Faculty of Economics and Business

Examining the Relationship of Cognitive and Affective Images on Destination Loyalty: A Case of Culture, Adventure, Nature, Food, and Festival Tourism in Sarawak

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Examining the Relationship of Cognitive and Affective Images on Destination Loyalty: A Case of Culture, Adventure, Nature, Food, and Festival Tourism in Sarawak

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DECLARATION

I declare that the work in this thesis was carried out in accordance with the regulations of Universiti Malaysia Sarawak. Except where due acknowledgements have been made, the work is that of the author alone. The thesis has not been accepted for any degree and is not concurrently submitted in candidature of any other degree.

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the intricate interplay between cognitive and affective images in shaping tourists' destination loyalty, focusing specifically on culture, adventure, nature, food, and festival (CANFF) tourism in Sarawak as elements of cognitive image. In contemporary tourism research, identifying the drivers behind tourists' loyalty toward a specific destination is crucial for sustainable tourism development. The purpose of this study is to examine the impact of destination images on tourists' behavioural intentions. More specifically, this research investigates the relationship between cognitive image and affective image, and the subsequent effects of both cognitive and affective images on tourists' intentions to revisit and recommend the destination. A systematic survey was conducted using convenience sampling of tourists visiting Sarawak, yielding 420 valid responses after data screening. A disjoint two-stage approach in Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modelling (PLS-SEM), appropriate for testing higher-order constructs (HOCs), was employed in this research. The findings support the conceptualization of a tourist destination's cognitive image as a reflective-formative, multidimensional higher-order construct encompassing culture, adventure, nature, gastronomy, and festivals (CANFF). Collectively, these CANFF attributes significantly contribute to forming Sarawak's cognitive image, illustrating how diverse destination elements coalesce to shape tourists' perceptions and drive their intentions to revisit and recommend Sarawak. Results also indicate a positive influence of cognitive image on affective image, with both cognitive and affective images positively influencing tourists' behavioural intentions. Notably, the affective image exerts a stronger impact on tourists' intentions to revisit and recommend the destination compared to the cognitive image, implying that emotions and feelings are more accurate predictors of behavioural intentions. The implications of this study are twofold. Firstly, it contributes to destination image and loyalty theories by empirically establishing nuanced relationships between cognitive and affective elements. Secondly, it offers practical insights for destination management organizations (DMOs) and policymakers in Sarawak and elsewhere to develop targeted strategies that enhance both cognitive and affective aspects of the destination experience, thereby fostering greater tourist loyalty. Leveraging these insights, Sarawak can progress toward its goal of becoming a leading tourist destination, significantly contributing to its economic development by 2030.

Keywords: Destination Image, Destination Loyalty, CANFF Tourism, Sarawak

Mengkaji Hubungan Imej Kognitif dan Afektif Terhadap Kesetiaan Destinasi: Kajian Kes Pelancongan Budaya, Pengembaraan, Alam Semula Jadi, Makanan, dan Festival di Sarawak

ABSTRAK

Kajian ini mendalami interaksi rumit antara imej kognitif dan afektif dalam membentuk kesetiaan pelancong terhadap destinasi, menggunakan konteks pelancongan Budaya, Pengembaraan, Alam Semula Jadi, Makanan, dan Festival (CANFF) di Sarawak sebagai imej kognitif. Dalam bidang penyelidikan pelancongan kontemporari, memahami faktor-faktor yang mendorong kesetiaan pelancong terhadap destinasi tertentu sangat penting untuk pembangunan pelancongan lestari. Tujuan kajian ini adalah untuk meneliti kesan imej destinasi terhadap niat tingkah laku. Secara khusus, penyelidikan ini menyiasat hubungan antara imej kognitif dan imej afektif, serta kesan kedua-dua imej kognitif dan afektif terhadap niat untuk melawat semula dan mengesyorkan destinasi tersebut. Sebuah tinjauan berstruktur yang disampel secara mudah telah dijalankan ke atas pelancong yang melawat Sarawak, menghasilkan 420 responden selepas penyaringan data. Pendekatan dua peringkat yang terpisah dalam PLS-SEM yang melibatkan pengujian konstruk orde tinggi (HOC) digunakan dalam kajian ini. Kajian ini menyokong konsep imej kognitif destinasi pelancongan sebagai sebuah konstruk berperingkat tinggi reflektif-formatif yang merangkumi budaya, pengembaraan, alam semula jadi, gastronomi, dan festival. Secara keseluruhan, atribut-atribut ini—budaya, pengembaraan, alam semula jadi, makanan, dan festival (CANFF)—secara signifikan membentuk imej kognitif Sarawak, menggambarkan bagaimana elemen-elemen pelbagai destinasi ini bersatu untuk membentuk persepsi pelancong dan mendorong niat mereka untuk melawat dan mencadangkan Sarawak. Hasil kajian ini menyokong kesan positif imej kognitif terhadap imej afektif, dan kedua-dua imej kognitif dan imej afektif mempunyai kesan positif terhadap niat pelancong untuk melawat *semula dan mengesyorkan destinasi tersebut. Hasil juga menunjukkan bahawa imej afektif mempengaruhi niat tingkah laku lebih daripada imej kognitif. Ini menunjukkan bahawa niat untuk mengunjungi semula dan untuk mencadangkan dapat diramalkan dengan lebih tepat oleh perasaan. Implikasi kajian ini adalah dua kali ganda: pertama, ia menyumbang kepada asas teori imej dan kesetiaan destinasi dengan secara empirik mewujudkan hubungan yang terperinci antara elemen kognitif dan afektif; kedua, ia menawarkan wawasan praktikal untuk organisasi pengurusan destinasi dan pembuat dasar di Sarawak, dan seterusnya, untuk merangka strategi yang disasarkan yang meningkatkan kedua-dua aspek kognitif dan afektif pengalaman destinasi, sekali gus memupuk kesetiaan pelancong yang lebih besar. Dengan ini, Sarawak dapat mencapai matlamatnya untuk menjadi destinasi pelancongan terkemuka dan menyumbang secara signifikan kepada pembangunan ekonominya menjelang tahun 2030.*

Kata kunci: *Imej destinasi, Kesetiaan Pelancong, Pelancongan CANFF, Sarawak*

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES

LIST OF FIGURES

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ASEAN	The Association of Southeast Asian Nations
AVE	Average Variance Extracted
CAC	Cognitive-Affective-Conative
CB-SEM	Covariance-based Structural Equation Modeling
CAN	Culture, Adventure and Nature
CANFF	Culture, Adventure, Nature, Food and Festival
CFA	Confirmatory Factor Analysis
CMV	Common Method Variance
CR	Composite Reliability
COVID 19	Coronavirus Disease 2019
DMO	Destination Marketing Organization
DOSM	Department of Statistics Malaysia
f^2	Effect Size
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GVATI	Gross Value Added Tourism Industries
HOC	Higher-order Construct
HTMT	Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio of Correlations
IPMA	Importance and Performance Matrix
LOC	Lower-order Construct
MTCP	Ministry of Tourism, Creative Industry & Performing Arts Sarawak
OECD	Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development
PCDS	Post-COVID-19 Development Strategy
Q^2	Predictive Relevance

R^2	Coefficient of Determination
SEAC	Sarawak Economic Action Council
SEM-PLS	Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling
SFC	Sarawak Forestry Corporation
SPSS	Statistical Package for the Social Science
STA	Sarawak's Tourism Aspiration
STF	Sarawak Tourism Federation
TDGDP	Tourism Direct Gross Domestic Product
UNWTO	United Nations World Tourism Organization
USD	United States Dollar
VIF	Variance Inflation Factor
WOM	Word-of-mouth
WTO	World Tourism Organization
WTTC	The World Travel and Tourism Council

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

This research study investigates tourists' perceptions and imagery of Sarawak as a tourism destination. It aims to comprehensively understand how tourists conceptualize and emotionally connect with Sarawak and how these perceptions influence their behavioural intentions. The chapter outlines the overall scope of the study, beginning with the background, followed by the identification of the research problem. Subsequently, the research questions and objectives guiding this study will be presented. The significance and scope of the study will also be discussed. Lastly, definitions of key terms used in this study will be provided.

1.2 Background of the Study

Tourism is defined as "travelling outside one's typical surroundings for leisure, business, or other purposes," and it is recognized as a social, cultural, and economic phenomenon by the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO). Tourism can be broadly categorized into international and domestic tourism. International tourism involves travel from one's home country to another country, whereas domestic tourism refers to travel within one's own country for leisure or business purposes (Helleiner, 1990).

Whether domestic or international, tourism has been identified as a significant driver of economic growth (Belloumi, 2010). It has long been considered an essential catalyst for regional economic development by increasing tourist receipts, creating employment opportunities, and generating government revenues. Sustainable tourism, in particular, not only creates economic value but also preserves cultural heritage and natural resources. Numerous benefits accrue from tourism, including economic, environmental, and socio-cultural advantages, contributing significantly to the revitalization and improvement of the living standards of local communities. Research has consistently identified tourism as one of the fastest-growing service sectors globally (McIntosh et al., 1995). According to the World Travel & Tourism Council (WTTC, 2023), the travel and tourism sector contributed 9.1 percent to global GDP in 2023, creating 27 million new jobs. Tourism is recognized as a labour-intensive sector due to its substantial employment generation (Onder & Durgun, 2008; Shukla & Ansari, 2013). It has a higher multiplier and spillover effect compared to other industries due to its service-oriented and labour-intensive nature (Pais, 2006).

The COVID-19 pandemic of 2020 simultaneously affected nearly every country, setting unprecedented global disruptions and establishing new standards for post-pandemic recovery. The travel and tourism sector was among the industries most severely impacted, as widespread restrictions led to grounded flights, closed borders, and significant limitations on international travel. Due to the highly contagious nature of the virus, governments worldwide imposed stringent measures, including travel bans, lockdowns of major cities, and the closure of popular tourist destinations, aiming to curb its spread. According to the UNWTO, international tourist arrivals declined by approximately 1.1 billion visits during the pandemic, placing around 100 to 120 million jobs at risk globally (Hall & Seyfi, 2021; UNWTO, 2020). These impacts could be even greater when considering non-monetary spillover effects of travel restrictions. Table 1.1 compares the economic impact of the travel and tourism sector globally between the pre-pandemic and post-pandemic periods from 2019 to 2023.

Table 1.1: Travel and Tourism Economic Impact

Year	Total GDP Contribution (Billion)		Total Travel & Tourism Jobs (Million)	
2019	10.3%	+4.7%	333 MN	+2.7%
	USD 9,630 BN	+ USD429 BN	1 in 10 Jobs	+8.7 MN
2020	5.3%	-50.4%	271 MN	-18.6%
	USD 4,775 BN	- USD 4,855 BN	1 in 12 Jobs	-62 MN
2021	6.1%	+21.7%	289 MN	+6.7%
	USD 5,812 BN	+USD 1,037 BN	1 in 11 Jobs	+18.2 MN
2022	7.6%	+22%	295 MN	+2.1%
	USD 7,091 BN	+USD 1,279 BN	1 in 11 Jobs	+6 MN
2023	9.1%	+23.2%	320 MN	+8.5%
	USD 9,500 BN	+USD 2,409 BN	1 in 10 Jobs	+25MN

Note: World Travel & Tourism Council (2023)

In the year 2019, the tourism sector made up 10.3 percent of the world's GDP, equivalent to USD 9,630 billion, an increase of 4.7 percent compared to 2018. The tourism industry also contributed 333 million jobs globally, a 10.3 percent share of global jobs, or one in every ten jobs is tourism related. The contribution of the tourism industry to global economics and global employment is significant.

The tourism industry has been thrown into hibernation as a result of COVID-19 response regulations (Bausch et al., 2020). The travel and tourism total GDP contribution was reduced to 5.3 percent, or USD 4,775 billion, in year 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic. It is a dramatic reduction of 50.4 percent (4,855 billion) compared to 2019, which is before the COVID-19 pandemic. Global employment has been reduced by 18.6 percent, or 62 million jobs due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

In the post pandemic era, travel and tourism's total GDP contribution has increased to 6.1percent (USD 5,812 billion) in 2021, and global employment has increased 6.7 percent in the same year. In 2022, the travel and tourism industry contributed 7.6 percent to global GDP, only 23 percent below pre-pandemic levels. It also accounted for 295 million jobs globally in 2022. The most recent annual data from the World Travel and Tourism Council

(WTTC) shows that the travel and tourism sector contributed 9.1 percent of GDP in 2023, up 23.2 percent from 2022 and just 4.1 percent less than in 2019. There were 27 million new jobs created, a 9.1 percent increase over 2022 and only 1.4 percent less than in 2019. They further forecast that the GDP contribution of travel and tourism will reach 11.6 percent (USD 15,500 billion) in 2033. By that time, it is forecasted that the industry will contribute 430 million jobs globally, with 110 million new jobs having been created compared to 2023.

The COVID-19 pandemic of 2020 is unique due to its rapid global spread and severe disruption to both the demand and supply sides of the tourism industry (Gössling et al., 2021). Comprehensive tourism research is thus essential in the post-pandemic era, as the travel landscape has drastically changed due to health concerns arising from the pandemic. These concerns have become key determinants influencing travel decisions and tourist behaviors, significantly affecting travelers' willingness to travel and their perceptions of destinations. Therefore, tourism stakeholders must acknowledge and strategically adapt to tourists' evolving expectations and destination perceptions. A nuanced understanding of the destination image and tourist loyalty has become particularly important.

The heart of the tourism sector is the tourism destination itself (Kozak & Rimmington, 1999), and the successful positioning of a destination strongly relies on its perceived image (Pike & Ryan, 2004). Destination image is fundamental to promoting a destination's tourism products effectively, influencing how they are perceived, promoted, and delivered (Hallmann et al., 2015). In today's dynamic and competitive global market, destination image is widely recognized as a powerful tool for destination management and marketing (Afshardoost & Eshaghi, 2020). Gunn (1972), Hunt (1971), and Mayo (1973) were among the first to conceptualize destination image, a concept extensively studied since then (Beerli & Martín, 2004). Empirical evidence demonstrates the crucial impact of destination image on tourists' behavioral intentions, including intentions to visit (Molinillo et al., 2018), recommend (Prayag et al., 2017), and revisit the destination (Loi et al., 2017).

Additionally, destination loyalty is a central concept in sustainable tourism development (Nilplub et al., 2016; Oppermann, 2000). Destination loyalty motivates tourists to revisit and recommend destinations, thus acting as a predictor and driver of tourism success (Yoon & Uysal, 2005). Given that attracting new visitors typically requires more resources than retaining existing ones, returning visitors help stabilize revenue streams and reduce marketing expenditures. Furthermore, loyal travelers frequently become informal ambassadors, positively promoting their experiences through personal networks and social media. Therefore, fostering visitor loyalty is imperative for achieving competitive advantage and sustainable growth within the tourism industry.

This research investigates Sarawak's destination image by examining its cognitive (tangible attributes) and affective (emotional responses and feelings) components, exploring their influence on tourist loyalty. By understanding how these components shape tourists' perceptions, this study aims to provide insights into how these factors collectively contribute to tourists' intentions to revisit and recommend Sarawak as a destination (Chen & Gursoy, 2001; Yoon & Uysal, 2005; Martin et al., 2013). The findings of this research offer practical implications for policymakers and tourism marketers in Sarawak, assisting them in enhancing destination appeal and strengthening tourist loyalty.

The findings of this study provide valuable insights for policymakers and tourism marketers in Sarawak, enabling them to strategically enhance the destination's image and effectively foster visitor loyalty.

1.2.1 Malaysia Scenario

In the 1960s, tourism emerged as a new driver of economic development and has since become one of Malaysia's major revenue generators. Before the COVID-19 pandemic, Malaysia's tourism industry was steadily growing. In 2019, the Gross Value Added of Tourism Industries (GVATI) contributed RM240.2 billion, accounting for 15.9 percent of the country's GDP. The sector employed approximately 3.6 million people, representing 23.6 percent of Malaysia's total employment (DOSM, 2022).

Table 1.2: Malaysia's Tourism Employment

Year	Tourism Employment (Million)	Percentage to Total Employment (%)
2016	3.2	22.7
2017	3.4	23.2
2018	3.5	23.5
2019	3.6	23.6
2020	3.4	23.2
2021	3.5	23.4
2022	3.6	23.6

Note: MyTourism Data Portal (2023); DOSM (2023)

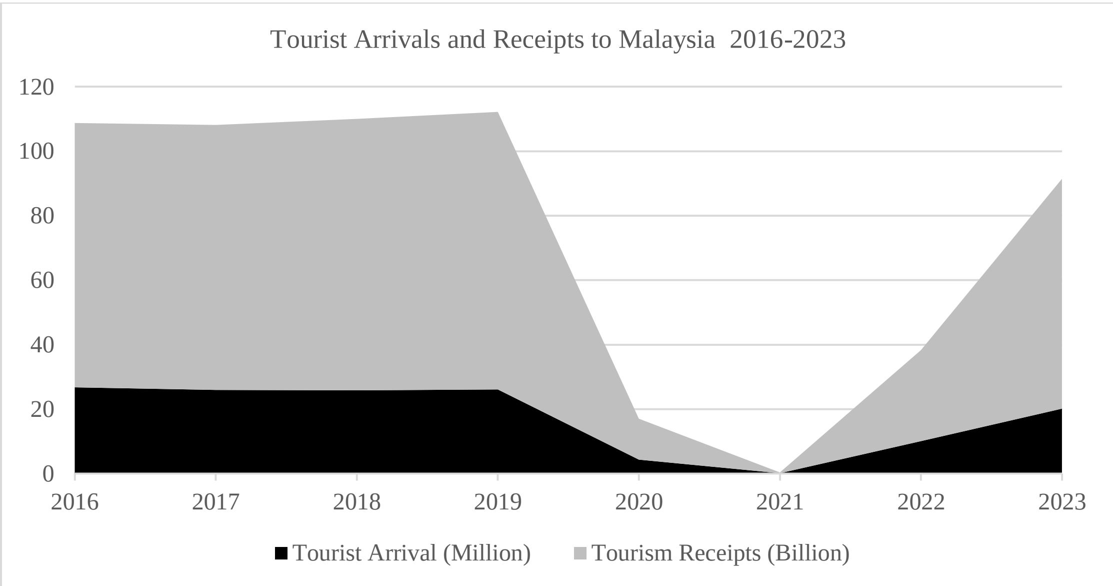
Table 1.2 presents Malaysia's tourism employment figures from 2016 to 2022. Tourism receipts consistently exceeded RM80 billion annually, demonstrating an increasing trend until the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. Employment in the tourism industry also showed steady growth, consistently comprising nearly a quarter of Malaysia's total employment. Given its significant contribution, tourism was identified as one of eight strategic and high-impact industries to accelerate economic growth in the Twelfth Malaysia Plan (2021-2025), alongside electrical and electronics, global services, aerospace, creative industries, halal products, smart farming, and biomass.

However, the COVID-19 pandemic severely impacted Malaysia's tourism industry in 2020 and 2021, forcing the suspension of the Visit Malaysia marketing campaign. The number of international tourists to Malaysia declined dramatically by 83.4 percent in 2020 compared to the previous year, marking the sharpest drop in history (The Borneo Post, September 2023).

Table 1.3: Tourist Arrivals and Receipts 2016-2023

Year	**Tourist Arrivals (Million)**	**Tourism Receipts (Billion)**
2016	26.76	82.1
2017	25.95	82.1
2018	25.83	84.1
2019	26.10	86.1
2020	4.33	12.7
2021	0.13	0.24
2022	10.07	28.2
2023	20.14	71.3

Note: MyTourismData Portal (2023)



Note: MyTourismData Portal (2023)

Figure 1.1: Malaysia Tourist Arrival and Receipts 2016-2023

Figure 1.1 shows the allocation of tourist spending between inbound (international) and domestic travel from 2015 to 2023. It is clear that the COVID-19 pandemic has resulted a significant shift in spending habits. From 2015 to 2019, the distribution was relatively stable. The biggest upheaval, however, happened in 2020, when domestic spending increased by 73.8 percent while inbound spending plunged dramatically to 26.2 percent. Due to the stringent controls and lockdowns that were implemented globally to stop the spread of COVID-19, international travel almost completely stopped, while local travel became a safer and more convenient choice. The pandemic continued to have a significant impact in the year after, 2021, with domestic expenditure dominating at 97.4 percent and inbound expenditure further falling to only 2.6 percent, along with the drop in international visitors to Malaysia due to the close-border policy.

Although the tourism industry is still in the recovery phase, the employment numbers in Malaysia's tourist industry for 2021 are an indication of the industry's considerable contribution to the nation's overall economy and labor market. The tourism sector employed 3.52 million people, or 23.4 percent of all employment (DOSM, 2022). It is one of the country’s largest employment sectors, with slightly under a quarter of all employment, demonstrating the industry's important contribution to livelihood and economic stability.

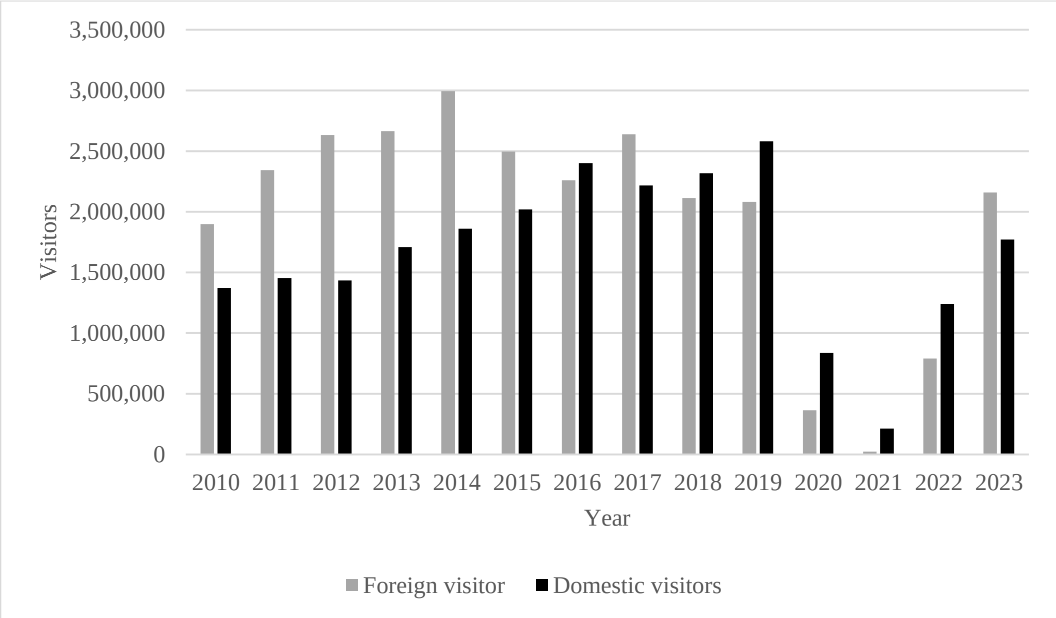
Despite the challenges during the pandemic, the Gross Value Added Tourism Industries (GVATI) for 2021, at 197.9 billion Malaysian ringgit, shows a certain level of resilience and recovery (DOSM, 2022). It signifies that the industry was able to rebound to a significant extent from the lows experienced during the peak of the pandemic, when international travel and tourism activities were severely constrained. While the 2021 GVATI is lower than the pre-pandemic figure of RM240.2 billion in 2019 (DOSM, 2022), the fact that it still remained at a considerable level demonstrates the industry's ability to adapt, innovate, and gradually recover as conditions improved. This comparison highlights the sector's capacity to withstand challenges and lays the foundation for continued growth as global conditions stabilize.

1.2.2 Sarawak Scenario

Sarawak, the largest Malaysian state located on the island of Borneo, is known for its cultural diversity, comprising 34 distinct ethnic groups. With vibrant and diverse cultures and unique festivals, Sarawak has consistently attracted travelers from around the globe. In addition to its rich historical heritage, Sarawak is renowned for its extensive biodiversity, encompassing diverse flora and fauna. The state's vibrant cultural festivals and natural attractions have historically drawn tourists from all over the world. According to Datuk Haji Abdul Karim Rahman Hamzah, Sarawak's Minister of Tourism, Arts, Culture, Youth and Sports, prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, Sarawak welcomed over 300,000 visitors monthly, translating to approximately RM1 billion in monthly tourism receipts (Dayak Daily, June 2020).

Tourism receipts in Sarawak reached a peak in 2019 at RM11 billion, reflecting the sector’s substantial economic importance. Before the pandemic, monthly tourist arrivals consistently exceeded 300,000 visitors, translating into approximately RM1 billion per month in tourism revenue. Furthermore, tourism supported numerous economic activities either directly or indirectly, such as accommodation, restaurants, and related services, significantly contributing to local employment (Antara et al., 2018). Employment opportunities generated by tourism underline the sector’s labor-intensive nature, highlighting its critical role in Sarawak's economy.

With 34 ethnic groups, Sarawak’s unique cultural diversity significantly contributes to the appeal of the destination, reinforcing tourism’s role as a major economic driver. In 2019, tourism contributed approximately RM11.0 billion to the state's economy, representing a historical peak (Sarawak Tourism Quick Facts, 2020). Clearly, the tourism sector continues to hold significant economic value and potential for Sarawak.



Note: mtac.sarawak.gov.my (2024)

Figure 1.2: Visitor Arrivals into Sarawak from 2010-2023

Figure 1.2 plots the tourist arrivals to Sarawak from 2010 to 2023. Looking at the figure, it is clear that, with the exception of 2015, visitor arrivals have been increasing throughout most of the time period. The exception of 2015 may be due to the Goods and Service Tax (GST), which was introduced at the time, as well as the ambiguous political situation at the time, incidents in the aviation industry and the security issue in eastern Sabah. Anyway, there have been over four million visitors since 2012, with the highest arriving in 2014 during the campaign "Visit Malaysia 2014."

Overall, visitors grew from 3.27 million in 2010 to 4.66 million in 2019, a 42.5 percent increased, while tourist receipts increased by 72.6 percent from RM6.7 billion in 2010 to RM11.57 billion in 2019 (The Borneo Post, 2020). However, the number decreased tremendously to 1.19 million in 2020 because of COVID-19 pandemic which caused the closure of borders and the restriction of mobility, which has resulted in a significant drop in travel and leisure. Hotels and resorts, tourist agencies, as well as the culinary industry were among the hardest hit sectors of the tourism industry.

The Minister of Sarawak Tourism, Arts, and Culture, Datuk Abdul Karim Rahman Hamzah, has described 2020 as a terrible year for the state's tourism business (Borneo Post, March 2021). The pandemic caused a 74 percent decline in visitor visits, from 4,662,419 in 2019 to 1,199,872 in 2020. In comparison to 2019, tourism receipts in 2020 fell 75 percent to only RM2.88 billion, resulting in a projected loss of RM8.69 billion. The COVID-19 has dashed the target of five million visitor arrivals to Sarawak in 2020, which initially proposed by the ministry.

The pandemic has caused significant disruptions to the worldwide economy, particularly in the tourism industry. However, the tourism industry may be one of the most important sectors for economic recovery. Sarawak's tourism industry brought in RM4.96 billion in 2022, an increase of 825.93 percent compared to RM536.17 million in 2021. In 2023, Sarawak visitor arrivals reached 3.9 million, bringing RM9.99 billion in tourism receipts (Sarawak Tourism Quick Facts, 2023). This shows that Sarawak tourism has enormous potential to accelerate the state's economic growth. In order to strengthen Sarawak's economy, tourism has been highlighted as a significant industry participant.

The Economic Planning Unit Sarawak (EPU) and Department of Statistics Malaysia (2023) reported that in 2023, the services sector accounted for 37.0 percent of Sarawak's GDP, which is the largest contribution, followed by manufacturing (28.0%), mining and quarrying (21.0%), agriculture (10.4%), and construction (3.3%). The tourism industry made up roughly one-fourth of the services sector's overall contribution.

The Third Sarawak Tourism Master Plan serves as a strategic roadmap for tourism development in Sarawak from 2020 to 2030. Guided by Sarawak's Tourism Aspiration (STA), the Master Plan aims to position Sarawak as a leading destination for eco-tourism and business events within the ASEAN region by the year 2030. Recognizing the increasingly competitive nature of international tourism markets, the plan supports targeted enhancements to destination image, infrastructure, and visitor experiences to attract and retain tourists. The Master Plan aligns with the broader goals outlined in the Sarawak Economic Development Strategy 2030, reinforcing tourism as a pivotal contributor to the state's economic growth.

In recent decades, global growth in international tourism has significantly intensified competition among destinations. Consequently, destinations have become increasingly focused on effectively managing, enhancing, and promoting their images to attract visitors. Effective destination positioning not only helps in distinguishing a destination from its competitors but also reinforces its unique identity in the eyes of travelers. By understanding tourists' perceptions and preferences, Sarawak can identify and enhance the specific attributes that attract the greatest number of visitors.

1.2.3 Sarawak Tourism Positioning: CANFF

In today's highly competitive international tourism market, establishing a distinctive and appealing destination image is essential for success (Qu et al., 2011). Recognizing this need, Sarawak has strategically positioned itself as a tourism destination known for its unique blend of Culture, Adventure, Nature, Food, and Festivals (CANFF), emphasizing two additional elements distinctive cuisine (Food) and year-round Festivals as key promotional attributes (Figure 1.3).

Sarawak is celebrated for its extraordinary cultural diversity, spectacular natural landscapes, wide range of outdoor adventure activities, vibrant culinary scene, and numerous colorful festivals held throughout the year. By leveraging these diverse attributes, Sarawak aims to strengthen its unique market position and appeal to a broader spectrum of tourists globally.

Note: Twitter.com (2023)

Figure 1.3: Sarawak Tourism Promotion on Twitter

Sarawak is the largest state in Malaysia and is home to 34 different ethnic groups, each with different languages and dialects. Each of these groups has its own unique history, vibrant culture, beliefs, and traditions, making Sarawak a cultural wonderland to be discovered. Therefore, a major component of Sarawak's marketing strategy for tourism focuses on its rich cultural heritage. The state's distinctive ethnic groups, like the Iban, Bidayuh, and Orang Ulu, offered tourists real cultural encounters. Visitors had the chance to take part in customary rituals, observe time-honored practices, and interact with locals, providing a rich and comprehensive understanding of Sarawak's cultural tapestry.

The virgin jungles, untamed scenery, and abundant animals in Sarawak make it a popular vacation spot for adventure seekers. The state offered numerous activities that gave guests amazing, adrenaline-pumping experiences in the middle of nature. Visitors can choose from a wide range of excursions, including cave adventures, wildlife viewing, mountain or rock climbing, and jungle trekking. Not limited to land activities, visitors have a variety of aquatic options, including fishing, jet skiing, sailing, diving, and river activities.

In terms of natural resources, Sarawak is home to an incredible 56 fully protected places, along with 14 natural reserves, five animal sanctuaries, and 37 national parks that have been gazette. The richest and most varied ecosystems on the planet can be found in its rainforests. The rich natural beauty of Sarawak, which includes luxuriant rainforests, breathtaking waterfalls, and gorgeous beaches, is also crucial to its positioning. The state's national parks, i.e. Bako National Park in Southern Sarawak and Mulu National Park in Northern Sarawak, have been highlighted as havens for those who love the outdoors and want to explore unique flora and fauna in their natural environments.

Besides, Sarawak's positioning also benefited greatly from the state's unique food sector. The state promoted its delicious regional cuisine, fusing elements from many ethnic groups, such as chicken cooked in bamboo “manok pansuh”, “midin” a kind of jungle fern, Sarawak laksa, Kolo mee, and many more, to make it available to tourists as an alluring culinary experience.

Sarawak hosts the most distinctive and lively festivals all year long, which has become one of the important selling points for the destination. There are so many festivals that visitors to Sarawak can take part in, i.e. Gawai harvest celebrations of thankfulness and Kaul celebrations by the fishing community of Melanau and marks the start of the fishing season. Rainforest World Music Festival, which is the star attraction of Sarawak, has been voted one of the top 25 festivals in the world by the London-based Song-line magazine (Inside Recent, 2018). Other remarkable festivals in Sarawak to name a few, included Kuching Waterfront Jazz Festival, Borneo Jazz, Pesta Kaul, Borneo Cultural Festival, Sarawak Regatta and so on. Through music, dance, art, and ancient rites, these festivals emphasized the state's cultural richness while giving tourists a chance to take part in joyous and vibrant celebrations.

By focusing on five main pillars, the positioning creates a cohesive and comprehensive image of Sarawak. This clarity enables tourists to understand what the destination has to offer and aligns with their expectations. The CANFF positioning of Sarawak distinguishes it from other locations that might concentrate on only one or two components. This competitive advantage aids in luring tourists looking for a multifaceted, all-encompassing trip experience. A wide spectrum of travelers with a variety of interests are catered to by the CANFF positioning. While cultural vultures can immerse themselves in the customs and heritage of numerous ethnic groups, adventure seekers can explore the state's jungles and engage in outdoor sports. Foodies may enjoy the regional specialties, while festival visitors can take in the colorful and energetic celebrations.

Effective positioning and branding aid in setting Sarawak apart from other locations in the highly competitive global tourism market. Sarawak can stand out and draw visitors looking for something distinctive and unforgettable by showcasing its own culture, various landscapes, and real experiences. A well-crafted brand can influence how Sarawak is viewed as a reliable and alluring travel destination. Positive reviews and word-of-mouth recommendations from satisfied tourists can further improve the reputation of the place. With a strong and recognizable brand identity, it can definitely encourage familiarity and trust among potential tourists, increasing their propensity to choose Sarawak over alternate locations. Besides, a strong brand can entice capital and promote collaborations with businesses and stakeholders in the travel and tourism sectors. It indicates a reliable and viable market for potential investors, encouraging the enhancement of tourism facilities and the improvement of tourism products. In terms of marketing effort, effective brand positioning provides a clear message and direction for marketing and promotional activities. It enables more focused and impactful campaigns that reach the right audiences with compelling messages.

The CANFF positioning offers clear guidance for marketing and promotional actions and enables tourist authorities to customize their campaigns and messages to specific target populations interested in culture, adventure, nature, food, or festivals, maximizing the impact of marketing endeavors. Besides, Sarawak as a CANFF destination, can instill a sense of pride and ownership among local communities. When residents recognize the value of their culture, nature, and festivals in attracting tourists, they may actively participate in preserving and promoting these aspects.

Tourism is a cornerstone of Sarawak's economic development strategy, especially as the state aims to achieve developed status by 2030 under the Post-COVID-19 Development Strategy (PCDS) 2030. To fully realize this potential, it is critical to comprehend the unique motivation factors for tourists to choose Sarawak over other destinations. Although people from different countries may travel for the same reasons, different destinations have different characteristics; the motivations for choosing a particular location and the weight placed on the considerations may vary. Branding, as well as positioning are crucial to influence how people view Sarawak as a travel destination. In addition to drawing tourists, a strong and genuine brand identity promotes sustainability, economic growth, and the long-term development of a favorable perception of the location.

1.3 Problem Statement

Sarawak is positioned as a Culture, Adventure, Nature, Food, and Festival (CANFF) tourism destination. In this context, the concept of destination image can be divided into two distinct but interconnected components: cognitive and affective images. The cognitive image refers to the tourists' perceptions and knowledge about tangible attributes of a destination, such as natural beauty, cultural festivals, gastronomy, and adventure activities. Conversely, the affective image describes the emotional connections, feelings, and sensations that tourists associate with a destination. Understanding both dimensions is crucial, as they collectively shape the overall perception of a location and significantly influence tourists' loyalty and behavioral intentions. Numerous studies emphasize that it is essential to explore tourists' cognitive and affective perceptions simultaneously to gain deeper insights into destination image formation (Baloglu & Brinberg, 1997; Li et al., 2010). Integrating these dimensions helps stakeholders strategically build the destination's attractiveness, leading to improved tourism outcomes.

The proposed research model offers a nuanced mechanism for predicting tourist behavior, specifically addressing how affect-driven (emotion-based) and judgment-driven (cognition-based) behavioral intentions develop. Traditionally, tourism research has often examined cognitive and affective images independently; however, this study integrates both into a unified framework, advancing theoretical understanding in destination image literature. By positioning Sarawak, known for its Culture, Adventure, Nature, Food, and Festivals (CANFF tourism), within this integrated framework, the study not only enriches local tourism scholarship but also positions Sarawak as a valuable case study to enhance broader theoretical discourse on tourism behavior.

The tourism market today is highly competitive, particularly among destinations promoting similar attractions. Although Sarawak offers unique cultural, natural, and gastronomical experiences, comparative perceptions of its destination image relative to neighboring destinations remain underexplored. This knowledge gap could potentially affect the state's ability to attract new visitors and retain existing ones. Therefore, investigating tourists' perceptions of Sarawak's cognitive and affective destination image in comparison to competing destinations is essential for formulating strategies aimed at increasing tourist loyalty and repeat visitation.

Note: Statista.com (2023)

Figure 1.4: Top 10 Nature and Culture Destinations in Southeast Asia

Figure 1.4 shows places with the highest number of endorsements for nature (Hinton, 2024) and culture (Liu, 2024) on the Booking.com platform, as of June 2023. The exclusion of Sarawak from Booking.com's top ten nature and culture destinations in Southeast Asia raises serious concerns and calls for additional research. Despite Sarawak's extensive efforts to portray itself as nature as well as culture tourist destination, its omission from this list suggests significant disparities between its perceived attractiveness and travellers' real preferences or awareness. This issue highlights the need to investigate the underlying factors contributing to Sarawak's absence from prominent travel rankings. Despite extensive promotional efforts, it appears that certain aspects may be affecting the destination's visibility and appeal to global travelers. Possible causes could include limitations in current marketing strategies, which may not fully resonate with the target audience. Additionally, there could be misconceptions or gaps in travelers' understanding of what Sarawak offers in terms of nature and cultural experiences. A comprehensive examination of these factors will provide insights into how Sarawak can better position itself to capture the attention and interest of CANFF enthusiasts.

Understanding these elements is critical for developing focused initiatives to increase Sarawak's visibility and appeal to travellers looking for nature-centric, adventurous activities, food and festival as well as culture experiences in Southeast Asia. If there is potential gap between the state's tourism appeal and travelers' awareness, the region's tourism position could suffer significant setbacks. Sarawak may continue to struggle to attract a sufficient number of visitors seeking nature-centric or cultural experiences, resulting in stagnant or declining tourism numbers and revenue. This could lead to missed possibilities for economic growth, limited investments in tourism infrastructure, and less job opportunities for local populations who rely on the tourism industry. Furthermore, if these challenges are not effectively addressed, it may continue to limit awareness of Sarawak's true appeal and weaken its competitiveness in the global tourism market. Over time, this could diminish the region's standing as a leading nature tourism destination, potentially compromising its long-term sustainability and significance in the industry. Therefore, specialized research on CANFF is essential to comprehend the motivations behind choosing Sarawak as a destination, and is crucial for crafting targeted marketing strategies. By examining how environmental features in Sarawak—such as cultural festivals, natural landscapes, and local cuisine—impact tourists' attitudes, researchers can determine which elements are most influential in shaping positive behavioral intentions. Moreover, the pandemic will alter current tourist supply and demand patterns, which must be comprehended and investigated so that appropriate policy interventions and plan destination recovery can be established.

1.4 Research Questions

To address the significance of studying the destination image of Sarawak in the context of Culture, Adventure, Nature, Food, and Festival (CANFF) tourism, the research questions need to be refined and elaborated to capture the complexity and nuances of the study. The research study aimed to answer the following questions:

i. Does culture, adventure, nature, food, and festival significantly form the cognitive image of Sarawak?

ii. Does cognitive image (CANFF) affect tourist's affective image of Sarawak?

iii. Does cognitive image (CANFF) of Sarawak affect tourist's intention to revisit and intention to recommend?

iv. Does affective image of Sarawak influence tourist's intention to revisit and intention to recommend?

1.5 Research Objectives

General objectives and specific objectives are the two main categories of pertinent objectives in this study. General objectives include larger areas of interest while specific objectives focus on more specific features that are the main subject of examination within this research framework.

1.5.1 General Objective

The aim in this research study is to identify the cognitive and affective images associated with Sarawak as a tourism destination in the post-pandemic era; and to investigate tourist behavior in relation to cognition and affection.

1.5.2 Specific Objectives

Specifically, the research pursues the following objectives:

i. To assess the significance of culture, adventure, nature, food, and festivals in shaping the cognitive image of Sarawak.

ii. To investigate the relationship between cognitive image (CANFF) and affective image.

iii. To investigate the relationship between cognitive image (CANFF) towards tourist's intention to revisit and intention to recommend.

iv. To investigate the relationship between affective image towards tourist's intention to revisit and intention to recommend.

1.6 Significance of the Study

Undoubtedly, the pandemic will reshape current tourism demand patterns, which is why the research intends to better understand tourist perceptions of Sarawak in the post COVID-19 pandemic era.

This research makes valuable theoretical and practical contributions. Theoretically, this research provides significant contributions by deepening the understanding of the intricate relationship between the components of destination image—both cognitive and affective—and tourists' behavioral intentions. By dissecting how cognitive aspects, such as perceptions of Sarawak's cultural, natural, and adventure offerings, interact with affective responses like feelings of excitement, relaxation, and so on, the study reveals the complex interplay that shapes tourists' intentions to revisit and recommend the destination.

Practically, this study put together the five pillars of Sarawak destination image attributes, clarified the elements that influence travelers propensity to choose Sarawak as a travel destination, which might be the foundation for strategically positioning Sarawak tourism. This study could provide support for necessary policy considerations to promote Sarawak tourism further. The findings can be used by tourism industry players to create focused marketing campaigns that showcase Sarawak's advantages in festivals, food, nature, culture, and adventure. They can arouse favourable emotional reactions and improve the cognitive impressions of potential tourists.

For the Sarawak Tourism Board, it is useful in creating targeted experiences and efficient marketing campaigns to draw in more tourists to Sarawak. Identifying the elements of the cognitive image can guide policymakers to better plan and develop tourism resources and infrastructure. By understanding what attracts tourists, The Sarawak Tourism Board can identify Sarawak tourism destinations unique selling points and competitive advantages, and focus their efforts on enhancing and promoting those specific attractions, thereby improving the overall visitor experience and increasing tourism revenue. It can further create job opportunities in tourism-related industries and benefit all Sarawak people as a whole.

The research also offer directions to Sarawak agencies and practitioners on which types of attractions tourists like or what tourists prefer in Sarawak that will attract tourist's intentions to revisit and recommend, in order to gain better insights into the tourist demand in Sarawak. Such knowledge is necessary to develop tourist products, the formation of marketing strategies, and promotional efforts for particular tourism destinations. It is necessary to comprehend the demands of tourists for a well design appealing tourism packages for tourist. They could utilize the results of the study to map out more comprehensive marketing plans to promote their tourism packages based on the five pillars. In order to establish appropriate and efficient measures to revive their businesses and the travel sector as a whole, the findings will assist industry players and other relevant stakeholders to anticipate the perception of travelers.

For Sarawak citizens, understanding and actively managing the destination image is essential, as it directly impacts the economy by attracting tourists, generating employment, and fostering sustainable development. By embracing and promoting the positive aspects of their home region, Sarawak citizens can contribute to building a strong and appealing image, which, in turn, enhances their sense of pride, cultural identity, and overall well-being.

1.7 Scope of the Study

The research location is in Sarawak, the largest state of Malaysia, which is determined with some considerations, i.e. (1) Sarawak is ranked in the top three performers of Malaysia's domestic tourism by state in 2023, attracting 17.9 million visitors according to the Domestic Tourism Survey (DTS) 2023, after Selangor (27.6 million) and Wilayah Persekutuan Kuala Lumpur (22.2 million), (2) Sarawak received a significant number of international tourists from Brunei, Indonesia, Singapore, China, the United Kingdom, the Philippines, India, Australia, South Korea, and European countries despite lacking direct international flights from most of the countries, and (3) Sarawak is lacking in research on destination image especially on the five pillars of CANFF.

The research population includes both domestic and foreign tourists visiting Sarawak. Therefore, data collection will be conducted at major checkpoints and tourist spots in Sarawak.

1.8 Definition of Key Terms

In order to ensure that the discussion is clear and consistent, it is important to define the key terms that been used in the study.

1.8.1 Cognitive Image

The combination of ideas and information that reflects judgements of the perceived characteristics of the destination is how cognitive image is expressed (Stylos & Andronikidis, 2013).

1.8.2 Affective Image

An individual's feeling and reacts to a destination (Shani & Wang, 2011).

1.8.3 Conation

Refers to an idealized and desired future state that a person aspires to create for themselves (Dann, 1996).

1.8.4 Destination Image

An entire collection of thoughts, feelings, expectations, and beliefs that have been built up over time regarding a location (Kim & Richardson, 2003).

1.8.5 Destination Loyalty

The consistent preference and repeat visitation of a specific travel destination by tourists or travelers over time (Chen & Tsai, 2007).

1.9 Organization of the Study

This study is structured into five chapters. Chapter One provides a comprehensive introduction, starting with the background of the research and proceeding to the problem statement, which identifies the key issues that the study seeks to address. The chapter then articulates the research questions guiding the study and the research objectives that the study aims to achieve. These elements are crucial as they define the direction and scope of the research.

Chapter Two presents a detailed review of the literature. It discusses the theoretical foundation of the study, establishing a framework to understand the variables under investigation. The chapter then proceeds with hypothesis development, where the researcher formulates testable predictions based on the reviewed literature. Finally, it identifies the research gap, highlighting areas where existing literature is limited and where this study aims to contribute new insights.

Chapter Three outlines the research methodology employed in the study. It begins with the research design, describing the overall strategy used to address the research objectives. It then details the research methods employed, including the approach used to collect data, the sampling design, and the instruments used for data collection. The chapter concludes with a discussion of the procedures for data analysis used to interpret the collected data.

Chapter Four is dedicated to data analysis and findings. In this chapter, data collected from the research is systematically analyzed and presented. The results are provided in detail, accompanied by tables and statistical interpretations. This chapter is essential for understanding the empirical outcomes of the study.

Chapter Five presents the conclusion of the study. It synthesizes and interprets the findings, discussing their implications and significance. The chapter also addresses the limitations encountered in the research and provides recommendations for future research directions.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

This chapter examines key concerns raised in previous empirical studies on destination images. The literature review incorporates theoretical frameworks such as the Cognitive-Affective Attitude Theory, which serves as the foundation of this study. The three key aspects of this study, cognition, affection, and conation are explored in detail. These theoretical perspectives provide a basis for understanding the relationships among the study variables and support the rationale behind the proposed hypotheses.

2.2 Key Concepts of Destination Image

An image facilitates purchase decisions and enables continuous evaluation of products, brands, and companies. Imagery has a strong impact on perception, influencing how individuals interpret and respond to what they see. Consequently, the perception of a product significantly affects consumer behavior and decision-making (Hallmann et al., 2015).

Destination image was described by Hunt (1975) as prospective visitors' impressions of a place, while Kim and Richardson (2003) defined it as the overall views, ideas, impressions, and feelings toward a destination, which accumulate over time. Destination image plays a crucial role in the distribution of a location's products, including their description, promotion, integration, and delivery (Hallmann et al., 2015). As a result, it has received increasing attention from tourism marketers, practitioners, and scholars (Alcocer & Ruiz, 2020; Chi et al., 2020; Lam et al., 2022).

The tourism sector revolves around destinations (Kozak & Rimmington, 2000), and destination positioning is largely dependent on destination image (Pike & Ryan, 2004). The process of selecting a tourist destination is closely linked to destination image (Pike, 2008), as it reflects a person’s subjective assessment of a place, shaping their travel behavior (Agapito, 2013). Destination images serve multiple purposes, including conveying messages and shaping perceptions (Molina et al., 2010). The practical application of destination image measurement in marketing and destination management (Tan, 2017; Sun et al., 2015), along with its role as a strong pull factor (Kim, 2018; Zhang et al., 2014) that attracts tourists and encourages repeat visits, has contributed to its increasing popularity. Additionally, place branding, often defined as "the development of a consistent element mix to identify and distinguish a place through positive image building," has made destination image a central component (Cai, 2002).

The growing expansion of international tourism has intensified scholarly interest in destination image. Destinations consist of a variety of characteristics that influence travelers at different stages of their journey. Echtner and Ritchie (1991, 1993) provided a comprehensive overview and proposed that destination image comprises both functional (physical) and psychological (abstract) elements. Functional elements are tangible and easily observable, including general sensory experiences and infrastructure components such as scenic landscapes, beaches, cultural and heritage sites, and shopping opportunities. In contrast, psychological attributes refer to the impressions, emotions, and attitudes that individuals associate with a particular tourism destination.

Some studies (Pike, 2009; Baloglu & Brinberg, 1997; Bigné Alcañiz et al., 2009) suggest that images emerge from tourists' cognitive and perceptual assessments, combined with affective evaluations that reflect their emotions toward a destination. Similarly, Gartner (1993) proposed that destination images consist of three distinct yet interconnected components: cognitive (factual knowledge), affective (emotional responses), and conative (future behavioral intentions). These three components follow a hierarchical structure, with cognitive elements forming the foundation, followed by affective responses, and ultimately conative intentions. The interaction among these elements determines the predisposition of a destination and influences tourists' overall perceptions and decision-making.

However, a tourist's perception of a destination is inherently subjective, shaped by each traveler's unique interpretations and experiences of that place (Bigné et al., 2001; Gallarza et al., 2002). These perceptions are deeply influenced by a range of antecedents, including personal memories, cultural background, prior knowledge, and individual emotions, all of which contribute to the formation of distinct and varied mental images of the destination. Consequently, two tourists visiting the same location may develop vastly different opinions and emotional connections, shaped by their unique perspectives and internalized meanings.

This variability underscores the complexity of destination image formation, highlighting the need for a personalized approach to understanding and addressing tourist perceptions. It also suggests that marketers and destination managers must consider the diverse psychological and emotional factors that influence individual perceptions, tailoring their strategies to align with the varied expectations and experiences of different traveler segments.

As a result, numerous authors have examined the elements that constitute a tourism destination image, typically focusing on cognitive and affective components (Baloglu et al., 1997, 1999; Beerli et al., 2004; Hallmann et al., 2015; Kim & Richardson, 2003; Pike et al., 2004; Smith et al., 2015; Tan & Wu, 2016). Lin et al. (2007) argued that the relative importance of cognitive and affective images varies depending on the destination and should therefore be studied separately (Stylidis et al., 2017). When a visitor considers both the cognitive and affective aspects of the image, it enables them to form a more comprehensive and nuanced opinion about the destination (Baloglu et al., 1997).

According to Fakeye and Crompton (1991), an image could persist even after the influences that formed it have altered. Even if destination attributes drastically alter over time, images may remain stable. Therefore, it is crucial to examine the elements of a place that are essential for the tourist's perception of the destination to be favorable, as tourists' perceptions play a fundamental role in making travel decisions. Most of studies on destination images have been undertaken from a tourist's point of view (White 2004).

The effectiveness of destination features affects visitors' satisfaction and subsequent actions, including re-visit intention and word-of-mouth recommendations (Ozdemir et al., 2012). Therefore, understanding the destination image formation process is important for destination positioning, planning, promoting, as well as general industry management.

2.2.1 Cognition

Cognition is a psychological term that refers to the mental processes involved in acquiring, processing, storing, and utilizing information (Anderson, 2014). Gupta and Sharma (2021) defined cognition as an individual's knowledge and thinking abilities.

Cognitive components primarily correlate to a tourist destination's resources (Stabler, 1995); the component represents an assessment of the perceived features of the place

(Papadimitriou et al., 2018). These resource features include, but are not limited to, the landscape, weather, lodging options, dining options, and historical and cultural sites. These all can attract tourists to travel to a particular place. With regard to measuring cognitive images, lists of functional and psychological characteristics have been used (Hallmann et al., 2014).

The cognitive component explains "perceptions on the thing, its attributes, and its connections to other objects" (Ostrom, 1969). The term "cognitive image" describes the mental image or perception that a person has about a specific thing, place, person, or idea. According to Scott (1965), a cognitive image is an assessment of the product's known features or an intellectual knowledge of the product.

In the context of travel and tourism, the term "cognitive image" refers especially to people's beliefs as well as perceptions about a place. The cognitive image component is mostly focused on its observable physical characteristics, which consist of beliefs and information tourists have about a place (Pike & Ryan, 2004). People often group places together based on shared traits and qualities, which shapes their sense of the place as a whole. The associations people have with a place can affect how they perceive it cognitively. Images produced from facts are how Boulding (1956) explains the cognitive component. For instance, associations with luxury, adventure, or historical significance may influence how the mind perceives a location.

Nine cognitive characteristics identified by Beerli and Martin (2004) are (1) natural resources, which refer to the landscape, climate and geographical features that make a destination unique; (2) general infrastructure, encompassing transportation systems, utilities, and other essential services that support tourism; (3) tourism infrastructure, which includes accommodations, restaurants, and facilities specifically designed for tourists; (4) tourism entertainment and recreation, cover the variety of activities and attractions available, such as theme parks, museums, and nightlife; (5) political and economic factors, consider the stability, safety, and economic conditions of the destination; (6) culture, history, and arts, reflect its heritage, traditions, and creative expressions; (7) natural environmental, pertains to the destination's ecological quality and sustainability; (8) social environment, involves the friendliness, hospitality, and cultural attitudes of the local population; and lastly (9) the atmosphere, captures the overall mood and character of the place, including its vibrancy, tranquility, or excitement. These cognitive characteristics collectively form a comprehensive framework for understanding how tourists evaluate and experience a destination, guiding both their expectations and their actual experiences.

2.2.2 Affection

Affection refers to the range of emotions and feelings that individuals experience (Holt-Lunstad et. al., 2008). The affective component is defined by Kothandapani (1971) and Ostrom (1969) in terms of positive or negative emotions towards an attitude object. A tourist's emotional reactions or assessments of the place they are visiting are referred to as their affective component (Bigne et. al., 2005; Hallmann et. al., 2015， Kim et al., 2019). The affective dimension should be used to gauge one's perception of "an area of large scale," such as a country or city, according to emotion theorist Russell. Indeed, researchers studying destination images have backed this view (Wamsley & Young, 1998; Young, 1995). Researchers are also focusing on affective image, which is utilized to measure a destination image using a semantic difference scale (Agapito et al., 2013; Stylidis et al., 2017). Russell, Ward, and Pratt's (1981) affective grid scale or its variations have been used almost exclusively to measure affective imagery (Prayag & Ryan 2012). It is determined that this strategy adheres to psychological convention about the emotion assessment technique.

The research has traditionally paid less attention to the emotional component, as affective factors are more ethereal and imprecise and have much less application in the development of marketing strategies, therefore not all scholars concur on the usefulness of the affective component of image (Chen, 2001); despite the fact that it is described as the emotions someone has for a place (Chen et al., 2016). However, the rising body of research on affective image in academia over the past several years has resulted in an increase in the number of papers on the topic. The overall effect size increased significantly, even larger effects than cognitive image on behavioural intentions which indicated feelings are better predictors of intentions (Afshardoost & Eshaghi, 2020). This suggests that for tourism managers and researchers, it is becoming more and more important to concentrate on the affective image dimension of destination image. More and more studies revealed that people's behavioural intentions are significantly influenced by their affective image (Han et al., 2019; Lee et al., 2008; Regan et al., 2012; Yang et al., 2009).

The idea that emotions are information elucidates how people use their emotions and perceptions to bias themselves towards a particular outcome (Kock et al., 2016). Travelers' perceptions of a place are shaped by their thoughts and views about it, according to a conceptual model developed by Mayo and Jarvis in 1981. And, it starts to function during the destination selection evaluation phase. Numerous environmental psychology studies, for example, Holbrook (1981) and Waldsley & Young (1998), support the idea that the two components should be addressed independently.

2.2.3 Conation

Conation is the term for the psychological or mental component of behavior that deals with one's intentions, will, or desires to act in a particular way in order to attain a particular objective. Conation is an idealized and desired future state that a person aspires to create for themselves (Dann, 1996). According to Bagozzi (1992), the conative element is described as behavioural tendency and is associated with the likelihood or propensity to act in a specific manner toward the object (White, 2014). Many researchers considered conation to be equivalent to intention (Prayag, 2009; King et al., 2015; Pike & Ryan, 2004; Woodside et. al., 2002).

Intention or conation, according to Chen, et al., (2016), describes an action that is motivated by a person's affection and cognition. Along with cognition (thinking) and affection (feeling), it is one of the three elements that make up human consciousness. Conation is a key factor in deciding how people direct their efforts and pursue their goals (James, 1890). The conative aspect, also referred to as the behavioral aspect, pertains to the behavioral intentions and actions that result from individuals' cognitive and emotional responses towards a destination. This involves the behaviors exhibited by tourists, such as whether they choose to return to the place again, engage in positive word-of-mouth recommendations, or participate in activities and interactions within the location. Conative aspects encompass the tangible actions that reflect individuals' attitudes and perceptions, and how these translate into real-world behaviors.

Due to growing competition and acknowledgment of the value of repeat customers, the study of destination marketing and management now includes destination loyalty as a key component. There're limited research have been done on the consequences of other constructs on destination loyalty, despite the fact that satisfaction has been extensively studied to anticipate tourist loyalty (Yuksel et al., 2010). Additionally, according to current research findings, merely gratifying customers may not be enough to maintain success in the cutthroat market of today (Carroll & Ahuvia, 2006), and customer loyalty is not always the result of satisfaction (Mittal & Lasar, 1998). This study examines the destination image with both a cognitive and affective component, which is an additional notion beyond satisfaction alone for the tourist's revisit intention and recommendation.

2.3 Underlying Theory

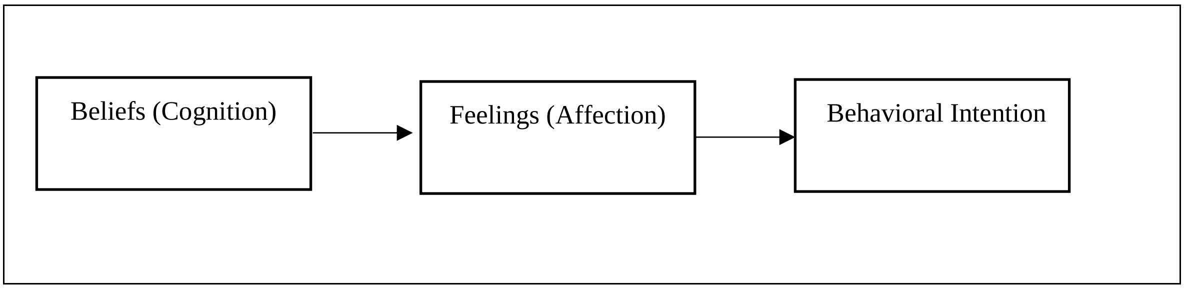
2.3.1 Cognitive-Affective Attitude Theory

Fishbein and Raven's (1962) attitude theory model plays a significant role in understanding consumer behavior by elucidating the processes through which attitudes influence decision-making. For tourism sector, this is how tourists select and act towards travel destinations. This model suggests that a consumer's attitude toward a product or service is determined by their beliefs about the attributes of the product and the evaluation of these attributes. Traditional attitude theories further elaborate on the relationship between cognition, affect, and behavior, positing that cognitive processes indirectly influence behavior through affective responses. In this framework, affect acts as an intermediary between cognition and behavioral intentions, highlighting the complex interplay between thoughts, feelings, and actions in consumer decision-making.

The model proposed by Fishbein and Raven (1962) emphasizes that attitudes are a function of an individual's salient beliefs about an object and the evaluative aspects associated with those beliefs. According to this model, each belief links the object to some attribute, and each attribute is weighted by the evaluation of its importance to the individual.

The overall attitude is then conceptualized as the summation of the products of these beliefs and evaluations. This approach allows for a quantitative assessment of attitudes, providing a predictive framework for understanding consumer choices.

Attitude, is a key factor in destination selection models for predicting tourist behavior. The three key components of the model, cognition refer to belief or evaluation of destination qualities, i.e. the subjective probabilities that an object possesses certain attributes. In consumer behavior, this pertains to what consumers believe about a product's features or benefits. While affective evaluations, which refer to feelings towards the destinations; i.e. the degree of positive or negative appraisal that consumers assign to each attribute. Both are factors that will influence tourist behavior, including how they select and act towards travel destinations. In short, the combination of beliefs and feelings leads to the formation of an overall attitude toward the product or service, which influences the consumer's intention to purchase. The three interconnected and hierarchically arranged components of attitude are cognition (perceptions and beliefs), affect (feelings), and conation (behavioural intentions).

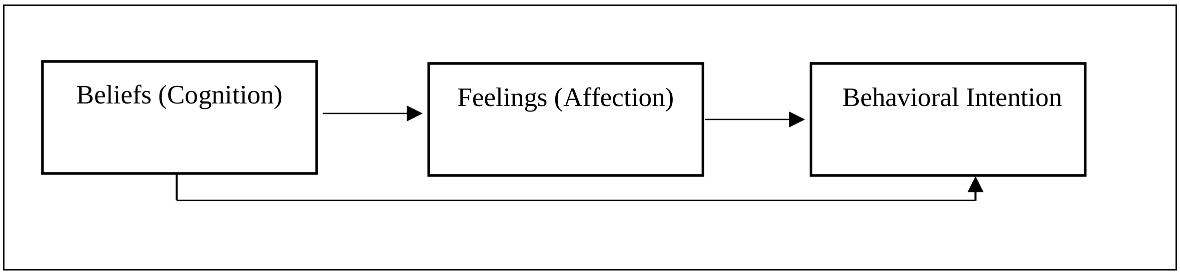


Note: Fishbein & Azjen (1975)

Figure 2.1: Traditional Attitude Model

As shown in Figure 2.1, Traditional attitude theory posits a hierarchical relationship between cognition, affect, and behavior. In this sequence, cognitive processes (thoughts and beliefs) influence affective responses (feelings and emotions), which in turn shape behavioral intentions and actions. It suggests that merely having knowledge or beliefs about a product is insufficient to drive behavior unless these cognitions evoke corresponding emotional responses. The affective component serves as a critical bridge, translating cognitive evaluations into actionable intentions. Traditional attitude theory holds that cognition can only indirectly affect behavior through affect, with affect acting as an intermediary between cognitive and behavioral intentions.

However, Bagozzi (1982) examined the model for blood donation and found some results that were counter to the traditional theory of attitude. Bagozzi (1982) discovered through empirical research that cognitions have a direct impact on behaviour in addition to an indirect one through affect. The results stood in contrast to past research, where it was discovered that cognitions only indirectly affect intentions through affect.



Note: Bagozzi (1982); Bagozzi & Burnkrant (1985)

Figure 2.2: Extended Attitude Model

Bagozzi (1982) concluded that the traditional relationship between attitude structures would need to be modified in certain ways, and that further investigation into the interplay between cognition, affect, and behavioral intent was necessary. Theoretically, a more accurate depiction of the attitude structure and behaviour prediction was made possible by treating the cognitive and affective responses differently.

In this study, the conceptual model is developed based on Bagozzi's reformulation of attitude theory, treating the cognitive and affective image differently and each influence the behavioral differently.

In view of its effectiveness in explaining attitudes and behaviors, the CAC Attitude Theory has been widely used in research on internet users' sharing behavior (Hsiao, 2020) and consumer behavior (Lim and Kim, 2020). In tourism research, researchers have applied the CAC theory to examine tourists' loyalty, and others have used this theory to explain tourists' environmentally responsible behavior (Ahn and Back, 2017; Liu et al., 2022). With further research, scholars have argued that cognitive and affective factors play an important driving role in tourists' pro-environmental behavior (Baird et al., 2022; Tang et al., 2022). Despite the emergence of new theoretical frameworks, the CAC model is still widely applied in tourism studies such as Alzboun (2023) on gastoromic tourism, Yang (2022) on destination image, Gautam (2023) on residents' environmental behavior; as it provides a structured approach to analyzing how destination image influences travelers' attitudes and actions (Agapito et al., 2013). Recent research also integrates CAC with digital marketing and social media influences, highlighting its adaptability in modern tourism contexts (Kim & Stepchenkova, 2015).

2.4 Cognitive-Affective and Conative Components

A fundamental model for the creation of destination pictures has been developed by Gunn (1988), Gartner (1996), Baloglu and McCleary (1999a), in which influencing factors are taken equally into account and are empirically shown to be multidimensional. According to a review of the literature, there are a number of cognitive and affective elements that have an impact on destination image formation (Agapito et. al. 2013; Baloglu, 1998; Chen & Phou, 2013; Hallmann et. al., 2015).

For this study, Sarawak, as the tourism destination, will be examined through the lens of the CANFF framework as its cognitive image. This framework represents how Sarawak positions itself in the tourism market, emphasizing unique features or distinct attributes that differentiate it from other destinations.

2.4.1 Cognitive Component (CANFF)

The term "cognitive image" describes a visitor's perceptions or understanding of the features or qualities of a tourist site that line up with the available amenities or attractions. Within the realm of tourism, these attractions refer to the features of a tourism destination that draw travellers, like picturesque views, engaging activities, and unforgettable experiences (Crompton, 1979; Baloglu & McCleary, 1999; Kim & Richardson, 2003; Pike & Ryan, 2004; Polo Peña et al., 2012). Polo Peña et al. (2012) conducted a research to validate cognitive image dimensions for rural tourist destination and found the qualities of the place, service options, cultural attractions, outdoor activities, local goods and cuisine, and nature-based activities are all considered cognitive image elements for rural destinations.

These factors affect the loyalty and satisfaction of tourists. For destination image management to be efficient, it is vital to comprehend these factors. Lam et al. (2022) pointed out that destination image measuring scale dimensions should be context-specific to highlight the unique qualities of each destination. Sarawak is rich in diversification of tourism products, including special landscapes, various cultures and heritage, as well as additional products like longhouses, caves, mountains, rainforests, flora and fauna, exotic foods, and so on. The Since 2014, Sarawak Tourism Board started to emphasize culture, adventure, and nature (CAN) as its core products (Ban & Ramsaran, 2017), and later repositioned itself as CANFF, adding food and festivals as its core products. These distinctive tourism products of Sarawak are said to have a significant impact on attracting foreign visitors. Sarawak succeeded in presenting itself as a varied destination that suited a wide range of traveler interests by incorporating cultural, adventure, nature, food, and festival components into its tourist positioning.

2.4.1.1 Nature

The natural resources of a place define the environmental context in which a visitor can appreciate the place, according to Dwyer and Kim (2003). Alghamdi (2007) stated that natural resources include wild and undeveloped places, national parks and forests, rivers, rural areas with pleasant weather, snow and mountains, and other features that are present in certain locations.

Any tourism that deals with an experience directly tied to natural attractions is considered nature tourism (Commission for Environment Cooperation, 2000). Nature tourism is defined by some researchers and authorities as visiting a destination to enjoy natural attractions such as sightseeing, wildlife viewing, sandy beaches, waterfalls, lakes, national parks, fishing, and other outdoor activities (Fennell, 2014; Wearing & Neil, 1999).

Natural resources are appealing to tourists because of their intrinsic features. Their attraction as draw factors for tourists seeking memorable and gratifying experiences in many regions of the world is fueled by their scenic beauty, recreational opportunities, biodiversity, cultural value, opportunity for adventure, health advantages, and alignment with sustainable practices.

Sarawak is a beautiful natural wonderland, with 70 percent of the area covered by tropical rainforest and unique flora and fauna in Borneo. It brims with Mother Nature's beauty and bounty. It is easy to name some nature escapes in Sarawak, i.e., Mulu Caves, Niah Caves, Bako National Park, Bengoh Range, and many more. Throughout the year, Mulu Cave and Niah Cave effectively attract a substantial number of international visitors. These two caves, along with the tropical rainforest, obviously convey the image of Sarawak. The statistic from the Forest Department Sarawak (SFC) shows a total of 541,631 visitors visited Sarawak national parks, nature reserves, wildlife centers, and wildlife rehabilitation centres in 2018. Caving and jungle trekking are two of the most famous activities that attract travelers from all over the world (Sanggin, 2009).

Studies have shown that cognitive image factors, particularly the impression of natural amenities, significantly relate to affective image factors (Ko et al., 2002). It is not surprising that natural scenic beauty is among the most important to tourists (Hallmann et. al., 2015) and serve as an important factor for the cognitive image element (Lin et al., 2007). By showcasing Sarawak's natural beauty and promoting responsible adventure tourism, the CANFF's positioning encourages sustainable practices and conservation efforts, ensuring the preservation of the state's ecological assets for future generations.

2.4.1.2 Culture

Culture is a system made up of the diversity of thoughts, attitudes, and actions that people take in their social interactions. Additionally, as a symbol of purity or the degree to which a product related to tourism is well preserved, the element of culture incorporates several qualities like authenticity, variety, originality, and distinctiveness (Thong et al., 2020). Heritage is an inspiring resource for reflecting on the past, highlighting the present, and creating cultural inheritance (UNESCO). Burnett (2001) defined heritage as the "historical significance" of heritage properties or as representing the memory or identity of a place (Chin et al., 2014).

The desire to learn about and experience other cultures has gained popularity among travelers nowadays (Richards, 2007). Cultural tourism is pronounced when it involves tourists experiencing and learning about the local traditions, including arts, foods, folklore, pilgrimages, historical places, and monuments, without jeopardizing the respect of the local community and its environment (Cros & McKercher, 2015). It could also entail interacting with a local population and their cultural expressions, as well as experiencing the uniqueness of culture, heritage, and the specialties of the people and the particular destination (Wall & Mathieson, 2006). According to Hu and Ritchie (1993), for education-seeking tourists, the most important aspects are the uniqueness of the local people's way of life, historical attractions, landscape and scenery, and the local people's attitude towards tourists.

In the case of Sarawak, history (historical buildings, museums, culture centers, and galleries), lifestyle (indigenous people), architecture (longhouses), art, festivals (Borneo Rainforest Music), and cultural events (Borneo Cultural Festival), music, dance, languages, religion, and culinary are among the dimensions of the cultural product in the state (Hamzah, 2004; Bojei & Sahari, 2015). Some of the historical and cultural attractions in Sarawak, i.e., Fort Margherita, Kuching Old Courthouse, Sarawak Cultural Village, Annah Rais Longhouse, and many more. Emphasizing the state's cultural and culinary heritage can boost local businesses, such as artisans, handicraft sellers, and traditional food vendors. According to the Minister of Tourism Sarawak, for more than two decades, Sarawak Cultural Village has been a popular tourist attraction. This, in turn, contributes to the economic growth of local communities.

Tourists today are more interested in experiencing and learning about diverse cultures (Boyd, 2002; Hager, 2003; Richards, 2007). According to Ghimire (2013), two-thirds of adults in the United States choose to visit cultural sites. The same goes for Horner and Swarbrooke (2016), Richards (2007), Hu and Ritchie (1993), and Yousefi and Marzuki (2015), who found that culture and historical is one of the most important part of the tourism product, especially for education seeking tourists.

Studies reveal that tourists' perceptions of a destination are greatly influenced by its culture (Polo Peña et al., 2012). According to the World Tourism Organization (WTO), “cultural tourists” account for more than 40% of all international tourists from all over the world (Richards, 2007). This phenomenon demonstrates that culture is an important component of tourism (Horner & Swarbrooke, 2016; Richards, 2007).

2.4.1.3 Adventure

Adventure is described as a thrilling experience that results from unanticipated, uncommon, or even dangerous events, or as a venture that includes unanticipated dangers. According to Alghamdi (2007), travellers seeking adventure enjoy travelling to strange and exotic locations to discover new things, take in the culture, or test their mettle.

Adventure activities have become increasingly important and well-liked in most of the locations (Albayrak et. al., 2018). Many countries throughout the world are interested in adventure tourism, and it is heavily commercialised (Pomfret, 2006). By incorporating ancillary products like daily tours and genuine events, destination authorities hope to raise both the appeal of their locations and overall visitor pleasure. Additionally, according to study findings (Horner & Swarbrooke, 2016, Rid et al., 2014), travellers are quite interested in participating in daily excursions and activities outside of their hotels. According to

Hudson (2003), adventure tourism combines travel and sporting or outdoor activities with a focus on experience involvement. Adventure travel is one of the fastest-growing travel segments, according to the Adventure Travel and Tourism Association (2010).

Despite the variety of interpretations, Hudson (2003) categorized adventure tourism into two types: hard and soft. Hard adventure tourism is associated with higher risk and greater challenge activities that necessitate the physical and mental fitness of the particular visitor (Beard et al., 2012). Bungee jumping, rock climbing, canoeing, jungle trekking, wilderness survival, and rafting are some of the examples of hard adventures. In the other hand, the soft adventure tourism refers to lower-risk or lower-danger activities such as hiking, bicycling, bird watching, and camping, which require lesser skills neither physical nor mental fitness (Beard et al., 2012). Some destinations, especially islands, also offer a variety of water sports activities such as jet skiing, scuba diving, parasailing, wakeboarding, surfing, kayaking, and so on to attract adventurous visitors.

Antara et. al. (2018) found that one of the dominant factors drawing tourists to Bali, Indonesia, is recreation opportunities in the natural open, i.e., adventure activities. Kim and Chalip (2004) stated that sporting activities are one kind of attraction that can draw in participants, spectators, and visitors. Yoon and Uysal (2005) also found that most of the visitors who visited Northern Cyprus were attracted by its water-sport activities.

2.4.1.4 Food

Gastronomy tourism, or culinary tourism, are terms used to describe tourism activities related to food. The meaning of these phrases is the same: people come to a particular location in order to find food (Ab Karim & Chi, 2010). Culinary tourism was characterised by Long (2004) as experiencing and taking part in other people's foodways, which might entail eating, preparing, and presenting food. Numerous studies support the idea that food motivates travellers. Local cuisine is a major draw for visitors and essential to the overall travel experience (Björkv & Kauppinen-Räisänen, 2014).

Sarawak is a diverse state with different ethnic groups such as Malay, Chinese, Iban, Bidayuh, Melanau, Orang Ulu, Kayan, Kenya, Bisaya, and the other ethnic groups that in terms of gastronomic delights, have something special to offer. The uniqueness of Sarawak's ethnic native's gastronomic delights could be an advantage for Sarawak as an attraction and a culinary tourism destination in Malaysia.

Quite a number of research has been done on tourism and gastronomy in other nations (Kivela and Crotts, 2006). According to Goeldner and Ritchie (2006), tourists cannot disregard food and beverages, and some even consider food as one of the most important aspects of their trip. Travelers will experience diverse sorts of food and beverages in the visited destination while participating in other tourism activities (Richards, 2002). Not only do tourists experience and consume varieties of food and beverages, but they also learn about the destination's culinary culture and legacy. All these foods, beverages, and food-related activities can be considered part of gastronomic products (Hall and Mitchell, 2005).

According to Goeldner and Ritchie (2006), gastronomy is considered one of the most important elements for traveler. Richards (2002) and Hall and Mitchell (2005) stated that tourists will come across a variety of food and beverages in the visited area. One of the main reasons people travel is to visit primary and secondary food producers, food festivals, restaurants, and specific sites where food is produced. Another motivation is to taste or experience the characteristics of a specialized food production region according to Hall and Mitchell (2001) as well as Ab Karim & Chi (2010).

Food tourism is becoming a crucial component of destination marketing strategies as culinary experiences have grown to be a major draw for many destinations (Baltescu, 2016). Sarawak positioning itself as CANFF tourism is in line with the trend, as food is one of the elements of Sarawak tourism products.

2.4.1.5 Festival and Event

Sarawak is also home to various unique festivals throughout the year. In order to promote tourism and attract tourists to Sarawak, the Ministry of Tourism, Arts, and Culture has listed a total of 117 events and festivals in the Sarawak Tourism Calendar of Events for 2021 (Borneo Post, December 2020). Among the famous events and festivals are the World Rainforest Music Festival, the Borneo Jazz Music Festival, the Borneo International Kite Festival, the Borneo Cultural Festival and the Sarawak Regatta.

It is suggested by Rivera et. al. (2008) that festivals will draw visitors who want to immerse themselves in a specific facet of culture. They found that festivals draw the majority of visitors to a particular place to experience a specific facet of culture. Unique events play a significant role in shaping a destination's appeal by offering distinctive experiences that can attract visitors and enhance their perceptions of the location. According to earlier research, unique events are one of the major factors that might increase a destination's appeal and influence travelers' decision-making (Lo et al., 2017). Kaplanidou and Vogt (2007) found that events have power over destination image formation. By showcasing local culture, traditions, and unique offerings, events and festivals can positively affect visitors' cognitive and affective evaluations of a destination, ultimately leading to increased destination loyalty through higher intentions to revisit and recommend the place to others. Thus, events contribute to both the immediate attractiveness and long-term reputation of a destination.

2.4.2 Affective Component

The affective component of destination image refers to the emotional and attitudinal responses that individuals hold towards a particular travel destination. It encompasses the feelings, emotions, and sentiments that tourists associate with a destination, and it plays a significant role in shaping their overall perception and decision-making process. A positive affective component can lead to stronger emotional connections and a more favorable attitude towards the destination, ultimately influencing visitation intentions and behaviors. A favorable affective image can drive stronger intentions to visit or revisit a destination, as emotions have a lasting influence on memory and decision-making. Travelers are more likely to choose destinations that evoke positive emotions and avoid those linked with negative or neutral feelings. Moreover, the affective component significantly affects word-of-mouth promotion; travelers who have emotionally engaging experiences are more inclined to recommend the destination to others. As a result, the affective dimension of destination image not only influences initial visitation decisions but also contributes to building long-term loyalty and advocacy for the destination.

A semantic differential scale will be used to assess tourist's affective image of Sarawak. It is a type of survey or measurement tool used in research to gather data about the perceived attitudes, opinions, or emotions of individuals towards a particular object, concept, or subject. Respondents are given a list of bipolar adjectives or phrases to grade the item or concept under evaluation according to how they see it along those dimensions.

Stylos et. al. (2016) used seven semantic differential scales (unpleasant-pleasant, gloomy-exciting, distressing-relaxing, negative-positive, unenjoyable-enjoyable, unfavorable-favorable, and boring-fun). A number of researchers [Baloglu & McCleary

(1999b); Pike & Ryan (2004) and Russell & Pratt (1980)] suggested that four semantic differential scales (sleepy-lively, unpleasant-pleasant, boring-exciting, and distressing-relaxing) can typically be applied to investigate the affective component of the destination image (Lin et al. 2007; Stylidis et. al., 2017).

2.4.3 Conative Component

An act motivated by a person's affection and cognition is referred to as conation or intention. Consequently, the concept of behavioural intention as a dependent variable appears to be crucial for comprehending tourist destination decision as well as their future intentions and actions (Chen et al., 2016). The general perception of a destination affects travelers' behavioral intentions as well as the process of choosing a destination (Chen & Tsai, 2007; Qu et al., 2011; Wang & Hsu, 2010). Various consumer behavior factors have been hypothesized to be influenced by destination image. For tourism researchers and managers, the most favourable indicators of pre- and post-visit behavioural intentions are the intention to return (Loi et al., 2017) and the intention to refer (Prayag & Ryan, 2012).

Tourists may promote or return to destinations based on loyalty, which has been recognized as a motivator and predictor of success in tourism and marketing (Yoon & Uysal, 2005). Thus, destination loyalty from the viewpoint of tourists has drawn the attention of tourism scholars (Lam & Hsu, 2006). In order to evaluate visitor loyalty, Martin et al. (2013) determined that it was necessary to evaluate two aspects of behavioral intention (i.e., likelihood to recommend and intention to return).

In this study, the conative indicators of destination loyalty are captured through two key behavioral intentions: the intention to revisit the destination and the intention to recommend it to others, often referred to as word of mouth. These indicators have been widely recognized and employed in tourism research as conventional measures of tourist loyalty. Specifically, Chi and Qu (2008) highlighted that these variables are most commonly used to assess tourists' behavioral intentions related to a destination. Furthermore, numerous researchers, including Chen and Gursoy (2001) and Yoon and Uysal (2005), have underscored the significance of revisit intention and recommendations to others as reliable metrics for evaluating tourist loyalty. By examining these conative indicators, this study aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of how tourists' experiences influence their loyalty to a destination, contributing valuable insights into the dynamics of tourism behavior.

Customer loyalty is among the most crucial markers to the effectiveness of marketing tactics, and the principle also holds true for tourism-related products (Lee, 2009). Understanding the factors that draw customers to revisit a destination and motivate them to recommend it to others is crucial for the sustainable success of the tourism industry. Tourist loyalty is a vital metric for the long-term success of any tourism destination. From a survey of the pertinent literature (Yoon & Uysal, 2005), although visitor loyalty to destinations is remarkable in today's cutthroat market, a thorough investigation of visitor loyalty in special interest tourism is necessary (Wen et. al., 2019).

2.4.3.1 Intention to Revisit

Revisit intention refers to the tourists' desire to go back to a specific place (Szymanski & Henard, 2001). The intention to return, a key behavioral or conative intention reflects a visitor's assessment of how likely it is that they will return to the same location (Bigné et al., 2001; Chen & Funk 2010; Kaplanidou 2009; Petrick 2004). A high intention to return indicates strong loyalty, suggesting that the destination has successfully met or exceeded the visitor's expectations, thereby fostering a desire to relive the positive experience.

The definition of intention to revisit a tourism place is the readiness or willingness of an individual to make a repeat visit to the same destination, offering the most accurate prediction of a decision to revisit, for example, the purchase of a vacation package to the same destination (Han & Kim, 2010). Recurring visitors have a stabilizing effect and represent a profitable business niche for the majority of places. According to Kastenholz et al. (2012), Lau and McKercher (2004), and Zhang et al. (2014), recurring visitors offer ongoing revenues and lower costs for market communication. Additionally, the intention to return is essential since it shows a commitment to the brand, which is a significant sign of successful destination development and makes travel locations more competitive. Understanding this intention is crucial for tourism stakeholders, as it not only signals potential repeat business but also provides insights into the factors that contribute to long-term destination loyalty.

A substantial amount of research has demonstrated that travelers' intentions to return to a destination are influenced by its general reputation (Baker & Crompton 2000; Cronin et. al., 2000; Dolnicar & Grün 2013; Petrick 2004; Qu et. al., 2011). The intention to revisit is typically used to measure behavioural actions (Bigné et. al., 2001; Chen & Funk, 2010; Kaplanidou, 2009; Petrick, 2004).

2.4.3.2 Intention to Recommend

Intention to recommend refers to customers' intentions to tell their friends and family about their experiences (Maxham III, 2001). Tourists intentions to recommend a tourism destination are of paramount importance for the success and sustainability of that destination's tourism industry. When tourists have a positive experience and are motivated to recommend the destination to others, it generates a ripple effect of positive word-of-mouth marketing. The most trustworthy information sources for potential travellers are recommendations from past trips. One of the most popular sorts of information sought by those who are interested in travelling is word of mouth (Chi & Qu, 2008).

A number of scholars contend that since a tourist's decision-making is influenced by factors other than a positive perception of the place, the intention to recommend is a more accurate measure of loyalty. In fact, given that they are regarded as the most reliable agent and information source (Gartner, 1993), tourists can promote the place to relatives and friends whether or not they return there (Agapito et al., 2011; Chen & Gursoy, 2001).

Positive recommendations can significantly enhance the destination's reputation and increase its visibility in the global tourism market. As more potential travelers hear about the positive experiences of their peers, they are more likely to consider visiting the destination themselves. As a result, there are more visitors, who stay longer and spend more money, which boosts the local economy and helps local companies. Positive recommendations may also prompt happy tourists to return, further enhancing the destination's standing as a top pick. The ability of travelers to spread the word about their experiences and the power of word-of-mouth are ultimately what drive a place's ability to expand steadily as a tourism destination.

2.5 Hypotheses Development

2.5.1 Cognitive Image and Affective Image

According to research by Holbrook (1978, 1981), thoughts about a product shape how we feel about it. Stem and Krakover (1993) empirically tested their composite image formation hypothesis and found that the affective quality attributed to the city was determined by perceptions of city characteristics. Research on destination image formation consistently shows that cognitive image is an antecedent of affective image (Palacio et al., 2002; Ko et al., 2002; Santana & Gosling, 2018). Affective image, which describes feelings toward a location, is greatly influenced by cognitive image, which reflects opinions and understanding of the destination's features (Meira et al., 2017).

The destination choice model developed by Woodside and Lysonski in 1989 demonstrated how perceptions or cognitive assessments of a destination influence the feelings of travelers towards particular destination, or affective assessments of the destination. As some basic knowledge is needed to activate affective associations with reference to a particular destination, the authors claimed that perceptual and cognitive evaluation have a one-way directional influence on the affective appraisal of the destination.

The relationship between cognitive and affective image in tourism contexts has been explored in recent studies. Cognitive image, which represents knowledge and beliefs about a destination, can influence affective image, which reflects emotional responses (Yang et al., 2022; Guo & Pesonen, 2022). The research conducted by Shah Alam Kabir Pramanik (2023) demonstrated that cognitive image had significant positive effects on affective image, in line with the results pf several studies (such as Alcocer & Ruiz, 2020; Collins & Miller, 2021; Králiková et al., 2020). Research and empirical evidence revealed a connection between cognitive and affective images, with the latter being heavily reliant on the former (Agapito et al., 2013; Collins & Millar, 2021). Numerous studies in different fields confirmed that affective evaluation of any object depends on its cognitive evaluation; therefore, the relationship between cognition and affect is well established (Anand et. al., 1988; Baloglu & McCleary, 1999; Beerli & Martin, 2004; Burgess, 1978; Gartner, 1993; Li et. al., 2010; Lin et. al., 2007; Reibstein et. al., 1980; Russel & Pratt, 1980; Stem & Krakover, 1993;

Sylidis et. al., 2017; Williams et. al., 1992; Wang & Hsu, 2010;). Accordingly, the hypothesis below is developed:

H1: Cognitive image will positively influence affective image.

2.5.2 Cognitive Image and Affective Image towards Conation

Literature has provided abundant evidence of the influence of cognitive and affective country image on consumer reactions to foreign products, particularly in terms of cognitive judgements and behavioral tendencies (Oduro et al., 2023). Numerous of research has confirmed cognitive country image as an important external cue for consumer judgements of product quality, reliability, workmanship and brand competence (He and Ge, 2023). For tourism research, destination image has become a widely accepted tool in the tourism marketing literature that helps in building destination loyalty (Baloglu & Mangaloglu, 2001; Gursoy et al., 2014; Wang et al., 2021).

The attitude structure towards destinations is made up of perceptual, cognitive, and affective assessments, which together determine visitation intentions. A large body of research has shown that travelers' intentions to return to a destination are influenced by its general image (Baker & Crompton 2000; Cronin et al.,2000; Dolnicar & Grün 2013; Petrick 2004; Qu et al., 2011). Affect and perceptual/cognitive assessments both play significant roles in directly influencing re-visitation intentions.

Cognitive assessments consistently influenced affection and visit intention or revisit intention both before and after the destination experience. Baloglu (1998) found affection to have impacts on behavioral intentions, especially after a destination experience. In other words, after visiting a place, travelers' emotional connections to that particular place play a significant role in determining their future behavior. According to a study by Akgün et al. (2019) on visitors visiting Istanbul, emotive destination image also had a significant impact on the intention to recommend and the intention to return.

According to Font (1997), Baloglu and McCleary (1999a), Echtner and Ritchie (2003), Sirgy and Su (2000), and studies on the factors that determine destination competitiveness (e.g., Ritchie and Crouch 2003; Enright and Newton 2004), it is assumed that a number of variables (cognitive and affective factors) affect destination image and its effect on behavioral intentions. Numerous research have shown that behavioural intentions are strongly influenced by the cognitive image (Wang & Fu, 2015; Wang et al., 2016).

Certain features of the destination and the respondents' evaluative variables were found to be correlated by Ross (1993). Specifically, he discovered that tourists are more inclined to desire to return to a location if they have a favorable perception of it in terms of the receptiveness dimension. As positive perceptions of destinations influence purchase decisions (Woodside & Lysonski, 1989), quite a number of studies conclude that tourists' intention to revisit a place is very much associated with their positive perception (cognitive and affective images) of a particular destination (Assaker et. al., 2011; Bigne et. al., 2009; Chew & Jahari, 2014; Kim & Yoon, 2003).

In terms of intention to recommend, Stylidis et. al. (2017) found that both cognitive and affective images significantly influence intention to recommend a tourist destination. Li et. al. (2010) also found a direct relationship between affective image and intention to recommend. The emotional aspect delves into the affective responses and feelings that a destination evokes in individuals. This includes the emotional connections, attachments, and sentiments that people experience when thinking about or visiting a place. Emotions play a significant role in shaping one's overall perception and memory of a destination, influencing their decision to revisit or recommend it.

Both cognitive and affective images can predict tourists' behavioral intentions, such as revisiting or recommending a destination (Basaran, 2016). Shah Alam Kabir Pramanik (2023) conducted research at heritage site in Bangladesh and discovered that both the cognitive image and affective can affect destination loyalty by enhancing tourists' inclinations to recommend and return to a site in the future, same outcomes in the earlier studies (Alahakoon et al., 2021; Casali et al., 2020).

Numerous research studies have documented the impact of a destination's image on travellers' intentions to return and their intentions to recommend it (Chi & Qu, 2008; Choi et. al., 2011; Ramkissoon et. al., 2014), particularly the direct effect of the cognitive and/or affective images of a destination on the future behavior of tourists (Chew & Jahari, 2014; Li et. al., 2010; Zhang et. al., 2014). Therefore, the following hypotheses can be drawn:

H2: Cognitive image will positively influence intention to revisit.

H3: Cognitive image will positively influence intention to recommend.

H4: Affective image will positively influence intention to revisit.

H5: Affective image will positively influence intention to recommend.

2.6 Conceptual Framework

The study "Examining the relationship of cognitive and affective images on destination loyalty: A case of culture, adventure, nature, food, and festival tourism in Sarawak" is grounded in theoretical foundations and extensive literature on destination image and loyalty. The cognitive image in this context is represented by the CANFF (Culture, Adventure, Nature, Food, and Festival) elements, which are key attractions that shape tourists' perceptions of Sarawak. The affective image, on the other hand, is captured through four semantic differential scales: sleepy-lively, unpleasant-pleasant, boring-exciting, and distressing-relaxing. These scales measure the emotional responses tourists have towards Sarawak as a destination. The study aims to explore how these cognitive and affective images influence tourists' destination loyalty, specifically their intentions to revisit and recommend Sarawak to others.

The conceptual framework has been developed for this research integrates these variables to illustrate how perceptions of Sarawak's cultural, adventurous, natural, food, and festival (cognitive images) interact with emotional responses (affective images) to influence tourists' loyalty behaviors, as shown in Figure 2.3.

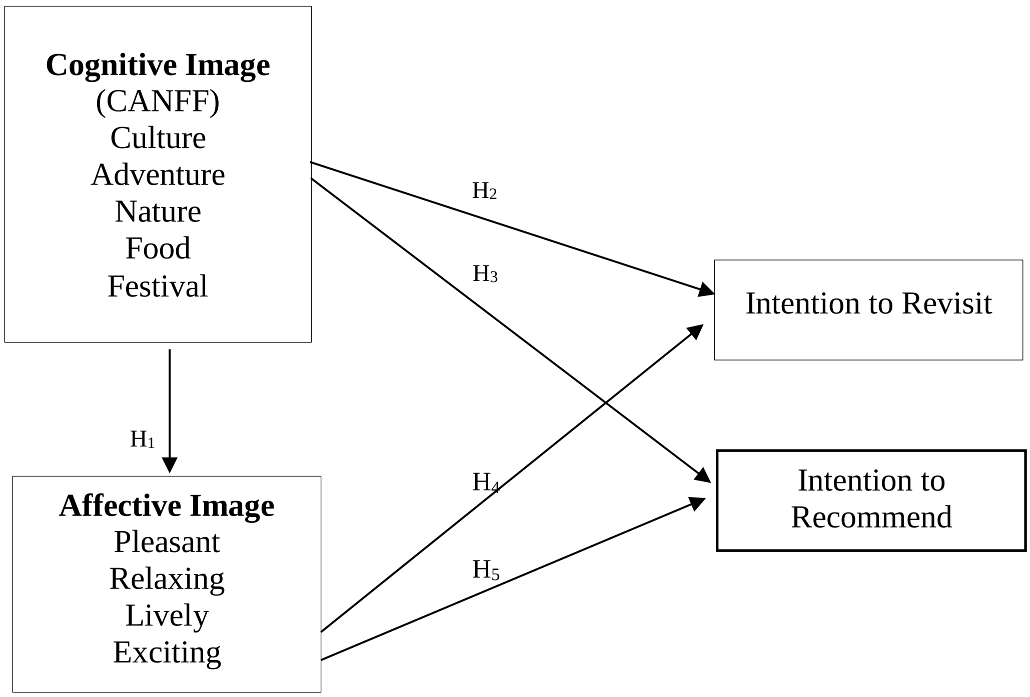


Figure 2.3: Conceptual Framework

This conceptual framework seeks to close the gap on the role played by the CANFF in the cognitive and affective image of Sarawak and how it influences tourist intention to revisit as well as intention to recommend, since no research has examined it previously.

2.7 Research Gaps

Destination marketing and management success must be led by a careful study of destination image, especially in the increasingly cutthroat tourism market. Sarawak's tourism positioning leverages its diverse culture, adventure, nature, food, and festivals (CANFF) offerings to attract travelers from around the world. It is crucial to understand how the CANFF characteristics influence tourists' perceptions of the destination's image, their emotional responses toward Sarawak, and their impact on destination loyalty. Despite the recognized importance of cognitive and affective images in influencing tourist behavior, there is limited empirical research focused on how these images specifically affect destination loyalty within Sarawak's unique tourism offerings. Understanding this relationship is essential for targeted marketing strategies and enhancing the overall tourism experience, thereby fostering repeat visitation and positive word-of-mouth (WOM) recommendations.

Despite the substantial body of research dedicated to understanding the intricacies of cognition, emotion, and conation, a notable research gap persists in comprehending the interplay among these domains, as highlighted by Stylos et al. (2016). While individual studies have examined these dimensions separately, a comprehensive understanding of the relationships between cognitive (belief-related), affective (feeling-related), and conative (behavior-related) images remains elusive, particularly in the context of Sarawak's destination image. Existing literature often fails to elucidate how these dimensions interact dynamically, shaping perceptions, decisions, and behaviors. Cognitive and affective images were examined separately, analyzing their influence on tourists in isolation (Shi et al., 2021; Souiden et al., 2020). While some studies have integrated both dimensions into a single model, they primarily focus on their interaction rather than their comparative effects, often treating them as correlated constructs (Kock et al., 2019; Micevski et al., 2021; Wang et al., 2023). Consequently, there is a pressing need to explore the nuanced relationships between cognition, emotion, and conation, shedding light on their influence and providing valuable insights into how these interconnections shape the overall tourist experience and behavior.

The debate over the precise relationship between cognitive and affective images in influencing behavioral intentions further underscores this research gap. While Gartner (1993) and Fishbein and Ajzen (1975) suggest a hierarchical structure where cognition precedes affection in shaping behavior, Bagozzi (1994) argues that cognition and affection may independently influence behavior. This lack of consensus highlights the need for further research to clarify these mechanisms, particularly in the context of Sarawak's unique CANFF tourism offerings. Furthermore, Tasci, Gartner, and Cavusgil (2007) emphasize the absence of a systematic framework that operationalizes the relationship between destination image and behavioral intentions, reinforcing the necessity for a more structured approach to studying these linkages.

In addressing this gap, this research employs CANFF as the foundation for forming cognitive image and adopts the reflective-formative Type II model, which is rarely applied in tourism research. This model allows for a multi-dimensional analysis, capturing how individual cognitive attributes (culture, adventure, nature, food, and festivals) collectively shape destination image and subsequently influence affective responses and conative behavior. By adopting this approach, the study provides a more comprehensive and structured evaluation of how cognitive and affective images interact in shaping destination loyalty. Following Baloglu and Brinberg's (1997) recommendation to explore cognition-affect relationships in behavioral intention research, this study fills an important gap by applying an underutilized yet theoretically robust modeling approach. To ensure empirical validity, primary data will be collected from tourists who visit Sarawak, allowing for a firsthand understanding of their perceptions, emotions, and loyalty behaviors.

Sarawak's cultural richness, biodiversity, and natural beauty provide a strong foundation for tourism, but effectively translating these attributes into memorable experiences requires a deeper understanding of how visitors cognitively perceive and emotionally connect with the destination. Recognizing that positive emotional bonds significantly influence loyalty, this study’s findings will help Sarawak’s tourism stakeholders curate experiences that evoke strong emotional connections, thereby fostering a deeper attachment to the region.

To date, few studies in Sarawak have employed this conceptual approach to investigate the topic. Therefore, this study aims to examine the cognitive image (CANFF) of Sarawak tourism in relation to tourists’ affective image and conative behavior, addressing the research gap by providing new insights into how tourists perceive Sarawak, their emotional responses to the destination, and their future behavioral intentions. In this study, future behavior is specifically linked to tourist loyalty, ensuring practical implications for tourism development, marketing strategies, and destination branding.

The lack of localized research has resulted in insufficient empirical evidence to understand the unique drivers of tourist behavior in Sarawak, making it challenging for stakeholders to develop effective marketing and branding strategies. By applying the Cognitive-Affective-Conative (CAC) model in this context, this study will contribute new theoretical and practical insights, enabling tourism practitioners and policymakers to tailor their promotional efforts more effectively. This will enhance destination loyalty and competitiveness, ultimately strengthening Sarawak's position as a distinctive and attractive tourism destination.

2.8 Chapter Summary

The part on literature reviews provides the theoretical underpinnings and the research framework required for the study. It sets the background, identifies the gaps in the research, and provides guidance for the research framework for examining the relationship of cognitive and affective images on destination loyalty. In general, the literature review provides a strong framework for the later chapters and validates its importance in the ongoing study.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

The research methodology will be discussed in detail in this chapter, which is divided into nine sections. The first section discusses the positivist research paradigm, followed by the research design in the second section. The subsequent sections cover the research population, sample size, and sampling method. This chapter also discusses the research instruments and measurement methods, including measurement items and measurement scales. The final section focuses on data analysis, which includes both the measurement model assessment and the structural model assessment.

3.2 Research Paradigm

A scientific "paradigm" is a set of fundamental beliefs held by scientists that guide how problems should be addressed and how we conduct research (Creswell, 2003). Adhering to the research paradigm is the best strategy for defining legitimate research (Myers & Avison, 2002), because these paradigms comprise a core collection of presumptions or beliefs that guide our inquiries for a particular study undertaking (Guba and Lincoln, 2005).

The constructivist and positivist paradigms have dominated research paradigms over the previous decades (Zukauskas et. al., 2017). In constructivist research, the focus is on exploring how individuals make sense of the world, how they attribute meaning to their experiences, and how their beliefs and perceptions shape their actions and behavior. This paradigm often employs qualitative research methods to capture the rich and complex nature of human experiences and the multiple perspectives that individuals bring to their understanding of the world. On the other hand, the positivist research paradigm is a way of thinking about research that places a strong emphasis on using empirical data and scientific techniques to comprehend and explain phenomena. It is rooted in the idea that knowledge should be based on observable and measurable data, and its goal is to discover objective, generalizable, and law-like patterns in the natural and social worlds. Positivists hold that the only way to properly learn anything is through experimentation and observation. Therefore, a scientific approach is the main method to generate knowledge. Positivism is sometimes referred to by the phrases scientific method, empirical science, post positivism, and quantitative research (Rahi, 2017).

The positivist paradigm was adopted to direct the focus of this study, as this research aims to predict results, verify theory, and establish causal relationships between variables.

3.3 Research Design

Causal research evaluates cause-and-effect relationships (Walliman, 2006) and is commonly used because it identifies underlying motives and provides empirical evidence to support a theory or prediction (Grey, 2014). This approach aims to establish and confirm the connections between different components of the phenomenon under investigation. The causality research approach is applied in this study because it seeks to identify causal relationships and provide empirical support for theoretical predictions (Grey, 2014).

Since the objective of this study is to examine the relationship between cognitive and affective images as well as the relationship between both images and tourists’ intentions to revisit and recommend the destination, the study is correlational in nature. Correlational research investigates the relationships between variables (Sekaran & Bougie, 2013).

Additionally, this study incorporates descriptive research, which aims to gather information that characterizes the key attributes of the research subject. Descriptive studies are frequently employed to gain insights into the characteristics of individuals, objects, or situations (Sekaran & Bougie, 2013).

This research adopts a quantitative methodology, which focuses on the numerical assessment of specific factors and allows for reaching a broader audience (Dawson, 2007). Quantitative research is particularly useful for validating theoretical predictions (Tharenou et al., 2007). The standard procedure in quantitative research involves reviewing relevant literature, developing theoretical models, and formulating testable hypotheses (Patton, 1990). The conceptual framework and research hypotheses were discussed in the previous chapter.

A survey research strategy was adopted for this study. A survey is a method of collecting data from target respondents to describe, compare, or gain insights into their knowledge, attitudes, or behavior (Fink, 2003). The survey process includes defining data collection objectives, designing the study, developing a reliable and valid survey instrument, administering the survey, managing and analyzing the data, and reporting the results (Fink, 2003). Therefore, a survey questionnaire was designed to collect data for this study.

The unit of analysis for this study is individual tourists, with data collected from each individual as a separate data source. A cross-sectional research design is employed, meaning data will be collected at a single point in time, which is appropriate for achieving the study's objectives.

3.4 Research Population

The process of sampling begins with a precise definition of the target population. The target population should be defined in terms of elements, geographical areas, and time (Sekaran & Bougie, 2013). The research population for this study is the visitors who visited Sarawak in 2023, which is 3,929,657 in total, includes 2,159,591 foreigner and 1,770, 066 domestic visitors.

The target population of this study consists of inbound tourists visiting Sarawak. The target respondents include both international and domestic tourists who travel to Sarawak for more than one day. Tourists will be approached at major tourist attractions, such as museums and national parks in Sarawak, as well as key entry points, namely Kuching International Airport, Sibu Airport, Bintulu Airport, and Miri Airport. These locations have been selected as they serve as important checkpoints for tourists entering and departing from Sarawak. To accurately measure Sarawak's destination perceptions and visitor loyalty, it is essential to ensure that the respondents are representative of the target population.

3.5 Sample Size

The requisite subset of a population to guarantee sufficient data for drawing conclusions is known as the sample size (Sekaran & Bougie, 2010). Sample size is important because sampling a smaller group requires lesser time and also less costly than covering the entire population.

In quantitative research, an appropriate sample size is important for drawing valid conclusions from research findings. Roscoe (1975) suggested that a sample size greater than 30 and less than 500 is suitable for most behavioral studies. Sekaran and Bougie (2016) claimed that a sample size larger than 500 may lead to a Type II error, which is the failure to detect a true effect or difference when one actually exists. The context here may involve the balance between statistical power and practical significance. With very large samples, even trivial differences can become statistically significant, leading researchers to overlook meaningful insights and real-world relevance. This can result in the misinterpretation of data, where significant findings may not be practically or clinically important, thus obscuring the actual effects and leading to erroneous conclusions about the absence of meaningful differences or relationships. Therefore, while large samples enhance statistical precision, they must be interpreted with caution to avoid the pitfalls of Type II errors and ensure that findings are both statistically and practically significant. Mumtaz et. al. (2020), in their review and recommendation of sample size, mentioned that research design is considered an important factor when deciding sample size. The more the variables (complex model) will needs a larger dataset compare to a simple model.

The minimum sample size required for specific studies has been well-documented in previous research. For instance, exploratory factor analysis cannot be conducted with fewer than 50 observations, as smaller samples are highly sensitive to other factors. Similarly, simple regression analysis requires a minimum of 50 samples, though in most cases, at least 100 samples are recommended (Hair et al., 2018). Additionally, Pearson correlation analysis requires a minimum of 200 samples (Guilford, 1954).

To determine the appropriate sample size for this study, G-Power software was used to perform a power analysis, which is crucial for assessing the effect size and the required sample size for the research model. Based on an effect size of 0.15, a power level of 0.95, and five predictors, the minimum sample size calculated for this study is 138. However, a larger sample size helps to minimize sampling errors, reduce the risk of non-response bias, and improve the precision of parameter estimates. Furthermore, given the potential for incomplete or unusable responses, collecting a higher number of participants ensures that the final dataset remains statistically valid. Thus, increasing the sample size enhances the robustness, reliability, and generalizability of the findings.

Since the total number of visitors to Sarawak in 2022 exceeded 1,000,000, the required sample size for this study is determined using Krejcie and Morgan’s (1970) table, which suggests a minimum sample size of 384 for large populations. Krejcie and Morgan’s (1970) method is widely recognized for its reliability and simplicity in providing statistically significant results. Their formula is specifically designed for large populations, offering an efficient approach to determining an appropriate sample size that ensures representativeness without excessive oversampling. For a population exceeding 1,000,000 visitors, a sample size of at least 384 is recommended.

This approach balances accuracy and practical feasibility, ensuring that the collected data is both manageable and reflective of the broader tourist population. Additionally, adhering to this well-validated method aligns the research with widely accepted statistical practices, enhancing the credibility and comparability of the study's findings within the broader field of tourism research.

3.6 Sampling Method

Mumtaz et al. (2020) emphasized that the method of data collection is more critical to research strategy than simply increasing the sample size, which may result in unnecessary expenditure of time and resources. The robustness of a sample is determined by careful selection of respondents rather than sheer quantity (Boreham et al., 2020; Mooi et al., 2018).

Thus, the choice of sampling method is crucial for ensuring the accuracy and validity of research findings.

Sampling methods can be categorized into two types: probability and non-probability sampling (Sekaran & Bougie, 2013). In probability sampling, every element in the population has a known, nonzero chance of being selected as part of the sample. In contrast, in non-probability sampling, elements in the population do not have a known or predefined probability of selection.

For this study, a non-probability purposive sampling method was selected to collect primary data from the target population. Purposive sampling is particularly valuable when the target population is small, specialized, or difficult to reach, as it allows the researcher to ensure that specific insights are obtained from relevant respondents. This method requires the researcher to identify key characteristics of the target population and select participants who meet those criteria (Johnson & Christensen, 2012).

The target respondents for this study were tourists who visited Sarawak for leisure purposes, including both domestic and international travelers. Purposive sampling was employed to ensure that participants had relevant experiences and insights regarding Sarawak's destination image and visitor loyalty. To accurately identify suitable respondents, data collection was conducted at strategic locations, such as airports and popular tourist attractions.

Before administering the survey, a preliminary screening question was asked to confirm that the individuals were indeed tourists visiting Sarawak for leisure. This approach helped to eliminate non-tourist respondents, ensuring that the collected data was relevant to the study's objectives. Additionally, by selecting diverse locations, the study aimed to capture a broad spectrum of tourist perspectives, thereby enhancing the reliability and representativeness of the findings.

3.7 Research Instrument

The self-administered questionnaire was employed as the research tool in this study, as questionnaires are typically used to gather significant amounts of quantitative data (Sekaran et. al., 2010). The self-administered questionnaire was chosen since it is a typical method of questioning chosen respondents and is affordable, simple to transform into quantitative data. As a result, the self-administered questionnaire may easily collect information from the intended respondents and is easier to handle when working with larger samples that span a wider geographic area (Roopa & Rani, 2012). The target respondents will record their own answers using a range of options established in the questionnaire. Additionally, the same questions were asked of each targeted participant in the same order.

The questionnaire is divided into two parts. Part A consists of 32 items, measuring cognitive and affective images of Sarawak, also tourist's intentions to revisit and recommend Sarawak. The measurement items are adopted from previous research. Each of the questionnaire items is assessed on a 7-point likert rating scale, from (1) strongly disagree to (7) strongly agree. The 7-point scale provides more response options than a typical 5-point Likert scale. This increased granularity allows for greater sensitivity in capturing the nuances of respondents' attitudes. It provides more accurate measurements than five-point scales (Finstad, 2010), which can be particularly helpful when dealing with subtle or complex issues. The additional response options in a 7-point Likert scale enable researchers to distinguish between varying degrees of agreement or disagreement. This finer discrimination helps to capture more nuanced attitudes and provides a more accurate representation of respondents' opinions. Kusmaryono (2022) reviewed 60 papers using a Likert scale which published between 2012-2021, found the use of rating scale with an odd number of responses of more than five points (especially on a seven-point scale) is the most effective in terms of reliability and validity coeddicients. Table 3.1 shows the measurement items and their sources.

Table 3.1: Measurement scales and literature sources

Constructs		Source
Cognitive Component (22 items)		
Natural Resources		
	Beautiful landscape	Stylos et. al. (2016)
	Good climate	Chi & Qu (2008)
	Breathtaking scenery and natural attractions	
	Unique flora and fauna	
	Unspoiled wilderness and fascinating wildlife	
Cultural Heritage		
	Distinctive historic sites and museums	Stylos et. al. (2016);
	Diverse ethnic groups and cultures	Chen et. al. (2013)
	Variety of unique cultural attractions	Chi & Qu (2008)
	Vintage heritage buildings	
	Interesting cultural attractions	
Adventurous		
	Enormous opportunities for outdoor recreation	Chi & Qu (2008)
	Terrific place for trekking/ hiking/ camping/ hunting	Wang & Hsu (2010)
	Exciting sports/ activities	
	Wide variety of adventurous activities	
Food		
	Rich and varied cuisine	Debbagh et.al. (2021)
	Appealing local food and beverage	Chen et. al. (2013)
	Unique cuisine	Kim et. al. (2015)
	Good quality of food	Chi & Qu (2008)
Festival and event		
	Wide arrays of festivals/ events	Chi & Qu (2008)
	Tempting festivals/ events	
	Excellent quality and fun festivals/ events	
	Variety of special festivals/ events	
Affective Component (4 items)		
Distressing – Relaxing		Stylidis et. al. (2017);
Unpleasant – Pleasant		Stylos et. al. (2016);
Boring – Exciting		Sharmal. (2019);
Sleepy – Lively		Qu et. al. (2011)
Conative Component (6 items)		
Intention to revisit		
	I intend to revisit Sarawak in near future	Stylos et. al.. (2016);
	I want to visit Sarawak again	
	There is high possibility for me to travel to Sarawak again	
Intention to recommend		
	I am likely to say positive things about Sarawak	Debbagh et. al.
	I am likely to recommend Sarawak to those who want advice on travel	(2021)
	I am likely to encourage friends or relatives to visit Sarawak	

Part B is the demographic profile of tourists, including gender, age, nationality, income levels, and travel related variables such as purpose of visit, frequency of visit, tourism information source, travel duration, preferred attraction, etc.

3.7.1 Pre-test

Pre-testing questionnaires is critical for ensuring that respondents comprehend the questions correctly and that the measurement and language are correct. Before distributing the questionnaire to the respondents, it will assist in correcting shortcomings, decreasing bias, and improving the instruments (Sekaran & Bougie, 2013). The pre-test's goal is to ascertain whether respondents comprehended the question and whether they are willing to answer some of the questions; this sample group's responses were assessed and scrutinized (Grimm, 2010). It helps identify and rectify any problematic items in the questionnaire, such as ambiguous wording, complex questions, or formatting issues that may confuse respondents consequently lead to inaccurate data. By pre-testing the survey instrument, researchers can gauge the clarity, relevance, and effectiveness of the questions, ensuring they accurately capture the intended information. The researcher then make necessary revisions based on the feedback received during the pretest.

Thus, before the questionnaire was distributed to the target respondents, it underwent a pre-testing process to ensure clarity, relevance, and reliability. Three researchers, who were also administrative staff and academicians at a higher education institution with expertise in tourism research, were invited to review the questionnaire. Their feedback focused on aspects such as question wording, structure, and overall coherence to enhance respondent understanding and minimize potential biases. Based on their suggestions, necessary modifications were made to improve the questionnaire’s effectiveness in capturing meaningful data. Once the revisions were finalized, the refined version of the questionnaire was officially distributed to the selected respondents for data collection. This pre-testing process helped to enhance the validity of the instrument, ensuring that the questions were well-aligned with the study objectives and could accurately measure the intended variables.

3.7.2 Pilot test

A pilot test is an essential step in the research process, particularly in survey-based studies, as it helps ensure the quality and reliability of the data collection instruments before the main study is conducted. Conducting a pilot test mitigates the risk of measurement errors, enhances the practicality of the research, and assures that the final questionnaire effectively captures the intended data. As a result, the pilot test strengthens the overall robustness and accuracy of the research findings, leading to more credible and actionable insights.

Before the actual data collection, a pilot test was conducted with 30 respondents to identify problematic items and enhance the questionnaire further. The three features of the measurement model used for pilot test analysis are reliability, convergence validity, and discriminant validity. The pilot test revealed that there were no design flaws of the questionnaire; it also assured the feasibility and practicality of the study before the major investigation began. Overall, this preliminary step enhances the quality and robustness of the research, leading to more reliable and actionable insights from the final study.

3.8 Measurement Model

Higher-order construct (HOC), also known as hierarchical component models in the context of partial least squares structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM), which make it easier to represent a construct on a more abstract dimension (referred to as higher-order component) and its more concrete sub dimensions (referred to as lower-order components) have become a more noticeable trend (Sarstedt et al., 2019). Higher order constructs were used to test the two levels of constructs in the structural model (Hair et al., 2014) have several advantages. For example, model parsimony is achieved by reducing the number of path model relationships with the use of higher-order constructs (Sarstedt et al., 2019). It is easier to comprehend the model as a whole because the indicators of structural model has been reduced (Wan, 2014). While the operational definition and measurement of the destination image are dependent on the research aim, four types of measurement models namely reflective-reflective, reflective-formative, formative-reflective, and formative-formative (see Figure 3.1) were proposed for those who handle it as a higher-order construct (HOC) and test it through structural equation modeling (SEM), in line with Sarstedt et al. (2019).

According to Hair et al. (2017), the reflective construct presupposes that the measuring items are interchangeable and comparable, with a shared subject and meaning. In contrast, a formative concept encompasses a variety of indications that, when combined, describe the concept (Diamantopoulos et al., 2008). A collection of indicators that together make up the construct are combined linearly to create formative composite measurement models. In other words, the indicators are thought to be causative rather than necessarily covarying, and they point from the measured variables to the composite concept (Hair et al., 2020).

Formative constructs are employed when the indicators collectively define and shape the construct rather than reflect it, as each indicator represents a unique and essential dimension of the construct. In the context of measuring the cognitive image of Sarawak, the CANFF attributes—culture, adventure, nature, food, and festivals—are distinct elements that together form a comprehensive understanding of the destination's cognitive image.

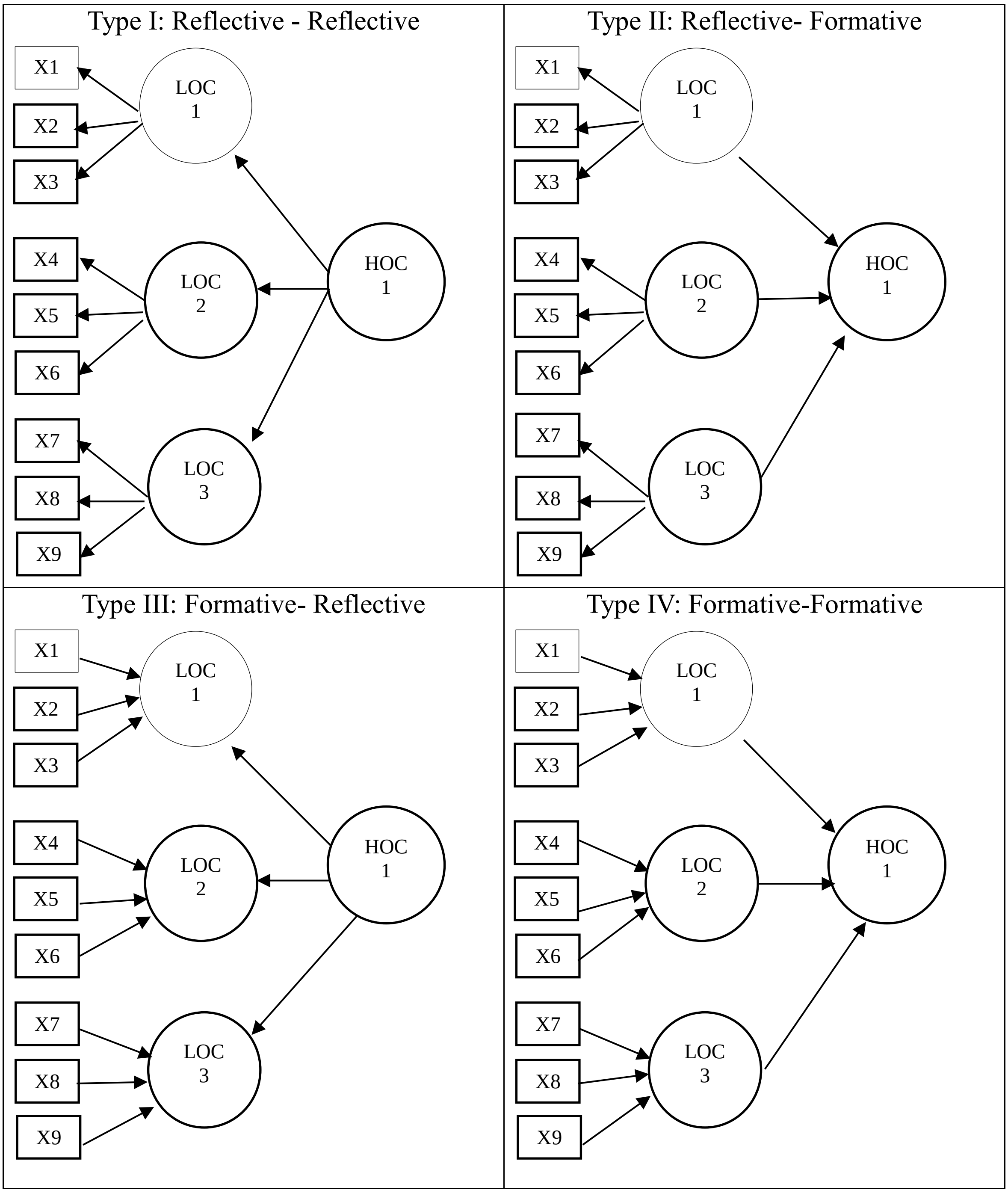


Figure 3.1: Four Types of Higher-order Constructs

According to Coltman et al. (2008), items in a formative construct are not interchangeable because each one captures a specific facet of the construct that contributes uniquely to the overall concept. Given that CANFF encompasses a variety of indicators, each representing a different aspect of Sarawak's appeal, the formative construct approach is appropriate. This approach allows for a nuanced and holistic measurement of the cognitive image, ensuring that all relevant dimensions are considered in shaping tourists' perceptions of Sarawak.

For this study, the driver construct for cognitive image are (1) culture, (2) nature, (3) adventure, (4) food, and (5) festival, has a reflective measurement because indicators are expressions of the constructs, indicators share identical content, dropping any of indicators would not change the conceptual domain of the construct and variations in the construct cause variations in the indicators (Duarte & Amaro, 2018). All the five driver constructs (lower-order constructs) form the cognitive image (higher-order construct) of Sarawak tourism. Because the first-order or lower-order constructs (CANFF) define the attributes of the second-order or higher-order construct (cognitive image), and because the first-order constructs are not interchangeable, cognitive image has a formative measurement (Duarte & Amaro, 2018). With the first-order construct has a reflective measurement and with the second-order construct (cognitive image) has a formative measurement, this research model is referred to as type II model.

In Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM), three common methods are used to handle higher-order models (Duarte & Amaro, 2018): (1) the hierarchical component model proposed by Wold (1982) and more commonly known as Repeated Indicators Approach, (2) the Disjoint Two-Stage Approach, and (3) the Hybrid Approach (Becker et al., 2012; Ciavolino and Nitti, 2013). The first approach measures the second-order factors by using the observable variables from all the first-order factors (Chin, 1997). This approach works best when the lower-order constructs have a similar number of indicators, else the weights for the first-order constructs on the second-order constructs will be biased (Ringle et al., 2012). As the indicators of the first-order constructs were different in number, this study did not use this approach. For the hybrid approach, the indicators of the first-order construct are randomly split in half; half of the indicators are used to measure the first-order constructs and the other is used to measure the second-order construct so that the indicators are not repeated. However, it is more complex and may require careful model specification.

Therefore this study used a two-stage approach recommended by Becker et al. (2012) and Rasoolimanesh et al. (2017) to establish cognitive image as second-order or higher-order (HOC) constructs. In the first stage, culture, nature, adventure, food, and festival were established as first-order or lower-order constructs (LOC) and then assessed the measurement model using there five reflective constructs. As a result, five reflecting first-order components were included in the model utilized for the initial evaluation phase.

The reliability, convergent validity, and discriminant validity of these reflective constructs must be established before moving on to the second stage. The detail steps will be discussed in the Section 3.9.

Defining image as a HOC provides three benefits including fewer path model interactions, resolution of the bandwidth-fidelity dilemma, and less collinearity (Sarstedt et al., 2019). Prior research measured destination image using a range of dimensions. Afshardoost and Eshaghi (2020) synthesized the destination image impacts from 87 research by meta-analysis and found 46 studies (53%) considered it multidimensional construct or rather a HOC.

Figure 3.2 showed the measurement model for cognitive image and affective image of Sarawak tourism, and destination loyalty which reveals by intention to revisit and intention to recommend by tourists. The final instruments contained 32 items, 22 of which were to measure cognitive image (i.e. 5 nature items, 5 culture items, 4 adventure items, 4 food items, and 4 festival items), another four items to measure the affective image (i.e. pleasant, relaxing, lively, and exciting), a further six items were used to measure tourists' loyalty (i.e. 3 items intention to revisit and another 3 items intention to recommend).

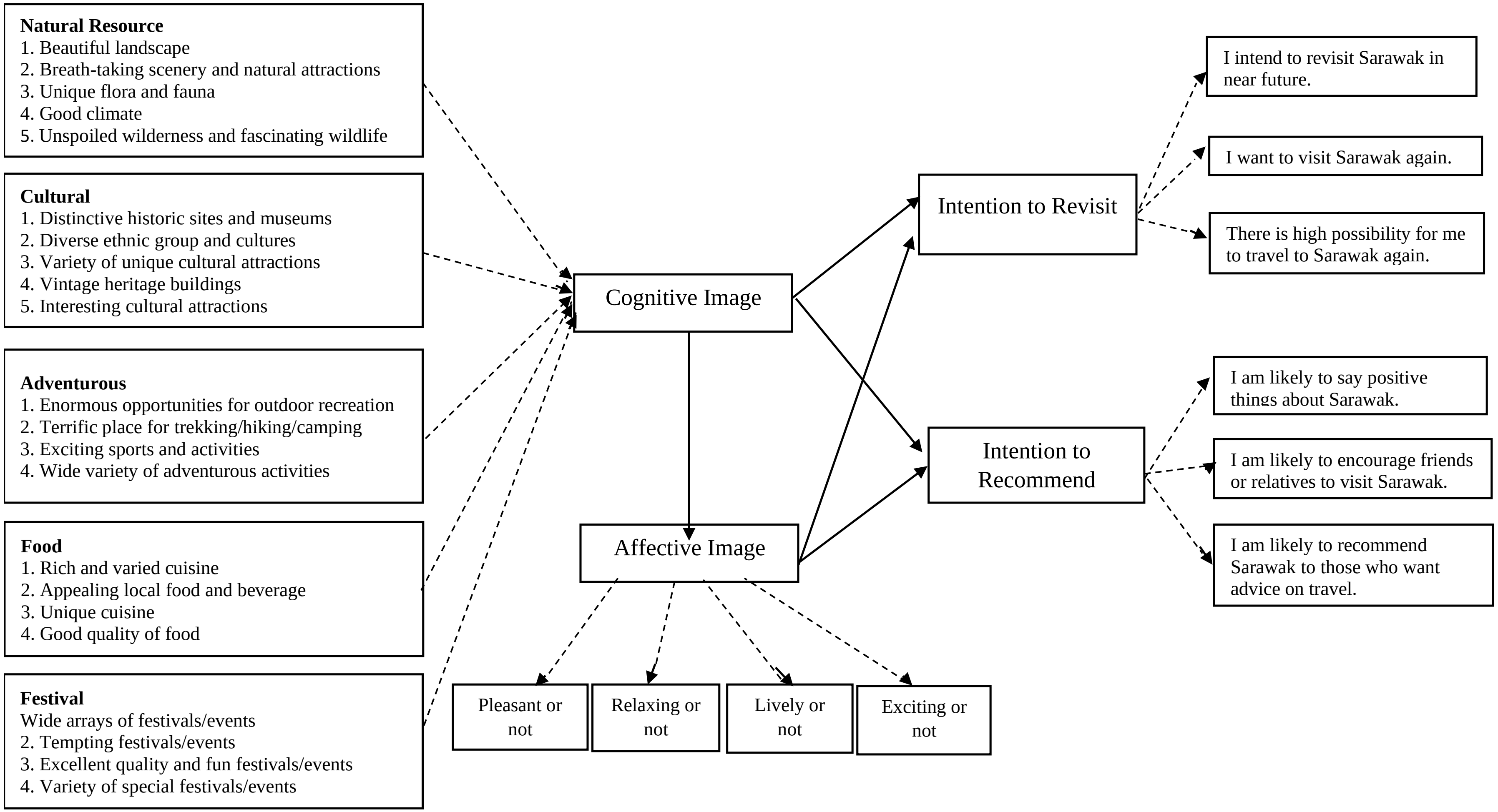


Figure 3.2: Measurement Model

3.9 Data Collection Procedure

Data collection methods are the systematic methods used to collect data or information. Two main data collection methods in the quantitative research approach are the self-completion method and the structured interview method (Bryman, 2004; David and Sutton, 2004). This study will use a self-administered questionnaire for data collection through the traditional paper and pencil method.

To gather data from tourist, the current study utilized purposive convenience sampling method, in which tourists who travel to Sarawak were randomly selected and requested to fill the questionnaires. Firstly, determine the locations where researchers can find tourists who meet the criteria (travelling to Sarawak for leisure and staying for at least one day). Popular tourist attractions, hotels, airports and information centres are all the potential data collection points. The researcher also seeks permission from relevant authorities, such as airport authorities, to distribute the questionnaires at the selected data collection points.

A total of 426 responses were collected from various places in Sarawak such as the four major airports in Sarawak (Kuching, Sibu, Miri and Bintulu), and main tourist spots in Sarawak such as Kuching waterfront, national park, museum and heritage centre from December 2023 to May 2024.

3.10 Data Analysis

The data collected from the survey questionnaires were processed and analyzed using the Statistical Package of Social Science (SPSS) software and the Smart Partial Least Squares (SmartPLS) 4.0 software.

SPSS is a sophisticated data analysis programme. It can work with any file type to generate descriptive statistics, tabulate reports, graphs and charts of distributions and trends, and complicated statistical analyses. It is one of the most popular statistical programs, which can perform complex data manipulation and analysis with straightforward commands (Chaleunvong, 2009).

SmartPLS is one of the outstanding tools to analyze structural equation modelling (SEM). It is intended to support complicated statistical analyses that researchers and analysts carry out to look at and model relationships between variables. In the realm of research and data analysis, SmartPLS is particularly well-liked for its user-friendly interface, which is suitable for both novice and advanced users. Moreover, PLS-SEM able to handle both reflectively and formatively specified measurements in the estimated models to test hypothesized relationships and to emphasize prediction, all at the same time (Cepeda-Carrion ´ et al., 2016; Vaithilingam et al., 2024).

3.10.1 Data Screening

A data screening process must be conducted on the collected raw dataset before performing further analysis to ensure that the data is clean, reliable, and accurate (Maharana et al., 2022). Data screening helps identify and address issues such as missing data and outliers, ensuring that the dataset is usable, valid, and suitable for testing and analysis. Therefore, data screening is a critical step before conducting any statistical tests or analyses.

Missing data will bring a number of issues. One of the issue is that the possibility of insufficient data points for the analyses to be performed. Therefore. if numerous values in the data are missing, the analysis cannot be conducted.

Besides, a group of data known as an outlier are those inconsistent with the remainder of the data set (Barnett & Lewis, 1978). Usually it considered as extraordinary items in a data collection. It has unusually high or low values in relation to the overall data. Outliers might skew the results by causing the mean to diverge from the median. Since the researcher was investigating a peculiar response in the current study, outlier analysis is crucial before the final statistical analysis of the data. The anomalous answer will be eliminated, and doing so will increase the discriminant analysis's classification accuracy (Barnett & Lewis, 1978).

3.10.2 Descriptive Analysis

Descriptive analysis is the process of converting raw data into a format that is easier for researchers to comprehend and analyze. The background data from the respondent will be presented using descriptive analysis, which makes use of the mean, standard deviations, frequencies, and percentages. The descriptive analysis offered insightful data on the inherent characteristics of respondents (Best & Kahn, 2003). It is useful to investigate the information gathered.

A frequency distribution depicts the frequency with which each score value occurs. It is the initial phase in evaluating categorical variables, which the number of cases that reacted to each of the variable categories must be determined (David & Sutton, 2004). For each value or category variable, a table was created to indicate the number and percentage of cases. Frequencies and percentages were utilized in this study to describe the sample using factors such as gender, age, nationalities, and others. Specifically, the respondents were categorize based on their gender, age, and nationality.

To provide a statistical picture of the variations, the mean and standard deviation were examined. The most common measure of central tendency is the mean or average (David & Sutton, 2004). It provides a broad overview of the data without overburdening one with each of the dataset's observations (Sekaran, 1992). On the other hand, a standard deviation was employed to measure the variability. It is crucial to quantify variability since it was used to determine how widely apart the actual scores are (Krishnaswami & Ranganatham, 2006). In short, the mean value was computed to assess the variance's centrality, and the standard deviation was determined to comprehend how the data changed with regard to the variety. Descriptive statistics allow the collected data to be grouped, summarized, and simplified, making it easier to identify trends and patterns in the dataset (Dawson, 2007). This process facilitates meaningful interpretation and informed conclusions based on the research findings.

3.10.3 Disjoint Two-stage Approach in PLS-SEM

Evaluating higher-order constructs (HOCs) using the disjoint two-stage technique in SEM-PLS includes numerous steps. This approach is particularly effective for complicated models where higher-order constructs are formed by several lower-order constructs (LOCs). The same model evaluation criteria that apply to any PLS-SEM analysis are generally applicable when estimating higher-order models (Chin, 2010). However, higher-order constructs require consideration of two additional measurement models for which the evaluation criteria are applicable: (1) the measurement models of the lower-order components; and (2) the measurement model of the higher-order construct as a whole, which is represented by the relationships between the higher-order component and corresponding lower-order components.

All measurement models, including those of the lower-order components, are taken into account during the first step of result evaluation. Firstly, estimate the measurement model to ensure the reliability and validity of the constructs by assessing indicators like loadings, composite reliability, and average variance extracted (AVE), which are discussed in detail in session 3.10.4.

Secondly, determine each lower-order construct's latent variable scores using the measurement model that was evaluated in stage one and use the latent variable scores of LOCs to form the higher-order construct. The step follow by assessment of higher-order construct (HOC). For reflective HOCs, check the indicator reliability, internal consistency, convergent validity and discriminant validity; while for formative HOCs, evaluate the convergent validity and collinearity between indicators as well as significance and relevance of the outer weights (Hair et al., 2014).

Thirdly, after confirming the measurement model's adequacy, estimate the structural model to examine the hypothesized relationships between constructs. This involves evaluating the path coefficients, R^2 values, and effect sizes, as discussed in detail in Section 3.10.5. The evaluation of the stage two results must be done in light of the structural model and the measurement model of the higher-order construct, which are represented by the relationships between the components.

3.10.4 Assessment of Measurement Model

First, the measurement models are the main focus, as multiple items are used to construct measurement in order to increase accuracies, due to the fact that total degree of measurement inaccuracy inherent in the indicators is decreased when multiple indicators are used to measure a single idea. Furthermore, a multi-item assessment has a higher chance of accurately capturing the various facets of the idea (Hair et al., 2022). By looking at PLS-SEM estimates, the researcher can assess the validity and reliability of the construct measurements. Therefore, several test were conducted on the 22 measurement items of cognitive image, 4 measurement items of affective image, and 6 measurement items of visitor loyalty, which are 32 measurement items all together.

There is a need to distinguish between constructs that are measured formatively and reflectively when assessing the measurement models. Since the two approaches have different conceptual foundations, several evaluative measures must be taken into account.

3.10.4.1 Assessment of Reflective Measurement Model

When evaluating the measures' reliability for reflective measurement models, two perspectives are taken into consideration: indicator reliability and construct reliability (also known as internal consistency reliability). The assessment of two forms of validity is the main emphasis of validity assessment. The first is the average variance extracted (AVE) for each measure to determine its convergent validity. The second is discriminant validity, which uses the heterotrait-monotrait (HTMT) ratio of correlations to compare all construct measures in the same model In short, indicator reliability, internal consistency reliability, convergent validity, and discriminant validity are the criteria used to evaluate a reflective measurement model (Hair et al., 2022).

When evaluating the reflective measurement model assessment, the indicator's outer loadings are examined in the first step. High outer loadings on a construct signify a high degree of similarity among the correlated indicators, which the construct captures. A common rule of thumb is the standardized outer loadings should be 0.708 or higher (Hair et al., 2022). The reasoning behind this rule makes sense when considering the outer loading square of a standardized indication, often known as the communality of an item. The variance extracted from an item is defined as the square of the outer loading of a standardized indicator, which shows how much of the variation in the item is explained by the construct. As a general rule, each indicator's variance should be substantially (typically at least 50%) explained by a latent variable. Because that value squared (0.7082) equals 0.50, an indicator's standardized outer loading, as determined by the PLS-SEM results, should be 0.708 or higher.

However Lower outer loadings (<0.70) are frequently found in social science studies, especially when employing recently developed scales (Hulland, 1999). When removing an indicator, researchers should carefully assess how this would affect other reliability and validity metrics, instead of deleting any of indicators when their outer loading is less than 0.70. Indicators with outer loadings between 0.40 and 0.70 ought to be removed only in cases when doing so improves the indicator's convergent validity or internal consistency reliability.

The second step in assessment of reflective measurement model is internal consistency reliability. In order to provide a consistent measurement throughout time and among different measurement items, reliability analysis was utilized to quantify and show the degree of error-freeness in the measures. Reliability was employed to demonstrate the instruction's stability and consistency in order to ensure the study's measurement quality. Composite reliability (CR) was employed in this study to gauge how free of random error the items were and how well they could yield consistent findings (Aguirre-Urreta et al., 2013). The value of composite reliability could vary between 0 and 1, the higher the values indicating greater reliability. In more advanced stages of research, values in the range of 0.70 to 0.90 can be deemed satisfactory; in exploratory research, values in the range of 0.60 to 0.70 are acceptable. Values below 0.60 indicate the internal consistency reliability is lacking. Semantically redundant items that slightly reword the same question are usually the cause of values above 0.90 (and definitely above 0.95), which is not what is desired (Hair et al., 2022). This measure of reliability takes into account the different outer loadings of the indicator variables and is calculated using the following formula:

$$\mathrm{CR} = \frac{\left(\sum_{i=1}^{M} l_i\right)^2}{\left(\sum_{i=1}^{M} l\right)^2 + \sum_{i=1}^{M} var(e_i)} \qquad \text{Equation 3.1}$$

Where l_i symbolizes the standardized outer loading of the indicator variable I of a specific construct measured M indicators, e_i is the measurement error of indicator variable i, and $var(e_i)$ denotes the variance of the measurement error, which is defined as 1-l_i^2.

The third step is to assess how well the various indicators may agreeably represent the same construct, by testing the convergent validity. The degree to which a measure associated with other measures in an assessment of a single variable was known as convergent validity. Because it contributes to establishing the validity of study findings, convergent validity is essential. Divergent results from several techniques of assessment for the same construct may point to problems with the measures' validity or the underlying construct under investigation. statistical evaluations, typically using correlation coefficients, to determine convergent validity. Stronger convergent validity is indicated by higher correlation coefficients between the measures, indicating that they are, in fact, measuring the same underlying construct. Convergent validity, to put it briefly, is the process of proving that many approaches to measuring the same notion yield consistent findings, supporting the validity of those measurements and the construct they are meant to evaluate. One popular metric for assessing convergent validity on the construct level is the average variance extracted (AVE) (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). For there to be sufficient convergent validity, the AVE value must be at least 0.5 (Sarstedt et al., 2017). This allowed for the average explanation of more than half of the variation of its indicators by a latent variable. AVE values less than 0.5 were deemed unsatisfactory because more variance came from the error variance than the indicator variance (Hair et al., 2022). The AVE is calculated using the following formula:

$$\text{AVE} = \left(\frac{\sum_{i=1}^{M} l_i^2}{M}\right) \qquad \text{Equation 3.2}$$

Where l_i symbolizes the standardized outer loading of the indicator variable i of a specific construct measured with M indicators.

Discriminant validity is to be assessed after the convergent validity, to look at how distinct the indications of various constructs were from one other. In other word, discriminant validity was used to assess how much one concept and its indicators differed from another concept and its indicators. The study using the heterotraitmonotrait ratio (HTMT) of the correlations which is suggested by Henseler, Ringle, and Sarstedt (2015) as a reliable way to evaluate discriminant validity. The HTMT criterion could be validated in two different methods. A HTMT greater than 0.85 at first suggested that there was a validity assessment issue (Rahi et al., 2017). Second, according to Rahi et al. (2017), a result of 1 for any interval value of the HTMT of the structural path indicated a lack of discriminant validity. An empirically different construction was regarded to exist if the value 1 fell outside of the variety. To demonstrate validity, the HTMT interval value should be less than 0.85 (Kline, 2011) and 0.90 (Gold et al., 2001). Henseler, Ringle, and Sarstedt (2015) propose a threshold value of 0.90 if the path model incorporates conceptually highly similar structures, based on previous research and study results. HTMT values more than 0.90 indicate a possible problem with discriminant validity. A lower and therefore more conservative threshold value of 0.85 appears appropriate when the components in the path model are conceptually more different (Henseler et al., 2015). The HTMT is computed using following formula:

$$\text{HTMT}(Y_1Y_2) = \frac{mean(R_{Y1Y2})}{\sqrt{mean\,(R_{Y1Y1}).mean\,(R_{Y2Y2})}} \qquad \text{Equation 3.3}$$

Where R_{Y1Y2} is the matrix of correlations between every indicator of Y_1 and Y_2, and $R_{Y1Y1}\,(R_{Y2Y2})$ is a matrix of correlations between each indicator of Y_1 (Y_2) (Franke & Sarstedt, 2019).

3.10.4.2 Assessment of Formative Measurement Model

Since indicators in formative measurement models are more likely to reflect the construct's independent sources than their correlations, the statistical evaluation criteria for reflective measurement scales cannot be simply applied to them. Moreover, the internal consistency reliability notion is inappropriate because formative indicators are presumed to be error-free (Diamantopoulos, 2006; Bollen & Diamantopoulos, 2017). For formative measurement construct therefore should prioritizing content validity establishment to make sure the formative indicators capture all, or at least the majority of the construct's features.

In formative measurement models, large correlations between indicators are not expected because the indicators are not fundamentally interchangeable. Indeed, collinearity is the term used to describe strong correlations between two formative indices (Hair et al., 2014). Since they affect weight estimation and statistical significance, high degrees of collinearity among formative indicators are crucial issue.

The variance inflation factor (VIF), which is the reciprocal of the tolerance, is a related indicator of collinearity. As a rule of thumb, VIF values of 5 or higher suggest critical collinearity issues among the indicators of formatively measured constructs (Hair et al., 2011). But even at VIF values of 3.3 or higher, collinearity problems might arise (Diamantopoulos & Siguaw, 2006). The VIF values should ideally be close to 3 or lower (Hair et al., 2022). A VIF value of 5 or above indicates a very high level of collinearity, and it is advisable to remove one of the associated indicators. Nonetheless, this necessitates that, from a theoretical standpoint, the remaining indicators nonetheless adequately convey the substance of the construct.

The following step is to assess the significance and relevance of the formative indicators. In a formative construct, outer weight is crucial to consider a formative indicator's relevance and impact. The latent variable scores serve as the dependent variable and the formative indicators serve as the independent variables in a multiple regression analysis that yields the outer weight (Hair et al., 2019). An R^2 value of 1.0 is obtained from performing such a multiple regression analysis since the construct itself is generated by its underlying formative indicators as a linear combination of the indicator scores and the outer weights. That is, the indicators account for all of the construct. According to Sarstedt, Hair, Ringle, Thiele, and Gudergan (2016), this feature sets formative (i.e., composite) indicators apart from causal indicators that are frequently utilized in CB-SEM. In the second instance, the measured construct's (causal) indicators do not always fully explain it. Since the outer weight values are standardized, they can be contrasted with one another. They convey the relative relevance of each indicator in creating the construct, as well as its contribution to it. In formative measurement models, the outer loadings of reflecting indicators are larger than the estimated values of outer weights. It is possible that one or more formative indicators to have low or even nonsignificant outer weights when more formative indicators are utilized to test a single concept. Formative measurement has an intrinsic limit to the number of indicators that can maintain a statistically significant weight, in contrast to reflective measurement models where the number of indicators has no effect on the measurement results (Cenfetelli & Bassellier, 2009).

However, it is not always appropriate to assume that nonsignificant indicator weights signify a low-quality measurement model. Rather, the absolute contribution of a formative signal to its construct, or its absolute relevance, should also be taken into account. Put simply, the information an indicator offers without taking into account any other indicators connected to the formative construct is known as the absolute contribution. The outer loading of the formative indicator, which is always supplied with the indicator weights, quantifies the absolute contribution. An indication should be viewed as absolutely important but not as relatively important when its outer loading is high (that is, above 0.50) yet its outer weight is nonsignificant. Generally, the indicator would be kept in this case. However, in cases when an indicator's weight is not significant and its outer loading is less than 0.50, researchers ought to consider its theoretical significance as well as any potential content overlap with other indicators that pertain to the same construct when determining whether to keep or eliminate the indicator (Hair et al., 2022).

3.10.5 Assessment of Structural Model

The structural model examined the relevance of the routes connecting the latent constructs and specified the causal links among them. It is conducted to test the hypotheses. There are six steps for assessing the structural model using PLS-SEM: i) Evaluation of the structural model for collinearity issues; ii) Evaluation of the significance and relevance of the relationships in the structural model; iii) Evaluation of the R^2 level; iv) Evaluation of the effect size (f^2); v) Evaluation of the predictive relevance Q^2; and lastly vi) Evaluation of the q^2 effect size.

3.10.5.1 Lateral Collinearity

The first step is to address the lateral collinearity issues. When predictor variables in a model are highly associated, collinearity problems arise, which can cause instability in parameter estimations and make it challenging to interpret the findings. The lateral collinearity problem has the potential to occasionally stealthily mislead the results because it can conceal the significant causal influence in the model (Kock and Lynn, 2012).

For this study, the variance inflation factor (VIF) value was utilized to estimate multicollinearity. When assessing the correlation with predictor variables, the variance inflation factor (VIF) calculated how much the variance of the regression coefficient has grown (Hair et. al., 2017). It require the inner model VIF below 5 (Hair et. al., 2011), or below 3.3 (Diamantopoulos and Sigouw, 2006). There is potential collinearity problem if VIF greater than 3.3 or 5. If that is the case, researchers can remove or combine highly correlated variables to reduce redundancy. By addressing collinearity, the model becomes more reliable, and its results more interpretable.

3.10.5.2 Statistical Significance

At the second step, the statistical significance will be tested through path coefficient. At this step, one-tailed or two-tailed effect should be taken into consideration. For each hypothesized model, a path coefficient is produced; the higher the value of the path coefficient, the impact of endogenous constructs is more substantial (Hair et al., 2017). Consequently, the t-statistics test is used to confirm the path coefficient for the significance level.

The method of bootstrapping is frequently used to evaluate the importance of path coefficients. Bootstrapping involves resampling the data with replacement to produce several subsamples. For each subsample, the model is then updated, yielding a distribution of path coefficients. Confidence intervals will be computed from this distribution and assess whether the coefficients deviate considerably from zero. Path coefficient values are range from -1 to +1; the closer to +1 indicates the strong positive relationship while the closer to -1 indicates strong negative relationships. The confidence interval for a meaningful association will not include zero. However, the path coefficients should be at least at the 0.05 level of significance (Hair et. al., 2017).

3.10.5.3 Coefficient of Determination (R^2)

The third step is to evaluate the relevance of the structural model relationships, it is crucial in order to understand how precisely the dependent variable can be approximated from the predictor variables. A higher R^2 value means that the model is more effective at explaining the dependent variable's variability. The rule of thumbs for acceptable R^2 value is 0.67 (substantial), 0.33 (moderate), and 0.19 (weak), according to Chin, 1998. However, for a given endogenous construct's variance to be considered well explained, its R^2 value must be at least 0.10 (Falk and Miller, 1992).

3.10.5.4 Effect Size (f^2)

Understanding the practical significance or importance of the links or differences found in statistical analysis requires first determining the level of effect size. The effect size is the difference between the R^2 value used to estimate the model with and without the preceding construct (Ramayah et. al., 2018). The effect size (f^2) values of 0.35, 0.15, and 0.01 are considered large, medium and small effect sizes respectively.

Measures of the observed effects' size aid in determining their size as well as the significance of the results. For this study, f^2 value measured how strongly (large or medium, or small effect sizes) that cognitive image and affective image influencing the tourist revisit intention and intention to recommend. If the effect size is below 0.02, although it is statistically significant however the predictor is not very important as the effect size is small.

3.10.5.5 Predictive Relevance (Q^2)

A PLS path model must yield generalizable results in order to be beneficial for managerial decision-making (Hair & Sarstedt, 2021). It is necessary to determine whether the results apply to other data sets outside of the estimating process in addition to the data used in the model estimation process in order to produce conclusions that may be broadly applied. In other words, researchers must evaluate the predictive power, or just the predictive power, of their model (Chin et al., 2020).

The idea of dividing the entire data set into training and holdout samples is the foundation of the study. A section of the data set called a training sample is used to estimate the parameters of the model, such as the loadings, path coefficients, and indicator weights. The holdout sample is the portion of the data set that is not utilized for model estimation (Danks et al., 2017). In order to generate predictions of the dependent constructs' indicators in the holdout sample, PLSpredict uses the values for the independent constructs' indicators of observations and applies the model estimates from the training sample. This allows it to predict the values of a selected dependent construct's indicators (Shmueli et al., 2016). The model appears to have a good predictive power when there is little difference between the actual and anticipated values. On the other hand, a significant difference between the expected and actual values denotes a poor predictive power.

Q^2 could be calculated using the blindfolding procedure. It is a technique used to assess the predictive relevance of a model, particularly in the context of Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM). It involves systematically omitting observed values from a dataset and then comparing the model's predictions for those omitted values with their actual observed values. This entails assessing the model's capacity to correctly anticipate newly or previously unobserved data points.

If the Q^2 value greater than zero, it indicates that the exogenous constructs have predictive relevance for the endogenous construct under investigation (Fornell and Cha, 1994). The cut-off value of Q^2 greater than 0.5, indicates that predictive relevance of the model, while Q^2 less than zero indicates lack predictive relevance (Barroso et. al., 2010).

3.11 Conclusion

This chapter discussed step-by-step guide to the research methods used to examine the structural relationship of cognitive and affective images on tourist destination loyalty. In general, this study is quantitative research to test the developed hypotheses that the whether the cognitive and affective images influence the tourist intention to revisit and recommend Sarawak as a tourist destination. The target respondent will be tourist who travel to Sarawak. A survey questionnaire will be used to collect necessary information and data from respondents. Data will be collected at the major tourist spot and important check-point in Sarawak with purposive sampling method. Finally, statistical analysis will be applied to examine the objective of this study and answer to the research questions.

CHAPTER 4

DISCUSSION

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the results of the data analysis conducted to answer the research questions and achieve the research objectives. The primary data collected from the respondents were analyzed using SPSS and SmartPLS. The chapter begins with a section presenting the demographic profiles of the respondents, followed by the descriptive analysis. Lastly, the two-stage approach of analysis is introduced to systematically examine the research model and hypotheses.

4.2 Raw Data Processing

A total of 437 questionnaires were initially collected. Each questionnaire underwent a thorough data processing stage to ensure quality and reliability. Each response was carefully examined for missing data points. Thirteen incomplete questionnaires were identified, where critical sections were left unanswered. As a result, these questionnaires were removed from the dataset. Following this, a total of 424 responses were evaluated for straight-lining (standard deviation = 0), a pattern where respondents selected the same answer for all or most of the questions. Such responses may indicate a lack of engagement or understanding. Based on this assessment, four additional responses were identified as straight-lined and were excluded from the dataset. After this data cleaning process, the final dataset consists of 420 valid responses, ensuring the reliability and integrity of the data for further analysis.

The data were then checked for multivariate outliers. Outliers are data points significantly different from the rest of the responses and may have an excessive influence on the factor's findings (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2007). The Mahalanobis distance is the most straightforward method for identifying outliers (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2007). Using SPSS, this investigation assessed the outliers according to the Mahalanobis distance value. Outliers are defined as Mahalanobis distance values with a p-value less than .001. There were 17 outliers found, however Sarstedt and Mooi (2019) suggested outliers should be retained if there is no clear explanation. Cortina (2002) suggests that while removing outliers typically strengthens hypotheses, it warns against post hoc actions aimed solely at confirming desired results. It emphasizes the risk of compromising objectivity and the integrity of empirical testing, highlighting the importance of maintaining a clear distinction between theoretical expectations and empirical findings.

After this rigorous data cleaning process, the final dataset consisted of 420 valid samples. This number exceeds the minimum required sample size of 384, ensuring that the analysis has sufficient statistical power and reliability. To ensure the validity of the cross-sectional survey, a test for common method variance (CMV) was conducted using the Harman's Single-Factor approach (Akter et al., 2011). The results indicate that the total variance extracted by a single factor is 38.696%, which is below the recommended threshold of 50% (Podsakoff et al., 2012). This confirms that common method bias is not a concern in this study, and the dataset is valid for further analysis.

4.3 Respondents' Demographic Profiles

Table 4.1 presents the demographic profile of the study participants. The female respondents accounting for 55.9 percent of the sample, while male respondents accounting for 44.1 percent of the sample. In terms of age, the largest group of participants were aged 21-30 years (23.8%), followed by those aged 31-40 years (21.2%), and 51-60 years (15.5%). Majority of the respondents are Malaysian from west Malaysia and Sabah (41.4%), United Kingdom (8.8%), China (6.2%), Brunei (5%), Australia (4.8%) and Indonesia (4.3%).

The majority of the respondents were single (51.2%), and 33.9 percent of respondents reported an annual household income of below USD7, 000 or RM32, 655. Furthermore, the majority of the respondents (74.8%) not taking any holiday package. The proportion of fist-time visitors were 54.8 percent. Finally, majority of the respondents get to know about Sarawak from friends and family (65%).

Table 4.1: Respondents Profile

			Respondent (n=420)
Demographic Variable	**Category**	**Frequency**	**Per cent**
Gender	Female	235	55.9
	Male	185	44.1
Age	20 years old & below	58	13.8
	21-30 years old	100	23.8
	31-40 years old	89	21.2
	41-50 years old	49	11.7
	51-60 years old	65	15.5
	61 years old & above	59	14
Nationality	Malaysia	174	41.4
	United Kingdom	37	8.8
	China	26	6.2
	Brunei	21	5
	Australia	20	4.8
	Indonesia	18	4.3
	Germany	15	3.6
	Italy	11	2.6
	France	10	2.4
	Netherlands	10	2.4
	United States	9	2.1
	Singapore	8	1.9
	South Korea	6	1.4
	Belgium	6	1.4
	Austria	5	1.2
	Poland	5	1.2
	Taiwan	5	1.2
	Canada	3	0.7
	Japan	3	0.7
	New Zealand	3	0.7
	Philippines	3	0.7
	South African	2	0.5

Table 4.1 continued

	India	2	0.5
	Sri Lanka	2	0.5
	Russia	2	0.5
	Finland	2	0.5
	Others	12	2.83
Marital Status	Single	215	51.2
	Married	186	44.3
	Divorced	12	2.9
	Widow/Widower	6	1.4
	Others	1	0.2
Annual Household Income (USD/RM)	Under $7,000/ RM32,655	142	33.9
	$7,001/RM32,659- $12,499/RM58,308	45	10.7
	$12,500/RM58,313- $17,999/RM83,965	42	10
	$18,000/RM83,970- $27,999/RM130,615	47	11.2
	$28,000/RM130,620- $37,999/RM177,265	30	7.1
	$38,000/RM177,270 or more	84	20
	Others	34	8.1
Taking Holiday Package	Yes	106	25.2
	No	314	74.8
First Trip to Sarawak	Yes	230	54.8
	No	190	45.2
How did you know about Sarawak	From family/friends	273	65
	From website/medias	99	23.6
	From travel agency	27	6.4
	Others	21	5

4.4 Descriptive Analysis

The purpose of the descriptive analysis is to describe the distribution of the variable of interest. It is essential to the study because it allows the investigator to evaluate the distribution and central tendency of the gathered data. Each variable's mean value and standard deviation provide useful information about how the sampled population responded to the questionnaire items.

Table 4.2 reveals the mean and standard deviation values for each variable based on 420 responses. Among the five variables of cognitive image of Sarawak, culture has the highest mean (5.73), followed by food (5.72), nature (5.69), adventure (5.40), and festival (5.12). The lower mean score for the festival component (5.12) could be attributed to the fact that many respondents may not have had the opportunity to participate in a festival during their visit. Unlike culture, food, and nature, which are accessible year-round, festivals are often held on specific dates, limiting tourist exposure. The standard deviation for are close to 1 and lower than 1, indicating low variance. The findings suggest that tourists generally perceive Sarawak positively across all CANFF tourism dimensions, with culture and food being the most highly rated aspects. The low standard deviations indicate a strong consensus among tourists regarding Sarawak's appeal in these areas.

Among all the variables, intention to recommend has the highest mean (6.02), indicates that tourists generally have a strong intention to recommend Sarawak as a tourism destination. While intention to revisit has the highest standard deviation (1.30), indicates there is considerable variability in tourist's intention to revisit Sarawak. Standard deviation measures the dispersion or variability of scores around the mean. A higher standard deviation (1.30 in this case) means that the scores for intention to revisit are more spread out from the mean. In other words, while the average intention to recommend is high, individual responses regarding intention to revisit vary more widely; that means some visitors may be highly inclined to revisit, others may not share the same enthusiasm. This variability could be influenced by factors such as travel accessibility, prior experiences, or personal preferences. Addressing the factors that contribute to inconsistent revisit intentions—such as improving infrastructure, offering repeat-visitor incentives, or enhancing overall visitor satisfaction—could help boost return visits and long-term destination loyalty.

Table 4.2: Summary of Descriptive Statistics

Variables	Mean	Std. Deviation	Skewness	Kurtosis
Nature	5.69	0.91	-0.91	1.45
Culture	5.73	0.94	-0.71	0.70
Adventure	5.40	1.05	-0.51	-0.27
Food	5.72	1.03	-0.92	0.83
Festival	5.12	1.10	0.10	-1.04
Affective	5.68	0.87	-0.59	0.46
Revisit	5.47	1.30	-1.05	1.18
Recommend	6.02	0.89	-0.87	0.46

Skewness and kurtosis are important for understanding the shape and characteristics of data distributions in research. Business researchers, who frequently use non-normal data, will find PLS-SEM especially intriguing because it does not require normally distributed data (Hair et al., 2019). Nevertheless, extremely non-normal data may produce inaccurate findings about the statistical significance of the parameters when utilizing PLS-SEM (Guenther et al., 2023; Hair et al., 2022). For this reason, normality is evaluated prior to estimating the model. This is to make sure that highly non-normal data doesn't produce false results and to determine whether PLS-SEM is appropriate because of its resilience in non-normal data analysis.

Data normality is evaluated by looking at skewness and kurtosis, which is an essential presumption in many statistical analysis. According to Kim (2013), these metrics shed light on the symmetry and form of data distributions. Data is deemed to be normal if the skewness falls between -0.2 to +0.2, and kurtosis falls between -0.7 to +0.7 (Bryne, 2010; Hair et al., 2010). As shown in Table 4.2, the skewness of all variables (except festival) are beyond –0.2 to +0.2; and kurtosis are beyond -0.7 to +0.7 (except culture, adventure, affective and recommend), indicated that data is not normally distributed.

Normality tests can be categorized according to the type of normality being tested, namely univariate or multivariate normality. Univariate normality is a requisite for multivariate normality (DeCarlo, 1997). After checking the univariate normality, multivariate skewness and kurtosis was checked using the Web Power. As the p-value less than 0.05, the null hypothesis that there is no multivariate skewness and multivariate kurtosis was rejected.

As the data show substantial departure from normality, partial least squares structural equation modelling (PLS-SEM) has shown to be an invaluable tool, especially when working challenging modelling problems, such as non-normal data and atypical data features, which are common in the social sciences (Hair et al., 2014). This is because the PLS method converts non-normal data in line with the central limit theorem, PLS-SEM is less stringent when working with non-normal data (Beebe et al., 1998; Cassel et al., 1999). The lack of normality causing the inability to use parametric significance tests, which are employed in regression studies to determine the significance of coefficients like outer weights, outer loadings, and path coefficients. Rather, PLS-SEM tests the significance of coefficients using a nonparametric bootstrap approach (Chernick, 2008; Davison & Hinkley, 1997; Efron & Tibshirani, 1986).

4.5 Measurement Model Assessment

A structural equation model consists of two parts. The measurement model, also known as the outer model in the context of PLS-SEM, is the initial component (Hair et al., 2011). Presenting the outer model results to evaluate the validity and reliability of the measures used to represent each construct is the first stage in evaluating a model. (Chin & Dibbern, 2010). The outer model evaluates each indicator's contribution to the construct it is linked with and determines how effectively the entire set of indicators represents the construct while the relationships between the constructs are specified by the inner model (Hair et al., 2014).

Following the initial screening of the data and the examination of the descriptive statistics, the statistical analysis was carried out in the first stage of the measurement model in order to determine the causal relationships between the items of the observed variables and the underlying constructs. The model was evaluate using confirmatory factor analysis (CFA), which Convergent validity, discriminant validity, and reliability were the three components of confirmatory factor analyses (CFA) in order to assess the validity of the indicators. Different methods were used to evaluate the validity and reliability of the constructs because the model contains both formative and reflective constructs.

4.5.1 Assessing First-order (Lower-order) Construct

The first-order constructs have a reflective measurement because the indicators are expressions of the constructs; they have a common content; the conceptual domain of the construct is unaltered by the removal of an indicator; and modifications to the construct result in modifications to the indicators (Duarte & Amaro, 2018). According to Marko et al. (2019), researchers must use the usual measurement model assessment criteria to the path linkages between the higher-order and lower-order components. Determining indicator reliability, internal consistency reliability, convergent validity, and discriminant validity are all part of the reflective concept assessment process.

The stage one path model of first-order or lower-order constructs as shown in Figure 4.1 was drawn using the SmartPLS. The stage one model includes five antecedent constructs, which are culture, adventure, nature, food, and festival (CANFF) with total of twenty-two items, represent the cognitive image of Sarawak as a tourist destination. The model is used to demonstrate how cognitive image affect tourist feelings (affective image) and loyalty (intention to revisit and recommend). All measurement models, including those of the lower-order components, are taken into account during the first step of result evaluation.

In reflective measurement model assessment, the outer loadings of the indicators are examined initially. Greater outer loadings on a construct signify a high degree of similarity between the related indicators. Standardized outer loadings should, as a general rule of thumb, be 0.708 or greater (Hair et al., 2019). In general, indicators having outer loadings between 0.40 and 0.70 ought to be removed only when doing so improves the indicator's convergent validity or internal consistency reliability.

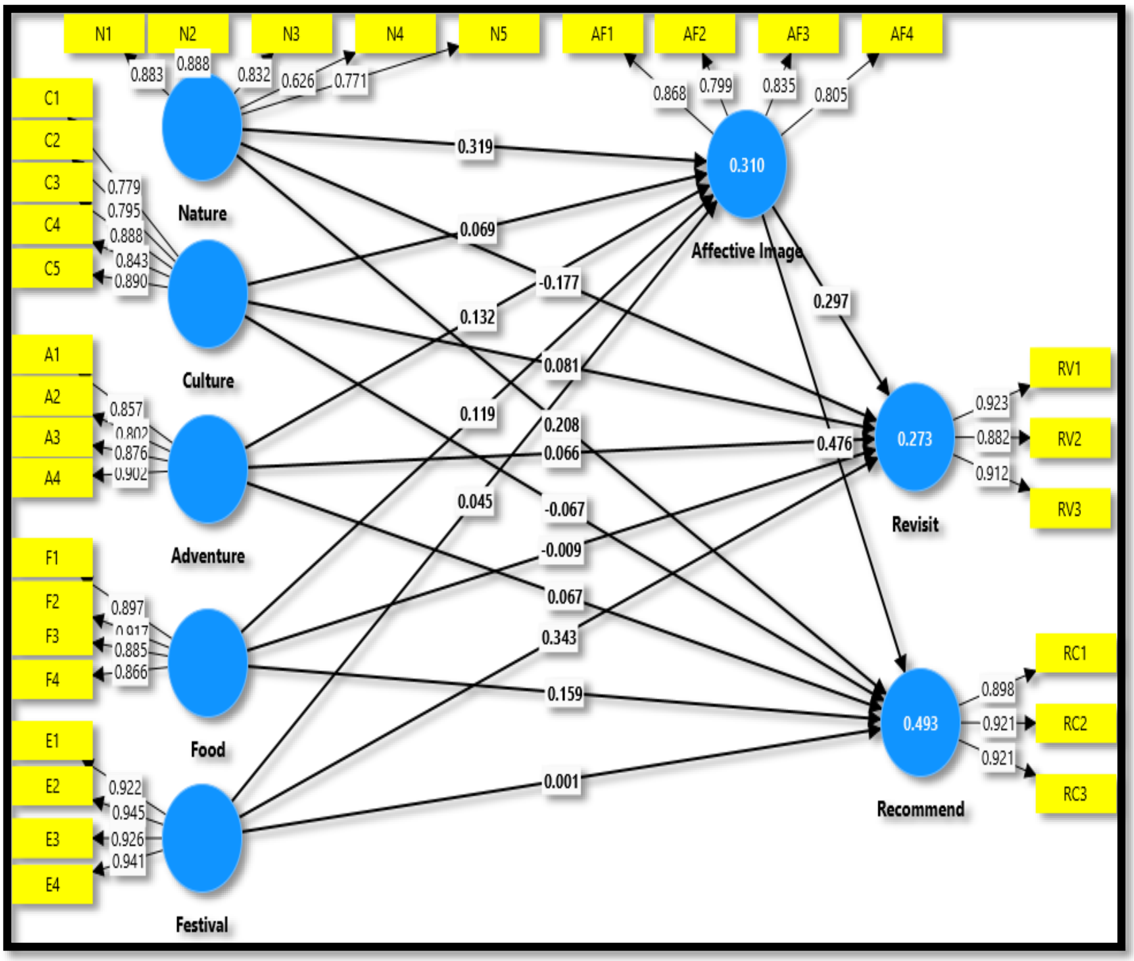


Figure 4.1: Stage One PLS Path Model

In stage one, findings are evaluated using all measurement models, including those for lower-order components. The model assessment begins with the reflecting measurement models of lower-order components, which meet all applicable criteria (internal consistency, convergent validity and discriminant validity) as shown in Table 4.3.

Table 4.3 showed the results of measurement model. Although the loading 0.708 or higher is recommended (Hair et al., 2019), but loadings which is greater than 0.4 is adequate if other items have high scores of loadings to complement AVE and CR. Indicators with loadings lower than 0.708 can be kept when the minimum of AVE result of 0.5 is achieved (Hair et al., 2022). Therefore, although one of the items (N4 = 0.626) had loading value less than 0.708, it has been kept as the minimum AVE result of 0.5 is achieved. All the other loading values equal to and greater than 0.708, indicated the individual indicator are reliable and more than 50 percent of the variance in the individual indicator is explained by the construct.

Table 4.3: Results of Measurement Model for Stage One Path Model

Constructs	**Items**	**Loading**	**AVE**	**CR**
Nature	N1	0.883	0.650	0.901
	N2	0.888		
	N3	0.832		
	N4	0.626		
	N5	0.771		
Culture	C1	0.779	0.706	0.923
	C2	0.795		
	C3	0.888		
	C4	0.843		
	C5	0.890		
Adventure	A1	0.857	0.740	0.919
	A2	0.802		
	A3	0.876		
	A4	0.902		
Food	F1	0.897	0.795	0.939
	F2	0.917		
	F3	0.885		
	F4	0.866		
Festival	E1	0.922	0.872	0.964
	E2	0.945		
	E3	0.926		
	E4	0.941		
Affective	AF1	0.868	0.685	0.897
	AF2	0.799		
	AF3	0.835		
	AF4	0.805		
Intention to Revisit	RV1	0.923	0.820	0.932
	RV2	0.882		
	RV3	0.912		
Intention to Recommend	RC1	0.898	0.834	0.938
	RC2	0.921		
	RC3	0.921		

Note: a. Average Variance Extracted (AVE) = (summation of the square of the factor loadings)/ {(summation of the square of the factor loadings) + (summation of the error variances)}
b. Composite Reliability (CR) = (square of the summation of the factor loadings)/ {(square of the summation of the factor loadings) + (square of the summation of the error variances)}

Internal consistency reliability is usually the second criterion to be assessed. Cronbach's alpha is the conventional metric used to assess the reliability of internal consistency. Cronbach’s alpha and the composite reliability vary between 0 and 1, higher values of Cronbach's alpha and the composite reliability indicate higher level of reliability. Values between 0.70 and 0.90 can be regarded as satisfactory (Hair et al., 2022).

Convergent validity is the degree to which one measure positively correlates with another measure of the same construct. Indicators of a reflective construct are handled as distinct (alternative) methods of measuring the same construct when using the domain sampling paradigm. Consequently, a significant amount of variance shared or convergence is expected among the items that function as measures or indicators of a specific reflective construct. When a value of AVE is 0.50 or greater, it means that on average the construct accounts for more than 50 percent of the variation in its indicators (Hair et al., 2022).

For this study, Composite Reliability (CR) and Average Variance Extracted (AVE) were utilized to quantify internal consistency and convergent validity. Table 4.3 shows that the CR values for all the eight reflective constructs were greater than 0.700, indicating that all measurements were internally consistent (Hair et al., 2022); and the AVE of each model construct was greater than the acceptability level of 0.500 (Hair et al., 2022), reveals that all the reflective constructs have high levels of convergent validity and demonstrating more than 50 percent of the variance in the sets of indicators is explained by the construct. Furthermore, the results show that all constructs at this stage had outer loadings of connected items that were greater than 0.400. As a result, the findings confirm that the eight reflective constructs used in this stage have appropriate reliability and convergent validity.

Furthermore, the Heterotrait-Monotrait ratio of correlation (HTMT) was used to establish discriminant validity. Discriminant validity is the degree to which a construct is actually different from other constructs according to empirical standards. Therefore, proving discriminant validity suggests that a concept is distinct and captures things that other constructs in the model do not describe. Henseler, Ringle, and Sarstedt (2015) recommend a threshold value of 0.850 if the constructs in the path model are conceptually more distinct and a threshold value of 0.900 in cases where the path model incorporates conceptually similar constructs.

As indicated in Table 4.4, all constructs achieved satisfactory discriminant validity with values below than 0.850 and 0.900 (Hanseler et al., 2015). As a result, the latent variable are statistically different and thus discriminant validity was established for all constructs in the stage one path model.

Table 4.4: Discriminant Validity (HTMT) for Stage One Path Model

	Adventure	Affec	Culture	Festival	Food	Nature	RC	RV
Adventure								
Affective	0.511							
Culture	0.583	0.458						
Festival	0.538	0.358	0.568					
Food	0.525	0.424	0.551	0.453				
Nature	0.711	0.589	0.66	0.433	0.494			
Recommend	0.504	0.732	0.403	0.322	0.473	0.584		
Revisit	0.325	0.429	0.345	0.48	0.268	0.225	0.5	

Note: HTMT < 0.85 (Kline, 2011), HTMT < 0.90 (Gold et al., 2001)

After the reflective constructs' reliability, convergent validity, and discriminant validity were established, the culture, nature, adventure, food, and festival first-order construct scores were obtained to be used as a second-order or higher-order construct. Affective image and destination loyalty remain as reflective first-order constructs.

4.5.2 Assessing Second-order (Higher-order) Constructs

Cognitive image is the second-order or higher order construct in the study based on five first-order or lower-order constructs which are culture, adventure, nature, food, and festival. Cognitive image has a formative measurement, because first –order constructs (CANFF) are defining characteristics of the second- level construct (cognitive image), also due to the fact that first-order constructs cannot be substituted (Duarte & Amaro, 2018). In stage two, latent variable scores of the first-order components CANFF were obtained from stage one and then applied to the second stage as indicators for the second-order construct. The path coefficient between other constructs are estimated at the same time (Wilson & Henseler, 2007; Hair et al., 2011).

4.5.3 Validating Higher Order Formative Construct

It is vital to evaluate whether each first-order construct forms part of the second-order construct at the first-order construct level. Therefore, outer weights and outer loadings were checked in order to establish the higher order construct validity (Hair et al., 2016). The significance of the outer weights was tested and found nature, adventure, food and festival has significant p-values at the 0.1 level (see Table 4.5). This step is to ascertain how much the construct score is influenced by the formative indicators. The weights are comparable to beta coefficients and are determined through the use of a multiple regression model. They show how each formative indication contributed differently to the formation of the construct. The size of the outer weights is used to interpret the indicators' contribution (relevance), with larger weights denoting a higher contribution (Hair et al., 2020).

The result demonstrated each indicator contributes significantly to the construct. However, it is not always appropriate to assume that nonsignificant indicator weights signify a low-quality measurement model. Instead, the absolute contribution to or importance of a formative signal for its construct should also be taken into account by researchers. Put simply, the information an indicator offers without taking into account any other indicators connected to the formative construct is known as the absolute contribution. The outer loading of the formative indicator, which is always supplied with the indicator weights, is used to calculate the absolute contribution (Hair et al., 2022). In short, an indicator should be considered as absolutely crucial rather than relatively essential when its outer loading is high (i.e., above 0.50) yet its outer weight is nonsignificant. Therefore, although culture is not significant in the outer weight, however, its outer loadings (0.722) was greater than 0.5, thus the non-significant indicator are retained for content validity assessment. The decision was supported by researcher that it is never appropriate to discard a formative indicator based only on statistical standards (Hair et al., 2020).

Since the indicators are not essentially inter-changeable, high correlations are not expected between indicators in formative measurement models. High correlations between two formative indicators are known as collinearity (Hair et al., 2020). High levels of collinearity between formative indicators are problematic because they have an impact on the estimation of weights and their statistical significance.

Therefore, examining multicollinearity is a crucial component in determining the validity of the first-order constructs. A high correlation between the first-order constructs can indicate that they are drawing from the same part of the construct. If that is the case, a formative nature for the second-order construct would not be suitable. Therefore to ensure the multicollinearity is not present, the variance inflation factor (VIF) were assessed to check the collinearity. The VIF value for each indicator should preferably be less than 3, or 5 (Hair et al., 2022). If not, think about treating collinearity issues by removing indicators, combining indicators into a single index, or developing higher-order constructs. As demonstrated in Table 4.5, the VIF values were ranging from 1.505 to 1.961 (see Table 4.5), all the VIF values were far below the common cut-off threshold of 5, demonstrated that multicollinearity is not present among the first-order constructs. Since all the criterion were met, the higher order construct validity was established.

Table 4.5: Higher Order Construct Validity

HOC	LOC	Outer Weight	T-stats	P values	Outer Loadings	VIF
Cognitive Image						
	Adventure	0.248	2.749	0.006	0.812	1.961
	Culture	0.072	0.781	0.435	0.722	1.929
	Festival	0.214	2.530	0.011	0.669	1.571
	Food	0.267	2.978	0.003	0.721	1.505
	Nature	0.474	4.212	0.000	0.870	1.935

Note: t-value >1.96 ($p < 0.05$*); t-value >2.57 ($p < 0.01$**)

After the validity and reliability of the construct has been checked, a disjoint two-stage approach in PLS-SEM is employed to test higher order constructs. Higher-order constructions have various advantages. Higher-order constructs can simplify models by reducing the number of path links (Marko et al., 2019). To execute the disjoint two-stage approach, researchers save the construct latent variable scores, i.e. latent variable scores for nature, culture, adventure, food, and festival; then used the latent variable scores of the CANFF to measure higher order construct, which is cognitive image of Sarawak.

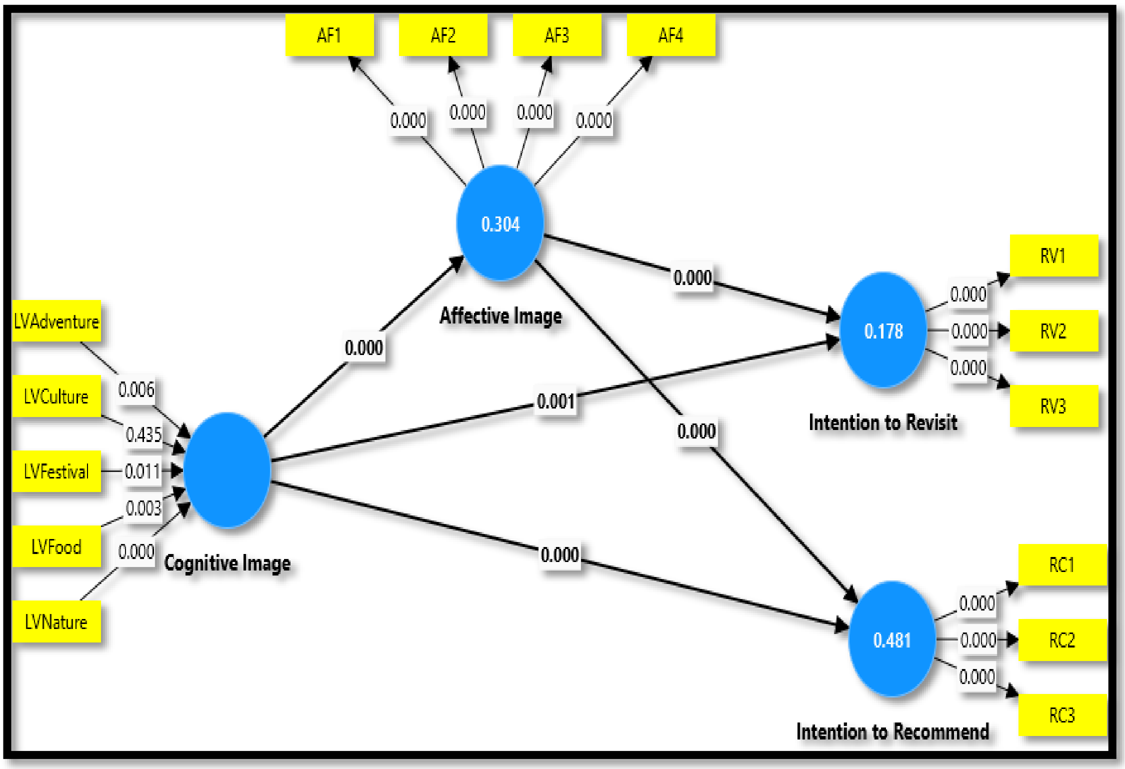


Figure 4.2: Stage Two PLS Path Model

The stage two path model of second-order or higher-order constructs (HOCs) as shown in Figure 4.2 was drawn using the SmartPLS. The model is used to demonstrate how cognitive image affect tourist feelings (affective image) and destination loyalty (intention to revisit and recommend).

Table 4.6 shows all the loadings value for the higher order construct greater than 0.708, indicates that latent variables can account for at least 50 percent of the items' variance (Hair et al., 2017). The convergent validity of the construct level was also assessed using the Average Variance Extracted (AVE). It is assumed that convergent validity is achieved at the construct level if the AVE value exceeds the 0.500 threshold (Baggozzi & Yi, 1982). Thus, the measures of the three reflective constructs have excellent degrees of convergent validity.

Table 4.6: Results of Measurement Model for Stage Two Path Model

Constructs	Items	Loading	AVE	CR
Cognitive Image	LVA	0.812		
	LVC	0.722		
	LVE	0.669		
	LVF	0.721		
	LVN	0.870		
Affective Image	AF1	0.868	0.685	0.897
	AF2	0.800		
	AF3	0.836		
	AF4	0.805		
Revisit	RV1	0.908	0.817	0.931
	RV2	0.908		
	RV3	0.897		
Recommend	RC1	0.898	0.834	0.938
	RC2	0.921		
	RC3	0.921		

Note: a. Average Variance Extracted (AVE) = (summation of the square of the factor loadings)/ {(summation of the square of the factor loadings) + (summation of the error variances)}
b. Composite Reliability (CR) = (square of the summation of the factor loadings)/ {(square of the summation of the factor loadings) + (square of the summation of the error variances)}

Finally, the Heterotrait-Monotrait ratio of correlation (HTMT) was used to establish discriminant validity. As indicated in Table 4.7, all constructs achieved satisfactory discriminant validity with values below than 0.850 (Henseler et al., 2015) and below than 0.900 (Gold et al., 2001). As a result, the latent variable are statistically different and thus discriminant validity was established for all constructs in the stage two path model.

Table 4.7: Discriminant Validity (HTMT) for Stage Two Path Model

	Affective Image	Intention to Recommend	Intention to Revisit
Affective Image			
Intention to Recommend	0.732		
Intention to Revisit	0.429	0.5	

Note: HTMT < 0.85 (Kline, 2011), HTMT < 0.90 (Gold et al., 2001)

The assessment of the stage two results confirmed that all structural model evaluation results are at a satisfactory level and therefore proceed to structural model assessment.

4.6 Structural Model Assessment

After confirming the reliability and validity of the outer model, the next step involves structural equation modeling (SEM) to assess the hypothesized relationships among the constructs in the conceptual model. This step is crucial for testing the proposed hypotheses and addressing the research questions, providing deeper insights into the relationships between the study variables.

The first step is to check the structural model for any possible collinearity problems. The rationale is that ordinary least squares regressions of each endogenous latent variable on its corresponding parent constructs serve as the foundation for the path coefficient estimate in the structural models. Similar to a standard multiple regression, if there is too much collinearity between the predictor constructs during estimate, the path coefficients may be skewed. The same metrics as it used to evaluate formative measurement models was used to determine collinearity. For each structural model component, a different collection of predictor components was examined. For the predictor constructs to guarantee that collinearity has no appreciable impact on the structural model estimations, the VIF values should be less than 5, and preferably less than 3 (Hair et al., 2022).

Table 4.8: Inner VIF Values

	Affective Image	**Cognitive Image**	**Recommend**	**Revisit**
Affective Image			1.409	1.409
Cognitive Image	1.000		1.409	1.409
Recommend				
Revisit				

Note: VIF values should be less than 5, and preferably less than 3 (Hair et al., 2022)

As shown in Table 4.8, all the inner VIF values for the independent variables (affective image, intention to revisit and intention to recommend) are less than 5 and 3.3, therefore indicated there is no collinearity concern (Hair et al., 2022).

After confirming that collinearity is not at a critical level, then the relevance and significance of the relationships in the structural model (i.e., the path coefficients) was evaluated. The given assumptions were tested by using a bootstrapping technique with 5000 re-samplings. The standardized values of the path coefficients typically range from approximately -1 to +1, although they can occasionally fall outside these bounds. Path coefficients estimated near +1 indicate strong positive relationships.

Table 4.9 showed the result of the path coefficient and hypotheses testing. Referring to the path coefficients, all the five hypotheses are supported. The five hypotheses include H1: cognitive image positively influence affective image (β=0.551; t=12.983, p=0.000); H2: cognitive image positively influence tourist intention to revisit (β=0.204; t=3.188, p=0.001); H3: cognitive image positively influence tourist intention to recommend (β=0.301; t=4.783, p=0.000); H4 affective image positively influence tourist intention to revisit (β=0.274; t=4.838, p=0.000); and H5: affective image positively influence tourist intention to recommend (β=0.480; t=8.540, p=0.000), are all confirmed or verified as t-statistics exceed the recommended value, 1.96 at 5% significance level (p<0.05).

Table 4.9: Inner Model Assessment and Hypotheses Testing Result

	Std Beta	T statistics	P values	Decision
Affective Image -> Intention to Recommend	0.480	8.540	0.000	Supported
Affective Image -> Intention to Revisit	0.274	4.838	0.000	Supported
Cognitive Image -> Affective Image	0.551	12.983	0.000	Supported
Cognitive Image -> Intention to Recommend	0.301	4.783	0.000	Supported
Cognitive Image -> Intention to Revisit	0.204	3.188	0.001	Supported

Note: t-value >1.96 (p < 0.05*); t-value >2.57 (p< 0.01**)

Looking at the relative importance of the constructs in predicting the dependent construct (destination loyalty), it is evident that affective image (B=0.480) is the most important predictors for intention to recommend, follow by cognitive image (B=0.301). Besides, affective image also the most important predictors for intention to revisit (B=0.274) compare to cognitive image (B=0.204).

Evaluating the structural model's ability to explain phenomena is the third step in the evaluation process. A model's explanatory power is determined by how well it fits the available data by measuring the degree of association that the PLS path model indicates. The coefficient of determination (R^2) value is the most widely used metric to assess the explanatory power of the structural model (Hair et al., 2022). The R^2 value ranges from 0 to 1, with higher levels indicating higher levels of explanatory power. Falk and Miller (1992) recommend that R^2 values should be equal to or greater than 0.10 in order for the variance explained of a particular endogenous construct to be deemed adequate. As shown in Table 4.10, the R^2 values of affective image (0.303) and intention to recommend (0.481) can be considered moderate (Chin, 1998), as the predictors explained 30.3 percent in the affection and 48.1 percent in the intention to recommend; but for the intention to revisit (0.169) is considered weak as the predictors only explained 16.9 percent of the variances in the intention to revisit. All exogenous variables demonstrate weak to moderate explanatory power on their respective endogenous variables with R^2 ranging from 0.169 to 0.481 indicates that the model has weak to moderate explanatory power according to Chin (1998).

Table 4.10: Structural Model Explanatory Power

	R-square	**R-square adjusted**
Affective Image	0.303	0.302
Recommend	0.481	0.479
Revisit	0.169	0.165

Note: < 0.19, weak; >0.33, moderate; >0.67, substantial (Chin, 1998)

In the fourth step of the structural model assessment, the effect size (f^2) was evaluated. Cohen classified effect sizes as small (≥ 0.02), medium (≥ 0.15), and large (≥ 0.35). Effect size values of less than 0.02 indicate there is no measurable effect. The effect size, f^2 ranges from 0.03 to 0.516. Cognitive image (0.436) is said to have exert the largest effect size on affective image and affective image (0.310) have largest effect size on tourist intention to recommend Sarawak as a tourism destination (see Table 4.11).

Table 4.11: Structural Model Effect Size

	Affective Image	Cognitive Image	Recommend	Revisit
Affective Image			0.310	0.059
Cognitive Image	0.436		0.121	0.034
Recommend				
Revisit				

Note: < 0.02, small; >0.15, medium; >0.35, large (Cohen., 1988)

In assessing how well the model can predict or forecast outcomes based on the available data, assessing predictive relevance is crucial. Therefore, the final step is to assess the predictive relevance (Q2) of path model using a blindfolding technique. A higher Q^2predict value suggests stronger predictive power, while a value close to zero or negative indicates weak or no predictive ability. Q^2 predict values for affective image range from 0.175 to 0.237, suggesting moderate predictive relevance. Q^2predict values for recommendation between 0.235 and 0.252 indicate medium predictive ability as well, meaning the model moderately predicts tourists' likelihood to recommend Sarawak. Revisit Q^2predict values of 0.05, 0.128, and 0.077 indicate weak predictive relevance, implying that the model's ability to predict revisit intention is lower than its ability to predict recommendation intention.

For those indicators with Q^2predict more than 0, next was to compare the RMSE values with the naïve LM benchmark. The model has good predictive potential if all indicators in the PLS-SEM analysis have lower RMSE values when compared to the naïve LM benchmark (Hair et al., 2022). As shown in Table 4.12, PLS-SEM analysis yields larger prediction errors in comparison to the LM (see PLS-LM RMSE column), except AF 2 and AF3; the result showed a minority of the items were lower than thus indicating the model lacks predictive power.

Table 4.12: Structural Model Predictive Power

	Q^2predict	PLS-SEM_RMSE	LM_RMSE	PLS-LM RMSE
AF1	0.237	0.787	0.777	0.01
AF2	0.175	0.923	0.926	-0.003
AF3	0.18	0.986	0.987	-0.001
AF4	0.176	1.094	1.093	0.001
RC1	0.235	0.768	0.765	0.003
RC2	0.252	0.838	0.836	0.002
RC3	0.252	0.922	0.914	0.008
RV1	0.05	1.47	1.389	0.081
RV2	0.128	1.202	1.191	0.011
RV3	0.077	1.442	1.362	0.08

Note: < 0.02, small; >0.15, medium; >0.35, large predictive relevance (Hair et al., 2022)

4.7 Importance and Performance Matrix (IPMA)

The importance-performance map analysis (IPMA) expands on the typical PLS-SEM results reporting of path coefficient, including a dimension in the analysis that takes the average values of the latent variable scores into account. IPMA contrasts the structural model total effects (importance) and the average values of the latent variable scores (performance) of a specific endogenous construct, to highlight significant areas for the improvement of the management activities by showing the specific focus of the model (Hair et al., 2017). It is especially useful in discussion of managerial implications. IPMA has been conducted on the indicator level (CANFF) to identify relevant and more specific areas of improvements on the five dimensions of cognitive image for this study. Table 4.13 shows the IPMA result, while Figure 4.3 shows the Importance-performance map.

Table 4.13: IPMA Result

Indicator	Importance (Total Effect)	Performance (Index Values)
Adventure	0.136	70.316
Culture	0.040	78.208
Festival	0.118	62.049
Food	0.147	74.399
Nature	0.261	79.112

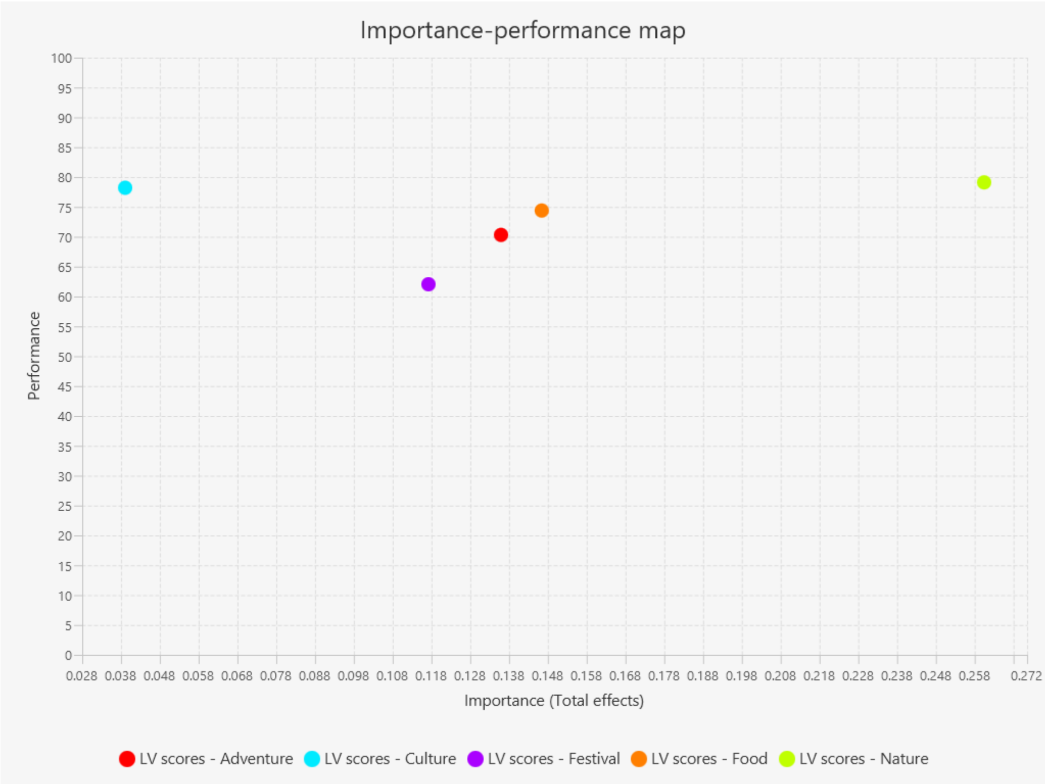


Figure 4.3: Importance-performance map

The Importance-Performance Map Analysis (IPMA) of Affective Image highlights key insights into the role of different tourism attributes. While culture demonstrates high performance, its impact on shaping Affective Image is relatively low, indicating that visitors may appreciate cultural aspects but do not strongly associate them with their overall emotional perception of the destination. On the other hand, festival and adventure, despite having lower performance levels, play a more significant role in influencing Affective Image, suggesting that enhancing these elements could yield a stronger emotional connection with visitors. Food emerges as the second most important factor, reinforcing its role in shaping tourists' emotional experiences, while nature holds the highest importance, emphasizing its critical contribution to the overall affective perception. This suggests that efforts to strengthen the natural attractions and culinary experiences, while improving the festival and adventure offerings, could enhance visitors' emotional engagement with the destination.

4.8 Chapter Summary

The results of the different analyses have been discussed and provided in this chapter. The five hypotheses which are H1: cognitive image positively influence affective image; H2: cognitive image positively influence tourist intention to revisit; H3: cognitive image positively influence tourist intention to recommend; H4 affective image positively influence tourist intention to revisit; and H5: affective image positively influence tourist intention to recommend are all satisfactorily confirmed and verified. A detailed discussion of these findings, including their theoretical and practical implications, will be presented in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSIONS

5.1 Introduction

The goal of this study is to develop and evaluate a theoretical model of destination image formation, using Sarawak CANFF tourism as a case study. This model allows for a comprehensive examination of the contributions made by cognitive and affective components to destination image. These two dimensions have been thoroughly analyzed to determine their influence on tourists' intentions to revisit and recommend the destination. This chapter presents a discussion of the research findings, highlighting their theoretical and managerial implications. Additionally, the study's limitations are acknowledged, and recommendations for future research are provided.

5.2 Study Recapitulation

The current study aimed to investigate the relationship between the cognitive image and affective image of Sarawak and how both cognitive and affective components influence destination loyalty. The study was guided by three main objectives. The first objective was to examine the CANFF contribution in formation of cognitive image. The second objective was to investigate the relationship between cognitive image and affective image. The third objective was to examine the impact of cognitive image towards tourist's intention to revisit and intention to recommend, and finally was to investigate the impact of affective image towards tourist's intention to revisit and intention to recommend. This research answers a series of research questions and summaries as follows:

i. The elements of adventure, nature, food, and festivals play a significant role in shaping the cognitive image of Sarawak except culture.

ii. The cognitive image formed by the CANFF elements influences tourists' emotional perceptions of Sarawak.

iii. A strong cognitive image, shaped by positive experiences with culture, adventure, nature, food, and festivals, increases the likelihood of tourists returning to Sarawak and recommending it to others.

iv. A positive affective image—where tourists perceive Sarawak as lively, pleasant, exciting, and relaxing—enhances their emotional connection to the destination. This emotional attachment strengthens their intention to revisit and recommend Sarawak to others.

5.3 Discussion of Findings

This section discusses the key findings of the study in relation to the research objectives and the Cognitive-Affective Attitude Theory. The study contributes to the tourism knowledge pool by providing empirical evidence on how cognitive and affective images influence tourists' behavioural intentions toward Sarawak. The findings underscore the importance of culture, adventure, nature, food, and festivals (CANFF) in shaping cognitive image. Additionally, the study confirms the influence of cognitive image on affective perceptions and the impact of both cognitive and affective images on tourists’ intention to revisit and recommend Sarawak. The following subsections provide a detailed discussion of each relationship, examining how these elements interact to influence tourist perceptions and loyalty.

5.3.1 Discussion of Demographic Profile

Different demographic groups may exhibit varied cognitive and affective images of Sarawak based on their information sources and prior travel experiences. Tourists from tropical or culturally similar regions might have different affective responses compared to those from colder or culturally distinct regions. From the demographic profile, approximately 54% of the respondents were tourists from Southeast Asia, with domestic tourists from Malaysia forming the largest group. Their familiarity with cultural and linguistic similarities may influence their cognitive and affective perceptions differently compared to international tourists. The second-largest group comprised tourists from European countries (26%), with a significant proportion from the United Kingdom. Additionally, about 10% of respondents were from East Asia, including China, South Korea, Taiwan, and Japan. Another 10% came from other regions, including South Asia, Oceania, North America, South America, and Africa. The diverse backgrounds of respondents contribute to varied perspectives on Sarawak's cognitive and affective images, highlighting how different cultural and regional influences shape tourists' perceptions and experiences of the destination.

The demographic profile of respondents indicates a predominance of younger to middle-aged visitors. The largest group of participants falls within the 21-30 years age range (23.8%), suggesting that young adults are highly interested in exploring Sarawak, likely attracted by its adventurous activities, cultural experiences, and natural beauty. This is followed by the 31-40 years age group (21.2%), who may be drawn by both the adventure and more family-oriented experiences. The 51-60 years age group (15.5%) also constitutes a significant portion, likely interested in more leisurely and cultural aspects of the destination. These age demographics imply that Sarawak's tourism offerings appeal broadly across different life stages, with a slightly higher inclination towards younger travelers seeking exploration and unique experiences.

The distribution of marital status among tourists visiting Sarawak shows almost equal distribution, with 44.3 percent of respondents being married and a little majority (51.2%) being single. This implies that Sarawak is a well-liked vacation spot for both single people and couples. The destination's adventurous and exploratory nature may appeal to persons seeking new experiences and social interactions, which could explain the high percentage of single travellers. However, a sizable percentage of married respondents suggests that Sarawak also draws couples, perhaps for romantic gateway or family vacation. The demographic distribution of married status balances underscore Sarawak's attraction to a wide spectrum of travellers, as it provides a variety of experiences and activities for both singles and couples.

The income distribution of Sarawak tourists reveals a significant portion of respondents with diverse economic backgrounds. Notably, 33.9% of respondents reported an annual household income below USD 7,000 (RM 32,655), indicating that Sarawak attracts budget-conscious travelers or those from lower-income brackets who might seek affordable travel options and value-for-money experiences. This group may be particularly interested in budget-friendly accommodations, local cuisine, and low-cost activities. On the other end of the spectrum, 20% of respondents reported an annual income of USD 38,000 (RM 177,270) or more, suggesting that a considerable segment of wealthier tourists is also drawn to Sarawak. This higher-income group is likely to seek premium services, luxurious accommodations, and exclusive experiences. The presence of both low and high-income travelers suggests that Sarawak offers a versatile range of attractions and amenities that cater to various financial capabilities, making it an inclusive destination for a wide range of tourists.

Furthermore, the majority of the respondents (74.8%) not taking any holiday package, preferred individual travel over pre-arranged tour packages, with only a small percentage of them taking advantage of any holiday packages offered in Sarawak. This trend indicates that a lot of travellers, maybe motivated by the demand for individualized travel experiences and the availability of online travel tools, prefer the flexibility and freedom to design their own itineraries and explore Sarawak at their own speed. The inclination for self-guided travel could also indicate visitors' self-assurance in manoeuvring through Sarawak's attractions without assistance, potentially because comprehensive information and assistance are readily available for travellers. This knowledge helps direct regional travel agencies to create more adaptable and flexible travel choices, such mix-and-match packages or reservations for individual activities, to meet the expanding demand for independent and tailored travel experiences.

The data also reveals that a majority of respondents (54.8%) are first-time visitors, while a significant proportion (45.2%) are repeat visitors. This indicates that Sarawak continues to attract new tourists, suggesting a strong initial appeal and effective marketing strategies that draw in first-time travelers. The high percentage of repeat visitors also signifies a high level of satisfaction and loyalty among tourists, suggesting that the destination offers memorable and positive experiences that encourage return visits. This balance between first-time and repeat visitors underscores Sarawak’s ability to both attract and retain tourists, highlighting the destinations diverse and appealing offerings that cater to both new and returning travelers. This insight can be useful for tourism stakeholders to maintain and enhance the quality of experiences, ensuring that new visitors are consistently attracted while also providing fresh and engaging activities for repeat visitors.

Understanding the demographics of tourists is essential for enhancing tourism products and services to better meet the needs and expectations of different visitor groups. Tailoring experiences based on demographic insights can lead to a more personalized and satisfying travel experience. For example, offering multi-lingual guides can cater to international tourists, ensuring clear communication and cultural understanding. Providing gender-specific amenities and age-appropriate activities can further improve comfort and engagement, making the destination more accessible to diverse groups. Moreover, analyzing demographic data allows for the identification of trends and patterns that are crucial for future tourism planning. Understanding visitor demographics helps tourism stakeholders design targeted marketing strategies, develop customized experiences, and improve destination management practices to enhance visitor satisfaction and destination loyalty.

5.3.2 Cognitive Image of Sarawak

Among the five attributes (culture, adventure, nature, food, and festival) forming Sarawak's cognitive image, nature (outer weight = 0.474; t-value = 4.212) play the most significance role, followed by food (outer weight = 0.267; t-value = 2.978), adventure (outer weight = 0.248; t-value = 2.749), festival (outer weight = 0.214; t-value = 2.530), and lastly culture (outer weight = 0.072; t-value = 0.781). The ranking, based on the size and significance of the indicator weights, highlights the relative importance of these attributes in forming tourists' cognitive image of Sarawak. Collectively, these elements coalesce to shape tourists' perceptions and drive their intentions to visit and recommend Sarawak.

It is unsurprising that nature plays the most significant role in forming the cognitive image of Sarawak given the region's rich biodiversity and stunning natural landscapes. Sarawak's rainforests, diverse wildlife, national parks, and rivers attract Eco tourists and nature enthusiasts from around the world. One of the most iconic natural landmarks is Mulu National Park, a UNESCO World Heritage Site renowned for its spectacular cave systems, karst formations, and rich ecosystem. Beyond Mulu, Sarawak boasts immaculate beaches, dense tropical rainforests, and diverse native species, all of which captivate nature-loving tourists. Additionally, the region fosters a strong sense of environmental consciousness, further enhancing its appeal as a top destination for nature seekers. The dominance of nature in shaping Sarawak's cognitive image underscores its position as a haven for immersive, nature-based experiences, reinforcing its attractiveness to travelers seeking authentic ecological and adventure tourism.

The survey findings reveal that many respondents, particularly those from Western countries, identified nature as the most attractive feature driving their decision to visit Sarawak. This underscores the critical role of Sarawak's natural beauty in shaping its tourism appeal. To maintain and enhance this attractiveness, the Sarawak government should prioritize the protection and conservation of its natural environments. Implementing sustainable tourism practices, enforcing strict environmental regulations, and promoting eco-friendly initiatives will be essential in preserving Sarawak's unique landscapes and biodiversity. By adopting a sustainable approach, Sarawak can ensure the long-term viability of its natural resources while simultaneously strengthening its destination appeal. A commitment to conservation not only attracts responsible travelers but also fosters economic growth by positioning Sarawak as a leader in eco-tourism. By safeguarding its natural heritage, Sarawak can solidify its reputation as a premier nature-based tourism destination, offering visitors authentic and immersive environmental experiences.

Food ranks second after nature in shaping Sarawak's cognitive image, highlighting its significant potential in gastronomy tourism. The diverse ethnic communities in Sarawak, including the Iban, Chinese, Malay, and Orang Ulu, have contributed to a rich culinary landscape, creating a tapestry of unique flavors and traditions. Local specialties such as Laksa Sarawak, Kolo Mee, and Manok Pansoh (bamboo chicken) offer visitors a distinct and memorable culinary experience, deeply rooted in culture and history. Sarawak's position as a gastronomic destination is further reinforced by food festivals and local markets, which serve as platforms to showcase the region's unique culinary heritage. However, while food festivals play a crucial role in promoting local cuisine, they are occasional events and may not provide continuous exposure to Sarawak's rich food culture. To enhance and sustain gastronomy tourism, the Sarawak government should consider establishing permanent food hubs or markets where tourists can conveniently sample a wide variety of local dishes in one place. These dedicated food hubs would allow travelers to experience Sarawak's culinary diversity in an accessible and immersive setting.

Additionally, integrating these food hubs with cultural performances and local craft markets can create a multi-sensory tourism experience, enriching visitors' understanding of Sarawak's way of life and cultural blend. Beyond catering to tourists' palates, this initiative would also support local food vendors, create sustainable economic opportunities, and promote Sarawak's gastronomic heritage year-round. By developing a structured and immersive gastronomy tourism strategy, Sarawak can solidify its reputation as a premier culinary tourism destination in the region. Adventure and festivals, while also important, follow in the hierarchy of attributes forming Sarawak's cognitive image. Activities like caving, trekking, and river rafting are popular forms of adventure tourism that appeal to thrill-seekers and enhance the vibrant image of Sarawak. Events like the Rainforest World Music Festival, International Kite Festival, and Gawai Dayak festival draw people from abroad and from local communities alike, providing a window into the dynamic cultural landscape of the area.

Last but not least, culture which includes historical landmarks, indigenous arts and crafts deepens the understanding of Sarawak even though it is ranked lower and insignificant compare to nature, adventure, food, and festival. The insignificance of culture as an indicator in forming the cognitive image of Sarawak tourism may be attributed to the fact that respondents have less frequent visits to cultural places. Due to their limited access to cultural sites, they become less conscious of and appreciative of Sarawak's rich cultural heritage, which in turn causes them to place less value on culture in their impression of the area as a whole. When visitors focus on and remember natural areas, adventurous activities, and regional food and festival, cultural encounters may not make a big impact or contribute significantly to their mental image of Sarawak. Because of this, cultural heritage—which could include historical landmarks, museums, and traditional villages—receives less respect and attention than other traits, which adds to the survey respondents' perception of its lack of relevance. Another reason why culture may not be as significant in forming the cognitive image of Sarawak could be due to the majority of the respondents are Malaysian. The perception of culture as less significant could stem from the assumption that Sarawak's cultural elements might not appear as distinct or exotic to local Malaysian respondents compared to those from other regions. As a nation with a diversified population, Malaysia is home to several states, each with its own distinct and vibrant culture. Sarawakian culture may not be particularly distinctive to local respondents since it may seem like other Malaysian cultural experiences. Furthermore, compared to more unique experiences like exploring Sarawak's natural wonders or engaging in adventurous activities, they may view cultural elements like traditional crafts and dances as less distinctive tourist attractions.

The loading value for culture (0.722) exceeds the recommended threshold of 0.500, indicating that culture still makes a significant absolute contribution to the formation of Sarawak's cognitive image. According to Hair et al. (2020), when no other indicators are considered in the computation, the absolute contribution of a formative indicator represents the amount of information it contributes to the construction of the overall cognitive image.

In conclusion, Sarawak's tourism positioning is in line with the incorporation of the five dimensions—Culture, Adventure, Nature, Food, and Festivals (CANFF)—as indicators that shape the state's cognitive image. These regions are where Sarawak's lively and varied offerings come together to form a full and appealing tourism profile. When combined, these characteristics offer a complex and captivating picture of Sarawak, with each feature adding in a different way to the state's allure as a travel destination. Together, these aspects capture Sarawak's diverse appeal and provide a fascinating, well-rounded travel destination that appeals to a broad spectrum of travelers.

5.3.3 Relationships between Cognitive Image and Affective Image

This empirical study in Sarawak, Malaysia, found that cognitive image have a positive influence on affective image (β=0.551; t=12.983, p=0.000). The study therefore support the existing literature's conceptual framework that suggests a positive relationship between cognitive image and affective image (Burgess, 1978; Reibstein et. al., 1980; Russel & Pratt, 1980; Anand et. al., 1988; Williams et. al., 1992; Gartner, 1993; Stem & Krakover, 1993; Baloglu & McCleary, 1999; Beerli & Martin, 2004; Lin et. al., 2007; Wang & Hsu, 2010; Li et. al., 2010; Sylidis et. al., 2017). The study advances existing literature by providing empirical evidence that cognitive image (CANFF) significantly influences affective image. This finding reinforces the Cognitive-Affective Attitude Theory, demonstrating that tourists first evaluate tangible aspects of a destination before forming emotional perceptions. These emotional responses stem from prior cognitive evaluations, reinforcing the idea that well-developed tourism attributes create favorable affective impressions in line with the underpinning theory – Cognitive Affective Attitude Theory.

More specifically, the research findings indicate that various elements of the CANFF (Culture, Adventure, Nature, Food, and Festivals) tourism positioning contribute to forming a cognitive image of Sarawak as a tourism destination and it positively affect tourist feelings (affective image). The positive correlation between cognitive and affective images indicates that tourists' perceptions of Sarawak are influenced by their cognitive processes. In other words, tourists' emotional response will be more positive the more they perceive Sarawak's cultural, adventurous, natural, food, and festive characteristics.

Affective image referred as an individual's sentiments or emotions regarding a certain location (Beerli & Martin, 2004). Affective sentiments, according to Marino (2008), surface when a person evaluates their feelings while visiting a destination. While the negative aspects of the affective component for this study include unpleasant, distressing, sleepy, and boring, the positive dimensions of the affective component include experiences like pleasant, relaxing, lively and exciting. The mean value for the affective image being 5.68 suggests that tourists tend to agree positively on the emotional aspects of their experiences in Sarawak. This high mean value indicates that visitors generally find their experiences pleasant, relaxing, lively, and exciting. Such positive affective responses are crucial for tourism as they can lead to higher levels of satisfaction, positive word-of-mouth, and repeat visits. It reflects that Sarawak successfully provides an emotionally enriching environment, which complements its cognitive attractions like culture, adventure, nature, food, and festivals. Therefore, continuing to enhance these affective components could further improve tourist satisfaction and contribute to the destination's appeal.

However, there’s only thirty percent ($R^2 = 0.303$) of tourists' sensations can be explained by the cognitive image that includes culture, adventure, nature, food, and festivals; this suggests that other elements have a considerable impact on tourists' experiences and views. This implies that the happiness and overall perception of tourists are significantly shaped by emotional, social, and potentially personal factors. The warmth and friendliness of the people, the originality and warmth of the experiences, the personal connections, the surprising discoveries, and even the standard of service and facilities could make a bigger difference in the overall experience of tourists. Thus, in order to produce a more thorough and fulfilling tourist experience, Sarawak tourism stakeholders must prioritize improving the emotional and experiential dimensions in addition to the cognitive image.

In summary, the study highlights the significance of the CANFF components in shaping the perception of Sarawak as a tourism destination. The correlation between affective and cognitive images is positive, which emphasizes the need of strategically focusing on these aspects to foster favourable tourist perceptions and emotional bonds, which would ultimately increase Sarawak's attractiveness and competitiveness in the tourism sector.

5.3.4 Relationships between Cognitive Image and Destination Loyalty

A major contribution of this study is the confirmation that a strong cognitive image directly influences tourists' intention to revisit and recommend Sarawak. This finding aligns with Cognitive-Affective Attitude Theory by demonstrating how positive evaluations of adventure, nature, food, and festivals create a favourable attitude, which in turn drives behavioural intentions. Based on a literature review, the destination image model, including cognitive image and affective image, has been firmly established as an acceptable means to gain an understanding of tourists' behavior toward revisiting and recommendations (Yang et al., 2022).

The results reveals the positive impact between the cognitive image and destination loyalty. Numerous research have shown that behavioural intentions are strongly influenced by the cognitive image (Wang & Fu, 2015; Wang et al., 2016). More specifically, several researchers discovered evidence in favour of the statistically significant associations between cognitive image and intention to revisit (Tan & Wu, 2016) and intention to recommend the destination (Stylidis et al., 2017).

While tourists generally express a strong intention to recommend Sarawak based on the high mean score, the higher standard deviation for intention to revisit suggests varying levels of interest among tourists. The high standard deviation for intention to revisit indicates that, although some visitors are eager to visit Sarawak again, others might be hesitant or unsure. This might be the result of a number of things, including the price, the logistics of the trip, their general experience, or other private concerns. As discussed in session 5.3.1, the respondents were from many different places, from domestic tourists i.e. Sabah and West Malaysia to international tourist from various nations i.e. from neighbouring countries to western countries. The variability could also indicate that Sarawak appeals differently to various segments of tourists. For some, it might be a one-time bucket-list destination, while others might see it as a place they would want to revisit multiple times.

Furthermore, as the majority of the respondents (74.8%) not taking any holiday package, it's possible that different visitors to Sarawak had different experiences, which affected how likely they were to return. Quality of lodging, attractions or places visited, friendliness, and individual hobbies are just a few examples of the many variables that can affect how likely they are to come back.

Anyway, because tourism-related items are intangible, tourists frequently choose a place based more on their feelings and subjective impressions than on hard data. The relevance of a destination's "subjective feel" is emphasized by Mill & Morrison (2002) and Ahmed (1991). This subjective feel becomes important when considering Sarawak's tourism research that focuses on Culture, Adventure, Nature, Food, and Festivals (CANFF) because tourists are more likely to choose a destination that has a strong, positive, discriminating, and identifiable image (Pearce, 1982; Woodside & Lysonski, 1989). As the process of forming an image is ongoing (Gunn, 1989); visitors' good post-visit perceptions might affect their intention to revisit and spread positive word of mouth (Bigne et al., 2001; Court & Lupton, 1997). Stated differently, a favourable reputation can aid Sarawak in maintaining tourist loyalty.

5.3.5 Relationship between Affective Image and Destination Loyalty

The study further strengthens the theoretical foundation of Cognitive-Affective Attitude Theory by demonstrating that affective image is a crucial determinant of tourists' behavioral intentions. This contribution enhances the understanding of emotional engagement in tourism marketing, emphasizing that destination branding should not only focus on tangible attractions but also on creating deep emotional connections with visitors.

The results reveals the positive impact between the affective image and destination loyalty, as people's behavioural intentions are significantly influenced by their affective image (Lee et al., 2008; Yang et al., 2009). Tourists who perceive Sarawak as lively, pleasant, exciting, and relaxing are significantly more likely to revisit and recommend the destination. Numerous research have shown that behavioural intentions are strongly influenced by the affective image, i.e. Li et al. (2010) found a direct relationship between affective image and behavioural intentions, but no relationship between the cognitive image and behavioural intention. More specifically, several researchers discovered evidence in favour of the statistically significant associations between affective image and intention to revisit (Akgün et al., 2019) and intention to recommend (Akgün et al., 2019; Han et al., 2019).

This study supports the idea that visitors are more likely to respond favourably to a destination when they identify it with pleasant emotions like pleasure, relaxing, lively and fun. It also emphasizes the significance of affect in destination image. In this study, the effect size of the affective image is greater than cognitive image. This finding suggests that tourists more rely on affective image while recommending the tourism destination.

Since it appears that thoughts and emotions, rather than beliefs, more greatly predict tourist decision-making, the study support the findings as numerous researchers contend that feelings impact a person's conduct more than cognitive component (Li et al., 2010; Russell & Snodgrass, 1987; Yu & Dean, 2001). The rising body of research on affective image in academia over the past several years has resulted in an increase in the number of papers on the topic. The overall effect size increased significantly, according to the results. This suggests that for tourism managers and researchers, it is becoming more and more important to concentrate on the affective image dimension of destination image. This study findings also in line with the meta-analytic study results conducted by Zhang at al. (2014) that affective image has the greater impact on tourist loyalty compare to cognitive image.

To enhance tourists' positive experiences and boost destination loyalty, Sarawak tourism can focus on creating memorable and emotionally engaging interactions. This can be achieved by fostering genuine connections between tourists and local communities through personalized and immersive cultural experiences, such as homestays, traditional craft workshops, and community-led tours. When visitors feel welcomed and engaged in meaningful interactions with the local community, they are more likely to view tourism impacts positively. Research has shown that high inter-group emotional solidarity significantly influences individuals' perceptions of tourism impacts (Joo, Cho, & Woosnam, 2019; Li & Wan, 2017), shaping tourists' beliefs and impressions of a destination (Stylidis, Woosnam, & Ivkov, 2020). Emotional solidarity has also been linked to increased tourist spending (Woosnam, Dudensing, & Walker, 2015), higher levels of tourist satisfaction (Joo, Woosnam, Lee, & Lee, 2020; Ribeiro, Woosnam, Pinto, & Silva, 2018), and a greater likelihood of tourists revisiting or recommending the destination (Stylidis et al., 2020).

Beyond shaping tourist perceptions, high emotional solidarity yields tangible economic and behavioral benefits. Research suggests that when tourists feel emotionally connected to a destination, they are more likely to increase spending, as they perceive greater value in local products, services, and experiences. Additionally, strong emotional bonds between tourists and residents contribute to overall satisfaction, reinforcing positive memories and increasing the likelihood of repeat visits and word-of-mouth recommendations. By fostering deeper emotional connections through authentic and engaging cultural experiences, Sarawak can further strengthen its position as a highly attractive and memorable tourism destination.

5.4 Research Implications

The study findings have various implications for both theoretical and practical perspectives, which explained in more detail as below.

5.4.1 Theoretical Implications

The impact of a destination's image on tourists' behavioural intentions has been hotly contested for the last 10 years. While numerous studies have provided empirical support for the relationship between tourists' behavioural intentions and destination image, some research indicates that different patterns and magnitudes may manifest in specific destination aspects (Choi, 2015). This study adds significantly to the body of literature because it was carried out in Sarawak, a Borneo island that lacks destination image studies, particularly with regard to CANFF tourism.

The study add significantly to the body of knowledge in the field in two ways. First, this study offered empirical support for the Gartner's (1993) model, strengthening destination image theory and illuminating the hierarchical relationships between tourist images. Gartner’s model suggests that tourist images are hierarchically interrelated, meaning that the cognitive, affective, and conative components are connected in a structured way that influences how tourists perceive and interact with destinations. Gartner’s model posits that the image of a destination is formed through a hierarchical process: (1) tourists first form an image based on knowledge and beliefs about the destination, (2) these cognitive perceptions then influence their emotional responses, and (3) these emotional responses guide their behavior and intentions regarding the destination. Comprehending this hierarchy facilitates the development of a more comprehensive theory of destination image by elucidating the interdependencies between various aspects of perception and behaviour.

This study expands upon Gartner's approach by examining the direct impact of cognitive image on conation rather than through affective image. This extension has important theoretical ramifications because it casts doubt on the conventional sequential model and raises the possibility that tourists' behavioural intentions to revisit and recommend a destination can be directly influenced by their knowledge and perceptions of it, independent of their emotional reactions. This research implies that destination marketing strategies could benefit from emphasizing the direct improvement of cognitive perceptions in addition to the enhancement of emotional connections. One way to do this would be by offering comprehensive and positive information about the destination's features. With a more complete grasp of how tourists acquire intentions toward a destination, this nuanced understanding enhances the theoretical framework of destination image and loyalty.

Secondly, this study employed a reflective-formative (Type II) model. Formative measures are starting to be conceptualized and operationalized by an increasing corpus of research (Diamantopoulos et al., 2008; Fassott & Henseler, 2015). There are important theoretical ramifications to this study's use of a reflective-formative (Type II) model, especially for the field of tourism research. The study adds to the current conversation on the conception and application of formative measures by utilizing a reflective-formative model. It illustrates how these models can be applied and are relevant in capturing multifaceted, intricate concepts such as the affective and cognitive pictures of travel places.

This method offers strong methodologies for upcoming study and aids in the improvement of measurement ideas.

The reflective-formative model allows for a more comprehensive understanding of how different dimensions (culture, adventure, nature, food, and festivals) collectively form the cognitive image of a destination like Sarawak. This holistic perspective is crucial for understanding the interplay between various components and their impact on tourist perceptions and behavioral intention.

The adoption of reflective-formative models represents a theoretical advancement in tourism research. There has been discussion in the literature regarding formative measurement's vulnerability to both external inconsistency and interpretational confounding (Hardin et al., 2011). Therefore this study challenges traditional reflective-only models and encourages scholars to consider alternative approaches that may offer richer, more nuanced insights into tourist behavior and destination perception. This can lead to the development of more sophisticated theoretical frameworks and models in the field.

5.4.2 Practical Implications

It is essential to thoroughly comprehend visitors' experiences and loyalty while formulating policies and strategies for every destination (Rasoolimanesh et al., 2021; Richards, 2018). This study supports the notion that, despite the composite nature of a destination's image, it is crucial to analyze each component independently to understand how individuals perceive and respond to different tourism destinations. The examination of the three dimensions suggested by Gartner (1993) is particularly useful for Destination Marketing Organizations (DMOs), which are responsible for positioning, branding, and communicating destinations effectively. In this case, evaluating the affective and cognitive aspects of destination images can serve as predictor variables for how tourists behave upon arrival.

The findings of this study provide valuable insights for tourism stakeholders in Sarawak, particularly in designing marketing strategies that enhance tourists' cognitive impressions of the state's Culture, Adventure, Nature, Food, and Festivals (CANFF) tourism. A well-structured cognitive image can appeal to a diverse group of travelers by presenting comprehensive information about Sarawak's rich cultural heritage, adventurous activities, natural wonders, unique culinary experiences, and vibrant festivals. For example, promoting the unique traditions of indigenous tribes, showcasing the exhilarating activities available in Sarawak's rainforests and caves, and highlighting the breathtaking biodiversity of national parks can significantly influence potential visitors' perceptions.

Moreover, the study underscores the importance of affective image in shaping tourists' behavioral intentions, with results indicating that emotional appeal has a more substantial effect than cognitive perception. By emphasizing the pleasurable and relaxing experiences that visitors can encounter in Sarawak, tourism stakeholders can enhance the destination's attractiveness. Marketing campaigns can incorporate testimonials and anecdotes from visitors who have experienced the hospitality of the locals, the stunning landscapes, and the excitement of local festivals. Additionally, vibrant imagery and immersive content can capture the essence of Sarawak's CANFF tourism, further strengthening the destination's emotional appeal and encouraging prospective tourists to visit.

Offer personalized travel experiences that cater to individual preferences, making tourists feel special and emotionally connected to the destination. This could include personalized itineraries, customized tours, or special experiences that align with tourists' interests. Ensuring exceptional hospitality, where tourists feel welcomed and valued, is crucial; this can be supported by training programs for local service providers to enhance their customer service skills. Additionally, promoting tranquil and scenic natural spots for relaxation, and offering well-organized adventure activities that provide a sense of thrill and accomplishment, can further enrich the emotional experience.

Besides, DMOs can use storytelling in marketing campaigns to create a deep emotional connection with potential tourists, in order to develop narratives around Sarawak's culture, adventure, nature, food, and festivals that evoke strong emotions. Ensure that the actual experiences meet or exceed tourists' expectations by maintaining high standards in service, facilities, and attractions. This will reinforce the positive affective image of the destination. By emphasizing authentic, heartfelt experiences and outstanding service, Sarawak can cultivate strong, positive emotions that drive tourist loyalty.

Last but not least, DMOs can engage tourists after their visit through follow-up emails, social media interactions, and loyalty programs. Encourage tourist to share their experiences and memories, which can strengthen their emotional attachment to the destination. For example, share their travel experience on social media with most like, they can win flight ticket to Sarawak or free accommodation in Sarawak. Use social media platforms to share tourists’ stories and experiences that highlight the emotional connections they formed with Sarawak. User-generated content can be a powerful tool to showcase authentic emotional experiences. By spreading good news to their friends and family, tourists can also have a beneficial impact on them. This is a dependable method of influencing tourists' decisions and future behaviour intentions through the direct or indirect effects of affective image. DMOs can also partner with travel influencers who can authentically convey the emotional and cognitive appeal of Sarawak’s tourism offerings. Influencers can help in reaching wider audiences and establishing an emotional connection with potential tourists. In summary, destination managers should prioritize forming an emotive image as a vital variable when there is a lack of budgeting.

5.4.3 Managerial Implications

The study’s findings suggest significant managerial implications, particularly in recognizing the critical role of affective image in fostering loyalty. Establishing a strong emotional bond between tourists and the destination is essential for long-term visitor retention. DMOs should prioritize affective associations by creating opportunities for tourists to actively engage in Sarawak’s cultural heritage. For instance, hands-on workshops where visitors can learn traditional crafts, culinary sessions featuring local cuisine, and interactive music or dance classes can deepen their emotional connection to the destination. Additionally, immersive experiences such as village homestays, where tourists can participate in daily activities and learn about indigenous customs, can further strengthen their bond with Sarawak’s culture.

In terms of nature and adventure-based activities, the Sarawak government can provide guided eco-tours that highlight the state's distinct biodiversity. These can include river cruises through dense jungles, wildlife spotting in Bako National Park, and birdwatching excursions. By incorporating knowledgeable guides who share insights about the ecosystem, these tours can add educational value while enhancing the overall experience. Furthermore, offering tourists opportunities to participate in conservation activities, such as tree planting, wildlife observation, or community-led environmental projects, can create lasting positive impressions and reinforce their emotional attachment to Sarawak's natural beauty.

Food and festivals serve as powerful means of connecting tourists with a destination, yet the study found that respondents lacked sufficient exposure to Sarawak's culinary and festival experiences. To address this gap, Sarawak DMOs can organize guided food tours through local markets, street food vendors, and renowned eateries, highlighting unique Sarawakian dishes such as Sarawak laksa, kek lapis, bamboo chicken, and umai. These experiences can significantly enhance tourists' engagement with the destination, creating a deeper emotional connection and ultimately increasing their intention to revisit and recommend Sarawak to others.

By acknowledging and strengthening the factors that influence tourists' perceptions and emotional attachments, Sarawak's tourism industry can make substantial progress in attracting and retaining visitors. DMOs can enhance destination marketing strategies by focusing on the emotive elements of Sarawak's CANFF tourism—highlighting the friendliness of locals, the excitement of adventure activities, the serenity of natural landscapes, and the vibrancy of cultural festivals. Emphasizing these aspects aligns with how travelers form their opinions and make travel decisions.

Ultimately, a comprehensive tourism strategy that prioritizes both cognitive and affective components can differentiate Sarawak from other destinations, making it a more appealing choice for tourists seeking unique and emotionally fulfilling experiences. This approach can lead to increased visitor satisfaction, repeat tourism, and positive word-of-mouth recommendations, thereby solidifying Sarawak's reputation as a must-visit travel destination. By continuously refining and promoting these elements, Sarawak can create a rewarding tourism experience that benefits both visitors and stakeholders, ensuring sustainable growth and competitiveness in the global tourism market.

5.5 Limitations of the Research

Although this research was conducted with rigorous adherence to scientific principles, it is important to acknowledge its conceptual and methodological limitations. Conceptually, the research is constrained by the parameters of its own objectives. While this study identifies and validates several factors influencing destination image perception, it does not account for other known factors that may also contribute to shaping tourists' perceptions.

Firstly, affective image, or how tourists feel about a place, are influenced by a lot of things other than just their mental picture of it. For example, tourist's previous travel experiences, personal interests, and expectations are all significantly shape their feelings of one destination. For instance, a tourist with a preference for adventurous experiences might have more favourable feeling towards a Sarawak as an adventurous place if they participated in adventurous activities such as jungle trekking and hiking, compare to those who are not. Besides, the service quality such as accommodation, transportation, and customer service that tourists experiences in Sarawak also directly impacts tourist feelings. Poor service can lead to negative feelings or poor affective image even if the cognitive image is strong.

Moreover, destination loyalty especially tourist's intention to revisit also influenced by a number of elements in addition to cognitive and affective image. For instant, economic factors and accessibility are both affects the likelihood of tourist's intention to revisit a destination. No matter how positive tourist's perception of cognitive and affective image of Sarawak, the cost of travel and ease of access definitely influence their decision making.

Besides that, tourists' intents to revisit and recommend the tourism destination can be strengthened by ongoing expansion and improvement, which includes the addition of additional attractions, better facilities, and better services. Other than that, the presence of competing destinations offering similar or better experiences can affect tourist intentions. A tourist might opt for a new destination over revisiting the same one.

From the methodological aspects, when using a questionnaire as an information-gathering tool, the need to avoid excessive length imposes restrictions on the number of variables and scales that can be included, which can limit the comprehensiveness and depth of the data collected. A lengthy questionnaire may cause fatigue in the respondents, decreased completion rates, and worse quality responses as a result of the respondents' reduced focus and effort. Therefore, if the resulting questionnaire is to avoid being unduly lengthy, there are certain restrictions on the amount of variables and scales that must be included when using a questionnaire as an information-gathering tool. Thus, it would be intriguing to do additional research incorporating those kinds of variables to examine their impact on image development.

During the data collection process, several challenges were encountered with the administration of the questionnaires. One key challenge was the varying levels of willingness to participate among different tourist groups. Western tourists were generally more cooperative and open to answering the survey, whereas Eastern tourists were more reluctant. This difference in response rates may be attributed to cultural factors, such as differing attitudes toward privacy, research participation, or unfamiliarity with survey-based studies. Additionally, some respondents were unwilling to disclose personal information, particularly regarding their income status. Questions related to financial matters often led to hesitation or refusal to answer.

Lastly, non-probability sampling which frequently depends on the convenience or availability of subjects can lead to a skewed sample that is not representative of the broader population of interest. As Western tourists might be more likely to engage in surveys, the majority of foreign respondents are from Western nations rather than close-by nations like Indonesia, Brunei, and Singapore. This skewed representation limits the generalizability of the research outcomes and may result in tourism strategies that do not adequately address the needs and desires of the more regionally significant Eastern tourist markets.

To address these limitations, several recommendations for future research are proposed in the next section. A comprehensive research design should be employed, incorporating multiple influencing factors to provide a more holistic understanding of tourists' attitudes and intentions.

5.6 Recommendations for the Future Research

To gain a deeper understanding of the intricate variables influencing affective image and tourists' emotional responses, future research should incorporate additional factors beyond CANFF. Specifically, studies should assess overall satisfaction with the visit, covering elements such as accommodation, transportation, customer service, and other service-related aspects. Future research must ensure the survey captures a wide range of factors influencing tourists' feelings, such as personal experiences, service quality, social influences, and any other factors. It is also suggested to incorporate interviews and open-ended questions to gain deeper insights into the subjective experiences and emotions of tourists.

To better understand the factors influencing tourists' intentions to revisit and recommend, future studies should develop a more comprehensive model that integrates various predictors, including economic factors, accessibility, overall satisfaction, and personal circumstances. Mixed mode research can be used to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the elements impacting visitors' emotions, combine quantitative surveying with qualitative interviewing. Furthermore, future study may include some moderators or mediators to evaluate indirect influence of the exogenous variables towards the endogenous variable to produce more comprehensive findings, as human behavior is a complex process.

Secondly, instead of non-probability sampling method which leading to biased sample that does not accurately represent the research population, it is suggested that purposive sampling techniques can be used to ensure the sample is representative of the population. Purposive sampling allows researchers to intentionally select participants who are most relevant to the study objectives, can help offset the limitations of non-probability sampling and its potential bias in the research. Moreover, it is suggested to examine data according to different demographics, such as nationality, gender, and age, can also provide significant insights into how opinions vary across different groups for a comprehensive and effective destination marketing strategy in Sarawak. Researcher may compare the perceptions and satisfaction levels of Western tourists with those from neighboring Eastern countries to highlight distinct preferences and experiences. Besides, researcher can also segment the data by age groups to understand how younger versus older tourists perceive and experience the destination differently. By doing so, more solid and comprehensive outcome could be generated, better strategies could be implemented.

As some respondents were unwilling to disclose personal information, this reluctance may stem from concerns about privacy, cultural norms regarding discussing personal finances, or uncertainty about how the information would be used. To mitigate this issue, researchers could consider using broader income categories or alternative approaches, such as indirect questioning techniques, to improve response rates. This highlight the importance of adapting data collection strategies to different cultural contexts. Future studies may benefit from employing multiple survey distribution methods, offering anonymity assurances, and refining questionnaire design to encourage greater participation and more accurate responses from diverse tourist demographics.

Lastly, the same research model can be applied to other tourism destinations to assess its generalizability and comparative insights. By analyzing results against data from comparable destinations, such as Indonesia, researchers can identify Sarawak's relative strengths and weaknesses in the tourism market. This comparative approach would help policymakers and tourism stakeholders refine marketing strategies, product offerings, and service quality based on benchmarking insights. The tourism industry is highly dynamic, with tastes, preferences, and trends constantly evolving. A study conducted at one point in time may become outdated or less relevant due to shifts in traveller expectations, emerging destinations, or new industry trends. Therefore, it is recommended that similar research be conducted periodically in Sarawak. Regular assessments will allow tourism stakeholders to track changes in tourist perceptions, preferences, and satisfaction levels, ensuring that Sarawak remains competitive and adaptive in the ever-changing global tourism landscape. By conducting longitudinal studies and updating research findings, Sarawak can make data-driven decisions to sustain and enhance its position as a leading tourism destination.

5.7 Chapter Summary

Illuminating the connection between Sarawak's destination image and tourist loyalty has far-reaching implications for enhancing the region's long-term appeal and competitiveness in the tourism industry. This study's adoption of a reflective-formative (Type II) approach enhances the methodological rigor and validity of tourism research while also offering practical insights for destination management. It improves understanding of how various factors collectively shape a destination’s overall perception, with strategic implications for boosting tourist loyalty.

This knowledge enables tourism stakeholders to strategically tailor their offerings, marketing campaigns, and infrastructure improvements to align with tourists’ preferences and expectations, thereby enhancing the overall visitor experience. By fostering positive perceptions and experiences, destinations can cultivate loyal tourists who not only contribute to repeat visits and sustained revenue but also serve as advocates for the destination. Positive word-of-mouth (WOM) promotion and online reviews help strengthen Sarawak’s reputation, ensuring competitiveness in the global tourism market. Additionally, local authorities can leverage these insights to allocate resources more effectively, maximizing their impact in generating goodwill and fostering repeat tourism.

Regarding the relationships observed in this study, the results are generally consistent with existing literature. However, this study found that affective image has a stronger influence on tourists’ intentions to revisit and recommend than cognitive image, which contrasts with some previous studies. This finding suggests that emotional connections and experiential elements may play a more significant role in shaping tourist loyalty than previously assumed.

Given the study’s limitations, it is recommended that further taxonomic research be conducted to gain a deeper understanding of tourist behavior and to develop more effective strategies for promoting Sarawak tourism. A thorough examination of the factors influencing tourists' intentions to revisit and recommend is crucial for sustainable tourism development and enhancing the destination’s overall competitiveness in an increasingly dynamic global market.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Questionnaire

Faculty of Economics and Business

Universiti Malaysia Sarawak
Kota Samarahan, 94300
Tel: 006082-582360/582459
Fax: 006082671794

Dear Respondent:

I am conducting a research with the topic "Examining Structural Relationship of Cognitive and Affective Images on Destination Loyalty: A Case of Culture, Adventure, Nature, Food, and Festival Tourism in Sarawak". Comprehending and enhancing Sarawak's cognitive and affective image is pivotal for its sustainable development, tourism promotion, and the preservation of its unique identity.

I would like to invite **tourists who have visited Sarawak** to participate in this survey and share their valuable insights about their travel experiences in Sarawak. Please complete the questionnaire based on your honest opinion. There are no right or wrong answers; we are primarily interested in your opinions.

This survey will take approximately 5-10 minutes to complete. All information provided by you will be kept confidential.

Your kind participation and assistance are highly appreciated in making this study a success. Should you have any queries regarding this study, please do not hesitate to contact the person below. Thank you.

Yours sincerely,

Evelyn Toh Ting Ling
(evelyntoh@uts.edu.my)

Section 1

The following statements determine attributes of Image of Sarawak as a tourism destination (CANFF). Please circle one number which represents your answer for each

Please rate each item in a scale from "1 = strongly disagree" to "7= strongly agree" for the case of Sarawak as a tourism destination.							
I think Sarawak has	**Strongly Disagree**	**Disagree**	**Somewhat Disagree**	**Neutral**	**Somewhat Agree**	**Agree**	**Strongly Agree**
Natural Resources							
Beautiful landscape	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Breath-taking scenery and natural attractions	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Unique flora and fauna	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Good climate	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Unspoiled wilderness and fascinating wildlife	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Cultural							
Distinctive historical sites and museums	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Diverse ethnic groups and cultures	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Variety of unique cultural attractions	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Vintage heritage buildings	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Interesting cultural attractions	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Adventurous							
Enormous opportunities for outdoor recreation	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Terrific place for trekking/ hiking/camping/hunting	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Exciting sports and activities	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Wide variety of adventurous activities	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Food							
Rich and varied cuisine	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Appealing local food and beverage	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Unique cuisine	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Good quality of food	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Festival							
Wide arrays of festivals/events	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Tempting festivals/events	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Excellent quality and fun festivals/events	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Variety of special festivals/events	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Please rate Sarawak as a tourism destination for the following feelings, with “1 = Strongly negative” to “7 = Strongly positive”.							
My vacation in Sarawak is	**Strongly Negative**	**Negative**	**Somewhat Negative**	**Neutral**	**Somewhat Positive**	**Positive**	**Strongly Positive**
Unpleasant - Pleasant	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Distressing - Relaxing	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Sleepy – Lively	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Boring - Exciting	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Please rate each item in a scale from “1 = strongly disagree” to “7= strongly agree”, for the intention to revisit and recommend Sarawak as a tourism destination.							
	Strongly Disagree	**Disagree**	**Somewhat Disagree**	**Neutral**	**Somewhat Agree**	**Agree**	**Strongly Agree**
I intend to revisit Sarawak in near future	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I want to visit Sarawak again	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
There is high possibility for me to travel to Sarawak again	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I am likely to say positive things about Sarawak	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I am likely to encourage friends or relatives to visit Sarawak	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I am likely to recommend Sarawak to those who want advice on travel	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Section 2: The following questions are meant only for the purpose of analysis (Answer by writing or marking a tick whichever is required):

1.	Gender	☐ Male ☐ Female
2.	Nationality	☐ Malaysian, state of origin ________________________ ☐ Non-Malaysian, country of origin ________________________
3.	Marital Status	☐ Single ☐ Married ☐ Divorced ☐ Widow/Widower
4.	Age	☐ Below 20 ☐ 21-30 ☐ 31-40 ☐ 41-50 ☐ 51-60 ☐ 61 and above
5.	Annual household income (USD/ RM)	☐ Under $7, 000/ RM32,655 ☐ $7, 001/ RM32, 659 - $12, 499/ RM58,308 ☐ $12, 500/ RM58,313 - $17, 999/ RM83,965 ☐ $18, 000/ RM83,970 - $27, 999/ RM130, 615

		☐ $28, 000/ RM130, 620 - $37, 999/ RM177, 265 ☐ $38, 000/ RM177, 270 or more	
6.	Types of visitors/ tourists	☐ Excursionists (Day trip) ☐ Overnight tourist	☐ Transit with stay ☐ Transit without stay
7.	Purpose of visit	☐ Holiday/ leisure	☐ Others, please specify ________
8.	How did you know about Sarawak? (You may select more than one)	☐ From family/ friends ☐ Travel agency ☐ Travel fair ☐ Online website	☐ Social media ☐ Mass media ☐ Printed media ☐ Others, please specify __________
9.	What are the factors affecting your decision to visit Sarawak? (You may select more than one)	☐ Wildlife and nature ☐ Cultural and heritage ☐ Local delicacies ☐ Festivals and events	☐ Value for money ☐ Safety and security ☐ Shopping ☐ Others, please specify __________
10.	Are you taking any holiday package for this trip?	☐ Yes	☐ No
11.	Is this your first trip to Sarawak?	☐ Yes	☐ No
12.	Which of the categories best describe your travel party to Sarawak?	☐ Alone ☐ Family ☐ Organized group	☐ Couple ☐ Friend/ relative ☐ Others, please specify __________
13.	Please specify the tourist attraction(s) that you have visited/ the activities that you have experienced/ the food(s) that you have tried (you may select more than one):		
	Cultural	☐ Museum ☐ Cultural village ☐ Market/ Craft centre	☐ Religious Shrine ☐ Heritage site ☐ Others, please specify__________
	Adventure	☐ Trekking/ hiking ☐ Swimming/ surfing ☐ Expedition cruises	☐ Fishing/ hunting ☐ Snorkeling/ scuba diving ☐ Canoeing/ kayaking

		☐ Wildlife safaries ☐ Others, please specify ___________
	Nature	☐ National park ☐ Wetlands ☐ Rainforest ☐ Wildlife centre ☐ Beach/ Island ☐ Farm/ Garden ☐ Lake/ River ☐ Cave ☐ Highland ☐ Others, please specify __________
	Food	☐ Noodles/ Main dishes: Laksa Sarawak/ Kolo Mee/ Kampua ☐ Traditional Desserts: Sarawak layered cake/ Moss cake ☐ Traditional Snacks: Crispy rice cookies/ Sago balls/ pepper sweet ☐ Local vegetable dishes: Midin (Jungle fern)/ Sour eggplant ☐ Local fruits: Dabai (local olive)/ Salak (Snake fruit)/ Wild durian ☐ Ethnic specialties: Tuak (Rice wine)/ Ayam pansuh (Bamboo chicken)/ Umai (Raw fish salad) ☐ Others, please specify ____________________________________
	Festival	☐ Cultural and Heritage Festival ☐ Music and Arts Festival ☐ Sports and Outdoor Events ☐ Natural and Wildlife Events ☐ Others, please specify _________________________________
14.	I spend ______________ days (including departure and arrival) on this trip to Sarawak.	
15.	I spend approximately RM __________________ for this trip in Sarawak.	
16.	Do you think this trip is good value for money?	☐ Yes ☐ No, please specify _______________________
17.	What do you like the most in Sarawak? (Select only one)	☐ Culture ☐ Adventure ☐ Naturre ☐ Food ☐ Festival ☐ Others, please specify _______
18.	In your opinion, what will attract tourists from your country to visit Sarawak? (You may select multiple)	☐ Culture ☐ Adventure ☐ Nature ☐ Food ☐ Festival ☐ Others, please specify _______