	The Influence of Four Leisure Motivators on Travel Satisfaction .....	198
4.41	The Influence of Travel Satisfaction on Travel Behaviour .....	200
4.42	The Influence of Travel Satisfaction on Urban Tourism .....	201
4.43	The Influence of Travel Satisfaction on Rural Tourism .....	202
4.44	The Influence of Travel Satisfaction on Adventure Tourism .....	203
4.45	The Influence of Travel Satisfaction on Sports Tourism .....	203
4.46	The Influence of Travel Behaviour on Travel Satisfaction .....	204
4.47	The Influence of Urban Tourism on Travel Satisfaction .....	205
4.48	The Influence of Rural Tourism on Travel Satisfaction .....	205
4.49	The Influence of Adventure Tourism on Travel Satisfaction .....	205
4.50	The Influence of Sports Tourism on Travel Satisfaction .....	205
4.51	The Influence of the Four Categories of Travel Behaviour on Travel Satisfaction .....	208
4.52	The Influence of Leisure Motivation and Travel Satisfaction on Travel Behaviour .....	210
5.1	Summary of Hypotheses Tested and Outcomes .....	235

## LIST OF FIGURES

Figure	Page
2.1	The Conceptual Framework – Leisure Motivation, Travel Behaviour and Travel Satisfaction of Foreign ..... 68
4.1	Histogram of Intellectual Factor ..... 122
4.2	Histogram of Social Factor ..... 122
4.3	Histogram of Competence-mastery Factor ..... 123
4.4	Histogram of Stimulus-avoidance Factor ..... 123
4.5	Histogram of Leisure Motivation ..... 124
4.6	Histogram of Urban Tourism ..... 124
4.7	Histogram of Rural Tourism ..... 125
4.8	Histogram of Adventure Tourism ..... 125
4.9	Histogram of Sports Tourism ..... 126
4.10	Histogram of Travel Behaviour ..... 126
4.11	Histogram of Travel Satisfaction ..... 127
4.12	Simple Linear Regression - Key Relationships Between Sub-variables of Leisure Motivation and Sub-variables of Travel Behaviour ..... 168
4.13	First Canonical Function – Canonical Relationship Between Leisure Motivation and Travel Behaviour ..... 183
4.14	Second Canonical Function – Canonical Relationship Between Leisure Motivation and Travel Behaviour ..... 184
4.15	Third Canonical Function – Canonical Relationship Between Leisure Motivation and Travel Behaviour ..... 186
5.1	Conceptual Model – Leisure Motivation, Travel Behaviour and Travel Satisfaction among Foreign Students in Malaysia ..... 225
5.2	Relationship Between Leisure Motivators and Travel Satisfaction among Foreign Students in Malaysia ..... 226
5.3	Relationship Between Travel Satisfaction and Four Categories of Travel Behaviour among Foreign Students in Malaysia ..... 226

## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

BOP	Balance of Payments
EPU	Economic Planning Unit
HEWM	Higher Education Week Malaysia
ICEF	International Consultants for Education and Fairs
INTAN	The National Institute of Public Administration
KPI	Key Performance Indicator
MOHE	Ministry of Higher Education
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
PIE	Professionals in International Education
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation
UNSTAT	United Nations Statistical Commission
UNWTO	United Nations World Tourism Organisation
WHO	World Health Organisation
WTO	World Trade Organisation

## **CHAPTER 1.0 INTRODUCTION**

### **1.1 Background of the Study**

Malaysia has set its sight to become a fully developed nation in all aspects such as in economics, politics, social, spiritual, psychology and culture, and this ideal has been emblazoned in the national agenda “Vision 2020” that was launched in year 1991, according to Malaysia’s National Institute of Public Administration (INTAN, 2021). According to the Economic Planning Unit (EPU) from the Prime Minister’s Department, strategic five-year national plans have been established and implemented progressively towards realizing this vision, and the Eleventh Malaysia Plan for the five-year period 2016 – 2020, marks the end of the final five-year plan in this three-decades journey towards Vision 2020 (EPU, 2021).

Looking back, Hansen (2013) noted that in Malaysia’s endeavor to achieve fully developed nation status, developing quality human capital was among the key strategies laid out in the Tenth Malaysia Plan 2011 – 2015. In developing human capital, Malaysia has focused on developing research, funding research universities and increasing the number of post-graduate students by funding many of Malaysian students’ higher education overseas, mainly to the United States of America and the United Kingdom. After the Asian Financial Crisis 1997 – 1998, however, Malaysia set up more local universities and other institutions of higher learning, so that Malaysian students can proceed to higher education locally, which is more affordable than sending students overseas. The increasing number of local universities soon became an attraction to foreign students from abroad, especially students from



countries that find Malaysia's higher education affordable and have cultural similarities, such as Indonesia, Iran, Iraq, Nigeria and Pakistan (Hansen, 2013).

With the inflow of foreign students into Malaysian universities, it follows that Malaysia aspires to become a regional education hub for higher education, as it has the abilities to meet the discerning needs of the international student market in Asia. These abilities include the wide use of English language in institutions of higher learning, affordable fees and cost of living due to favourable exchange rates, and relatively safe and stable political climate (Tourism Malaysia, 2012). At the Transforming Education Summit 2012 at Abu Dhabi, organized by the International Consultants for Education and Fairs (ICEF), Malaysia announced its aim to be the sixth largest education exporter, with a target of 200,000 foreign students by 2020 (ICEF Monitor, 2012). In year 2014 when Malaysia hosted about 135,000 foreign students, it announced a target of 250,000 foreign students by year 2025 (ICEF Monitor, 2014). The ICEF is a global market leader based in Germany, dealing in business-to-business events and services in the international education sector, and it established the ICEF Monitor as a dedicated market intelligence resource for the international education industry, serving a wide range of audiences from 171 countries. The target of 250,000 foreign students by year 2025 is spelt out in the Malaysia Education Blueprint for Higher Education 2015 – 2025 (Lam, 2021).

In Malaysia, the Ministry of Higher Education (MOHE) affirms the government's vision to become a centre of educational excellence and to internationalize Malaysian education. MOHE was created in 2004 to take charge of higher education in Malaysia, then involving more than 900,000 students pursuing

higher education. Today, Malaysia has 20 public universities, 447 private universities and colleges, 36 public polytechnics, and 103 public community colleges – a total of 606 institutions of higher learning (Ismail, 2020).

All institutions of higher learning as well as collaborative programmes with foreign institutions of higher learning, have been intensified to attract more international students, or as is often known as foreign students, to continue their studies in Malaysia, which the Ministry of Tourism regards as Education Tourism, or, often known as edu-tourism. While MOHE is responsible for developing education programmes that could attract foreign students, the Ministry of Tourism helps in terms of marketing, usually with promotions through various channels, such as the Higher Education Week Malaysia (HEWM 2015). Tourism Malaysia is an agency under the Ministry of Tourism, Arts and Culture, being assigned the specific task of promoting both domestic and international tourism in Malaysia. In a collaboration, MOHE and Tourism Malaysia together launched “Malaysia 101 Edutourism Packages” in year 2015, which enabled the public institutions of higher learning to introduce and organize educational tour packages to the public and the international community (Tourism Malaysia, 2015). For instance, Universiti Putra Malaysia became the first Malaysian university to organize and offer education packages to visitors, with focus on several attractive locations such as the Malay Heritage Museum, Serdang Gallery and the UPM Conservatory Park around the campus area (UPM, 2021). MOHE suggested that these educational tours can provide a more holistic education, with the tagline ‘Beyond a Degree’, and emphasized that such initiative is an important strategy for developing quality human capital (Murni, 2015).

Malaysia's edu-tourism policies has attracted a growing number of foreign students into local institutions of higher learning (collectively referred as Malaysian universities). UNESCO Institute for Statistics showed from 2009, Malaysia hosted 57,824 tertiary education international students (UNESCO, 2012). By August 2012, Therin (2012) noted that some 80,000 foreign students were studying in Malaysia's institutions of higher learning among the 1.1 million tertiary students in Malaysia with 500,000 pursuing bachelor's degrees and 400,000 pursuing diplomas. Hansen's (2013) report dated 1<sup>st</sup> June 2013, noted that there were almost 100,000 foreign students in Malaysian universities, with the Malaysian government aiming for 200,000 by year 2020. MOHE (2019) announced that as of March 2019, enrolment of international students has reached 127,583 with about 70% in private universities and 30% in public universities, and that it hoped to achieve the target of 200,000 by year 2020. However, Hirschmann's (2020) research covering statistics on the number of international students studying in higher education institutions in Malaysia in the year 2019, by country of origin, was published in [statistica.com](http://statistica.com), revealing only a total of 93,580 international students in 2019, as shown in Table 1.1. Hirschmann (2020) also commented that a large share of international students in Malaysia come from Muslim countries, a majority of whom enrolled in private higher education institutions.

Education revenues from overseas students studying in Malaysia, along with revenues from international tourists to Malaysia, are among the service exports in the Malaysian Balance of Payments (BOP), contributing to the growth of the country's economy (Vengedasalam and Madhavan, 2007). The Education Ministry announced

that, the average expenditure of an international student is RM46,000 per annum and will increase to RM88,000 if family members also come along, thereby generating an estimated RM7.2 billion per year of revenues in education fees and living expenses during the course of study in Malaysia. (MOHE, 2019; The Malay News, 2019). Thus, the idea of edu-tourism has so far focused on the education-based revenues earned from foreign students, with Malaysia having added attractiveness to foreign students due to its wealth of culture and tradition (BERNAMA, 2019).

As reported in The Professionals in International Education (PIE) News by Viggo (2019), MOHE called for all its universities, both public and private, to work together to attract more foreign students because it had become quite clear that the country most likely could not reach its target of 200,000 by year 2020. Despite efforts to improve foreign student enrolment, all plans were disrupted when the COVID-19 pandemic hit Malaysia at the beginning of year 2020. The World Health Organisation (WHO) has announced that COVID-19 pandemic is a global health crisis caused by a newly discovered coronavirus, now called severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2), which is both highly infectious and deadly, and has led to over 1.8 million reported deaths worldwide as at 31<sup>st</sup> December 2020 (WHO, 2021). Travel bans imposed by governments across many countries in order to contain the spread of COVID-19 have severely impacted student mobility, and education worldwide faced unprecedented challenges (UNESCO, 2021). Higher education has been forced to shift from on-campus teaching and learning to remote models using digital platforms, which not only makes learning difficult for students who have little or no internet connection in their localities, but also removes the

experience of university life at campus (Kee and Adamu, 2020). Ewing (2021) argued that COVID-19 should be or could be a catalyst for change in higher education, although it does not guarantee that change will happen. After more than one year into the pandemic, which is still raging on in Malaysia, it remains to be seen whether the higher education landscape will return to normal as before, or, whether there could be changes in demand for higher education that require new strategies for edu-tourism.

*Table 1.1 Number of Foreign Students in Malaysia by Country of Origin In 2019*

<b>Country of origin</b>	<b>Number of foreign students</b>
China	13,450
Indonesia	9,340
Bangladesh	7,740
Yemen	6,000
Pakistan	5,150
Nigeria	4,820
India	3,070
Egypt	2,650
Saudi Arabia	2,250
Iraq	2,230
Others	36,880
<i>Total</i>	93,580

*Source: Adapted from statistica.com website, R.Hirschmann (2020)*

## **1.2 Background of Tourism Economy in Malaysia**

Tourism has long been regarded as one of the engines of growth for Malaysia. The Tourism Department was officially established in 1959 under the Ministry of Trade and Industry, but today it is known as the Ministry of Tourism, Arts and Culture Malaysia. This establishment had been re-structured over the years for the coordination, development and promotion of domestic and international tourism.

During the 1980s global recession, Malaysia gave increasing attention to develop tourism as an alternative source of foreign exchange to remedy the nation's balance of payments (BOP) deficits (Mazumder et al, 2009).

In promoting international tourism, Malaysia had launched a worldwide marketing campaign in 1999 called 'Malaysia, Truly Asia' which successfully brought in 7.4 million international tourists (Munan, 2002). Other campaigns successfully launched by Tourism Malaysia include Visit Malaysia Year 1994 with the theme 'To know Malaysia is to love Malaysia', Visit Malaysia Year 2014 with the theme 'Celebrating 1Malaysia, Truly Asia', and MyFEST 2015 campaign to showcase and promote the multi-cultural festivals to boost tourism (Tourism Malaysia, 2021). These campaigns captured and defined the essence of the country's unique diversity of cultures, festivals, traditions and customs, offering myriad experiences, because no other country has Asia's three major races: Malay, Chinese, Indian, plus various other ethnic groups in large numbers. "Malaysia, Truly Asia" sums up the distinctiveness and allure of Malaysia that make it an exceptional tourist destination (Tourism Malaysia, 2013). Hirschmann (2020) reported that the tourism sector contributed about 5.9% to Malaysia's total gross domestic product in 2018. The Visit Malaysia Year 2020 campaign, which came with the theme 'Visit Truly Asia Malaysia', was set to become a festive year-long event to showcase art, culture, cuisine, history, and the beauty of natural geography among other events to bring in international tourists. However, this campaign could not be launched due to the COVID-19 outbreak from the start of 2020 (Tourism Malaysia, 2021).

Domestic tourism was intensified by the government after the Asian financial crisis in 1997. International travels were also restricted by epidemics such as the avian influenza H5N1 in 1997 and SARS (severe acute respiratory syndrome) outbreak in 2003 (WHO, 2014). Malaysians have been urged to spend their money at home and to visit local destinations, with tourism campaigns like ‘Cuti-cuti Malaysia’ (Mohamed and Yusof, 2012). The success of domestic tourism was announced by Malaysia Tourism Minister that in the year 2010, Malaysians had made 110 million trips to go on vacation in their own country which contributed an income of RM34 billion (BERNAMA, 2012). Tourism Malaysia (2020) announced that statistics from Department of Statistics Malaysia, showed domestic tourism had increased annually, and in the year 2018 Malaysia had 78.2 million domestic tourists making 302.4 million trips and contributing RM92.6 billion to the national economy. Measuring domestic tourism was based on UNWTO’s International Recommendations for Tourism Statistics 2008, with data collection through household survey (Department of Statistics Malaysia, 2020).

While Malaysia has mainly focused on marketing holiday and leisure travels in its tourism industry, there are other types of tourists who visit Malaysia, such as for business, for sports events, for education and training, or for health and medical treatment which is regarded as medical tourism. Medical tourism is facilitated and promoted by Malaysia Healthcare Travel Council which has earned Malaysia a place in the top ten destinations in the world for healthcare (Patients Beyond Borders, 2021). Malaysia’s tourism policies have resulted in the phenomenal growth of

international tourist arrivals and tourism revenues, from the years 2000 to 2020, as shown in Table 1.2 below.

*Table 1.2 Tourist Arrivals and Receipts to Malaysia*

<b>Year</b>	<b>Arrivals (million)</b>	<b>Receipts (RM' billion )</b>
2020	4.33	12.7
2019	26.10	86.1
2018	25.83	84.1
2017	25.95	82.1
2016	26.76	82.1
2015	25.72	69.1
2014	27.44	72.0
2013	25.72	65.4
2012	25.03	60.6
2011	24.71	58.3
2010	24.58	56.5
2009	23.65	53.4
2008	22.05	49.6
2007	20.97	46.1
2006	17.55	36.3
2005	16.43	32.0
2004	15.70	29.7
2003	10.58	21.3
2002	13.29	25.8
2001	12.78	24.2
2000	10.22	17.3

*Source: Adapted from Tourism Malaysia Corporate Website (2021)*

Statistics from Tourism Malaysia (2020) stated that in year 2019, tourist receipts was RM86.14 billion and the number of tourist arrivals was 26.1 million. At this time, the top ten international arrivals were from Singapore (10.2 million), Indonesia (3.6 million), China (3.1 million), Thailand (1.9 million), Brunei (1.2 million), and India, South Korea, Japan, the Philippines and Vietnam with each having under one million tourist arrivals. About 33.6% of those tourist receipts were