

The staycation behaviour intention among tourists: A conceptual paper

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ABSTRACT

The concept of staycation, once considered a niche trend, has gained substantial momentum following global crises such as the COVID-19 pandemic. In Malaysia, the surge in domestic tourism amid border restrictions has elevated staycations as a prominent feature of local travel behavior. Despite its growing popularity, the theoretical understanding of the determinants of staycation behavior intention remains limited. Grounded in the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB), this conceptual paper proposed a model incorporating traditional TPB constructs: attitude, subjective norms, and Perceived Behavioral Control (PBC) in the context of staycation. These factors reflect the evolving motivations of post-pandemic travelers, particularly in the Malaysian context. This study provides a comprehensive framework for analyzing staycation revisit intention by integrating these variables. The proposed model offers a theoretical contribution to tourism behavior literature and practical insights for stakeholders, including tourism marketers and policymakers. Ultimately, this paper contributes to the sustainable recovery of domestic tourism and supports entrepreneurial opportunities linked to local travel.

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1. INTRODUCTION

The global tourism industry has experienced profound and unprecedented disruptions over the past two decades, with the COVID-19 pandemic marking one of the most significant upheavals in travel behavior. The pandemic restricted international travel and heightened health-related anxieties among potential tourists, causing a substantial shift toward safer, more localized travel alternatives. Within this context, staycations, defined as leisure travel activities undertaken within one's local area, have gained renewed prominence and appeal (Muritala et al., 2022; Moon & Chan, 2022). Staycations were a growing trend before the pandemic, driven by concerns over sustainability, travel costs, and personal convenience. However, the pandemic significantly accelerated their popularity. During periods of travel restrictions and heightened health risks, staycations emerged as a safe and practical alternative, allowing individuals and families to engage in leisure activities without the complications and perceived dangers associated with long-distance travel (Kou et al., 2024; Mulvey et al., 2024; Hashim et al., 2020). In addition to mitigating travel anxiety, staycations have been linked to psychological well-being, offering restorative experiences and supporting mental health during stressful periods (Lin et al., 2021; Pratminingsih et al., 2024). Several critical factors influence staycation behavior, including risk aversion, protection motivation, travel anxiety, and cultural values (Huang et al., 2023; Pratminingsih et al., 2024; Nik Hashim et al., 2019). While the emotional benefits of staycations may occasionally resemble those of ordinary weekends spent at home, they also provide a sense of novelty and escapism, which are vital for enhancing subjective well-being (Moon & Chan, 2022; Patwary et al., 2023; Bakar et al., 2024). Younger generations, particularly Millennials and Generation Z, have shown an increasing interest in staycations, motivated by their desire for unique, authentic experiences and opportunities for social interaction (Astuti & Atrisia, 2024; James et al., 2017; Nasir et al., 2022).

Moreover, staycations offer considerable advantages in terms of the economic impact. They contribute to local economies by stimulating demand for domestic tourism services and reducing carbon emissions associated with long-haul travel (Kou et al., 2024; Hung & Huan, 2024). Government initiatives and local incentive programs have successfully promoted staycations as part of broader strategies to support the tourism industry during periods of reduced international mobility (Wong et al., 2021; Ali et al., 2023). Despite the growing staycation study, theoretical investigations into the determinants of staycation behavior intention remain limited. The Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) has long served as a foundational framework for predicting travel intentions, positing that attitude, subjective norms, and Perceived Behavioral Control (PBC) are critical antecedents of behavioral intention (Ajzen, 1991). Nevertheless, emerging research suggests that traditional TPB constructs alone may not fully capture the complexities of post-pandemic travel behavior, particularly in the context of staycation, which has gained greater significance (Yuzhanin & Fisher, 2016; Erul et al., 2023). In response to these evolving dynamics, this conceptual paper proposes a TPB model that constructs influencing staycation behavior intention. In doing so, the study aims to offer a more comprehensive understanding of domestic tourism behavior in the Malaysian context. By addressing both theoretical gaps and practical challenges, this study contributes to the sustainable development of Malaysia's tourism industry. Other than that, it provides a robust foundation for future empirical investigations.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Attitudes

Attitudes play a crucial role in determining an individual's likelihood of engaging in staycations, as they encapsulate the behavior's cognitive, emotional, and social evaluations (Hadinejad et al., 2024). A positive attitude toward staycations is formed when individuals perceive them as cost-effective, convenient, and emotionally rewarding (Sthapit et al., 2020). Conversely, negative attitudes emerge when individuals associate staycations with boredom, lack of novelty, or perceived inferiority to international travel experiences (Jacobsen et al., 2021). The factors influencing attitude formation can be broadly categorized into economic considerations, psychological benefits, social influences, and media representation (Zhang, 2021).

Staycations offer considerable mental benefits, especially during increased stress or limited travel options. Studies indicate that participating in local trips or hotel experiences can temporarily enhance psychological capital, comprising hope, optimism, confidence, and resilience, aiding individuals in managing distress and adjusting to new challenges like those presented by the COVID-19 pandemic (Wong et al., 2021; Lin et al., 2021). Note that staycations are linked to rejuvenation and stress alleviation, as a barrier against burnout and promoting overall mental health, particularly for individuals facing job-related stress or telecommuting exhaustion (Wu, 2023). In contrast to international trips, staycations lessen logistical challenges and enable people to uphold their routines, which lowers the likelihood of post-travel fatigue and jet lag (Liu et al., 2023; Chong et al., 2022). As a result, the study formulates the following hypothesis:

H1: There is a relationship between attitude and staycation revisit intention

2.2 Subjective Norms

Subjective norms are crucial in shaping individuals' staycation revisit intentions, representing the social pressures and expectations that influence decision-making (Ajzen, 1991). These norms emerge from the opinions and behaviors of family, friends, colleagues, and society, guiding individuals toward travel choices that align with socially accepted behaviors (D'Arco et al., 2023). The rise of social media and digital communication has amplified the impact of subjective norms, making them even more significant in determining travel preferences (Erul et al., 2023). Hence, understanding the role of subjective norms in shaping staycation behavior is essential for promoting domestic tourism and influencing consumer decisions (Choirisa & Rizkalla, 2021).

Moreover, peer influence extends to travel planning, as individuals rely on recommendations and experiences shared within their social networks. Positive testimonials about staycations from peers increase their perceived desirability, making individuals more likely to engage in local travel (Yu et al., 2021). The influence of peer groups is powerful among younger generations, who frequently share and discuss travel experiences online (Li et al., 2024). Social media has emerged as a powerful tool in shaping subjective norms related to staycations. Travel bloggers, influencers, and online communities promote domestic tourism, reinforcing staycations as a popular and socially endorsed choice (Van Raemdonck et al., 2025). Furthermore, studies indicate that exposure to staycation-related content on digital platforms increases the likelihood of individuals choosing local travel over international trips (Chen et al., 2025). With the above notion, the following is hypothesized:

H2: There is a relationship between subjective norms and staycation revisit intention

2.3 Perceived Behavioral Control

PBC is a fundamental determinant of staycation revisit intention, reflecting an individual's belief in their ability to engage in a specific behavior (Ajzen, 1991). In the context of tourism, PBC encompasses factors such as financial resources, time availability, ease of travel planning, and confidence in executing travel decisions (Wang & Chen, 2023). Individuals who perceive fewer constraints and greater autonomy over travel choices are likelier to opt for staycations over international travel (Kim & Lee, 2022). This discussion examines the various dimensions of PBC that influence staycation behavior and explores how financial, logistical, and psychological factors shape domestic travel preferences (Park et al., 2021).

Time constraints are another critical factor shaping PBC in staycation decisions. Unlike long-haul vacations that require extensive planning and extended leave from work, staycations offer greater flexibility, allowing travelers to make last-minute decisions without significant disruptions to their routines (Park & Jung, 2022). Therefore, individuals with rigid work schedules or family responsibilities often perceive higher control over their ability to engage in staycations, as these require less time commitment compared to international travel (Wang et al., 2023). Research highlights that work-from-home arrangements and flexible work schedules increase staycation behavior by reducing time-related barriers (Kim et al., 2022). Hence, the study formulates the following hypothesis:

H3: A relationship exists between perceived behavioral control and staycation revisit intention

2.4 The relationship between smart tourism destination and regenerative tourism participation

Staycation revisit intention signifies an individual's readiness and willingness to engage in a staycation experience again (Ajzen, 2002). In travel behavior, revisit intention reflects a tourist's inclination to return to a previously visited destination. In this context, it refers to an individual's eagerness and preparedness to partake in another staycation. According to Baker and Crompton (2000), revisit intention encompasses the likelihood that a tourist will visit a destination and consider revisiting it, indicating satisfaction and perceived value from the prior experience.

The concept of staycation revisit intention also captures the emerging trend of individuals repeatedly choosing local leisure experiences over traditional travel, influenced by factors such as convenience, affordability, health concerns, and sustainability. This trend has gained momentum, particularly in the post-pandemic era, as people increasingly prefer nearby recreational options that align with lifestyle and environmental values (Gössling et al., 2021). Moreover, contemporary research indicates that revisit intentions are shaped by the initial satisfaction with the staycation experience, including reduced travel stress, cost-effectiveness, and the discovery of meaningful experiences within the local environment (Huang et al., 2021).

2.5 Framework

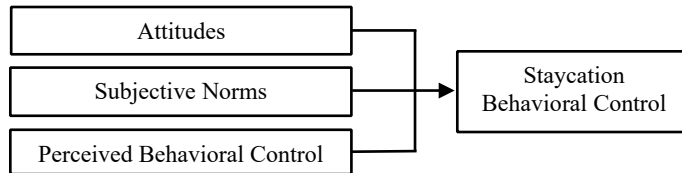


Fig. 1. Framework

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Design

This study will adopt a quantitative research design. The target population of this study comprises domestic tourists aged 18 years and above who have experienced staycation activities. Consequently, purposive sampling will be employed to ensure that respondents meet the criteria. Participants must be willing to participate voluntarily.

Table 1. Data Collection Procedure

Element	Description
Target population	Domestic tourists with experience of a staycation
Method of sampling	Purposive sampling
Research technique	Quantitative technique
Data collection method	Online questionnaire distribution

3.2 Instrumentation and Measurement

The conceptual model is structured around traditional TPB constructs, including attitude, subjective norms, and PBC. Note that instruments were adapted from validated scales in previous tourism studies (Ajzen, 2002; Kim et al., 2023; Gómez-Suárez et al., 2023). Variables are measured using a five-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).

3.3 Reliability and Validity Test

A pilot test with 100 respondents was conducted to assess the reliability and validity of the instrument, following Sekaran and Bougie's (2019) rule of thumb as displayed in Table 2. Cronbach's Alpha values ranged from 0.769 to 0.955, indicating strong internal consistency across constructs. Correspondingly, experts from Universiti Malaysia Kelantan reviewed content validity.

Table 2. Rule of Thumb Cronbach's Coefficient Alpha

Cronbach's Coefficient Alpha (α)	Reliability Level
0.80 – 0.95	Very Good
0.70 – 0.80	Good
0.60 – 0.70	Fair
Below 0.60	Poor

4. FINDINGS

4.1 Demographic

Table 3. Demographic Profile of Respondents

Category	Description	Frequency	Percent (%)
Gender	Male	57	57%
	Female	43	43%
Age	18-22	20	20
	23-27	28	28
	28-32	18	18
	33-37	14	14
	38-42	10	10
	42 and above	10	10
Race	Malay	60	60
	Chinese	20	20
	Indian	10	10
	others	10	10
Occupation	Government	22	22
	Private	25	25
	Self-employed	12	12
	Student	28	28
	Other	13	13
Salary	RM1,500 and below	25	25
	RM1,501 – RM2,000	20	20
	RM2,501 – RM3,500	18	18
	RM3,501 – RM4,500	17	17
	RM4,501 and above	20	20

Most respondents were Malaysian domestic tourists familiar with staycation: most were female (65%), and the remaining (35%) were male. The respondents' ages ranged from 18 to 42 years and above. The highest of the respondents (28%) aged between 23 and 27 years, (20%) of them aged from 18-22 years, between 28 and 32 years (18%), between 33 and 37 years (14%) between 38 and 42 years (10%) and the last group of respondents is 42 years and above of age (10%).

As for the respondents' ethnicity, most were Malay (60%) compared to Chinese (20%), Indian (10%), and others (10%). In terms of occupation, more than half of the respondents were students (28%), 22% of respondents were in the government sector, 25% were from the private sector, and only 12% were self-employed. The remaining group of respondents were from other sectors (13%).

Moreover, the descriptive analysis revealed that the majority of respondents (25%) received a monthly income below RM1500, while 20% received a monthly income from RM1501 to RM2500. The remaining (18%) of the respondents received between RM2501 and RM3500 monthly, with 17% receiving RM3501 to RM4500 monthly. Lastly, 20% of respondents received a monthly income of RM4501 and above.

4.2 Data Distribution

Data normality was assessed via skewness and kurtosis. According to Bulmer (1970), skewness between -0.5 and +0.5 indicates approximate symmetry. The pilot data satisfied these criteria, justifying parametric analysis such as Structural Equation Modeling (SEM).

4.3 Data Analysis

IBM SPSS version 26 was used to analyze the data. Full-scale data collection will utilize SmartPLS 4.0 for Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM). This approach is appropriate for predictive modeling and theory development in behavioral research (Hair et al., 2022). The measurement model will assess construct reliability (Cronbach's Alpha, composite reliability), convergent validity (average variance extracted), and discriminant validity (Fornell-Larcker criterion). The structural model will evaluate path coefficients, mediating effects, R^2 values, and Q^2 predictive relevance through bootstrapping with 5,000 samples.

5. CONCLUSION

This paper advances tourism behavior research by presenting the TPB model as the critical determinant of staycation behavior intention. While the traditional TPB constructs attitude, subjective norms, and PBC remain foundational, especially within the evolving tourism landscape in a post-pandemic era. As international travel becomes increasingly affected by environmental, health, and economic concerns, domestic travel options such as staycations offer a resilient alternative that promotes sustainability, emotional well-being, and community engagement. In the Malaysian context, staycations are particularly important for revitalizing the local tourism industry, offering affordable and accessible travel experiences that meet the needs of risk-averse and environmentally conscious travelers. The proposed framework captures these emerging trends, providing a comprehensive foundation for understanding revisit intentions among domestic tourists. Other than that, it offers actionable insights for policymakers, tourism marketers, and hospitality providers seeking to design more targeted and effective strategies. For instance, tourism authorities can emphasize local destinations' emotional and cultural value, promote sustainable practices, and develop programs that highlight proximity as a key advantage. Additionally, this conceptual model opens new avenues for future empirical research. It invites scholars to validate the extended TPB model across different geographic regions and demographic groups and to explore moderating effects such as income level, prior travel experience, and digital engagement. Longitudinal studies would further enhance understanding of how traveler motivations and behaviors evolve, especially in response to ongoing global challenges. Overall, this study contributes significantly to the theoretical contribution on sustainable tourism and provides a strategic framework to support the sustainable development of Malaysia's domestic tourism sector in a dynamic global environment.

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7. CONFLICT OF INTEREST STATEMENT

The authors declare that this research was conducted in the absence of any commercial, financial, or personal relationships that could be construed as a potential conflict of interest. The authors also declare that there are no conflicting interests with the funders regarding the publication of this manuscript.

8. AUTHORS' CONTRIBUTIONS

Siti Nazatul Anis Mohd Alwi: Conceptualisation, methodology, investigation, data collection, formal analysis, and writing-original draft; **Nik Alif Amri Nik Hashim:** Conceptualisation, supervision, methodology, validation, and writing-review and editing; **Siti Salina Saidin:** Conceptualisation, supervision, validation, and writing-review and editing; **Nor Syuhada Zulkefli:** Conceptualisation, validation, and writing-review and editing; **Aqilah Nadhirah Sukarno:** Investigation, data collection, and formal analysis; **Izzati Razlee:** Investigation, data collection, and literature review.

9. DECLARATION OF GENERATIVE AI IN THE WRITING PROCESS

The authors used ChatGPT, a generative artificial intelligence (AI) tool developed by OpenAI, solely to assist with language editing, grammar checking, and improving the manuscript's readability. The AI tool was not used to generate research ideas, conduct literature reviews, analyse data, interpret findings, or draw conclusions. The authors developed all research content, analyses, and conclusions presented in this article. All content has been reviewed and approved by the authors, who take full responsibility for the integrity of the work.

10. DATA AVAILABILITY/SUPPLEMENTARY MATERIALS

The datasets generated and analysed during the current study are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request. All relevant data supporting the findings of this study are included within the article.

11. ETHICS STATEMENT

This study was reviewed and approved by the Faculty of Hospitality, Tourism and Wellness, Universiti Malaysia Kelantan. All procedures involving human participants were conducted in accordance with ethical research standards. Informed consent was obtained from all respondents before participation, and the anonymity and confidentiality of the participants were strictly maintained throughout the study.

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