

THE EFFECT OF COUNTRY IMAGE AND AN
INSTITUTION'S REPUTATION ON STUDENTS' DECISION
ON WHERE TO STUDY

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ORIGINAL LITERARY WORK DECLARATION

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ABSTRACT

The study shows that in Malaysia a country's image and a university's reputation are critical factors in influencing students' selection of a place for study. For Muslim students, the sub-dimension variable of ease of practicing religion is also a significant consideration. The study also shows that perceived quality becomes full and partial mediators for both variables. The fit model for all variables is shown with samples taken nationwide. The data used 1,852 university students from Malaysian universities including 114 international students from four zones of Peninsular Malaysia, namely the northern region covering Perlis, Kedah, Penang and Perak, the Klang Valley region, the eastern region covering Pahang, Terengganu and Kelantan and the southern region covering Negeri Sembilan, Malacca, and Johore. Through questionnaires all 155 items have been created and selected. The evidence is also further supported by four group interviews.

The analysis was conducted using structural equation modeling (SEM) and focus group interviews. In the qualitative part of the questionnaire, in terms of majority, the effect of country image outperforms the effect of university reputation in the decision-making by students of various Malaysian universities in their selection of which destination they want to go to. In addition, what is more interesting, when comparisons were made between country, education system, university reputation and personal reason as to which factor influenced them to pursue their study in that particular country, country image often outperforms university reputation as the first ranked influence. Ultimately, the findings indicate that both country image and university reputation are important. The study concludes that a country which has advantages in both variables becomes more successful in terms of becoming favored study destinations.

The prepared model shows that for service industries, such as a university environment, the reputation of the university is very important. The study confirms that for

the country that has a poor image, only the reputation of its universities can attract students. On the other hand, for the country that has a good image, its universities also have an advantage in attracting students.

Keywords: Country Image, University Reputation, Perceived Quality, Ease of Practicing Religion

ABSTRAK

Kajian ini menunjukkan di dalam negara kita, imej negara dan reputasi universiti adalah faktor kritikal yang mempengaruhi pemilihan pelajar kemana mereka ingin melanjutkan pelajaran. Untuk pelajar muslim, pembolehkan sub-dimensi kemudahan mengamalkan agama adalah faktor yang penting. Dapatan kajian menunjukkan persepsi tentang kualiti menjadi pengantara penuh dan pengantara separa untuk kedua-dua pembolehkan. Model yang lengkap dan sempurna untuk semua pembolehkan dapat disediakan dengan mengambil sampel dari seluruh negara. Data ini menggunakan 1852 pelajar universiti di seluruh Malaysia termasuklah 114 pelajar asing. Pecahan pungutan data di seluruh negara merangkumi zon utara iaitu Perlis, Kedah, Pulau Pinang dan Perak. Zon tengah pula ialah Lembah Klang, zon pantai timur meliputi Pahang, Terengganu dan Kelantan, manakala zon selatan meliputi Negeri Sembilan, Melaka dan Johor. Negeri Sabah dan Sarawak tidak termasuk dalam kajian ini kerana pelajar-pelajar mereka telah menetap dan bermastautin di semenanjung. Terdapat 155 soalan dalam kajian ini dan disokong oleh empat kumpulan temuduga dan dua temuduga perseorangan.

Analisa ini menggunakan teknik “Structural Equation Modeling (SEM)” dan temuduga fokus berkumpulan. Dalam bahagian kualitatif soalselidik tersebut, majoriti responden memberi maklumbalas kesan reputasi universiti mengatasi kesan imej negara apabila mereka membuat keputusan kemana mereka ingin melanjutkan pelajaran. Apa yang lebih menarik, apabila perbandingan dibuat antara negara, sistem pendidikan, reputasi universiti dan sebab peribadi yang mana faktor paling mempengaruhi mereka untuk melanjutkan pelajaran di sesebuah negara, imej negara selalunya mengatasi reputasi universiti sebagai pilihan dan kedudukan yang tertinggi. Sesungguhnya dapatan menunjukkan kedua-dua pembolehkan iaitu imej negara dan reputasi universiti adalah

amat penting. Sebagai kesimpulan mana-mana negara yang mempunyai kelebihan di dalam dua-dua pembolehubah menjadi lebih berjaya dalam menarik pelajar ke tempat mereka.

Model yang dihasilkan menunjukkan di dalam industri perkhidmatan, seperti persekitaran universiti reputasi univesiti adalah sangat penting. Kajian ini mengesahkan bahawa bagi negara yang mempunyai imej yang lemah, hanya reputasi universiti yang boleh menarik pelajar. Selain daripada itu, bagi negara yang mempunyai imej yang baik, universiti di sana mempunyai kelebihan untuk menarik pelajar.

Kata Kunci: Imej Negara, Reputasi Univesiti, Persepsi Tentang Kualiti, Kemudahan Mengamalkan Agama.

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LIST OF SYMBOLS AND ABBREVIATIONS

	Albukhary International University
ABE	Attitudes Behavior Experience
AeU	Asia e University
AGFI	Adjusted Goodness of Fit Index
AIMST	Asian Institute of Medicine, Science and Technology
AM	Ambience
AMOS	Analysis of Moment Structure
AVE	Average
AVE	Average Variance Extract
BS	Brand Services
CA	Cronbach's Alpha
CFA	Confirmatory Factor Analysis
CFI	Comparative Fit Index
CI	Country Image
CMIN/df	Normed Chi-square
COA	Country of Assembly
COI or CoI	Country of Origin Image
COD	Country of Design
COM	Country of Manufacturing/Manufacture
COO	Country of Origin

LIST OF ABBREVIATION (CONTINUED)

COP	Country of Parts
CR	Composite Reliability
C.R.	Critical Ratio
df	Degree of Freedom
E	Environment
EC	Economic Conditions
EE	Emotional Engagement
EFA	Exploratory Factor Analysis
EPR	Ease of Practising Religion
EST	Experience Social Tangibles
EV	Eigen Value
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GFI	Goodness of Fit Index
GNP	Gross National Product
GT/GTO	Going To
IFI	Incremental Fit Index
IIUM	International Islamic University Malaysia
IMU	International Medical University
INCEIF	International Centre for Education in Islamic Finance
ITS	Intention to Study
KMO	Keiser-Meyer-Olkin Index

LIST OF ABBREVIATION (CONTINUED)

LUCT	Lim Kok Wing University
MEDIU	Al-Madinah International University
MI	Modification Index
MLE	Maximum Likelihood Estimation
MMU	Multimedia University
MSU	Management and Science University
MUST	Malaysian University of Science and Technology
NFI	Normed Fit Index
NNFI	Non-Normed Fit Index
OUM	Open University Malaysia
PCA	Principal Component Analysis
PCFI	Parsimony Adjustment to the CFI
PCI	Product Country Image
PFA	Principal Factor Analysis
PGFI	Parsimony Goodness of Fit Index
PNFI	Parsimony Normed Fit Index
PO	Politic Order
PQ	Perceived Quality/Perceived Service Quality
QAP	Quality of Academic Performance
QEP	Quality of External Performance
RFI	Relative Fit Index
RMSEA	Root Mean Square of Approximation

LIST OF ABBREVIATION (CONTINUED)

RMR	Root Mean Square Residual
RNI	Relative Non-centrality Index
RR	Reputed Recognition
SE	Standard Error
SEM	Structural Equation Modeling
SMC	Squared Multiple Correlation or Reliability
SRC	Standardised Residual Covariances
SRW	Standardised Regression Weights
SPSS	Statistical package for the Social Sciences
SQ	Service Quality
T	Technology
TLI	Tucker Lewis Index
TOT	Total
UIA	Universiti Islam Antarabangsa
UiTM	Universiti Teknologi Mara
UKM	Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia
UDM	Universiti Darul Iman Malaysia
UM	Universiti Malaya
UMK	Universiti Malaysia Kelantan
UMP	Universiti Malaysia Pahang
UMS	Universiti Malaysia Sabah
UMT	Universiti Malaysia Terengganu
UniKL	Universiti Kuala Lumpur

LIST OF ABBREVIATION (CONTINUED)

UniMAP	Universiti Malaysia Perlis
UNIMAS	Universiti Malaysia Sarawak
UNISEL	Universiti Industri Selangor
UNITAR	Universiti Tun Abdul Razak
UNITEN	Universiti Tenaga Nasional
UPM	Universiti Putra Malaysia
UPNM	Universiti Pertahanan Nasional Malaysia
UPSI	Universiti Pendidikan Sultan Idris
UR	University Reputation
USIM	Universiti Sains Islam Malaysia
USM	Universiti Sains Malaysia
UTAR	Universiti Tunku Abdul Rahman
UTeM	Universiti Teknikal Malaysia Melaka
UTHM	Universiti Tun Hussein Onn Malaysia
UTM	Universiti Teknologi Malaysia
UTP	Universiti Teknologi Petronas
UUM	Universiti Utara Malaysia
VE	Total Variance Extracted
VIF	Variance Inflating Factor
V	Values
WCP	Work Culture People
WOU	Wawasan Open University
(χ^2) or (df,p)	Chi-Square
$(\chi^2) /df$ or (MIN/df)	Normed Chi-Square