MEDIATING EFFECT OF PERSONAL AND SITUATIONAL CHARACTERISTICS OF ARAB TOURISTS IN MALAYSIA AND THEIR INFLUENCE ON INFORMATION SOURCES AND INFORMATION CHANNELS OF TOURIST INFORMATION CHOICE STRATEGIES

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Abstrak

Statistik menunjukkan bahawa kemasukan pelancong ke Malaysia terus meningkat sebanyak 14.3%; sumber maklumat dan saluran maklumat telah memainkan peranan penting dalam hal ini. Walau bagaimanapun, kajian yang sedia ada masih belum membezakan bagaimana sumber maklumat dan saluran maklumat mempengaruhi strategi pilihan maklumat pelancong Arab. Oleh itu, kajian ini mengkaji kesan pengantara ciri-ciri peribadi dan situasi terhadap sumber maklumat dan saluran maklumat untuk memberikan pemahaman yang lebih jelas tentang bagaimana sumber maklumat dan saluran maklumat mempengaruhi strategi pilihan maklumat pelancong Arab. Data dikumpulkan daripada 358 pelancong Arab di Malaysia melalui prosedur soal selidik yang ditadbir sendiri, dan data dianalisis menggunakan analisis regresi berganda. Secara keseluruhan, kajian itu mendapati bahawa sumber maklumat dan saluran maklumat mempunyai pengaruh yang besar ke atas strategi pilihan maklumat pelancong Arab. Bagi kesan pengantara, kajian itu juga mendapati bahawa ciri-ciri peribadi mempunyai pengaruh yang signifikan terhadap sumber maklumat berkaitan strategi pilihan maklumat pelancong Arab. Hasil menunjukkan bahawa ciri-ciri situasi mempengaruhi secara signifikan sumber maklumat berkaitan strategi pilihan maklumat pelancong Arab. Oleh itu, kajian ini menyimpulkan bahawa sumber maklumat dan saluran maklumat mempengaruhi strategi pilihan maklumat pelancong Arab, manakala ciri-ciri peribadi dan situasi mempengaruhi sumber maklumat dan saluran maklumat berhubung strategi pilihan maklumat. Kajian ini menyumbang kepada ilmu dalam bidang ini dan juga menyediakan beberapa penemuan baru yang boleh menyumbang kepada pembangunan pengetahuan yang berkesan yang seterusnya boleh meningkatkan industri pelancongan di Malaysia dan juga menarik lebih ramai pelancong Arab ke Malaysia. Kajian ini mencadangkan bahawa kedua-dua pelancong Arab dan agensi-agensi pelancongan Malaysia perlu sentiasa mengambil kira ciri-ciri peribadi dan situasi dalam perancangan dasar pengembaraan pelancongan. Akhir sekali, kajian ini menonjolkan batasan kajian dan cadangan untuk kajian masa depan.

Katakunci: Sumber maklumat, Saluran maklumat, Strategi pilihan maklumat, Ciri-ciri peribadi, Ciri-ciri situasi.

Abstract

Statistics show that the influx of tourists in Malaysia has continued to increase by 14.3%; information sources and information channels have played crucial roles in this regard. However, existing studies are yet to distinguish how information sources and information channels influence information choice strategies of Arab tourists. Therefore, this study examines the mediating effects of personal and situational characteristics on information sources and information channels to provide clearer understanding on how information sources and information channels influence the information choice strategies of Arab tourists. Data was collected from 358 Arab tourists in Malaysia through the self-administered questionnaire procedure, and the data was analysed using the multiple regression analysis. Overall, the study found that information sources and information channels had significant influence on the information choice strategies of the Arab tourists. As for the mediating effects, the study also found that personal characteristics significantly mediate the influence of information sources on the information choice strategies of the Arab tourists. The result showed that situational characteristics significantly mediate the influence of information sources on the information choice strategies of the Arab tourists. Therefore, the study concluded that information sources and information channels influence the information choice strategies of the Arab tourists, while personal and situational characteristics significantly mediate influence of the information sources and information channels on the information choice strategies. The study contributes to the body of literature in this area and also provides several insights that may contribute to the development of knowledge that would effectively enhance the tourism industry in Malaysia and also attract more Arab tourists to Malaysia. The study recommends that both the Arab tourists and the Malaysian tourist agencies should always consider personal and situational characteristics in planning for tourism adventure policies on tourism. Finally, the study highlights the limitation of the study and the suggestions for future study.

Keyword: Information sources, Information channels, Information choice strategies, Personal characteristics, Situational characteristics.

Publications from This Research

The following conferences papers and publication have been produced from the research reported in this thesis:

Bilal A. A Al-khateeb and Zulkhairi B Md Dahalin, "Information Source, Information Channels and Information Choice: The Mediating Effect of Personal Characteristics", in the Proceedings of the International Conference on Computing & Informatics, Kuching, Sarawak, Malaysia, August 2013.

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List of Abbreviations

IDTV	Integrated Digital Television
TV	Television
DVD	Digital Versatile Disc
CDROM	Compact Disc Read Only Memory
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
BTL	Bell Telephone Laboratories
S-M-C-R	Source-Message-Channels-Receiver
S-O-R	Stimulus-Organism-Response
IT	Information Technology
WWW	World Wide Web
SARS	Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome
IV	Independent Variable
DV	Dependent Variable
SPSS	Statistical Package for the Social Sciences
KMO	Kasier-Meyer-Olkin
VIF	Variable Inflationary Factor
AAPOR	American Association for Opinion Research
UNWTO	United Nations World Tourism Organization

CHAPTER ONE
INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, the researcher discusses the background of the information sources, information channels, information choice strategies, and mediating personal characteristics and situational characteristics. This chapter starts with the background, statement of the problem, the research questions, the research objectives, and the significance of the study, the scope of the study, and finally the structure of the study.

1.1 Background of the Study

The person, who, in the 1940's, developed the information theory, was Claude Shannon. Since then, people speak frequently about the differences between information sources and communication channels. In particular, communication students as well as the general public, talk about this distinction on a daily basis (Rogers, 1997). According to this model developed by Shannon, 'an information sources is the personal or organization from which the information originates'. As an example, in the tourism industry, sources of information includes travel agents, service providers or suppliers, journalists, travelers, location, friends, tour operators, and family. As for the information channels it refers to the way the information is transmitted to the receiver. Tourist information channels normally refer to face-to-face interaction, telephone, TV, print, Integrated Digital Television (IDTV), mail, mobile Internet and the Internet.

Several tourism scholars have recognized the importance to understanding more about the factors influencing travelers' information choice strategies (Chen &

Gursoy, 2000; Fodness & Murray, 1999; Jeng & Fesenmaier, 2002; Moorthy, Ratchford, & Talukdar, 1997). It is argued in this thesis that to fully grasp the decision-making situational facing a traveler when searching for information, it would be beneficial to make a clear distinction between information sources and information channels. The first is a question of who is providing the information; the second is a question of how the information is communicated.

Jansen and Rieh (2010) said that this distinction between information sources and information channels is among the most important theoretical construct of the information sciences. Most studies, that have been reviewed, however, seem not to make any distinction between information sources and information channels. Researchers tend to use the term information sources' whether they are referring to the provider of the information or the communication method (Fodness & Murray, 1997; Gitelson & Crompton, 1983; Raitz & Dakhil, 1989).

The problem with tourism information search strategy studies to date is that the traveler's information search preferences have been measured by using a list of alternatives that include both information sources and information channels. This often forces the respondent to choose either sources or channels when he or she in reality has used a combination of the two. For instance, in trying to assess the most important sources, the respondent may be asked whether the Internet or travel agent was most important in his or her trip planning. However, the respondent may have used a combination of the two, when surfing a travel agent's web site. Hence, trying to measure the traveler's behavior in this way may not provide an accurate picture, as the sources used are not mutually exclusive.

In this thesis the term information choice strategy is used to describe a combination of an information sources and information channels, and each one in the tourism information sources and information channels represents a possible strategy. It is argued here that measuring travelers' information sources and information channels similar to the one in Figure1.1 makes for a more precise description of the travelers' information choice strategy than the traditional lists of information sources and information channels used in previous studies.

Information sources

	Travel Agents	**Service Providers**	**Information Centre's**	**Journalists /Writers**	**Other Travelers**	**Friends / Family**
Face-to-Face						
Telephone						
TV						
Print						
Internet						

*Figure 1.1.*The Tourism Information Sources and Channels (Grønflaten, 2005)

The globalized era is witnessing a rapid evolution of the information search environment. It is therefore crucial to understand the information sources and information channels that tourists choose to access the information needed for their travels. This study focuses on the investigation of the factors associated with travelers' choice of information sources and information channels when visiting other countries.

The tourists use tourist information in every phase of their trip and superior tourism is dependent on how efficient information sources and information channels are in reaching potential customers. Because of varying information needs, various

travelers will search for information in different ways (Buhalis, Leung, & Law, 2011; Kingsley & Fesenmaier, 1995). It is therefore researchers must be able to understand; how and where travelers seek, information varying circumstances. What is the different information needs for different travelers. Assael (1987) noted that information can be regarded as the most important factor influencing and determining the information choice strategies of tourists.

The digital information environment has made a great impact on the selection of information sources and information channels of tourist information choice strategy (Lehto, Kim, & Morrison, 2006). Hyde (2006) posited that a comprehensive understanding of the behavior of tourist information search behavior is crucial for any service provider seeking to improve the information choice strategy with tourism consumer.

Tourism scholars understand the importance of finding out more about the factors influencing traveler's information search as well as information sources and information channels (Dietrich, Snowdon, & Washam, 1997; Fodness & Murray, 1999; Hyde, 2006; Kim, Lehto, & Morrison, 2007; Nishimura, Waryszak, & King, 2006). A review of previous literature on the behavior of tourist information choice mainly attempted to explain the travelers' choice of information search strategies (Grønflaten, 2008, 2009). This was based on the link between the use of certain information sources and several antecedent demographic, personal characteristics and situational characteristics.

With the emergence of new electronic information channels, the problem of choosing the most appropriate channels is becoming increasingly important and

difficult for tourism information providers. Understanding the reasons why tourists choose the information channels to reach a particular information sources has therefore become paramount for tourists agents.

The Internet has radically changed the relative access to different sources of information, and thus has made it less self-evident which contact method a tourist has used to consult a particular information provider. Hence, it has become essential to make a clear distinction between who is providing the information (sources) and how the information is communicated (channels). This study seems to be the first to focus on the Arabic travelers' own response of why particular personal characteristics and situational characteristics are chosen in terms of the information sources and information channels and the factors that are important to the tourists in this decision.

1.2 Problem Statement

Tourism has become one of the major aspects of the economic sector that is generating a huge income and revenue to both individual and government of many countries where tourism is well promoted (Mat, Zakaria, & Jusoff, 2009). Until 9/11 incidents, many Arab tourists tend to go for tourism adventure or vacation in the Western world, which include the U.S.A and Europe. However, the incident of 9/11 has changed the baton where many Arab now turn to the Asia countries in particular Malaysia for their tourism pleasure or adventure (Mat et al., 2009; Salman & Hasim, 2012). The data provided by Mat et al. (2009) and Salman and Hasim (2012) indicate that Arab tourists are the highest spenders among all other tourists in Malaysia. For

instance, an average Arab is found to spend a minimum of RM5.000.00 per trip (Mat, Zakaria, & Jusoff, 2009).

Globally, tourism business is in its booming period. For instance, the projection by the world travel and tourism Council for the tourism industry in Southeast Asia has been deemed to be very significant and strong (Hassan, 2009; Hitchcock, King, & Parnwell, 2009). The figure indicates that travel and tourism would contribute about $43.2 billion to the Asian continent's GDP, which would directly create about 6.96 million jobs in 2005 rising to $88.3 billion and 8.5 million jobs by 2015. Likewise, in terms of demand, there is very encouraging feedback as it was expected to have increased by 6.3 per cent in 2005 and by an average of 6.2% yearly in real terms between 2006 and 2015 (ibid).

In Malaysia, tourism industry has been booming. For instance, tourist's arrivals in Malaysia continue to increase by 14.3% that is 2,078,485, in October 2009 compared with 1,818,304 in the same month in 2008 (New Straits Times, January 4, 2010), despite the financial crisis facing the world. From January to October in 2009, Malaysia has seen an increase of 7.2 per cent in tourists' arrival to 19.45 million compared with 18.14 million in the same period in 2008. This shows the resilience of Malaysia's tourism industry. Concerning the Arab tourists in Malaysia, the data provided by (Mat et al., 2009) shows that there have been yearly increase in the number of Arab tourists coming to Malaysia. For instance, the data show an increase of 23.9% in 1999; 46.5% in 2000 and 87.1% increase in 2001 while it is expected to soar higher by 90% in the near future Mat et al. (2009). According toSalman and Hasim (2012) the Arab tourists to Malaysia have been on the increase. It is noted that

the influx of Arab tourists to Malaysia have reached a total of 126,000 in 2004; 150,000 in 2005 and 200,000 in 2006 (Salman and Hasim (2012). Thus, it is very clear that there is an increase in the Arab tourism visitors in Malaysia, which also suggests that Arab tourism activities in Malaysia should be investigated.

The annual increase in the influx of Arab tourists to Malaysia as indicated above and coupled with the agenda of transforming the Malaysian tourism industry by the current government to accommodate the current change and trend show that there is a need to investigate the relevant factors that are contributing to the influx of Arab tourists in Malaysia. Besides, an extensive literature indicates that studies are yet to investigate the Arab tourism information choice strategies and what motivated them to Malaysia.

A study of this nature will help in the understanding of the key factors that determine information choice strategies of the Arab tourism. For instance, Mat et al. (2009) have acknowledged the lack of study in certain aspects of tourism adventure of the Arabs in Malaysia. In view of this, there is a need for further study to be conducted to address the lack of study in the area of information sources, information channels and information choice strategies in line with the tourist's personal characteristics and situational characteristics. Furthermore, in order to embark on tourism adventure or pleasure, the potential tourists need clear information about the tourism sector or activities of that particular country they intend to go for their tourism adventure. Not on that but also, they need to search for information relating to the tourism and the channels or method of getting this information are very crucial to both the tourists and as well as to the tourism providers. In view of this, two major issues confronting

Arab tourists are being identified and discussed as they formed the basis upon which this study will be conducted.

First, the ineffectiveness of the information channels used by the Arab travelers to search for tourism information is an issue to be investigated on. A critical observation showed that the information channels used by the Arab tourists has been judged not to be effective due to the inability of the users to actually identify which channels of information they used. In the academic domain, Grønflaten (2009) has identified the problem with the communication method (otherwise known as information channels) used by the tourists. He argued that until now the tourists are yet to clearly show how they obtained their tourism information and how the information is being distributed. They noted that this is a huge misconception, which needed to be addressed by the researchers (Grønflaten, 2009). Accordingly, it is also noted that tourists, particularly the Arab tourists, have yet to clearly differentiate between the various methods or channels they use to sources for tourism information. For instance, the tourists have problems in differentiating between travel agents and primary sources providers; or between face-to-face and communication and internet channels of information. Grønflaten (2009) noted that a clear understanding between travel agents and primary sources providers; or between face-to-face and communication and internet channels of information would help to understand the Arab tourists' information choice strategies. Based on this description, the information theory becomes very relevant in underpinning this study as it stresses on the need for better sources of information and channels of information. It posits that individual in this case, the Arab tourists will obtain better

information if their information search is based on right sources and channels of information.

Concerning the information sources, authors (Grønflaten, 2009; Fodness & Murray, 1997) have acknowledged the problem of information sources by the tourists, that is, who provides information about tourism to them? To this end, Fodness and Murray (1997) claim that the most pressing need is for more systematic research describing how and why travelers use different information choice strategies. In the light of this, they suggested that future research is required in order to examine travelers' use of different information choice strategies through the analysis of perceptions of the alternatives available to them for trip planning, and that such research should address the dimensions underlying information choice strategy preferences. For example, it is important to know what causes different tourists to choose specific sources to plan their trips (Fodness & Murray, 1997).

Another major weakness of the previous studies in the tourism domain is the inability to clearly establish which factor determines the information search behavior (Grønflaten, 2009; Jansen & Rieh, 2010). For instance, Jansen and Rieh (2010) noted that until now authors have luck to determine between information sources and information channels, and these are among the most important theoretical construct of the information sciences. Also, further review indicates those studies such as Case (2012); Fodness and Murray (1997); Gitelson and Crompton (1983); Raitz and Dakhil (1989) have equally luck to distinguish between information sources and information channels. Researchers tend to use the term information sources whether they are referring to the provider of the information or the communication method

(Case, 2012; Fodness & Murray, 1997; Gitelson & Crompton, 1983; Raitz & Dakhil, 1989). One of the objectives of this study is to address this gap by making a clear distinction between information sources and information channels and to the extent or how each variable individually determine the information choice strategies.

Furthermore, the inadequate measurement of traveler's information choice strategies is also another key issue that is of concern to this study. The study by Grønflaten (2009) has pointed out the problem in measuring traveler's choice strategies. He argues that measuring tourist behavior using single measure such as information sources or communication channels may not be a good measure that would really reflect the tourist behaviors, that is, single measure would not be able to capture the actual choice strategies of the tourists. He suggested that using a combination of measures such information sources and communication channels would provide a better understanding information choice strategy of the tourist. Thus, the use of combination measures of information sources and communication channels would address this weakness. Therefore, this study will adopt the combination methods of information sources and communication channels in determining information choice strategies the Arab tourist. Accordingly, the study by Aziz and Ariffin (2009) has acknowledged that the study of tourism as well as tourism market is fast expanding. They suggested that more studies should be conducted so as to understand information choice strategies the tourists. Therefore, an information choice strategies study of this nature to help in adequately understanding the tourist's information choice strategies is timely in this regard.

Another key weakness of the previous studies is the inconsistency in determining the factors that determine the tourist's information choice strategies. For instance, while some believed that it is the information sources that determine the tourist information choice strategies (Capella & Greco, 1987; Fodness & Murray, 1999; Gitelson & Crompton, 1983; Grønflaten, 2009) others believed that tourist's behavior is best determined by the communication channels (Cai, Feng & Breiter, 2004; Fodness & Murray, 1999; Grønflaten, 2009). Others argued that a combination of both would adequately determine the information choice strategies of Arab tourist's (Grønflaten, 2009). In this situational according to Baron and Kenny (1986) warrants that mediating variables or moderators should be introduced in order to determine which among these variables best determine the information choice strategies of Arab tourists. Besides, the controversy between these variables (information sources and communication channels) suggest that further investigation is needed in order to determine which among variables (information sources and communication channels) determine the information choice strategies of Arab tourist and this would help us to arrive at a common acceptable stand that gives room for generalization of the research findings. Therefore, owing to this view, the present study introduces both personal characteristics and situational characteristics as mediating variables in order to determine which among information sources and communication channels best determines the information choice strategies of Arab tourism.

Hence, this study not only considers the issues above but also the mediating effects of both personal and situational characteristics and how both influence the

relationship between information sources, information channels and information choice strategies.

Both personal and situational characteristics have been found to play significant roles in information sources as well as in communication channels (Grønflaten, 2009). According to Grønflaten (2009), both personal and situational characteristics are believed to strongly and significantly influence information sources or choice of information strategy and communication channels. He suggested that these variables should be given the needed attention by subsequent studies. He further noted that travelers' choice search for information is dependent on a range of factors, among which are personal and situational characteristics. However, these variables are noted as significantly influencing information sources or choice of information strategy and communication channels of the tourists, although with inconsistent results (Grønflaten, 2009).

The mediating variables of this research which are personal characteristics and situational characteristics have been found to play significant roles in information sources as well as in communication channels. For instance, Grønflaten (2009) reported that personal characteristics have been found to significantly influence information sources or choice of information strategy and communication channels. He further noted that traveler's choice search for information is dependent on a range of factors among which are personal characteristics and situational characteristics. However, despite the fact that these variables are noted to significantly influence information sources or choice of information strategy and communication channels of the tourists, there is still inconsistent result (Grønflaten, 2009). For instance, it

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was argued that the use of travel agent is controversial while it was also noted that families are more likely to use travel agents. However, whether personal characteristics or situational characteristics better influence information sources and communication channels, situational theory by Belk (1975) has stressed that it is only the potential situational factors that would determine information sources and communication channels to a greater extend. Hence, situational theory is of relevant to the present study. In this light of this, further study is required to address this gap. Therefore, this study investigates the mediating effect of both personal characteristics and situational characteristics on the influence of information sources and information channels on the information choice strategies of the Arab tourists. The focus on the Arab tourists is justified by the annually increase in the influx of Arab tourists to Malaysia as indicated above and coupled with the agenda of transforming the Malaysian tourism industry by the current government to accommodate the current change and trend in Malaysian tourism industry.

1.3 Research Questions

There are many studies on the relationship between information sources and information channels among information choice strategies of Arab tourists in the world. However, some research has different outcomes. Knowledge in this area is lacking. Given that, the specific research questions addressed are:

1. Is there any relationship between information sources and information choice strategies of Arab tourism?

2. Is there any relationship between information channels and information choice strategiesof Arab tourism?

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3. Will personal characteristics mediate the relationship between information sources and information choice strategies of Arab tourism?

4. Will personal characteristics mediate the relationship between information channels and information choice strategiesof Arab tourism?

5. Will situational characteristics mediate the relationship between information sources and information choice strategies of Arab tourism?

6. Will situational characteristics mediate the relationship between information channels and information choice strategies of Arab tourism?

1.4 Research Objectives

The objectives of this study are as follows:

1. To identify the influence of information sources on the information choice strategies of the Arab tourists.

2. To determine the influence of information channels on the information choice strategies of the Arab tourists.

3. To identify the mediating effect of personal characteristics on the influence of information sources on the information choice strategies of the Arab tourists.

4. To determine the mediating effect of personal characteristics on the influence of information channels on the information choice strategies of the Arab tourists.

5. To ascertain the mediating effect of situational characteristics on the influence of information sources on the information choice strategies of the Arab tourists.

6. To ascertain the mediating effect of situational characteristics on the influence of information channels on the information choice strategies of the Arab tourists.

1.5 Scope of the Study

This study is concerned about how personal characteristics and situational characteristics influence tourists' information sources and information channels, concentrating more on Arab tourists information choice strategies. In this thesis, the gap in the literature is addressed through exploratory research on tourists' motives for selecting specific tourism information sources, information channels and information choice strategies of Arab tourism.

Although previous researchers had identified more information on how personal characteristics and situational characteristics influence tourists' choice of information sources and information channels in various dimensions, this thesis is more concerned with Arab tourist's information choice strategies because Malaysia has become a favorite tourist destination after September 11 terrorist attack (Abd Aziz & Ariffin, 2009; Razalli, Abdullah, & Hassan, 2012; Salman & Hasim, 2012).

The Arab tourists coming to Malaysia within the context of this study include tourists from Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates (UAE), Bahrain, Qatar, Oman, Iraq, Kuwait, Jordan, Syria, Palestine, Lebanon, Yemen and Libya. This scope is justified due to the annual increase in the influx of Arab tourists to Malaysia. The number of Arabs coming to Malaysia is expected to soar higher by 90% in the near future (Mat et al. (2009). Salman and Hasim (2012), study concurs that the Arab

tourists coming to Malaysia has been on the increase. The influx of Arab tourists to Malaysia which reached a total of 126,000 in 2004; 150,000 in 2005; 200,000 in 2006; 245,302 in 2007; 264,338 in 2008 and 284,890 in 2009 (Salman and Hasim (2012).

1.6 Significant of the Study

Although there are many studies conducted on tourists' information choice strategies, they are related to all aspects of tourism. The findings from the thesis studies may benefit both in theory and practice. This study will look into the aspects of increasing awareness of information channels and information sources, especially amongst information choice strategies of Arab tourists.

The tourism industry which has undergone rapid growth in its development has become known as an "information-intensive industry in which electronic commerce plays a very significant role" (Abd Aziz & Ariffin, 2009; Sangpikul, 2008). Therefore, understanding and discovering information search behavior of tourists is considered as the key element to developing tourism industry in general. In order to have effective information management practices, an understanding of how tourists obtain the required information is vital. This understanding will help in the designing of strategies that could enhance revenue, as well as a nation's growth and development.

Tourism has recently been recognized as a lucrative industry (Peter Chiu, Chen, Cheng, & Wu, 2010) with the potential of procuring foreign exchange and developing a country's economy (Abd Aziz & Ariffin, 2009; Poon & Low, 2005).

For example, (Peter Chiu et al., 2010) noted that, tourism is now definitely one of the most important industries in the world, capable of generating substantial income (p. 28). With regard to the Asian region, the tourism sector in Malaysia has grown rapidly and considerably in recent years (Basiron & Laut, 1991).

Both researchers and practitioners on tourism have stressed the importance of understanding how and where tourists search for tourist-based information in order to more effectively market tourism product and services (Eby, Molnar, & Cai, 1999). Understanding the dynamics of tourism information acquisition behavior is becoming more important now that information technology is increasing the amount of accessible information at a staggering pace (Christensen & Bailey, 1997). There is currently a tremendous development in the information and communications technologies that is already affecting all areas of the industry, and keeping up with new trends in the market is a major challenge for tourism professionals.

Specifically, this research can make contribution to tourism organizations in three distinct areas namely; information sources, information channels, and information choice strategies to mediating with personal characteristics and situational characteristics, also information choice strategies of the Arab tourism to knowing the evaluative criteria used by consumers when choosing communication channels and information sources may also provide guidance in the development of information technologies.

1.7 Structure of the Study

This thesis is organized into five separate chapters. These chapters are closely related to each other and their relationships are illustrated in Figure 1.2. The contents of every chapter are provided as follows:

Chapter 1: Introduction. This chapter is an introduction and overview of the study including research background providing an overview of the overall structure of the research, identifying problem statements and setting up the context of the research with respects to success information sources, information channels, information choice strategies of the Arab tourism and mediating personal characteristics and situational characteristics. This statement of the research questions and research objectives, which set the scope of the study and finally, the significance of potential contributions of the study, is provided.

Chapter 2: Literature Review. Previous researches relating to the research domain are provided covering the main areas including success of information sources, information channels, information choice strategies of the Arab tourism and mediating personal characteristics and situational characteristics.

Chapter 3: Theoretical Frameworks. This chapter discusses the relevant literature that would assist in understanding the theory of information sources, information channels, information choice strategy, personal characteristics and situational characteristics. This literature provides explanation on theories to understand how this study relates to previous

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work in this field. Apart from that the study also draws on theory from related fields in consumer behavior, information theory, communication studies, and information technology. This chapter also clarifies related concept, and theories of tourists' personality as well as situational characteristics and its relationship with information sources and channels.
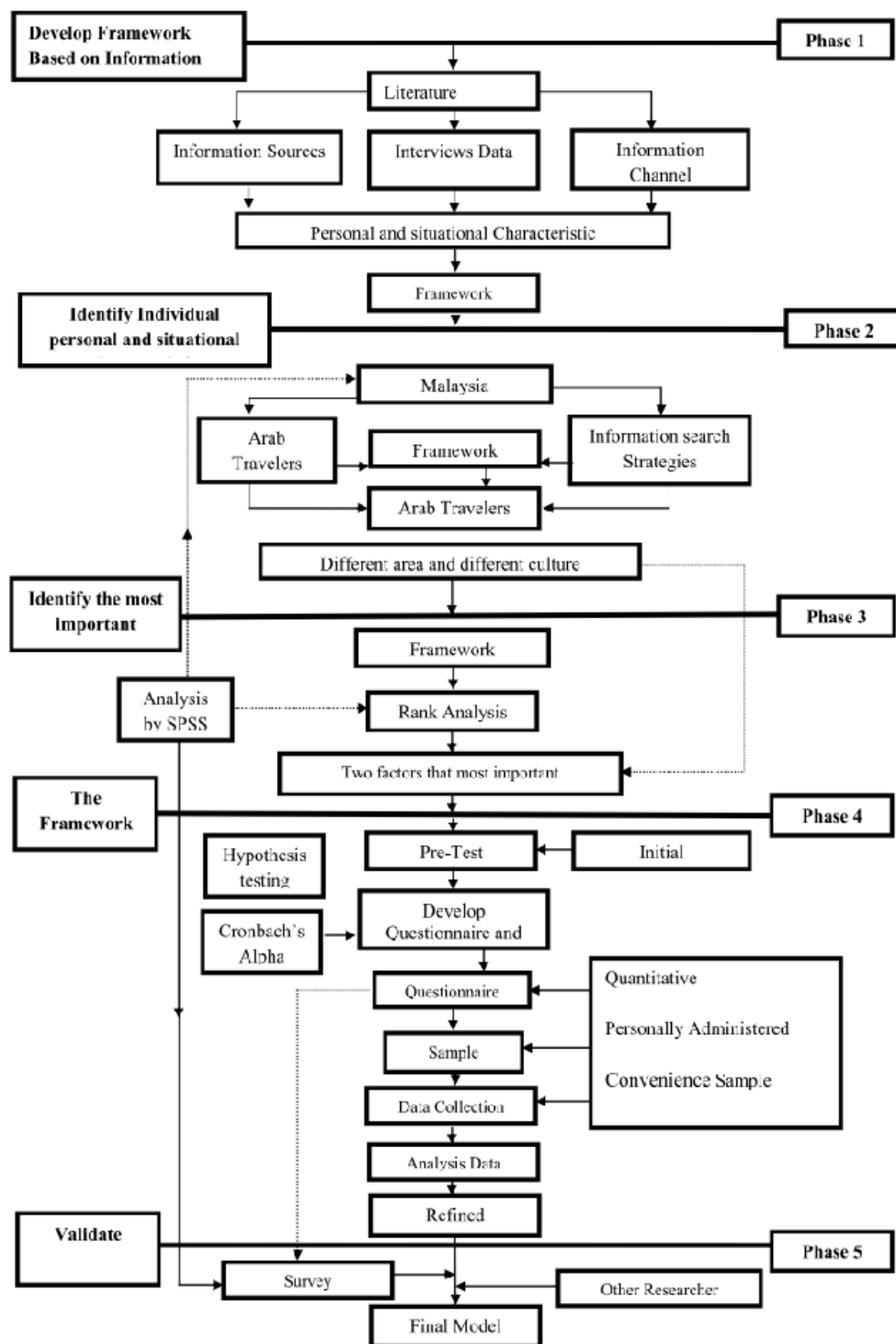
Figure 1.2. Structure of Research

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Chapter 4: Methodology. This chapter discusses the research methodology and design incorporated in the study. It is then followed by a description of the framework and the hypotheses. Instrument developed the sources of the measurement items. This chapter includes the pre-test and pilot study. The chapter concludes with a brief description of validity, reliability, correlation analysis, regression analysis, and multiple regressions.

Chapter 5: Data Analysis and Findings. This chapter presents the analysis of the quantitative data; using multivariate data analysis approach. The initial section describes the demographic profile of respondents. It is then followed by factor analysis, validity, reliability tests and mediating effect of both personal characteristics and situational characteristics. Finally, this chapter presents the main findings of the study in terms of the nine hypotheses proposed.

Chapter 6: Discussion and Conclusions. This chapter discusses the findings of results by discussing the major research questions and the hypotheses proposed in this study. Finally, it provides an overview of the study and presents its theoretical and practical contributions. The chapter also discusses the limitation and weaknesses of this study and concludes with a brief discussion of the possible future research directions in the subject area of this study.

1.8 Summary

First this chapter discusses the general introduction of the research, which is based on the Arab tourists and their coming to Malaysia. Second, it discusses the background of the study or the research background, which presents the nature and business of tourism in Malaysia and those who patronize the industry. The current trend of the Malaysia tourism industry, the economic importance of tourism to the Malaysia government and its economy are also discussed. Thereafter, the chapter discusses on the problem statement which covers the nature of problems on the tourism industry in Malaysia and the Arabs who choose Malaysia as their tour destination. The chapter highlights the problems, such as the influx of Arab tourists to Malaysia; and inability of the Arab tourists to differentiate between information sources and information channels which are the major determinants of information choice strategies. Apart from data, the global scenario of tourism, with particular focus on Asia, is also covered in this chapter. For instance, the projection by the World Travel and Tourism Council for the tourism industry in Southeast Asia deemed to be very significant, with travel and tourism contributing about USA43.2 billion to the Asian continent's GDP, which directly created about 6.96 million jobs in 2005 and expected to increase to USA88.3 billion with 8.5 million jobs by 2015. The chapter also discusses the research questions and the research objectives. Some of the research questions include: Is there any relationship between information sources and information choice strategies of Arab tourists? And is there any relationship between information channels and information choice strategies of Arab tourists? Some of the research objectives include identifying the influence of information sources on the information choice strategies of the Arab tourists;

determining the influence of information channels on the information choice strategies of the Arab tourists, etc. Other areas discussed in this chapter are scope of the study, significance of the study and structure of the thesis.

CHAPTER TWO
LITERATURE REVIEWS

2.1 Introduction

The previous chapter discussed on the introduction, problem statement, the research questions and objectives. Therefore, this chapter discusses the relevant literature that would assist in understanding the variables under investigation. The chapter covers information sources, information channels, information choice strategies, personal characteristics, situational characteristics and previous models on tourism. This literature provides explanation on the relationship between information sources, information channels, information choice strategy, personal characteristics and situational characteristics by reviewing existing relevant literatures and theories to understand how this study relates to previous work in this field. In addition to that, it will also examine how the literature is able to contribute by way of explaining traveler's information search behavior. There is an emphasis on firstly; arguments that the distinction between information sources and information channels is important for understanding this behavior and secondly showing how this distinction is not being deliberated in previous research topics.

2.2 Tourism Industry in Malaysia

Tourism has become one of the lucrative businesses in almost all the countries across the globe. It is now one of the major areas of the country's economy sector that is generating a huge income and revenue benefitted by both individuals and

governments in countries that seriously promote tourism (Mat, Zakaria, & Jusoff, 2009).

In the global arena, tourism is at its peak and continues to flourish. For instance, the projection by the World Travel and Tourism Council for the tourism industry in Southeast Asia has been deemed to be very significant and strong (Hassan, 2009; Hitchcock, King & Parnwell, 2009). It is indicated that travel and tourism contributed about USA 43.2 billion to the Asian continent's GDP, directly creating about 6.96 million jobs in 2005 and expected to increase to USA 88.3 billion and 8.5 million jobs by 2015. Likewise, in terms of demand, there is very encouraging feedback tourism increased by 6.3% in 2005 and by an average of 6.2% yearly in real terms between 2006 and 2015 (ibid).

In Malaysia for instance, the year 2003 showed that the country registered about 25.7 million tourist arrivals, which placed Malaysia as the ninth most visited country of the United Nations World Tourism Organization's (UNWTO) top-ten list of countries with highest tourist arrivals. In 2012, Malaysia recorded a total of 25.03 million arrivals compared to 25.7 million arrivals in 2013. This represents a growth of 1.5% in tourist arrivals. Malaysia registered 25.7 million tourists with RM65.44 billion in receipts for 2013. This indicates that the Malaysian tourism industry performed above expectations in 2013, with tourist receipts of RM65.44 billion, exceeding the initial target of RM65 billion. The 8.1% growth from RM60.56 billion in 2012 represents an expansion of about RM4.89 billion in foreign exchange earnings.

Further, Salman and Hasim (2012) observed that the number of Arab tourists to Malaysia has been on the increase. It is noted that the influx of Arab tourists to

Malaysia reached a total of 126,000 in 2004, 150,000 in 2005, 200,000 in 2006, 245,302 in 2007, 264,338 in 2008, 284,890 in 2009 (AlBattat, Som, Ghaderi & AbuKhalifeh, 2013),indicating an upward trend for Malaysia's economic growth and development. Thus, it is very clear that there is an increase in the number of Arab tourists to Malaysia, which also suggests that Arab tourism activities in Malaysia should be investigated. According to AlBattat, Som, Ghaderi, & AbuKhalifeh, (2013) Arab tourists' growth 71% and the Table 2.1 depict a clear picture of Arab tourists coming to Malaysia 2012 (AlBattat, Som, Ghaderi, & AbuKhalifeh, 2013).

Table 2.1

Arab Tourists Coming to Malaysia (AlBattat, Som, Ghaderi & AbuKhalifeh, 2013)

Year	2007	2008	2009	2011	2012
Arab Tourists	245,302	264,338	284,890	11,362,862	11,632,483

2.3 Related Work

2.3.1 Similarity

Several studies have been conducted in this area but only a few studies such as Grønflaten (2005); Grønflaten (2008) and Grønflaten (2009) are in line with the present study. This is because these studies investigated similar issues though different context with the present study. One major area of similarity between these studies conducted by Grønflaten (2005) Grønflaten (2008) and Grønflaten (2009) and the present study are the variables investigated. The two major variables

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common to these studies are information sources and information channels. Besides, both studies try to make distinctions between information sources and information channels which other studies such as Ramkisson and Nunkoo (2008); Gitelson and Crompton (1983) etc. lucked to distinguish. These studies (Grønflaten, 2005; Grønflaten, 2008; Grønflaten, 2009) including the present study argued that information sources and information channels should be seen as a separate variables instead as a lump-sum.

2.3.2 Differences

Even though these studies (Grønflaten, 2005; Grønflaten, 2008; Grønflaten, 2009) look similar to the present study, there are still some area of differences between them and this present study. Some of the differences are discussed below.

First the research context upon which these studies were conducted is quite different from this present study. Most of these studies were conducted in the Western countries. For instance, the studies by Grønflaten (2005) Grønflaten (2008) and Grønflaten (2009) were conducted in Norway. According to Okpara and Wynn (2007), environment differs and this has a way of affecting the research findings. The present study is conducted in what is considered as a developing country Europe and USA (Ramkisson & Nunkoo, 2008).

The second difference identified is the difference in measurement scale. The measurement scale used by Grønflaten (2005); Grønflaten (2008) and Grønflaten (2009) is different from the measurement scale used by the present study. While the studies by Grønflaten (2005); Grønflaten (2008) and Grønflaten (2009) utilized the

nominal scale measurement, the present employed an interval scale measurement, which is totally different, each other. This implies that variables used in the studies by Grønflaten (2005); Grønflaten (2008) and Grønflaten (2009) are categorical in nature while the present study is in interval scale in particular 5-Likert scale.

Another important difference identified between these studies is the data analysis technique employed by these studies. Due to the differences in the measurement scales, the data analyses technique for these studies are bound to be different from each other. For instance, the studies by Grønflaten (2005); Grønflaten (2008) and Grønflaten (2009) used chi-square data analysis and binomial logistical regression techniques in line with their measurement (e.g. yes or no questions), while the present study utilized multiple regression analysis technique due to the interval scale used in obtaining the data for the study. Additionally, even though these studies and the present study seem to be similar in terms of variables investigated, however, they differ in terms of perspectives. For instance, while Grønflaten (2005); Grønflaten (2008) and Grønflaten (2009) are on the information search strategies, the present study is on the information choice strategies.

The nature of the relationship investigated by these studies and the present study is also different. The studies by Grønflaten (2005); Grønflaten (2008) and Grønflaten (2009) only considered the direct relationship between the information sources, information channels and choice of information strategies. This study not only considered this but also considered the mediating effects of both personal characteristics and situational characteristics and how both influence the relationship

between information sources, information channels and information choice strategies.

2.4 Information Sources and Information Choice Strategy

Within the context of this study, information sources is described as the origin of the information about the tourism destination of the tourists or pleasure travelers (Abd Aziz & Ariffin, 2009; Razalli et al., 2012) and these sources may include friend/relatives, media, Internet, travel agents etc. (Fodness & Murray, 1997). Besides this Fodness and Murray (1997) noted that information sources can also be internal or external depending on where the information seeker obtained his information. On the other hand, information choice strategy is concerned with the decision about the tourism destination of the tourists. It includes tourists choosing among alternative tourism destinations available to him (Fodness and Murray (1997).

Empirical findings by previous studies such as Grønflaten (2008; 2009) and Jansen and Rieh (2010) have acknowledged that travelers choice of information is affected or determined by a number of factors such as information sources and information channels. For instance, a qualitative study conducted by Grønflaten (2008) on factors that affect traveler's choice of information revealed that information sources and information channels are among the identified factors. Thus, information sources and information channels are good determinants of information choice of the travelers. This is also in line with the Media Richness theory which emphasizes on the richness of the information sources and information channels to transmit or share information

between people (Tan & Arnott, 1999). Also, another study by Grønflaten (2009) on information channels and travelers choice of information found that information sources such as travel agents and service providers; and information channels such as face-to-face and the Internet significantly affect travelers' choice of information strategies.

However, studies (Case, 2012; Fodness & Murray, 1997; Gitelson & Crompton, 1983; Jansen & Rieh, 2010; Raitz & Dakhil, 1989) on this issue did not distinguish between the sources that provide the information and the channels through which it is communicated. For instance, the study conducted by Jansen and Rieh (2010) noted that, authors tend to overlook the difference distinguishing between information sources and channels, and these are among the most important theoretical constructs of the information sciences. Also, further review indicates that studies, such as Case (2012); Fodness and Murray (1997); Gitelson and Crompton (1983); and Raitz and Dakhil (1989) equally did not distinguish between information sources and information channels. Researchers tend to use the term 'information sources', whether they are referring to the provider of the information or the communication method (Case, 2012; Fodness & Murray, 1997; Gitelson & Crompton, 1983; Jansen & Rieh, 2010; Raitz & Dakhil, 1989).

Furthermore, Grønflaten (2009) has identified the problem with the communication method (otherwise known as information channels) used by the tourists. He argued that until now the tourists are yet to clearly show how they obtained their tourism information and how the information is being distributed. They noted that this is a huge misconception, which needed to be addressed by the researchers. Accordingly,

it is also noted that tourists particularly the Arab tourists are yet to clearly differentiate between the various methods or channels they used in sourcing for tourism information. For instance, the tourists have problem of differentiating between travel agents and primary sources providers or between face-to-face and communication and Internet channels of information. Grønflaten (2009) noted that a clear understanding between travel agents and primary sources providers or between face-to-face and communication and Internet channels of information would help us to understanding the tourism information search behavior. Based on this description, the information theory becomes very relevant to underpin this study as it stresses on the need for better sources of information and channels of information. It posits that individual in this case; the Arab tourists will obtain better information if their information search is based on the right sources and channels of information.

2.4.1 Tourism Information Sources

The information sources used by travelers forms the basis for planning a trip (Goeldner & Ritchie, 2009), and has therefore been studied extensively in tourism literature. A main focus of this body of tourism literature has been to identify and rank the different information sources that have been used by travelers. In Table 2.1, the most important of these studies are listed and the focus of their particular investigation indicated. As can be seen from the Table 2.1, the basis for the ranking of sources has sometimes been actual frequency of usage of the information sources, whereas at other times, the researchers have recorded sources preference, usefulness or importance placed on the different sources. The Table also shows the differing perspectives and population segments on which the studies have concentrated.

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Table 2.1

Information Sources Studies (Grønflaten, 2005)

Study	Author(s)	Year	Respondents	Focus
A	Nolan	1976	Resort and State Visitors in Texas	Sources Usage
B	Gitleson & Crompton	1983	Pleasure Vacationers in Texas	Sources Usage
C	Capella & Greco	1987	Elderly Americans	Sources Importance
D	Raitz & Dakhil	1989	American College Students	Sources Importance
E	Snepenger, & Snellig	1990	Destination-Naïve Tourists to Alaska	Sources Usage
F	Uysal, McDonald & Reid	1990	Visitors to US National Parks and Natural Areas	Sources Usage
G	Fesenmaier & Vogt	1992	Vacationers to the Midwest	Sources Usage and Perceived helpfulness
H	Andereck & Caldwell	1993	Visitors to an Attraction in the US	Sources Importance
I	Duke & Persia	1993	American Tour Operator Clients	Sources Usage
J	Hsieh & O'Leary	1993	British Pleasure Travellers	Sources Usage
K	Dodd	1998	Industrial Tourists to a US Winery	Sources Importance
L	Fodness & Murray	1998	American Auto Travellers	Sources Usage
M	Vogt, Stewart, & Fesenmaier	1998	First-Time Visitors to the Midwest	Sources Usage
N	Flognfeldt & Nordgren	1999	Auto Travelers in Norway	Sources Usage
O	Chen	2000	Australian Business and Leisure Travellers to the US	Sources Usage
P	Chen & Gursoy	2000	First-Time German Visitors to the US	Sources Usage
Q	Biege & Laesser	2001	Swiss Leisure Travellers	Sources Usage
R	Jung, Luoviers, & Oppewal	2002	Students in the UK	Sources Preference
S	Lo, Cheung, & Law	2002	Hong Kong's Inbound Travellers	Sources Usage
T	Tjostheim	2002	Norwegian Non-Package	Sources Usefulness

			Travellers	
U	Kersetter & Cho	2004	American Visitors to Florida Resort	Sources Usage
V	Schweda	2004	Interactive TV Users from London	Sources Usefulness

Table 2.1 illustrates the wide range of tourism information sources that have been studied in this body of literature. Some effort has been put into condensing the list by grouping together obvious overlaps. The main focus, however, has been to show the variety of sources investigated in the studies. Because of the different perspectives and methods used, caution should be applied when making direct comparisons between the studies. Nevertheless, the Table does provide some clear indications of the relative importance of sources, such as family, friends and relatives, which consistently rank in the top four. It also illustrates the importance of travel agents, which ranks as the most important sources in many studies, whereas in other contexts and for other population segments, they are seen as relatively unimportant.

All recreation and visitor surveys performed by destinations include a checklist of information sources used for trip planning (Perdue, 1985). The studies in this Table, however, represent academic research aimed at advancing the conceptual understanding of the topic by collecting empirical data on information sources to test various hypotheses about the nature of tourist information search.

The problem with confusing sources with channels in these types of investigations is that the categories that consumers respond to are over-lapping. If, for instance, a tourist indicates that he or she has acquired information from a service provider, it is impossible to know whether this has been in the form of a brochure or by talking to a

sales representative on the phone or in-person. On the other hand, if a tourist indicates that he or she has received information from a brochure, it is impossible to know whether some form of tourism intermediary has been written by a tourism service provider or this brochure itself. Thus, the use of both channels categories and sources categories in such studies is ambiguous as the categories are not mutually exclusive.

2.4.2 Classification of Information Sources

Information sources can be categorized in many ways, for e.g., formal, informal and, internal or external (Fodness & Murray, 1997; Gursoy & McCleary, 2003; Raitz & Dakhil, 1989). Raitz and Dakhil (1989)explained that formal sources are designed with the intent to express a consistent message about the qualities of a place or environment, and are used by an advertising firm hired to create a positive image of a place, in order to attract, especially first-time visitors.

Informal search includes oral communication with relatives and other visitors(Raitz & Dakhil, 1989), is not usually patterned or prepared in any way and may be obtained upon request. Internal and external information sources can come under other forms of information sources classification (Chen, 2000; Fodness & Murray, 1997; Goossens, 1995; Gursoy & Terry Umbreit, 2004; Peterson & Merino, 2003). Examples of Internal sources are personal experiences (either with the specific destination or with a similar destination) and the knowledge accumulated through an ongoing search process (Manyika et al., 2011).

Internal search is based on the retrieval of information from memory. The other

external search is classified into four basic categories (Money & Crotts, 2003).

Fodness and Murray (1997) said that sources of information can be classified in

terms of whether the sources are commercial or non-commercial, and received from

personal or impersonal communication. They also said that there is a correlation

between culture and information search and the use of information sources in terms

of preference, which may show variation from one culture (nationality) to another

(Chen, 2000; Gursoy & Chen, 2000; Gursoy & Terry Umbreit, 2004; Ramkissoon &

Nunkoo, 2008; Uysal, McDonald, & Reid, 1990). Figure 2.1 below presents the

classification of information sources.

Type of Information

Source of Information	Impersonal	Personal
Commercial	Brochures Guide Books Local Tourist Offices State Travel Guides	Auto Clubs Travel Agents
Non-Commercial	Magazines Newspapers	Friends or Relatives Highway Welcome Centres Personal Experience

*Figure 2.1.*Classification of Tourism Information Sources (Fodness & Murray, 1999)

2.5 Information Channels and Information Choice Strategy

According to Rogers (1986) the information channels would include mass media

channels such as radio, television, newspapers etc. Empirical findings by previous

studies such as Grønflaten (2008; 2009) and Jansen and Rieh (2010) have

acknowledged that travelers choice of information is affected or determined by a number of factors such as information sources and information channels. For instance, a qualitative study conducted by Grønflaten (2008) on factors that affect traveler's choice of information revealed that information sources and information channels are among the identified factors. Thus, information sources and information channels are good determinants of information choice strategies of the travelers. This is also in line with the Media Richness theory which emphasizes on the richness of the information sources and information channels to transmit or share information between people (Tan & Arnott, 1999). Also, another study by Grønflaten (2009) on information channels and travelers choice of information strategies found that information sources such as travel agents and service providers; and information channels such as face-to-face and the Internet significantly affect travelers' choice of information strategies.

However, studies (Case, 2012; Fodness & Murray, 1997; Gitelson & Crompton, 1983; Jansen & Rieh, 2010; Raitz & Dakhil, 1989) on this issue have failed to distinguish between the sources that provide the information and the channels through which it is communicated. For instance, the study conducted byJansen and Rieh (2010) noted that until now, authors have not succeeded in to distinguish between information sources and information channels, and these are among the most important theoretical construct of the information sciences. Also, further review indicates that study such as Case (2012); Fodness and Murray (1997); and Gitelson and Crompton (1983); Raitz and Dakhil (1989) have equally lucked to distinguish between information sources and information channels. Researchers tend to use the

term information sources' whether they are referring to the provider of the information or the communication method (Case, 2012; Fodness & Murray, 1997; Gitelson & Crompton, 1983; Jansen & Rieh, 2010; Raitz & Dakhil, 1989).

Furthermore, Grønflaten (2009) has identified the problem with the communication method (otherwise known as information channels) used by the tourists. He argued that until now the tourists are yet to clearly show how they obtained their tourism information and how the information is being distributed. They noted that this is a huge misconception, which needed to be addressed by the researchers. Accordingly, it is also noted that tourists particularly the Arab tourists are yet to clearly differentiate between the various methods or channels they used in sourcing for tourism information. For instance, the tourists have problem of differentiating between travel agents and primary sources providers or between face-to-face and communication and Internet channels of information. Grønflaten (2009) noted that a clear understanding between travel agents and primary sources providers or between face-to-face and communication and Internet channels of information would help us to understanding the Arab tourism search strategies. Based on this description, the information theory becomes very relevant in underpinning this study as it stresses on the need for better sources of information and channels of information. It posits that individual in this case, the Arab tourists will obtain better information if their information search is based on right sources of information and channels of information.

2.5.1 The Role of Sources and Channels in Information Theory

It seems intuitively relevant to first look into Information Theory to provide a theoretical basis for the study of information search. Although many aspects of information theory are of little relevance to consumer or tourist information search strategies, the general model of the communication process developed by the pioneer information theorists supplied invaluable conceptual framework for identifying the factors influencing the behavior. Although the model has tremendous impact on the study of communication as well as other social sciences, it is argued that researchers within the field of tourism information search largely ignore the framework. The communication model is discussed in detail here in order to make a case for its applicability to this thesis.

The book, 'Mathematical theory of Communication (Shannon & Weaver, 1962, 2002) and the following discussions about their proposed model was in fact what spawned the whole discipline of communication as we know it now (Baker, 2002). Everett Rogers claimed that the publication of this book was "the most important single turning point in the history of communication sciences" (Rogers, 1997) while Rogers and Valence suggested that "Shannon's information theory provided the root paradigm for the field of communication theory and research" (Rogers, 1997)

As an engineer working for Bell Telephone Laboratories (BTL), Shannon's ambition was to describe in mathematical terms the process of which a message is able to travel from a sources to a destination (Raitz & Dakhil, 1989). In particular, he was seeking answers to questions such as: Which kind of communication channels can bring through the maximum amount of signals? How much of a transmitted signal

will be destroyed by noise while travelling from the sources to the receiver? (McQuail, 2010; McQuail & Windahl, 1981). However, as pointed out by Beck, Bennett, and Wall (2004), the mathematical dimensions of Shannon and Weaver's information theory were largely ignored by the early communication theorists in favors of the adoption of general diagrammatic model of the process of communication.

2.5.2 Determinants of Information sources and Information Channels

Scholars have researched the determinants of travelers' search strategy, or direction of travelers' search activities and an overview on some important findings is provided below. It is difficult to state with certainty whether the factors discussed in these studies influence the choice of information sources and information channels, or both. Therefore, this study aims to address this gap in the literature.

In the following discussion the emphasis is on studies that have looked into the choices of different information search strategies. Thus, studies have investigated variables associated with the use of one particular information sources, such as welcome centers (Fesenmaier & Vogt, 1993; Pennington-Gray & Vogt, 2003) or one particular channels, for example the Internet (Ellard & Nickerson, 1999; Graeupl & McCabe, 2004) are not included.

Vogt and Fesenmaier (1998) found travel skills to be positively related to using books and magazines for travel information. Also in the same study conducted, the strength of an individual's intent to visit a destination was clearly associated with using newspaper, magazine advertisements and TV. Cai, Feng, and Breiter (2004)

studied the effect of purchase decision involvement on information search strategy and found that travelers with high purchase involvement levels were more likely to search for destination information from the Internet compared to other sources (Gretzel, Yoo, & Purifoy, 2007; Lindquist & Sirgy, 2003).

The various factors which influence the choice of information search strategy of travelers can be classified into two broad categories (Fodness & Murray, 1999; Lindquist & Sirgy, 2003) personal characteristics and situational characteristics. In the following these two types of factors would be discussed accordingly. Table shows personal characteristics, which were found to influence the choice of search strategy including demographic variables such as age, gender, education, socio-economic status and nationality, as well as personal values, the situational characteristics such as travel party, planning, and horizon. The findings are, however, often inconsistent.

Table 2.3

The Personal Characteristics and Situational Characteristics (Grønflaten, 2005)

Situational Variables	Study	Findings
Travel Party	Gitleson & Crompton, 1983	-Family groups are more likely to acquire information from mass media such as radio and TV.
	Fodness & Murray, 1999	-Families with children are likely to use sources such as travel agents and auto clubs as decisive pre-purchase information sources. Couples without children are heavy users of governmental tourist bureaus.
	Luo et al., 2004	-People travelling with friends are more likely to get information from friends/relatives and less likely to get information from destination specific sources. People travelling in a non-family group are less likely to use the Internet.
Planning	Dodd, 1998	-The shorter the time the decision is made to

Horizon		visit an attraction, the greater is the importance placed on billboards for information.
	Vogt et al., 1998	-Respondents with long planning horizons are more likely to look for information in magazines and books.
	Flognfeldt & Nordgren, 1999	-Internet is used at an early stage.
	Schweda, 2004	-Guidebooks seem to be used all throughout the planning process.

Personal Variables	**Study**	**Finding**
Age	Gitleson & Crompton, 1983	-People over 50 are more likely than other age groups to use travel agents. Those use print media less than 30 years old.
	Capella and Greco, 1987	-Family and friends greatly influence the vacation decisions for respondents over 60 years old. Travel agents are not important information sources for this group.
	Raitz & Dakhil, 1989	-Younger people value information provided by peers more highly than information from family members. Print media are less useful to young adults than are electronic media (except radio).
	Fesenmaier and Vogt, 1992	-Welcome centers are more likely to be used by 51-64 year olds than both older and younger travelers.
	Lo et al., 2002	-No significant differences.
	Luo et al., 2004	-No significant differences.
Gender	Gitleson and Crompton, 1983	-Females are over-represented in their use of TV and Radio.
	Capella and Greco, 1987	-Personal sources are relied on more by males, while females use more newspapers. -Men are less likely to use travel agents than women.
	Snepenger et al, 1990	-Women place significantly more importance on word of mouth as an information sources than men do.
	Dodd, 1998	-No significant differences. -Males are more likely to use travel agents and Internet, whereas females are more likely to use friends / relatives.
	Lo et al., 2002 Luo et al., 2004	
Socio-Economic Stats/ Income	Woodside and Ronkainen, 1980	-Upscale, white collar travelers use travel agencies extensively.
	Gitleson and Crompton, 1983	-Tourists with higher incomes are more likely to seek consultants' help than expected.
	Capella and Greco, 1987	-Individuals who rely more on their family for information are of higher social status.

	Fesenmaier and Vogt, 1992	-Advice from family and friends is used predominantly by travelers with low incomes, and newspapers by individuals with a high annual income.
	Fodness and Murray, 1999	-Travelers with lower incomes rely on their friends and relatives for travel information. Higher income groups use more governmental tourist information sources such as welcome centers, local tourist offices, and state travel guides.
	Lo et al., 2002	-Personal experience is more important for lower income groups.
	Luo et al., 2004	-High-income groups are more likely to use the Internet, and low-income groups are more likely to use friends / relatives.
Education	Gitleson and Crompton, 1983	-Those with the highest levels of education are over represented in their use of print media. College-educated are more likely to use destination specific literature.
	Capella and Greco, 1987	-The lower the person's education, the more importance respondents place on consumer publications.
	Andereck and Caldwell, 1993	-People with lower education levels rate mass media as more important than do people with higher education levels.
	Dodd, 1998	-The lower the person's income and education, the more importance respondents place on brochures.
	Lo et al., 2002	-No significant differences.
	Luo et al., 004	-No significant differences.
Nationality	Uysal et al., 1990	-Visitors from the United Kingdom and Japan make less use of word of mouth than do German and French visitors. Japanese visitors appear to make greater use of printed media in general.
	Gursoy and Chen, 2000	-German travelers use personal computers, and city / state travel departments relatively more than British and French travelers do. British and French leisure travelers are more likely to use tour companies, newspapers and magazines, as well as friends and relatives.
	Lo et al.,2002	-Travelers from Canada perceive travel agents as more important than travelers from Singapore.
Personal Values	Capella and Greco, 1987	-People who can be identified as opinion leaders rely on personal sources of information as well as television.

Fall, 2000	-Hedonism is associated with interpersonal information sources, whereas people who are identified with an achievement factor are associated and advertising sources.

Assessing both information sources and information channels preferences for different age groups would therefore provide a more accurate picture regarding their search strategies. The effect of gender differences on travelers' search behavior is also studied in this research. According to Dodd. (1998) women placed significant importance through word of mouth as information sources than men did, whereas Capella and Greco (1987) is findings found that males rely more on personal sources. Luo and Cai (2004) and Dodd (1998) concurred with that females are most likely to use friends and relatives in obtaining travel information. Further light could be shed on these contradictions only if it were clear whether these gender differences could be attributed to a choice of personal, familiar information sources or to a choice of a face-to-face communication channels. The use of travel agents is also controversial with Snepenger, Meged, Snelling, and Worrall (1990) suggesting that users of this sources were often than not to be women, Luo and Cai (2004) argued that they were more likely to be men.

Similar contradictions were found in regards to the influence of socio-economic status on the reliance of friends and family. Capella and Greco (1987) reported that individuals who relied more on their family for information came from higher social status. Other studies have found evidence that travelers with lower incomes rely more on their friends and relatives for travel information (Fesenmaier & Vogt, 1993; Fodness & Murray, 1999; Luo & Cai, 2004). According to Andereck and

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Caldwell (1994) travelers with lower education levels rated mass media as more important than did people with higher education level.

This has proven somewhat in consistent with Gitelson and Crompton (1983) findings which indicated that those with the highest level of education were over-represented in the use of print media. Initially, it may appear that people with higher education level preferred writ ten tourism information, whereas the less educated preferred other types of media such as the radio and TV. Further studies conducted had however shown that the lower the person's income and education, the more importance respondents were found to place on consumer publications (Capella & Greco, 1987) and brochures (Dodd, 1998) as sources for information. This suggests that the relationship between the level of education and preference for print media may be dependent on whether these channels used by commercial or editorial information sources.

The research, which studied the influence of nationality on information search, has shown significant variations in search strategies for tourists from different countries (Gursoy & Chen, 2000; Lo, Cheung, & Law, 2002; Uysal et al., 1990). The subsequent results may be interpreted in two ways whereby, either the people from different nationalities have different media habits and preferences, which was suggested by Gursoy and Chen (2000) study; or there exists culturally determined preferences for particular information providers. Chen (2000) in fact, argued that the preference of the Pacific-Rim countries for travel agencies rather than information from the tourism offices suggested an inclination to use proprietary as opposed to

public information sources. Personal values may also directly be affecting both travelers' information sources and information channels preferences.

The composition of travel parties seemed to affect the decision-making process in various ways. For instance, Gitelson and Crompton (1983) found that family groups were more likely to acquire information from mass media such as radio and TV. According to Fodness and Murray (1999) families with children were most prone to use sources like travel agents and auto clubs as pre-purchase information sources. However, the radio and TV, as potential information channels, were not included in their studies, hence it is difficult to compare the findings with Gitelson and Crompton (1983). Not surprisingly however, Luo and Cai (2004) found that people travelling with friends were more likely than other groups to depend on friends in obtaining travel information.

A second situational factor to have been featured in the literature was the effect of the planning horizon on travelers' choice of information search strategy. The timing of the decision to visit a tourist attraction was, not surprisingly, negatively related to the use of billboards as an information channels (Dodd, 1998). Thus, the shorter the time the decision was made to visit an attraction, the greater the importance was placed on billboards for information, indicating the association of this particular information channels with spontaneous decision types. In another study, Vogt and Fesenmaier (1998) found that books and magazines were used relatively more by travelers who planned the trip ahead of time. The Internet also found to be used primarily during the early planning stages. It is obvious that the situational context in which the information search took place had an impact on both the choice of

information sources and information channels. However, the situational, which would be the push factor towards the two decisions, remain unresolved.

2.6 The Effect of the Internet

Tourism and information technology (IT), are two of the largest and most dynamic industries in the world today (Buhalis, 2003; Buhalis & Law, 2008; Sheldon, 1997). According to the world travel and tourism council, both tourism and information technology are amongst the three most important industries in the 21st century (Middleton & Clarke, 2012; Werthner & Klein, 1999). There cannot be any other industry which is able to live up to these two in terms of growth and development (Frew, 2000). This section discusses the impact of the development practices with regards to travelers' information search. This section further maintains that the advent of the Internet has made it extremely important to distinguish between information sources and information channels.

At the present time, the Internet is driving most of the developments in information technology and tourism, as well as communication. But the tourism sector has been relying on information technology long before the development of the network into commercial use (Sheldon, 1997). For decades in the travel industry, it has use technology to sell, control, operate and network in one form or another (Fontayne, 1996). The size and nature of the tourism industry indicate that it generates large amount of information that must be addressed (Sheldon, 1997).

Every time one decides to purchase a holiday package, there seems to be enormous amount of information associated with the transactions. This associated transactions

information includes destination and product information, routes, schedules, payment information and passenger information. For over 30 years, the travel industry has been exploiting the information technology to process such information, so much so that the tourism industry is said to be the inventor of electronic commerce (Dietrich et al., 1997). What has changed, Dietrich et al. (1997) pointed out was that the introduction of Internet prompted the use of information technology from the back office to the consumer, and that the novel use of information technology had become a critical competitive advantage for tourism companies.

The use of the Internet and World Web Wide (WWW) now dominates in the field of marketing communications and tourism. Currently the Internet contains hundreds of thousands of home pages for service providers and associations, as well as electronic bulletin boards, newsgroups and chat rooms for travel and tourism community, and is fast becoming an important channels of trade in the tourism field and other industries (Dombey, 1998; O'Connor, 2012). For example, it took only three years on the Internet for up to 50 million users, as opposed to 38 years for radio and 13 years for TV (Law & Leung, 2000).

In consideration of the new medium, it seems as if it were designed specifically for the Internet to correct the deficiencies and complexities inherent in the tourism industry (Anckar, 2003; Sterns, 2000). Consumers and suppliers by definition are widely dispersed, and the Internet is the ideal tool to improve marketing and communication between the two countries. Moreover as already mentioned, the process of research and purchase is very dependent on the density of information (O'Connor, Buhalis, & Frew, 2001). It involves a huge amount of data on each

element of the trip, which comes from a wide range of sources. Internet offers the possibility to reduce or eliminate this search and inefficient process (O'Connor, Buhalis, & Frew, 2001). Websites also can serve as a central access point for information on many related topics, allowing the traveler to search for every aspect of the trip (air, hotels, cars, and tourist attractions) in one place. The Internet has also provided new channels of communication that is available to travelers in both the private and government bodies; as well as government tourism or commercial suppliers of tourism services process (O'Connor, Buhalis, & Frew, 2001; Oh, Lehto, & Park, 2009). This has mandated the need for making a clear distinction between the information sources and information channels.

Traditionally, traveler used to get in touch with the travel agent by making phone calls or talking to a travel agent in personal. Now however, the same information may be obtained through the site on the Internet and travel agent or by sending an e-mail process (O'Connor, Buhalis, & Frew, 2001; Oh, Lehto, & Park, 2009). Similarly, other travelers traditionally have been sources of information to the other personal while traveling abroad. Nowadays, this is the information sources that can be easily accessed through a variety of discussion groups and chat rooms.

Because of the emergence of new information technologies, such as the Internet and Smartphones, e.g., iPhone, iPad and others, there is no longer one obvious channels of information used by tourists to consult the sources for certain information processes (O'Connor, Buhalis & Frew, 2001; Lee, 2011; Dickinson et al., 2014; Emmanouilidis, Koutsiamanis, & Tasidou, 2013). The Internet, as well as the use of Smartphone, has changed radically the way that travelers access information sources.

It is therefore necessary to make a clear distinction between who is providing the information (sources) and how to deliver information (channels).

It is by nature of Internet providers that the information sent through these channels is more ambiguous than most other media channels and unfortunately many consumers do not know (or do not care) who are those behind the sources of the information. It is unfortunate that the academic literature of tourism in the region also seems to ignore the fact that the Internet is the information channels through which a number of sources passed their messages across. For a proper assessment of the impact of Internet in the tourism industry, it is important to consider these new channels of information and as such; this research does not focus on how to use various sources of information on the Internet as one of the communication channels (Morgan, Pritchard, & Abbott, 2001).

Being the largest reservoir of human knowledge it is clear that the Internet has enormous potential in the service of tourists in the process of searching for information for their decision-making process (Morgan, Pritchard, & Abbott, 2001; Oh, Lehto, & Park, 2009). As Morgan, Pritchard and Abbot reported: "Before the advent of WWW, organizations needed at least two media for marketing promotion to raise awareness and a sales medium (face-to-face or telephone) to process the transaction. Today, website is channels of distribution as well as communication making the conversion of interest in to action and sales more immediate"(Morgan, Pritchard, & Abbott, 2001).

Thus not only the Internet is used extensively for the purposes of communication and marketing, but more importantly, it is seen as one of the major impacts that affect the

way that tourism products would be purchased and sold in the near future (Inkpen, 1998). Internet technology can link both customers and suppliers with great ease. This is bringing about new possibilities for distribution, tourism, and the restructuring of the tourism industry, as well as the emergence of new types of companies, for example, median travel. On-line travel agents give consumers the opportunity to bypass traditional intermediaries such as travel agents and tour operators, and thus threaten the positions of these companies. Some writers, in fact, stated that the issue of disintermediation is one of the biggest issues currently facing the tourism industries (Inkpen, 1998).

Although it is expected that the importance of the Internet is able to gain confidence and increase the usage (Beirne & Curry, 1999), however it was also noted that Internet is not likely to become the only channels for the distribution of tourism products. Research has shown that many consumers in their process of search and purchase products some prefer from outside the line as a sources of enjoyment and an opportunity for social interaction (Beliveau, Garwood, Sheldon, Wober, & Fesenmaier, 2001). There is a common finding in studies that examined the issue of disintermediation that the Internet cannot replace travel to traditional retail stores because of its inherent limitations in terms of personal, face-to-face concept to assist customers.

From the above conclusion it is clear that the more closely related to consumer preferences for personal transactions, which are the medium for the selection and purchase of travel agents in exchange directly from the suppliers. It would seem that the data indicate a choice between single interfaces versus personal technology,

preferably in the travel agent as a representative. There are many commentators who ignore that nowadays; most travel services are sold through the Internet by travel agents (O'Connor, 2001). In addition, the human touch factor is experienced when the tourist visits the tourism supplier personally (although this is becoming increasingly difficult in many cases as tourism products are usually at some distance from the consumer).

Therefore, it is inadequate and misleading to imply that the issue is about whether consumers buy disintermediation of the travel agent or from the Internet. Option still exists between buying through a broker versus directly from suppliers. However, apart from these two options, there is an additional option in dealing with them, either personally or through some new electronic channels (O'Connor, 2001). In fact, the choice between the sources (the travel agent) and the channels (Internet) is actually a choice between two sets of sources and channels.

A more accurate description of the issue of disintermediation is the option to deal with service providers directly through the Internet. In order to be clearer about the forces that drive disintermediation, it is necessary to separate the factors that determine the choice of information sources from the factors, which determine the choice of information channels.

What has changed of course, with the advent of the Internet is the relative accessibility of the different vendors of tourism services, making it easier for tourists to purchase directly from the suppliers. The Internet does not, however, change the basic principles of the role of intermediaries, who exists to simplify buyers' choice processes by aggregating travel products and simplifying the consumers search

process (Palmer & McCole, 1999). When considering the disintermediation issue, it is important to recognize that accessibility is only one out of several factors that guides consumers' choice between a service provider and a travel agent. When eliciting other choice criteria used when purchasing a travel service, one must determine whether these criteria can be attributed to the sources that the tourist is buying from or to the characteristics of the channels that is used for distribution.

Not surprisingly, the disintermediation debate has focused on the revenue generating aspect of tourism distribution, which is the actual transaction. Understanding that providing pre-purchase information is a necessary prerequisite for any transaction to be made (O'Connor, 2001) the questions asked by the disintermediation debate are very relevant to the information search stage of the consumers' decision-making process.

Regardless of whether or not the tourist has an immediate intention to purchase the travel product in question, the Internet provides a vastly improved access to information sources that were not consulted as frequently only a few years ago. Again however, the question of whom to acquire the necessary information from (supplier or intermediary) must be separated from how the tourist wants the information to be communicated (through the Internet or face-to-face). This research takes a fresh look at the disintermediation issue from an information search perspective with an emphasis on clearly separating the choice of information sourcesfrom the choice of information channels.

In summary, this section reveals that the emergence of new technologies, such as the Internet and the use of Smartphone, have significantly helped the Arab tourists in

their information search. Therefore, the studies by O'Connor, Buhalis and Frew (2001); (Inkpen, 1998); (Beirne & Curry, 1999); (Beliveau et al., 2001) and Dickinson et al., (2014) on the new technology emergence are very relevant to this present study as they relate the usefulness of new technology to effective tourism information search strategies used by the tourists, including the Arab tourists coming to Malaysia.

2.7 Information Choice Strategy

Information choice strategy is concerned with the decision about the tourism destination of the tourists. It includes tourists choosing among alternative tourism destinations available. Many of the decisions regarding consumer products and the acquisition of information necessary to determine the destination and make decisions on the site, such as choice of accommodation, transportation, activities, and tours (Fodness & Murray, 1998; Gursoy & Chen, 2000; Snepenger et al., 1990) can be defined as search for information as "motivated activation of knowledge stored in memory or acquisition information on the environment" (Blackwell, Miniard, & Engel, 2006). There are internal and external searches, where by internal search is to retrieve knowledge from memory, while external search involves gathering information from market locations (Blackwell et al., 2006).

Information search occurs when the individual realizes a decision is necessary. Invariably, the individual would initially depend on internal search (previous experiences and knowledge from for planning a repeat visit (Fodness & Murray, 1997; Gursoy & Chen, 2000; Lindquist & Sirgy, 2003; Vogt & Fesenmaier, 1998).

Internal sources includes personal experiences, and also information gathered through ongoing research (Schul & Crompton, 1983; Vogt & Fesenmaier, 1998). If the internal search has given adequate information for making decisions on a trip, this may not be followed by external search (Beatty & Smith, 1987). However, if information secured via internal search is insufficient, then the individual usually resorts to external sources.

As revealed by the description above, it shows that information choice strategy is well related to information to the decision about the tourism destination of the Arab tourists. It shows that the lack of information choice strategy would lead to wrong decision about the tourism destination of the tourists.

2.7.1 Information Search Behavior of Tourist

An individual's awareness, choice and selection of destinations depend on the available information (Bieger & Laesser, 2001; Oppewal, Huybers, & Crouch, 2010). The literature on information search behavior of travelers revealed that the way in which tourists look for information has often been used as a segmentation criterion in tourism research (Bieger & Laesser, 2004; Fodness & Murray, 1997). Segmenting travelers is important to understand their individual behavior (Cohen, 2004; Wickens, 2002) and has been found to be useful for marketing purposes, in designing appropriate tourism products and for establishing proper communication channels to meet the needs and expectations of tourists in different segments (Alvarez & Asugman, 2006).

Segmenting the tourism market on the basis of information search behavior of travelers is especially appropriate for the industry as the latter rely to a large extent on information (Alvarez & Asugman, 2006; Bieger & Laesser, 2001) and communication with tourists (Pan & Fesenmaier, 2006). There have been several attempts to segment travelers according to their information search behavior (Fodness & Murray, 1997; Schul & Crompton, 1983). Stigler (1961) first came up with the concept of search theory of economics of information, meaning 'consumers will continue expanding resources for search until the utility gained from the search exceeds the costs' (Money & Crotts, 2003).

Information search behavior of consumers has been one of the most researched areas in consumer research (Beatty & Smith, 1987; Dörnyei, 2011) and likewise, investigating and understanding the information search behavior of travelers have a long tradition in tourism research (Etzel & Wahlers, 1985; Fodness & Murray, 1997, 1998, 1999; Perdue, 1985; Raitz & Dakhil, 1989; Ramkissoon & Nunkoo, 2008; Schul & Crompton, 1983; Snepenger & Snepenger, 1993; Woodside & Ronkainen, 1980).

The information search behavior has "motivated activity to search for information stored in memory or acquisition of decision-relevant information from the environment" (Blackwell et al., 2006). This is often regarded as one of the first steps of vacation decision-making process (Gursoy & Terry Umbreit, 2004). The process of information search starts when an individual recognizes a need or a problem (Kerstetter & Cho, 2004) and would take place when the consumer has to make a travel decision.

Two models guide the research on information search behavior of travelers. These two models are: the strategic and the contingency model (Fodness & Murray, 1997). The strategic model was first proposed by *Snepenger*, which defines information search strategies as the combination of information sources. However, literature review reveals that several studies using this sources-based approach only looked at one type of information sources used by tourists (Fodness & Murray, 1997). Snepenger et al. (1990) defined search strategy as "the combination of information sources used by a travel party to plan a trip".

Other studies have also revealed that travelers tend to use different information sources such as travel consultants, family and friends, destination-specific literature and the media when planning a vacation (Snepenger & Snepenger, 1993; Woodside & Ronkainen, 1980). For instance, the research by Fodness and Murray (1998) found that some travelers depend only on one sources of information. On the other hand, there were also travelers who used several types of information sources before settling on a decision.

The influence of socio-demographic characteristics on the use of external information sources is dealt with by the strategic model (Snepenger et al., 1990). On the other hand, the contingency model (Schul & Crompton, 1983) defined information search as, an individual's efforts to search for information using, for example, previous trip experiences, number of sources used, and the amount of time spent, personal characteristics and situational influences (Fodness & Murray, 1997; Schul & Crompton, 1983). These researchers argued that the lifestyles and differences in individuals could more accurately predict travelers' external search

behavior compared to socio-demographic characteristics. The above-mentioned models are similar in some aspects but differ in others. Both the strategic and contingency models take into account the following:

1. Influence of the travel parties.

2. Prior visits to destination.

3. Degree of familiarity with the destination.

4. Availability of external information sources.

One of the advantages of the strategic model is attempt to look into the various information sources likely to be utilized by tourists. However, the weaknesses being its inability in helping us to understand the reason why travelers utilize certain types of external information sources and rejects others. Also, it does not try to study the factors besides consumer's demographic characteristics, which could have an impact on external information sources used. The contingency model can be considered superior to the strategic model. The contingency model examines several other factors, which may have an influence on a travelers' search behavior. Yet, this model is infrequently used in the tourism literature (Schul & Crompton, 1983).

Finally, this section of the literature is that it has helped the current study to understand the different behavioral of the tourist travelers. It shows that tourist travelers are in the habit of searching for information using information channels. Hence, the consideration of information sources and information channels in this present study.

2.7.2 Tourist Information Search

Consumer awareness, selection, choice of travel products and services depend on the information available and used by travelers. Tourism researchers have thus understandably directed considerable attention to the study of information search (Fodness & Murray, 1997). Information search or information seeking is generally considered to mean the process of referring to several sources before arriving at a decision to buy (Andereck, 2005; Andereck & Caldwell, 1994; Johnson & Pham, 2007; Maser & Weiermair, 1998).

Engel (1995) pointed out that these sources are not necessarily external to the consumer and defined information search as "the motivated activation of knowledge stored in memory or acquisition of information from the environment" (Blackwell et al., 2006). This aspect of information search as well as other ways regarding the concept would be discussed further later in this chapter.

As mentioned earlier, the main reason to carry out information search is the need to arrive at better consumption choices (Fodness & Murray, 1999). However, tourism information may also have other motives like sensitizing consumers to the idea of having a vacation, persuading them to do so, and heightening the appreciation of a vacation (Baas & van Raaij, 2010; Mugadza, 2005; Verhallen & Raaij, 1993).

Along these lines it can be denoted that destination-specific literatures and the mass media, in general, have a vital role to play in disseminating information; friends, relatives and travel consultants typically perform a legitimizing or evaluative function (Gitelson & Crompton, 1983). Researchers have also pointed out the

hedonic as well as other functions of tourism information search (Goossens, 2000; Govers, Go, & Kumar, 2007; Vogt & Fesenmaier, 1998).

More often than not, the acquiring and use of information is a means but not an end to consumer behavior. Some travelers may have specific problems to solve e.g. a tourist in need of directions to a specific place. Other travelers may not know precisely the information, which they need, but they are aware that they are looking for some type of travel information. This variation in information needs means that different travelers will search for information in their own different ways (Kingsley & Fesenmaier, 1995) depending on their personal needs. It is therefore essential for researchers to better understand where and how travelers search for information under different circumstances. Assael (1987)has argued that information can be treated as one of the most or even the most important factor influencing and determining consumer behavior.

Tourists are generally expected to engage in extensive information search before embarking on a trip (Dellaert, 1999) especially when it involves a substantial amount in terms of money spent. Due to the inherent personal characteristics, information search carried out to plan leisure travel, usually takes more time and involves greater usage of information sources when compared to the search for other consumer products' information (Fodness & Murray, 1998). Several reasons have been cited, namely:

1. *Cost:* A vacation is typically considered a costly product both in terms of a traveler's discretionary time and income (Gitelson & Crompton, 1983).

2. *Intangibility:* Unlike durable goods, intangible tourism services cannot be physically displayed or inspected at the point of sale before purchasing (Gitelson & Crompton, 1983).

3. *Novelty:* Many vacationers are interested to visit new, unfamiliar destinations as a primary travel motive, which implies that they have little desire to return to a previously visited destination, no matter how successful a previous vacation at that destination (Schul & Crompton, 1983).

4. *Distance:* Most tourism services are by definition bought before the time of their use and far away from the place of consumption (Buhalis, 2000).

5. *Image***:** The decision to purchase a holiday is also important in the sense that it is viewed by many people as an extension to their personality (Mill & Morrison, 2006).

6. *Infrequency:* Leisure time has become a scarce commodity, and thus the annual holiday or even an accessional weekend break is of great value to the consumers (Wicks & Schuett, 1994).

Spending money on a vacation is therefore associated with several risks and uncertainties. As such, consumers must search for detailed information so as to reduce the gap between their expectations and their actual holiday experience (O'Connor, 2001). According toSheth, Newman, and Gross (1991); Howard and Sheth (1969) in Theory of Buyer Behaviors; the buyer's uncertainty in judging available products or services acts on risk arousal, which in turn stimulates attention to and search for information. The aforementioned characteristics of tourism services make for a travel decision-making process that is understandably high in uncertainty and risk for the consumer. Risk categories typically employed in the tourism

literature involve: equipment risk, psychological risk, social risk, financial risk, time risk, satisfaction risk, and physical risk (Roehl & Fesenmaier, 1992). Due to the high risks involved when purchasing tourism products, the use of external information to reduce these risks seems apparent (Nysveen, Methlie, & Pedersen, 2003).

D'Ambra and Wilson (2004) Said that the Internet will eventually replace many traditional sources of information in terms of reducing buyer uncertainty. Etzel and Wahlers (1985) and Wicks and Schuett (1994) said that from a tourism marketer's perspective, information search is interesting, as there seems to be a positive association between the amount of search, time and money spent on a trip.

Tierney (1993) found that travelers who stopped for information at state traveler centers both stayed longer and spent more money during their visit than other travelers. It has also been reported that a personal intention to visit a destination is positively related to both the number and type of information sources used (Baloglu, 2000). The provision of information, therefore, is essential in terms of getting the potential tourists' attention in the first place but also to guide and direct travelers during their stay at the destination.

Several studies on tourism information search have been motivated by its potential use as a basis for segmentation including, the question of 'if and how consumers can be segmented on the basis of their information search behavior' (Bieger & Laesser, 2001; Fall, 2000; Hsieh & O'Leary, 1994; Manyika et al., 2011; Perdue, 1985; Snepenger, 1987). As Maser and Weiermair (1998) pointed out, "most empirical work done in travel information research was focused on identifying either or 'information sources segments' and used behavioral and personal characteristics for

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its description" (Maser & Weiermair, 1998). The rationale behind this interest is the various search strategies revealed within the tourism market represent the means by which service and product offerings are communicated to the travelers (Assael, 1987).

In summary, this section has helped the study to understand the important and the need to search for information. It helped to reveal the various means and the processes employed by a potential tourists search for information using several sources before arriving at a decision to buy (Andereck, 2005; Andereck & Caldwell, 1994; Johnson & Pham, 2007; Maser & Weiermair, 1998). Thus, the review on tourist information search has facilitated the understanding of the information sources, which is one of the key variables in this study.

2.8 Situational Characteristics and Personal Characteristics

The choice of tourists from the information search strategy in regards to the information found to be influenced by the situational characteristics and personal characteristics of the traveler. Forming a group party to travel seems to affect the decision in different ways. According to Gitelson and Crompton (1983) those with family groups were most likely to obtain information from the media such as radio and television. This could be due to these channels are actually suitable for communication in the early stages, and also allows multiple users at any one time. According to Fodness and Murray (1999) families with children were likely to use sources such as travel agencies, auto clubs and other crucial sources of information before buying. This study does not, however, include radio, television and channels

of information possible, so it is difficult to compare with (Gitelson & Crompton, 1983). Not surprisingly, Luo and Cai (2004) found that people traveling with friends are more likely than other groups to use friends in getting travel information.

A second contextual factor emerging in the literature is the effect of planning horizon in the choice of travelers' information search strategy. The timing of the decision to visit the tourist attractions, not surprisingly, negatively related to the use of billboards as a channels of information (Dodd, 1998). Thus, the shorter the time the decision was taken to visit the attraction, placed greater importance on the bulletin boards for information, which indicates a link to this channels with the specific information types of spontaneous resolution. In another study by Vogt and Fesenmaier (1998) it was found that books and magazines were used when people plan a long trip ahead of time. The Internet was also being choice of information sources during the early planning stages.

2.8.1 Mediating Effect of Personal Characteristics

Apart from other factor such as personal characteristics that have been identified to influence information sources, information channels and information choice strategy, personal characteristics such as age, education, nationality etc. have equally been acknowledged to have influence on information sources, information channels and information choice strategies. For instance, Fodness and Murray (1999) in attempt to identify the factors that influence the relationship between influence on information sources, information channels and information choice strategies categorized them into two major groups called situational characteristics and personal characteristics

(e.g. age, education, nationality, gender etc.). The studies by (Grønflaten, 2008; 2009) on the influence of information search strategies (comprising of information sources and information channels) on information choice strategies noted that both situational characteristics and personal characteristics would influence the relationship between information sources, information channels and information choice strategies.

However, this study concentrates only on the personal characteristics in particular education. The argument presented by Grønflaten (2008; 2009) imply that personal characteristics such as education would influence or mediate in the information sources, information channels and information choice strategies relationship. Therefore, it is argued here that the higher the level of education of the traveler or potential tourist, the better the information sources and information channels which will then reflect on the information choice strategies. Hence, personal characteristics such as education are assumed to be a significant mediator in the information sources, information channels and information choice strategies relationship. It is expected to give further explanation on the influence of information sources, information channels on information choice strategies. By so doing, the tourism travelers obtain better information sources, information channels and information choice strategy. Other personal characteristics that have been identified by previous studies to play mediating roles in the information sources, information channels and information choice strategies relationship include age, gender, education, socio-economic status and nationality, as well as situational values (Gitelson & Crompton,

1983; Grønflaten, 2008, 2009; Gursoy & Chen, 2000; Luo & Cai, 2004; Raitz & Dakhil, 1989).

2.8.2 Mediating Effect of Situational Characteristics

The proponents of situational theory have emphasized the importance of situational as the dominant factor or feature in making certain decisions (Hayward, 2006). Although, this theory was originally applied in the leadership domain, however, it has become very relevant in the domain of tourism study (Hayward, 2006). For instance, the study by Grønflaten (2009) adopted this theory in his study of travelers' choice of information sources and information channels. He argued that situational factors are more likely to affect travelers' choice of information sources and information channels. He further noted that situational characteristics would affect the relationship between information sources, information channels and information choice strategies. Hence, situational factors would determine the association of the information sources and information channels on the information choice strategies of the tourists in making their decisions about tourism adventures. The study by Fodness and Murray (1999) affirmed that situational factors such as families including children are more likely to influence the use of information sources, information channels with information choice strategies. Recent study by Luo and Cai (2004) noted that situational factors such as nonfamily group and planning stage of the tourism adventure would significantly affect the influence of both information sources and information channels on the information choice strategies. Also, Flognfeldt and Nordgreen (1999) found that situational characteristics such as early planning stages which is subject to changes during the years affects the influence

information sources and information channels on the information choice strategies. That is the decision on information sources, information channels and information choice strategies of the tourists. Therefore, it is expected in this study that situational characteristics would give further explanation on the influence of information sources and information channels on the information choice strategies of the Arab tourists. By so doing, the tourism travelers would obtain better information sources, information channels and information choice strategy. Table 2.4 shows the situational characteristics.

Table 2.4

Situational Characteristics Affecting Information Search Strategy (Gronflaten, 2005)

Situational Variable	Studies	Studies
Travel Party	Gitleson & Crompton, 1983	-Family groups are more likely to acquire information from mass media such as radio and TV. -Families with children are likely to use sources such as travel agents and auto clubs as decisive pre-purchase information sources.
	Fodness & Murray, 1999	Couples without children are heavy users of governmental tourist bureaus.
	Luo et al., 2004	-People travelling with friends are more likely to get information from friends/relatives and less likely to get information from destination specific sources. People travelling in a non-family group are less likely to use the Internet.
Planning Horizon	Dodd, 1998	-The shorter the time the decision is made to visit an attraction, the greater is the importance placed on billboards for information.
	Vogt et al., 1998 Flognfeldt & Nordgren, 1999 Schweda, 2004	-Respondents with long planning horizons are more likely to look for information in magazines and books. -Internet is used at an early stage. -Guidebooks seem to be used all throughout the planning process.

2.8.3 Studies of Travelers' Choice of Information Search Strategy

There is a great variety in information needs. This means that different travelers would search for information in different ways (Kingsley & Fesenmaier, 1995) thus making it vital for tourism marketers to properly understand travelers' information search strategies. This includes the understanding of where different travelers search for information under different circumstances (Fodness & Murray, 1999) and reasons underlying the choice of the said strategy. Table 2.5 provides an overview of variables, which were used to explain the choice of search strategies in previous research.

Table 2.5

Studies of Travellers Choice Information Search Strategy(Gronflaten, 2005)

Personal Variables	Studies
Age	Gitleson & Crompton, 1983; Capella & Greco, 1987; Raitz & Dakhil, 1989; Fesenmaier & Vogt, 1992; Lo,Cheung & Law, 2002; Luo, Feng & Cai, 2004.
Gender	Gitleson & Crompton, 1983; Capella & Greco, 1987; Snepenger et al, 1990; Dodd, 1998; Lo, Cheung & Law, 2002; Luo, Feng & Cai, 2004; Lehto, & Morrison, 2007
Socio-Economic Status/ Income	Woodside & Ronkainen, 1980; Gitleson & Crompton, 1983; Capella& Greco, 1987; Fesenmaier & Vogt, 1992; Fodness & Murray, 1999; Lo, Cheung & Law, 2002; Luo & Cai 2004
Education	Gitleson & Crompton, 1983; Capella & Greco, 1987; Andereck & Caldwell, 1993; Dodd, 1998; Lo, Cheung & Law, 2002; Luo, & Cai, 2004
Nationality	Uysal, McDonald & Reid, 1990; Mihalik, Uysal & Pan, 1995; Gursoy & Chen, 2000; Chen, 2000b; Hyde, 2006; Chen, 2000.
Personal Values	Capella & Greco, 1987; Fall, 2000
Situational Variables	**Studies**
Travel Party	Gitleson & Crompton, 1983; Fodness & Murray, 1999; Luo, Feng & Cai, 2004.
Planning Horizon	Dodd, 1998; Vogt, Stewart & Fesenmaier, 1998 Flognfeldt & Nordgren, 1999; Schweda, 2004
Trip Phase	Rompf, DiPietro & Ricci, 2005.

Table 2.5 shows that all the variables measured are antecedent factors recorded in parallel to the respondents' information search strategy rather than respondents' own accounts of the reason for choosing these strategies. Such measures are very important because they identify personal characteristics and situational characteristics that are likely to accompany the choice of a certain strategy, and a traveler's information search strategy can thus be anticipated based on knowledge of a range of commonly measured tourism statistics.

Although these studies are important, they, however, fail to show the range of qualitative reasons, which the tourists themselves would consider as important in order to arrive at a decision. Therefore, knowledge of both these aspects of information search strategy choice is needed so as to best reach tourism consumers through marketing communication on their terms. The only example of a qualitative study that examines tourists' choices of information search strategies from their own point of view is by Nishimura, Waryszak, and King (2006) and Nishimura et al. (2006) although they focused only on the use of guidebooks. Pearce and Schott (2005) also included qualitative elements in their research, by focusing on the choice of distribution channels as platforms of travel purchase rather than information. It is therefore necessary to carry out a qualitative study to investigate the choice between the various information search strategies from the travelers' perspective. This kind of study will help to highlight new important variables that can shed more light about this phenomenon.

2.8.4 Empirical Studies on Information Sources and Channels with Tourists' Search Strategy

Information need is an aspect of information behavior that represents the root of information search behavior (Wilson, 1997). In order to provide information to tourists, it is vital to understand their information needs or the reasons for collecting information. Recent research have indicated that tourists' information needs include both the functional needs that help in immediate travel decisions as well as the non-functional needs, which are used for other purposes like hedonic, aesthetic, innovation, and sign needs (Vogt & Fesenmaier, 1998) and might also influence future decisions.

Previous studies in the area of consumer behavior revealed that information needs related to personality (Bosnjak, Bratko, Galesic, & Tuten, 2007); yet only few studies relate personality and travel personality with tourists' information needs (Schul & Crompton, 1983). (Schul & Crompton, 1983) linked travel-specific lifestyles, including preference for travel activities with information search, and found that there is a relationship between travel lifestyle and the time duration of the information search and the activeness of that search (Abd Aziz & Ariffin, 2009; Schul & Crompton, 1983).

It is well known that the information search and decision process for tourists is complex (Fodness & Murray, 1997). Different researchers have tried to capture this process and its influencing factors. Fodness and Murray (1997, 1998, 1999) worked on a general model which is now the backbone for many further research

(Fesenmaier & Jeng, 2000; Fesenmaier & Vogt, 1993; Gursoy & McCleary, 2004; Vogt & Fesenmaier, 1998) in investigating the whole processes.

The Internet, with its huge potential, its rapid development and growing technical sophistication has provided important sources of information for the travelers. Accordingly, it has become an important area of research for researchers to understand tourists' information and decision search process. Besides that, research on the Internet with focus on information and decision process is tailored towards the understanding of the factors that enhance the decision-making ability of (travel) recommendation systems (Jeng & Fesenmaier, 2002).

Additionally, the study by Grabler and Zins (2002) on the search strategies of users, which observed travelers during their travel information search using an online travel agency, highlighted six different decision styles, namely: price, destination, activities, highly pre-defined, accommodation and recommendation-oriented. However, the study did not cover the level of details of the information requested by the travelers.

Investigation of user behavior in web search engines in general is attractive to researchers, although obtaining the data is a difficult task. Several studies have been conducted to examine user interaction with information retrieval systems and web search engines in particular (Berendt & Spiliopoulou, 2000; Jansen, Spink, & Saracevic, 2000; Najafi Azadeh, 2008; Ozmutlu, Ozmutlu, & Spink, 2003; Ozmutlu, Spink, & Ozmutlu, 2004; White & Iivonen, 2001). Jansen et al. (2000) found that users were submitting only a few queries per search, most of them only one and even then very short queries. This simplicity of the use research additionally revealed

features and possibilities to improve the search. Relevant feedback is rarely used, and operators were not frequently applied.

In addition, even when they were being used, very often it was unnecessary or users made mistakes. "The distribution in the frequency of use in terms of queries was highly skewed. A few terms were used repeatedly and some of them only once" (Jansen et al., 2000). A further study on web searchers showed that search behavior is different during daytime, whereby searches in the morning are longer, in the sense that users submit more queries. There are also generally more users but characteristics in query formulation concerning term per query and query reformulation remain the same (Ozmutlu et al., 2003).

Apart from this, the trend of multi-tasking search was discovered (Najafi Azadeh, 2008; Ozmutlu et al., 2003) this means that users submitted a variety of queries on several topics. It was therefore suggested that these topics were related to each other(He, Goker, & Harper, 2002). Automatic topic identification helps to discover the switching of topics, but methods development (He et al., 2002; Ozmutlu et al., 2004)still need further improvements. Additionally, research in understanding web users' behavior was focused on external behavior influences.

A major factor for selecting a research strategy is the original user's goal and purpose of the search which then influences the search behavior (Sawasdichai & Poggenpohl, 2002; Xie, 2002). An individual's awareness, choice and selection of destinations depend on available information (Bieger & Laesser, 2001; Rose & Levinson, 2004; Spink, 2002). Xie (2002) in a study presented the relationship between interactive intentions (as identifying, learning, finding, locating, record

keeping, accessing, evaluating and obtaining) and the search strategies chosen to reach these goals.

The intentions were multi-faceted, divided into four types namely; specific, common, location and general knowledge. The relationship is complex for each respective aim, a different set of information search strategies was chosen. Sawasdichai and Poggenpohl (2002) used their set of search strategies (exploratory, existence, topical, known item, comprehensive) to discover a similar relationship. In identifying different information seeking patterns, they detected three frequent ones, where users are found to be struggling. The learning process during the information search process leaves a lot of potential for search engines. Not only do users experience some level of change in the definition of their problem (Spink, 2002) but the more users are enjoying the search, the more useful they reckon search engines become for them (Liaw & Huang, 2003). A positive attitude to search engines and sense of satisfaction does not need to implicate a good search result. The measurements used to evaluate search engines do not correlate with user-based method (Spink, 2002) which shows a need for improving search engines, based on the users' needs.

From the foregoing, it is revealed that both information sources and information channels are relevant and related to the present study, as both factors are assumed to influence information choice strategy of the Arab tourists coming to Malaysia. For example, the tourists must obtain information from the right sources using appropriate channels and by so doing; their choice of information on their tourism adventure would be very effective; hence, the need for information sources and

information channels in relation to tourist information strategy in this study. Finally, the chapter discusses the effect of new technologies, such as the Internet and the use of Smart-phones as information search strategies of the tourists.

2.8.5 Arab Tourism in Malaysia

Tourist's numbers in Malaysia has increased over the last few years. The number of Arab tourists to Malaysia reached 126,000 in 2004, 150,000 in 2005, 200,000 in 2006, 245,302 in 2007, 264,338 in 2008, 284,890 in 2009, 11,362,862 in 2011, 11,632,483 in 2012 (AlBattat, Som, Ghaderi, & AbuKhalifeh, 2013) indicating an upward trend. The West Asian market is considered as high yield expenditure with an average of RM 3,397.40 per capita and an average stay of 13.7 nights compared to tourists from other countries. In terms of per capita expenditure, the Middle Eastern markets were top in 2003, in spite of a slight decrease in the arrival of Arab tourists, as a result of the Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) outbreak and haze (Ibrahim, Zahari, Sulaiman, Othman, & Jusoff, 2009; Razalli et al., 2012; Salman & Hasim, 2012). The income from the influx and spending power amongst Arabs tourists has contributed to a significant economic impact for the Malaysian economy.

As such, the Middle East has become one of the most important market segments for the Malaysian tourism industry. Accordingly, the tourism board, tour operators as well as hotel operators should capitalize on promoting tourism products like places of attractions, cultural events, shopping facilities, hotels and services to capture a larger share of this market segment. It is also important to understand the travelling

patterns so as to enable hotel operators to cater to the needs of these tourists. This would, in turn, result in satisfied and repeat travelers to this country. To date, most of the studies pertaining to Arab tourists were undertaken in developed countries (Blanc & Constant, 2006; Din, 1989; Houellebecq, 2001; Ritter, 1989; Smith, 2012). Some of these studies included:

1. Ritter (1989) who studied the differences between the travel behavioral patterns of Muslims and Arabs and those of their European counterparts.

2. Din (1989) who looked into the Islamic concept of tourism.

3. Moore, Cushman and Simmons(1995), who discussed the Islamic concept of travel related to the sacred goal of submission to the ways of God as opposed to the commercial goals of mass travel which stresses on profit maximization and customer satisfaction.

4. Houellebecq (2001) who examined the travelling of pilgrims during the Hajj season.

However, very limited analysis on the behavioral patterns and preferences among Arab tourists visiting Malaysia has been undertaken. This study therefore aims to identify the travelling patterns of Arab tourists in relation to their purpose and frequency of visits, duration of stay, travelling companions and chosen activities. In addition, their preferences regarding hotel, restaurant, food and front office attributes while staying in Malaysian hotels were also being studied.

This section has provided the present study with the relevant data and information relating to the number of the Arab tourists coming to Malaysia. The spending power of the Arab tourists has significantly contributed to the Malaysian economic. The

data and information provided by this section of the review provided part of the platform (e.g. total number of the Arab tourists, their spending, revenue earned by Malaysia etc.) for the present study to be conducted.

2.9 Summary

This chapter discussed about how information sources, information channels, and tourist information choice strategy affect with personal characteristics and situational characteristics from perspectives. This chapter helps to understand the importance and the need of search for information and the various means and the processes employed by a potential tourists search for information using several sources before arriving at a decision to buy. Accordingly, the chapter also discussed on the consumer behavior that is the tourist behaviors on information search and the choice of information strategy before and after arriving at the tourism destination. It also considered the personalities of the tourists such as travel-specific lifestyles, including preference for travel activities with information search. The chapter covered the major variables such as information sources and channels, tourist personal characteristics and situational characteristics search with a view to establish the relationship between these variables and information choice strategies of the tourists.

The chapter further established that the Middle East has become one of the most important market segments for the Malaysian tourism industry. It equally discussed on the income and the spending of the Arab tourists coming to Malaysia. The review also revealed that the income from the influx and spending power amongst Arabs tourists has contributed to a significant economic impact for the Malaysian economy. Tourist's numbers in Malaysia has increased over the last few years. The number of

Arab tourists to Malaysia reached 126,000 in 2004, 150,000 in 2005, 200,000 in 2006, 245,302 in 2007, 264,338 in 2008, 284,890 in 2009, 11,362,862 in 2011, 11,632,483 in 2012 (AlBattat, Som, Ghaderi, et al., 2013) indicate an upward trend for Malaysia economic growth and development.

Finally, the chapter discussed the effect of new technologies such as Internet and the use of Smartphones on the information choice strategies of the Arab tourists.

Based on the literature review above, it is revealed that several research gaps still exist despite the few studies in the area of tourism. Some of the major gaps which are related to the present study include the following:

1. An increase in the influx of Arab tourists coming to Malaysia and the need to investigate this influx. This is noted by Salman and Hasim (2012).

2. Lack of studies that have investigated the Arab tourism information choice strategies and what motivated them to choose Malaysia as their tourism destination. This was acknowledged by Mat et al. (2009) that there is lack of studies in certain aspects of tourism adventure of the Arabs in Malaysia.

3. Also, the ineffectiveness of the information channels used by the Arab travelers to search for tourism information is an issue to be investigated. From the literature, it has been revealed that the information channels used by the Arab tourists has been judged not to be effective due to the inability of the users to actually identify which channels of information they have used (Grønflaten (2009).

4. Apart from the above, another major gap identified is the inability to clearly establish which factor determines the information search behavior (Grønflaten, 2009; Jansen & Rieh, 2010). For instance, Jansen and Rieh

(2010) noted that until now, authors have failed to determine between information sources and information channels, and these are among the most important theoretical constructs of the information sciences. Also, further review indicates studies, such as Case (2012); Fodness and Murray (1997); Gitelson and Crompton (1983); and Raitz and Dakhil (1989), did not distinguish between information source and information channels. Researchers tend to use the term 'information sources', whether they are referring to the provider of the information or the communication method (Case, 2012; Fodness & Murray, 1997; Gitelson & Crompton, 1983; Raitz & Dakhil, 1989).

5. Finally, it is also found in the literature that there is an inconsistency in identifying the factors that determine the tourists' information choice strategies (Capella & Greco, 1987; Fodness & Murray, 1999; Gitelson & Crompton, 1983; Grønflaten, 2009; Cai, Feng & Breiter, 2004; Fodness & Murray, 1999; Grønflaten, 2009).

CHAPTER THREE
THEORETICAL FRAMEWORKS

3.1 Introduction

The previous chapter discussed on the literature review, covers information sources, information channels, information choice strategies, personal characteristics, situational characteristics and previous models on tourism. Therefore, this chapter discusses the relevant literature that would assist in understanding the theory of information sources, information channels, information choice strategy, personal characteristics and situational characteristics. This literature provides explanation on theories to understand how this study relates to previous work in this field. Apart from that the study also draws on theory from related fields in consumer behavior, information theory, communication studies, and information technology. This chapter also clarifies related concept, and theories of tourists' personality as well as situational characteristics and its relationship with information sources and channels.

3.2 Theoretical Dimensions

Much of the conceptual research on information search and tourism information, have discussed a variety of dimensions along which the different types of information search behavior have been defined. In this section the most important of these dimensions are used as a framework for reviewing this particular part of the literature as well as delineating this project with regards to these concepts.

3.2.1 Internal Vs. External

One fundamental classification of information search is internal versus external. Fodness and Murray (1999) referred to this as the spatial dimension of information search, reflecting the locus of the activity. Internal search involves using past experiences as the basis for tourism planning. Information search invariably takes place internally, and sometimes-internal sources are considered to be sufficient in making a decision. As pointed out by Engel (1995) internal search is really nothing more than a cognitive scan for decision-relevant knowledge stored in the long-term memory of the consumer.

Often however, internal information search must be supplemented with information from external sources. External search involves a conscious effort to search for new information. This is done either through personal communication with others or through other types of media. Travelers use external sources to learn about the number of destinations that may meet their needs, characteristics and attributes of those destinations, and their relative desirability (Gitelson & Crompton, 1983). In their model of destination choice, Um and Crompton (1990) also made a distinction between internal and external inputs which they defined as "the sum of social interactions and marketing communications to which a potential pleasure traveler is exposed" (Um & Crompton, 1990).

In the tourism context, information search is predominantly external, involving considerable effort and a variety of information sources (Fodness & Murray, 1997). Although it is recognized that internal sources to be playing an important role in the

decision to purchase tourism products, this research is primarily concerned with the choice of external sources and channels of information.

3.2.2 Static vs. Dynamic

Sheldon (1997) pointed out the difference between static (tourism information that does not change frequently) and dynamic (changes often and is intensely dynamic) tourism information. Few examples of static tourism information that may change in the long run but not in the short term are namely; product descriptions, transportation routes, maps, and location information. Prices and other aspects of the service offerings are also usually more dynamic.

This distinction is particularly interesting as different types of information vary in terms of the most suitable communication channels. This explains why one factor may be more important in influencing travelers' choice strategies of information channels compared to another. While static information lends itself to distribution and access through hard copy, video, DVD, CD-ROM, and other off-line mediums, dynamic tourism information is usually better distributed and accessed through more dynamic channels such as the Internet, telephone, or face-to-face communication.

3.2.3 Pre-Trip vs. In-Trip

Travelers need information during different times and at different places. Pre-trip information in the planning phase of a trip is required in the traveler's home region or during pre-destination. In-trip information is sought either en route or even at the destination. Flognfeldt and Nordgren (1999) distinguished further between these two types of in-trip information. They argued that there are at least three stages in

the information collection process:

1. Information received or collected at home, before the start of the trip.

2. Information obtained or viewed during the trip, but before entering the destination (airlines' in-flight information systems, highway road signs, or any mobile information such as a guidebook or cellular phone).

3. Information obtained or used at the destination visited during the stay.

According to a study by Mansfeld (2004) tourists will depend more on informational material while preparing their trip at home compared to after arriving at their destination. There is however, an upward trend among travelers towards leaving more of their decision-making to until they reach their destinations (Sheldon, 1997). This need for more in-trip information is spawning new Internet technology applications such as mobile Internet technology. As Jenkins (1978) reported vacationers would first select a destination and then look for accommodation, activities, attractions, etc. Usually, these sub-decisions are left until after arrival at the destination (Fesenmaier & Jeng, 2000).

This research argues that in the trip phase, for example, whether the information is sought before or after departure may influence the types of sources and channels the traveler would use. The study therefore considers both pre-trip and in-trip information when assessing travelers' choice of information search strategies.

3.2.4 Decisive vs. Contributory

Engel (1995) Suggested that information may be decisive (having a major influence on choice) or contributory (awareness or interest which may broaden the user's

knowledge base, but not have any major impact on decision-making). As a third alternative Fodness and Murray (1998) proposed that information may also be ineffective, meaning that exposure to it has no particular impact on decision outcomes. As Vogt and Fesenmaier (1998) shared, not everyone who requested for tourist information actually visits, or even intends to visit the destination. "They may be satisfying other needs to entertain themselves, to share with others, to view pictures to familiarize themselves with those places, or simply to satisfy their curiosity" (Vogt & Fesenmaier, 1998). Such information may be contributory to a future purchase decision but will also often be ineffective, or rather, is serving other functions.

The eventual effect of the information acquired from a particular information sources or channels is difficult to evaluate, at the point of choosing, where and how to obtain the information. This dimension is therefore not directly relevant to the process of deciding on a search strategy. It is however recognized that both information sources and information channels may differ in terms of their potential to provide decisive information as opposed to contributory information.

3.2.5 Formal vs. Informal

Tourism information can also be classified according to its level of formality. Informal information is acquired through communication with relatives, friends, or other travelers (Mathieson & Wall, 1982).This information is usually unstructured. Formal information is deliberately designed to deliver a consistent message about the

qualities of a place or environment (Raitz & Dakhil, 1989) which is often produced by sources hired to create a positive image to entice visitors to actually make a visit.

Thus, one can see that the level of formality is by definition closely associated with the sources of information and which communication channels are utilized. Examples of formal communication are the TV and print media, while telephone and face-to-face modes are associated with informal communication. The Internet is full of formal and informal tourist information, because it is very cheap to upload information on the Internet. In this research, both types of information sources and information channels are considered.

3.2.6 Interpersonal vs. Impersonal

Tourist information can be represented by interpersonal (direct exchange between two or more people) or impersonal communication (Hsieh & O'Leary, 1994). It involves communication-taking place between a sale personal and a prospective customer, as well as word-of-mouth communication where the message is not directly controlled or managed by an organization. In contrast, impersonal information is targeted to a large or diffused audience through non-personal channels such as television, radio, newspapers and magazines.

The Internet occupies a distinct position, as it is a medium, which lends itself to both interpersonal and impersonal communication. From a commercial point of view, it is possible to use the Internet as a mass medium and for so-called one-to-one marketing. Non-commercial travel communities also make use of both impersonal news groups as well as interpersonal chat rooms where travelers exchange

information in a more direct manner. Most studies on tourism show that impersonal information is mostly used in the early stages of the search process. As for interpersonal sources, it is mainly needed at a later stage (Van Raaij, 1986).

For interpersonal communication, the distinction between sources and channels are very obvious. However, in impersonal information, it is less evident and often ignored. Although tourist information may be regarded as being less personal if it is being distributed through so-called mass communication, it must be emphasized that all exchange of information ultimately happens between one personal (or more) who is the sources sender and one personal (or more) of who is the receiver. The level of individuality differs from one information channel to another and is considered to be an important distinguishing factor.

3.2.7 Ongoing vs. Pre-purchase

Information search is commonly thought of as an activity, which is triggered and motivated by a current purchasing concern. It should be noted however, that consumers often engaged in ongoing external information search in the absence of specific purchase deliberations Fodness and Murray (1999) referred to this distinction between ongoing and pre-purchase search as the temporal dimension of information search.

As Crotts (1999) pointed out, ongoing search for information is conducted to acquire information for later use. It is also done because the process itself can be pleasurable. According toBloch, Sherrell, and Ridgway (1986) pre-purchase search is influenced by involvement in the purchase (a particular vacation), while ongoing search is

influenced by involvement with the product itself, i.e. a general interest in travelling or in geography or history, whereby the traveler is intrinsically motivated and regards the seeking of information as a reward in itself (Goossens, 1995). Surfing on the web or watching a destination video on television may be examples of ongoing information search activities that are motivated by pure entertainment value rather than as a function in the purchase problem-solving context. This type of search may eventually result in a purchase situational. This study, however, focuses on pre-purchase information search and both sources and channels of information may differ in terms of their applicability to ongoing versus pre-purchase information search.

3.2.8 Degree vs. Direction

Engel (1995) further more distinguished between the degree and direction of external information search process. In this study, degree refers to the amount of search, i.e., the amount of time and number of sources referred to this aspect has also been termed as the search effort (Schmidt & Spreng, 1996). The direction of the search on the other hand, represents a specific content of the search and may be described in terms of which information sources the consumer consults. Fodness and Murray (1999) used the term 'search strategies' to describe the combination of different information sources utilized by a tourist when he or she searches for products or services. In this thesis, 'information search strategies' is often used to describe the combination of information sources and information channels, and not the combination of several sources.

A large part of information search literature both, in general consumer behavior and tourism is focused on the antecedents of the information search effort. Search effort is measured by the amount of time spent searching and number of sources consulted. More basically, it also looks at whether or not the search actually takes place. In their comprehensive study of consumer behavior, Beatty and Smith (1987) listed the following seven categories of variables which have been established to affect search efforts namely; market environment, situational variables, potential payoffs, knowledge, experience, individual differences, conflict or conflict resolution, and costs of search. For all these categories, the authors identified roughly 60 variables, which have been studied empirically as determinants of information search effort or degree. Table 3.1 shows some of the variables found to influence the degree of information search in the tourism literature.

Table 3.1

Determinants of Search Effort (Grønflaten, 2005)

Variable	Studies
PriorVisits /Novelty	Gitleson & Crompton, 1983; Etzel & Wahlers, 1985; Perdue, 1985; Van Raaij, 1986; Snepenger, 1987; Chon, 1991; Perdue, 1993; Lo, Cheung, & Law, 2004
Socio-demographic Variables (e.g. age, gender, education, income, nationality)	Gitleson & Crompton, 1983; Van Raaij & Francken, 1984; Etzel & Wahlers, 1985; Chon, 1991; Maser & Weiermair, 1998; Jeng & Fesenmaier, 1999; Hyde, 2000; Dogan Grursoy, 2001; Qihua Lin, 2002; Ada Lo & Catherine Cheung & Rob Law, 2004; Andrew Talbot, 2004; Dogan Gursoy& W. Terry Umbreit, 2004; Man Luo & Ruomei Feng & LipingCai, 2004
Purpose of Trip	Gitleson & Crompton, 1983; Etzel & Wahlers, 1985; Jeng & Fesenmaier, 1999; Lo, Cheung, & Law, 2002; Lo, Cheung, & Law, 2004; Man Luo & Ruomei Feng & Liping A. Cai, 2004; Ada Lo & Catherine & Rob Law, 2004; Grønflaten, 2005.
Timing of Travel Planning	Gitleson & Crompton, 1983; Perdue, 1985; Jeng & Fesenmaier, 1999; Dogan Gursoy & Ken McCleary, 2003;Luo & Ruomei Feng & Liping Cai, 2004
Length of Trip	Gitleson & Crompton, 1983; Etzel & Wahlers, 1985; Jeng &

	Fesenmaier, 1999
Personal Involvement	Perdue, 1993; Dodd, 1998; Hyde, 2000
Presence of Family or Friends	Fodness & Murray, 1999; Bieger & Laesser, 2000; Man Luo & Ruomei Feng & Liping A. Cai, 2004
Travel Knowledge / Experience	Etzel & Wahlers, 1985; Jeng & Fessenmaier, 1999; Haywantee Andrew Talbot, 2004
Travel Companions	Jeng & Fesenmaier, 1999; Hyde, 2000
Intentions to Travel	Manfredo, 1988; Hyde, 2000
Accommodation	Chon, 1991; Hyde, 2000.
Attitudes Toward Trip	Manfredo, 1988; Chon, 1991; Fodness & Murray, 1997, 1999
Expenditure	Van Raaij, 1986; Tierney, 1993; Fodness & Murray, 1997, 1999
Activities of Interest	Etzel & Wahlers, 1985
Cultural Interest	Schul & Crompton, 1983; Dogan Gursoy & Terry Umbreit, 2004
Desire for Excitement	Gitleson & Crompton, 1983
Desire for Well-planned Trip	Gitleson & Crompton, 1983.
Duration of Trip	Gitleson & Crompton, 1983.
Travel Frequency	Chon, 1991; Ada Lo & Catherine Cheung & Rob Law, 2004
Opinion Leadership	Schul & Crompton, 1983
Travel Agent	Man Luo & Ruomei Feng & Liping Cai, 2004
Travel Party	Fodness & Murray, 1997, 1999; Man Luo & Ruomei Feng & Liping A. Cai, 2004.
Household	Dogan Grursoy, 2001; Andrew P. Talbot, 2004; Man Luo & Ruomei Feng & Liping Cai, 2004
Model of Transport	Feng & Liping, 2004; Dogan Gursoy & Ken McCleary, 2003.
Internet	Andrew Talbot, 2004; Man Luo & Ruomei Feng & Liping A. Cai, 2004
Marital Status	Dogan Gursoy, 2001.

It should also be mentioned that some of the most notable theoretical models of tourism information search have primarily been concerned with the degree of information search (Fodness & Murray, 1999; Gursoy & McCleary, 2004).

This thesis, however, focuses on the direction of information search, i.e., the choice of information search strategy rather than the degree. These studies mentioned in the table would therefore not be discussed in further details here. The various sources already studied in the tourism literature are discussed at length in this study. The

term information sources are used regardless whether the author is making reference to the information provider (sources) or the method of communication (channels).

3.2.9 Conceptual Theory of Information Choice Strategy

The rationality in the choice of information by any user assumed that the information channels contain fixed inherent information properties (Tan & Anorlt, 1999). The rationality behind the choice of information model assumed that the characteristics of the media are considered as invariant irrespective of the context of the information seek. That is, the decision of the user concerning the choice of information decision depends on his ability to cognitively evaluate the media and the appropriateness of the task at hand. Thus his choice of information is objectively rational and enhanced by efficiency.

3.3 Theories and Previous Models of Information Choice Strategy

Previous models on information strategy choice have discussed the rationality behind the choice of information by any user. These models assumed that the information channels contains fixed inherent information properties (Tan & Arnott, 1999). The rationality behind the choice of information model assumed that the characteristics of the media are considered as invariant irrespective of the context of the information seek. That is, the decision of the user concerning the choice of information decision depends on his ability to cognitively evaluate the media and the appropriateness of the task at hand. Thus his choice of information is objectively rational and enhanced by efficiency.

Evidence from the literature clearly indicates that there is a lack of theoretical foundations on tourists' information search strategy options. Within the context of organizational behavior, management and employees have been used to explain the behavior for channels selection. Some of the previously discussed models, such as media richness theory, situational theory, channels disposition theory and the theory of individual preference in relation to the acquisition of relevant information by the tourists have been reviewed and deemed to be very relevant to this study.

3.3.1 Media Richness Theory

Media richness theory developed by organizational scientists was originated from information processing theory. It argued that communication efficiency between people is affected by fitness of the media and characteristics of the communication task. In this body of literature, perhaps, the most cited and tested channels selection model is the Media Richness Theory which was proposed by Daft and Lengel (1983). Information richness is regarded as the ability of a medium to promote shared meaning or transit information.

The media richness theory posits that a user will select a channels based on a situational phenomenon. Users tend to select a richer medium for a highly equivocal situational while they choose a less rich medium for a recurring, non-ambiguous situational. The reason for this is explained that highly rich information is needed to clarify different opinions during an ambiguous situational. However, once the difficulty of interpretation of the information has been reduced, less rich channels can be used to satisfy information requirements of the user. According to Tan and

Arnott (1999) the Media Richness Theory is based on the assumption that information channels can be ranked according to the information richness that they are able to convey. The Media Richness Theory is evaluated, based on four characteristics:

1. **Capacity for immediate feedback:** The medium facilitates quick convergence on a common interpretation.

2. **Capacity to transmit multiple cues:** An array of cues, including physical presence, voice inflections, body gestures, words, numbers, graphic symbols, facilitate conveyance of interpretation and meaning, rather than simply information or data.

3. **Language variety:** Numbers and formulas provide greater precision, but natural language conveys a broader set of concepts and ideas.

4. **Capacity of the medium to have a personal focus:** This refers either to the conveyance of emotions and feelings, or to the ability of the medium to be tailored to the specific needs and perspectives of the receiver.

Hence rich media incorporate speedy feedback, multiple cues, varied language, and personal focus allowing for the expression of feelings and emotions. Face-to-face is an example of a rich medium, whereas a printed brochure would be considered a lean information channels. The basic tenet of Media Richness Theory is that information channels selection is dependent on the ambiguity of the information search situational, and that a richer medium will be chosen if the situational is somewhat equivocal. If the vagueness is reduced, then there is less need for additional

information to reduce ambiguity and a leaner medium maybe sufficient. Furthermore, Tan and Arnott (1999) posited that using rich media for situational of low ambiguity is not efficient as the additional cues would only distract the information searcher from the actual message content.

Fodness and Murray (1999) Found that friends and relatives were used as information sources for routine travel decisions does not seem to support this theory as these are sources usually associated with media rich face-to-face communication. It is possible however; that this finding should be explained with reference to sources attributes associated with friends and relatives rather than face-to-face channels attributes. In other words, it is likely that travelers talk to friends and relatives about routine decisions not because face-to-face communication is needed to reduce vagueness, but because friends and family are seen as the most appropriate information sources whereas 'face-to-face' is seen as the most appropriate way of communicating with these sources.

Media richness theory was not developed to theorize how managers chose the media but to determine the most effective media and the situational under which the media is effective. However, the question to be asked here is whether the use of the richer media improves the performance of equivocal tasks? Initially, there has not been a supportive evidence for the assertion and also, the results of the empirical investigations of past studies show disagreement to the media richness theory (Dennis, Valacich, Speier, & Morris, 1998). In organizational research there has so far been mixed empirical support for the Media Richness Theory (Tan & Arnott,

1999). Some researchers say that this theory fails to recognize the importance of situational or contextual demands on information search strategy choice.

Past researches have shown that media richness theory is based on the presumption that the richer the media the more effective the information shared (Daft & Lengel, 1983). Most test of the media fitness have investigated the perception of the suitability of the media for information sharing, not the actual effect of media use (Dennis et al., 1998). Daft and Lengel (1983) is their investigation asked managers to choose a medium in sending a set of hypothetical question. The aim of this is to determine whether the choice of the media fits the predictions of the media richness theory. The conclusion of these researchers is that media choice is affected by factors beyond the richness (Carnevale, Pruitt, & Seilheimer, 1981; Daft & Lengel, 1983). Some of these factors are the situational characteristics of the users and the users' individual preferences. As such, this study dwells further into the situational theory in explaining the information choice strategy.

3.3.2 Situational Theory

The illustration on the effect of the situational and the object (stimulus) including the personal (organization) in relation to a certain behavioral disposition (outcome) was explained by Belk (1975) using a Stimulus-Organization-Response (S-O-R) shown in figure 3.1 below.
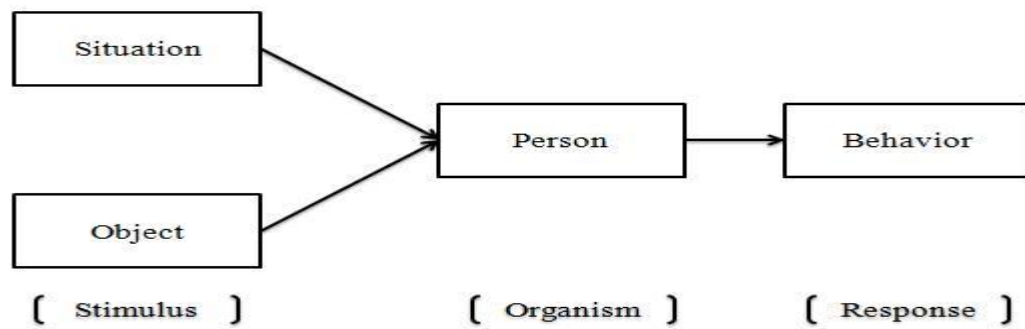
Figure 3.1. *S-O-R Diagrams Belk's S-O-R Diagram (Sources: Belk, 1975)*

According to Belk (1975) studies of buyer behavior that ignore situational effects will only bring about good predictions when the characteristics of buyers or choice alternatives are intense enough to be influential across all relevant situational. It is possible that factors such as time constraints, geographic distances, time zones, and accessibility of the sources and channels served as a limitation in traveler's choice of search strategy even before other factors are being considered. Travelers' (as well as managers) often act under time pressure, and when faced with an urgent need for information, the most accessible sources or channels would invariably be used. Allen (2003) explained this with reference to the law of least effort. This law theorized that when individuals select from among several paths to a goal; they will base their decision upon the single criterion of least average rate of probable work (Zipf, 1949).

This provides an explanation on the use of billboards as a last minute decision-makings for automobile travellers, and why travellers who are visiting friends and relatives at the destination will rely on these for tourism information. However, attention should be paid to the geographic distances and different time zones may prevent the use of certain tourist information channels when the information sources are located at a far off place. Thus, in addition to the media richness of the

information channels, situational variables must be considered when trying to understand travellers' choice of information search strategy.

As seen in the preceding sections, a number of situational variables have been studied in existing literature with regards to their effect on tourism information search. When ranking and rating the overall importance of various tourist information sources however, situational factors tended to be ignored in tourism literatures. This study is particularly concerned with potential situational factors that may influence travelers' choice of information search strategy.

Apart from other factor such as situational characteristics that have been identified in the situational theory has been able to influence the users' decision on choice of information sources or strategy. Personal characteristics such as the age, gender, and educational background of the user have equally been proclaimed as having influence on information sources, information channels and information choice strategy. The factors affecting the relationship between information sources, information channels and information choice strategy categorized were classified into situational characteristics and personal characteristics (Fodness & Murray, 1999). Grønflaten (2008; 2009) on the influence of information search assert that both situational characteristics and personal characteristics would influence the relationship between information sources, information channels and information choice strategy. As such, this study further dig into the theory of individual preference in explaining the personal characteristics that influence the relationship between information sources, information channels and information choice strategies.

3.3.3 Individual Preferences

The personal preference of individuals on the sources or channels plays a dominant role in the strategy selection. Normally, a traveler will automatically go to his or her favorite sources of the channels. If what he or she is seeking is not available, then he or she has a valid reason to use another sources. The preference for private channels is related to individual characteristics (Trevino, Daft, & Lengel, 1990) as opposed to the concept of experience and the media (Fulk, Schmitz, & Steinfield, 1990). Individual characteristics that may affect these preferences and patterns of cognitive styles (Trevino et al., 1990) and arrest of oral and writing (Alexander, Penley, & Jernigan, 1991).

Alexander et al. (1991) found that people who are concerned by mouth or by writing showed less ability to choose the appropriate means of communication to suit the right situational. It seemed likely that fear from face-to-face communication may affect the use of direct personal contacts or in other similar manner. Media experience indicated the extent to which a personal is aware of and skilled in the use of channels specific information. For example, Fulk et al. (1990) indicated that a manager is less likely to communicate via e-mail if one's writing skills is lacking. The preference for this type of channels was found to be self-reinforcing, leading to either repeated use or otherwise the information on this channels is optimal (O'Reilly III, 1982).

As we are familiarized from the previous chapters on studying many of the individual or personal characteristics and their relationship in searching for tourism information, these can be factors directly related to the preferences of information

sources or channels, in particular with regards to certain information. It may even be that some people have a preference for specific groups in terms of sources and channels. A clear example can be that older travelers rely more on family and friends to obtain tourist information as evidenced by Capella and Greco (1987) to be either a preference for self-reinforced information on reliable sources, or it can be a channels of preference for face-to-face or it may even be both.

It has also been found that personals and media preferences cannot be exercised when you press the demands of the task and situational constraints are relatively weak (Trevino et al., 1990). It has also been found that media preferences can only be exercised when the pressure from task demands and the situational constraints is relatively weak (Trevino et al., 1990). Aspects such as particular information requirements and time pressure may thus limit travelers' abilities to exercise personal preferences. If for example a tourist needs to quickly get a price of an airline ticket, he or she may be forced to make a phone call to a travel agent even though he or she would prefer to talk to the travel agent in personal.

3.3.4 Channels Disposition Theory

The attempt of Channels Disposition Model proposed by Swanson (1987) focuses on the integration of the quality of information channels that can be transferred, and access easily. It further emphasize on the information search performs costs-benefits; where there is a trade-off of the benefits of particular channels against the costs associated with access to that channels. Thus, a tourist may select an information channels in spite of the poor quality of its information of the channels to reach his

destination. Similarly, one may tolerate low-force in the channels, provided one believes that the information provided by these channels is of a high quality.

An important contribution of the channels theory is that it sheds more light on the interaction between information sources and channels because it recognizes that the choice of channels depends on the kind of information that can be obtained through these channels, in particular, access to the sources of information depends on the access channels. Thus, one should always choose tourist information channels to be seen in light of tourism information providers or sources that can be reached through the channels. The study by (Swanson, 1987) found that channels disposition influenced both channels information and information usage. Although much cited in more recent studies, there have nonetheless few subsequent attempts to gather empirical support for the theory.

3.3.5 Social Influence Theory

In addition to the rational choice theories discussed thus far, social interaction theorists like Fulk et al. (1990) discussed the role of social influences in the selection of communication channels. They suggested four ways in which the selection of channels could be socially influenced, these are:

1. **Others' Opinions:** the decision made by a tourist in choosing particular channels of information may be affected by the comments of the other tourists. Recommendation by a fellow traveler to use the Internet in searching for information made by a fellow traveler might convince a personal to refer to the recommended channels irrespective of the personal

preference of individual travelers' decision towards the choice of information channels.

2. **Vicarious Learning:** Non-users are more likely to start using an information channels if they observe someone else making effective use of it. In contrast, if a tourist observes particular a channels has resulted in negative experience for the user, (for instance wasting a lot of time sifting through useless web site) then one is likely to avoid those channels.

3. **Media Behavior Norms:** The social environment can dictate norms for which information channels are most acceptable. Sometimes, some travelers resort to the Internet to search for tourist information if it is considered trendy to do so. This might encourage some travelers to adopt these channels so as to conform to the social norms of the community.

4. **Social Definitions of Rationality:** An example of this may be a traveler who continues to use channels because he or she has spoken negatively about alternative channels when they were first proposed. Although it would appear to be not sensible to keep referring to such channels, people are expected to behave consistently over time in their statements and behaviors, and therefore, this behavior would be rational from a social influence point of view.

It is in the nature of social influence, which is not often reported explicitly by the respondents a shaving played a role in their choice of search strategy. This could either be because the respondents are not made aware of this influence or might be

that they decided not to acknowledge or admit to this influence. A traveler may, for example, be too proud to admit that he or she was convinced to use the Internet by his or her peers rather than through his or her own initiative. This study is mostly concerned with the choice dynamics (as reported by the travelers themselves). As such, it is acknowledged that social influence may consciously or sub-consciously play an additional role on the choice.

3.3.6 Information Theory (The Roles of Sources and Channels)

It seems intuitively relevant to first look into Information Theory to provide a theoretical basis for the study of information search. Although many aspects of information theory are of little relevance to consumer or tourist information search behavior, the general model of the communication process developed by the pioneer information theorists supplied invaluable conceptual framework for identifying the factors influencing the behavior. Although the model has tremendous impact on the study of communication as well as other social sciences, it is argued that researchers within the field of tourism information search largely ignore the framework. The communication model is discussed in detail here in order to make a case for its applicability to this thesis.

The book, 'Mathematical theory of Communication (Shannon & Weaver, 1962, 2002) and the following discussions about their proposed model was in fact what spawned the whole discipline of communication as we know it now (Baker, 2002). Everett Rogers claimed that the publication of this book was "the most important single turning point in the history of communication sciences" (Rogers, 1997), while E. M. Rogers and Valente (1993) suggested that "Shannon's information theory

provided the root paradigm for the field of communication theory and research"
(Rogers, 1997)

As an engineer working for Bell Telephone Laboratories (BTL) Shannon's ambition
was to describe in mathematical terms the process of which a message is able to
travel from a sources to a destination (Raitz & Dakhil, 1989). In particular, he was
seeking answers to questions such as: Which kind of communication channels can
bring through the maximum amount of signals? How much of a transmitted signal
will be destroyed by noise while travelling from the sources to the receiver?
(McQuail, 2010; McQuail & Windahl, 1981). However, as pointed out by Beck,
Bennett and Wall (2004) the mathematical dimensions of Shannon and Weaver's
information theory were largely ignored by the early communication theorists in
favors of the adoption of general diagrammatic model of the process of
communication.

The model became the fundamental building block of the school of communication,
and it is this model, which is currently the focus of this discussion. Figure 3.2 is a
representation of the basic communication model and shows the relationship
between the different components of communication process.
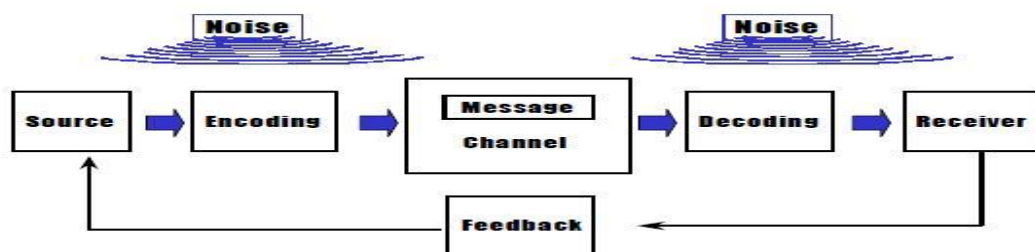
Figure 3.2. *The Communication Process (Adapted from Baker, 2002)*

According to this model, the sources chooses a message and encodes it as words, symbols, pictures, or some other signal that can be transmitted to the receiver through the selected channels. The receiver decodes the transmitted signal back into meaningful thought and may choose to respond by sending a return message or feedback. The receiver then becomes the sources of the return message. Noise refers to any unwanted additions to the signal such as distortions, errors, or extraneous material (Baker, 2002). Shannon and Weaver (2002) communication model has been modified and adapted countless of times in various articles and textbooks on the topic. However, the basic notion of the sources as being a distinct element in the communication process that is essentially different from the channels through which the information is transmitted is widely recognized.

"First process is an information sources which produces a message or a chain of messages to be communicated" (McQuail & Windahl, 1981). Shannon and Weaver (2002) referred to the term 'information sources' as the brain behind the selection of messages to be transmitted to a receiver. This implied that the information sources are the human originator of the message. Schramm explained that the sources may also be seen as the organization for which this personal works: "A sources may be an individual (speaking, writing, drawing, and gesturing) or a communication organization (like a newspaper, publishing house, television station, or motion picture studio)" (Shannon & Weaver, 1962, 2002).

Thus, the sources are the answer to the question: Who composed the message? The term 'tourism information sources' refers to the personal(s) or organization(s) providing the information, which is being communicated to the potential receiver,

i.e., the travelers. When the terms 'travel agents' and 'visitor information centers' are used to describe information sources, it is the organizations or the people working within them who are referred to rather than the physical premises where they operate.

The channels may be understood simply as "the method used to deliver a message" (Adler & Elmhorst, 2005). Dance (1967) similarly defined channels as a means of sending messages such as (telephone, telegraph, radio, or couriers). In other words, the channels are the answer to the question: Through which medium is the message being communicated? This concept not only encompasses the technologies that are commonly associated with the word 'medium' but also includes the methods, for example, printed and oral communication (over the telephone or face-to-face). As Adler and Elmhorst (2005) pointed out, the word 'channels and medium' are often used interchangeably.

Similarly the term face-to-face is used here to describe direct oral communication although technically speaking, the channels is the air between the speaker and listener with the airwaves created by the source's vocal system (Berlo, 1960). Berlo said that the term 'channels' is interpreted in at least three different ways when applied to the human communication theory. Using the analogy of a river boat with the message being the cargo, he explained that the term 'channels' was used to describe the first modes of encoding and decoding messages (boat docks), second the message-vehicles (boat), and third the vehicle-carriers (water).

In summary, Berlo suggested: "For the moment, it is enough to say that a channels is a medium, a carrier of messages. It is therefore correct to state that, messages can exist only in some channels. However, the choice of channels is often an important factor for the effectiveness of communication," (Berlo, 1960). The above discussion used the terms channels, medium, carrier, method, and means interchangeably to denote the same concept, but as Berlo stated: "In any case, it is not the name which is vital but the function. Channels couple the sources and the receiver enabling them to communicate," (Berlo, 1960). The main understanding in our discussion is that the channels are fundamentally different from the sources, and the differences need to be considered when studying travelers' information search behavior. For the purpose of this study, tourism information channels are defined broadly as the method used to communicate tourist information to the travelers.

An important point in Berlo's argument of the communication model being "all messages must be transmitted through a channels and that the choice of channels is important in determining both the efficiency and effectiveness of communication" (Berlo, 1960). In this linear model the communication is initiated by the sources, and the choice of channels is therefore seen from the source's point of view. This may be called the push factor of the communication act and seemed to be the most prevalent way in the communication process. It also seemed to be the most common perspective for channels selection, both within media studies and organizational behavior.

Information search on the other hand, involves looking at the communication process from a pull perspective. In this case, receiver of the information plays an important

role in initiating the communication. When a personal is searching for information, one would invariably have choices to choose from. They are namely, the type of message or information, the sources and finally the channels in which to acquire the information. Upon deciding on how to obtain the information, the traveler would choose a combination of information sources and channels, which is able to communicate the desired messages. In fact, information can only be acquired as a bundle consisting of these three components. In this thesis, the term 'information search strategy' is used to describe the combination of information sources and channels.

Although many tourism researchers have acknowledged the importance of understanding where and how consumers acquire information about different tourism services, this literature review will further confirm that most authors make no distinction between the sources (the personal(s) providing the information) and the channels (the method) in which the information is being obtained. Researchers use the term 'information sources' regardless of whether they are referring to the information provider or communication method. In this thesis, it is argued that it is necessary to clearly differentiate the two concepts, so as to have a clearer picture of the criteria involved when travelers look for tourist information.

In their choice of information sources it is sometimes appropriate for a traveler to consult commercial travel agent, whereas at other times he or she would be better equipped when asking other travelers on their personal experiences. In deciding on which of these sources to consult, consumers might use criteria such as credibility and familiarity with the product to evaluate which information provider would best

serve their purposes. The commercial travel agent may be perceived as being biased towards a particular product, whereas a fellow traveler, although less biased, may be lacking the required knowledge to be a useful information sources. It is also most likely that the aspect of trust would play a major role in deciding whether to seek information from a service provider or a user.

Apart from that, if the consumer decides that he or she would be best served by contacting a travel agent, the choice of most appropriate information channels might be based on a different set of criterion. At times, it might be best to talk to the travel agent face-to-face, whereas other times it is better to communicate with them through e-mail or telephone calls. A travel agent's credibility and familiarity with the product would normally be the same regardless of contact methods, so in the choice of channels, factors such as information format and media preference would be more likely to guide the outcome of the decision. The mathematical aspects of information theory have had enormous practical applications in the electronic sciences of communication where there is a need to compute information quantities and design information channels that facilitate effective handling of communication (Rogers, 1994).

The major contribution of classical information theory to the social sciences is that the latter used the technical model as an analogue for modeling interpersonal communication (Littlejohn & Foss, 2007). According to Littlejohn and Foss (2007), "Except for this analogue function, information theory has little relevance to any domain outside information per". Many researchers have criticized this information theory because of the inappropriateness of this analogy, for example the inability of

the model to fully explain human communications. One thread of criticism attacks the linearity of the model, which implies that the communication act is a one-way process with an identifiable beginning and end. In fact, the feedback loop imposed in figure 3.2 is a result of DeFleur (1966) argument that communication would usually be resulting in some form of response from the receiver.

Other circular models of communication have been developed by Osgood and Schramm (Schramm, 1997). Dance (1967) took this one step further and proposed a helical model of communication to illustrate the fact that communication rarely comes back to the same point where it started but rather develops dynamically resembling a spiraling helix. All these models are focused on describing the communication process and have been criticized for being too mechanistic and not taking into account the other aspects of human communication such as semiotics, personal influence, unintentional communication and etc. (Littlejohn & Foss, 2007). However, this type of argument tends to ignore the purpose for which the models were developed in the first place. As David Ritchie pointed out: "To criticize Shannon's model as not applicable to the complexities of human communication is to criticize a rowboat because it is not a whale" (Rogers, 1997).

The adoption of the main components of the model to describe the important elements of communication process seems to be less controversial than the actual shape of the model and nature of relationships within the process itself. The SMCR (Sources-Message-Channels-Receiver) framework has been imprinted in the minds of generations of communications students, and the concept has also been absorbed into everyday speech by the general public (Rogers, 1997). These components also

form the basis for Harold Lasswell's study (1948) which suggested a convenient way to describe an act of communication is by answering the questions below:

Who

Says What

In Which Channels

To Whom

With What Effect

As Simpson noted, Lasswell's dictum is "practically inscribed in stone over the portals of those U.S. colleges offering communication as a field of study"(Simpson, 1994). Considering the impact of this model in communication sciences it may seem surprising that these elements have not been playing a more prominent role in the description of travelers' information search process. The elements of Lasswell's definition seemed to capture very appropriately some of the more important variables in tourism marketing communication process, as well as any other forms of tourism information distribution. In summarizing the impact of Shannon and Weaver's communication models, Rogers epitomized it's applicability as a framework for studying the communication process:

> *"More than any other theoretical conceptualization, it served as the paradigm for communication study, providing a single, easily understandable specification of the main components in the communication act: sources, message, channels, and receiver. Thus, communication investigations of the communication act could identify sources variables (such as credibility), message variables (like the*

use of fear appeals), channels variables (such as mass media versus interpersonal channels), and receiver variables (like the persuasiveness of audience individuals). [...] Thus, it seemed facile to translate Shannon model of communication into a general classificatory scheme for the variables included in communication research".

(Rogers, 1994)

This study indicates an attempt to apply this classificatory scheme to the area of tourism information search and also tries to identify variables specific to travelers' choice of information search strategies. It is believed that by incorporating clear distinction between information sources and channels in which the framework suggests, it will provide a better picture on the factors, which are, involved in the tourism information search processes.

3.3.7 A Nested Model of Human Information Behavior by Jansen and Rieh (2010)

The nested model of human information behavior identified, compared and contrasted the theoretical constructs between the field of information searching and information retrieval in order to lay emphasis on the synergy between the two fields. The two fields using computerized information system approached the central issues on the locating information. The model presents a two-nested parallel framework. One of the frameworks explained the behaviors when users are engaging information systems while the other explained the systems that provide support for the affordance of the system.

According to Jansen and Rieh (2010) human information behavior is the broadest set that addresses human interaction with all forms of information? It encompasses of information seeking behavior employed by users to discover and access information resources in response to their objectives and intentions. Information searching behavior is encompassed by the information seeking behavior, which consists of the actions involved in the interaction that exists between the user and the information search system. On the opposite side of the framework is a parallel framework of information system. This is the highest level of information, which includes all level of processes and technologies through which users interact with information. The information system consists of a subset known as the information seeking system which includes both the technical and nontechnical nature by which users find and use information. Lastly, Information retrieval system is a subset of information seeking system and it is usually regarded as a computer system which users use for documentation and multimedia.

It should be noted that there is a connection via various level of interaction between the information behavior and the information system frameworks. In the first level of connection, users access different types of information and in which a support is being provided by the information system. The next level of connection is that users seek this information and eventually use this information to achieve his goals and intentions. However, both the human resources and information system support the affordance of that information. At the lowest level of interaction between the two nested frameworks, the primary action of the user is mainly to browse or search for information needed, which is enabled by the functionalities of the information

retrieval system. Figure 3.3 represents the nested model of human information behavior.
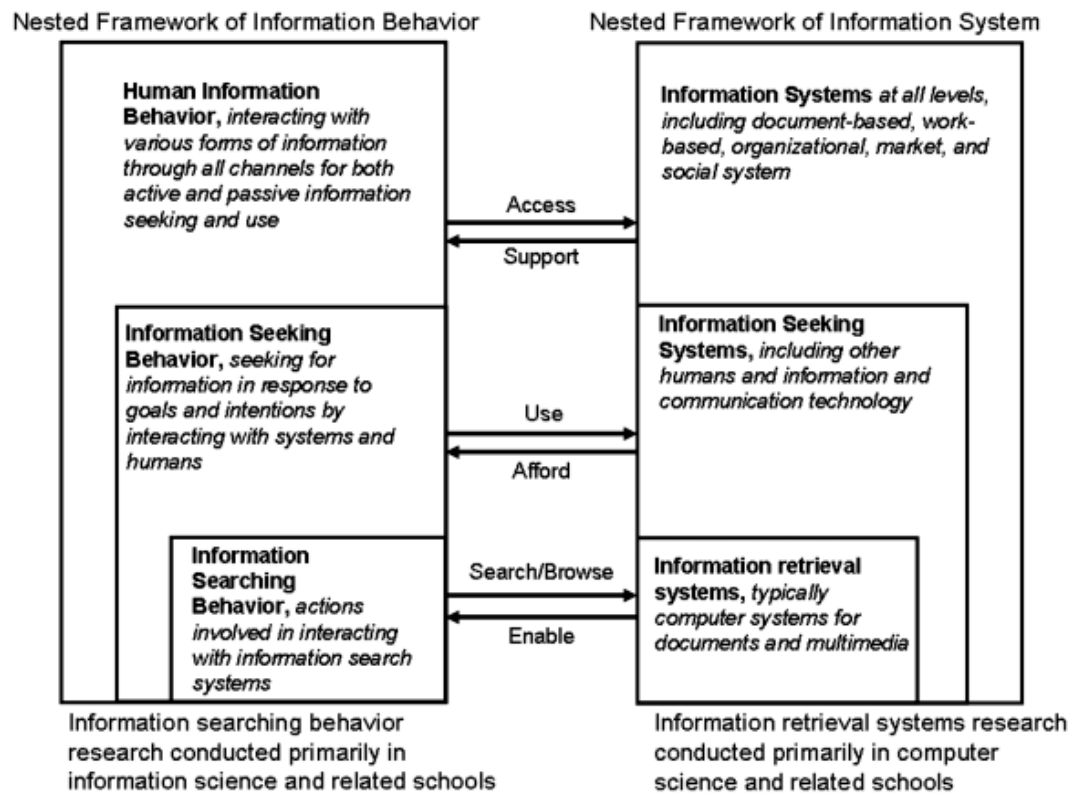
Figure 3.3. *Nested Model of Human Information Behaviour and Information Systems (Jansen & Rieh, 2010)*

3.3.8 Model of Tourist Information Search Strategy Process

This model incorporates the contingencies; tourist's characteristics and search outcomes. These forces drive individual tourists to develop unique search strategies. Fondess and Murray (1998) suggest the spatial, temporal and the operational as the three information-searching strategies. The spatial shows the locus of the searching strategy (either internal by accessing the content of local memory or external by requesting information from the environment). Temporal relates to the timing of the

searching activity while operational represents how the search is conducted, especially focusing on a particular sources depending of the relatives effectiveness of the sources in making decision.

The model of tourist information search strategy process identified two different factors that underpin the process of information search strategy. These are; the situational and the product characteristics (Fondess & Murray, 1997). Behavior is usually said to occur within a particular context. According to Belk (1974) situational characteristics are asserted to influence a particular time and place and they are a function of particular product characteristics. As such, situational characteristics are regarded as influencing the search strategies of a tourist. This model however identified the nature of decision-making and the traveling party composition as the situational characteristics that affect the information search. Information search strategy also said to be affected by the features of the product characteristics (Fondness & Murray, 1999). Users' search between goods and services are usually different. Users find difficulties in evaluating services quality before they purchase, therefore, they perceive a higher risk when about to make decision on purchasing intangible products such as tourist experience. Therefore, the model incorporates the purpose of trip and mode of travel as the product characteristics that affect information search. Thus, situational characteristics and product characteristics are the two contingencies that affect tourist information search.

From the perspectives of tourists, the most essence of information strategy is to facilitate purchasing decision-making. Therefore, search outcome has been ascribed

as the primary motivation behind information search in order to better enhance consumption choice (Engel, 1995). Literatures have posited that there is a relationship between the size of a consideration set and function of information search. It is shown in the case of leisure travel that the more activities and opportunities one is aware of at an intended destinations, the more one consumes the (Chadwick, 1987). This is supported by Etzel and Wahlers (1985) which found that there is a positive relationship between increasing level of information search and increasing level of expenditures. As such, the models of information search strategy process are presented in the figure 3.4 below:
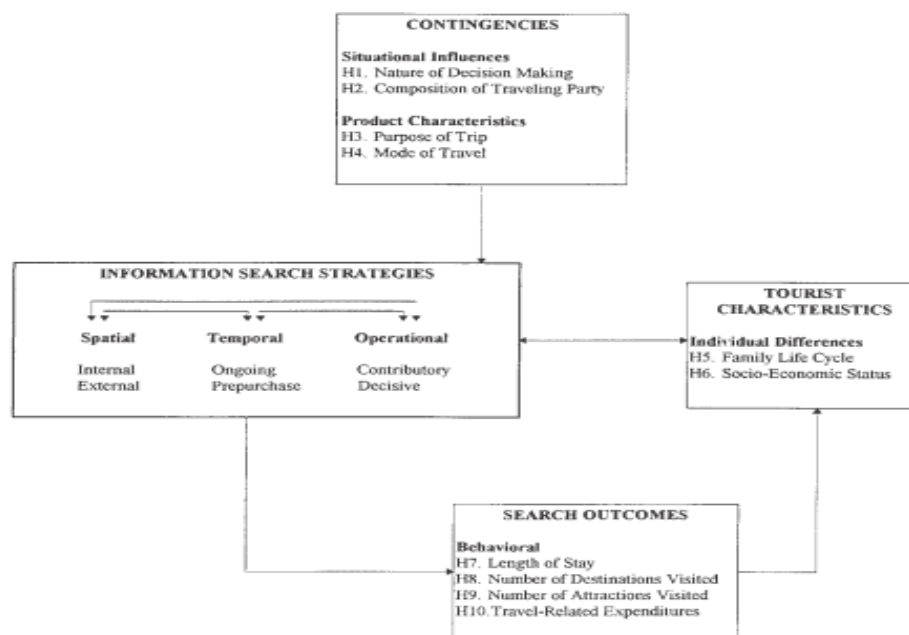
Figure 3.4. *Model of Tourist Information Search Strategy Process (Fondness & Murray, 1999)*

3.4 Variables Discussed in the Theories

Belk (1975) S-O-R diagram as discussed above provided a useful framework for analyzing the variables involving a travelers' choice of information search strategy.

Applying this diagram to the tourism information search context, the traveler would be the organism (O), the response(R) is the choice of information search strategy, and the stimulus (S) consists of the situational as well as the object under consideration. Normally, under consumer behavior, the object refers to the product or service that is purchased. However, in the process of searching for information, the object under consideration is in fact, information about this product.

Referencing the communication model of Shannon and Weaver (2002) it is revealed that the consideration of travelers are focused on three objects. In this case, the objects may be seen as consisting of three components: the information sources, information channels, and the message. Information is as a matter of fact, a product which cannot be acquired except as a complete package consisting of these three elements, all of which have distinctive product characteristics. Belk's S-O-R diagram is as shown by the model in Figure 3.5
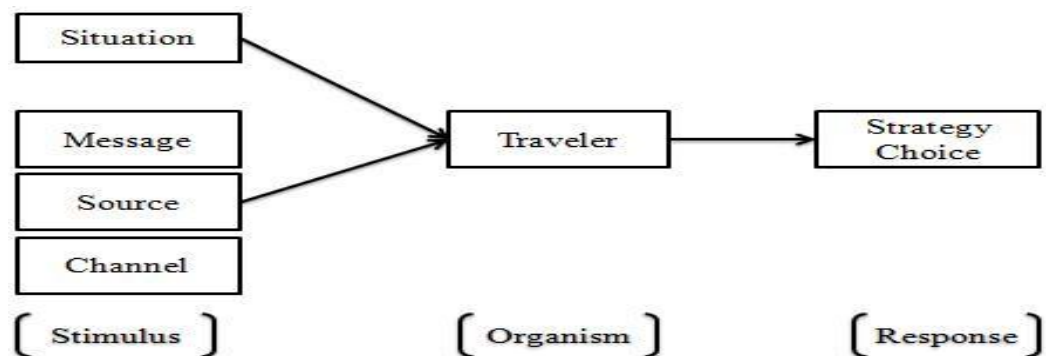
Figure 3.5. *Adapted S-O-R Diagram (Adapted from Belk, 1975)*

This model suggests a set of classes in which the variables of potential influence may be classified as a strategic choice of travelers searching for information; and as such as can be considered as simplified conceptual framework for this project. The

categories can also be used to compare the main focus of the various theories discussed in this section. In Table 3.2 the 'X' found in the table indicate those variables that the theories have focused on with bold types pointing to the main focus of the theory.

Table 3.2

Comparison of Theories(Grønflaten, 2005)

	Sources Characteristics	Channels Characteristics	Message Characteristics	Situational Characteristics	Personal Characteristics
Media Richness Theory		X	X	X	
Situational Theory	X	X	X	X	X
Channels Disposition Theory	X	X	X		X
Individual Preferences		X			X
Social Influence Theory		X			X

The above theories have been put forth primarily to explain the channels of information choice. They are assumed to possess the characteristics of the information channels to a certain extent as proposed by the Media Richness Theory, which considers the ability of channels to communicate information with various degrees of media richness. The situational theory is used as the fundamental theory

for the present study's framework because it covers all the variables utilized in this study. The theory also emphasizes the situational characteristics.

The main focus of channels disposition theory is the trade-offs between channels characteristics (accessibility) and information characteristics (quality). The individual preference theory emphasizes personal characteristics such as cognitive styles and oral/writing apprehension.

Finally, the social influence theory deals with the social context within which the information search behavior occurs. As mentioned earlier in this chapter, Fodness and Murray (1999) also used personal situational and product characteristics to categorize the variables influencing travelers' choice of information sources. In their framework however, the product referred to the trip rather than the information about the trip. It is argued here that when the traveler is trying to decide how to acquire tourist information, it is this information with its three components sources, channels, and message that is the actual object under consideration, and by which in consumer behavior is called the target (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1980). In the process of searching for information on consumer decision-making process, there is a need for information that the consumer seeks to satisfy, rather than the need for the trip itself. Using this interpretation, the variables discussed within Fodness and Murray (1999) framework must be regarded as either personal characteristics or situational characteristics. Product characteristics in the sense that it is understood it has not been widely researched in tourism. One exception however, is research on the use of Internet for tourism purposes, which has identified a number of channels characteristics that distinguished the Internet from other channels.

In his review of this body of literature, Jang (2005) identified the following characteristics of the Internet that have been found to present travelers with unique benefits compared to other channels: ability to purchase tickets, real-time communication, low cost, customized information, easy product comparison, interactivity, virtual community formation, and 24-hour accessibility. No studies were found however, which clearly described channels characteristics that are important for choosing between other information channels.

The most notable example of research studying sources characteristics in tourism is Kerstetter and Cho (2004) who recently studied the effect of credibility, which they found to be a strong predictor of sources selection. Apart from the study, most of the research on sources characteristics has been focusing on the choice of travel agents. Wolfe, Hsu, and Kang (2005)have also reviewed that the literature and identified several sources characteristics that seem to play an important role in this choice namely: reputation, knowledge, willingness to search for lowest fares, politeness, friendliness, customer service, corporate image, price reliability and competitiveness.

Users will choose a travel agent who they can trust and able to provide good service, expertise, and convenience without costing too much (Wolfe et al., 2005). A few studies have also looked at the reasons for choosing information centers (Pennington-Gray & Vogt, 2003) but no research was identified in this review that has looked at sources at tributes associated with the choice between various information sources. It should also be added that the studies reviewed by Wolfe et al. (2005) considered travel agents as a sources of travel purchase rather than a sources of information. The main objective of this research is therefore to identify the factors

of information sources and information channels to attributes used as evaluative criteria by travelers when deciding on a particular information search strategy, as well as the situational characteristics and personal characteristics influencing this decision.

3.5 Summary

The aim of this chapter is to present the various theoretical frameworks and backgrounds of the previous studies that are relevant to guide the adequate understanding of the variables under investigation. In view of this, the chapter first discusses the theoretical dimensions of the various concepts presented in this study. The chapter provides explanation on theories to and their relations with the present study. Apart from that, the study also discusses theories from related fields in consumer behavior, information theory, communication studies and information technology. This chapter also covers related concepts, and theories of tourists' personality as well as situational characteristics and their relationship to information sources and channels. The classification of information is also covered. For instance, information is classified as both internal and external. Internal is nothing more than a cognitive scan for decision-relevant knowledge stored in the long-term memory of the consumer while external search involves a conscious effort to search for new information. Both internal and external searches for information play crucial roles in making decisions about tourism adventures. The chapter, among others, covers the formality of information. It discusses the formality and informality of information search by the tourists. Communication includes the television and print media, while telephone and face-to-face modes are associated with informal communication.

Other theories discussed include Media Richness Theory developed by the organizational scientists; Situational Theory which is related to situational and the object (stimulus) including the personal (organization) in relation to a certain behavioral disposition (outcome); and the Channels Disposition Theory proposed by Swanson (1987). This chapter emphasizes on the integration of the quality of information channels that can be transferred and accessed easily.

Finally, the chapter also covers rational choice theories as well as the social interaction theories by Fulk et al. (1990), which discuss the role of social influences on the selection of communication channels. All these theories guide the present study to enhance better understanding of the variables utilized in this study.

CHAPTER FOUR
RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the description of the research methodology and research design employed in this study. It discusses on the research methods and approach utilized in this study. It covers other topics such as the population, sampling and sampling technique, data collection procedure and data analysis technique. It further presents an overview of the conceptual framework with hypotheses and a description of the instrument used for the study.

4.2 Conceptual Framework

This study has two categories of variable, which are independent, and dependent variables. Dependent Variable (DV) in this study is Arab tourist's information choice strategy. Personal characteristics and situational characteristics are the mediating variables of this study and also the information sources and information channels have been included as Independent Variables (IV). An independent variable is one that influences the dependent variables in either positive or negative way.

As demonstrated in the literature review section, information sources and channels influence Arab tourist's information choice strategy. These concepts of information sources and information channels will be used to evaluate the tourism information choice strategy of Arab tourists.
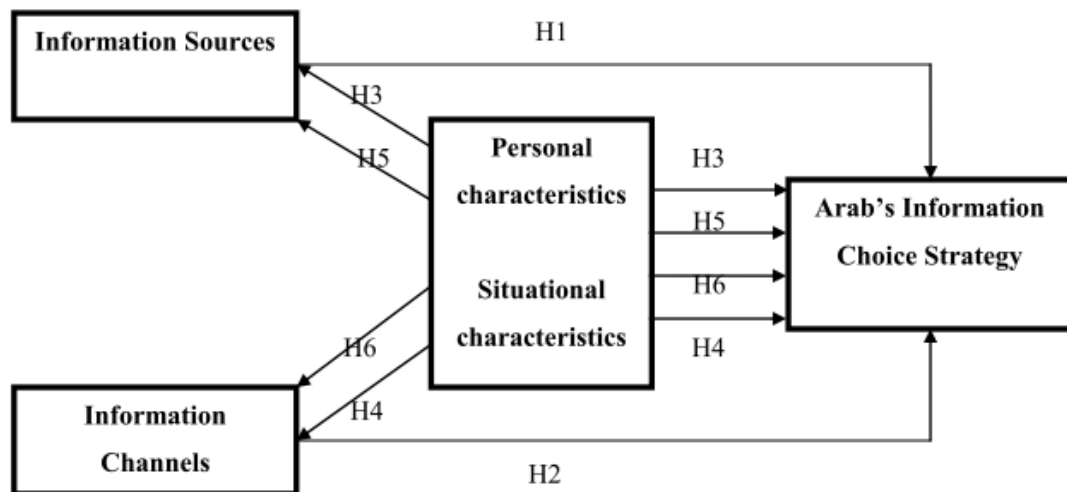
Figure 4.1. Conceptual Framework of Information Sources and information channels of Arab Information Choice Strategies

Figure 4.1 above depicts all variables that were utilized in the study. They include two independent variables, two mediating variables and one independent variable. The independent variables are information sources and information channels; the mediating variables are personal characteristics and situational characteristics while the dependent variable is information choice strategy of Arab tourists. As depicted in figure 4.1 the independent variables indirectly influence the dependent variable through the mediating variables personal characteristics and situational characteristics.

4.3 Hypotheses Development

Based on the conceptual framework depicted in figure 4.1, the following hypotheses are hereby formulated:

H1: There is a significant relationship between information sources and information choice strategy.

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H2: There is a significant relationship between information channels and information choice strategy.

H3: Personal characteristics will mediate in the relationship between information sources and information choice strategy.

H4: Situational characteristics will mediate in the relationship between information sources and information choice strategy.

H5: Personal characteristics will mediate in the relationship between information channels and information choice strategy.

H6: Situational characteristics will mediate the relationship between information channels and information choice strategy.

4.4 Research Design

As defined by (Zikmund, Babin, Carr, & dan Griffin, 2013), research design is a master plan that tends to specify the methods and procedures for data collection including the analysis of the collected data. It is also a plan that a researcher should follow in order to ensure that the objectives of the research achieved. Selecting an appropriate design is critical to make sure that research questions can be answered correctly (Creswell, 2008; Yin, 2008). Furthermore, Research design is defined as the science and art of planning procedures for conducting studies so as to get the most valid findings (Vogt, 1993). Frankfort-Nachmias and Nachmias (2007) also defined research design as a plan that guided the investigator in a process of collecting, analyzing, and interpreting observations. It is a logical proof that allows the researcher to draw inferences concerning causal relations among concepts under investigation (Frankfort-Nachmias & Nachmias, 2007).

According to Zikmund, et al., (2013) the basic research designs include; experimental design, cross-sectional design, longitudinal design, case study design etc. Accordingly, the choice of any of these research design indicated above depends greatly on the purpose and nature of the research. Owing to this therefore, this study opts for a cross-sectional research design approach. A cross-sectional research design approach is concerned with observation and data collection at one specific point in time (Zikmund et al., 2013). The major reason for this research design it is relatively quickly and the research data is collected at the same point in time (Zikmund et al., 2013). Besides, it is has been deemed to be the most appropriate research design for the study of this study (Zikmund et al., 2013).

For the research method, in general, there are two types of research methods or approaches, which are: qualitative and quantitative. Both are also based on the data types. The qualitative research is characterized by the opportunity to explore a subject in a manner as real as possible (Lewis, Saunders, & Thornhill, 2009). The quantitative research involves numerical data or contains data that usually can be quantified (Lewis et al., 2009). By qualitative method, case study, interview and so forth are used. While by quantitative method, researchers have come to mean the techniques of quasi-experiments, randomized experiments, sample surveys, multivariate statistical analyses and the like (Blaikie, 2009). This study uses a quantitative instrument method to determine relationships and also explore new variables that may be useful in developing a better model for similar studies in the future. The reason for this method is its ability in capturing the advantages in generalizing the findings to the population (Hair, Money, Samouel, & Page, 2007).

For the purpose of this study, this study opts for a quantitative research approach. It is concerned with a quantitative data and then applies statistical analysis in the analysis of the data being collected Saidu (Saidu, 2006). Amin and Khan (2009) and Khurshid (2008) affirmed that quantitative questionnaire approach is suitable in conducting a research in social science.

4.5 Instrumentation

This is concerned with the assignment of numerals to objects or events according to rules (Zikmund et al., 2013). Within the context of social sciences research, there are four common levels of measurement, namely: nominal, ordinal, interval and ratio. This study adopts both interval and nominal levels of measurements for both constructs and descriptive factors. While the interval is related to the scale, the nominal is concerned with categorization of constructs (Zikmund et al., 2013). Therefore, all constructs were measured using a five-point Likert-scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree) based on the previous work by (Cavana, Delahaye, & Sekaran, 2001). Also, constructs were measured using a five-point Likert-scale ranging from 1 (Not very effective) to 5 (Very Effective) based on the previous work (Cavana et al., 2001).

For the sources characteristics was measured using the following dimensions; travel agents, service providers, information center, journalists/ writers, other travelers, and friends/ family adapted from the work by (Grønflaten, 2005). Concerning the channels characteritics construct, it was measured using five dimensions consisting of face-to-face, telephone, TV, print, and the Internet and it was adapted from the

work by (Grønflaten, 2005). The tables 4.1, 4.2, 4.3, 4.4, 4.5, 4.6, 4.7, 4.8 and 4.9 provide more details about the construct measurements and the questionnaire description.

Table 4.1

Information Sources before Variables (Adopted from Grønflaten, 2005)

Name	Label	Operationlization
Information Sources Before	**Information sources before coming to Malaysia**	
Q1A	Information Sources	a) I give priority to Travel Agents' sources of information before coming to Malaysia
Q1B		b) Tourism Service Providers
Q1C		c) Tourism Information Centers
Q1D		d) Travel Journalists/ writers
Q1E		e) Friends / Family
Q1F		f) Other Travelers'

Table 4.2

Information Sources after Arab Coming to Malaysia (Adopted from Grønflaten, 2005)

Name	Label	Operationlization
Information Sources After		**Information sources after coming to Malaysia**
Q2A	Information Sources	a) I am very comfortable in obtaining information from the travel agents when I came to Malaysia
Q2B		b) Tourism Service Providers
Q2C		c) Tourism information centers is very suitable in obtaining information
Q2D		d) Travel Journalists/ writers is very suitable in obtaining information is very suitable in obtaining information
Q2E		e) Friends / Family
Q2F		f) Other Travelers' is very suitable in obtaining information

Table 4.3

Information Sources Variables (Adopted from Grønflaten, 2005)

Name	Label	Operationalization
Information Sources		
Q3A	Locals	The sources was local from Malaysia
Q3B	Maps & Brochures	I could get maps and brochures from the sources
Q3C	Destination	The sources had been to Malaysia before

Experience

Q3D	Credibility	I trusted the sources to be honest
Q3E	Travel Experience	The sources had previous traveling experience
Q3F	Commonalities	I am related to the sources
Q3G	Knowledge	The sources has adequate information about my traveling
Q3H	Booking	I could book my tickets with the sources

Table 4.4

Information Channels before Arab Coming to Malaysia Variables (Adopted from Grønflaten, 2005)

Name	**Label**	**Operationalization**
Information Channels Before	**Information channels before coming to Malaysia**	
Q4A	Information Channels	a) Face-to-Face
Q4B		b) Telephone
Q4C		c) TV/ Video
Q4D		d) Print
Q4E		e) Internet

Table 4.5

Information Channels after Arab Coming to Malaysia Variables (Adopted from Grønflaten, 2005)

Name	Label	Operationalization
Information Channels After Information channels after coming to Malaysia		
Q5A	Information channels	a) Face-to-Face
Q5B		b) Telephone
Q5C		c) TV/ Video
Q5D		d) Print
Q5E		e) Internet

Table 4.6

Information Channels Variables (Adopted from Grønflaten, 2005)

Name	Label	Operationalization
Information Channels		
Q6A	Accessibilty	I considered my communication channels very accessible
Q6B	Speed	I considered my communication channels very quick
Q6C	Control	I have the opportunity to choose the information I wanted

Q6D	Quantity	My communication channels provides me with a lot of information
Q6E	Enjoyment	I considered my communication channels to be comfortable
Q6F	Interactivity	My communication channels assisted me to ask questions and get answers.
Q6G	Personalness	It was personal
Q6H	Ease of use	My communication channels was easy to use
Q6I	Directness	My communication channels was direct
Q6J	Flexibility	I could use my communication channels when I wanted and as long as I wanted
Q6K	Mobility	My communication channels is mobile
Q6L	Price	My communication channels was cheap

Table 4.7

Personal Variables (Adopted from Grønflaten, 2005)

Name	Label	Operationalization
Q7A	**Education**	My level of education assisted my choice of information for my tourism
Q7B		My level of education helped me to understand my information choice.
Q7C		My level of education enhanced my knowledge of information choice.
Q7D		The quality of my information choice depends on my education
Q7E		The type of information choice depends on my education

Table 4.8

Situational Variables (Adopted from Grønflaten, 2005)

Name	Label	Operationalization
Q8A	**Travel Style**	I am an independent traveller
Q8B		I join any of the organized tour
Q9A	**Travel Partner**	I often travel alone
Q9B		Travel with friends
Q9C		Travel with Family and children
Q9D		Travel in group
Q9A	**Purpose of travel**	I often do business whenever I go for tour
Q10B		I always visit Relatives and Friends whenever I go for tour
Q10C		I only go for holiday whenever I go for tour
Q11A	**Knowledge of Language**	I do not know the language
Q11B		I am not so good at the language
Q11C		I fairly know the language
Q11D		I am very fluent at the language

Table 4.9

Information Choice Strategy Variables (Adopted fromGrønflaten, 2005)

Name	Label	Operationalization
Q12A	**Travel Agent**	I used the air/plane during my tour in Malaysia

Q12B		Boat
Q12C		Road
Q12D		Train
Q12E		Other
Q13A	**Accommodation**	I prefer staying at the Hotel/ Motel
Q13B		I like camping
Q13C		I like staying with Friends/Family
Q13D		I often go back that same day
Q13E		Others

4.5.1 Demographics

The demographic and background variables used in this study were gender, Nationality, marital status, education, monthly income, visited Malaysia before and number of years traveling to Malaysia. Table 4.10 below gives respondents' demographic profile:

Table 4.10

Demographics Information

No. 1	**Sex**				
	Male			Female	
No. 2	**Age**				
	Under 25	25-34	35-44	45-55	55 and Above
No. 3	**Nationality:**				
No. 4	**Marital Status**				
	Married			Non-Married	
No.5	**Education**				
	Primary School	Degree	Diploma	Master and above	
No. 6	**Monthly Income RM**				
	Less than 20,000	21,000 – 30,000	31,000 – 40,000	41,000 – 50,000	Over than 50,000
No. 7	**Have you ever-visited Malaysia Before**				
	Yes			No	
No. 8	**Number of Years traveling to Malaysia**				
	0-2	2-4	4-6	6-8	10 and above

4.6 Instrument Validity

The scales were pronounced reliable through the use of Cronbach's alpha (Appendix B). The revised concept was further examined for its validity and reliability. According to Hair *et al*. (2007) validity is "*the extent to which a construct measures what it is supposed to measure*" (p 246). Therefore, one can infer that instrument validation must make sure that the instrument measures what it claims to measure (Sekaran & Bougie, 2010; Hair *et al*., 2007; Saunders *et al.,* 2003; Nachmias & Nachmias, 1996). Different types of

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validity have been proposed. In this chapter only the construct validity, convergent validity, discriminate validity and statistical conclusion validity are explained.

4.6.1 Construct Validity

Construct validation deals with inferences of validity regarding unobserved variables in the form of the construct; having its basis on the observed variables which are presumed indicators (Pallant, 2001). Construct validity was carried out by tackling the following questions: whether the correct constructs have been chosen for the purpose of phenomenal explanation and whether the constructs have been suitably operationalized to represent the constructs? These particular questions are impossible to be wholly determined as it will not substantiate the notion that constructs are valid and have been properly operationalized.

A number of different procedures can be carried out to study construct validity comprising discriminant and convergent validities (Clark and Watson, 1995), despite the above dilemma. Support for construct validity is manifested only during that time when high correlations are exhibited between the same construct's measures making use of different methods (convergent validity) and when low correlations between different constructs' measures are displayed. In line with the notion, the following sections investigate construct validity through convergent as well as discriminant validity

4.6.2 Convergent Validity

Convergent validity is the type of validity that shows whether there is a relationship between individual scale items. Therefore, in line with the process, it has been

claimed that convergent validity can be tested with the help of principal components for EFA. Convergent validity finds out if the associations linking the same factor scales are greater than zero, or high enough to carry out discriminant validity tests (Kerlinger and Lee, 2000). Table in Appendix B shows of indicates convergent validity through data showing the entire loadings from principal component factor analysis as >= .500, similar to what was suggested (Kerlinger and Lee, 2000). This indicates that the items chosen in the study have achieved convergent validity.

4.6.3 Discriminant Validity

Discriminant validity determines the degree of correlation between different constructs. Low correlations are present if individual constructs are unique and hence possess various dimensions. As a result, correlation matrix approach and EFA can both examine construct validity for determining convergent or discriminant validity (Aladwani and Palvia, 2002). After examining the expletory factors loading correlation matrix, the results revealed that .586 is the lowest within-factor correlation. These correlations are higher than zero (P <0.000) and large enough to proceed with discriminant tests as supported by Hair et al (1998). Discriminant validity was examined by observing the frequency of an item's correlation with items belonging to other factors in comparison to the items of its own variable (Hair, et al., 1998). For example, the least within-factor correlation for training is .535, and in addition, no other correlation of training with items of other factors is > 0.833, therefore, the violation is considered as none. (Doll and Torkzadeh, 1988) argued that this number should be less than 50 percent. Since the result showed no

violation for comparisons, therefore the present study is said to have achieved discriminant validity.

4.7 Population

According to Zikmund, et al., (2013) population of this study is the non-probability sampling technique for a survey is the entire set of units for which the survey data are to be used to make inferences. It is generally a large collection of individuals or objects that is the main focus of a scientific query. In research, it is often referred to as the universe, which includes any complete group of entities that share some common set of characteristics. Also, (Sekaran, 2003) "a population refers to the entire group of people, events or topics of interest that the researcher wishes to investigate". Thus, a population is considered as a group that divides the set of common characteristics(Black, 1999). The concept of population is very crucial in any research work as (Crask, 2000) has long pointed out that defining the non-probability population correctly is an important step in the design of research project. In this study, the population includes tourists coming from Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Bahrain, Qatar, Oman, Iraq, Kuwait, Jordan, Syria, Palestine, Lebanon, Yemen and Libya. Currently, Arab tourists coming to Malaysia have been estimated to be 284,890 in 2009 and they are expected to increase more in 2014 (Mat et al., 2009; Razalli et al., 2012).

4.8 Sampling Technique

Since we cannot study the whole population, a portion of the population called the sample, representing the entire population is often drawn from the population for

study. Therefore, a sample is a subset of the population. That is, a subset, or some part, of a larger population which the researcher wants to study. However, this portion of the population must be drawn using some forms of sampling techniques, which may include; simple random sampling, systematic sampling, stratified sampling and cluster sampling. All these sampling techniques fall under the probability sampling techniques. Therefore, this study, adopts a convenient sampling approach of non-probability sampling technique. This sampling technique gives the researcher the opportunity to obtain participants or units that are most conveniently available for the study (Zikmund et al., 2013). According to Abzakh, Ling and Alkilani (2013) the use of convenient sampling is justified in a situational where the particulars of the respondents cannot be ascertained.

One of the major reasons for choosing convenience sampling technique in this study is because of the largeness of the population which makes it impossible for the researcher to include every individual in the population (Zikmund et al., 2013). Therefore, convenience sampling is used for convenient accessibility and proximity of the population to the researcher due to a large population especially in cases where the demographic profile of the respondents is not available.

Regarding the sample size, both Sekaran, Robert, and Brain(2001) and Krejcieand Morgan (1970) suggested a sample size of 382 when the population is 75,000. However, 500 questionnaires were sent out with the intention of avoiding or preventing the problem of low response rate. Out of the 404 questionnaires that were returned, 46 cases were deleted due to outlier's treatment. Hence, the total data used for this study is 358 given a total response rate of 71.6%. According to the American

Association for Public Opinion Research (AAPOR), a response rate of 32.6% is considered good for any study of this nature (Johnson & Owens, 2003).

4.9 Unit of Analysis

According to Zikmund et al., (2013) and Sekaran, Robert and Brain (2001) a unit of analysis for any study could either be individual or organizational level depending on the nature of the study or construct under investigation. Therefore, for this study, the unit of the analysis is at individual level. It includes all the individual Arab tourists coming to Malaysia. It has been established that Arab tourists out number all other tourists coming to Malaysia (Razalli et al., 2012). It is better to utilize them, as they are the ones involved in tourism pleasure or adventure. Thus, utilizing them gave a better understanding of the issue under investigation. Indeed, there were the most suitable personal to provide information on the variables under investigation. Besides, past studies by Raitz and Dakhil (1989) and Grønflaten (2009) on tourism and pleasure tourists, used individuals such as the tourists and visitors to gather information in a study of this nature. These Arab tourists are mostly come from Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Bahrain, Qatar, Oman, Iraq, Kuwait, Jordan, Syria, Palestine, Lebanon, Yemen and Libya.

4.10 Pilot Study

The study by Lucky (2011) pointed out that conducting a polit study before the main study is very crucial as it would enable the researcher to detect problems with the instrument if there are any, before proceeding to address these problems. The author concurred that an initial study would help in the clarity of the questionnaire, and its

reliability and validity can be determined through the help of the pilot study. Based on this, a pilot study was conducted on the research instruments, whereby 30 questionnaires were distributed to 30 Arab tourists in Langkawi (a prime tourist location in Malaysia) who are believed to possess the same characteristics with the main respondents of the study. The reliability and validity test showed that the instruments passed both the reliability and validity tests.

For the face and content validity, the questionnaire was given to experts (who are academic staff of the (College of Arts and Sciences and College of Business at Universiti Utara Malaysia) in this area of study and with knowledge on Arab tourism. The aim is to help the researcher identify any minor errors, such as typographical errors, wrong spelling and formatting problems with the questionnaires and to determine whether the language used in the questionnaire is within the linguistic capacity of the respondents. Based on the inputs and feedback from the experts, the researcher was able to improve on the questionnaire by re-wording, re-phrasing and formatting some of the questions that the experts had deemed as unfit. This process was also used to achieve the face validity of the instrument for this study.

4.11 Data Collection Procedure

According to Sekaran (2010) research data can be collected in a variety of ways, in different settings (field or laboratory), and from different sources. Thus, quite a number of data collection methods or procedures exist in the research arena. Notable among them are interview and survey methods. Others include; observation,

projective and multi-methods. This study adopts a well-structured questionnaire approach to gather information from the respondents (Sekaran & Bougie, 2009). This study employed self-administered procedure to distribute the questionnaire to the respondents of this study (Sekaran & Bougie, 2009). The questionnaires were distributed using a self-administered procedure. The questionnaires were handed over to the respondents and were subsequently collected after the respondents had successfully filled them in. However, the study conducted by Shehab (2008) affirmed that survey method seems better due to the fact that it involves people and the analysis of the data collected from people while Ogbonnaya and Osiki(2007) equally concurred that self-administered questionnaire produces a high response rate. Moreover, studies such as Grønflaten (2009) and Raitz and Dakhil (1989) adopted a questionnaire approach in their various studies. Accordingly, Ogbonnaya and Osiki (2007) claimed that the questionnaire seems to be the best approach in gathering information from a large population such as that of the Arab tourists (Saudi Arabia, UAE, Bahrain, Qatar, Oman, Iraq, Kuwait, Jordan, Syria, Palestine, Lebanon, Yemen and Libya) in Malaysia.

Further, the data was collected from three major tourist locations in Malaysia Penang, Langkawi and Kuala Lumpur in the months of January 2013 to April 2013.This was done to elucidate information from the respondents about the variables under investigation (Sekaran & Bougie, 2009). Questionnaire survey and self-administered procedures are very convenient and mostly used in the social sciences domain (Oladele, 2007).

4.12 Data Analysis Techniques

As defined by (Zikmund et al., 2013) data analysis is the application of reasoning to understand the data that have been gathered. In its simplest form, analysis may involve determining consistent patterns and summarizing the relevant details revealed in the investigation. Quite a number of analysis techniques exist in research field. Some of them include, descriptive, factor analysis, correlation analysis, and regression analysis (simple, multiple and hierarchical regressions). Each of these analyses is applied depending on the nature and objective of the study. For this study, various analyses such as descriptive analysis, factor analysis, correlation analysis, multiple and hierarchical regressions were all applied in order to achieve the study objectives. These analyses are briefly discussed below.

4.12.1 Factor Analysis

This is one of the relevant analyses utilized by researchers to determine the number of factors that determine the structure of a variable. It is also very useful in checking the validity of the instrument that will be utilsed in the study. Two major forms of factor analysis exist in the area of social science research (Pallant, 2007). The exploratory factor analysis is often used to determine the structure of the items while the component factor analysis is also used to reduce the number of the items. They include exploratory and principal component factor analyses. The study employed the component factor analysis technique in order to determine the number of items that loaded on a factor or on the other hand, determine the structure of a variable. Also, it played a very significant role in checking the construct validity of the

instrument. So, owing to this, the study conducted a factor analysis in order to determine the number of items loaded on a factor and at the same time checks whether each item measured the variable. In this case, the study used the component factor analysis with a varimax rotation as suggested by Halim(2009); Kolawole and Torimiro (2005), all items loading the acceptable limit are all accepted while those not loading the minimum standard are dropped. Thus, items that lacked to load meet the minimum acceptable limit are not used for further analysis in this study. In addition to this, the study equally ensured that the result of the factor analysis indicates an Eigen value greater than 1.

4.12.2 Descriptive Analysis

Descriptive analysis: This analysis is often used to check for the demography and profile of the respondents (Pallant, 2007). In this case, descriptive analysis method like frequency counts, percentage, means and standard deviation were used to summarize the demographic data of the respondents that participated in the study. Overall, the analysis was used to summarize the respondents' characteristics.

4.12.3 Correlation Analysis

This is a statistical analysis that tends to measure the relationship, either positive or negative, between the independent and dependent variables. It helps the researchers to determine the degree and type of relationship between two variables. It further shows us how strongly or weakly a relationship between two variables is (Ogbonnaya & Osiki, 2007). Therefore, the use of correlation analysis in this study is

aimed at determining the strength and degree of the relationship between the independent and dependent variables.

It was further used to check and determine the strength and direction of the relationship between the independent and dependent variable in this study (Pallant, 2007). Specifically, the Pearson correlation technique was used to assess the strength and direction of the relationships among all the variables used in this study. In this case, the value of correlation coefficients, which is indicated by "r", is used to determine the strength of the relationship among the variables under investigation. Apart from that, the correlation analysis also shows that a positive correlation implies a positive direction and while a negative correlation indicates a negative direction. Accordingly, a correlation is said to be small if r = .10 to .29; it is medium if the r = .30 to .49 and it is said to be high if r = .50 to 1.0 (Pallant, 2007).

4.12.4 Multiple Regressions Analysis

This analysis was used to establish nature of the relationship between the independent and dependent variables in this study. Thus, it was used to explain the influence of the independent variables on the dependent variable as theorized in this study. Multiple regressions are used to identify dominant factors amongst the personal and situational characteristics with information sources and channels. The factors are considered dominant if the beta value is the largest among the significant factors.

This statistical analysis technique determines the relationship between the relationships between the independent and depend variables. Therefore, the researchers used this analysis technique to understand the relationship between the independent (x) and dependent variables (y) (Saidu, 2006). Researchers can always establish the relationship between the x and y through the application of the regression analysis. Hence, this analysis technique assisted this study to determine the relationship between the independent and dependent variables of this study.

4.13 Summary

This chapter summarizes all the steps required to answer the research questions and achieve the research objectives. In other words, the chapter presents the description of the research methodology and research design employed in this study. It covers the research methods and approach utilized in this study, and related topics, such as the population, which emphasizes on the entire set of units for which the survey data were used to make inferences. Also referred to as the large collection of individuals that is the main focus of a scientific query; convenient sampling approach of non-probability sampling technique use in this study. They also equally discuss the conceptual framework, which presents all the independent and dependent variables, including the mediating variables. After this, the various hypotheses are highlighted. The hypotheses are significant relationships between information sources and information choice strategies; and between information channels and information choice strategies. It also shows significant mediating effect of both personal characteristics and situational characteristics on the relationship between information sources, information channels and information choice strategiesof the Arab tourists.

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Further, discussion covered by this chapter also includes the unit of analysis of the study. For this study, the unit of the analysis is at individual level, which includes all the individual Arab tourists coming to Malaysia. The data collection procedure for the study was equally discussed. In this study, self-administered questionnaire procedure was adopted based on the suggestion of studies, as well as the requirement of the study.

CHAPTER FIVE
DATA ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

5.1 Introduction

The previous chapter showed the research methodology utilized in this study while the preceding chapter presented the various literature reviews on the information sources, information channels, personal characteristics, situational characteristics and information choice strategy. Therefore, this chapter presents the data analysis and the presentation of the analyze results. In other the words, the chapter covers both the data analysis and the presentation of the data analysis results based on the hypothesis testing. To analysis the data collected from the 358 respondents, the study employed SPSS version 19. The initial data analysis started with the cleansing and screening of the data collected. After this, the preliminary data analyses such as outliers checking, normality, linearity, multi-collinarity and homoscedasticity were conducted. Other analysis covered by this chapters are factor analysis, descriptive statistics (such as the mean, standard deviation and inter-correlation), validity (construct), reliability, correlation analysis, regression analysis while the multiple regression was used to test for the mediating effect of both personal characteristics and situational characteristics where each result of the analysis is either supported or rejected.

5.2 The Initial Data Screening and Cleaning the Data

As humans, it is very easy to make mistakes in the course of keying in or entering data into the SPSS (Pallant, 2007) and as such there is a need for one to check the data sheet for errors. Here, two things are very important; first checking for the

errors and secondly, finding the errors and correcting the errors in the data files (Pallant, 2007). Errors in data set could distort and mess up the analysis by affecting the result obtained (Pallant, 2007). Also, (Sekaran et al., 2001) suggested researchers should always try to check for errors before going into data analysis in order to check and detect any errors that could arise.

To check for the errors in this study, a thorough inspection of the data set was conducted using descriptive analysis technique as suggested by Pallant (2007). This method enables to obtain the minimum and maximum values that are supposed to be in a particular data set. However, upon the inspection, the inspection result revealed that there were no data set with any error. The study equally checked for the out of range data, that is, data that are out of the scale say a scale of 1 to 5. The result also revealed that all data are within their respective ranges. This exercise provided a green light for the next analysis to be conducted.

5.2.1 Preliminary Analyses Basic Assumptions for Statistical Analysis

According toPallant (2007)the preliminary analyses include checking for the outliers, normality, linearity and multicollinearity which are prerequisite for conducting analyses such as correlations and multiple regressions. She noted that these preliminary analyses are very important, as they are conditions, which must be fulfilled before the main analysis would take place. Thus, a violation of these preliminary analyses would prevent the further analysis of correlations and multiple regression analyses. For example, there is a need to check for the outliers to see if some particular data sets show a low or a high figure above its data set while the

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normality helps to ensure that our data collected is well distributed without skewing to one side. In this case, the study adopted both boxplot and histogram plots to check for the outliers and normality cases respectively as suggested by Pallant (2007). The final result of the checking indicated that all the assumptions of using regressions and correlation analyses were duly met.

5.2.2 Treatment of Outliers

Any observation that is numerically far or distant from the rest of the data is called outlier (Pallant, 2007). Thus, it is a data that is markedly deviated from other members of the date. Outliers can be caused by any of the following; by chance, measurement errors or heavy-tailed distribution. To treat the problem of outliers in research several methods have been suggested by Pallant (2007); Osborne and Overbay (2004) and Sekaran and Bougie (2010). Through these methods, one can check and detect in the data set. For instance, one could use either histograms or Mahalanobisor the boxplot. Authors are actually divided on the issue of outliers whether the presence of outliers in a data affect its result or not (Pallant, 2007). ForOsborne and Overbay (2004), the presence of outliers may have nothing to do with the result of the study while Pallant (2007) and Sekaran and Bougie (2010) believed that outliers presence are dangerous to results.

However, since checking for outliers is a prerequisite for further analysis such as regression, which is of paramount to this study, the study conducted empirical outliers checking using three methods of histograms, Mahalanobis and boxplot. Both the histograms and the Mahalanobis were plotted, and the result through the

inspection of the histogram and the scanning of the Mahalanobis showed that there are no cases of outliers in the data set. To treat outlier in a data set two methods have been suggested by Pallant (2007). They include deletion and score assigning (that is any variable found with outliers is assigned another score). The inspection of Mahalanobis and boxplot indicate that there is an outlier's presence in any data set. The outliers were identified and deleted accordingly (Pallant, 2007). In all, a total of 46 cases were deleted from the data set. After this, the histogram and boxplot were again plotted to see if there are still cases of outliers. Although, the data showed outliers presence, however, the outliers are not extreme cases, that is, not significant. Hence, they were not deleted. Osborne and Overbay (2004) and Pallant, (2007) suggested that outliers without extreme cases are not to be deleted as they are not significant and may not affect the analysis result

5.2.3 Test of Normality

Normality is one of the basic assumptions and the prerequisite for statistical analysis such as regression analysis (Coakes., 2012). It is used to detect or check if a data is normally distributed or evenly distributed. A normal data would appear in the normal probability plot as a straight line just like a linear line. Thus, when the data point falls close to the straight line, the data are assumed to be normal and if on the other hand, the data falls otherwise, then it is normally distributed (Selkind, 2009). According to Pallant, (2007); Sekaran et al. (2001); Jarraet (1989) normality of data will assist the researchers to determine whether the collected data is normal skewed to one end. However, many still believed that how well a data normalizes greatly depends on the size of the data (Coakes., 2012). That is, the larger the data, the

normal the data. For example, a 500 data size would be more normal than a 30 data size. Hence the larger the data, the normal the data (Pallan, 2007) believed that data with 30 to 150 cases are assumed to be normal.

Although, the data for this study is far higher than 30 and 150, yet it went further to statistically conduct a normality test using the histogram plot. The normal P-P plots and Normal probability plot were generated from the regression result and were used to assess the level of the normal of the data. Upon inspection, the result of the data normality showed that the data is normally distributed. The diagram in figures 5.1 indicates the data for this study is normally distributed. It demonstrates that the collected is from a normal sample distribution. Based on this, it is therefore assumed in this study that the normal assumption is well met. This is another clearance for further analyses. It further shows that the data set for this study is well-modeled by a normal distribution. Besides, the regressions standardize residual plotted alongside the normal P-P plots and Normal probability plot equally demonstrated that the collected data is normal. This is evidenced by the histogram which was found to have the greatest frequency of scores at the middle with smaller frequencies towards the extremes and this in line with (Coakes & Steed, 2009)who utilsed the normal probability plot in their studies. The plot shows the cumulative probability of the information choice strategies residuals, which clearly demonstrated that the observed residuals are clustered, and closely around the normal straight line. See appendix E for more details about the rest of the normal P-P plots and Normal probability plot.

Histogram

Dependent Variable: InformationChoice
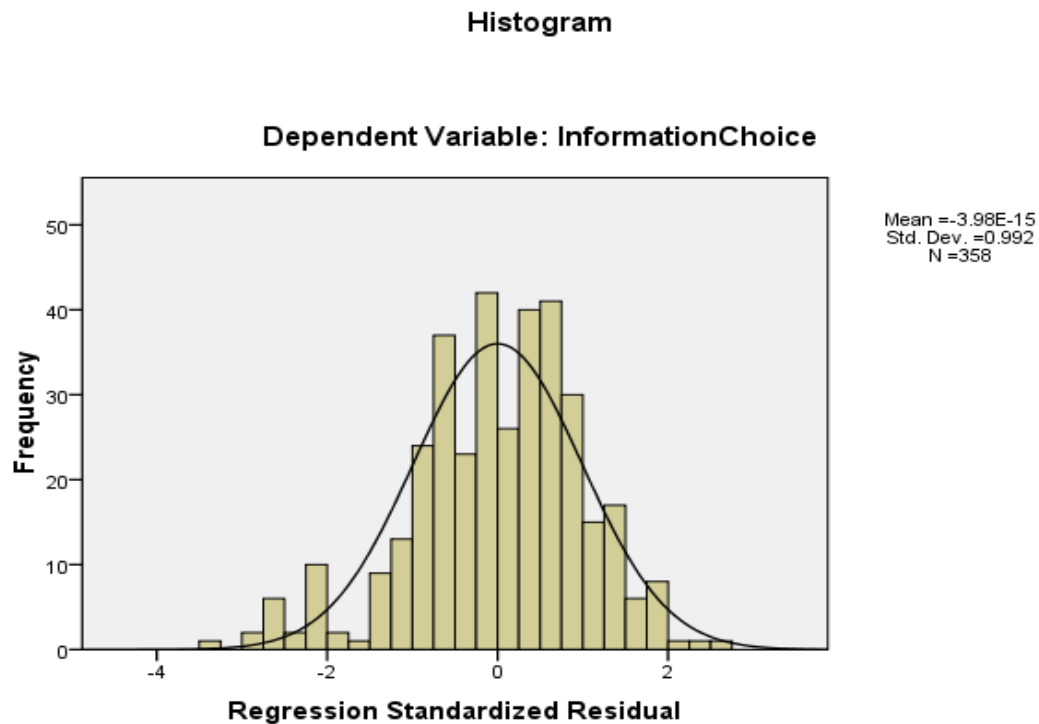
*Figure 5.1.*The Histogram plot

5.2.4 Test of Multicollinearity

This is another basic assumption that must be met before conducting the regression analysis. Multicollinearity occurs when two or more independent variables are found to be closely correlated(Pallant, 2007). Multicollinearity problem can cause a strange result, that is, it could negatively affect the result of the analysis (Pallant, 2007). For instance, it can cause wide confidence intervals and strange P values for independent variables. According to Selkind (2009), the problem of multicollinearity should be prevented because it could affect the analysis and consequently lead to misleading and useless interpretation of the result of the analysis. Generally, in statistics, it is expected that some sort of correlations should be found among independent variables; however, this correlation should not be found to be too high like .90. That is, any correlation results that indicates .90 and above should be considered

multicollinearity problem. One way as suggested by Pallant (2007)to solve the problem of multicollinearity is to delete one of the variables that is highly correlated. Thus, researchers should ensure that the correlation among the independent variables in their study is not as high as .90 and above.

To check for the multicollinearity problem in this study, the regression analysis was conducted and the result was inspected in order to identify whether there is any multicollinearity problem. Interestingly, the result of the analysis indicates that there is no problem of multicollinearity. The variable inflationary factor called VIF was used to determine whether there was a multicollinearity problem among the independent variables. According to Lahiri and Kedia (2009), VIF above 10 cut-off suggests a problem of multicollinearity among the independent variables. Thus, VIF is a good indicator of multicollinearity. For this study, the results indicate in all VIF of less than 10 cut-off as suggested by Lahiri and Kedia (2009), and this implies that there is no case of multicollinearity or whatsoever. Table 4.1 presents the VIF result for the entire variable as derived from the regression analysis results.

Table 5.1

Result of Multicollinearity Test

Variables	Label	VIF
Information Sources	Information Sources	1.00
Information Channels	Information Channels	1.00
Personal Characteristics	Personal Characteristics	1.00
Situational Characteristics	Situational Characteristics	1.00
Information Choice Strategy	Information Choice Strategy	1.00

5.2.5 Testing of Linearity

By simple meaning, linearity implies that the amount of change or rate of change, between scores on two variables is constant for the entire range of scores for the variables. Therefore, a nonlinear relationship underestimates the strength of the relationship, or fails to detect the existence of a relationship.

Two major techniques are commonly used in the evaluation of linearity. They are: graphical and statistical. While the graphic involves the examination of scatterplots, the statistical method includes diagnostic hypothesis tests for linearity. This study adopted the graphic method scatterplot of examining the linearity (Pallant, 2007; Sekaran et al., 2001). A linear relationship between two variables indicates that the observed data fit to a straight line. It also implies that there is no clear relationship between the residuals and the predicted values (Pallant, 2007). The result outputs for the examination of the scatterplot indicate that there is no clear relationship between the residuals and the predicted values. Thus, the dots in the scatterplot box are found to be scattered around each other, not being far from each other then it is concluded that the assumption of the linearity is met. Besides, the normal plot was also plotted and examined. The result also showed that there is no linearity problem. The normal plot shows that the residuals have a straight-line relationship with the predicted dependent variable scores as suggested by Sekaran et al. (2001) the general strength of the relationship between independent variables and the dependent variable is once again demonstrated. Based on this result, it therefore assumed that there are no significant data problems concerning linearity. As indicated in figure 5.2, the scatterplot contains a scatter dot, which, are scattered around each other, and this

implies that the assumption of the linearity is met. Hence, the observed data fit to a

straight line. See appendix D, and E for other scatterplot and normality plot
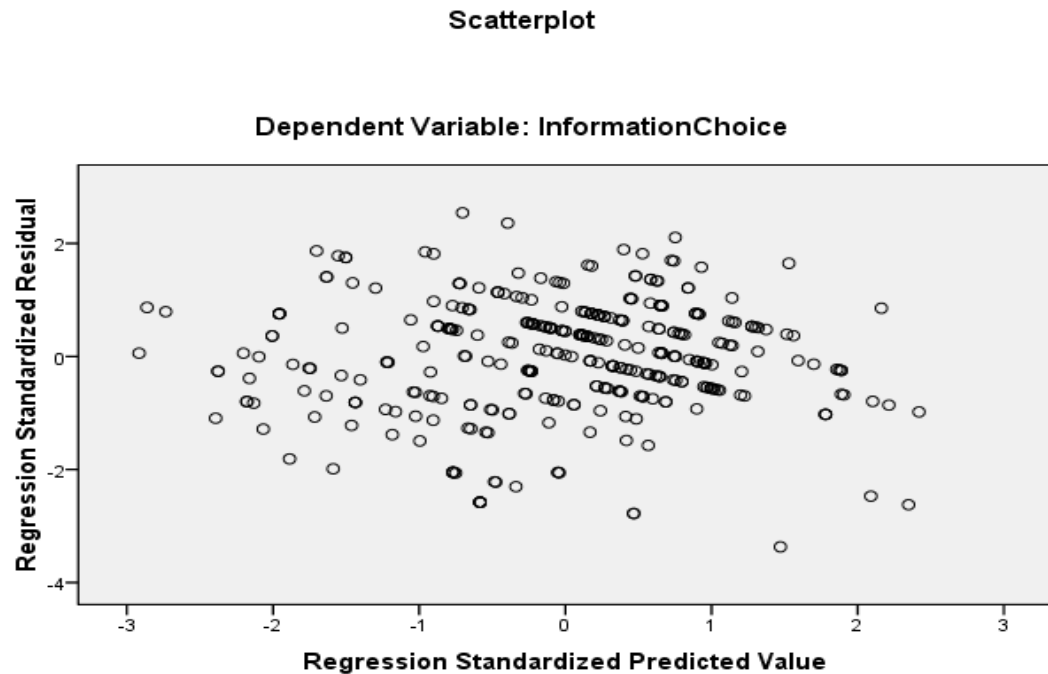
Figure 5.2. The Scatterplot between Standardized Predicted Value of the Independent
Variable and the Standardized Residuals of Overall Performance.
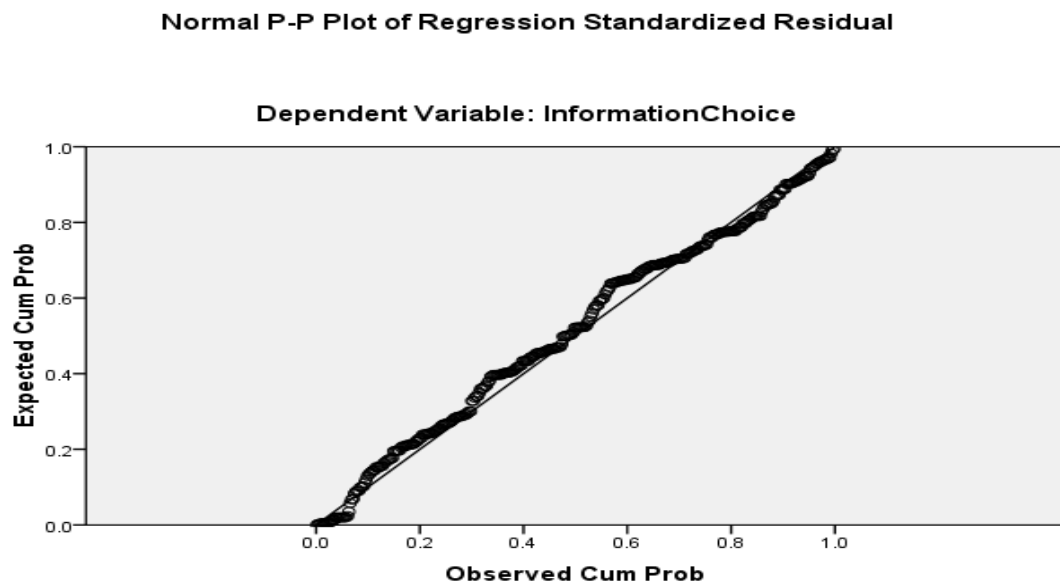
Figure 5.3. Normal P-P Plots

5.2.6 Treatment of Homoscedasticity (Levene Test)

The problem of non-bias response or homoscedasticity could arise as a result of any of the following; wrong respondents, wrong sample size and sampling technique to select the respondents for the study, limited time in filling the questionnaires or responding to the questions, lack of cooperation from the respondents, senility questions etc. (Bryman & Bell, 2007; Fowler et al., 2002; Zikmund et al., 2013). Therefore, researcher should try as much as possible to prevent or better still avoid any of these causes highlighted above. For example, asking wrong questions that lucked to answer or meet the research objective would no doubt create a problem of non-bias response or homoscedasticity in a research work. This is because the answers provided by respondents would not be able to achieve the research objective.

Furthermore, despite the above, Researchers can easily prevent or avoid the problems of non-bias response through many ways before they actually occurred in the data collected. Most of the effective ways researchers can prevent this problem includes; choosing the right respondents, keep the questionnaire design clean, precise, logical and short if possible, Ask the right questions that answer or meet the research objective, asking interesting questions, sending reminders to the respondents and above all, the proper designing and development of the questionnaire from the early stage of the questionnaire (Zikmund et al., 2013). For instance, wrong respondents would indicate wrong representative of the populations and that would reflect in the response they are going to provide. Also, wrong design

and questionnaire development would be the biggest headache as respondents would respond wrongly and this has a way of affecting the study.

Within the context of this study, quite a number of steps or measures were taken in order to avoid and also prevent the non-bias response problem. The initial steps are: first, the questions design and development was properly done. For example, it was ensured that all questions are simple, precise, concise and short, and meet the research objective. Secondly, returned questionnaires that were not properly filled by respondents were not used in this study. Hence, a total of ten (10) questionnaires were all rejected as a result of this. Besides these steps above, an empirical test called the Homoscedasticity or non-bias test was equally conducted on the data to check whether the problem of non-bais response exist using the benchmark suggested by Bryman and Bell (2007) and Pallant (2007).This benchmark indicates non-significant value of above 0.05 with the variance of the residuals about the predicted dependent variable score should be the same for all predicted scores as cases without non-response bias errors.

For this study, the test result indicates a non-significant result for all the variables: information sources (.044), information channels (.724), personal characteristics (.378), situational characteristics (.264) and information choice strategies (.742). See table 5.2 for details.

Table 5.2

Result of the Test of Non-Respondent Bias

Variables	Sig.
Information Sources	.044
Information Channels	.724
Personal Characteristics	.378
Situational Characteristics	.264
Information Choice Strategies	.742

Group Statistics

	nonBiasresponse	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Information Sources	Early response	300	4.43	.246	.014
	Late response	58	4.44	.201	.026
Information Channels	Early response	300	4.34	.394	.023
	Late response	58	4.40	.390	.051
Personal Characteristics	Early response	300	4.06	.594	.034
	Late response	58	3.94	.533	.070
Situational Characteristics	Early response	300	4.12	.472	.027
	Late response	58	4.09	.413	.054
Information Choice Strategies	Early response	300	4.22	.334	.019
	Late response	58	4.34	.371	.049

5.3 The Result of the Descriptive Analysis

A descriptive statistical analysis was conducted to examine the characteristics of the respondents. The result of the descriptive analysis in Table 5.3 indicates; for Gender, 193 (53.9%) for male and 165 (46.1%) for the female. For the age, the result indicates that 103 (28.8%) are under 25 years, 98 (27.4%) are between 25 to 35 years, 56 (15.6%) are between 35 to 44 years, 81 (22.6%) are between 45 to 54 age bracket while 20 (5.6%) are above 55 years. For the nationality, the result also shows that 114 (31.8%) of the respondents are from Saudi Arabia, 56 (15.6%) are from UAE, 40 (11.2%) are from Bahrain, 40 (11.2%) are from Qatar, 38 (10.6%) are from Oman while 24 (6.7%), 20 (5.6%), 8 (2.2%), 5 (1.4%), 3 (1.1%), 4 (1.1%), 4 (1.1%) and 2 (.6%) are from Iraq, Kuwait, Jordan, Syria, Palestine, Lebanon, Yemen and Libya respectively. Similarly for married status, 217 (60.6%) of the respondents are married while 141 (39.4%) are not married. Accordingly, the result shows that 84 (23.5%) of the respondents have a high school education, 85 (23.7%) are diploma holders, 128 (35.8%) have degrees, 56 (15.6%) of them have Masters while 5 (1.4%). As for monthly income, the result shows that 14 (43.9%) of the respondents are on a salary below RM 20,000, 50 (14.0%) are between the income of RM 21,000 and RM 30,000, 63 (17.6%) of them are between the income of RM 31,000 and RM 41,000, 104 (29.1%) are also between the salary of RM 41,000 and RM 50,000, 127 (35.5%) while majority of them earned a monthly income of a list RM 50,000. Furthermore, the result also indicates that 173 (48.3%) of the respondents have visited Malaysia while 185 (51.7%) have not visited Malaysia. It further shows that the majority of respondents 207 (57.8%) is between 0 to 2 years, number of years traveling to Malaysia while 65 (18.2%), 57 (15.9%), 26 (7.3%) and 3 (.8%) are

between 2 and 4 years, 4 and 6 years, 6 and 8 years, and above 10 years. Table 5.3

below provides more information.

Table 5.3

Descriptive Analysis of the Demographic

N	Frequency	Percentage
Gender:		
Male	193	53.9
Female	165	46.1
Total	358	100.0
Age:		
Under 25	103	28.8
25-34	98	27.4
35-44	56	15.6
45-54	81	22.6
Above 55	20	5.6
Total	358	100.0
National:		
Saudi Arabia	114	31.8
UAE	56	15.6
Bahrain	40	11.2
Qatar	40	11.2
Oman	38	10.6
Iraq	24	6.7

Kuwait	20	5.6
Jordan	8	2.2
Syria	5	1.4
Palestine	3	1.1
Lebanon	4	1.1
Yemen	4	1.2
Libya	2	.6
Total	358	100.0
Marital Status:		
Married	217	60.6
Non-married	141	39.4
Total	358	100.0
Education:		
High school	84	23.5
Diploma/ Certificate	85	23.7
Degrees	128	35.8
Masters	56	15.6
Others	5	1.4
Total	358	100.0
Monthly Income RM		
Less Than RM 20,000	14	43.9
RM 21,000- RM 30,000	50	14.0
RM 31,000- RM 41,000	63	17.6

RM 41,000 – RM 50,000	104	29.1
Over RM 50,000	127	35.5
Total	358	100.0
Visit Malaysia:		
Yes	173	48.3
No	185	51.7
Total	404	100.0
Number Years Traveling		
Malaysia:		
0-2 Years	207	57.8
2-4 Years	65	18.2
4-6 Years	57	15.9
6-8 Years	26	7.3
10 years and above	3	.8
Total	358	100.0

5.3.1 Descriptive Statistics for all Variables

Table 5.4 shows the descriptive analysis result for all the variables in this study. It presents both the mean and the standard deviation for all the variables. Table 5.4 shows that all the variables have means of above 4.0. For example, the information sources variable has a mean of 4.4 with a standard deviation of .24. It also indicates that information channels variable has a mean of 4.3 with a standard deviation of .39. Similarly, personal characteristics variable displays a mean of 4.0 with a standard

deviation of .59. Equally, situational characteristics variable indicates a mean of 4.1 with a standard deviation of .46 and finally, the information choice strategies variable shows a mean of 4.2 with a standard deviation of .34. This result suggests that variables such as information sources, information channels, personal characteristics and situational characteristics are very crucial in determining the Arab information choice strategy with regard to tourism.

Table 5.4

Descriptive Statistics for all Variables

Variables	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Information Sources before	358	4.3957	.41241
Information Sources after	358	4.4921	.34415
Information Sources	358	4.4360	.23895
Information channels before	358	4.4313	.29396
Information channels After	358	4.2849	.48777
Information Channels	358	4.3480	.39362
Personal Characteristics	358	4.0377	.58576
Situational Characteristics	358	4.1187	.46287
Information Choice strategy	358	4.2430	.34241

5.4 Factor Analysis

Study of the purpose for using factor analysis in a study, a factor analysis in this study was used to determine the number of items in a factor. In other words, it was used to reduce number of factors from a larger number of measured variables

(Zikmund et al., 2013). It assisted in the determining whether the instruments were able to measure what they intend to measure. Hence, the validity of the instruments was determined using this method. Based on this, the confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) otherwise called principal component analysis and a varimax rotation was adopted to validate the entire instrument. The Kasier-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) is the indicator of how well an instrument validates its construct while factor loading indicates how strongly a measured variable is correlated with a factor (Zikmund et al., 2013). In this study, the factor loading required for each item to be included in the factor is .30 as suggested by Pallant (2007) and Sekaran and Bougie (2010). All instruments in this study were subjected to SPSS for factor analysis according to the construct they measure using the principal component factor analysis and a varimax rotation as indicated earlier above. The results are presented accordingly as follow:

5.4.1 Factor Analysis Result for Information Sources Before

The result in table 5.5 indicate that out of the six items submitted to the factor analysis, only four items (Q1B, Q1C, Q1A and Q1E) loaded while the remaining two items, specifically items Q1D and Q1F lucked load into the factor. The four items loaded account for 27.7% of the variance with Eigenvalue of 1.7 and Kasier-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) of .51. The summary statistics for this analysis are presented in table 5.5.

Table 5.5

Factor Analysis Result for Information Sources Before

Factors	Loadings
Q1B	.803
Q1C	.784
Q1A	.491
Q1E	-.369
Eigenvalue	1.7
Percentage of variance explained (%)	27.7%
Kasier-Meyer-Olkin	.513
Bartletts' test of spericity approx. chi square	173.061
df.	15
Sig.	.000

5.4.2 Factor Analysis Result for Information Sources After

The result for information sources after variable shows that the whole five items subjected to SPSS loaded into the factor. The items account for 33.7% of the variance with Eigenvalue of 2.0 and Kasier-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) of .64. The summary statistics for this analysis are presented in table 5.6.

Table 5.6

Factor Analysis Result for Information Sources After

Factors	Loadings
Q2B	.629
Q2F	.612
Q2D	.610
Q2C	.591
Q2A	.528
Q2E	.501
Eigenvalue	2.0
Percentage of variance explained (%)	33.7%
Kasier-Meyer-Olkin	.636
Bartletts' test of spericity approx. chi square	211.634
df.	15
Sig.	.000

5.4.3 Factor Analysis Result for Information Sources Variable

For this variable, a total of twenty items were submitted for factor analysis. However, only fourteen (14) items loaded in to the factor. The rest of the items lucked to load as indicated by the factor result. These items as they are coded are Q1F, Q3H, Q3B, Q3E, Q1E and Q3G. The loaded items account for only 12.8% of the variance with Eigenvalue of 2.6 and Kasier-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) of .59. The summary statistics for this analysis are presented in table 5.7.

Table 5.7

Factor Analysis Result for Information Sources Variable

Factors	Loadings
Q1A	.551
Q2C	.514
Q2A	.499
Q1C	.451
Q2B	.444
Q2F	.422
Q3F	.362
Q3A	.360
Q2D	.354
Q3C	.353
Q1B	.341
Q3D	.333
Q1D	.324
Q2E	.300
Eigenvalue	2.6
Percentage of variance explained (%)	12.8%
Kasier-Meyer-Olkin	.597
Bartletts' test of spericity approx. chi square	927.814
df.	190
Sig.	.000

5.4.4 Factor Analysis Result for Information Channels Before

For this variable, all the five instruments used in measuring this construct were all

validated by factor analysis as all loaded into the factor. They account for only25.9%

of the variance with Eigenvalue of 1.3 and Kasier-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) of .51. The
summary statistics for this analysis are presented in table 5.8.

Table 5.8

Factor Analysis Result for Information Channels Before

Factors	Loadings
Q4B	.689
Q4C	.631
Q4A	.399
Q4D	.397
Q4E	.331
Eigenvalue	1.3
Percentage of variance explained (%)	25.98%
Kasier-Meyer-Olkin	.507
Bartletts' test of spericity approx. chi square	29.419
df.	10
Sig.	.001

5.4.5 Factor Analysis Result for Information Channels After

For this variable, a total of five items were submitted for factor analysis. However,
only four (4) items loaded in to the factor. One item coded Q5E lucked to load as
indicated by the factor result. The loaded items account for only 31.5% of the
variance with Eigenvalue of 1.6 and Kasier-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) of .56. The
summary statistics for this analysis are presented in table 5.9.

Table 5.9

Factor Analysis Result for Information Channels After

Factors	Loadings
Q5B	.693
Q5C	.654
Q5D	.633
Q5A	.445
Eigenvalue	1.6
Percentage of variance explained (%)	31.5%
Kasier-Meyer-Olkin	.558
Bartletts' test of spericity approx. chi square	29.419
df.	10
Sig.	.000

5.4.6 Factor Analysis Result for Information Channels Variable

The result for the factor shows that only five items out of the loaded into the factor and they included in the subsequent. The loaded items account for 44.9% of the variance with Eigenvalue of 2.3 and Kasier-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) of .57. The summary statistics for this analysis are presented in table 5.10 below.

Table 5.10

Factor Analysis Result for Information Channels Variable

Factors	Loadings
Q5B	.781
Q4B	.768
Q5D	.617
Q5C	.604
Q4D	.548
Eigenvalue	2.3
Percentage of variance explained (%)	44.9%
Kasier-Meyer-Olkin	.57
Bartletts' test of spericity approx. chi square	731.880
df.	10
Sig.	.000

5.4.7 Factor Analysis Result for Personal Characteristics

As indicated in Table, only four of out of five items submitted to the SPSS loaded into the factor. The other item code Q7E lucked to meet the loading requirement. The loaded items account for 48% of the variance with Eigenvalue of 2.4 and Kasier-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) of .74. The summary statistics for this analysis are presented in table 5.11 below.

Table 5.11

Factor Analysis Result for Personal Characteristics Variable

Factors	Loadings
Q7C	.825
Q7D	.777
Q7B	.754
Q7A	.739
Eigenvalue	2.4
Percentage of variance explained (%)	48%
Kasier-Meyer-Olkin	.74
Bartletts' test of spericity approx. chi square	384.211
df.	10
Sig.	.000

5.4.8 Factor Analysis Result for Situational Characteristics Variable

The result of the factor analysis for this variable indicates that out of the thirteen items submitted for factor analysis only eight items met the required loading limit. The rest of the items coded Q9A, Q10C, Q8B, Q9D and Q9C did not load into the factor. The loaded items account for 25.6% of the variance with Eigenvalue greater than 1 (3.2) and Kasier-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) of .73. The summary statistics for this analysis are presented in table 5.12 below.

Table 5.12

Factor Analysis Result for Situational Characteristics Variable

Factors	Loadings
Q11C	.768
Q11D	.737
Q11A	.669
Q10A	.634
Q11B	.605
Q10B	.502
Q9B	.478
Q8A	.418
Eigenvalue	3.2
Percentage of variance explained (%)	25.6%
Kasier-Meyer-Olkin	.73
Bartletts' test of spericity approx. chi square	982.381
df.	78
Sig.	.000

5.4.9 Factor Analysis Result for Information Choice Strategies Variable

Like others, the study also conducted a factor analysis for the information choice strategy variable in order to determine whether the measurement items actually measure the construct. The result indicates that eight out of the ten items submitted for the factor loaded into the factor while remaining two coded Q13A and Q13E lucked to load into the factor. The loaded items account for 26.6% of the variance with Eigenvalue greater than 1 (2.7) and a Kasier-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) of .71. The summary statistics for this analysis are presented in table 5.13 below.

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Table 5.13

Factor Analysis Result for Information Choice Strategy Variable

Factors	Loadings
Q12B	.702
Q13C	.688
Q13D	.684
Q12E	.660
Q13B	.542
Q12D	.405
Q12A	.371
Q12C	.302
Eigenvalue	2.7
Percentage of variance explained (%)	26.6%
Kasier-Meyer-Olkin	.71
Bartletts' test of spericity approx. chi square	514.037
df.	45
Sig.	.000

5.5 Reliability Test Result

To ascertain whether the instruments used in elucidating information from the respondents are reliable, a reliability test analysis was conducted on all the instruments. Authors such as Sekaran and Bougie (2009) Selkind (2009) and Zikmund et al., (2013) affirmed the need for authors to always conduct a reliability test in order to validate their instruments. In other words, authors should try as much as possible to determine whether each of the scale used in their study is very reliable for the sample of the research work. One of the major indicators of reliability is the Cronbach's Alpha. Sekaran and Bougie (2009) and Zikmund et al., (2013) noted that

a Cronbach's Alpha coefficient of .50. Similarly, Pallant (2007) considered Cronbach' Alpha coefficient from 0.50 acceptable particularly if the scale of the study has less than 10 units.

As indicated in Table 5.14 the variables on this study indicated Cronbach' Alpha coefficient above .50 with a five-point scale. For example, the result of the reliability test conducted for all the variables are as follows: information sources before (.56), information sources after (.60), information sources (.62), information channels before (.62), information channels after (.52), information channels (.69), personal characteristics (.78), situational characteristics (.76) and information choice strategies (.63). Table 5.14 below provides more details.

Table 5.14

Construct Reliability Scores All Variables (N=358)

Variables	No Items	Cronbach's Alpha Scores
Information Sources Before	3	.56
Information Sources After	6	.60
Information Sources	14	.62
Information Channels Before	5	.62
Information Channels After	2	.52
Information Channels	5	.69
Personal Characteristics	4	.78
Situation Characteristics	8	.76
Information Choice Strategies	8	.63

5.6 Correlation Analysis Result

To determine the correlation between all the variables in this study, a Pearson correlation analysis was conducted with a view to determine the strength and direction of the relationship among the variables. The benchmark to determine the correlation among variables as suggested by Salkind (2009) are a correlation between .8 and 1.0 is considered very strong, between .6 and .8 is considered strong, then between .4 and .6 is seen as moderate, and between .2 and .4 is weak while between .0 and .2 is considered very weak correlation. The result of the Pearson correlation analysis in table 5.15 indicates that there is a correlation between information sources and information choice strategies at $r = .218$, $p < 0.01$; information channels and information choice strategies at $r = .347$, $p < 0.01$, personal characteristics and information choice strategies at $r = .459$, $p < 0.01$, situational characteristics and information choice strategies at $r = .642$, $p < 0.01$. Based on the benchmark indicated above, the result indicates that most of the relationships are weak relationships while others are mediating relationships. See table 5.15 for details.

Table 5.15

Correlation Analysis Result for the Variables

Variables	ISB	ISA	IS	ICB	ICA	IC	PC	SC	ICS
Information Sources Before	1								
Information Sources After	.203**	1							
Information Sources	.597**	.772**	1						
Information channels Before	.297**	.289**	.422**	1					
Information channels After	.160**	.230**	.293**	.674**	1				
Information Channels	.214**	.252**	.344**	.819**	.837**	1			
Personal Characteristics	.385**	.313**	.452**	.307**	.254**	.288**	1		
Situational Characteristics	.376**	.270**	.426**	.336**	.327**	.319**	.884**	1	
Information Choice strategies	.218**	.215**	.347**	.338**	.446**	.411**	.459**	.642**	1

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level, (2-tailed)

5.7 Hypothesis Testing

5.7.1 The direct Effect

For this, the regression and multiple regression analyses were used to determine the direct relationships between all the independents variables and the dependent variable. Hence, it was employed to check the ability of all the independent variables to predict the dependent variable. Also, to check for the indirect effect, 3 step analyses as suggested by Baron and Kenny (1997) were adopted. Hence, analysis in this study is conducted in three stages or steps. The **Step 1** shows the results between the independent variables and the dependent variable. **Step 2** shows the results between the independent variables and the mediating variables while **Step 3** displays the results when both independents and mediating variables jointly predict the dependent variable.

5.7.1.1 Step 1: The Hypothesis Testing for the Direct Relationship between the Independent Variables and Dependent Variable

These were conducted after ensuring that all basic assumptions such outliers, normality, linearity, multicolinirity and homoscedasticity were met.

5.7.1.1.1 Regression Result for Information Sources

This result indicates that information sources predict information choice strategies. It shows that the relationship between information sources and information choice strategies is statistically significant at p < .001. This result provided further

opportunity for the mediating effect to be tested as posited by Baron and Kenny (1987). More details on this result are indicated in table 5.16.

Table 5.16

Summary of Regression Result for Information Sources Variable

Variables	R^2	Adjusted R^2	Beta	t	Sig.
Information Sources	.120	.118	.35	6.9	.000***

**P<0.05, ***p<0.001, Sig =Significant, NS = Not Significant

5.7.1.1.2 Regression Result for information channels

This result as indicated in table 5.17 revealed that the relationship between information channels and information choice strategies is statistically significant at significant at .000 (p < .001.). Thus, information channels predict information choice strategies. See detail result in table 5.17. This result provided further opportunity for the mediating effect to be tested as posited by Baron and Kenny (1987).

Table 5.17

Summary of Regression Result for Information Channels Variable

Variables	R^2	Adjusted R^2	Beta	t	Sig.
Information Channels	.169	.166	.41	8.5	.000***

**P<0.05, ***p<0.001, Sig =Significant, NS = Not Significant

5.7.1.1.3 Multiple Regressions for Information Sources and Information Channels

As indicated in table 5.18 both information sources and information channels are statistically significant in predicting information sources at .001(p < .001). See detail result in table 5.18. This result provided further opportunity for the mediating effect to be tested as posited by Baron and Kenny (1987).

Table 5.18

Summary of Regression Result for Information Sources and Information Channels Variables

Variables	R^2	Adjusted R^2	Beta	t	Sig.
Information Sources	.217	.212	.23	4.7	.000***
Information Channels			.33	6.6	.000***

**P<0.05, ***p<0.001, Sig =Significant, NS = Not Significant

5.7.1.1.4 Regression Result for all Information Sources Dimensions Sources (Information Sources Before and Information Sources After)

The results for other dimensions of information sources (information sources before and information sources after) also showed that they are both statistically significant at .000 (p < .001). The results showed that the two dimensions of information sources variable also predict information choice strategies. Table 5.19 and 5.20 provides more information on the results.

1) **Regression Result for Information Sources Before**

Table 5.19

Summary of Regression Result for Information Sources before Variable

Variables	R^2	Adjusted R^2	Beta	t	Sig.
Information Sources Before	.048	.045	.22	4.2	.000***

**P<0.05, ***p<0.001, Sig =Significant, NS = Not Significant

2) Regression Result for Information Sources After

Table 5.20

Summary of Regression Result for Information Sources after Variables

Variables	R^2	Adjusted R^2	Beta	t	Sig.
Information Sources After	.046	.044	.22	4.2	.000***

**P<0.05, ***p<0.001, Sig =Significant, NS = Not Significant

5.7.1.1.5 Regression Result for All Information Sources Dimensions Sources (Information Channels Before and Information Channels After)

The results for other dimensions of information channels (information channels before and information channels after) also showed that they are both statistically significant respectively at .000 (p < .001). The results showed that the two dimensions of information sources variable also predict information choice strategies. Table 5.21 and 5.22 provide more information on the results.

1) Regression Result for Information Channels Before

Table 5.21

Summary of Regression Result for Information Channels before Variables

Variables	R^2	Adjusted R^2	Beta	t	Sig.
Information Channels Before	.114	.112	.39	6.8	.000***

**P<0.05, ***p<0.001, Sig =Significant, NS = Not Significant

2) Regression Result for Information Channels After

Table 5.22

Summary of Regression Result for Information Channels after Variables

Variables	R^2	Adjusted R^2	Beta	t	Sig.
Information Channels After	.199	.197	.44	9.4	.000***

**P<0.05, ***p<0.001, Sig =Significant, NS = Not Significant

5.7.1.1.6 Multiple Regression Result for All Variables

Further investigation was also conducted simultaneously on all the independent variables including their dimensions. Table 5.23 presents their result. It shows that only information sources and information channels after are statistically significant at .000 (p < .0001).

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Table 5.23

Summary of Regression Result for Information Sources Variables

Variables	R^2	Adjusted R^2	Beta	t	Sig.
Information sources before	.261	.248	-.03	-.51	.614 [NS]
Information sources after			-.16	-1.9	.059 [NS]
Information sources			.39	3.7	.000***
Information channels before			-.09	-1.2	.246 [NS]
Information channels after			.34	4.0	.000***
Information channels			.09	1.1	.265 [NS]

**P<0.05, ***p<0.001, Sig =Significant, NS = Not Significant

5.7.1.2 Step 2: The Hypothesis Testing for the Direct Relationship between the Independent and Mediator Variables

The results here present the outcome relationships between the independent variables and mediating variables based on the regression analysis and suggested Baron and Kenny (1987).

The results in Tables 5.24, 5.25, 5.26, 5.27, 5.28, 5.29, 5.30, 5.31, 5.32, 5.33, 5.34 and 5.35 indicate that information sources, information sources before, information sources after, information channels, information channels before and information channels after are statistically significant with both personal characteristics and situational characteristics at .000 (p < .001).

1) Regression Result Between Information Sources and Personal Characteristics

Table 5.24

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Regression between Information Sources and Personal Characteristics

Variables	R^2	Adjusted R^2	Beta	t	Sig.
Information Sources	.204	.202	.45	9.6	.000***

**P<0.05, ***p<0.001, Sig =Significant, NS = Not Significant

2) Regression Result between Information Sources and Situational Characteristics

Table 5.25

Regression between Information sources and Situational Characteristics

Variables	R^2	Adjusted R^2	Beta	t	Sig.
Information Sources	.181	.179	.43	8.9	.000***

**P<0.05, ***p<0.001, Sig =Significant, NS = Not Significant

3) Regression Result between Information Channels and Personal Characteristics

Table 5.26

Regression between Information Channels and Personal Characteristics

Variables	R^2	Adjusted R^2	Beta	t	Sig.
Information Channels	.083	.080	.29	5.6	.000***

**P<0.05, ***p<0.001, Sig =Significant, NS = Not Significant

4) Regression Result between Information Channels and Situational Characteristics

Table 5.27

Regression between Information Channels and Situational Characteristics

Variables	R^2	Adjusted R^2	Beta	t	Sig.
Information Channels	.102	.099	.32	6.4	.000***

**P<0.05, ***p<0.001, Sig =Significant, NS = Not Significant

5) Regression Result for Information Sources Before and Personal Characteristics

Table 5.28

Regression Information Sources before and Personal Characteristics

Variables	R^2	Adjusted R^2	Beta	t	Sig.
Information Sources Before	.149	.146	.39	7.9	.000***

**P<0.05, ***p<0.001, Sig =Significant, NS = Not Significant

6) Regression Result for Information Sources Before and Situational Characteristics

Table 5.29

Regression Information Sources Before and Situational Characteristics

Variables	R^2	Adjusted R^2	Beta	t	Sig.
Information Sources Before	.141	.139	.38	7.7	.000***

**P<0.05, ***p<0.001, Sig =Significant, NS = Not Significant

7) Regression Result for Information Sources After and Personal Characteristics

Table 5.30

Regression Information Sources After and Personal Characteristics

Variables	R^2	Adjusted R^2	Beta	t	Sig.
Information Sources	.098	.095	.31	6.2	.000***

**P<0.05, ***p<0.001, Sig =Significant, NS = Not Significant

8) Regression Result for Information Sources After and Situational Characteristics

Table 5.31

Regression Information Sources After and Situational Characteristics

Variables	R^2	Adjusted R^2	Beta	t	Sig.
Information Sources After	.073	.070	.27	5.3	.000***

**P<0.05, ***p<0.001, Sig =Significant, NS = Not Significant

9) Regression Result for Information Channels Before and Personal Characteristics

Table 5.32

Regression Information Channels before and Personal Characteristics

Variables	R2	Adjusted R2	Beta	t	Sig.
Information Channels Before	.094	.092	.31	6.1	.000***

**P<0.05, ***p<0.001, Sig =Significant, NS = Not Significant

10) Regression Result for Information Channels Before and Situational Characteristics

Table 5.33

Regression Information Channels before and Situational Characteristics

Variables	R^2	Adjusted R^2	Beta	t	Sig.
Information Channels Before	.113	.110	.34	6.7	.000***

**P<0.05, ***p<0.001, Sig =Significant, NS = Not Significant

11) Regression Result for Information Channels After and Personal Characteristics

Table 5.34

Regression Information Channels after and Personal Characteristics

Variables	R^2	Adjusted R^2	Beta	t	Sig.
Information Channels After	.064	.062	.25	4.9	.000***

**P<0.05, ***p<0.001, Sig =Significant, NS = Not Significant

12) Regression Result for Information Channels After and Situational Characteristics

Table 5.35

Regression Information Channels After and Situational Characteristics

Variables	R^2	Adjusted R^2	Beta	T	Sig.
Information Channels After	.107	.105	.33	6.5	.000***

**P<0.05, ***p<0.001, Sig =Significant, NS = Not Significant

5.7.1.3 Step 3: The Testing For the Mediating Effect

This step was used to test for the mediating effect of both personal characteristics and situational characteristics on the relationship between information sources and information channels on informed choice strategies.

The results in tables 5.36, 5.37, 5.38, and 5.39 revealed that personal characteristics and situational characteristics are statistically significant. Thus, they are significant mediators in the relationship between information sources and information choice strategies, and between information channels and information choice strategies.

Table 5.36

The Mediating Effect of Personal Characteristics on the Relationship between Information Sources and Information Choice Strategies

Variables	R^2	Adjusted R^2	Beta	T	Sig.
Information sources	.235	.231	.175	3.361	.001***
Personal characteristics			.380	7.305	.000***

**P<0.05, ***p<0.001, Sig =Significant, NS = Not Significant

Table 5.37

The Mediating Effect of Situational Characteristics on the Relationship between Information Sources and Information Choice Strategies

Variables	R^2	Adjusted R^2	Beta	T	Sig.
Information sources	.419	.416	.09	1.9	.047 NS
Situational characteristics			.60	13.52	.000***

**P<0.05, ***p<0.001, Sig =Significant, NS = Not Significant

Table 5.38

The Mediating Effect of Personal Characteristics on the Relationship between Information Channels and Information Choice Strategies

Variables	R^2	Adjusted R^2	Beta	T	Sig.
Information Channels	.295	.292	.304	6.532	.000***
Personal Characteristics			.372	7.989	.000***

**P<0.05, ***p<0.001, Sig =Significant, NS = Not Significant

Table 5.39

The Mediating Effect of Situational Characteristics on the Relationship between Information Channels and Information Choice Strategies

Variables	R^2	Adjusted R^2	Beta	T	Sig.
Information Channels	.460	.457	.23	5.58	.000***
Situational Characteristics			.57	13.83	.000***

**P<0.05, ***p<0.001, Sig =Significant, NS = Not Significant

Next: personal characteristics (education) were also used to mediate the relationship between information sources, information channels, and information choice strategies simultaneously. The result indicates that only information channels was statistically significant at .000 (p<.001) while on the contrary, the result shows that information sources is no significant at .053 (p<.05).

Table 5.40

Mediating Effect of Personal Characteristics on Information Sources, Information Channels on Information Choice Strategies

Variables	R^2	Adjusted R^2	Beta	T	Sig.
Information Sources	.303	.297	.100	1.939	.053[NS]
Information Channels			.281	5.865	.000***
Personal Characteristics			.333	6.616	.000***

**P<0.05, ***p<0.001, Sig =Significant, NS = Not Significant

Next: Similarly, situational characteristics were equally used to mediate the relationship between information sources, information channels, and information choice strategies simultaneously. The result still revealed that only information channels is statistically significant at .000 (p<.001), however, the result again indicates that information sources is not statistically significant at .460 (p<.05).

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Table 5.41

The Mediating Effect of Situational Characteristics on Information Sources,
Information Channels on Information Choice Strategies

Variables	R^2	Adjusted R^2	Beta	T	Sig.
Information Sources	.461	.456	.033	.740	.460[NS]
Information Channels			.222	5.226	.000***
Situational Characteristics			.558	12.656	.000***

**P<0.05, ***p<0.001, Sig =Significant, NS = Not Significant

5.7.2 Result for the Dimensions

The results in Tables 5.43 and 5.43, show that personal characteristics and situational
characteristics are not statistically significant mediators in the relationship between
information sources before and information choice strategies.

Table 5.42

The Mediating Effect of Personal Characteristics on the Relationship between
Information Sources before and Information Choice Strategies

Variables	R^2	Adjusted R^2	Beta	t	Sig.
Information Sources Before	.213	.208	.048	.944	.346[NS]
Personal Characteristics			.441	8.633	.000***

**P<0.05, ***p<0.001, Sig =Significant, NS = Not Significant

Table 5.43

The Mediating Effect of Situational Characteristics on the Relationship between Information Sources before and Information Choice Strategies

Variables	R^2	Adjusted R^2	Beta	T	Sig.
Information Sources Before	.413	.410	-.027	-.618	.537 [NS]
Situational Characteristics			.653	14.874	.000***

**P<0.05, ***p<0.001, Sig =Significant, NS = Not Significant

Furthermore, the results in tables 5.44 and 5.45 however, revealed that personal characteristics and situational characteristics are not statistically significant mediators in the relationship between information sources after and information choice strategies.

Table 5.44

The Mediating Effect of Personal Characteristics on the Relationship between Information Sources after and Information Choice Strategies

Variables	R^2	Adjusted R^2	Beta	T	Sig.
Information Sources after	.327	.323	.080	1.608	.109 [NS]
Personal Characteristics			.434	8.779	.000***

**P<0.05, ***p<0.001, Sig =Significant, NS = Not Significant

Table 5.45

The Mediating Effect of Situational Characteristics on the Relationship between Information Sources after and Information Choice Strategies

Variables	R^2	Adjusted R^2	Beta	T	Sig.
Information Sources After	.414	.411	.046	1.080	.281 [NS]
Situational Characteristics			.630	14.939	.000***

**P<0.05, ***p<0.001, Sig =Significant, NS = Not Significant

Furthermore, the results in tables 5.46 and 5.47 indicate that personal characteristics and situational characteristics are statistically significant mediators in the relationship between information channels before and information choice strategies.

Table 5.46

The Mediating Effect of Personal Characteristics on the Relationship between Information Channels before and Information Choice Strategies

Variables	R^2	Adjusted R^2	Beta	T	Sig.
Information Channels Before	.254	.250	.218	4.520	.000***
Personal Characteristics			.392	8.142	.000***

**P<0.05, ***p<0.001, Sig =Significant, NS = Not Significant

Table 5.47

The Mediating Effect of Situational Characteristics on the Relationship between Information Channels before and Information Choice Strategies

Variables	R^2	Adjusted R^2	Beta	T	Sig.
Information Channels Before	.429	.426	.138	3.242	.001***
Situational Characteristics			.596	14.002	.000***

**P<0.05, ***p<0.001, Sig =Significant, NS = Not Significant

Similarly, the output result in tables 5.48 and 5.49 also revealed that personal characteristics and situational characteristics are statistically significant mediators in the relationship between information channels after and information choice strategies.

Table 5.48

The Mediating Effect of Personal Characteristics on the Relationship between Information Channels after and Information Choice Strategies

Variables	R^2	Adjusted R^2	Beta	T	Sig.
Information Channels After	.327	.323	.352	7.818	.000***
Personal Characteristics			.370	8.212	.000***

**P<0.05, ***p<0.001, Sig =Significant, NS = Not Significant

Table 5.49

The Mediating Effect of Personal Characteristics on the Relationship between Information Channels after and Information Choice Strategies

Variables	R^2	Adjusted R^2	Beta	T	Sig.
Information Channels After	.475	.472	.264	6.482	.000***
Situational Characteristics			.556	13.656	.000***

**P<0.05, ***p<0.001, Sig =Significant, NS = Not Significant

5.8 Summary of the results

Table 5.50

Summary of the Results

	Dependent = Information Choice Strategies		
	With mediator	Without mediator	Conclusion
Information sources	.35	.175	Partial Mediation
Personal characteristics		.380	

Information sources	.35	.09	Partial Mediation
Situational characteristics		.60	
Information channels	.41	.304	Partial Mediation
Personal characteristics		.372	
Information channels	.41	.23	Partial Mediation
Situational characteristics		.57	
Information sources before	.22	.048	No Mediation
Personal characteristics		.441	
Information sources before	.22	-027	Partial Mediation
Situational characteristics		.653	
Information sources after	.22	.080	No Mediation
Personal characteristics		.434	
Information sources after	.22	.046	No Mediation
Situational characteristics		.630	
Information channels before	.39	.218	Partial Mediation
Personal characteristics		.392	
Information channels before	.39	.138	Partial Mediation
Situational characteristics		.596	
Information channels after	.44	.352	Partial Mediation
Personal characteristics		.370	
Information channels after	.44	.264	Partial Mediation
Situational characteristics		.556	
Information sources	.23	.10	Not Significant
Information channels	.33	.28	Partial Mediation
Personal characteristics		.33	
Information sources	.23	.03	Not Significant
Information channels	.33	.22	Partial Mediation
Situational characteristics		.56	

5.8.1 Summary of Hypothesis Testing

Table5.51

Summary of Hypothesis Testing

Hypotheses Testing	Results
H1a: That the relationship between information sources and information choice strategies.	Supported
H1b: That the relationship between information channels and information choice strategies.	Supported
H1c: That the both information sources and information channels.	Supported
H2a: Indicate that information sources mediate with personal characteristics and situational characteristics.	Supported
H2b: Indicate that information sources before mediate with personal characteristics and situational characteristics.	Supported
H2c: Indicate that information sources after mediate with personal characteristics and situational characteristics.	Supported
H2d: Indicate that information channels mediate with personal characteristics and situational characteristics.	Supported
H2e: Indicate that information channels before mediate with personal characteristics and situational characteristics.	Supported
H2f: Indicate that information channels after mediate with personal characteristics and situational characteristics.	Supported
H3a: The personal characteristics and situational characteristics mediating between information sources and information channels on information	Supported

choice strategies.

H4a: That personal characteristics and situational characteristics mediators in the relationship between information sources before and information choice strategies.	Not Supported
H4b: That personal characteristics and situational characteristics mediators in the relationship between information sources after and information choice strategies.	Not Supported
H4c: That personal characteristics and situational characteristics mediators in the relationship between information channels before and information choice strategies.	Supported
H4d: That personal characteristics and situational characteristics mediators in the relationship between information channels after and information choice strategies.	Supported

5.9 Summary

This chapter presents the data analysis and the analyzed results. In other words, the chapter talks both the data analysis and the presentation of the data analysis results based on the hypotheses testing. The chapter talk about how the data collected from the 358 respondents was analyzed using the SPSS version 19. It also discusses the cleaning and cleansing of the collected data. Other issues associated with the preliminary data analyses, such as outliers checking, normality, linearity, multi-collinearity and homoscedasticity are also covered. The empirical outliers checking using three methods of histograms, Mahalanobis and boxplot revealed that the data

contains some sort of outliers and this was treated by deleting that data set with outliers; further, the histogram plot showed that there was no longer any issue of outliers on the data set. Other analyses covered by this chapter are factor analysis, descriptive statistics (such as the mean, standard deviation and inter-correlation), validity (construct), reliability, correlation analysis and regression analysis, while the multiple regression which was used to test for the mediating effect of both personal characteristics and situational characteristics is also covered in this chapter. Finally, the chapter presents the various analysis results, such as the descriptive analysis result which showed the descriptive characteristics of the respondents, the correlation analysis result which revealed the strength of association among all variables and lastly both the regression and multiple regression analysis result which also demonstrated both the direct and mediating relationships among the various variables tested in this study.

CHAPTER SIX
DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

6.1 Introduction

The previous chapter detailed the analysis and presentation the findings while the preceding chapters discussed on the methodology used to gather information from the respondents and the review of literature relating to information sources, information channels, information choice strategies, personal characteristics and situational characteristics. This chapter therefore presents the discussions and conclusions from the various analyses results found in the investigation in line with the major objectives of this study. The discussions also cover the hypotheses testing of the various hypotheses hypothesized in this study in order to answer the various research questions highlighted in this study. The various analyses used in this study to answer the research questions as well as to achieve the research objectives include descriptive analysis, correlation, regression and multiple regression analyses.

The chapter further discusses on the implications and limitations of the study with the suggestions for future study been highlighted. Finally, based on the research findings from the results of the analysis, the discussions, and the conclusions are highlighted. Accordingly, the discussion section is presented according to the objectives of this study.

6.2 Discussions

As indicated in the title of this study, the study examined factors affecting information sources and information communication channels of Arab tourist

information choice strategies with the mediating roles of personal characteristics and situational characteristics. As such questionnaire data was collected from 385 respondents and then the data was analyzed using the regression analysis technique in order to test for the six major hypotheses hypothesized in this study as following:

H1: There is significant relationship between information sources and information choice strategies.

H2: There is a significant relationship between information channels and information choice strategies.

H3: Personal characteristics will mediate in the relationship between information sources and information choice strategies.

H4: Situational characteristics will mediate in the relationship between information channels and information choice strategies.

H5: Personal characteristics will mediate in the relationship between information sources and information choice strategies.

H6: Situational characteristics will mediate the relationship between information channels and information choice strategies.

Overall, the results showed significant relationships between information sources and information choicestrategies; between information channels and information choicestrategies. It also shows significant mediating effect of both personal characteristics and situational characteristics on the relationship between information sources, information channels and information choice strategies on the Arab tourists.

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6.2.1 Research Question

This research includes six research questions introduced to overcome the research problem statement. In order to answer these questions, statistical test were run to test the research hypotheses, as implied by following research questions:

Research Question 1:

Is there any relationship between information sources and information choice strategies of Arab tourism?

Yes. The research addressed this research question. It reviewed that the information sources predicts information choice strategies of the Arab tourists. The finding demonstrates that there is a significant relationship between information sources and related information choice strategies of the Arab tourists. More detail on this result is indicated in table 5.16.

Research Question 2

Is there any relationship between information channels and information choice strategies of Arab tourism?

Yes. This research question was answered. The result shows there is significant relationship between information channels and information choice strategies of the Arab tourists. It shows that information channels significantly influence the choice of the information strategies of the Arab tourists, as indicated based in table 5.17.

Research Question 3

Will personal characteristics mediate the relationship between information sources and information choice strategies of Arab tourism?

Yes. This study answered this research question. The finding revealed that personal characteristics significantly mediate the relationship between information sources and information choice strategies of the Arab tourists. It shows that Arab tourist would obtain better information if they give serious consideration to their personal characteristics such as education. More detail on this result is indicated in table 5.36.

Research Question 4

Will personal characteristics mediate the relationship between information channels and information choice strategies of Arab tourism?

Yes. This study answered this research question. The finding revealed that personal characteristics significantly mediate the relationship between information channels and information choice strategies of the Arab tourists. It further revealed that the type of information channels used by the Arab tourists is influenced by their personal characteristics, which then influence their information choice strategies. Information regarding to this is indicated in table 5.38.

Research Question 5

Will situational characteristics mediate the relationship between information sources and information choice strategies of Arab tourism?

Yes. This research question was answered. The finding revealed that situational characteristics significantly influence the relationship between information sources and information choice strategies of the Arab tourists. It was found that information sources depend on situational characteristics to explain the information choice strategies of Arab tourists. It shows that Arab tourist would obtain better information

if they give serious consideration to their situational characteristics such as travel partner, travel style and purpose of tourism. More detail on this result is indicated in Table 5.37.

Research Question 6

Will situational characteristics mediate the relationship between information channels and information choice strategies of Arab tourism?

Yes. This particular was addressed by this study. The finding revealed that situational characteristics significantly predict the relationship between information channels and information choice strategies of the Arab tourists. It also revealed that situational characteristics are very relevant to the tourists in using information channels to determine their information strategies when making decisions concerning their tourism adventures. Information regarding to this is indicated in table 5.39.

6.2.2 Direct Effect: Information Sources, Information Channels and Information Choice Strategies

Overall, the results showed significant relationships between information sources and information choicestrategies; between information channels and information choicestrategies. It shows the direct effects of both information sources and information channels on the information choice strategies. A similar positive relationship between information sources, information channels and information choice strategies was also found by Grønflaten (2009). Thus, the results are

consistent with previous studies by Grønflaten (2009) who found that information

choice strategies which comprise of information sources and information channels

affect traveler information choice strategies. The findings suggest that both

information sources and information channels determine the level of information

choice strategies of the tourism travelers. Thus, they are significant predictors of

information choice strategies. The findings demonstrate that both information

sources and information choice strategies can independently predict information

choice strategies. Thus, both variables are significant determinants of information

choice strategies. It implies that tourism travelers prefer to seek information from the

right sources and right channels when planning their tourism travel adventures. For

instance, the sources and channels of information go a long way to determine the

quality of information obtained by the tourism travelers and consequent help them to

make their choice of the information strategies they want. Thus, tourism travelers

should only seek tourism information on the reliable sources using the effective

channels of information to obtain this information for the purpose of having a good

tourism experience.

6.2.3 Indirect Effect: Mediating Effect of Personal Characteristics

Furthermore, the empirical result for the indirect effect revealed that personal

characteristics mediate the influence of information sources and information choice

strategies. The finding is consistent with Grønflaten (2008) who found that apart

from other factors such as information sources and information channels that affect

information choice strategies, personal factors such as education also influences

travelers' choice of information strategies. Also, the finding supports the previous

finding by Grønflaten (2008) who also found that personal characteristics, which include education significant, influence the association between the travelers' information sources and information choice strategies. The finding indicates that personal characteristics mediate the relationship between information sources and information choice strategies. The result suggests that lack of personal characteristics such as education on the side of the tourist or traveler would result to low quality of information sources, which will also affect the information choicestrategies. Hence, the higher educational status of the traveler or tourists, the better the relationship between information sources and information choice strategies. A tourist would obtain a better information sources if he or she is well educated and this would reflect in the information choice strategies.

Similarly, the result also indicates that personal characteristics mediate the influence of information channels and information choicestrategies. The finding is consistent with Grønflaten (2009) who found that apart from other factors such as information sources and information channels that affect information choice strategies, personal factors such as education also influences travelers' choice of information strategies. Similarly, the result affirmed the result from the previous study by Grønflaten (2008) who also found that personal characteristics, which include education significant, influence the association between the travelers' information sources and information choice strategies. The finding suggests that personal characteristics in particular education has helped to explain the influence of information channels on the information choice strategies. It further suggests that lack of personal characteristics such as education on the side of the tourist or traveler would affect the quality of

information sources, which will also affect the information choicestrategies. Hence, the educational status of the traveler or tourists would provide a better information channels and that would reflect in the relationship between information sources and information choice strategies. A tourist would obtain a better information sources if he or she is well educated and this would reflect in the information choice strategies.

6.2.4 Indirect Effect: Mediating Effect of Situational Characteristics

The result obtained from the data analysis, indicates that their situational characteristics significantly mediates the relationship between information sources and information choice strategies. The result shows that situational characteristics explain the relationship between information sources and information choice strategies. This finding supports previous finding by (Grønflaten, 2009).

The result indicates that situational characteristics provide further explanation of the relationship between information sources and information choice strategies. This implies that situational characteristics are a significant factor that gives further meaning and interpretation to the relationship between information sources and information choice strategies. Thus, the explanation of the relationship between information sources and information channels depends on the presence of situational characteristics. It further suggests that situational characteristics play an indispensable role for tourism travelers or tourists in deciding the right information sources and information channels for their tourism travel or tourism adventure.

Furthermore, the finding also revealed a significant mediating effect of situational characteristics in the relationship between information channels and information

choice strategies. It shows that situational characteristics are a significant mediating factor that mediates the relationship between information channels and information choice strategies. In other words, it helps to explain the influence of information channels on the information choice strategies. Thus, this hypothesis is therefore supported. The finding is in line with previous study by Kim. and Chen (2010); Luo, Feng and Cai (2004) the finding indicates that situational characteristics very relevant to the tourists or tourism travelers in deciding the right sources of information, the right information channels and who and where to obtain this information about their tourism travel. It further suggests that tourism travelers that want the right information sources and information channels must give consideration to the situational characteristics as it would help them to obtain the relevant information about their tourism travel.

Further results on the hypotheses of the mediating effect of both personal characteristics and situational characteristics on the dimensions of information sources (information sources before and information sources after) and information channels (information channels before and information channels after) revealed that both personal characteristics and situational characteristics are significant mediators. It further indicates that both personal characteristics and situational characteristics influence the relationships between dimensions of information sources (information sources before; and information sources after) and information channels (information channels before and information channels after) and information choice strategies. These results suggest that both personal characteristics and situational characteristics assist the tourism travelers to decide on the information sources and information

channels before and after they embark on their tourism travel. By so doing, they would avoid the mistakes of choosing the wrong information sources and information channels. Therefore, tourism travelers must consider both personal characteristics and situational characteristics before and after making decisions about the information and information channels they intend to use in obtaining tourism information choice strategies.

6.3 Implications of the Study

Quite a number of implications have been identified in this study based on the analysis results and findings obtained. However, for proper understanding, the implications of this study are grouped into two major categories, which are: theoretical and managerial implications. Hence, the discussions on the implication of this study are in two folds.

6.3.1 Theoretical Implications

Past research on tourism has not revealed a clear demarcation between information sources and information channels, especially when determining the factors that influence information choice strategies. This study did this by first separating each variable and knowing the strength of each variable in determining the information choice strategies of the Arab tourists.

Second, it also measured and treated each construct as a separate variable rather than as a single variable. Therefore, distinguishing and measuring these constructs individually is a huge contribution to the academic field of tourism as it has

succeeded in identifying which of these variables best determines information choice strategies. The above would also stimulate more research in this domain via the separate consideration of information sources and information channels - which is another huge contribution to the body of knowledge in this domain.

The study also contributes to the theory in this domain, particularly the situational and communication theories, by further affirming and illustrating the effect of the situational and the object (stimulus), including the personal (organization), in relation to a certain behavioral disposition (outcome), as posited by Belk (1975). It also contributes to the Media Richness Theory as well as Communication Theory by re-affirming the communication efficiency (information sources and information channels) when making their various decisions, especially in the context of Arab tourists.

6.3.2 Managerial/Practical Implications

The managerial implications are beneficial to many people, particularly the travel agencies, the travelers, researchers and the government or the policy makers in the government. For the travel agents and tourism/recreational planners, the finding on the information sources and information channels would be beneficial to them as they can adequately understand the type or kind of information sources and information channels suitable for relaying their tourism information to the tourists.

Secondly, the findings on the situational and personal characteristics would also guide the travel agents and tourism/recreational planners towards choosing the right information sources and information channels to use in directing their information to

the targeted market and customers. Besides, it would help them to assure and provide a positive tourism experience that would bring about repeat visits.

Furthermore, the study provides an insight about the mediating effect of personal and situational characteristics in deciding about information sources and information channels; and then making information choice strategies about the available information for tourism adventure.

The implications of this study for the tourists are numerous. The information provided by this study can guide tourists to choose the right information sources and information channels when making decisions about their tourism journey or adventure. Also, the information from this study would help the tourists to make decisions on the information choice strategies as to who to contact and how to contact them because these decisions have a decisive impact on the success of the travel.

The conceptual framework developed here may be used by policy makers in government tourism agencies and those in the tourism industry to predict the outcome of information choice strategies of the potential tourists, especially when tourists seek information. Accordingly, the study provides more insight (i.e., more and better understanding) on the importance of situational and personal characteristics of the tourists in making decisions and policies about tourism in Malaysia, in the context of Arab tourists coming to Malaysia.

For the researchers, the conceptual framework developed here may be used by the researchers to further advance knowledge in this domain by investigating how other

personal characteristics (such as age, language, emotion, perception, etc.) and situational characteristics (e.g., location, religion, sentiment, etc.) can mediate the relationship between information sources, information channels and information choice strategies. Hence, the study has availed a new path for further research.

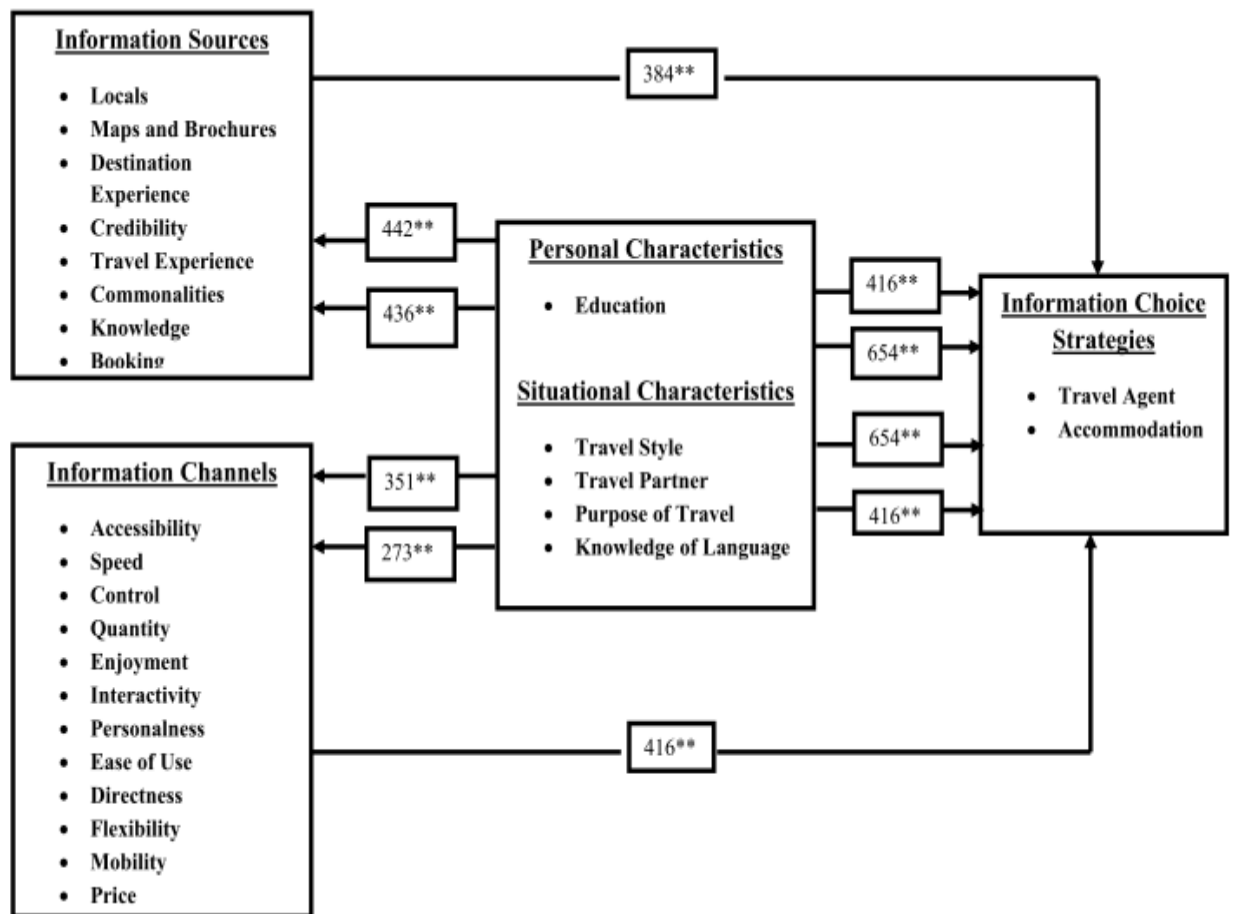## 6.4 The Final Model of the Study

Figure 6.1. *Model of Information Sources and Information Channels on Information Choice Strategies*

The above Figure 6.1 depicts the final model of this study. It shows all the variables and their relationships with other variables, particularly the dependent variable

(information choice strategy). It also shows that the hypotheses tested in this study with the supported hypotheses as earlier hypothesized. The figures in the path model indicate the significance of the relationship between one variable and another variable. After the data analysis, the hypothesized model was found to fit the data well and all significant relationships were found to be in the hypothesized direction.

Hypotheses and Model Evaluation

To recap, the following are the research hypotheses that are discussed in the present study. This section shows insignificant and significant positive relationship present between the independent and dependent factors displayed at p >.05 level.

Hypothesis 1: There is a significant relationship between information sources and information choice strategy.

It reviewed that the information sources predicts information choice strategies of the Arab tourists. The finding demonstrates that there is a significant relationship between information sources and related information choice strategies of the Arab tourists. More detail on this result is indicated in table 5.16.

Hypothesis 2: There is a significant relationship between information channels and information choice strategy.

The result shows there is significant relationship between information channels and information choice strategies of the Arab tourists. It shows that information channels significantly influence the choice of the information strategies of the Arab tourists, as indicated based in table 5.17.

Hypothesis 3: Personal characteristics will mediate in the relationship between information sources and information choice strategy.

The finding revealed that personal characteristics significantly mediate the relationship between information sources and information choice strategies of the Arab tourists. It shows that Arab tourist would obtain better information if they give serious consideration to their personal characteristics such as education. More detail on this result is indicated in table 5.36.

Hypothesis 4: Situational characteristics will mediate in the relationship between information sources and information choice strategy.

The finding revealed that personal characteristics significantly mediate the relationship between information channels and information choice strategies of the Arab tourists. It further revealed that the type of information channels used by the Arab tourists is influenced by their personal characteristics, which then influence their information choice strategies. Information regarding to this is indicated in table 5.38.

Hypothesis 5: Personal characteristics will mediate in the relationship between information channels and information choice strategy.

The finding revealed that situational characteristics significantly influence the relationship between information sources and information choice strategies of the Arab tourists. It was found that information sources depend on situational characteristics to explain the information choice strategies of Arab tourists. It shows that Arab tourist would obtain better information if they give serious consideration to

their situational characteristics such as travel partner, travel style and purpose of tourism. More detail on this result is indicated in Table 5.37.

Hypothesis 6: Situational characteristics will mediate the relationship between information channels and information choice strategy.

The finding revealed that situational characteristics significantly predict the relationship between information channels and information choice strategies of the Arab tourists. It also revealed that situational characteristics are very relevant to the tourists in using information channels to determine their information strategies when making decisions concerning their tourism adventures. Information regarding to this is indicated in table 5.39.

6.5 Limitations and Future Research

Just like any other research, this particular study is not exempted from limitations. However, its limitations are in three folds: First, the data utilized in this study only reflect the Arab tourists or pleasure travelers coming to Malaysia. Others tourists from other countries or continents are not accounted for. For instance, data has shown that there are also a large number of tourists from the West (e.g. U.S.A and Europe) patronizing Malaysian tourism industry. These groups of people can also be investigated. Thus, a larger more diversified sample from different economic and cultural regions could enhance the generalization of the findings of this study.

Secondly, the study only considered the personal characteristics in particular education as a mediator; other personal characteristics, which, are outside the scope of this study such as age, gender, nationality and personal values would also play

significant mediating roles in the relationship between information sources, information channels and information sources. Hence, future research should consider using them as mediators in any future study of this nature. Besides, it is hoped that future studies in this domain should try to replicate this study in other research settings and destinations so as to validate the results obtained.

Another major limitation of this study is the research method used as well as the nature of the data. The study used pure quantitative method with a survey data. Therefore, the findings obtained in this study would be limited to quantitative interpretation. Until now, the argument between qualitative and quantitative methods has continued to generate heat and debate among authors from both schools of taught. While the qualitative school believed that qualitative provides better research results, the quantitative also believed that quantitative provides more scientific result. However, a qualitative version of this study is required in order to provide a qualitative result, which would validate the findings of the present study.

6.6 Conclusion

The major objective of this study was to investigate the factors affecting information sources and communication channels of Arab tourist information choice strategies with the mediating roles of personal characteristics and situational characteristics. In order to address this objective, the Arab tourists coming to Malaysia were selected as the research respondents due to the high influx of Arab tourist in Malaysia. Four major hypotheses were formulated and tested using the regression analysis technique.

Therefore, based on the results from the regression analyses, the study concludes that both information sources and information channels are indispensable factors for tourism travelers, travel agent and tourism agents including the policy makers in making decisions about tourism and choosing the right information sources and information channels with the available information choice strategies, as they significantly predict information choice strategies.

The study further concludes that personal characteristics (education) and situational characteristics are significant mediating variables in the in the relationship between information sources, information channels and information choice strategies. Thus, they play significant role mediating roles in the relationship between information sources, information channels and information choice strategies of the travelers.

Further conclusion of this study is that the personal characteristics of the tourist, in particular education would assist him/her in making decisions about the information choice strategieshe/she needs for his/her tourism adventure. Thus, the educational status of the tourist plays a vital role in the choice of information strategies, right information sources and type and effective information channels that would give him a better tourism experience. Besides, the tourists or pleasure travelers should accord an urgent attention to personal characteristics and situational characteristics in order to ensure a successful tourism experience in Malaysia. The findings obtained in this study have given insight and contributed to the understanding of the relationship between information sources, information channels and information choice strategies with the mediating role of personal characteristics in particular education and situational characteristics.

6.7 Summary

This chapter precisely discusses the findings obtained from the study and conclusions including the recommendations. The discussions as based on the various research questions and research objectives of the study. The discussions also cover all the testing of the various hypotheses formulated in this study for the purpose of answering the various research questions formulated in this study.

The discussion also covers the various analyses results such as the descriptive analysis which showed that most of the respondents for the correlation analysis result, which showed that there is strong association among the variables under investigation; for both regression and multiple regression analyses, the results revealed that the independent variables are significantly related to the dependent variable (information choice strategies) of the Arabs tourists coming to Malaysia. The chapter further covers the results of the mediating effects of both situational characteristics and personal characteristics.

In addition, this chapter discusses the implications and limitations, both theoretical and practical, of the study, with the suggestions for future study highlighted. Finally, the discussion on this chapter also covers the conclusions and recommendations. The conclusion among others is that personal characteristics (education) and situational characteristics are significant mediating variables in the relationship between information sources, information channels and information choice strategies. The recommendation is that future studies in this domain should try to replicate this study in other research settings and destinations so as to validate the results obtained.

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