

Yesterday in a Nutshell: Unveiling Malaysians' Experience and Satisfaction of Visiting Museums

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Abstract

Museums started as a place to preserve history and heritage and have grown to provide a space for cultural sharing and providing prodigious experiences to the visitors. Such experience influences satisfaction which in turn will invite more visitors to the museums. This is vital in ensuring the sustainability of the industry as the younger generation tends to turn away from visiting museums. In studying the matter, The Experience Economy Theory (EET) is applied to understand the experiences obtained by the museum visitors, which affects their satisfaction level as well as the moderating effect of personality. This study employs quantitative analysis with the use of PLS-SEM software. Aesthetics and entertainment showed a significant relationship in influencing the satisfaction level of museum visitors in Malaysia. Museums should be focusing on these elements to improve the values of museums beyond just providing information to visitors in hopes of not only preserving the items of heritage but also preserving the museum-going culture in the future.

Keywords: experience, Malaysia, marketing, museum, satisfaction

1.0 Introduction

“Living is like tearing through a museum. Not until later do you really start absorbing what you saw, thinking about it, looking it up in a book, and remembering - because you can't take it in all at once – Audrey Hepburn”.

Museums should be a place where you raise questions, not just show stuff (Thorsell, n.d.). This coincides with the origins of museums in ancient Greek and Roman times where it was established as a place for philosophical discussions (Lewis, 1999). Centuries after that, museums expanded as private collections for a few of European's finest individuals and families to ensure that their collections of arts and



artefacts were protected, thus making them merely a concept rather than a building (Lewis, n.d.; The European Museums Network, n.d.).

The International Council of Museums (ICOM) defines museums as per the ICOM Statutes, adopted by the 22nd General Assembly in Vienna, Austria on 24th August 2007 as “a non-profit, permanent institution in the service of society and its development, open to the public, which acquires, conserves, researches, communicates and exhibits the tangible and intangible heritage of humanity and its environment for the purposes of education, study and enjoyment” (International Council of Museums, n.d.).

Typically, museums are for the purposes of collecting and preserving heritage and history items (Arinze, 1999). Museums have been categorised into several types that include i) object-centred museums, ii) narrative museums, iii) client-centred museums, iv) community-centred museums, and v) national and government museums (Gurian, 2006). Regardless of its type, each museum should be delivering one common goal, which is to preserve the heritage for the purpose of education as well as future development through the learning of experiences of past generations (Arinze, 1999). The protection of museums is important for the next generations to be able to have historical knowledge and be able to sense the environment of their ancestors.

Museums emerged in Malaysia early in the 19th century with its first museum, the Perak Museum which is located in Taiping, opened by the British government in 1883 marking the beginning of museum history in Malaysia (Tham et al., 2020). Initially governed as a department under the Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sports, museums are now administered by the Department of Museums Malaysia or Jabatan Muzium Malaysia (JMM) (Department of Museums Malaysia, n.d.). To date, there are 21 museums in Malaysia under JMM (Department of Museums Malaysia, 2020) (Department of Museums Malaysia, 2020). The National Museum of Malaysia or Muzium Negara located in Kuala Lumpur first opened its doors in 1963 and was officiated by our 3rd Yang di-Pertuan Agong (King of Malaysia). It was originally built as a replacement of the Selangor Museum, which was destroyed by bombing in 1945 (Muzium Negara, n.d.).

The number of visitors to museums in Malaysia has been fluctuating over the years as reported by JMM as seen in Figure 1 (Portal Data Terbuka Sektor Awam, 2020). The drop in visitors in 2020 is mainly due to the movement restrictions announced by the



government of Malaysia as well as the global travel ban due to the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic (Aziz et al., 2020; Fan & Cheong, 2020).

On top of the low number of visitors, there are several other challenges of museums in Malaysia including financial restraints and limitations mainly due to budget cuts from the government; exhibitions were considered static and conventional and lack of attractive and unmissable and exceptional masterpieces and collection and possibly an important factor, poor effective promotional strategies (Abdul Gani et al., 2021; Ser, 2020).

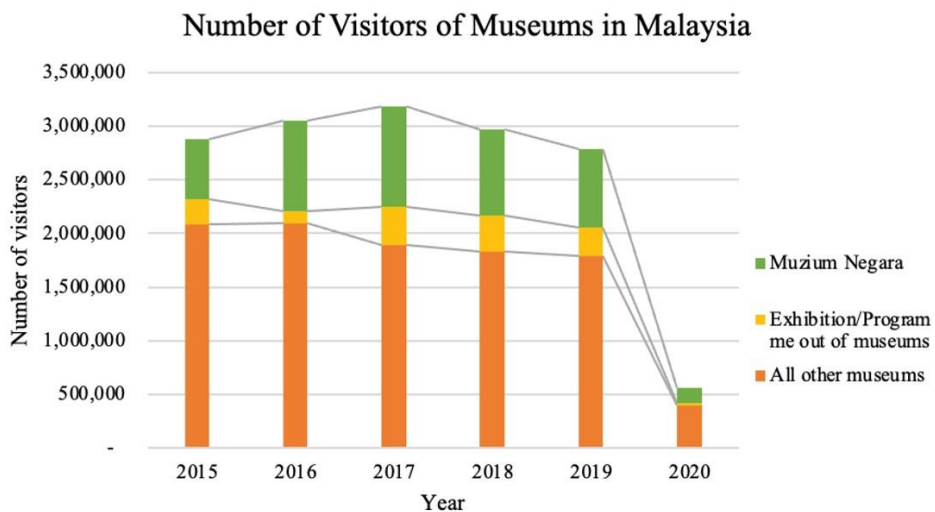


Figure 1 : Number of Visitors of Museums in Malaysia

A proposal was made for the revision of the museum definition to be more suited to the challenges and conditions of the present times. The revision is to include the idea of “experience” to be incorporated with the concept of museums as visitors and museums are now shifting to new structures involving experimental activities rather than just formal and didactic methods of learning (Annechini et al., 2020). It was reported that people are now losing the passion that could be obtained through visits to museums (Jones, 2017).

Museums, in a way, are now competing with the internet's seemingly infinite capacity for spreading knowledge and information. With the internet at one's fingertips and social media becoming more than just a tool, visiting a museum becomes about more than just gaining information; it is about gaining access to the layers beyond that.

Visitors to museums nowadays have an instinctive need to connect with context and perspectives, as well as the desire to not just hear but experience tales (Devine, 2020).

However, this does not necessarily mean that the industry is no longer relevant. The question at hand is how museums can increase the satisfaction level of the visitors to increase the number of visitors, especially by incorporating technology into the experiences throughout the visits (Devine, 2020). It is about enjoying yesterday, and today.

2.0 Literature Review

2.1 Experience Economy Theory (EET)

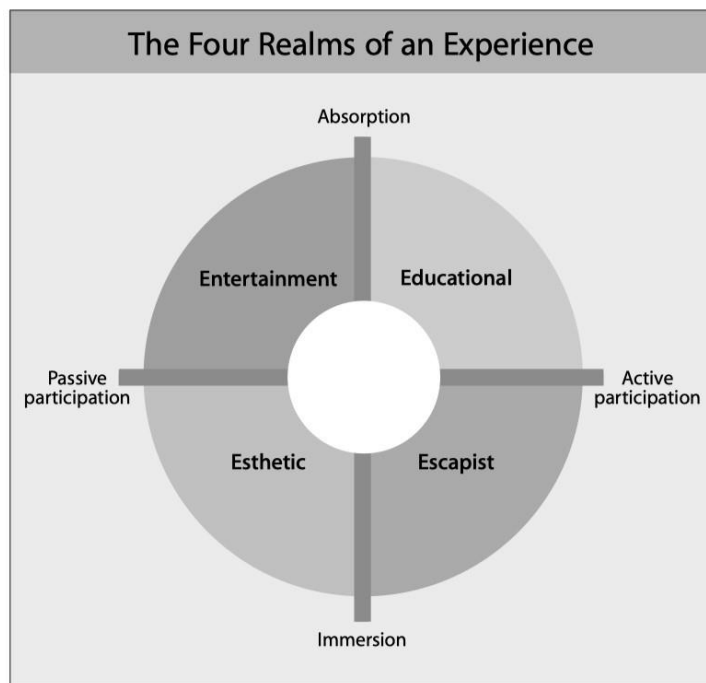


Figure 2 : Experience Economy Theory

The EET serves as the foundation for this study. According to proponents of this theory, as outlined in Figure 2, the experience economy is based on four experiential dimensions or realms that are entertainment (want to enjoy), education (desire to learn), escapism (desire to go and do 'something'), and aesthetic (desire to be) (Pine & Gilmore, 1998).

The idea proposes that experience is a suitable beginning point and an essential component in understanding consumer perception of

a product or service attractiveness. This is due to the nature of experience is also expected to meet the expectations and needs of customers similar to the expectancies from purchases of products and services (Pine & Gilmore, 1998).

The theory provided two experience dimensions that include customer participation and connection. Participation includes both passive and active participation depending on how much customers affect the services provided while connection portrays the relationship that unites customers with the services (Pine & Gilmore, 1998).

One of the promising management approaches is to understand customer experience whereby this experience should be memorable and emotionally significant (Wu, 2012). Experiences will improve future revisits or could improve museums' marketing strategy using word of mouth (Vesci et al., 2021).

2.2 Experience and Satisfaction

Research has notably applied and evaluated EET, especially in tourism (Hosany & Witham, 2009; Hwang & Lyu, 2015; Mahdzar et al., 2017; Mehmetoglu & Engen, 2011; Oh et al., 2007; Radder & Han, 2015; Song et al., 2014; Vesci et al., 2021). These studies have investigated the four areas in relation to customers' overall perceived quality and satisfaction.

Amongst many, Vesci et al. (2021), Mahdzar et al. (2017), and Radder & Han (2015) have evaluated the impacts of the experience of the museum's visitors on the satisfaction that contributed to the development of a framework for this study. Satisfaction is seen to be those sentiments and sensations that are produced by cognitive and emotional components that occur as customers are feeling satisfied when expectations are met (de Rojas & Camarero, 2006).

Museums are a good example of offering a memorable experience, but new generations of customers seek variety in leisure experiences leading to museums needing to emphasise on engaging experiences (Minkiewicz et al., 2014). Museum's sustainability and survival depend on visitors' experience and have become the key factor. Over the years, visitors are positioned at the centre of the business model whereby museums are now being pressured in terms of rethinking their connection with the visitors that could be more actively and interactively engaged (Bonet & Négrier, 2018).



This paper aims to analyse the influences of experiences on the satisfaction of museum visitors via analysing the four realms of experience.

Having an aesthetic experience is when visitors can immerse themselves in the environment (Pine & Gilmore, 2011). An aesthetic experience can be loosely defined as “a special state of mind that is qualitatively different from the everyday experience” (Marković, 2012). It relates to how each visitor interprets their physical surroundings, which for this study refers to the museum’s environment (Hosany & Witham, 2009). It is a passive form of experience as the visitors are not altering the environment or exhibitions around the museums (Oh et al., 2007). The relationships between aesthetics and satisfaction have been tested in the past, in the context of museums as well as other tourism products. Therefore, this study is to test if:

H1: There is a significant relationship between aesthetics (AES) and satisfaction (SAT) of museum visitors in Malaysia.

Entertainment signifies passive participation in which customers observe the product and services (Manthiou et al., 2014). The definition of a museum as provided earlier exemplifies how enjoyment is an important factor along with education and study (ICOM). It also creates a move forward toward a more participative role whereby visitors and the entertainment of these visitors are the central elements in a museum’s strategy as a pull factor (Bonet & Négrier, 2018). In relation to museums, there is a need to evolve from preservation sites to entertainment sites. This restructuring is of utmost importance in this current digital era (Agostino & Arnaboldi, 2021). Previous researchers found that entertainment is becoming a formidable tool to improve the participation of visitors (Waller & Waller, 2019). Hence, it is possible that:

H2: There is a significant relationship between entertainment (ENT) and satisfaction (SAT) of museum visitors in Malaysia.

Seen as the opposite of entertainment, which is a passive experience, escapism refers to the experience gained when a visitor actively immersed themselves in the activity (Pine & Gilmore, 2011). Going to a museum can be seen as a nurturing activity that is shared amongst family and friends (Jones, 2017) and for some, visits to places like the museums provide an outlet to move away from work or home



for a different experience (Vesci et al., 2021). Many previous studies have tried to show how being able to escape into a different reality provides satisfaction to individuals (Oh et al., 2007; Song et al., 2014; Vesci et al., 2021). Hence, it is said that there is a possibility that:

H3: There is a significant relationship between escapism (ESC) and satisfaction (SAT) of museum visitors in Malaysia.

Education is active participation involving learning something new (Pine & Gilmore, 2011; Zhang et al., 2016). People who participate in educational experiences will result in an increase and improvements in their knowledge and skillsets (Hosany & Witham, 2009; Oh et al., 2007). In the context of museums, education does not just refer to those experienced by kids or students on school trips, but it aims to provide informal learning experiences to adults and families through exhibitions and workshops (Ruso & Topdal, 2014). As this aim is understood by many, the relationship between education and satisfaction has been known to be significant in the past (Hwang & Lyu, 2015; Radder & Han, 2015; Song et al., 2014). Thus, this study wants to know if:

H4: There is a significant relationship between education (EDU) and satisfaction (SAT) of museum visitors in Malaysia.

2.3 Moderating Effect of Personality

As satisfaction is something that is produced by cognitive and emotional components and comes from within someone, and there are studies looking into the effects of personality in affecting the strength between those values and decision making as well as satisfaction (Ahmed et al., 2013; Badgaiyan et al., 2016; Moon, 2016). The Big Five personality is categorised as (1) extraversion – those that are sociable, (2) agreeableness – those with trust and kindness-like behaviours, (3) conscientiousness – those with high levels of thoughtfulness, (4) neuroticism – those with anxiety and moodiness, and (5) openness to experience – those with a wide range of interests and are imaginative as well as risk seekers (Ahmed et al., 2013; Soto, 2018). Ahmed et al (2013) further state that personality may affect the mood of a person, especially those with extraversion and neuroticism personalities which in turn affect satisfaction level in anything they are experiencing. Hence, this study hypothesised that:



H4: There is a moderating effect of personality in the relationship between (a) AES, (b) ENT), (c) ESC, (d) EDU, and satisfaction (SAT) of museum visitors in Malaysia.

Figure 3 below represents the research conceptual framework.

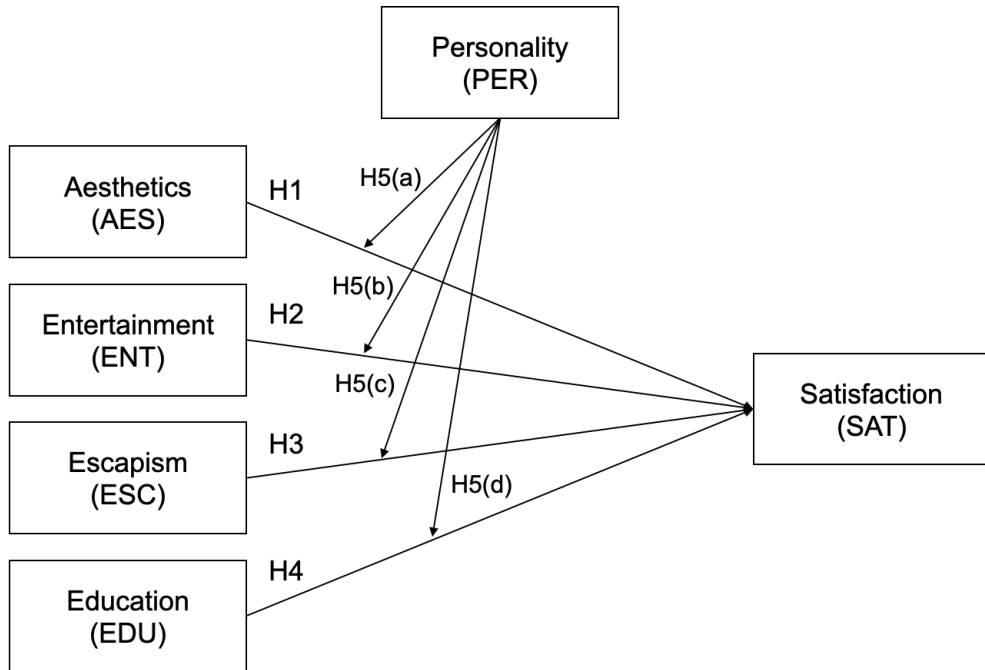


Figure 3 : Research Conceptual Framework

3.0 Methodology

The primary objective of this research is to understand the satisfaction level of visitors to museums in Malaysia based on their previous experiences. Thus, this study targeted Malaysians above 18 years old who have at least once visited any museums in Malaysia. Samples were acquired through convenience sampling.

Data collection was conducted throughout the implementation of MCO 2.0 from May to August 2021. In line with the restrictions on movement due to the COVID19 pandemic, there were limitations to acquire respondents directly from their visits to museums. Hence, a self-administered questionnaire, developed in Bahasa Malaysia and English, was shared via Microsoft Forms through various social media platforms.

Based on the outlined conceptual framework, the instruments employed were adapted from previous literature and were modified to suit the objectives of this study. The questionnaires consisted of several sections starting with filtering questions to select only viable respondents followed by a section to obtain demographic information of the respondents and measurements of the variables. For the variables, a six-point Likert scale is adopted to increase precision (Nemoto & Beglar, 2014).

In obtaining the view of the aesthetical and escapism experiences of museum visitors, a five-item measurement scale was adapted from Radder & Han (2015). In measuring the level of entertainment experiences by visitors to museums in Malaysia, a four-item measurement scale was revised from Zhang et al. (2016). In addition, to evaluate the educational experiences, five items were adapted from Radder & Han (2015) as well as Zhang et al. (2016). The dependent variable, which is the satisfaction level of the visitors is evaluated using the three items adapted from Zhang et al; (2016) while the moderating variable, which is personality is seen through five items as previously measured by Badgaiyan et al. (2016).

4.0 Findings

Following quality inspection and data cleaning, a total of 198 valid samples were available for analysis. Based on the G*Power program, with five number of predictors, the relevant sample size needed for this study is 116 with a 0.15 effect size, 5% Alpha error, and 0.9 power (Cohen, 1992; Faul et al., 2009). Thus, the sample size of 198 is considered sufficient.

From the 198 data collected, majority of the respondents were female (70.7%), and large respondents were the aged between 18 to 25 years old (68.2%). Insights from the younger group will be vital for this study as they are seen as the generation that could change the view of arts and museums (Ittelson, 2019; Weisman Art Museum, 2021). Most of the respondents are from Selangor (44.9%), which is consistent as the state with the most populous state in Malaysia (Department of Statistics Malaysia, 2021). More than half of the respondents are single (81.8%). Majority are students (64.6%) thus, most have a low annual income of less than RM24,000 (74.2%).

The data collected was analysed using partial least squares structural equation modelling (PLS-SEM) with Smart PLS 3.3.7 software. PLS-SEM is vastly used in analysing the causal-predictive



relationship between variables and have been used previously in experience and satisfaction study (Ali & Omar, 2014; Hair et al., 2019).

4.1 Measurement Model

Firstly, the measurement model is analysed and evaluated through validation using the reliability and validity of the construct and related indicators (Hair et al., 2019). This is through the outer loadings with an acceptable loading of more than 0.6 to indicate that the variables explain more than 50% of the indicator variances, signifying reliability (Dash & Paul, 2021; Hair et al., 2019). As per Table 1, the loadings of all reflective indicators are above the recommended value indicating acceptable item reliability.

Next, the results from Table 1 show that the composite reliability of the variables is all above the recommended value of 0.70, which denotes a level of satisfaction with good signalling reliability (Hair et al., 2019; Henseler et al., 2016). Correspondingly, all variables have a higher than 0.50 AVE suggesting that the construct explains at least 50% of the variance of its items (Hair et al., 2019).

The following step is the assessment of discriminant validity, which is “the extent in which the construct is empirically distinct from other constructs in the structural model” (Hair et al., 2019). This paper employs the heterotrait-monotrait (HTMT) ratio to determine the discriminant validity. Problems may exist when HTMT values are high and above the proposed value of 0.90. Based on Table 2, all HTMT ratios are below the threshold value, thus indicating that discriminant validity does exist.

Table 1 : Convergent validity and internal consistency assessment of variables

		Outer loadings	CR	AVE
Aesthetic Experience (AES)			<u>0.944</u>	<u>0.770</u>
AES1	I felt there is sense of harmony with my surroundings	0.898		
AES2	I felt the physical environment in the museum was pleasing	0.897		
AES3	I felt the exhibitions in the museum was pleasing	0.879		
AES4	I felt the interior ambience in the museum was pleasing	0.886		



AES5	I felt the museum appreciates diverse cultures	0.826		
Entertainment Experience (ENT)			<u>0.959</u>	<u>0.852</u>
ENT1	I felt the visit to the museum was entertaining	0.907		
ENT2	I felt the visit to the museum was enjoyable	0.945		
ENT3	I felt the visit to the museum was fun	0.938		
ENT4	I felt the visit to the museum was interesting	0.902		
Escapism Experience (ESC)			<u>0.851</u>	<u>0.537</u>
ESC1	I was able to be someone else while in the museum	0.772		
ESC2	I was able to imagine living in a different time and place	0.814		
ESC3	I was able to avoid interactions with others	0.655		
ESC4	I was able to get away from crowds of people	0.609		
ESC5	I was able to get away from stressful social environment	0.790		
Education Experience (EDU)			<u>0.938</u>	<u>0.753</u>
ESC1	I was given more knowledge from the visit	0.869		
ESC2	I felt that Malaysian museums are highly educational	0.904		
ESC3	I was allowed to learn more about culture and history	0.875		
ESC4	I was able to stimulate my curiosity by visiting the museum	0.869		
ESC5	I was able to enhance my philosophy by visiting the museum	0.819		
Personality (PER)			<u>0.837</u>	<u>0.507</u>
PER1	I see myself as extraverted, enthusiastic	0.751		
PER2	I see myself as sympathetic, warm	0.712		
PER3	I see myself as dependable, self-disciplined	0.697		
PER4	I see myself as calm, emotionally stable	0.621		
PER5	I see myself as open to new experiences	0.771		
Satisfaction (SAT)			<u>0.961</u>	<u>0.89</u>
SAT1	I am happy when I visited the museum	0.924		
SAT2	I had a good feeling about the museum	0.958		
SAT3	Overall, I am satisfied with my visit to the museum	0.948		



Table 2 : Discriminant Validity (HTMT Ratio)

	AES	ENT	ESC	EDU	PER
AES ENT	0.768				
ESC	0.523	0.527			
EDU	0.810	0.752	0.547		
PER	0.315	0.334	0.437	0.312	
SAT	0.804	0.843	0.524	0.771	0.403

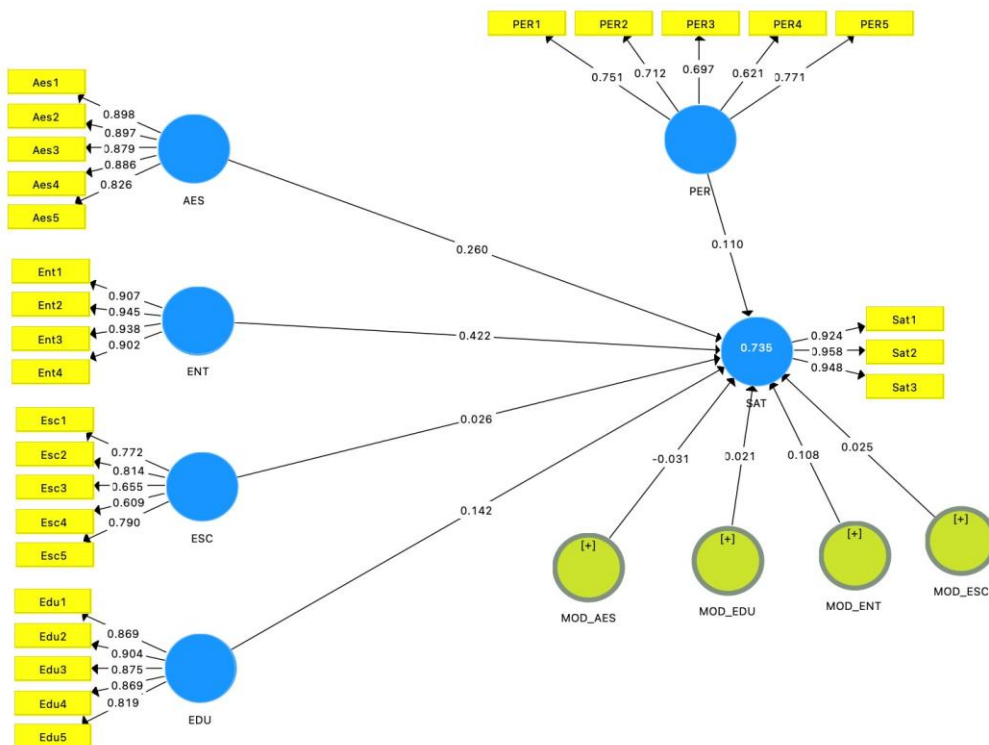


Figure 4 : Results of Measurement Model

4.2 Structural Model

As the measurement model provides satisfactory and acceptable results, this paper moved on to the structural model starting with the determination of the coefficient using adjusted R^2 . The value of 0.723 of the model shows a substantial fit to explain the variables (Hair et al., 2019).

Furthermore, the collinearity of the model is tested through the inner variance inflation factor (VIF). The inner VIF of direct relationships

of the variables to the dependent variables (SAT) resulted in AES: 2.990, ENT: 2.513, ESC: 1.722, ESU: 2.938, and PER: 1.271. As all VIF values are below the ideal value of 3, it does not indicate any possible or probable collinearity issues (Hair et al., 2019).

The model was further evaluated to test the hypothesised significance of the relationships between the four independent variables of AES, ENT, ESC, and EDU with the dependent variable (SAT) as well as the moderating effect of PER (MOD).

Based on Table 3, five main hypotheses were tested with two of them were supported and three were rejected. H1 and H2 were supported with a p-value of < 0.05 signifying that AES and ENT all have a significant relationship with SAT. On the other hand, H3 and H4 are rejected with a p-value > 0.05 indicating that ESC and EDU do not have a significant relationship with SAT and all H5 are rejected signifying that PER does not provide a moderating effect between the relationships of the independent and dependent variables.

Table 3 : Hypotheses Results Testing

	Hypothesis	Standard Beta (b)	t-value	p-value	Hypothesis results
H1	AES ® SAT	0.260	3.170	0.000	Accepted
H2	ENT ® SAT	0.420	5.32	0.000	Accepted
H3	ESC ® SAT	0.030	0.590	0.560	Rejected
H4	EDU ® SAT	0.140	1.660	0.100	Rejected
H5 (a)	MOD_AES	-0.030	0.410	0.680	Rejected
H5 (b)	MOD_ENT	0.110	0.770	0.440	Rejected
H5 (c)	MOD_ESC	0.030	0.420	0.680	Rejected
H5 (d)	MOD_EDU	0.020	0.240	0.810	Rejected



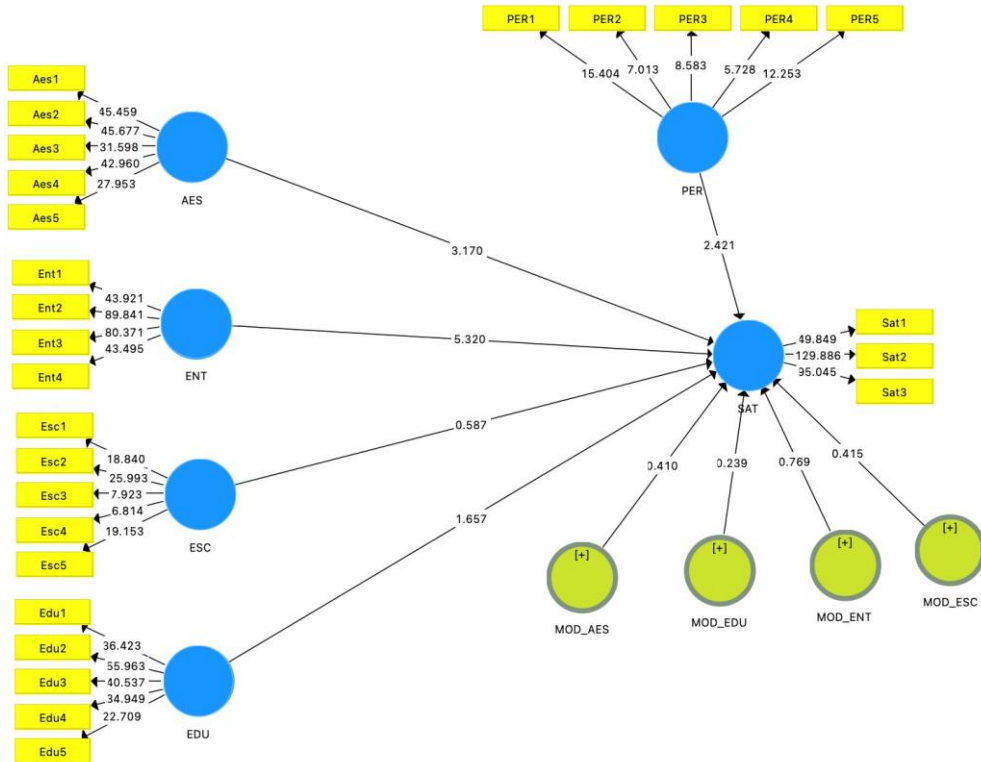


Figure 5 : Results of Structural Model

5.0 Discussion and Conclusion

5.1 Discussion and Conclusion

The result of this study is similar to the results of several previous studies. As for the aesthetic experience, the items measured and evaluated the environment of museums in Malaysia in giving pleasant experiences through their exhibitions and interior ambience. Moreover, in the aspect of entertainment, the study measured how much the museum provided a fun, enjoyable, and interesting experience to its visitors. For both of these elements, there are significant influences on the level of satisfaction of museum visitors. This is consistent with previous studies in which aesthetic experiences were found to have significant relationships with satisfaction levels (Hosany & Witham, 2010; Qu & Kangli, 2017; Radder et al., 2015). It has become apparent that the attitude of a person is influenced by the physical environment as well as tangible things that are surrounding them. Furthermore, the positive attitude towards experience can also be enhanced when a visitor is able to immerse themselves in an

enjoyable environment. Exhibitions in museums are those that are not normally seen in one's everyday life, which may be interpreted as something unique that gives a pleasing aesthetic and entertaining experience which in turn increases the attitude of the visitors. With a better attitude, the satisfaction level is increased and in the context of this study, museums visitor would have a better perception of the museums.

On the other hand, this research was not able to find significant relationships between escapism and education with the satisfaction level of the visitors. This is consistent with previous research that reported minimal or no effects of these elements on satisfaction (Hosany & Witham, 2010; Oh et al., 2007; Qu & Kangli, 2017; Radder et al., 2015). Escapism measured the ability of visitors to transport themselves to a different place upon visiting museums as well as the feeling of being away from a common social setting while education measured the level of knowledge that museums provide to the visitors. However, visitors do not necessarily choose museums as a medium to escape the hustle and bustle of daily life. Due to the nature of a museum as a tourist attraction, visitors possibly focus more on the physical environment and the aesthetics of the exhibitions rather than the information they provide.

Moreover, this study found that there are no mediating effects of personality in the relationships above. This finding is in contrast with previous research (Ahmed et al., 2013; Badgaiyan et al., 2016; Moon, 2016), however, it could be due to the nature of the personality measurements being too holistic and evaluating the overall personality of the big five traits rather than focusing on specific elements.

5.2 Managerial Implication, Limitation and Recommendation

This study hopes to add to the literature of experience studies in the past as well as museums and tourism research. Additionally, this study hopes to provide a significant contribution to assist the Department of Museums Malaysia in enduring sustainability of museums in Malaysia. As it has been found that the factors that affect satisfaction levels are both aesthetics and entertainment, the management of museums is being advised to explore new ideas to alleviate these core areas to improve the number of visitors. This could also increase the competitive advantages of museums with other tourism products in the hope to keep the industry alive. It is also imperative for museums to study the exhibitions provided by top



museums around the world as reported by Themed Entertainment Association (TEA) for 2020. The top 5 museums of 2020 were The Louvre in Paris, the National Museum of China, The Vatican Museum in Vatican City, The Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, and the British Museum in London (Themed Institution Association (TEA), 2021). These museums have been providing attractive exhibitions along with various innovations with the help of technology to provide better experiences to their visitors.

This study contains several limitations. There are only a few previous studies that specifically relate experience theory with museums in Malaysia, thus limiting the number of references for this paper. Furthermore, with the restrictions implemented through the MCO and due to the spread of the COVID-19 virus, data collection was not possible to be conducted in real time. Thus, the perception of the respondents may be slightly outdated as the visits to the museums are not necessarily in recent years.

Future studies can investigate the current perception of visitors as well as expanded the theory to include moderating or mediating variables. Personality as a moderator can be enhanced by focusing on specific aspects of the big five traits to not be too holistic. As the aim is to ensure the sustainability of the museum industry, future research can expand the framework into an intention to revisit and intention to recommend museums in Malaysia to other visitors, which could give some insights inon the possibility of increasing the number of visitors in the future.

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