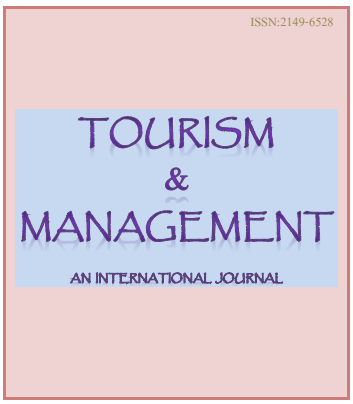

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The Contemporary Edu-Tourism Destination Selection Process: A Structural Regression Model

Abstract
This study developed a model capable of explaining the contemporary edu-tourism destination selection process in the context of Malaysia. It also established dimensions that determined edu-tourists' decision at each stage of the choice process. A modified synthesis model was adapted and used to develop the contemporary edu-tourism destination choice model (CEDCM). The research sampled 500 postgraduate and undergraduate international edu-tourists in 13 Malaysias' public and private universities using a survey questionnaire. Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) supported by Analysis of Moment Structures (AMOS) was used to validate the CEDCM model. The research reveals that the three hypotheses in the study are significant. Thus it provides significant implications for the government of Malaysia, the ministry of tourism, and higher education including the managers of Malaysia's education institutions in order to leap-frog the Malaysia's tourism sector.
Keywords: *Contemporary edu-tourism, Edu-tourism destination, Edu-tourists, Malaysia, Destination marketing.*
JEL Classifications: L83, Z32, N75
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1. Introduction

Global edu-tourism system had been characterised by high edu-tourists' mobility from emerging countries to the west, especially the English-speaking countries such as the United States, United Kingdom and Australia (Verbik & Lasanowski, 2007) thus, portraying a traditional edu-tourism mobility trends. Traditional edu-tourism mobility trend in this case explains edu-tourism destination choice behaviour of international edu-tourists from emerging economies in favour of destinations in the developed economy (Altbach, 2004; Chen, 2007). However, this trend is now changing as many emerging countries and Malaysia in particular now play host to international edu-tourists from other emerging countries (Becker & Kolster, 2012), thus the contemporary edu-tourism mobility trends. The contemporary edu-tourism mobility trend explains the mobility of international edu-tourists from emerging economies to edu-tourism destinations in other emerging economies (Bello, 2015; Roberts et al. 2010). It is pertinent to state that the contemporary edu-tourism mobility trend is a new phenomenon in international edu-tourism discuss.

It was reported that Malaysia is exploiting edu-tourism benefits by exporting university higher education services (Bashir, 2007) hence, attracted 86, 000 international edu-tourists from emerging countries such as Iran, Indonesia, China, Nigeria, Yemen, and Sudan among others enrolled in Malaysia's universities in 2010 (Ministry of Higher Education Malaysia, 2011). The government of Malaysia target to attracting 200,000 international edu-tourists by the year 2020 (Ministry of Education Malaysia, 2014; Ministry of Higher Education Malaysia, 2008). University higher education services, a specialised form of edu-tourism product contributed approximately RM27 billion or four percent to the Malaysia's Gross National Income (GNI) in 2009 (Borneo Post, 2011cited in Bello, 2015) with forecast to earn RM60 billion per year from this segment of edu-tourists from the year 2020 (Rehda Institute, 2014). This projection is based on an average earning of RM30, 000 per international edu-tourists annually, consequently, creating additional jobs of about 536,000 with majority of them in the professional and technical fields (Musa, 2010).

It is pertinent to state that a number of studies had explained the stages (i.e. the process) international edu-tourists from emerging countries go through to selecting edu-tourism destination in advance economies (i.e. the west) (Becker & Kolster, 2012; Chen, 2007; Fowler, 2009; Hagel & Shaw, 2010; Marianne, 2014; Mazzarol & Soutar, 2002; Vossensteyn, 2005). However, despite that Malaysia in now in the league of emerging edu-tourism destinations, few studies have developed and validated a structural model capable of explaining the stages international edu-tourists from emerging economies go through to selecting Malaysia as a preferred edu-tourism destination (Jacqueline, 2010; Jason et al. 2011; Mohd Taib Hj et al. 2009; Siti et al. 2010). In view of this, the present study aims to examine the stages international edu-tourists goes through to selecting edu-tourism destination in the context of Malaysia, including, the causal relationship between each of the stages.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Theoretical Underpinning: Chen's Synthesis Model

Chen's synthesis framework was adapted for the present study because it seems to have the most face validity (Becker & Kolster, 2012) compared to other frameworks developed and used to explain the phenomenon of edu-tourism destination choice process. Though, Chen's framework is a traditional edu-tourism destination choice model, however, the model is comprehensive because it explained edu-tourism destination selection process as consisting of three stages, including, dimensions that determines edu-tourists' behaviour in each stage of the choice process. It also applied the push-pull theory, thereby extending the theory (Becker & Kolster, 2012). It is pertinent to state that the nature of Chen's model, being an output of

mixed research has made the model to stand out among other models used in edu-tourism studies.

The first stage in Chen's framework is tagged the predisposition stage (i.e. the stage edu-tourists decides whether to study abroad or locally at home country). This stage has four dimensions — edu-tourists' characteristics, significant others, external push factor (Home country), and external pull factors (Host country). The stage two of the Chen's framework is tagged, the search stage / choice of country. In this stage, edu-tourists select the country and the institution to apply to. This stage is being measured by the combination of nine dimensions. Hence, edu-tourists' characteristics, significant others, external push factor (Home country), and external factor (Host country) are considered as determinant of choice of a country. Other five dimensions include: internal edu-tourists' characteristics, internal push factors, external characteristics, academic pull factor, and city image. The university choice stage is the third stage in the Chen's framework. In this stage, international edu-tourists select their preferred universities. Three set of dimensions come to play in this stage which include country environment, institutional factor, and city characteristics. In view of the fact that limited models explained edu-tourists destination selection process in the contemporary edu-tourism mobility context (Becker & Kolster, 2012), Chen's synthesis framework was modified to develop the contemporary edu-tourism destination choice model used for the present study.

2.2 Developing the Contemporary Edu-tourism Destination Choice Framework

Chen's synthesis framework is a traditional edu-tourism destination choice model. The model was slightly modified by adding, and or excluding some dimensions to propose the contemporary edu-tourism framework base on the push pulls theory and previous literature. The new model is expected to explain the phenomena of the contemporary edu-tourism destination selection process in the context of Malaysia, including, dimensions that informed edu-tourist's decision in each stage of the choice process as follows.

Decision to Study Abroad – The Push-Pull theory stresses that the push dimensions determine the decision of international edu-tourists to decide to study abroad (Mazzarrol & Soutar, 2002; McMahon, 1992). Push dimensions are also divided into intrinsic and extrinsic factors (Mazzarrol & Soutar, 2002; McMahon, 1992). The former explained personal desire, preferences and motivations of individual edu-tourist that motivates them to seek cross border edu-tourism services (Becker & Kolster, 2012). As it applied to the present study, edu-tourist's characteristics dimension including its corresponding indicators - *academic ability, social economic status, and personal characteristics* in stage one of the Chen's framework were retained (Chen, 2007; Mc Mahon, 1992). In addition, the dimension "significant others" is excluded from the proposed framework as it does not reflect the intrinsic desire of edu-tourists to choose to study abroad. Thus, the following dimensions are assumed as intrinsic push dimensions of international edu-tourists from the emerging economies to choose to study abroad in Malaysia:

1. Edu-tourists' characteristics (Chen, 2007; Mc Mahon, 1992),
2. Academic learning (Becker & Kolster, 2012; Chen, 2007; Mazzarol & Soutar, 2002),
3. Career development (Becker & Kolster, 2012; Chen, 2007), and
4. Socio-cultural factor (Carlson et al., 1990; Mazzarol & Soutar, 2002; Rhodes, 2010; Van Hoof & Verbeeten, 2005).

The latter, "extrinsic factor" in Chens' model according to the push-pull theory emphasised on the characteristics of edu-tourists' home country that pushes international edu-tourists to decide to study overseas (Becker & Kolster, 2012; Mazzarol & Soutar, 2002). Becker & Kolster (2012) argued that due to incompatibility of Mazzarol & Soutar (2002) and

Chen (2007) studies, more research is needed to gain more insight into the extrinsic dimensions of international edu-tourists from emerging economies to choose to study abroad. Hence, since pull dimensions does not push international edu-tourists to choose to study abroad rather, pull dimensions represents those dimensions that made an edu-tourist destination to be attractive to potential edu-tourists (Becker & Kolster, 2012). Therefore, incorporating pull dimension into the framework in stage one is not necessary.

In the present study, the dimensions "external pull factor (host country) - positive, and or negative" in Chen's framework were excluded from stage one of the proposed model. This is because pull factors do not push international edu-tourists to choose to study abroad, rather, it represents those dimensions that made a particular edu-tourism destination country and university to be attractive to potential edu-tourists (Becker & Kolster, 2012). Also, to be modified in stage one is the "external push dimension (i.e. home country)" in Chen's model as Chen did not identify its measures hence excluded. However, the following dimensions are considered as extrinsic push dimensions in the proposed framework based on literature: i. Economic factor (Agarwal & Winkler, 1985; Mc Mahon, 1992), and, ii. Educational / academic system (Mazzarol & Soutar, 2002; Kapur & McHale, 2005).

Choice of the Host Country – Once the decision to study abroad has been concluded by international edu-tourists in stage one, the next stage in the decision- making process in selecting an edu-tourism destination is the choice of the host country (Chen, 2007; Jason et al., 2011; Mazzarrol & Soutar, 2002). Pull dimensions are important determinants in this stage (Mazzarrol &Soutar, 2002; McMahon, 1992). The push-pull theory explained that pull dimensions are directly associated with the host country that make the edu-tourism host country relatively attractive to international edu-tourists (Mazzarrol & Soutar, 2002). The push dimensions on the other hand are associated with edu-tourist's home country that motivate them to choose to study abroad, rather than studying locally in their home country (Mazzarrol & Soutar, 2002). This implies that features of the host country must be perceived to be attractive for an edu-tourist to be motivated to choose the country for study, hence, indices of quality of a country are considered.

In the present study, edu-tourists' characteristics in stage two in Chen's framework is excluded from the new framework. This is because it does not reflect the host country indices of quality. Rather, it represents the intrinsic desire and personal features of edu-tourists which may not likely motivate them to choose a host country. Also, items for the significant others dimension in stage two of the Chen's framework is retained and enhanced in the proposed model. The push dimensions in stage two in the Chen's framework were excluded because, international edu-tourist's choice of a host country are not likely determined by the push factor (Chen, 2007). Also, to be excluded from the proposed model is the pull factor in stage two of the Chen's framework. This is because, using pull factor as a major dimension is beyond the scope of the present study hence, it should be measured. The institutional dimension in stage two in the Chen's model is also excluded from the proposed framework, since; the process is repeated in stage three. Though, Chen's model did not recognise that some international edu-tourists may not follow edu-tourist destination selection process sequentially as proposed in Mazzarrol & Soutar (2002). It is pertinent to state that some international edu-tourists may decide to choose to study abroad, skip the choice of the host country and then choose a university of study. In view of the above argument, the present study incorporates a link to connect stage one (Decision to study abroad) to stage three (i.e. the choice of a university) in the proposed model, thus, assuming that some edu-tourists may skip the second stage of selecting the host country. The "City image" factor in the Chens' model is excluded from the proposed framework, because, features of the city are the same as that of the country. The present study therefore considered the following as dimensions of choice of the host country among international edu-tourists:

1. Significant others (Chen, 2007),
2. Economic (Chen, 2007; Mazzarol & Soutar, 2002; Mc Mahon, 1992),
3. Host country edu-tourism image (Chen, 2007; Mazzarol & Soutar, 2002),
4. Socio-cultural factor (Chen, 2007; Cateora & Graham, 1999; De Mooij, 2004; Mazzarol & Soutar, 2002), and
5. Environment / geographical factor (Alvord et al. 2008; Kleckley, 2008).

Choice of a University – The stage three, the choice of a university is mostly determined by the pull dimensions. The pull dimensions explain the indices of quality that made a university more attractive to international edu-tourists (Chen, 2007; Mazzarrol & Soutar, 2002). This stage is very important to the university authorities, because it enables them to know factors perceived by international edu-tourists as clues of quality of a particular institution. As it applied to the present study, dimensions such as country environment, and city characteristics in the Chen's framework were excluded from the proposed framework. This is because these two dimensions does not reflect the host university indices of quality, rather, that of the host country. Also, to be modified in Chen's model is the institutional characteristics. This is because; many items identified in Chen's framework do not measure institutional characteristics. In view of the above, the proposed framework considered the following as dimensions of choice of a university by international edu-tourists:

1. Institutional characteristics (Baharun, 2006; Chen, 2007; Cohen, 2003; Harari, 1992; Ismail, 2009; Keling, 2006; Lee, 2008; Mazzarol &Soutar, 2002; Van der Wende, 2009; Yusof et al. 2008),
2. Cost or fees (Financial Aids) (Agarwal & Winkler, 1985; Joseph & Joseph, 2000; Mazzarol & Soutar, 2002; Webb, 1993),
3. Internationalisation of the institution (Ayoubi & Masoud, 2007; Deem & Brehony, 2005; Hanson &Meyerson, 1995; Harari, 1992; Klasek, 1992; Knight, 1994; Lipsett, 2009; McGowan & Potter, 2008; Mestenhauser & Ellingboe, 1998; Pickert & Turlington, l992; Van der Wende, 2009), and
4. Peer group / relation influence (Baharun, 2006; Chen, 2007; Licata & Maxham, 1998; Mazzarol, Kemp & Savery, 1997).

The proposed contemporary edu-tourism destination choice framework is therefore presented in Figure 1.

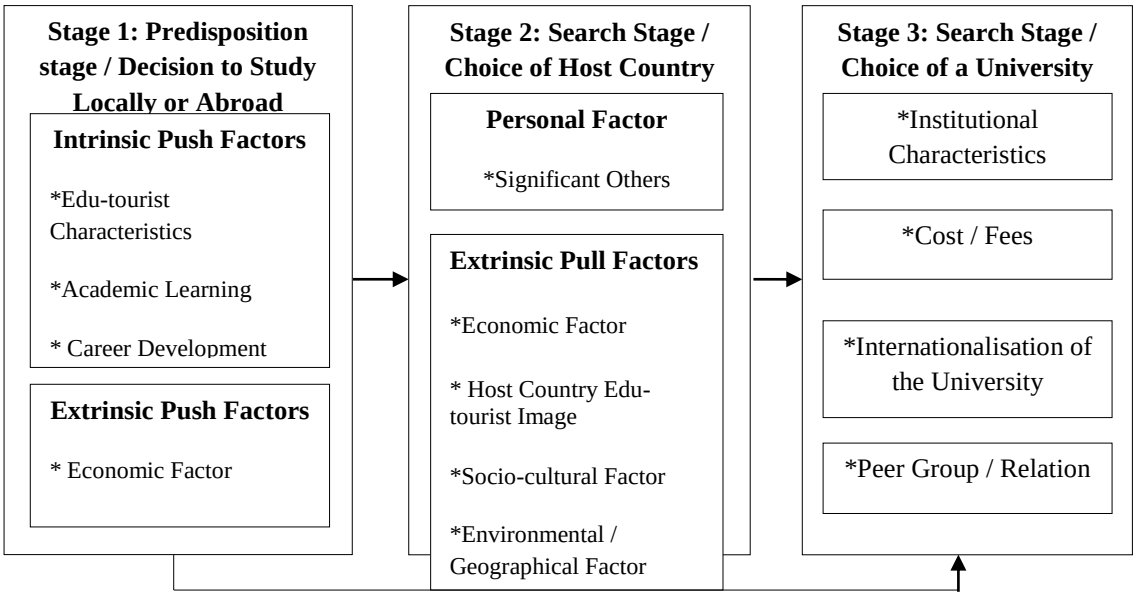

Figure 1: The Proposed contemporary edu-tourism destination selection model.

2.3 Relationship between Decision to Study Abroad and Choice of a Country

The push- pull theory advocated for both the supply and demand side of edu-tourism destination choice process (Hung, 2008). According to the contemporary edu-tourism destination selection model in Figure 1, stage one (i.e. Decision to Study Locally or Abroad) in edu-tourism destination choice process leads to stage two of the choice process tagged "the search stage / choice of a host country" (Chen, 2007; Mazzarol &Soutar, 2002). This implies that once international edu-tourists decided to study abroad in stage one, the next step is to begin the search for a preferred edu-tourism country (Chen, 2007; Jason et al. 2011; Mazzarrol & Soutar, 2002). This implies that a positive and significant relationship exists between the two stages. The assumption underlining the above information holds that stage one of edu-tourism destination choice process, the supply side (i.e decision to study abroad), is independent variable (IV) of stage two, the demand side (i.e Choice of a country). In this context, the current study proposes the following hypothesis;

Hypothesis 1: *There is positive significant relationship between decision to study abroad and choice of a country (Malaysia).*

2.4 Relationship between Choice of a Host Country and Choice of a University

Various evidences in the literature that adopted the push- pull theory to examine the stages in edu-tourism destination choice process and the way in which the process overlap suggests that once an edu-tourist concluded on the choice of a country, the next stage in the choice process is the choice of a university (Chen, 2007; Mazzarrol & Soutar, 2002). This shows that there is a positive significant relationship between the stage two (i.e. Choice of a country) and the stage three (i.e. Choice of a university). In view of this, the current study proposes the following hypothesis;

Hypothesis 2: *There is positive significant relationship between choice of country and choice of a university in Malaysia.*

2.5 Relationship between Decision to Study Abroad and Choice of a University

Evidences in Chen (2007) and Mazzarrol &Soutar, (2002) establish the number and sequence of stages in edu-tourism destination choice process, and the way in which they overlap. Both studies agreed that edu-tourism destination choice process comprised of three interrelated set of constructs (The decision to study abroad, the choice of a host country, and the choice of a university) (Chen, 2007; Mazzarol &Soutar, 2002). However, Becker & Kolster (2012) faulted Chen's (2007) and Mazzarrol & Soutar (2002) studies on the sequence of the three stages in edu-tourism destination choice process. The authors argued that not all edu-tourists follow the three stages sequentially, thereby, raising the possibility that some international edu-tourists may not follow the three stages sequentially, hence, some may skip the consideration for the choice of a host country and directly choose a host university (Becker & Kolster, 2012). This implies that, there could be a direct positive relationship between edu-tourists' decision to study abroad and the choice of a university. In view of this, the current study proposes the following hypothesis;

Hypothesis 3: *There is positive significant relationship between decision to study abroad and choice of a university.*

3. Methodology

A quantitative research design was used in this study. The researchers used a structured questionnaire to measure the process international edu-tourists go through in selecting edu-

tourism destinations in Malaysia. The enrollment statistics of international edu-tourists, both undergraduates and postgraduates, from each of the following six selected countries: Republic of China, Indonesia, Iran, Nigeria, Sudan, and Yemen, in 13 Malaysian public and private universities were obtained to determine the population of this study; 16,205 international edu-tourists were thus confirmed. International edu-tourists from these six countries were used in this study because they consistently top the list of countries that generate international edu-tourists to the following 13 Malaysian public and or private universities as presented in Table 1.

Table 1: List of Malaysian public and private universities with the highest enrolment of international edu-tourists.

Public	Private
Universiti Malaya	Limkokwing University of Technology
Universiti Sains Malaysia	Multimedia University
Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia	Al-Madinah International University
Universiti Putra Malaysia	Linton University
International Islamic Universiti Malaysia	Taylor's University
Universiti Teknologi Malaysia	Asia Pacific University
Universiti Utara Malaysia	INTI International University

Source: Author Survey (2015).

To determine the exact sample size for the present study, the suggestion by MacCallum et al. (1999) was adopted that a sample size of 500 or more observations is adequate for factor analysis. To determine sample size of each of the 13 selected universities vis-à-vis the undergraduate and postgraduate international edu-tourists from the six selected countries, the present study conceded to the method of proportional allocation suggested in Kothari (1990). The proportion of international edu-tourists from each of the 6 selected countries (i.e. Pi....6) to be drawn from the sample size (n) of 500 edu-tourists was determined hence; Pi....6, / N. The sample size of each of the six selected countries (i.e. pi.....6) was determined by multiplying the sample size (n) for this study, put at 500, with the enrolment proportion of international edu-tourists for each of the 6 countries hence; Pi....6,/ n. The process was repeated in the 13 universities to determine the sample size for international edu-tourists per country, per university and level of programme. Since it is practically impossible to access the nominal register of international edu-tourists from the six selected countries in each of the targeted institutions, the researchers opted for non-probability sampling with convenience sampling technique. In view of this, the researchers personally visited each of the 13 targeted universities in Malaysia and, thus, administered the structured questionnaires to every international edu-tourist from the six targeted countries until the sample size for international edu-tourist per country, per university and level of programme was met.

Chen's (2007) synthesis instrument was adopted and modified based on previous studies in the domain of edu-tourism destination choice process as operationalized in Tables 2-4. The instrument was originally used to examine dimensions of destination choice process among international edu-tourists from East-Asian countries in respect to the Canadian graduate schools. The modified questionnaire contained four parts, with part one focused on measures

of decision to study abroad, and part 2 addressing dimensions of choice of host country (i.e. Malaysia). Part three of the questionnaire posits dimensions of choice of a university in Malaysia. Part one, two, and three of the questionnaire adopted a 5-point Likert scale answer of: 1 for strongly not agreed to 5 strongly agreed. Part four of the questionnaire focused on the demographic information of the respondents.

Table 2: Operationalisation of observed variables for edu-tourist's predisposition / decision to study abroad.

Latent Variable	Observed Variables	Number of Items	Description	Source
Predisposition / Decision to Study Abroad	EDUCH	5	Edu-tourist characteristics.	(Chen, 2007; Hung Chich, 2008; Mc Mahon, 1992).
	ACDLN	5	Edu-tourists academic learning motives.	(Becker & Kolster, 2012; Hung Chich, 2008; Joseph, 2011; Zhang &Chen, 2012).
	CARDV	5	Edu-tourists career development.	(Alex Van der, 2010; Becker & Kolster, 2012; HungChich, 2008).
	SOICF	5	Social / cultural Interaction.	(Carlson, et al 1990; Hung Chich, 2008; Van Hoof &Verbeeten, 2005).
	ECOFA	5	Economic factors of the home country.	(Agarwal &Winkler, 1985; Mc Mahon, 1992).
	EDUAS	5	Education and academic system at the home country.	(Kapur & Mc Hale, 2005; Mazzarol & Soutar, 2002; Zhang & Chen, 2012).

Source: Author Survey (2015).

Table 3: Operationalisation of observed variables for choice of a host country.

Latent Variable	Observed Variables	Number of Items	Description	Source
Choice of the Host Country	SIGOH	5	Edu-tourist personal ties to the host country.	(Chen, 2007; Joseph, 2011; Lee, 2010; Zhang & Chen, 2012).
	ECNFT	5	Economic factors of the host country.	(Chen, 2007; Mazzarol & Soutar, 2002; Mc Mahon, 1992).
	HCEDU	5	Host country edu-tourism image.	(Chen, 2007; Mazzarol & Soutar, 2002; Wikins & Huismu, 2011).

HCSCF	5	Socio-cultural relationship between the host and home country.	(Cateora & Graham, 1999; Chen, 2007; De Mooij, 2004; Mazzarol & Soutar, 2002; Wikins et, al. 2011).
ENVGF	5	Environmental factors and geographical link between the edu-tourist's hosts and home country.	(Alvord et, al. 2008; Kleckley, 2008; Rees, 2002).

Source: Author Survey (2015).

Table 4: Operationalisation of observed variables for choice of the host university.

Latent Variable	Observed Variables	Number of Items	Description	Source
Choice of the Host University	INSCH	5	Institutional Characteristics	(Rees, 2002; Wikin et al. 2011; Zhang & Chen, 2012).
	COTFS	5	Cost factors	(Agarwal & Winkler, 1985; Joseph, 2011; Joseph, 2000; Lee, 2010; Rees, 2002; Siti et al. 2010; Webb, 1993).
	INTUN	5	Degree of Internationalisation of the host university	(Ayoubi & Masoud, 2007; Deem & Brehony, 2005; Hanson & Meyerson, 1995; Harari, 1992; Klasek,1992; Knight, 1994; Lipsett, 2009; Mc Gowan & Potter, 2008; Mestenhauser & Ellingboe, 1998; Pickert & Turlington, 1992; Rees, 2002; Van de wende, 2009;Wilkin et al. 2011).
	PEGRT	5	Influence of peer group / relation	(Baharum, 2006; Chen, 2007; Joseph, 2011; Mazzarol et al. 1997; Rees, 2002; Zhang & Chen, 2012).

Source: Author Survey (2015).

Structural equation modeling (SEM) supported by Analysis of Moment Structures (AMOS) was used to validate the relationship in the proposed contemporary edu-tourism destination choice model (CEDCM) / framework in Figure 1. The method SEM was chosen because it allows the researcher to consider overall tests of the model fit, regression weights, correlation coefficients, means and variances simultaneously (Hair et al. 2006). SEM allows the researcher to estimate multiple and interrelated relationships through multiple regression equations. It represents unobserved concepts or variables in the relationships (Arambewela & Hall, 2008). SEM takes a confirmatory hypothesis testing approach to analyses structural theory influencing a phenomenon, hence, the method represents a causal approach that seeks

to examine a set of relationship between one or more independent and dependent variables (Cool et al. 1989).

As it relates to the present study, the contemporary edu-tourism destination choice model was run using AMOS 22 software. The model was examined for its overall fit using the model fit indices suggested in Byrne (2010) and Hair et al. (2010). These scholars recommended reporting Chi-square (x^2), Comparative fit index (CFI), Goodness of fit index (GFI), Root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA) and Normed Chi-square (χ^2/df) (in case of sample size > 200 (Kline, 2011). In addition, the path coefficients were also examined both for statistical significance ($p< 0.05$) and practical significance ($\beta > 0.2$).

4. Results

The reliability of measures of each construct in the proposed CEDCM model was assessed using Cronbach's alpha. The composite reliability of each of the six aggregate dimensions of decision to study abroad in stage 1 of the model ranges between 0.75 to 0.871 except for "Edu-tourist characteristics" and "Academic learning" with composite score of .439 and .511 respectively. This suggests that the two dimensions are not reliable, thus dropped from the scale. However, the composite reliability scores of the remaining four dimensions: Career development (α=0.775), Social cultural factor (α=0.871), Economic factor of the origin country (α=0.859), and education / academic system of the host country (α= 0.704) were statistically reliable (Barrett, 2007). In addition, the composite reliability score for each of the five aggregate dimensions of edu-tourist's choice of a host country in stage 2 of CEDCM model ranges from 0.747 and 0.809. Significant Other, (α=0.747), Economic factor of the host country, (α=0.809), Edu-tourism image of the host country, (α=0.806), Social cultural factor of the host country, (α= 0.806), and Environmental factor of the host country, (α=0.769). This justifies that all the items for the five measures are internally consistent. Furthermore, the composite scores for each of the four aggregate dimensions of choice of a university in stage 3 of the CEDCM model ranges from 0.753 and 0.839. The composite reliability value of Institutional characteristics, (α=0.836), Cost / Fees, (α=0.839), Internationalisation of the university, (α=0.812), and Peer group / Relations, (α= 0.753) showing that they are all statistically reliable. This implies that the four dimensions in stage 1, five aggregate dimensions in stage 2, and four aggregate dimensions in stage 3 of the proposed CEDCM model, met statistical requirement for them to be included in the CFA.

Analysis of Moment Structure (AMOS) software was used to run the confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) on all the measuring items and sub-scales of each of the three constructs hence, test for the fitness of the model, the convergent and discriminant validity. The result of the initial model specification did not fit well to the data, as the normed chi-square (CMIN/DF) = 3.36; comparative fit index (CFI) = 0.796; goodness of fit index (GFI) = 0.751; root- mean- square error of approximation (RMSEA) = 0.058; and incremental Fit Index (IFI) = 0.797. This indicates the need for further modification of the model. To improve the initial model specification, items with factor loading < 0.6 were deleted from the model, one item at a time starting from the lowest loading. Following this procedure, two items which include EDAS5 and EDAS4 were deleted from Education and Academic System at the home country (EDUAS) variable. Hair et al. (2010) suggested that every latent variable should have a minimum of three items to justify its retention in the model. In view of this, only two items could not justify the retention of EDUAS variable in the model, thus, deleted. Three items SIGOH2, SIGOH5, and SIGOH1 were deleted in the Significant Others. The variable could not be retained with only two items, hence, deleted from the model. Only one item could not justify the retention of the Environmental factor variable as three items which include EVNGF1, EVNGF2, and EVNGF3 were deleted due to low factor loadings. Items HCEDU4 and HCEDU1 were deleted from the EDU_Image variable, while item EVNGF2 and

HCSCF2 were deleted from the Socio-cultural variable. Four items, PEGR1, PEGR3, PEGR2, and PEGR5 and two items, COTFS5, and COTFS4 was deleted from the Peer and Cost dimensions respectively making the researchers not to retain both variables in the model.

Items that share relative numbers of large standardised residual covariance with other items were deleted as indicators for possible misspecification. This was confirmed via modification indices (M.I) which shows the extent to which overall mode X^2 is reduced by constraining respective paths (Hair et al., 2010). Following this guide, HCEDU3 was deleted in EDU_Image variable, making us to lose the variable due to limited items to justify its retention in the model. An examination of the result of the third attempt yielded a better result but the model still not fit despite the adoption of stringent cut-off factor loading of < 0.6-0.7. In this wise, more specification improvement was warranted.

Following suggestions in Hooper et al. (2008), two errors of the same dimensions with high M.I value are said to be redundant, thus, one of such items should be deleted or better still, both items should be co-varied. In view of this, item 5, 6, 7, 8, 20 and 21, were correlated. This significantly improves the model. Thus revealed that the value of Chi-square (x^2) = 1165.486; Comparative fit index (CFI) = 0.917; Goodness of fit index (IFI) = 0.917; TLI = 0.908; Root –mean- square error of approximation (RMSEA) = 0.053; Normed Chi-square = 2.966, and df = 393. This implies that the model fit well with the data.

In addition, all factor loading (coefficients) of items of each dimension in each stage of edu-tourism destination choice process in the context of Malaysia substantially meet the ideal threshold value of > 0.2 (Hoe, 2008; Joreskoh & Sorbom, 2001). The results of the construct and discriminant validity of the final measurement model shows that both CR and AVE computed for the model meet the cut-off minimum values of 0.7 and 0.5, respectively. The result of composite reliability shows that the value of CR is greater than 0.7 thus shows the fulfillment of composite reliability as shown in Table 5. Convergent validity is achieved when all the CR values' corresponding to different constructs exceeds their respective AVE values. This evidences the fulfillment of this rule as shown in Table 5.

Table 5: Validity and reliability of edu-tourism destination choice model in Malaysia.

	CR	AVE	MSV	ASV	Choice of Country	Choice of University	Decision to Study Abroad
Choice of Country	.821	.698	.377	.252	**.836**		
Choice of University	.808	.678	.468	.422	.614	**.823**	
Decision to Study Abroad	.775	.540	.468	.298	.357	.684	**.735**

The discriminant validity was assessed by examining both minimum shared variance (MSV) and average shared variance (ASV). The rule of thumb for achieving discriminant validity is if the values of both MSV and ASV are less than their corresponding AVE values for each of the constructs. The evidence of this rule is met as shown in Table 5.

The result of the structural regression analysis shows that the model fit well with the data, hence, predicted that significant relationship exists between the three stages in the contemporary edu-tourism destination choice process in respect of international edu-tourists from emerging economies in Malaysia. This was evidences in the fit indices result of the model in Figure 2, thus, the Normed Chi square = 2.966, indicating a reasonable fit. Consistently, CFI= 0.917, IFI= 0.917, TLI= 0.908 and RMSEA= 0.053.

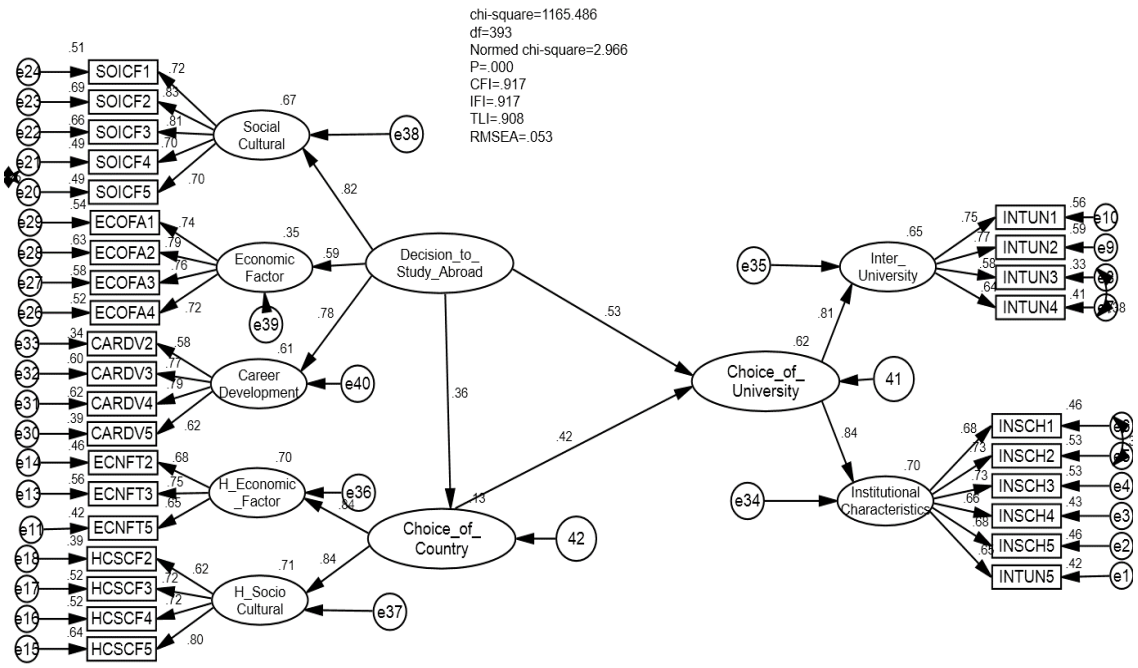

Figure 2: Structural regression model of the contemporary edu-tourism destination selection process.

In sum, values of the selected fit indices consistently indicated that hypothesised structural regression model fitted well with the data. In addition, the path coefficients were also examined both for statistical significance ($p < 0.05$) and practical significance ($\beta > 0.2$). The results yielded acceptably statistical significance for the three hypotheses as shown in Table 6.

Table 6: Estimate of the hypothesized model.

			Hypothesized Relationship	Estimated Coefficient	S.E.	C.R.	P
Choice of Country	←	Decision to Study Abroad	H_1	.36	.083	5.990	***
Choice of University	←	Choice of Country	H_2	.42	.041	7.208	***
Choice of University	←	Decision to Study Abroad	H_3	.53	.059	8.732	***

The results of the hypothesised model as shown in Table 6 indicates that the structural path between "Decision to study abroad" and "Choice of country (Malaysia)" showed a positive significant relationship. The results indicated that standardised estimated coefficient of decision to study abroad on the choice of country (Malaysia) = .36, standard error = .083, critical ratio = 5.99 and the level of significance = .001, which supported the structural path. In addition, result of hypothesis (H_2) is statistically significant with the standardised estimate of .42, standard error = .041, critical ratio = 7.208 and the level of significance = .001, thus, supported the structural path. Moreover, the result of hypothesis (H_3) shows that standardised regression weight = .53, standard error = .059, critical ratio = 8.73 and the level of significance = .001, thus, supported the structural path.

5. Conclusion, Implications and Limitations

The current study sought to establish the causal relationship between the three variables of interest in the contemporary edu-tourism destination choice process in Malaysia and how they explain, and predict destination choice decision among international edu-tourists. Hence, the following results were found respectively.

Theoretically, the push-pull theory was successfully applied in the present study to explaining the contemporary edu-tourism destination choice process, including, determinants of international edu-tourist's behaviour at each stage of the choice process. This further confirmed the applicability of the push- pull theory to edu-tourism study in Malaysia.

The results indicated that the decision to study abroad predicts the choice of Malaysia as a preferred edu-tourism destination country among international edu-tourists from emerging economies. The findings are in conformity with previous literature in the domain of edu-tourists' migration, hence, international edu-tourists will decide whether to seek cross border edu-tourism services in a particular country having implicitly compared their intrinsic desires and expectations with the quality of edu-tourism resources available in the potential host country (Becker, 1994; Fourage & Ester, 2007; Massey et al., 1993; Mincer, 1993). Their decisions to study abroad are motivated by indices of quality at the destination country (Chen, 2007; Mazzarol & Soutar, 2002). In the context of the present study, the above findings implies that international edu-tourists from emerging economies will continue to study abroad in as much edu-tourist resources in their respective countries are unable to meet their intrinsic desires. They will choose Malaysia as edu-tourism host countries if indices of quality of Malaysia are perceived to be more attractive to them than that of their origin countries, thus, confirm the push- pull theory.

The result further shows that the causal relationship between choice of country (Malaysia) and the choice of a university is significant. This implies that the structural path is supported, hence, variables related to touristic attributes of Malaysia such as culture and economy contributes to attracting international edu-tourists to selecting Malaysia's universities. The above findings are in conformity with previous studies in the domain of edu-tourism destination choice process. These studies reported that host country dimensions such as economy (Chen, 2007; Mazzarol & Soutar, 2002; Mc Mahon,1992), the host country edu-tourism image (Chen, 2007, Mazzarol & Soutar, 2002; Reen, 2002 Wilkin & Husan, 2011), the socio-cultural features of the host country (Cateora & Graham, 1999; Chen, 2007; De Mooij, 2004; Mazzarol &Soutar, 2002; Wikins et, al. 2011) among others motivates international edu-tourists' choice of a university. In the context of the present study, the Malaysia's' socio-cultural, and economic factors have touristic attributes that could be explored to attract and extend visitor's stay and expenditure and promote repeat visits.

The result shows that the relationship between decision to study abroad and the choice of a university is significant. This implies that the structural path is supported, hence, variables related to intrinsic attributes of edu-tourists (i.e. socio-cultural factor, and quest for career development), and the economy of edu-tourist's home country determines their decision to study abroad and subsequently their choice of university. The above findings are in conformity with previous studies. These studies suggested that a university that provides opportunities for edu-tourists to make international connection, develop their cross cultural competence, including, provision of opportunity to expand communication skill, and global understanding will attract high edu-tourist inflow (Baharun, 2006; Chen, 2007; Cohen, 2003; Harari, 1992; Ismail, 2009; Keling, 2006; Lee, 2008; Mazzarol & Soutar, 2002; Yusof, et al. 2008). Lipsett, (2009), McGowan and Potter (2008), and Van der Wende (2009) opined that students are likely to be attracted to a university that can equip them with the needed sets of skills capable of enhancing their career path, and overall value for future employers. This

implies that university with attributes that could meet the intrinsic desires of edu-tourists may likely be attractive to them, hence, fulfilling their decision to study abroad.

Practically, changes in the tourism and education industries over the last two decades have seen the convergence of these two industries with education facilitates mobility, and learning to become an important part of tourist's experience. Countries could be become more successful if they are able to link both the education and tourism industries as avenue for international exchange and learning. It was identified in the study that the CEDCM model predicted that significant positive relationship exists between the three stages in the contemporary edu-tourism destination choice process in respect to international edu-tourists from emerging economies in Malaysia. This implies that international edu-tourists from emerging economies will not stop to study abroad in as much edu-tourist resources in their respective countries are unable to meet their intrinsic desires. These findings may be useful in tourism product development activities in Malaysia. Hence, identification of the push factors that motivated edu-tourists decision to study abroad will help in tourism product segmentation, designing tourism promotion programs, and destination development decisions. The model further posits that edu-tourists from emerging economies will continue to choose Malaysia, and Malaysia's' universities in as much that indices of quality of Malaysia, and Malaysia's universities are perceived to be more attractive than that of their origin countries. This suggests that Malaysia (i.e. Country), and Malaysia's universities could be branded as tourism product. Therefore, we suggest that both the government of Malaysia, the ministry of tourism, and managers of Malaysian universities should make the most of the attractive country image of Malaysia among international edu-tourists to designing a marketing strategy for the country to attracting more international edu-tourists.

Despite the insightful results that were obtained, the study still has some limitations. One of the limitations of the current study is that only international edu-tourists from emerging economies was focused, thus, did not consider international edu-tourists from the developed economies. If this is done it may provide a more in-depth insight and more meaningful results. The study sampled international edu-tourists from emerging economies that enrolled in Malaysian universities as at the second semester, 2014 academic session. If this study is repeated in the future, it might provide different results and information because of dynamic nature of humans. Edu-tourists from six countries was investigated in the current study, the sample population could be extended to other edu-tourists source countries to Malaysian universities, hence, provides better information and results.

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