

## **Factors Affecting Recommendation for Higher Education Destination: The Case of Malaysia**

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### **Abstract**

The ability of a host country to attract international students depends on many factors, and recommendations or reviews by friends or families who are currently study or had experience studied in a particular host country found to be an effective marketing tool. Based on the data of 753 international students, gathered from a sample of few universities in Malaysia, this study employs a Logit Model in an attempt to identify the factors that affect the decision of the currently enrolled international students to recommend Malaysia to their friends and families as a study abroad destination. The result shows that the university environment, university service, academic quality and social factor affect the decision of the international students to recommend Malaysia. Interestingly, while education cost significantly affects the decision to recommend, it however shows the positive relationship which may suggests that higher cost reflects quality.

### **Keywords:**

International students; marketing tool; Malaysia; study abroad destination; recommendation.

## INTRODUCTION

The National Higher Education Strategic Plan (NHESP) which was launched in 2007 had stressed the importance of transforming Malaysia into a global higher education hub (Ministry of Education, 2007). The Malaysian government aims to achieve its target to attract around 250,000 international students to study in Malaysia by year 2025 (Ministry of Education Malaysia, 2015). This is the extension of the major aspiration for the Malaysian government to position itself amongst the top six destinations that attract international students globally. In 2015, there were around 115,987 international students studying in all higher education institutions in Malaysia. Out of this total number of international students, 25% were studying in public higher education institutions while the remaining 75% studying in private institutions. By and large, the education sector continues to be a vibrant sector in which it is expected that around RM 33.6 billion will be contributed through this sector by year 2020 with the opportunity of creating 3.3 million jobs (Performance Management and Delivery Unit (PEMANDU), 2013).

Following the NHESP, the Malaysia Education Blueprint (Higher Education), (MEB) (HE) for 2015-2025 was launched in April 2015. The Blueprint further emphasized the importance of positioning Malaysia as a global prominence in the service of higher education. Considering the significance of developing a student hub and ensuring the competitiveness of the Malaysian higher education sector, the need for providing quality education is further reiterated in the MEB (HE);

*'Increasing competition from other education hubs will, however, require the strengthening of Malaysia's higher education value proposition, capacity, and capabilities, in order to enhance the appeal and competitiveness in the region and beyond. Malaysia needs to raise the nation's higher education brand even further, from an attractive destination known for good value for money and quality of life, to one that is also recognized, referred to, and respected internationally for its academic and research expertise'.*

In the quest to position itself as the strategic destination for study abroad, Malaysia has embarked on various initiatives including the setting up of the Education Malaysia Global Services (EMGS) as the one stop centre focusing on managing and processing the application of international students, catering for their welfare and promoting Malaysia as an international

hub, globally. Facing with other competitive players in the global higher education sector, no doubt, Malaysia needs to strategize itself and equip with a comprehensive and well planned approach to further attract and retain the best brains to study in the country. As far as the choice of study destination abroad is concerned, one of the important factors that are found to significantly influence individual choice of higher education destination and host institution is the recommendation and opinion from family and friends (Bourke, 2000). Based on this fact, it is therefore vital for Malaysia to take the opportunity to benefit from the currently enrolled international students through their positive recommendations and feedback regarding the country's higher education.

The influence of family and friends reflects the importance of word-of mouth communication which is seen as objective, reliable and not commercially oriented. Buttle (1998) in his study explained that the willingness of a consumer to recommend the product or service used to other consumer is largely influenced by whether or not the consumers' experience met the expectation. This is agreed by Yang et al., (2012) who stated that consumer experience from consuming a product or service tend to increase their tendency to recommend the product or service to other consumers. In the context of higher education, the recommendation is believed to have an impact towards the future prospective international students who might potentially choose certain countries as their higher education destination (Wu, 2014; Yasvari, Ghassemi, & Rahrovy, 2012). Considering the possible high impact of recommendation of the currently enrolled international students towards their peers or families in determining the choice of higher education destination, this paper attempts to analyse the factors that affect the choice of the currently enrolled international students to recommend Malaysia as the higher education destination to their friends and families. It is hope that by identifying the right factors, appropriate policy adjustment and initiative could be undertaken to encourage the international students to promote Malaysia to the world in anticipation that more students will come and study in the country.

### **‘WORD OF MOUTH’ AS A MARKETING TOOL**

The recommendation (word of mouth) refers to the opinion and advice given by the consumers who experienced the product or service to the potential consumers (Gray, Fam, Che, & Singh, 2015). Arndt (1967) was one of the pioneers who investigated the importance of recommendation (word of mouth) in influencing the consumer demand behavior. In his study, he stated that consumers tend to demand more of a product when a positive recommendation

is provided and vice versa. Word of mouth is a greater marketing tool that able to create awareness to consumers to try a product than other form of advertisement (Sheth, 1971). Day (1971) stated that the effectiveness of word of mouth is great in turning the neutral or unfavourable susceptibility into positive attitudes that enable to influence the purchasing behaviour. Indeed, word of mouth performs better in influencing the purchasing behaviour than other form of advertisement (Mangold, 1988). Herr, Kardes, and Kim (1991) further stated that word of mouth communication between individuals effectively influences the demand decision making of consumers as compared to printed format advertisement. Indeed, compared to other forms of advertisement, word of mouth is more influential towards the demand behavior (Buttle, 1998). Furthermore, Buttle (1998) also stated that the impact of recommendation is higher on service as opposed to product offer.

Recent research further justified that recommendation is always recognized as an important prospect in influencing the consumer demand behavior towards a product or service (Yang, Hu, Winer, Assael, & Chen, 2012; Podnar & Javernik, 2012). As for the higher education industry, recommendation from friends or family members is always one of the important components under the marketing strategy in promoting the higher education destination by the host nations to attract international students (Wu, 2014; Nachatar Singh et al., 2014; Binsardi & Ekwulugo, 2003; Pimpa, 2003; Mazzarol & Soutar, 2002). Buttle (1998) in his study explained that the willingness of a consumer to recommend the product or service used to other consumers is largely influenced by whether or not the consumers' experiences meet the expectation.

Following the line of argument that the willingness of a consumer to recommend a product or services is largely depending on his or her own experience, the approach of this paper is to derive the possible factors that will affect the satisfaction of the currently enrolled international students towards higher education in Malaysia and use these factors to determine their willingness to recommend. The previous empirical study showed that university environment, university service, academic quality, information guidance, social factor and regulation carried out by the host nation are capable of enhancing the international students' utility (He & Banham 2011; Van Bouwel & Veugelers 2009; Li & Bray 2007; Mpinganjira & Rugimbana 2009; Perkins & Neumayer 2011a; Perkins & Neumayer 2011b; Pereda et al. 2007; Bodycott 2009). In addition, the cost factor which includes tuition fees and cost of living is always being the major concern of the international students for their choice of higher education destination

(Mpinganjira 2011; Lim et al. 2011; Rohaizat et al. 2011). Based on literatures, these factors are classified into two different motives which are investment motive and the consumption motive. There are six factors altogether which includes university environment, university service, academic quality, information guidance, social factor and regulation fall under the consumption motive whereas the education cost fall under the investment motive.

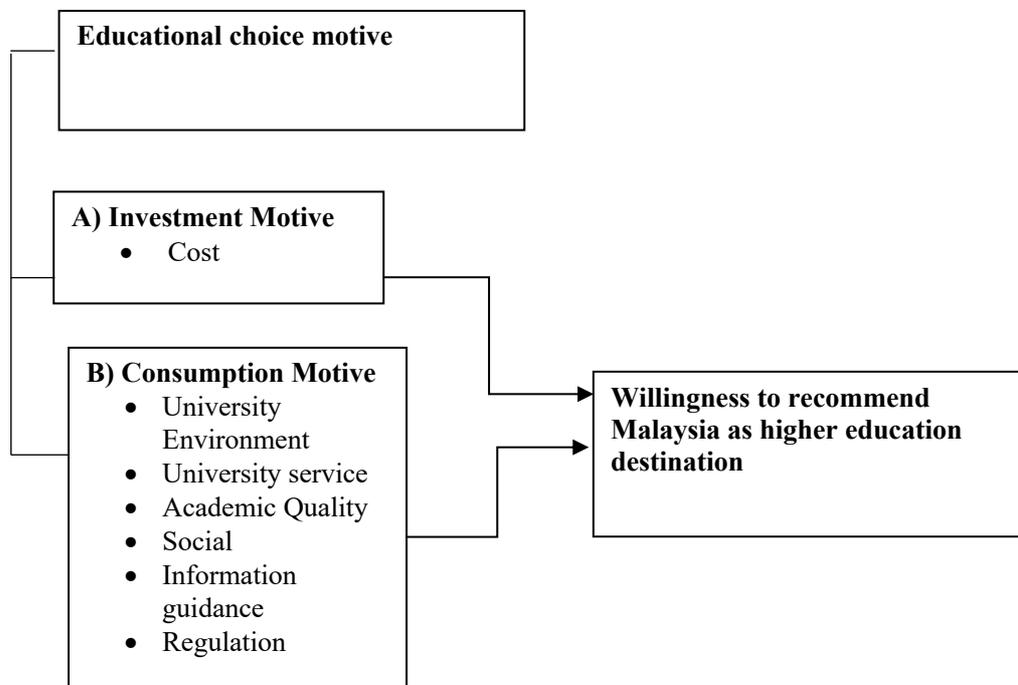
Similar to other investment, higher education entails cost and provides stream of benefits. The cost-benefit analysis which is normally being applied for measuring net return on investment, allows the comparison to be made between the amount of money we spent and receive in different time frames. Investment motive is therefore made on the basis of net return where financial gains are measured against the higher education costs (Borjas, 2009). The benefit may be higher job opportunities, higher chances of gaining a higher position that translated into a better salary (Salas-Velasco, 2006). Therefore, the lower the cost for a given monetary benefit, the higher the demand for higher education (Campbell & Siegel, 1967; Hight, 1975; and Ching & Hui, 1996) or vice versa, the higher the expected returns of lifetime earnings, the higher will be the possibility for individuals to invest in education.

Under consumption motive, individuals may also make educational decisions based on non-specific returns received during or after higher education. In other words, individuals may choose to invest in education even if they do not generate higher monetary returns or relatively high employment probabilities (Oreopoulos & Salvanes 2014; Alstadsæter et al. 2008). In short, the happiness obtained by a person during and after investment in education is the key factor that can also affect the decision of the student to invest in education, such as the joy of learning or the feeling of having the opportunity to participate in various activities on campus and the study environment, or even the ability to elevate the social status, the chances of a better and healthier life (Oreopoulos & Salvanes, 2014; Alstadsæter & Sievertsen, 2009; Frey & Stutzer, 2000 & 2002). Therefore, if the benefits received (in this case the income gains apply to non-pecuniary return) are more than the additional costs, they will continue to make additional investment in education (Ehrenberg & Smith, 2000).

The above reasons formed the theoretical basis of the model of educational choice and the present study attempts to apply the model in the context of analysing the willingness of the current international students to suggest Malaysia as a destination for higher education to their family and peers. Essentially, the preference of currently enrolled international students

to suggest Malaysia as a destination for higher education should be based on two motives, i.e. investment and consumption motives as presented in figure 1:-

**Figure 1:** A modified theoretical framework of willingness to recommend Malaysia as higher education destination



## DATA AND METHOD

This study uses primary data obtained through structured questionnaires. The data were collected during May 2013 to November 2013. The questionnaire is divided into four sections. Section A is designed with the purpose of obtaining the information related to respondents' demographic and education background, Section B solicits information on the respondents' choice to further their higher level of studies and destinations. Section C focuses on respondents' self-perception related to the improvement of their soft skills after going through their education experience in Malaysia and finally Section D probes on the factors influencing respondents' choice of higher education destination; students' satisfaction towards various factors identified and also their willingness to recommend Malaysia to their family and friends. Most of the instruments used in this study were modified according to the previous studies such as Baharun et al. (2011); Lim et al. (2011); Mpinganjira (2011); Pereda et al. (2007) and Mazzarol & Soutar (2002). Using a 7 points likert scale, students were asked to choose suitable answers from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree) based on their perception for all the

factors which include university environment, university service, academic quality, information guidance, social factor, regulation and education cost.

The targeted population for this study is the international students who were studying in Malaysian universities during the time of the survey. In order to incorporate randomness (also the representativeness and generalizability) into the sampling design, a combination of different sampling methods is used. First, the stratified random sampling is applied in which the targeted populations are divided into five strata *i.e.* public universities that are classified as Research Universities, Comprehensive Universities and Focus Universities, and the private universities which are classified into private universities/university colleges and foreign universities branch (Ministry of Education , 2011). These five strata fulfill the characteristic of homogeneous within stratum and heterogeneous across stratum and thus one university is selected randomly from each stratum. Secondly, a quota sampling is applied where students are grouped by level of studies *i.e.* Master degree, Bachelor degree and Diploma.

A pre-determined number of international students (quota) are then selected from each stratum. The targeted sample size of each group are determined based on the size of the group, using the table of sample size determination for a given population size from Sekaran & Bougie (2010). Out of the 1000 targeted samples, only 753 returned questionnaires were useable to be analyzed. Table 1 shows the sampling design which includes the strata sampling and the quota sampling.

Table 1: Sampling design (combined methods)

A. First stage - strata sampling				
Public			Private	
Research university	Comprehensive university	Focus university	Private university	Foreign branch

List of universities

UM	UiTM	UUM	HELP	MUSM
USM	UIAM	UPSI	University	Swinburne
UKM	UMS	UTHM	INTI	UNIM
UPM	UNIMAS	UTeM	International	NUMed
UTM		UniMAP	University	
		UMT	MSU	
		UMP	MMU	
		USIM	QIUP	
		UniSZA	Sunway	
		UMK	University	
		UPNM	Taylor's	
			University	
			IMU	
			LUCT	
			UTP	
			UNITEN	
			UCSI U	
			AUCMS	
			AP-UCTI	
			IUCN	
			KDU UC	
			Berjaya UC	
			Nilai UC	
			Segi UC	
			Linton UC	
			UCSA	
			MEDIU	
			UniKL	
			INCEIF	
			MUST	
			AIU	
			UNISEL	
			WOU	
			UTAR	
			UNITAR	
			KUIS	
			KIUN	

Selected university	UM	UIAM	UUM	MMU*	UNIM	
<b>B. Second stage - quota sampling</b>						
		UM	UIAM	UUM	MMU	UNIM
Master	N	1,473	1,168	618	885	283
	%	66.5	38.0	27.0	24.3	23.5
Bachelor	N	743	1,907	1,673	2663	919
	%	33.5	62.0	73.0	73.2	76.5
Diploma	N	0	1	0	92	0
	%	0	0	0	2.5	0
Total	N	<b>2,216</b>	<b>3,076</b>	<b>2,291</b>	<b>3,640</b>	<b>1,202</b>
	%	17.8	24.8	18.4	29.3	9.7
Targeted	Total	178	248	184	293	97
						1,000

Sample						
Master	118	94	50	71	23	356
Bachelor	60	154	134	214	74	636
Diploma	0	0	0	8	0	8

Note: 1.\*MMU is chosen due to a larger number of Master, Bachelor and Diploma students as compared to Asia Pacific-UCTI

2. The data are based on the year 2010 statistics. The statistical data from the Ministry of Education, Department of Higher Education for 2011, 2012 and 2013 are incomplete. Please refer to Appendix 1 for the full name of the institutions.

Source: Ministry of Education (2011b)

Table 2 and Table 3 highlights a brief descriptive statistic related to gender, age, country of origin, education level, previous higher learning institution attended, time spent studying in Malaysia, field of study, cumulative grade points average (CGPA) and English language proficiency for the 753 respondents. In addition, Table 4 provides some background information related to their financial matters.

Table 2: Individual Background

	Frequency	%
<b>Gender:</b>		
Male	494	65.6
Female	259	34.4
<b>Age:</b>		
21 years old or younger	71	9.4
21 – 25years old	400	53.1
26 – 29 years old	197	26.2
30 years old and older	85	11.3
<b>Home Country:</b>		
East Asia	77	10.2
South East Asia	179	23.8
African Nation	180	23.9
Middle East	231	30.7
India Subcontinent	86	11.4

Note: n = 753

Table 3: Education background

	Frequency	%
<b>Education level:</b>		
Bachelor	434	57.6
Master	319	42.4

<b>Previous university from which bachelor degree was obtained:</b>		
Malaysian University	102	32.0
Non-Malaysian University	217	68.0
<b>Length of time spent in Malaysia:</b>		
12 months and below	34	4.5
13 – 36 months	264	35.1
37 – 60 months	331	43.9
61 months and above	124	16.5
<b>Current field of study:</b>		
Education, Religion, Art & Philosophy	64	8.5
Social Sciences, Business & Law	418	55.5
Information Technology & Communication	121	16.1
Engineering, Manufacturing, Architecture & Construction	134	17.8
Health sciences & Medicine	16	2.1
<b>Current CGPA:</b>		
2.00 – 2.99	228	30.3
3.00 – 3.50	318	42.2
3.51 – 4.00	155	20.6
Research Based	52	6.9
<b>English test:</b>		
Yes	547	72.6
No	206	27.4

Note: n = 753

Table 4: Financial Background

	Frequency	%
<b>Financing education:</b>		
Self/Parent supported	600	79.7
Scholarship (from Malaysia)	28	3.7
Scholarship (other than Malaysia)	106	14.1
Loan	19	2.5
<b>Work part-time:</b>		
Yes	117	15.5
No	636	84.5
<b>Expenditure in Malaysia (Yearly) :</b>		
Below USD 5,000	146	19.4
USD 5,001 – USD 10,000	181	24.0
USD 10,001 – USD 15,000	180	23.9
Above USD15,000	246	32.7

Note: n = 753

USD = RM 4.1345 as on 1<sup>st</sup> June 2016 (Bank Negara Malaysia, 2016)

A logit model was employed to estimate the choice of the currently enrolled international students in recommending Malaysia to their friends, thus involves a binary categorical dependent variable of ‘Yes’ and ‘No’. A logit model is suitable to use to model a binary categorical dependent variable which enables the use of the estimated regression models to predict the probability of a particular categorical response for a given set of explanatory variables (Gujarati & Porter, 2009). The influence of the independent variables to the dependent variable is shown by the coefficients ( $\beta$ s). The marginal effect of the independent variables is calculated holding the other independent variables at their mean values respectively.

Assuming that there is a latent variable which represents an international student’s underlying tendency to recommend Malaysia as the higher education destination. This latent variable is associated with individual characteristics ( $X$ ). Let  $Y^*$  represent this latent variable and assume that  $Y^*$  is a linear function of  $X_i$ , then,

$$Y_i^* = \beta X_i + \varepsilon_i \quad (1)$$

where,

$Y_i^*$  = the underlying choice to recommend Malaysia as higher education destination

$X_i$  = the independent variables (the explanatory and control variables)

$\varepsilon_i$  = the error term

The model assumes that the observed international student’s choice to recommend ( $Y$ ) is related to the  $Y^*$  (which is unobservable). The observed currently enrolled international students’ choice to recommend ( $Y$ ) take the nominal category of 0 (not recommend) and 1 (recommend). Therefore, the value of  $Y$  is observed as:

$$Y_i = \begin{cases} 1 & \text{if } Y_i^* > 0 \\ 0 & \text{if } Y_i^* \leq 0 \end{cases} \quad (2)$$

Assuming that the error term in the latent equation (1) is logistically distributed, the probability that the international students will recommend Malaysia as higher education destination is given as:

$$\begin{aligned}
\Pr(Y=1 \mid X) &= \Pr(Y^* > 0 \mid X) \\
&= \Pr(X'\beta + \varepsilon > 0 \mid X) \\
&= \Pr(\varepsilon > -X'\beta \mid X) \\
&= \Pr(\varepsilon < X'\beta \mid X) \\
&= F(X\beta)
\end{aligned}$$

The  $F(\cdot)$  is the logistic cumulative density function (cdf) for the logit model. The maximum likelihood estimation is used to obtain the probability, thus the value of  $X_i$  and  $\beta$  need to be identified. The probability of observing the value of  $Y$  is specified as follow:

$$P_i = \begin{cases} \Pr(Y_i = 1 \mid X_i) & \text{if } Y_i = 1 \text{ is observed} \\ 1 - \Pr(Y_i = 1 \mid X_i) & \text{if } Y_i = 0 \text{ is observed} \end{cases}$$

(3)

If the observations are independent, the Likelihood equation is shown as:

$$L(\beta \mid Y, X) = \prod_{i=1}^N P_i$$

By substituting  $P_i$  into the function of  $L(\beta \mid Y, X)$ , we obtain:

$$L(\beta \mid Y, X) = \prod_{y=1} \Pr(Y_i = 1 \mid X_i) \prod_{y=0} [1 - \Pr(Y_i = 1 \mid X_i)]$$

By replacing the probability of observing the  $Y$  in the likelihood function with cdf function the following equation is obtained:

$$L(\beta \mid Y, X) = \prod_{y=1} F(X_i\beta) \prod_{y=0} [1 - F(X_i\beta)]$$

The log is being incorporated to obtain the log likelihood equation:

$$\ln L(\beta \mid Y, X) = \sum_{y=1} \ln F(X_i\beta) + \sum_{y=0} \ln [1 - F(X_i\beta)]$$

The matrix of  $X_i$  are denoted as below:

$X_1$  = University Environment

$X_2$  = University Service

$X_3$  = Academic Quality

$X_4$  = Education Cost

$X_5$  = Information Guidance

$X_6$  = Social

$X_7$  = Regulation

The model is estimated using the robust variance estimates (Huber/White/sandwich estimator of variance).

### 3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

From Table 5, the overall fit test shows that the model is fit at 1% significant level. The Cameron and Trivedi's heteroscedasticity test shows a p-value of 0.0147 which suggests a heteroscedasticity problem. However, this problem was solved when the estimation was done using robust standard error. To detect for multicollinearity problem, the Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) was used. VIF is based on the proportion of variance that shared by one independent variable with the other independent variables in the model (O'brien, 2007). The VIF value ranging from 1.05 to 3.78, signifies that there is no multicollinearity problem in the model (based on the rule of thumb of 10<sup>1</sup>) (Gujarati, 2003).

The percentage correctly predicted (PCP) statistic is also presented. The PCP measures how well the estimated model in predicting the actual outcomes of the observations. In a binary category model, it is practical to correctly predicted at least 50% of the outcome by the model without knowledge about the independent variables (Long, 1997). The value of PCP in this

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<sup>1</sup> A value of 1 means that the predictor is not correlated with other variables. The higher the value, the greater the correlation of the variable with other variables. Values of more than 4 or 5 are sometimes regarded as being moderate to high, with values of 10 or more being regarded as very high.

research is 76%, which means that the estimated model correctly predicted 76% of the outcomes.

Table 5: Goodness of Fit Test

	Results
Prob > chi2 (Overall fit test)	0.0000
Pseudo R2	0.1515
Heteroscedasticity* (Cameron & Trivedi's test)	P-value = 0.0147
Multicollinearity	1.05 to 3.78
Percentage correctly predicted (PCP)	76.00%

Note: \* this test is performed based on a linear probability model, to serve as an indicator to potential heteroscedasticity

Table 6 shows the estimation result of the binary logit model. The education cost and university service are positively significant at 5% level whereas, university environment, academic quality and social environment are positively significant at 1%. This outcome is consistent with Lee (2010) who found that the quality of service in the campus, level of discrimination (treatment of the international students as compared to locals) and also their living cost and tuition fees have an influence on their tendency to recommend the host nation to their peers and families. This finding might be counter intuitive but nevertheless may reflect price-quality relationship.

Furthermore, in terms of social demographic, the only variable that has positive significant effect on the international student's choice to recommend Malaysia is the country of origin. It is found that students from South East Asia are positively recommending Malaysia to their friends and families which are significant at 5% level. So far Malaysia is considered as one of the top destinations for students from Indonesia.

Table 6: Results of Binary Logit: Recommendation to Study in Malaysia

	Coefficient	P-value
Education cost	0.2270	0.021**
University environment	0.4799	0.000***
University service	0.2016	0.033**
Academic quality	0.3150	0.001***

Information guidance	0.1535	0.106
Social	0.5183	0.000***
Regulation	0.1575	0.137
<b>General Background:</b>		
Male	-0.0584	0.795
Age	0.0366	0.274
East Asia	-0.3896	0.354
South East Asia	0.7721	0.023**
Middle East	-0.1827	0.500
India Subcontinent	0.1159	0.737
Years been in Malaysia	-0.0021	0.714
<b>Education Background:</b>		
Master	0.1239	0.646
Social Sciences (Social Sciences, Business & Law)	-0.0134	0.974
Information Technology & Communication	-0.3620	0.425
Engineering (Engineering, Manufacturing, Architecture & Construction)	0.0342	0.942
Health sciences & Medicine	0.7307	0.621
CGPA	-0.0929	0.733
Focus university	-0.2386	0.524
Comprehensive university	-0.0294	0.937
Private university	-0.4286	0.239
<b>Financial Background:</b>		
Part-time jobs	-0.2363	0.409
Self/Parent support	-0.2070	0.524
Scholarship (from Malaysia)	-0.2489	0.683
Loan	-0.3701	0.587
Spend below USD5,000	-0.3693	0.169
Spend between USD 5,001 –10,000	0.0459	0.870
Spend between USD10,001 –15,000	0.1233	0.636

Note: \*\*\* = significant at 1%, \*\* = significant at 5% & \* = significant at 10%.

In order to provide a much better understanding, the marginal effect analysis is carried out. The marginal effect which measures the discrete change in probabilities is an effective method to interpret the continuous and dummy variables (Long, 1997). The result is presented in Table 7. The result shows that when the education cost increases by one unit the probability that the currently enrolled international students will recommend Malaysia as a study abroad destination increases by 4.15%. As explained earlier, this result might be counter-intuitive as it contradicts the cost-benefit theory but it may reflect price-quality relationship in which price signals quality as cited by Bouwel & Veugelers (2009). This shows that the currently enrolled international students willing to recommend Malaysia even if the price of education is expensive but the quality of education provided is worth the value.

Furthermore, as the quality of university environment increases by one unit, the probability that the currently enrolled international students will choose to recommend Malaysia as the

higher education destination increases by 8.97%. Similarly, when the services provided by the university increases by one unit, the probability that they will choose to recommend Malaysia increased by 3.69%. In terms of academic quality, the probability will increase by 5.77% and social factors by 9.4%. Lastly, international students from South East Asia have 12.72% higher probability as compared to students from African Nation to recommend Malaysia to their friends and families.

Table 7: Marginal Effect

	$dy/dx$
Education cost	0.0415
University environment	0.0879
University service	0.0369
Academic quality	0.0577
Social	0.0940
<b>General Background:</b>	
South East Asia	0.1272

## CONCLUSIONS

As Malaysia is positioning herself to become a global prominence in higher education services, the ability to attract the best brain into the country is critical. The experience of other countries has shown that the word-of-mouth or family and friends recommendation is an influential marketing tool. In this regards, the currently enrolled international students would be the right ambassadors to promote and persuade the future potential students to come and pursue their education in Malaysia. Following this, it is therefore important for the country to correctly identify the factors that influence the tendency of the currently enrolled international students to recommend Malaysia to their friends and families. The result indicates that university's environment and services, academic quality and social environment in Malaysia do matters in ensuring the willingness of the international students to recommended Malaysia. Cost, even it has an effect on the choice to recommend, the effect is however positive. This counter-intuitive outcome somehow reflects the role of price as a signal in which high cost is associated with

quality. Some of the policy implications from these findings are i) universities or the higher education institutions in Malaysia should invest more in infrastructure and services which includes teaching and learning facilities, and other facilities such as comfortable hostels, library and sports facilities, ii) enhancing academic quality through high-quality course offerings and teaching excellence and enhancing the visibility and profile of the university through teaching, research, publications and extra-curricular activities iii) price-setting that reflects quality as international students are searching for education that have value for money.

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## Appendix 1: List of Universities

### Public Universities

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1. UM	Universiti Malaya
2. USM	Universiti Sains Malaysia
3. UKM	Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia
4. UPM	Universiti Putra Malaysia
5. UTM	Universiti Teknologi Malaysia
6. UIAM	Universiti Islam Antarabangsa Malaysia
7. UUM	Universiti Utara Malaysia
8. UNIMAS	Universiti Malaysia Sarawak
9. UMS	Universiti Malaysia Sabah
10. UPSI	Universiti Pendidikan Sultan Idris
11. UiTM	Universiti Teknologi MARA
12. UDM	Universiti Darul Iman Malaysia
13. USIM	Universiti Sains Islam Malaysia
14. UMT	Universiti Malaysia Terengganu
15. UTHM	Universiti Teknologi Tun Hussein Onn Malaysia
16. UTeM	Universiti Teknikal Malaysia Melaka
17. UMP	Universiti Malaysia Pahang
18. UniMAP	Universiti Malaysia Perlis
19. UMK	Universiti Malaysia Kelantan
20. UPM	Universiti Pertahanan Nasional Malaysia

### Private University:

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1. HELP	HELP University
2. MEDIU	Al-Madinah International University
3. UniKL	Kuala Lumpur University
4. INCEIF	International Centre for Education in Islamic Finance
5. INTI	INTI International University
6. MUST	Malaysia University of Science and Technology
7. MSU	Management and Science University
8. MMU	Multimedia University
9. QUIP	Premier International University Perak
10. Sunway (SYUC)	Sunway University
11. Taylor	Taylor's University
12. AIU	Al Bukhary International University
13. UNISEL	Selangor Industrial University

14. IMU	International Medical University
15. LUCT	Limkokwing University of Creative Technology
16. UTP	PETRONAS University of Technology
17. UNITEN	University Tenaga Nasional
18. OUM	Open University Malaysia
19. WOU	Wawasan Open University
20. UNITAR	University Tun Abdul Razak
21. UTAR	University Tunku Abdul Rahman
22. UCSI	UCSI University

#### **Private University College:**

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1. AUCMS	Allianze University College of Medical Sciences
2. AP-UCTI	Asia Pacific University College of Technology and Innovation
3. IUCN	International University College of Nursing
4. KDU UC	KDU University College
5. CUCMS	Cyberjaya University College of Medical Science
6. Berjaya	Berjaya University College of Hospitality
7. KUIS	Selangor International Islamic University College
8. Linton	Linton University College
9. Nilai	Nilai University College
10. SEGI	SEGI University College
11. UCSA	Shahputra University College
12. IUCTT	International University College of Technology Twintech
13. KLMUC	Kuala Lumpur Metropolitan University College
14. KUIN	INSAHNIAH University College

#### **Branch Campus of Foreign University:**

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1. MUSM	Monash University Malaysia
2. NUMed	Newcastle University Medicine Malaysia
3. Swinburne	Swinburne University of Technology (Sarawak Campus)
4. UNIM	University of Nottingham in Malaysia

Source: Ministry of Education (2011)