
**CONTRIBUTING TOWARDS A STIMULATING-ORGANISM-RESPONSE (SOR)
MODEL OF TOUR-GUIDE STIMULATED TOURIST BEHAVIORAL STUDY****CHAI CHING TAN**

Abstract: Given the significant values of guided tours, a study that focuses on tour guides is important. The purpose of this study is to provide a “student” account of the roles of tour guides played in influencing tourists’ perceptions of the services, overall tour experiences and intention to join future trips of similar performances. The roles can be considered as the performative practices of tour guides which refer to the embodied dedications towards the tourists by the skillful uses of communicative, social, instrumental, interactional and caring competencies and attitudes. Overall, a stimulus-organism-response (SOR) model of Tour-Guide Stimulated Tourist Behavioral study is statistically validated, with significant model fits demonstrated by GFI, NFI, CFI of the structural equation modeling (SEM). Multiple regression analyses are also presented. The results can be implied to help the university improve the tour guide qualification or modify the training or curriculum requirement.

Keywords: Tour Guide, Stimulus-Organism-Response (SOR), Curriculum Development

Introduction: It has long been recognized that learning in a fieldtrip environment is effective (Esteves et al. 2015) as the experiences gained can inspire the students in their career developments. To gain optimum result, a good preparation prior to fieldtrip is necessary as it improves the students’ familiarities with the destinations cognitively and psychologically (Orion, 2008). Nevertheless, no studies are available that address how tourism students’ fieldtrip that relate to tour-guide experiences as well as how the tour-guide roles impact on the students-as-tour members’ learning and their perceived values of destination experiences, loyalty towards the destination and states of satisfaction, and intention to join future trip of similar performance. As such, this research is purported to study these phenomena. Role of tour guide, as inferred from the role theory (Bibble, 1979), would be a significant driving force to delight tourists (Solomon et al. 1985). The roles undertaken in this research also manifest the performative practices of tour guides, which can represent their attitudes and dedications to bring the best to the tourists, and include communicative, social, instrumental, and caring attitudes and behaviors. Tour guides are significant front-line service resources which could significantly impact on tourists’ perceptions towards the values they received as well as their future intention to re-engage with the services. Tour guide’s actions and dedications would thus represent a significant part of the factors that influence service quality (Zeithma and Bitner, 2000) and tourist attitudes relating to the trip and the services (Biddle and Thomas, 1966). Tour-guide roles are considered as they are actually controllable from the service provider’s point of view. Thus, the outcome of this research could be implied to tour operations to better configure and modify tour-guide induced encounter

system with the tour members. In this way, the success or failure of a tour program implemented is on the hands of the tour guides.

Research Method: A questionnaire-based survey approach is applied, which incorporates the three domains of constructs, namely the conditioning factors of the tour-guide roles, the values of destination experiences and learning perceived to occur, including perceptions of the qualities of transportation and food and beverages, and finally the tour members’ attitudes, satisfaction and intention to join future trip of similar performance. The structure of the theoretical conceptions can be interpreted to manifest the stimulus-organism-response (SOR) model of tourist behavioral influence as advocated in Aung and Tan (2016) – That is, tour guide roles play the stimulating effect to influence the perceptual organism of the tourists and thus impact on their attitude of the trip and the continuing use of similar services in the future. SOR model as such contributes to the various disciplines – the most obvious ones are services, relationship management, consumer/tourist behaviors, student learning and human resource development. When the results of this research are brought forward to the student learning domain, the students can be shown to activate a Kolb’s (1984) experiential learning cycle, which help the students to develop better awareness and understanding in the subjects (i.e. tour-guiding) they learned.

Research Findings: In this research a total of 116 students participated in the questionnaire-based survey. These students belonged to three buses, out of a total of six buses used for the fieldtrip, that the researcher was assigned as an observer. In the four full-day fieldtrip, the researcher was rotated through different bus each day and the survey started on the very first thing in the morning after the previous day

of fieldtrip experiences of the students. In this way, the observer was not, in any way, influencing the views and opinions of the students, and moreover, the students' memories were fresh and the survey restricted the students to address their perceptions to only the fieldtrip experiences of yesterday.

By the use of Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) technique, a first-layer fit is shown in Figure 1 which highlights the conditioning impact of tour-guide roles towards the perceptual organisms of the tour members, manifested in the perceived value of the destination experience and the learning occurrence. Thus, Figure 1 illustrates the S-O (stimulus-organism) aspects of the SOR model, which displays that social role of tour guide plays an active role in influencing tour members' perceptions over the value of the destination experience, while the three other roles of tour guides, in terms of interactional, instrumental, and care, and the tour members' perceptions of the value of the destination experience, have significant influences predicting the variance of tour members' learning. Goodness-of-Fit Index (GFI), which is an early attempt to produce a fit statistic that is less sensitive to sample size, is 1 which is an excellent fit. Also, the Normed Fit Index (NFI) shows a perfect fit of value = 1, and the Comparative Fit Index (CFI), which is also normed so that value is between 0 to 1, indicates a perfect fit. GFI, as discussed in Hair et al. (2006), has "many desirable properties, including its relative, but not complete, insensitive to model complex" (p. 749). Nevertheless, a slightly higher skewness values of the constructs indicates that the model may not fit well to an actual population, not just a sample used for estimation; thus, the Root Mean Square Error of Approximations (RMSEA), in range 0.3-0.4, are slightly further away from zero, which implies that not all the roles of tour guides displayed in Figure 1 will actively impact on tour members' learning and perceptions relating to destination experiences.

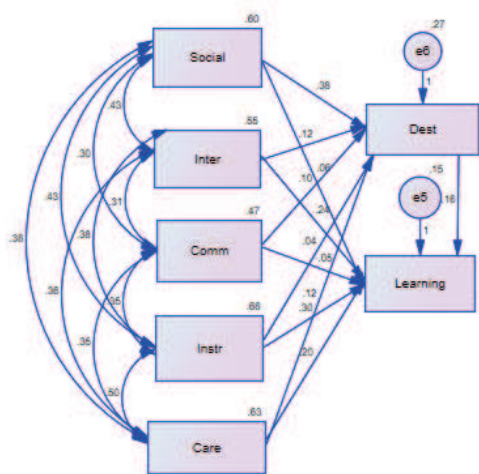


Figure 1: First-Layer Model Fit

In Figure 2, the tour-guide stimulated SOR tourist behavioral model is shown statistically supported – describing the directional interrelationships among the stimulating roles of tour guides, the perceptual organism of the tour members particularly towards the perceived values of destination experiences and the learning, and the attitudinal responses of the tour members. The attitudinal responses of the tour members include their loyalty to the destination, their satisfaction states, and intention to join future trip of similar performances. Tour members' intention measure can be used to infer the effectiveness of the trip program and the services rendered by the tour guides. Thus, while the perceived value of destination experience and learning manifest the authenticity, activity and attraction and acquisition of knowledge aspect of tourism, the transportations and food and beverages are the supporting resources which also play significantly important roles in influencing tourist satisfaction and intention for continuing relationship with similar trip program and the tour-guide services. Tourist loyalty is important as the trust gained could reduce price elasticity of trip program offers (Hornell et al. 2006), and through positive words-of-mouth of the tourists who have had experienced the tour services (shown in the operationalization of destination loyalty), would lead to market size expansion and good reputation in the marketplace. The learning-centered experience of tour members illuminates the role played by the tour members' experiences which involve knowledge generation and tourists' uses of sense-channels (Moscardo, 2009) to impact on personal development, i.e. the trip has helped to improve self-confidence, develop personal identity, learn more about myself, and acquire new skills, which could further benefit careers and relationships with family members, circles of friends and colleagues in the workplace (Aung and Tan, 2016).

Conclusion: A stimulus-organism-response (SOR) model of Tour-Guide Stimulated Tourist Behavioral study is statistically validated, by the use of SEM and multiple regressions. The SOR configuration also shares the mindfulness theory of Moscardo (2009) in that the role of tour guides can set to create the mindful state of perceptual functioning of the tourists, which eventually lead to active experience and participation of tourists, and thus, positive outcomes such as satisfaction. Based on the research outcomes identified, as either post-mortems or summative feedback of the success or things to be improved of the fieldtrip, the students of the course and the fieldworks can relate to each other on relevant findings, and can create or extend specific research findings or contents that are grounded in real-world contexts, and further share information on

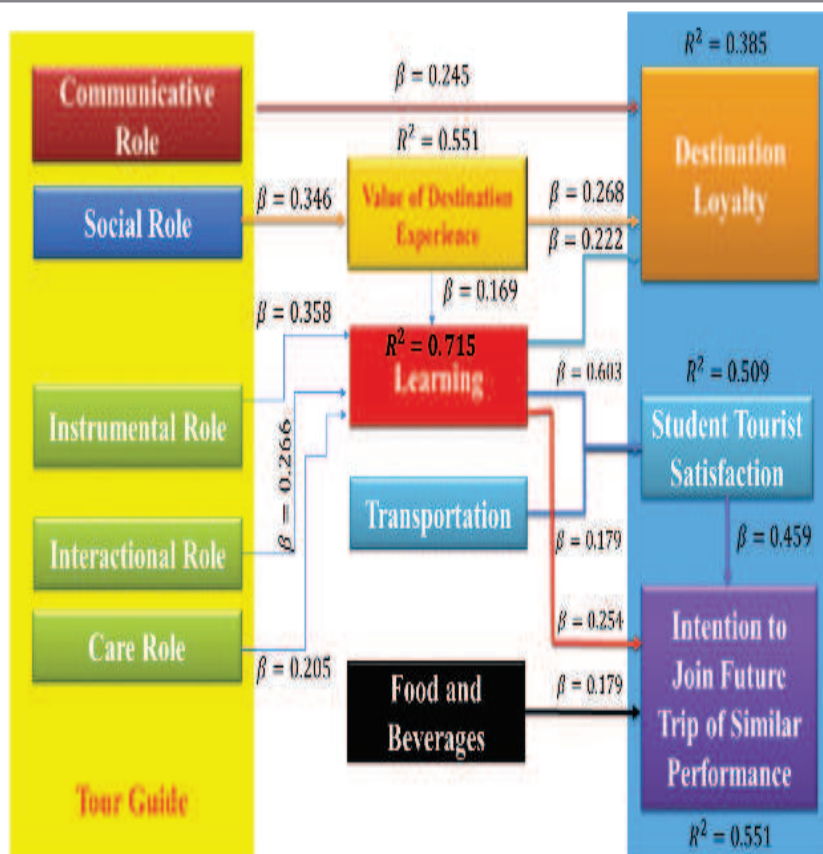


Figure 2: The Tour-Guide Stimulated SOR Tourist Behavioral Model

what the students experience relating to the research findings, in the class as a true community of learners. The “relate,” “create,” and “share” aspects in the learning process form the essential components of an engagement theory advocated in Kearsley and Shneiderman (1998) which aims to foster cooperation and exchange among students to produce a significant effect in performance (Strickland and Xie, 2012). Students also need to learn to recognize the significant value of road transportation, which shares what King and Associates’ (2007) stress on – that is,

“the private sector tourism industry needs to be more engaged and more proactive in transportation policies and issues” (p. 2). King and Associates (2007) also highlight that “to be a tourist is to be concerned about driving time, driving safety, driving costs, and driving frustrations” (p. 3), and thus, the quality of transportation and on-the-journey services should be emphasized as they would certainly improve the recreational states of tourists and thus their satisfaction and loyalty.

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