

**TOURIST'S MOTIVATIONAL FACTORS AND  
EXPERIENTIAL DIMENSION OF HEALTH  
AND WELLNESS TOURISM AT  
KALABAKAN FOREST**

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2017**

## DECLARATION

I hereby declare that the material in this thesis is my own except for quotations, excerpt, equations, summaries and references, which have been duly acknowledged.

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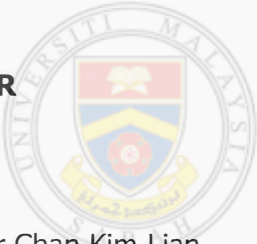
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## ABSTRACT

It is important to understand the experiential dimension of why tourists visit Kalabakan Forest and how can health and wellness be gained from tourism especially after a visit from Kalabakan Forest. The emergence of health and wellness in Sabah has raised some issues on how the tourism can contribute and then the tourism can have a Health and wellness-oriented activities have been recognized around the world with existing of different health practices of the people in different regions for staying healthy, and for healing/curing remedies as well. Tourism solely can arguably contribute too many dimensions of wellness; tourists need to be in good enough physical health to embark on a journey, as well as being materially affluent. Where there is consensus, however, is in the fact that wellness no longer constitutes the mere physical nature of the body but also note the spiritual, psychological or holistic dimensions of the experiences. Efforts to utilize the resources in the Kalabakan Forest for Health and Wellness Tourism Development seems important as less research works have been conducted due to its deteriorating environment and disturbed ecology. The study aimed to determine the motivational factors of the Health and Wellness Tourism (HWT) within Kalabakan Forest, Sabah to identify the key motivational factors of health and wellness tourists' experiences and dimension by using qualitative approach. About 13 international and domestic tourists have been interviewed. Data Collection was accessed in the Activity Hall, Long House Resort, Kalabakan Forest before departure from the visit. Interviews were taken place in quiet, private place in order to provide a thought-encouraging environment. The recorded interviews were transcribed into a written format for data analysis. The data was revised and analyzed in three stages to identify and develop appropriate themes. According to this research, perceptions, learning and attitudes may be influential to ones' motivation factors and thus influence the consumer/tourist behaviours. Accordingly, the informants think that it is important to participate in activities that contribute to ones' health and well-being. They seek to find balance or moderation in their lifestyles which is believed to makes ones healthy or healthier thus ones may live longer and able to lead more enjoyable lives. In this study, the concept of push and pull motivations is used to refer to the perceived importance of health and Wellness services for international and domestic visitors during their holiday in Asiatic Organic Farm Kalabakan Forest, Sabah. This implies that certain reasons for health and Wellness services during travel may correspond to certain benefits to the tourists that are to be valued and obtained at the destination site. Therefore, the tourism providers, health and spa providers must understand the tourists with regards to their health and spa perceptions, expectations and decisions; and so, matching the destination's health and spa attributes to the tourists' diverse needs. The experiential or expressive dimensions are hedonic, interactive, novelty, comfort, stimulation and personal safety. However, there is a new experiential group found in the research which is the spiritual seeking or holistic development. A major limitation of this study is due to the nature of the exploratory study and the type of respondent (foreign tourists) which limit the generalizability of the research findings. It suggests a comparative work in a similar context in different locations and countries would prove beneficial for the possible validation of the findings.



## **ABSTRAK**

### **FAKTOR MOTIVASI DAN DIMENSI PENGALAMAN PENGUNJUNG PELANCONGAN KESIHATAN DAN KESEJAHTERAAN DI HUTAN KALABAKAN**

Adalah penting untuk memahami dimensi pengalaman pelancong melawat Hutan Kalabakan dan bagaimana kesihatan seseorang boleh diperolehi daripada pelancongan terutama selepas lawatan. Bagaimanapun, terdapat kenyataan bahawa kesihatan tidak lagi merupakan sifat fizikal semata-mata tetapi juga merangkumi kerohanian, psikologikal atau keseluruhan pengalaman. Usaha untuk menggunakan sumber-sumber di Hutan Kalabakan untuk pembangunan pelancongan kesihatan dan kesejahteraan seolah-olah penting kerana kerja-kerja penyelidikan yang telah dilakukan terdapat kekurangannya disebabkan persekitaran yang semakin merosot dan ekologi yang semakin terganggu. Kajian bertujuan untuk menentukan faktor-faktor motivasi Pelancongan Kesihatan dan Kesejahteraan dalam Hutan Kalabakan, Sabah untuk mengenal pasti faktor-faktor motivasi utama kesihatan dan dimensi pengalaman pelancong kesihatan dengan menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif. Kira-kira 13 pelancong antarabangsa dan domestik telah ditemuramah. Pengumpulan Data telah diakses di Dewan Aktiviti, Long House Resort, Hutan Kalabakan sebelum mereka berlepas daripada lawatan berkenaan. Temubual telah dilakukan di lokasi yang tenang bagi menyediakan persekitaran yang menggalakkan pemikiran. Wawancara yang telah dirakam disalin ke dalam format bertulis untuk analisis data. Data yang telah disemak semula dan dianalisis dalam tiga peringkat untuk mengenal pasti dan menentukan tema yang sesuai. Kajian ini menunjukkan persepsi, pembelajaran dan sikap mungkin berpengaruh kepada faktor-faktor motivasi dan seterusnya dapat mempengaruhi tingkah laku pengguna / pelancong. Oleh itu, pemberi maklumat berfikir bahawa ia adalah penting untuk mengambil bahagian dalam aktiviti-aktiviti yang menyumbang kepada kesihatan dan kesejahteraan. Mereka berusaha untuk mencari keseimbangan atau kesederhanaan dalam gaya hidup mereka yang dipercayai membuat seseorang itu lebih sihat atau berupaya hidup lebih lama dan dapat menjalani kehidupan yang lebih menyenangkan. Dalam kajian ini, "konsep motivasi tolak dan tarik" digunakan untuk merujuk kepada kepentingan yang dilihat sebagai perkhidmatan kesihatan dan Kesejahteraan untuk pelawat antarabangsa dan domestik semasa percutian mereka di Asiatic Organic Farm Kalabakan Hutan, Sabah. Perkhidmatan pelancongan kesihatan dan kesejahteraan semasa perjalanan mungkin sesuai dengan manfaat tertentu kepada pelancong yang akan dinilai dan didapati di destinasi. Oleh itu, pembekal pelancongan, kesihatan mesti memahami pelancong mengenai persepsi kesihatan mereka, harapan dan keputusan; dan sebagainya, daripada pelbagai keperluan pelancong. Dimensi pengalaman atau ekspresif adalah hedonik, interaktif, sesuatu yang baru, selesa, rangsangan dan keselamatan diri. Walau bagaimanapun, terdapat satu kumpulan pengalaman baru yang terdapat dalam penyelidikan ini iaitu keseimbangan atau pembangunan rohani secara holistik. Had utama kajian ini adalah disebabkan oleh sifat kajian penerokaan dan jenis responden (pelancong asing) yang menghadkan terhadap hasil penyelidikan. Oleh itu, dicadangkan kerja perbandingan dalam konteks yang sama di lokasi yang berbeza akan bermanfaat untuk pengesahan keputusan penemuan.

## TABLE OF CONTENT

	Page
<b>TITLE</b>	i
<b>DECLARATION</b>	ii
<b>CERTIFICATION</b>	iii
<b>ACKNOWLEDGEMENT</b>	iv
<b>ABSTRACT</b>	v
<b><i>ABSTRAK</i></b>	vi
<b>TABLE OF CONTENT</b>	vii
<b>LIST OF TABLES</b>	xii
<b>LIST OF FIGURES</b>	xiii
<b>LIST OF PHOTOS</b>	xiv
<b>LIST OF APPENDICES</b>	xv
<b>LIST OF PUBLICATIONS</b>	xvi
 <b>CHAPTER 1: RESEARCH BACKGROUND</b>	
1.0 Introduction	1
1.1 Problem Statement	6
1.2 Research Objectives	9
1.3 Research Questions	9
1.4 The Scope of Research	9
1.5 Conclusion	10
 <b>CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW</b>	
2.0 Introduction	11
2.1 Definition of Health and Wellness Tourism	11
2.1.1 Health and Wellness Consumers	12
2.2 Motivation Theory: Push and Pull Factors	13
2.2.1 Push and Pull Factor	14



2.3	Understanding Tourists' Experience through Experience Dimension and Mindfulness Theory	15
2.3.1	Tourist Experience Dimension	16
2.4	Mindfulness and Mindlessness Theory	18
2.5	Study Site: Kalabakan Forest	22
2.5.1	Kalabakan Health and Wellness Tourism Development and Management	23
2.5.2	Core Resources and Attributes at Kalabakan Forest	25
2.5.3	Location of the Study Site	27
2.5.4	Natural Resources for Health and Wellness	28
2.6	Summary	30

### **CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

3.0	Introduction	31
3.1	Research Process	31
3.2	Theoretical Framework	32
3.3	Research Design	34
3.3.1	Data Collection Method	35
3.3.2	Sampling Technique and Sample Size	35
3.3.3	Access to Respondents	36
3.3.4	Data Analysis	36
3.4	Qualitative Interview Questions	38
3.5	Credibility and Trustworthiness of Qualitative Data	40
3.6	Summary	42

### **CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**

4.0	Introduction	43
4.1	Respondents Profile	43
4.1.1	Demographic Profile	43
4.2	Travel Motives and Reasons to Kalabakan	44
4.3	The Meaning of Health and Wellness	47

4.4 Meaning and Concept of Push and Pull Factors 50

4.5 Experiential Dimension of Tourists 53

4.6 Summary 58

**CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION**

5.0 Introduction 59

5.1 Key Finding and Contribution 59

5.2 Management Implication 60

5.3 Limitation of the Study 64

5.4 Suggestion for Future Research 64

5.5 Summary 65

**REFERENCES** 66

**APPENDICES** 74



**LIST OF TABLES**

	Page
Table 2.1: Six Domains of Tourists Experiential Dimension	18
Table 3.1: Summary of Research Objectives, Themes and Coded Designed	39
Table 4.2: Travel Motives and Reasons to Kalabakan Forest	44
Table 4.3: The Meaning of Health and Wellness	47
Table 4.4: Push and Pull Factors	51
Table 4.5: Experiential Dimension of Tourists	54



## LIST OF FIGURES

	Page
Figure 2.1: Natural Resources for Health and Wellness	26
Figure 2.2: Location of the Study Site	27
Figure 3.1: Research Process	32
Figure 3.2: The Conceptual Framework for Health and Wellness Tourism in Kalabakan Forest	33



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## LIST OF PHOTO

	Page
Photo 2.1: Kalabakan Forest	28
Photo 2.2: Organic Farm	28
Photo 2.3: Waterfall inside Kalabakan Forest	29
Photo 2.4: Visitors Joined the Yoga Retreat Program	29
Photo 2.5: Organic Food	29
Photo 2.6: Visitors and the Wild Pygmy Elephant in the Forest	29



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## LIST OF APPENDICES

	Page
Appendix A: Research Project Confidential Statement	74
Appendix B: Demographic of the Visitors	75
Appendix C: Interview Structure for Visitors	76
Appendix D: Sample of Interview Transcript from the Respondents	77
Appendix E: Publication	80



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## LIST OF PUBLICATION

### Proceeding of Conference

Goh,H.C. and Chan, J.K.L.2014. Visitors' Motivational Factor and Experiential Dimension of Health and Wellness Tourism in Kalabakan Forest. 5<sup>th</sup> Asia-Euro Conference in Tourim, Hospitality and Gastronomy. "Creating Opportunities Through Innovation: The Future of Tourism and Hospitality in Asia", Taylor's University, Lakeside Campus, Selangor, Malaysia on May 19<sup>th</sup>-21<sup>st</sup>,2014.



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# CHAPTER 1

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.0 Research Background

This chapter presents the research background of the health and wellness tourism in Malaysian especially in Kalabakan Forest, Sabah context. It reveals the motivational factor and experiential dimension of visitors at Kalabakan Forest. It also presents the research gap to develop by understanding health and wellness tourism sector by applying push and pull theory, mindfulness theory and eventually tourists' experiential dimension.

Travel has always contributed to the enhancement or improvement of health and wellness or well-being. It has frequently been in indirect ways during the travel, travelers obtain relaxation and escapism (Mueller and Kaufmann, 2001). Therefore, many tourists are willingly prefer to go on trips so that they can improve in their sense of wellness Smith and Puczkó, 2009). The effects that gained from a travel especially for health and wellness tourism can even be long-lasting for tourists and not just limit to the limited or constrained through the duration of the holiday that one was making.

Interestingly, the research has shown that health and wellness tourism can induce the equilibrium of balance body, mind and soul (Konu *et al.*, 2010). The tourism's realm which is not only including and holistic or spiritual retreats, spa tourism, social tourism, sports and adventure tourism but also others work-related issues such as stress-management, can definitely help in some extension to achieve the balance of body, mind and soul (Konu *et al.*, 2010).

In 1970, the World Health Organization (WHO) defined health as "a state of complete physical, mental, and social well being, not totally the absence of disease" (Shillingford and Shillingford, 1991). More recently, contemporary definitions for health have been enhanced by the concept of "wellness". In broader sense, "Wellness," can be described as "a process in which an individual makes choices and engages in activities in a way that leads to health promoting lifestyles," . Overall, "wellness" can be seen as "a

state of health which the harmony of body, mind and spirit are achieved with physical fitness, healthy nutrition and diet are considered, relaxation is gained, meditation and mental activity or environmental sensitivity and social contacts are performed simultaneously (Finnicum and Zeiger, 1996).

The holistic and best approach to wellness during vacations can be appropriate observed in a hotel provider which is specializing in wellness services. We can define the concept of "wellness tourism" in a narrower or specific sense. Therefore, the research has adopted the following definition (Inoormaziah and Chan, 2010):

*"Wellness tourism is the sum of all the relationships and phenomena resulting from a journey and residence by people whose main motive is to preserve or promote their health. They stay in a specialized hotel or resort which provides the appropriate professional know how and individual care"*(Konu,2010).

It was reported that an average of 160,000 visitors per year were seeking "medical treatment" in Malaysia by 2000. The number of foreign patients seeking medical treatment in Malaysia was estimated to have been around 400,000 over a two-year period (Chaynee, 2003) and 150,000 were reported in 2004 (Chong *et al.*, 2005). From January to March 2007, Malaysia received 77,009 medical tourists compared to Singapore which has attracted around 410,000 tourists travelling specifically for health care services in the year of 2006 only (Lee, 2009). Malaysia received 392,000 healthcare travelers in 2010 and the number grew to 671,000 in 2012, a remarkable accumulated growth rate of 63% in the last three years (Malaysia Healthcare Travel Council, 2013).

On the other hand, the presence of health tourism where holiday-makers visit different health spas available (Schofield, 2004) with the primary purpose of beneficial health outcomes has become encouraging. The numerous spas that are remained in some cases represented the effective start of local tourism in many countries (Tom, 2007). It also generates wealth for the local economy and therefore any healthcare program, which covers medical care, wellness and fitness in health and wellness tourism sector can help to induce a better tourism industry (de la Barre *et al.*, 2005).

Hence, Malaysia is renowned for its natural beauty from the top of mountain and into the deep of ocean. Its outstanding wilderness treasures has made the tourism industry in Malaysia especially Sabah is overwhelming with its strategic locality, lovely people, richness of heritage cultures and the most vitally it is supported by the government (Chan, 2008). Since health and wellness is a growing tourism sector, the tourist's motivational factors had been widely studied and many factors had been documented in others health and wellness tourism destination (Inoormaziah and Chan, 2010). However, there are more self-responsibility or intense knowledge required in many of these sub-sections of tourism are based on changing leisure activities and lifestyle trends like healthier nutrition intake, fitness regimes focus, or the quest for spirituality or contact with the so-called Gods shifts in many societies both in Western or Eastern, ranged from curative to preventative healthcare areas (Sue, 2010).

Health and wellness tourism is a integrated industry in Sabah. It is vital to be further developed and well-planned through sustainable manner as apart from promoting our local resources such as aesthetic forest view. Its rich culture and vast biodiversity that exist in this unique region is a method to enhance, indirectly promote both our local traditional complementary health industry. Hence, it is too important in many ways such as socio-economically enhancement, cultural enrichment, and also technological improvement or invention after the health and wellness tourism had been well-developed as integrated powerful movement for all (Chan, 2008).

In addition, Chan (2007) stated that the recent arising trend of spa and health tourism has led to many resort hotel operators in Sabah introducing spa and wellness activities in their hotels. It has being part of the hotel facilities, providing their in-house guests with a new exclusive additional form of relaxation service. To name a few, not to include the growing numbers of commercial-stand-alone spas, there are three upscale resorts that provide spa facilities with their own identities and themes. For example, and Sutera Harbour Resort provides(Mandara Spa – Balinese's style ), Nexus Resort Karambunai provides (Borneo Spa – Thai's style) whereas Shangri-La's Tanjung Aru Resort has got (Chi Spa – or Chinese's fundamental of Ying and Yang ).

There are many factors contribute to the growth of the health and wellness tourism. The search for "eternal youth" continues to grow when the population in the main tourists generating markets ages. Thus, the demand for health and wellness trips will definitely increase. Another driving factor behind the predicted growth trends is the changing attitude towards physical fitness and general wellbeing. In Germany, new laws enable employees to take up to six weeks leave in a year, if required, for health/wellbeing reasons (Konu, 2010). Hence, obviously it is now a recognized scenario that a fit lifestyle that healthy people will always and will be chase after which can lead to a better standard of life.

Over a decade, the amount of spa revenue has grown from \$5 billion in 1999 to \$12.8 billion in 2010 (Konu, 2010). Thus, the biggest challenge for health and wellness providers is to determine these needs in a sustainable manner. It will require providing a unique and satisfying, long-term experience for their and ensure a satisfactory financial profit for the business owners and operators on the other hands (Ringer, 2006).

There are reasons on motives for tourists to visit specific tourist's places. Tourist's motivation which seeks to explain why people is travelling, and the key component and driving force (tourist behavior) that made them to start travelling (Gnoth, 1997). Tourism motivation is conceptualized as a dynamic process of internal psychological factors-needs and wants (Ziegler *et al.*, 2012). At present, population's growing health consciousness is corresponding to healthy-living lifestyle practices and it is considered health-related travel which can induce the tourist to travel (Yeoman, 2008).

Experiential study has long been seen as focus point to the tourism and hospitality product and service. Experiential views of interest in understanding the visitor experience, in order consumption or consumers' subjective and emotional to enhance visitor satisfaction and destination sustainability. Ostensibly, hedonic, emotional and imaginary outcomes of the steady shift towards experience economy. It means consumption seem to have a central place in that enhancing the customer experience is seen as the understanding of consumer behavior (Chan, 2010).

However, many elements integrates health and wellness holidays selection, at which adventure, outdoor sports, entertainments, health food choices play vital roles for



the health and wellness holiday-makers (Schobersberger, 2004). With increasing health and wellness consciousness and healthy living lifestyle rooted in today world, travel to seek for health and wellness is among one of the main motives. Many researchers (Konu et al., 2010, Mueller and Kaufmann, 2001; Smith and Puczkó, 2009 and Sue, 2010) had shown that healthy lifestyle impacts the motivations for travel and travel's needs. Furthermore, the precious leisure time has become a key opportunity to enhance escape in more modern and busy lives (Greaves, 2008).

People are practicing a healthy lifestyle to keep them fit and vibrant. Wellness can be termed as an attitude of life and as a method to gain health. It creates healthful way of life (Mueller and Lanz-Kaufmann, 2001, Inoormaziah and Chan, 2010).

The recent trend the western tourists are seeking in Eastern therapy or philosophy such as Thai Massage, Japanese Shiatsu, Acupunctures, Qi Gong, Tai Ji seems to be alternatives that had germinated in many Western society. More international tourists are keen to visit the original place of the philosophies emerged (Smith and Kelly, 2006). The health and wellness centers are blooming up in many tourism destination in Asian (Hudson, 2008).

The Kalabakan Wellness Project is a concept interconnects nature-tourism, eco-tourism, organic agricultural tourism, agro forestry, and also tourism development. It is an arena with about 1,300 hectares of tropical rainforest land which is converted to agricultural and tourism development. It is also a new health and wellness destination which provides more alternatives elements in the tourism attractiveness sense by utilizing the nature and also environment in Sabah. It is vital to Sabah for creating more new concepts for economic development instead of too depending on the natural resources or conventional agriculture such as timber production, cocoa and oil palm industry (Forest Management Plan, 2008). This is due to World Health Organization predicts that international tourism arrivals alone will exceed 1.56 billion in Asia and Middle East by 2020 (Greaves, 2008).

On the other hand, the interrelationship between health and wellness tourism has received relatively little research attention from the scholars (Lee, 2009). The obtained results from (Lee, 2009) review that there is a unidirectional long-run causality from health care to international tourism and interestingly there is no causality between these two sectors in the short-run. Therefore, these findings are so useful for policy-makers



particularly in Malaysia that in the beginning of the development of health care sector. It believes to have positive effects on international tourism in the long-run (Lee, 2009).

Aside from the modern medical technology and advances, that is expanding the population lifespan, the personal awareness and responsibility towards ones' health and well-being also play a role. The changing lifestyle of this population has shown a greater shift towards health products and services. With regards to tourism industry, the tour operators and destinations are increasingly realizing that holidays need to linked to rejuvenation of body, mind and spirit, in achieving excellent health and well-being, together with a wide range of needs associated with the individuals' travel experiences, so that can perform a positive function in the health conscious society (Smith and Kelly, 2006).

Malaysian environment's factors itself such as strategic holiday's destination, affordable and cheaper fees compared to other and various choices of destination or accommodation available in a vast number are all our comparative advantages (Chan, 2009). Hence, the proper understanding of tourist motivation and their experiential dimension is vital to compete for the health and wellness tourism.

### **1.1 Problem Statement**

Health and wellness-oriented activities have been recognized around the world. The emerging of different health practices in different regions worldwide for staying healthy, and for healing/curing remedies had gained consumer's strong interest in health and wellness awareness (Konu, 2010). The rising affluence, resulting everyone is in search for health and well-being which includes of the methods of techniques that the individual able to control or practice, such as they way and how often they need to exercise and achieving a high-level wellness. This will directly involve continual striving for a more holistic of living (Inoormaziah and Chan, 2010).

Tourism motivation and experience are important to be well-studied and understood for tourist destination management. Health and wellness tourism is a growing sector in Sabah and need to understand what attract tourist and what experience are they looking for. Hence, it is important to underlying the motivation and experiential dimension due to limited empirical evidence especially the Kalabakan forest is a new established health and wellness tourism site.

There are different factors attract tourist to visit a place. Many aspects such as what is the motivation influences the tourists to visit a place, the tourists' expectation, behaviors, and experiences gained from a visit and eventually satisfaction that derived from a visit also play very vital role to build a sustainable health and wellness tourism destination is still lack of intensive research in Sabah (Konu, 2010) and hence it is important that all the aspects of Kalabakan Forest to be studied.

Besides, the understanding of motives and experiential dimension satisfies the sustainability of the health and wellness tourism in Kalabakan Forest. Tourism experience and the tourism industry that services it contributes to the sustainable tourism destination planning (Jackson *et al*, 1996). Besides, the motivation from the previous studies might be applied to understand the Health and Wellness Tourism in Kalabakan Forest. Hence, it is vital to understand what is the tourist motivational factor which had made them to visit there.

A variety of tourism themes and sectors have been studied or analyzed by reference to personality which including tourists' satisfaction with their experiences; tourists' motivations. In addition, the analysis of tourism destinations, among many other themes has been done also (Ziegler *et al*, 2012). Sensation seeking has been found to be related to various attitudes and behaviors concerning tourism (Gallowaya *et al*, 2008) and tourism consumption experiences are influenced mainly by cognitive (mind), emotional affinity (body), and connection to the nature (soul) (Ziegler *et al*, 2012).

The motivation of the visitors to visit health and wellness place is attributed to several factors. Push and pull theory can be used to understand the health and wellness industry more deeply and thoroughly. Pull factors are more important in understanding destination choice whereas Push factors are deemed to precede pull factors in terms of initiating travel desire. However, they are both closed associated with the Maslow's hierarchy of needs theory and Plog's psychographic theory (Kim *et al*, 2002). This demand-side approach helps to understand tourists' decision-making process. However, in tourism destination management, it is important to understand not only the needs and wants of tourists, but also tourist satisfaction (Ziegler *et al*, 2012). On the contrary, Pull factors are generally viewed from a supply-side dimension (Kim *et al*, 2002). Thus, it is

important to understand what make the tourist to visit and utilize Health and Wellness Tourism Package in Kalabakan Forest.

In the case of Kalabakan Forest, the push and pull factor may be different compared to different study mentioned above. This is due to the past studies only focused on a very specific or limited research area instead of linking the nature as an attribute provided to enhance the motivational factors or experiential dimension to gain health or wellness. This study portrays a sound relationship between nature and human with some additional man-made services to further enhance and strengthen the satisfaction of the visitors. Some researchers propose that there are four essential ingredients associated with wellness. These include, taking responsibility for one's own actions adding to the quality of one's life, lifelong approach emphasizing permanent lifestyle changes and eventually not simply extending the length of life and making choices that improves an individual's position on the lifestyle continuum. (Mueller and Kaufmann, 2004).

The concept of the tourism experience has become a focal point for current tourism research (Falk *et al.*, 2012). But there is currently no consensus in the academic literature for the exact definition between tourism experiences and experiential dimension are varied (Falk *et al.*, 2012). Hence, Kalabakan Forest is a newly developed health and wellness destination, then , it is important to understand the experiential dimension of why tourists visit Kalabakan Forest and how can health and wellness be improved to enhance the expectation and satisfaction gained from health and wellness tourism especially after a visit from Kalabakan Forest.

Tourism solely can arguably contribute too many dimensions of wellness, tourists need to be in good enough physical health to embark on a journey, as well as being materially affluent. Where there is consensus, however, is in the fact that wellness no longer constitutes the mere physical nature of the body but also note the spiritual, psychological or holistic dimensions of the experiences (Smith and Kelly, 2006). Hence, it is important to gather information on what is the experiential dimension of Health and Wellness Tourism at Kalabakan Forest.

## 1.2 Research objectives

The four main objectives for this study are:

- i. To explore the meaning of health and wellness tourism in the context of Kalabakan Forest.
- ii. To explore the motivational factors of the health and wellness tourism in the context of Kalabakan Forest.
- iii. To describe the key experiential dimension of health and wellness tourism in the context of Kalabakan Forest..
- iv. To identify the key elements that contributes to the health and wellness visitors' experiences and satisfaction dimension.

## 1.3 Research Questions

The research objectives were undertaken in an effort to answer the following questions:

- i. What are the meaning underlying the health and wellness towards the concepts and perceptions of the visitors?
- ii. What are the key motivational factors of visitors to utilize health and wellness products and services in Kalabakan Forest?
- iii. What are the key experiential dimensions or attracting factors that encouraging them to come?
- iv. What are the key elements those contribute to the visitors' expectation, experience, and satisfaction dimension towards health and wellness tourism in Kalabakan Forest?

## 1.4 The Scope of Research

This research was focused on both the international and domestic health and wellness consumers who visited and overstayed at the Long House Resort, Kalabakan Forest. It was mainly focused on the respondent stayed at the resort at least three days two nights.

The study was focused on the motivational factors and experiential of health and wellness services in Kalabakan Forest. It was wished to capture the significant motivational factors of both international and domestic visitors. Subsequently, the data collected was then extended in terms of push and pull theory, experiential dimensions and then mindful theory to explain the health and wellness visitors' behaviors.