CONSUMER PREFERENCE TOWARDS VISIT INTENTION ON AGRITOURISM DESTINATION

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Abstract*: Given the rise in agritourism destinations, it is crucial for anyone working in the sector to understand what influences consumer preference toward visit intention. Understanding further consumer preferences on agritourism will be a valuable step to bridging tourists from urban areas and agritourism sites from rural areas. Therefore, the aim of this study is to explore the consumer preferences towards visit intention on agritourism destinations among visitors who have visited any agritourism site in Malaysia. These factors include facilities, services, and products. 84 respondents who have visited any agritourism site in Malaysia completed a self-administered questionnaire that was meant to collect information and measure respondents' preferences. To test the hypotheses in this study, linear regression analysis was used. The findings demonstrated that the three variables (Facilities, Services, and Products) significantly influence the visit intention on agritourism destinations. The outcome of this study perhaps will help the University College of Agroscience Malaysia (UCAM) to develop a good agritourism development plan effectively and efficiently.*

Keywords*: Agritourism Destination, Consumer Preference, Visit Intention*
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Introduction

Agriculture's multifunctional value on a global scale includes its potential to alter the environment, sustain social and cultural systems, and contribute to economic progress (Sugiharti et al., 2020). One aspect of agriculture's multifunctionality is its role as an agritourism destination, defined as using agribusiness for tourism to extend agricultural knowledge, experience, recreation, and business relationships (Sugiharti et al., 2020). Agritourism has become an essential aspect of rural economies worldwide, driven by urban populations seeking pollution-free, nature-centric, and unique lifestyle experiences (Man et al., 2020). By merging agriculture and tourism, agritourism offers diverse economic and non-economic benefits for farmers, visitors, and communities, while promoting sustainability and preserving agricultural land resources (Setyo et al., 2021). Malaysia, for instance, has witnessed

substantial agritourism growth, with government agencies like the Ministry of Agriculture and Food Industry (MAFI) and the Ministry of Tourism, Arts, and Culture (MOTAC) playing vital roles in its development (Man et al., 2020). As agritourism gains momentum, understanding consumer preferences becomes crucial to sustaining its success and making it a driving force for rural development (Sugiharti et al., 2020). To this end, the Ministry of Rural Development (KPLB) aims to establish the University College of Agroscience Malaysia (UCAM) as a model for agritourism development, with consumer preferences as a key consideration for successful implementation (Sugiharti et al., 2020).

Amidst the extensive literature on consumer preferences towards agritourism destinations (Gyska, 2018; Setyo et al, 2018; Delos Reyes et al., 2021), there is a notable gap in research focusing on consumer preferences in the campus setting. To address this void, the present study aims to investigate consumer preferences towards an agritourism destination at the University College of Agroscience Malaysia (UCAM) in Melaka. UCAM envisions developing a green campus with an agritourism destination that offers visitors opportunities for health, leisure, recreation, and education. By utilizing existing assets such as farms, livestock, laboratories, and lakes, UCAM seeks to create engaging tourist attractions and visitor centers with a strong emphasis on agricultural education and high-quality tourism-related products. Considering the campus's location in the Alor Gajah District, this venture has the potential to provide an exceptional agritourism experience. The study will explore consumer preferences for facilities, services, and products to ensure the significant and successful development of the agritourism destination on the campus (Gyska, 2018; Setyo et al, 2018; Delos Reyes et al., 2021).

The objective of the study are to identify the significant relationship between consumer preferences towards visit intention on agritourism destinations in terms of facilities, services, and products.
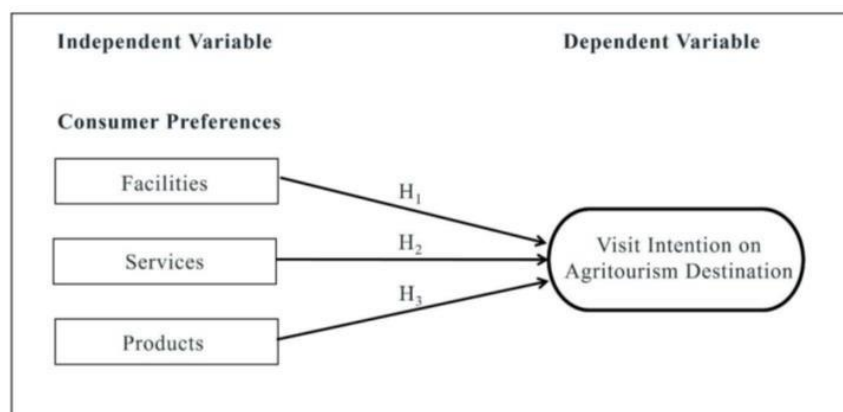

Figure 1: The Research Framework

Sources: Adapted from Delos Reyes et al. (2021)

The proposed theoretical framework for consumer preference towards visit intention on agritourism destinations at UCAM adapted three (3) components of Consumer Preferences that act as independent variables for the study. The three (3) constructs of facilities, services, and products were adapted from the previous study by Delos Reyes et al., (2021) that analysed consumer preference towards agritourism in Laguna, Philippines.

Methodology

The study used the quantitative research approach because the researcher intends to determine the consumer preferences of the potential consumers regarding visit intention on agritourism destinations in a campus setting. The variables in this study are independent variables which are; consumer preferences in terms of facilities, services, and products. While the dependent variable is visit intention on agritourism destination. The study setting for this research is a non-contrived setting and the time horizon for this study is a one-shot to answer the research question, which leads to a cross-sectional study. The cross-sectional design was adopted in the current study because the data were collected only once. Thus, the purpose of the study is correlational because it involves several variables, to understand how the variables are related to one another.

The unit of analysis for this study is individual, where the respondents will answer the questionnaire independently. The population of the study is based on the year 2018 tourists visited agritourism areas in Malaysia (Figure 2). For this study, the sample of the respondents this research is those who are potential consumers of agritourism destinations, which is the visitors who have visited any agritourism site in Malaysia.
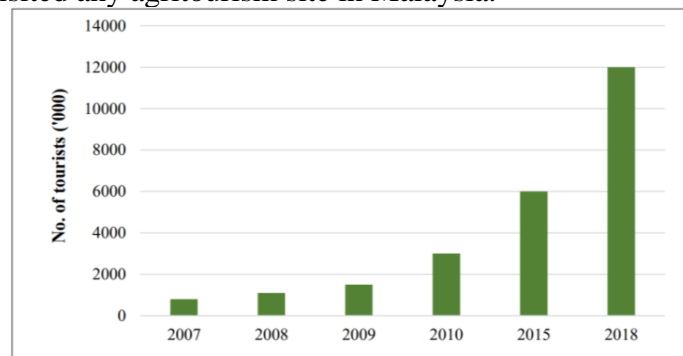
Figure 2: Number of Tourists Who Visited Agritourism Areas

Source: Ministry of Agriculture and Agri-based Industry

The power analysis will be used in this study after a number of other approaches to determining sample size have been considered. The minimum number of participants required under the guidelines would be 77. Hence, power analysis, more especially the G*Power analysis, was used to establish this sample size.
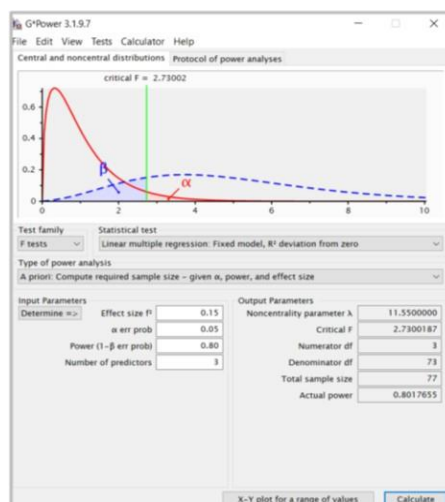
Figure 3: G*Power Calculation

For this study, the researcher chose convenience sampling as a sampling technique under the non-probability technique. The respondents will not be randomly selected but based on willingness to respond. It is an easier, less expensive, and more timely technique than the probability sampling technique.

For data analysis, the collected data were examined by SPSS to determine the means and percentages for each of the questionnaires' items. Cronbach Alpha was used to check the reliability of the survey. Other than that, descriptive analysis was used for demographic and key variables. In addition, linear regression analysis was used for hypothesis testing to explain relationships between consumer preferences towards visit intention on agritourism destinations in terms of facilities, services, and products. Hence, multiple linear regression was utilized to test which consumer preferences among facilities, services, and products that influences the most towards visit intention on agritourism destinations.

Results and Discussion

The Cronbach's Alpha reliability analysis on all variables in this study including facilities, services, products, and visit intention among visitors who have visited any agritourism destination in Malaysia, resulted from 0.857 to 0.908. This finding indicates that the internal consistency obtained from all these instruments is very good and excellent. Table 1 shows a summary of the values of Cronbach's Alpha for each variable used in this study.

Table 1: Result of Reliability Analysis

No.	Variables	Cronbach's Alpha	Strength of Association
1.	Facilities	0.857	Very Good
2.	Services	0.908	Excellent
3.	Products	0.871	Very Good
4.	Visit Intention	0.888	Very Good

N=84

Based on Cronbach's Alpha result in Table 1, the Cronbach's Alpha value for Section B of the questionnaire regarding the dimension of consumer preference towards visit intention on agritourism destination in terms of facilities indicates a very good Cronbach's Alpha value of 0.857, while the dimension of consumer preference towards visit intention on agritourism destination in terms of services in Section C shows Cronbach's Alpha value is 0.908. Section D involves consumer preference towards visit intention on agritourism destination in terms of products recorded Cronbach's Alpha value of 0.871, while Section E related to the visit intention in agritourism destination also recorded Cronbach's Alpha value of 0.888 which depicts very good reliability of the instruments. As a result of the reliability test conducted, all dimensions in each variable exceeded Cronbach's Alpha minimum value of 0.7, so all instruments were reliable for further analysis.

As this was a correlational study, linear regression analysis was performed. Linear regression analysis can be used to analyse the relationship between an independent variable and a dependent variable.

Table 2: Model Summary for Facilities, Services, and Products with Visit Intention

Model Summary

	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
ALL_FACILITIES	.620[a]	.385	.377	.53518
ALL_SERVICES	.734[a]	.539	.534	.46312
ALL_PRODUCTS	.771[a]	.595	.590	.43424

a. Predictors: (Constant), ALL_FACILITIES, ALL_SERVICES, ALL_PRODUCTS

Linear regression analysis was used to test if the tangible significantly predicted satisfaction. Based on Table 2, the R Square value for facilities is 0.385. The results of the regression for the facilities indicated the predictors explained 38.5% of the variance. Besides, the R square value for the services is 0.539. The value indicated that the services is able to explain 53.9% of the dependent variable, which is visit intention. Additionally, the R Square of the products is 0.595, which indicates that the products are able to explain 59.5% of the dependent variable.

Table 3: ANOVA for Facilities, Services, and Products with Visit Intention

ANOVA[a]

		df	F	Sig.
ALL_FACILITIES	Regression	1	51.237	<.001[b]
	Residual	82		
	Total	83		
ALL_SERVICES	Regression	1	95.922	<.001[b]
	Residual	82		
	Total	83		
ALL_PRODUCTS	Regression	1	120.376	<.001[b]
	Residual	82		
	Total	83		

a. Dependent Variable: ALL_VISIT_INTENTION
b. Predictors: (Constant), ALL_FACILITIES, ALL_SERVICES, ALL_PRODUCTS

Based on table 3 ANOVA table, the F value of 51.237 is significant at $p<.001$ ($p<0.05$). Therefore, it shows that the independent variables facilities can reliably predict the dependent variable visit intention, $F(83) = 51.237$, $p<0.05$. Thus, it can be deduced that the regression model is a good fit for the data.

In addition, the F value for services is 95.922, which is significant at $p<.001$ ($p<0.05$). Consequently, it shows that the independent variable's services can reliably predict the dependent variable, which is visit intention, $F(83) = 95.922$, $p<0.05$. Hence regression model is acceptable.

The table above also shows the ANOVA table for products with the dependent variable. Based on the result, the F value of 120.376 is significant at $p<.001$ ($p<0.05$). Besides, the independent variable products can reliably predict the dependent variable, which is visit intention, $F(83) = 120.376$, $p<0.05$. Therefore, the regression model is showing a significant relationship.

Table 4: Coefficients for Facilities, Services, and Products with Visit Intention

Coefficients[a]

		(β)	t	Sig.	Result
H1	ALL_FACILITIES	.620	7.158	<.001	Accepted
H2	ALL_SERVICES	.734	9.794	<.001	Accepted
H3	ALL_PRODUCTS	.771	10.972	<.001	Accepted

a. Dependent Variable: ALL_VISIT_INTENTION

According to Table 4, the coefficient for facilities is 0.620, which is statistically significant. Furthermore, the p-value is lower than 0.05 (p<0.05) it is considered that there is a significant relationship between independent value (facilities) and dependent value (visit intention). Moreover, the t-value is greater than 2, which is 7.158. Hence from the table above, the researcher can conclude that the facilities is positively and significantly influence the visit intention. Therefore, the hypothesis can be accepted.

The coefficient for services is 0.734, which is statistically significant. Furthermore, the p-value is <.001, which is lower than 0.05 (p<0.05). Therefore, considered that there is a significant relationship between services, which is the independent variable, and visit intention, which is the dependent variable. In addition, the t-value is greater than 2, which is 9.794. Hence from the table above, the researcher can conclude that services is positively and significantly influence visit intention. Therefore, the hypothesis was accepted.

The products standardized coefficient beta value is statistically significant, with 0.771. Furthermore, the p-value is <.001, which is lower than 0.05 (p<0.05). Consequently, it is considered that there is a significant relationship between the independent variable, products with the dependent variable, visit intention. Additionally, the t-value is greater than 2, which is 10.972. Therefore, it can be concluded that products is positively and significantly influence the visit intention. The hypothesis is accepted.

Consequently, the hypotheses of the study are accepted:
H1: There is a positive relationship between consumer preferences towards visit intention on agritourism destinations in terms of facilities.
H2: There is a positive relationship between consumer preferences towards visit intention on agritourism destinations in terms of services.
H3: There is a positive relationship between consumer preferences towards visit intention on agritourism destinations in terms of products.

This indicates that the study of the relationship between facilities and visit intention has been carried out since years ago. In addition, the physical facilities, such as cleanliness and a comfortable setting, have a favourable impact on how well people enjoy the park (Brown & Malenfant, 2017).

Besides, the result of the study indicates that the services may affect visitors to visit UCAM in the future. This finding is supported by the study conducted by Islam et al., (2019); and Montoya-Weiss et al., (2003), consumers gain confidence and trust in the service provider

because of their professionalism; as a result, this attitude positively correlates with customers' experiences and influences their visit intention.

Other than that, Dedeoglu et al., (2018) found that products have a significant positive relationship with the visit intention. He adds since parks also provide products to people, the physical environment and the rides attractions become the primary assessment of the visitors' experience.

Conclusion

For the conclusion, consumer preferences have been proven by this study to have a positive impact on establishing the visit intention. In other words, visitors who were the respondents of this study agreed that they had the intention to visit UCAM in the future when they agreed with the facilities, services, and products. Thus, some recommendations can be made for future study. Future researchers are advised to use moderator effects such as gender, age, income level, education level, and many more. This factor allows the tourism industry players in Malaysia to get more detailed information for their market segmentation. Nevertheless, future researchers may conduct the same study with includes consumer motivation and consumer behaviour as the variables. If this recommendation can be taken into consideration by future researchers, it is believed to help in improving the quality of the agritourism destination and at the same time, boosting the country's economy through the visit intention.

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