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**INFLUENCING FACTORS AND POST-PURCHASE EVALUATION OF
INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS' DECISION TO STUDY AT PRIVATE
HIGHER EDUCATIONS IN MALAYSIA**

By

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In Partial Fulfilment of the Requirement for the Doctor of Business Administration**

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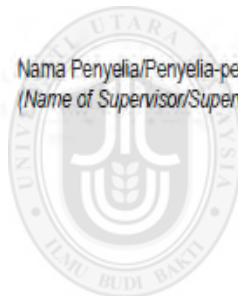
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ABSTRACT

Higher education institutions in Malaysia need to become more efficient to survive in this highly competitive global industry. They are competing not only with local universities but also with those around the world. Malaysia's blueprint for the year 2025 must be implemented to this end. The factors influencing international students' decision to study abroad, and their post-purchase evaluation have become a top priority. However, many higher education institutions continue to disregard this issue. This study investigates the influencing factors and post-purchase evaluation of international student's decision to study at private higher education in Malaysia. The relationship between study abroad decisions and post-purchase evaluation was also examined. A quantitative method was employed in this study. An online questionnaire was distributed to 241 international students at private universities in Malaysia using cluster random sampling. The data were analyzed using partial least squares structural equation modeling via SmartPLS 23.0 to confirm the relationships between the constructs. The results reveal that home country, host country, cost, internal information sources, and academic factors significantly influence student's decision to study abroad. Besides, decisions to study abroad had a significant impact on post-purchase (university facility evaluations). Additionally, study abroad decisions mediate the relationship between host country factors and internal information sources towards post-purchase evaluation. These findings are crucial to add to existing knowledge as they are consistent with the proposed research framework, which applies the push and pull theory and the decision-making model as underlying theories. Accordingly, the results could serve as a reference point for the government to develop a strategic plan for higher education. Policymakers in higher education institutions could use the empirical findings to formulate marketing strategies to increase the enrollment and satisfaction of international students.

Keywords: Influencing Factors, Study Abroad Decision, Post-Purchase Evaluation, International Student, Private Higher Education.

ABSTRAK

Institusi-institusi pengajian tinggi di Malaysia perlu meningkatkan kecekapan sekiranya ingin kekal dalam industri global yang amat kompetitif ini. Mereka bukan sahaja bersaing dengan universiti-universiti tempatan, malah turut bersaing dengan universiti-universiti lain di seluruh dunia. Pelan tindakan Malaysia untuk tahun 2025 perlu direalisasi faktor-faktor yang mempengaruhi pembuatan keputusan pelajar antarabangsa untuk melanjutkan pengajian di luar negara serta penilaian pasca-pembelian mereka kini menjadi pertimbangan utama. Bagaimanapun, kebanyakan institusi pengajian tinggi terus memandang remeh isu ini. Kajian ini menyiasat faktor-faktor yang mempengaruhi dan penilaian pasca pembelian terhadap keputusan pelajar antarabangsa untuk belajar di pengajian tinggi swasta di Malaysia. Hubungan di antara keputusan belajar di luar negara dan penilaian pasca-pembelian turut dikaji. Kaedah kuantitatif telah digunakan dalam kajian ini. Soal selidik dalam talian telah diedarkan kepada 241 pelajar antarabangsa di universiti swasta di Malaysia menggunakan pensampelan rawak berkelompok. Data dianalisis menggunakan pemodelan persamaan struktur kuasa dua terkecil separa melalui SmartPLS 23.0 untuk mengesahkan hubungan antara konstruk. Hasil kajian mendedahkan bahawa negara asal, negara tuan rumah, kos, sumber maklumat dalaman, dan faktor akademik secara signifikan mempengaruhi keputusan pelajar untuk belajar di luar negara. Selain itu, keputusan untuk belajar di luar negara mempunyai kesan yang signifikan terhadap pasca pembelian (penilaian kemudahan universiti). Tambahan pula, keputusan belajar di luar negara mengantara hubungan antara faktor negara tuan rumah dan sumber maklumat dalaman terhadap penilaian selepas pembelian. Penemuan-penemuan ini penting untuk menambah pengetahuan sedia ada kerana konsisten dengan rangka kerja penyelidikan yang dicadangkan, yang menggunakan teori tolak dan tarik serta model membuat keputusan sebagai teori asas. Sehubungan itu, dapatan kajian itu boleh menjadi titik rujukan kepada kerajaan untuk membangunkan pelan strategik pendidikan tinggi. Pembuat dasar di institusi pengajian tinggi boleh menggunakan penemuan empirikal untuk merangka strategi pemasaran untuk meningkatkan pendaftaran kemasukan dan kepuasan pelajar antarabangsa.

Kata kunci: Faktor-faktor Mempengaruhi, Keputusan Belajar di Luar Negara, Penilaian Pasca-Pembelian, Pelajar Antarabangsa, Pengajian Tinggi Swasta.

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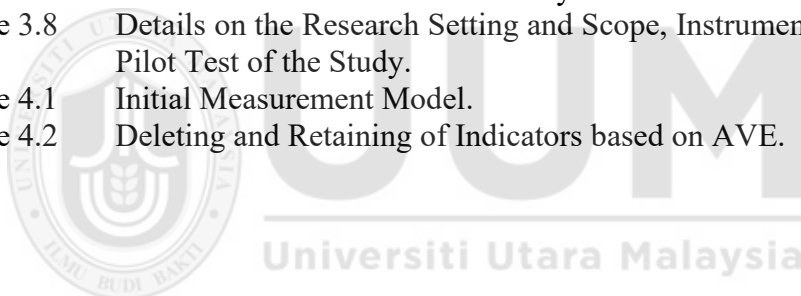
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LIST OF ABBREVIATION

AFE	University Facilities Evaluation
APM	Akademik Professor Malaysia
AR	Academic factors
AVE	Average Variance Extracted
CDM	Consumer Decision Making Model
CO	Cost
CR	Composite Reliability
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
HC	Host Country Factors
HEIs	Higher Education Institutions
HM	Home Country Factors
InS	Information Source
MAPCU	Malaysia Association of Private Colleges and Universities
MEB	Malaysia Education Blueprint
MoHE	Ministry of Higher Education
MyQUEST	Malaysian Quality Evaluation System for Private Colleges
MyRA	Malaysia Research Assessment
NHEAP	National Higher Education Action Plan
NHESP	National Higher Education Strategic Plan's
9th MP	Ninth Malaysia Plan
PF	Personal Factors
PHEIA	Private Higher Education Institutions Act
PHEIs	Public Higher Education Institutions
PLS-SEM	Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modelling
PPE	Post-purchase Evaluation
SAD	Study Abroad Decision
SDG	Sustainability Development Goal
SQE	Service Quality Evaluation
UIS	UNESCO Institute for Statistics
UK	United Kingdom
US	United States
VIF	Variance Inflator Factor

CHAPTER 1:

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

This chapter provides a brief overview of the research. Following the introduction, the next section presents the background to the research, research problem, research questions, research objectives, scope and limitation of the study, the definition of key terms, the significance of the study, the organisation of the thesis and finally the chapter summary.

1.2 Background of the Study

The Malaysian government has been giving significant attention to the higher education sector, which plays an important role in nation-building and sustainable economic growth. This is mainly due to globalisation and the development of the nation as a knowledge-based economy. In the 2021 budget, the education sector received the biggest allocation of the RM50.4 billion or 15.6% of total government budget (BH Online, November 23, 2020). This is an indication that the government recognises the importance of education in remaining competitive and staying ahead of global trends. Additionally, in the globalized world today, the higher education sector needs to be sustained as Malaysia aspires to transform its higher education institutions (HEIs) into a regional hub of education excellence.

Therefore, in 2011, the Malaysian government introduced The Internationalisation Policy for Higher Education with the aim of increasing the number of international students from 150,000 in 2015 to 200,000 by 2020 and 250,000 by 2025 (Ministry of Higher Education Malaysia, 2011). As a direct outcome of this policy, the Malaysia Blueprint 2015-2025 (Higher Education) was established. One of the aspirations of this blueprint is the goal of bringing the total number of international students studying in Malaysia up to 250,000 by 2025. This aim is aligned with one of the National Higher Education Strategic Plan's (NHESP) Beyond 2020 goals, which calls for each private HEI to enrol 10% international students (see Table 1.1). This demonstrates the significance of international students to the higher education sector as well as to the economy of Malaysia as a whole. These aims hence represent a challenge for the HEIs to realise.

Table 1.1:
Aspiration of Malaysia Higher Education

-
- The Ministry aims to expand access to and enrolment in higher education by 2025. If Malaysia is able to increase its current tertiary enrolment rate from 36% to 53% (and its higher education enrolment rate from 48% to 70%), it will be on par with the highest enrolment rates in ASEAN.
 - This growth scenario demands an additional 1.1 million places by 2025, primarily through the growth of technical and vocational education and training (TVET), private higher learning institutions (HLIs), and online education.
 - The Ministry intends to increase enrolment in higher education over the next decade. The specific nature of the cover comprises both the number of seats and the program profile.
 - This comprises international students studying in Malaysian Higher Learning Institutions (97,000 in 2012 and 250,000 in 2025).
-

To achieve the goals and aspirations of the nation for the higher education sector, the education sector has made numerous efforts to meet the government's educational expectations and goals. Each party involved also, such as the higher institutions need to develop an effective strategy. This is because the increase in international students has a positive impact on the country's economy through international student fees and living expenses, culture and tourism, and the sustainability of the institutions' image

(Hamzah, 2017). Additionally, an article by Bernama (2019) stated that if Malaysia can achieve its target of 200,000 enrolments of international students in 2020, as much as RM15.6 billion would be contributed to the national economy. This is supported by a report from UNESCO (2022) which states that international student enrolment contributed RM40 billion to the Malaysian economy from 2018 to 2020.

Although the presence of international students in the host country around the world and in Malaysia brings many advantages, the number of international students enrolled and studying in Malaysia is on the decline. For the past 10 years (2013 to 2022), Malaysia has been recording a dynamic trend in the enrolment of international students in private HEIs (see Table 1.2). In 2017, there was only a 1.09% increase in the number of enrolments of international students compared to 42% in 2014. Meanwhile, from 2018 to 2019 and from 2020 to 2021, the number of international student enrolment fell dramatically to 36.14% and 6.72%, respectively.

It is noteworthy that 2025 is only two years away and based on the number of enrolments of international students in 2022, Malaysia needs to attract more international students to achieve the aim of 250,000 international students by 2025. Much effort is needed in promoting the country, its education sector, and the HEIs. Hence, international students who have studied in this country must be evaluated. HEIs and the government can implement means of improvement by evaluating whether the students are satisfied or dissatisfied during their studies in Malaysia.

Table 1.2:

Number and Percentage of Enrolment of International Student in Private HEIs in Malaysia from 2013 to 2022

Year	Number of enrolments of international students in private HEIs in Malaysia	Percentage (%) increase/decrease
2013	52,598	
2014	74,996	42.58
2015	87,002	16.01
2016	99,679	14.57
2017	100,765	1.09
2018	92,415	(8.29)
2019	59,013	(36.14)
2020	62,249	5.48
2021	58,063	(6.72)
2022	59,906	3.17

Source: <https://www.mohe.gov.my>, 2023

Other than the declining trend in the enrolment of international students in Malaysia, the HEIs are also facing fierce competition from its counterpart such as South Korea, Taiwan and Hongkong. For example, South Korea is developing projected hub campuses which are targeted to open in 2013 in the country's effort to become an emerging higher education centre. This creates a stiff competitive environment with other Asian countries that aim to become education hubs and attract more international students. Meanwhile, Taiwan enrolled 103,658 international students in 2022 whilst China is one of the main providing countries of international students (Textor, 2023). This shows that although Taiwan is less developed compared to Malaysia, the country can attract more international students. This puts great pressure on the HEIs to compete with other countries. Each HEIs in Malaysia hence must play its role in achieving the aspirations of the country.

In addition to competition, external factors such as the occurrence of Covid-19 had changed the education scenario, i.e., from physical classes to digital ones. After two years, it may be difficult for countries including Malaysia, to attract international students because such aforementioned changes have caused a shift in student

behaviour. Hence, HEIs need to take fast action on these changes to re-attract international students to enrol and study in Malaysia.

Attracting international students is increasingly vital for HEIs worldwide, including Malaysia. With the growing number of international students studying abroad, research into how students make their decision and the factors that influence such decision has become more critical ever. Following their decision to enrol and study abroad, the students will then evaluate their decision including their satisfaction of the institution and the expectation of the students is high in terms of the benefits they will gain. It is hence necessary to examine the students' decision-making process and evaluation. Evaluating the post-decision outcomes enables HEIs to understand their customers better and, as a result, improve their customer experience. In conclusion, it is now crucial to fully understand the entire decision-making process for an international student to study abroad.

1.3 Problem Statement

Deciding to study abroad entails a complex process. It involves various stages from searching for information, making decisions and applications, and finally evaluating the decision once the student is studying in the host country. Studying abroad benefits the students' personal development, the host country's economy and image, tourism and culture, and HEIs' revenue and sustainability. Additionally, international student enrolment has a positive impact on the economy of the host country through international student fees, living expenses and other services (Abbas, et al., 2021).

Evidence from local newspapers shows that international students are a frequently highlighted topic (Rajaendram, 2023; Sharma, 2020; Stacey, 2019). Sharma (2020) reported that 20% of private HEIs in Malaysia are at risk of closure as international students stay away from enrolling and studying in the country. In addition, Malaysia's strict policies on working while studying in Malaysia may go against the country's aim of enrolling 250,000 international students by 2025 (Free Malaysia Today, 2019). Malaysia is calling for its private universities to attract international students after it became increasingly clear that the country would most likely miss its target (Stacey, 2019). Hence, based on the report, there is an indication that the current performance of the private higher education sector is only moderate and far from achieving the aim of the country, thus necessitating a study on international students' decision to study abroad.

Malaysia is lagging behind and if no action is taken, sooner or later, the nation may lose its ability to attract international students. If the scenario continues, it will have a negative impact on the country's economy and private HEIs. Private HEIs are unable to pay for their current liabilities, such as wages and bills, have lost their competitive advantage to compete, and finally, the country's aim of having 250,000 international students by 2025 cannot be realised. As such, Malaysia needs to act fast in order to compete with other Asian countries, to maintain its position as one of the preferred countries for international students and be the eventually become the hub of excellence for higher education in Southeast Asia. However, less attention has been given to decision making research especially in the services sector as stated by Stankevich (2017). As a result, it is necessary to identify the factors that influence international students from various countries and backgrounds to study in Malaysia.

Numerous studies have investigated the factors that influence international students to study abroad. Some studies had concentrated on developed countries such as Australia, United Kingdom and the United States (Hailat, et al., 2022; Abbas, et al., 2021). Despite Asia's growing demand for higher education, there is a lack of research on the factors influencing international students' decision to study in developing countries such as Malaysia. Thus, additional research attention on this subject must be given to the Asian context, particularly Malaysia. Vuong et al. (2021) suggested that future researchers investigate the factors that lead international students to study in countries other than the United States. With Asia's growing demand for HEIs, additional research in developing countries is necessary.

The decision-making process does not stop once a decision is made. It will then have to go through the evaluation stage (Sabatayeva et al., 2018). The evaluation stage cannot be ignored because it is related to the students' expectations and satisfaction. Most of the past research on international students studying abroad had been conducted independently on influencing factors, and there is still a lack of research on the entire decision-making process, i.e., from the influencing factors to decision making (mediator) and finally to post-purchase evaluation stage, i.e. satisfaction of international student on their decision. On the same note, Moogan (2018) reiterated that no research had been conducted on the entire student decision-making process. Additionally, Vidal-Ayuso et al. (2023) noted that several scholars and practitioners had overlooked the final stage of decision making, i.e., the post-purchase evaluation. This calls for a proper investigation on the matter.

Many studies on international student satisfaction have been conducted, but there has been minimal empirical research into student accommodation satisfaction among international students, notably in Malaysia (Aliu & Muhamad Ariff, 2018). In addition, existing research reported that international students' evaluation of the services in Malaysian universities is only at a moderate level (Mustaffa et al., 2019). As a result, understanding international students' evaluations on the aspects of accommodation and service quality provided by private HEIs is a necessity.

The Push and Pull Theory is often employed when analysing the decision to study abroad, and it primarily assesses the elements that influence students' decisions to study abroad from the standpoint of factors related to the home country, the host country, and the institution (Shkoler & Rabenu, 2023; Lei et al., 2021; Gbollie & Gong, 2020; Li & Qi, 2019). The decision-making process, on the other hand, includes decision and post-purchase evaluation attributes, which are typically articulated using the decision-making model by Kotler et al. (2018). As a result, a method integrating the Push and Pull Theory and the decision-making model should be applied in studying the decision-making process of international students.

Following Malaysia's determination to be the regional hub of education excellence and to attract more international students to enrol in Malaysian universities, there is a demand to study the whole decision-making process, understand the relationship between the stages, and fill the existing gaps. Hence, this study takes a comprehensive approach in examining the influencing factors from the home country, host country, and institutional contexts. The scope of this study then broadens to include the

international students' evaluation of the decisions they made. The influencing factors to study abroad and post-purchase evaluation serve as the bases for this study.

1.4 Research Questions

Based on a review of past studies on the decision-making process of international students, this study focuses on answering the research questions on factors that influence international students to study abroad and their post-purchase evaluation.

Specifically, the research questions are:

RQ1: What are the influencing factors that cause the international students to study in private universities in Malaysia?

RQ2: Do the influencing factors affect international students' decision to study in private universities in Malaysia?

RQ3: What are the international students' post-purchase evaluation of their decision to study in private universities in Malaysia?

RQ4: Does the decision to study abroad mediate the relationship between the influencing factors and the post-purchase evaluation?

1.5 Research Objectives

This study aims to investigate and examine the factors that influence international students to study abroad and their post-purchase evaluation.

To achieve the aim, this research has four objectives namely,

RO1: To determine the factors influencing international students' decision to study in private universities in Malaysia.

RO2: To assess the relationship between the influencing factors and the international student' decision to study abroad.

RO3: To examine the relationship between the international students' decision to study abroad and their post-purchase evaluation.

RO4: To examine whether the decision to study abroad mediates the relationship between the influencing factors and the post-purchase evaluation.

1.6 Scope and Limitation of the Study

The scope and limitations of the study are as follows:

Firstly, the study was conducted in Malaysia. The findings from the study cannot be generalised across all developing countries with international students in private universities as in different countries the factors influencing international students may vary due to different culture, politics, economics, and others.

Secondly, the scope of the study only focuses on private HEIs with university status, although there are other categories of private HEIs in Malaysia as presented in Table 2.3. This is because the number of international students enrolled in other categories of private HEIs is lower than the total number of international students studying in private HEIs with university status, as presented in Table 3.2 in Chapter Three.

Thirdly, instead of taking all international students who enrol for postgraduate and undergraduate programs, the study focuses only on the undergraduate group of international students. Again, this is because the total number of international students enrolled in undergraduate programs such as Bachelor's program is higher than those in postgraduate programs as presented in Table 3.2. For example, in 2017, a total of 45,774 international students had enrolled for Bachelor's programs compared to only 2,414 for PhD and 8,279 for Master's programs (Ministry of Higher Education, 2018).

Finally, the study only focuses on the central zone of Malaysia. This is because 67.92% of the private HEIs with university status are in this zone, as presented in Table 2.4. Thus, the findings from this study cannot be generalised across all zones in Malaysia as the factors that influence the international students may vary.

1.7 Definition of Key Terms

The key terms employed in this study and their definitions are summarised in Table 1.3.

Table 1.3:
Key Terms Definition

Key Terms	Definition
Post-purchase Evaluation	This refers to the final stage of the international students' decision-making process where the student will evaluate how satisfied they are with their study abroad decision (Sabatayeva et al., 2018).
Study Abroad	This refers to a study process that takes place outside the home country (Hurst, 2018).
Study Abroad Decision	This refers to the process where international students make their decision on their educational fulfilment (Petzold & Moog, 2018).
International Student	This refers to someone who is not a citizen of the host country, has crossed international borders for his higher education needs and has enrolled in a full-time higher education program (Pawar et al., 2019).
Home Country Factors	This refers to the situation in the international student's country, such as the economic condition, political condition, and education quality, which affect the decision of the student to study abroad (Kim Khanh & Ngoc, 2022).
Host Country Factors	This refers to the situation in the destination country, such as political conditions, education environment, cultural attraction, and lifestyle, which affect the decision-making of the student to come and study in that country (Kim Khanh & Ngoc, 2022).

Table 1.3 (Continued)

Cost	This refers to factors such accommodation cost, living costs and program costs which influence the international student's decision (Migin et al., 2015).
Information Source	This refers to information that comes from an internal source, external source, and interpersonal source (Branco Oliveira & Soares, 2016).
Academic Factors	This refers to the institution's academic programme reputation, university image, university ranking, course quality, and courses offered (Wong et al., 2020; Qasim, et al. (2020).
Personal Factors	Personal factors related to self-fulfillment or personal fulfilment, personal development or self-development, and future employment factors influencing the students' decision to enrol in international education (Paulino & Castano, 2019).
Service Quality Evaluation	This is an approach for measuring educational service quality, consisting of reliability, responsiveness, and assurance (Parasuraman et al., 1988).
University Facilities Evaluation	This refers to the evaluation of the facilities provided by the university, which influences student satisfaction (Weerasinghe & Fernando, 2017).
Private Higher Educational Institutions	The Private Higher Educational Institutions Act of 1996, defines a PHEI as an educational institution, including a university or a university college or a branch campus, approved and registered under this Act, which is not established or maintained by the Government.
Push and Pull Theory	Developed by Mazzarol and Soutar (2002) in the area of studying abroad. The theory states that the decision-making process for selecting a study location consists of at least three distinct stages, with the first stage relating to the push factors, the second stage to the pull factors, and the third stage to the institutional factors.

Table 1.3 (Continued)

Consumer Decision Making Model	This is a theoretical framework for analysing consumer behaviour and the factors that influence it (Branco Oliveira & Soares, 2016). It explains consumer decision making as a multistage process involving five stages namely problem recognition, information search, evaluation of alternatives, purchase decision, and post-purchase evaluation (Kotler et al., 2018).
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1.8 Significance of Study

Education plays an important role in the development of human beings in a nation. Education will aid in a nation's development by assisting in the development of human beings in the country. Without good and quality education, there will be no ongoing development for the country. As a result, public and private HEIs play the main roles in offering quality education to people worldwide. Understanding students' needs is important in developing a better education system to be offered to them.

Practical Significance

As Malaysia targets to become the regional hub of education excellence, the country as well as all higher education institutions must play their respective roles. Generally, the country needs to be promoted to the outside world, and the higher education institutions especially private HEIs are responsible for providing good education. With good education, more international students will come and enrol to study in Malaysia. Finally, customer satisfaction is assured. This is significant for private HEIs because more than 70% of international students studying in Malaysia choose private HEIs (Malaysiakini, 2019). With excellent education and satisfied international students, this helps the Ministry of Higher Education (MoHE) to achieve the country's aim of 10% enrolment of international students at private HEIs as stated in Thrust 5 in the

NHESP Beyond 2020 agenda. At the same time, this will increase the revenues and image of the private HEIs.

The finding from the study helps the host country in improving its policies. Better policies will attract more students to choose Malaysia. Also, understanding the factors that influence international students' selection of a host country would enable the government to enact well-informed policy initiatives that foster international student inflow (Pawar et al., 2019). The study's finding can also help the government in improving the educational environment and mechanism of international students in Malaysia. This is aligned with the Sustainability Development Goal (SDG) number 4 i.e., Quality Education.

Additionally, the HEIs especially the private HEIs can use the information obtained from the study to develop their marketing strategies. The HEIs' administrators in the private HEIs can use information from the study to gain a better understanding of how they can improve their policies for retaining international students. Improved policies will attract more students to pursue their studies the HEIs. Additionally, by gaining a better understanding of why international students study abroad and the factors that influence their decision, private higher education institutions can strengthen their image, minimise their weaknesses, and ultimately increase their chances of being chosen as a study destination by international students. By better understanding the influencing factors and decision-making processes of international students, the private HEIs can provide higher quality student experience.

It is significant for international students to understand the elements that influence them and their evaluation of the decision to study abroad, such as the decision to pursue postgraduate courses at the same institution in the host country. It also serves as the foundation and a more holistic approach towards supporting international students in their decisions, such as whether to work in the host country or return to their home country. This not only entails educational decisions, but also other areas such as the purchasing of goods and services.

Body of Knowledge

Decision as the mediating variable has been studied in relation to customers in the hospitality sector (Niode et al., 2020). The study found that decision can be a good mediating variable. Therefore, in this study, the researcher incorporated the decision to study abroad as the mediator in the relationship between influencing factors and post-purchase evaluation. This contributes to the expansion in knowledge in the subject of studying abroad.

Furthermore, Romadlon et al. (2022) chose the construct of decision as the mediating variable in their study on the relationship between passengers' concern and their satisfaction with airport services. Other studies in the financial area on the relationship between capital structure and firm performance also regard decision as a mediating variable (Imelda & Himelda, 2021). Hence, there is a necessity to study this construct as it contributes to expanding knowledge in the area of marketing, specifically consumer behaviour.

Theoretical Significance

It is hoped that the findings of this study will increase the number of empirical findings on decision making process studies in the consumer behaviour area. Previous studies had focused more on the factors influencing students to study abroad and less on their post-decision evaluation. With higher competition among study destinations abroad, understanding the whole process of international student decision-making is important to attract more students (Tan, 2015).

It is pertinent to combine the Push and Pull Theory and the Consumer Decision-Making Model in an empirical study on the decision-making process of international students, and to combine all stages of the decision-making process in one study. Integrating the Push and Pull Theory and the Consumer Decision Making Model in the study can help determine the international students' behaviour in Malaysia and would fill the literature gap in the context of Malaysia.

1.9 Organization of the Thesis

This thesis is organised into six chapters: introduction, literature review, research methodology, data analysis and findings, and discussion, recommendation, and conclusion.

Chapter One discusses the research background, research problem, research questions, research objectives, the definition of key terms, the significance of the study, and the research contribution, scope, and limitations. This chapter also describes the organization of the thesis and its order of presentation to provide a clearer research process.

Chapter Two presents the review of the literature. This chapter also describes the development of the theoretical framework and the hypotheses to be tested in relation to previous studies.

Chapter Three focuses on the research methodology, including the research design and measurement of variables. It describes the survey procedure and its execution. The measurement concerns are acknowledged, and Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modelling (PLS-SEM) is utilised to analyse the data.

Chapter Four presents the quantitative data analysis results. The chapter provides information on data collection, which has been analysed using IBM SPSS software version 23.0 for descriptive analysis followed by Smart PLS version 3.1. Outliers, normality testing, and descriptive analyses of the demographic profiles are examined and presented in the initial phase. This is followed by the assessment of measurement model, the assessment of the structural model and finally, measurement and presentation of the mediating analysis.

Chapter Five presents the research findings and discussion. This chapter discusses the key findings of the study based on the research objectives.

Chapter Six concludes the findings drawn from the quantitative study. This chapter also highlights the limitations of the study and provides policymakers and future studies with several recommendations. To ensure that the objectives of this study are met and to contribute to the body of knowledge and the industry as a whole, this section also describes the interconnection between the chapters.

1.10 Chapter Summary

This chapter described the study background, research problem, research questions, research objectives, the research scope and limitations, the definition of key terms, the significance of the study, and organization of the thesis. The next chapter will discuss the existing literature, previous theories, research framework and research hypotheses.



CHAPTER 2:

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

This chapter begins with a general overview of the higher education in Malaysia. The next section will discuss the relevant literature related to theory, concept, and hypothesis development, leading to the formulation of the research framework. Finally, the chapter summary is presented.

2.2 General Overview of Higher Education in Malaysia

2.2.1 Higher Education in Malaysia

Education has been the key to Malaysia's rapid development, as it is important for human and nation development. In Malaysia, education begins from pre-school and continues to higher education (moe.gov.my, 2019). At the age of 18, students in Malaysia can enrol in "higher education institutions" at the undergraduate level. Under the Ministry of Higher Education's (MoHE) jurisdiction, the higher education sector was established in 2004 following the Ministry of Education's restructuring.

The responsibility of the Ministry of Higher Education is managing public universities, private higher educational institutions, polytechnics, and community colleges. It is also responsible for the management of Malaysian students around the world. The evolution of higher education in Malaysia can be broadly divided into four main phases, as presented in Table 2.1.

Phase 1 started before 1970 and was known as education for the elite, where there is only one university established in Malaysia, i.e., University Malaya. Once the private higher institution was officially recognized in Malaysia, the second phase started from 1970 until 1990. From 1990 to 2000, phase 3 was initiated, where overseas universities established their branches in Malaysia. Phase 4 started when the MoHE was established. At this phase, the internationalization of higher education institutions becomes the main plan.

Table 2.1:
Typology of Phases in Malaysian Higher Education

Phase 1 Before 1970 Education for Elite	Phase 2 1970 - 1990 Education For Affirmative Action	Phase 3 From 1990 to 2000 Education as and For Business	Phase 4 2000 - now Education for Global Competition
Only one university (University of Malaya)	Establishment of 6 state-controlled universities Private higher education institutions were officially recognized in Malaysia.	Introduction of private post-secondary education abroad, including universities and corporatization of public institutions of higher education.	“Establishment of Ministry of Higher Education (MoHE)” “Evidence of Internationalization”

Source: Anantha Raj A. Arokiasamy (2010)

The Malaysian government has given great attention to the development of higher education. This sector provides a major stream of income to the national gross domestic product (GDP), especially from international students who come to study in this country. The higher education sector has contributed about RM 5.9 billion annually to the Malaysian economy and this figure is expected to reach RM 15.6 billion by 2020 (Chin, 2019). While international students studying at U.S. contributed \$1.3 billion to the U.S. economy (Jeduka, 2022). Government policy, education policy, quality and price also supported the rapid growth in the education export.

Due to the benefits received and in response to the external forces and the liberalization of education, starting in the year 2000, the higher education's function and character underwent a dramatic change. In 2003, the Private Higher Education Act 1996 was amended to make private HEIs more competitive globally. Due to the amendment, an increase in enrolment of international students in HEIs occurred, where in 2015, the number of international students increased to 3%. There are currently 151,979 international students in public and private higher institutions in Malaysia compared to only 93,000 students in 2011 (Harian Metro, April 15, 2016). Other than that, several promotion offices were set up in China, Dubai, Indonesia, and Vietnam, by the government which also contributed to this success (Abu Hassan Asari et al., 2017).

Three years after the amendment of the Act, the national mission was announced in the Ninth Malaysia Plan (9th MP). The national mission emphasized on the government's effort to achieve Vision 2020. To achieve this, Malaysia through the Ministry of Higher Education (MoHE), introduced the National Higher Education Action Plan (NHEAP) 2007 blueprint and National Higher Education Strategic Plan (NHESP) beyond the 2020 blueprint. The NHESP beyond 2020 aims to transform higher education in Malaysia as the hub of excellence for higher education in Southeast Asia, targeting the enrolment of 200,000 international students by 2020 and 250,000 by 2025.

There are four phases in the NHESP beyond 2020. Phase One started from 2007 to 2010, known as laying the foundation phase. Phase Two started from 2011 to 2015, whereby this, the target is more towards strengthening and enhancement. Phase Three started from 2016 to 2020 and is known as the excellence phase. The final phase is

known as the glory and sustainability phase, which starts after 2020 (Grapragasem et al., 2014).

Also, part of the NHESP plan is to reach an enrolment of 200,000 international students by 2020. This transformation is the foundation for achieving the excellence and sustainability of the higher education system beyond 2020. In line with this, several changes, and reforms have taken place in the higher education in Malaysia to promote it to the world. The MoHE is actively promoting higher education in Asian regions such as China, India, and the Middle East to achieve the country's goal of enrolling 250,000 international students by 2025.

Furthermore, in 2009, a rating system known as SETARA (Rating System for Higher Education Institutions in Malaysia) was implemented. The system is used to measure university and university college's performance in teaching and learning. The universities and university colleges are rated from Tier One to Tier Six, whereby the former represents weak teaching and learning, and the latter represents outstanding teaching and learning. Subsequently, in 2011, the Malaysian Quality Evaluation System for Private Colleges, or MyQUEST, was introduced. The system evaluates private colleges and rates them as either excellent, good, or weak based on the quality of the programmes, resources, students, graduates, and governance. Private colleges are also be rated from one to six stars based on their achievement level. A one-star rating means that the private college's level of achievement is poor; a higher star rating means vice versa (StudyMalaysia.com, 2015).

As of December 2022, there are more than 500 higher education institutions in Malaysia, with 20 public universities, 416 private HEIs, 36 polytechnics, and 103 community colleges (mohe.gov.my, 2022). Hence, to stay abreast in today's global world, Malaysia is working hard on becoming a regional education hub. Malaysia is considered one of the developing countries that are successful in its efforts to be more competitive in the higher education market (Hall & Hooper, 2008). In line with that, the Ministry has introduced the Malaysia Education Blueprint (MEB) 2015-2025 (Higher Education) which is based on five goals: access, equity, efficiency, unity, and quality.

2.2.2 Higher Education Institutions in Malaysia

The higher education institution in Malaysia is divided into two sectors: Public Higher Education Institution and Private Higher Education Institution (moe.gov.my, 2019).

Public Higher Education Institutions (PHEIs) face less pressure to finance their operations and focus on providing quality education. In contrast, Private Higher Education Institutions are struggling to sustain their presence in the market as they are funded by a certain funder or from the State. Thus, private HEIs face more challenges, such as budget constraints for developing their campus and hiring talented staff in order to sustain their business (Berjoyai Bardai, 2015). In 2007, with the MoHE aiming to make Malaysia a regional education hub, the number of PHEIs rose to 20 as some college universities were upgraded to become public universities (Wan, 2007).

With this, the enrolment of students into Higher Education Institutions has continue to increase. Enrolment of international students from other Asian countries to Malaysia

also contributed to this increase (Statista Research Department, 2023). Furthermore, in achieving the target of the NHESP to transform the higher education in Malaysia to become the regional education hub, Public and Private Higher Education Institutions are now actively marketing themselves to international students. The marketing campaigns have been successful with Malaysia being considered as one of the tops higher education destinations by international students (Zeeshan et al., 2013). Malaysia was named one of the top 20 best countries in the world for higher education in 2022 (Krishnaswamy et al., 2023). This is supported by the statement from Second Education Minister, Datuk Seri Idris Jusoh in April 2016. The flow of international students has changed Malaysia's position from being a sending country to a receiving one. Malaysia was also listed as the top ten nations among upper-middle-income countries by the United States (US) magazine in the education category (Matrade, 2015).

There were more than 100,000 international students from various countries studying in Malaysian HEIs in 2022 (Statista Research Department, 2023). This is because international students identify Malaysia as the country where they can build their interpersonal skills through networks and relationships. By studying abroad, the international students also gain benefits in understanding a new culture and its diversity.

This also happened because of the transformation carried out by the government, which no doubt contributed to the success. Furthermore, the government had also set up promotion offices in China, Dubai, India, Indonesia, and Vietnam to promote Malaysia's higher education.

2.2.2.1 Public Higher Education Institution in Malaysia

Public Higher Education Institutions in Malaysia started off with the establishing of University Malaya as the first public university in Malaysia. Today, there are 20 PHEIs in Malaysia, including *Kolej Universiti Insaniah* (KUIN), which was announced as the latest PHEI in Malaysia on February 8, 2018 (Hamid, 2022; Abdul Mursyid Zainuddin, 2018). The PHEIs are categorised into three major groups namely Research Universities (RU), Focused Universities (FU) and Comprehensive Universities (CU), as presented in Table 2.2 (www.malaysiaeducation.info, n.d)

Table 2.2:
List of Public Higher Education Institution in Malaysia

No	University	Category
1.	Universiti Malaya (UM)	RU
2.	Universiti Sains Malaysia (USM)	RU
3.	Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia (UKM)	RU
4.	Universiti Putra Malaysia (UPM)	RU
5.	Universiti Teknologi Malaysia (UTM)	RU
6.	Universiti Utara Malaysia (UUM)	FU
7.	Universiti Islam Antarabangsa Malaysia (UIAM)	CU
8.	Universiti Malaysia Sarawak (UniMAS)	CU
9.	Universiti Malaysia Sabah (UMS)	CU
10.	Universiti Pendidikan Sultan Idris (UPSI)	FU
11.	Universiti Teknologi Mara (UiTM)	CU
12.	Universiti Sultan Zainal Abidin (UniSZA)	FU
13.	Universiti Malaysia Terengganu (UMT)	FU
14.	Universiti Islam Sains Malaysia (USIM)	FU
15.	Universiti Tun Hussein Onn Malaysia (UTHM)	FU
16.	Universiti Teknikal Malaysia Melaka (UTeM)	FU
17.	Universiti Malaysia Pahang (UMP)	FU
18.	Universiti Malaysia Perlis (UniMAP)	FU
19.	Universiti Malaysia Kelantan (UMK)	FU
20.	Universiti Pertahanan Nasional Malaysia (UPNM)	FU

Note: RU=Research University, FU= Focussed University, CU=Comprehensive Universities

As the government began to reduce budgets for public universities in the 1990s, public universities were corporatized in order to become less reliant on subsidies from the government (Chin, 2019). This makes them unsustainable as the institutions are still dependent on government budget to operate (Barjoyai Bardai, 2015). Therefore, PHEIs are now working hard to increase their income, and one of the ways is through

the enrolment of international students. However, this study is focusing on private Higher Education Institutions (HEIs), and a more detailed discussion and explanation on private HEIs will be discussed further in the next section.

2.2.2.2 Private Higher Education Institutions in Malaysia

Act 555 of the Private Higher Educational Institutions Act of 1996, defines a private HEI as an educational institution, including a university or a university college or a branch campus, approved and registered under this Act, which is not established or maintained by the Government (Yaakub & Mohamed, 2019). The government views the private sector of higher education institutions as the primary mechanism for reducing currency outflow and turning the country into a net exporter of higher education (Chin, 2019). There are four categories of private HEIs in Malaysia namely, private universities, college universities, foreign university branch campuses, and colleges. As of December 2022, there are 416 private HEIs in the country. The private HEIs are divided into four categories: a private university, a private university (international branch campus), a college university, and a college as shown in Table 2.3. Out of the 416 private higher educations, 55 private HEIs have been granted the status of university by the MoHE (jpt.mohe.edu.my, 2023). This large number of PHEIs benefits the Malaysian higher education sector by allowing more students to continue their education.

*Table 2.3:
Number of Private Higher Education Institution as of December 2022*

Category	Number of Institution
Private University	55
Private university (international branch campus)	10
College university	35
College	316
Total	416

Source: jpt.mohe.gov.my (2023)

Previously In 2018, there are 480 private HEIs with 55 private HEIs with private universities categories in Malaysia, with 22 of them located in Selangor and 13 in Wilayah Persekutuan and one in Putrajaya. There are three states without private HEIs with university status namely Sabah, Kelantan, and Perlis. Table 2.4 presents the number of private HEIs by status and state.

Table 2.4:
Number of Private Higher Education Institutions by State and Status as of December 2018

No.	State	Number of Private HEIs by Status				Total of Private HEIs by State
		Private University	Foreign University Branch Campus	University College	College	
1.	Selangor	22	3	9	102	136
2.	Wilayah Persekutuan	13	1	6	90	110
3.	Johor	2	3	2	22	29
4.	Kedah	2	0	1	6	9
5.	Sarawak	1	2	1	26	30
6.	Pulau Pinang	1	0	4	27	32
7.	Sabah	0	0	2	24	26
8.	Negeri Sembilan	3	0	2	18	23
9.	Melaka	1	0	2	14	17
10.	Pahang	2	0	2	11	15
11.	Terengganu	1	0	2	8	11
12.	Kelantan	0	0	2	11	13
13.	Perak	4	0	1	18	23
14.	Perlis	0	0	1	2	3
15.	Wilayah Persekutuan Putrajaya	1	1	0	0	2
Total		53	10	37	380	480

Source: Department of Higher Education, Ministry of Education Malaysia, 2019

Apart from developed countries such as Australia, Europe, the United Kingdom, the United States, and Japan, Malaysia is also experiencing the growth of Private Higher Education Institutions (Tajudeen, 2023). In Malaysia, a private university falls under the category private HEIs. When it comes to providing high-quality education to both local and international students, private universities have been proven to be invaluable to public HEIs (Salleh, 2007).

Private HEIs were illegal before the institutions were officially recognized in 1996 following the enactment of “the Private Higher Education Institutions Act” (PHEIA), and the government began encouraging the private sector to play a complementary role in higher education provision (Chin, 2019). Through the amended PHEIA 1996 in 2003, the presence of private HEIs in Malaysia is becoming more prevalent. This provides opportunities for local students to further their studies and international students who intend to study in Malaysia.

Unlike public universities, tuition fees at private HEIs are relatively higher than at public universities because private HEIs do not receive any government subsidies to operate. Student tuition fees, funding from their alumni, the HEIs’ businesses, private financial resources, and corporate funding are the sources of income for private HEIs (Tajudeen, 2023). Therefore, private HEIs need to work harder to gain income for their survival.

Although the tuition fees in private HEIs are higher, the number of local and international students enrolled in private HEIs is very encouraging. In 2006, the market shares of private HEIs increased to 45%. After 13 years, the total enrolment of international students in private HEIs increased to 70%, compared to only 30% studying in public universities (Malaysiakini, 2019). This highlights the significance of private HEIs as a provider of education in Malaysia, both for local and foreign students.

2.2.3 International Students in Private Higher Institution in Malaysia

International students are beneficial to HEIs because they contribute to the institution's revenue. There are various definitions of international students, as stated in Table 2.5. In addition, previous studies also used the term foreign student, which refers to international students. However, for this study, the definition of international student follows the definition given by Pawar et al. (2019), i.e., one who is not a citizen of the host country, has crossed international borders for his higher education needs, and has enrolled in a full-time higher education program.

Table 2.5:

Definition of International Student

Author	Definition of International Student
Pawar, Dasgupta & Vispute, (2019)	One who is not a citizen of the host country has crossed international borders for his higher education needs and has enrolled in a full-time higher education program.
Finn, & Darmody, (2017).	An international student is defined by proxy using three criteria: respondent was not born in Ireland, respondent's parents were not born in Ireland, and respondent's family home is not in Ireland.

Traditionally, Malaysia has been sending its students to study overseas, especially to developed nations such as Australia, Canada, the UK, the US, and New Zealand (Singh, 2016). By sending local students to study abroad, Malaysia has lost millions in currency outflow. For example, in 1995, Malaysia lost US\$800 million currency outflow due to local students going abroad for studies (Krishnan & Sajilan, 2014). In fact, Malaysia has also lost skilled workers when graduating students decide to stay and work in their host country. Therefore, to prevent this from happening again and to compete in the global education arena, the Malaysia Blueprint 2015-2025 (higher education) was launched. With this, Malaysia can divert international student attention from only choosing HEIs in developed countries to HEIs in Asian countries, including Malaysia. This is supported by Ahmad et al. (2016), who found that international

students traditionally favour English-speaking countries for higher education, but now the trend has started to change.

As the enrolment of international students is expected to increase globally in the future in accordance with the government's target as stated in the blueprint, private HEIs need to play their roles in helping the government to be the net service provider of tertiary education (Arokiasamy, 2010). Carmen Neghina (2018) estimated that the number of international students studying abroad would reach 6.9 million by 2030, an increase of 51%, or 2.3 million students, in 15 years (from 2015).

In Malaysia, the enrolment of international students increased to 78% in four years from 5,635 students in 1996 to 26,649 in 2000 (Hall & Hooper, 2008). This number continued increase by 36% in 2015. This helps Malaysia in developing a world-class higher education system that will transform its production-based economy into a knowledge-based economy by 2020 (Chin, 2019). Also, the increase in the enrolment of international students has changed the ranking of Malaysia as one of the top 10 most preferred study destinations in Asia in 2023, as reported by Asia Exchange on April 28, 2023.

Surprisingly, the drastic increase of international student enrolment in Malaysia is dominated by private Higher Education Institutions (Chong Pui Yee, 2011). From 18,242 international students in 2001, the figure grew by 79% to 86,919 international students (Malaysia Higher Education Statistics, 2011). In 2015, out of the 150,000 international students studying in Malaysia, 70% had studied in private HEIs. This shows that private HEIs in Malaysia are also attractive for international students. This

rapid increase in the number of international students in Malaysian private HEIs has made Malaysia a significant competitor in the education sector (Chin, 2019). Therefore, Malaysia needs to enhance its capability to compete internationally.

The higher education institutions should be aware of international students' needs to offer better student experience and satisfaction. The country and private HEIs must provide various facilities and promotions for international students. As such, in the long run, the private HEIs can sustain their students who will in turn contribute to the economic growth of the country and increase the income of the university. Furthermore, the international students can become the marketing agents for the universities they are studying in.

To achieve this, factors that influence the international students' decision to enrol in private HEIs in Malaysia and their evaluation of that decision need to be studied. The international students' whole decision-making process needs to be understood by the MoHE and HEIs for the sustainability of the HEIs in the long term and for their marketing strategy's success.

2.3 Theoretical Foundation

2.3.1 Push and Pull Theory

Lee (1996) proposed what is known as the Push and Pull Theory. It is a comprehensive migration theory that was developed to explain the factors that influence the migration of people. The Push-Pull Theory begins with certain factors, such as those linked to the place of origin, the place of destination (host country), intervening obstacles, and personal factors that lead to population mobility in any area (Lee, 1996).

Later, the theory was applied in other sectors such as tourism and education. In the education sector, McMahon (1992) adopted the Push and Pull Theory to depict the global patterns of international student migration. The theory explained international student destination choice of international students. The Push and Pull Theory is the most common tool for explaining international students' motivation and decisions to study abroad (Jiani, 2016; Wadhwa, 2016). Today, the theory serves as the foundation for the majority of empirical studies on the decision of international students to study abroad (Rhein & Phillips, 2022; Yasmin, et al., 2022; Lei et al., 2021; Mohammed & Saleh, 2020; Li & Qi, 2019; Acheampong et al., 2019; Trujillo, 2019). The theory offers a macro perspective and considers political, economic, educational, social, and cultural factors for explaining students' decision to study abroad. These factors can be divided into push and pull factors. Push factors relate to home country factors that push students to leave for overseas study, whilst pull factors relate to host country factors that attract students to study there. Mazarrol and Soutar (2002) listed the push factors of overseas courses being better than local courses, difficulty to gain entry at the home country, unavailable courses at the home country, and a better understanding of the west as the factors that motivate the students to study abroad. In short, disadvantages at the home country push students to further their studies abroad. Meanwhile the pull factors of quality, willingness to recognize previous student qualification, quality, expertise of staff, volume of international students enrolled in the institution, and strong alumni are some of the factors that entice students to choose a certain institution in a certain host country (Mazzarol & Soutar, 2002).

The Push and Pull Theory states that the selection of a study destination entails three distinct stages, as presented in Figure 2.1 (Mazzarol & Soutar, 2002). In the initial

stage, the student decides whether to study locally or abroad, typically based on a number of push factors associated with the home country. The second stage involves selecting a host country. At this stage, the pull factors associated with potential host countries play a crucial role in the decision-making process. The final stage involves a decision regarding the institution. Various institutions-related pull factors influence the decision-making process at this stage.

While Li and Bray (2007) extended the one-way push and pull model and draw model into a two-way model. The authors suggested that some pull factors at the home country may encourage students to remain in the home, while push factors at the host countries may deter international students from enrolling and studying there. Despite the value of the Push and Pull Theory as an explanatory mechanism, it has its limitations (Li & Bray, 2007). The earlier Push and Pull Theory neglected the micro-level elements and student characteristics in the decision-making process. Thus, a number of studies modified the Push and Pull Theory to emphasise on student choice. Jiani (2016) found that Mazzarol and Soutar's (2002) three-stage decision making process lack a clear sequential order. In fact, the intention to study in host countries such as China is often assessed alongside the decision to study abroad, the institution, and the host country.

Additional limitations of the theory are noted in terms of the exclusion of the preferred study programme (Wadhwa, 2016). The author argued that the theory should take into account not just the student's choice of host nation and institution, but also the student's choice of academic course. In short, the Push and Pull Theory is used to explain the factor influencing international students to study abroad. However, the Push and Pull

Theory ends when the students decide to study abroad. It does not investigate the next stage, i.e., the post-purchase evaluation of the international students entailing the assessment of their satisfaction level. Therefore, the decision-making process model will support the Push and Pull Theory.

2.4 Decision-Making Process

The decision-making process is a part of consumer behavior (Shamsudin et al., 2019). Deciding to purchase and consume goods and services is not a simple process as an individual needs to choose from two or more alternatives. Hence, understanding consumer decision-making is critical as the process is complex and influenced by various factors and involves several stages (Akalamkam & Mitra, 2018). Also, understanding the decision process allows service providers to better meet consumer needs or understand how consumers use services and identify the factors that influence their satisfaction (Branco Oliveira & Soares, 2016).

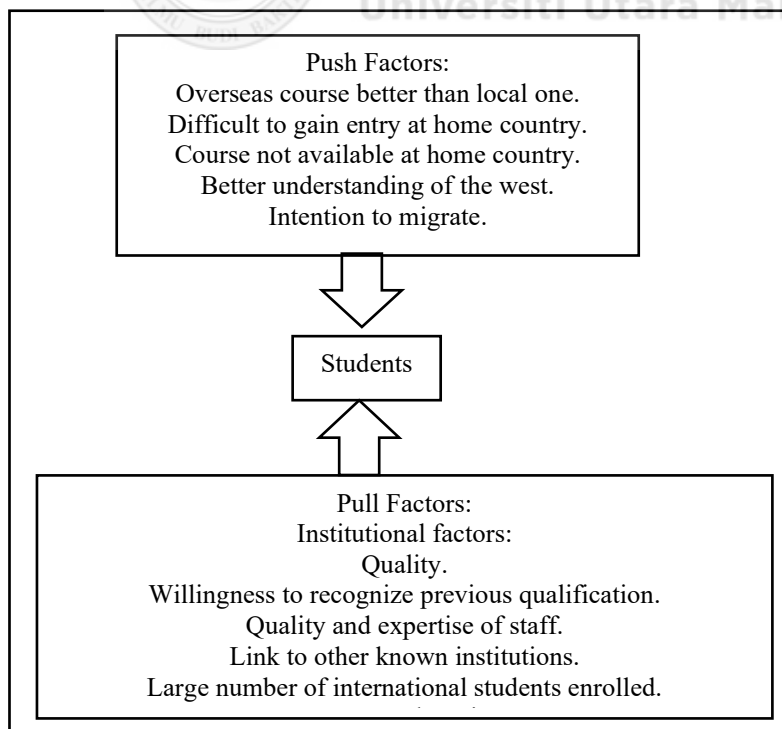


Figure 2.1:
Push and Pull Factors
Source : Mazzarol & Soutar (2002)

In general, consumer decision-making is different from the decision-making process for an organization. It is a complex process influenced by various factors and involves several stages (Akalamkam & Mitra, 2018). In a business setting, a decision is made after a problem is recognised, decision criteria are established, weights are assigned to the criteria, options are generated, analysed, a winner is chosen, the chosen option is implemented, and finally the decision's efficacy is assessed (Robbins & Coulter, 2018). While for consumers such as international student, the decision-making process starts with need recognition, information search, evaluation of alternatives, purchase, and consumption, and finally post-purchase evaluation (Branco Oliveira & Soares, 2016). Figure 2.2 shows the stages in the decision-making process.

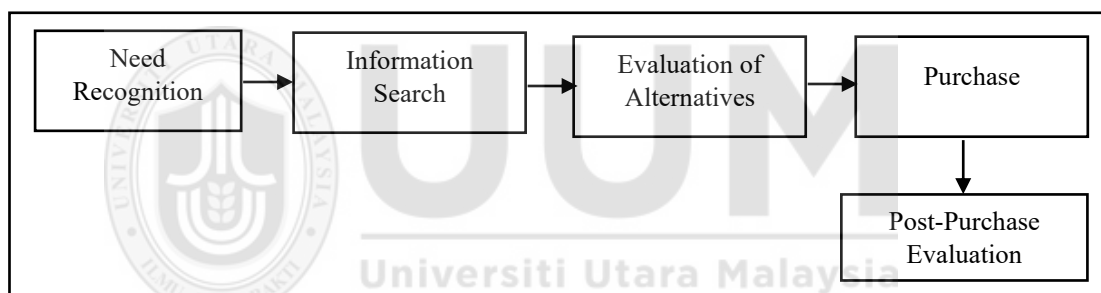


Figure 2.2:
Decision-Making Process of International Students
 Source: Branco Oliveira, & Soares, (2016)

Over the years, many different approaches and models have been employed to understand decision-making process, and the consumer decision making (CDM) model is one of them. The next section will discuss the CDM model further.

2.4.1 Consumer Decision Making (CDM) Model

The CDM model is a theoretical framework for analysing consumer behaviour and the factors that influence it (Branco Oliveira & Soares, 2016; Vrontis et al., 2007; Blackwell et al., 2001). One of the areas that use CDM model is higher education

research, whereby the CDM model is used to forecast the complex decision-making processes of international students (Teah Woon Sim, Chloe, 2019).

Various researchers have created a number of CDM models (Lee, 2015). The majority of the CDM models break down the consumer decision making process into five stages namely problem recognition, information search, evaluation of alternatives, purchase decision and post-purchase evaluation (Kotler et al., 2018; Branco Oliveira & Soares, 2016). This CDM model clearly explains how the consumer makes a purchase decision. The core focus of the CDM model is on the motivational factors that help the organisation understand the reasons behind the consumer's purchasing decision. Figure 2.3 presents the stages in the consumer decision-making model.

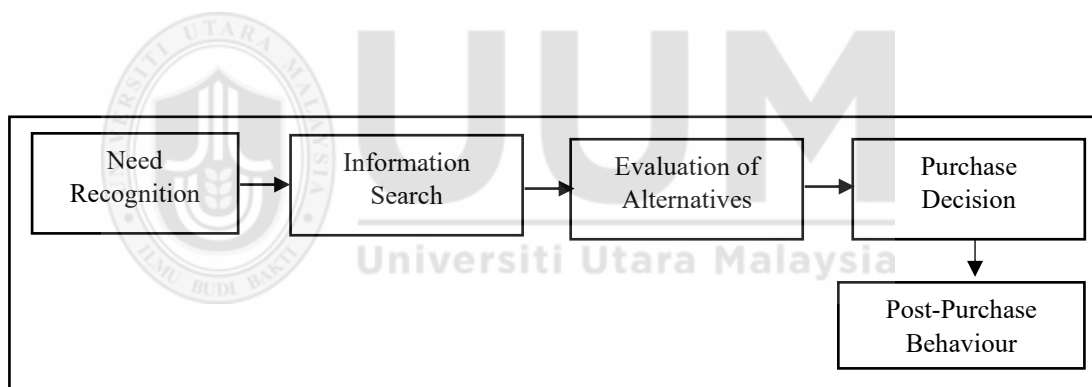


Figure 2.3:
Five Stage Model of the Consumer Buying Process
Source: Kotler et al., (2018)

Stage 1: Need Recognition

The first stage of the CDM model entails the recognition of a need or problem. A problem recognition occurs when an individual recognizes the difference between the actual situation and the desired situation (Bruner, 1993). Internal and external stimuli can trigger the need, depending on various situations and circumstances such as personal or professional, and this recognition results in the creation of a purchasing idea (Kotler et al., 2018). In the context of the current study, individuals who want to

study abroad are the prospective customers for the HEIs in the host country. In the problem recognition stage, international students recognize the need for them to continue their studies abroad. Various factors might motivate and influence them at this stage, such as disadvantages in their home country (Mazzarol & Soutar, 2002). Many international students also plan to study abroad to gain a better future and self-improvement opportunities as well as to experience culture and lifestyle in the host country (Rembielak et al., 2020; Zhu & Reeves, 2019).

Stage 2: Information Search

The search for information comes after the identification of need. The search information is an essential part of the consumer decision-making and purchasing behaviour (Akalamkam & Mitra, 2018). For example, at this stage, the student is inclined to gain more information and is likely to search for more product-related information before making a final decision (Kotler et al., 2018). However, different individuals seek for information differently based on their product knowledge, prior experience, or external information such as feedback from others. For example, international students will proactively search for information from various sources such as government websites, friends and family, agent and social media about the host countries and institutions to help them decide.

The search for information can be divided into three namely internal, external, and interpersonal sources of information (Branco Oliveira & Soares, 2016). Branco Oliveira and Soares (2016) stated that internal source of information is the information that can be accessed through the website of the host country, the ministry of higher education, or directly from the institution. The external source of information are

sources that the institutions cannot control such as social media and agent. Students now increasingly rely on social media as a primary means of communication and knowledge acquisition (Teng et al., 2015). Finally, an interpersonal source of information entails information gained through family, relatives, friends, and teachers (Calitz et al., 2020).

Stage 3: Evaluation of Alternatives

After gathering sufficient information, the international student will compare and evaluate the information gathered to make a final decision. At this stage, the international student will examine all the available options based on his needs and desires. Factors such as cost, academic factors, and procedures are also considered. Once the international student has obtained the information from various sources, he will evaluate all the alternatives.

Stage 4: Purchase Decision

At this point, the student has decided to make a final decision after reviewing all the alternatives and arriving at a final decision point. This is the most crucial stage out of the entire procedure. International students will choose the HEIs that best meet their needs and criteria at the purchase stage.

Stage 5: Post-purchase Behaviour

This is the final stage in the consumer decision-making process. Higher education institutions sometimes overlook this stage because it occurs after completing the purchase decision process. This stage is crucial because it directly influences the consumer's future product decisions. This stage reflects the consumer's experience,

such as buying a product or service. The consumer may be satisfied or dissatisfied depending on his evaluation (Brink & Berndt, 2009). Therefore, the HEIs' job does not end when the student enrolls in the institution. HEIs need to evaluate the post-purchase decision of the international students and determine whether the student is satisfied or dissatisfied (Kotler et al., 2018).

After enrolling in the HEIs, the student will conduct an assessment of the services that they have received. Depending on how the student evaluates the purchase and how his expectations compare to what was delivered, he may either be satisfied or unsatisfied with the product and services. Knowing whether the international students are satisfied or dissatisfied with their decision is essential. This student will recommend other potential students from his home country to attend the same host country and institution through word of mouth or through digital platforms (Wilkins & Huisman, 2011). This also helps the HEIs in understanding their customers and developing better customer service (Kusumawati, 2013).

Apart from the consumer decision-making model discussed above, Lovelock and Wirtz (2011) also illustrated the consumer decision-making process for services known as the three-stage service consumption process entailing pre-purchase, service encounter, and evaluation after purchase. As HEIs offer a program to be taken by international students, this is known as offering services.

2.4.2 Three-Stage Service Consumption Process

The three-stage service consumption process entailed pre-purchase, service encounter, and evaluation after purchase. The awareness of need, information search and

evaluation of alternatives, and buying decisions are all included in the pre-purchase stage. In this stage, consumers need to search for information and evaluate all their available choices before making a purchase decision. Also, the customer acquires information from various sources such as family and friends, the Internet, and others (Tsiotsou & Wirtz, 2015).

The service encounter stage, known as the consumption stage, is where action is taken. It involves exchange and interactions between customers and the company providing the service. In this stage, consumers co-produce a service and co-create experiences and value while evaluating the service experience (Tsiotsou & Wirtz, 2015).

Finally, after the purchase stage, the evaluation involves the consumers' behavioral and attitudinal responses to the service experience. The two main areas related to evaluation after the purchase stage are consumer satisfaction and perceived service quality. Figure 2.4 shows the three-stage model of the service consumption process.

Basically, international students studying abroad are also involved in the service consumption process. They choose the host country, institution, and program to apply. It is not an easy process, as many factors influence the students' decision. Moreover, Freeman (as cited in Tan, 2015, p. 2) stated that students from different countries and cultures display different behaviours, and that there are various reasons why students study abroad.

In studying international students' decision-making process, two contexts are looked at: one before the decision (during the information search and alternative evaluation)

or also known as the pre-purchase stage, and the other after the decision, that is, during the post-purchase evaluation (Marjanovi & Krizan Pavlovi, 2018). Many past studies had explored the factors influencing international students' decision to study abroad (Perez-Encinas et al., 2021; Fakunle, 2021; Zulkifli, et al., 2020; Hurst, 2018; Jupiter et al., 2018; James-MacEachern, & Yun, 2017; Haron, et al., 2017).

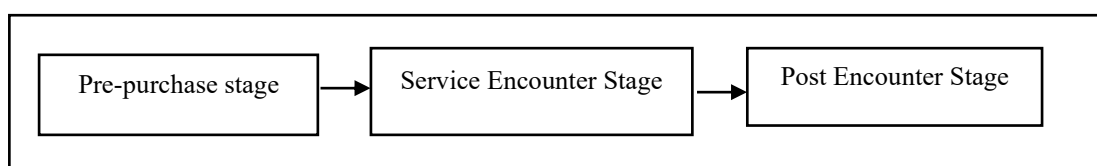


Figure 2.4:
Three-Stage Service Consumption Process.
 Source: Tsotsou & Wirtz (2015).

Investigating these factors offers the home country, host country, and institution more information on why students choose a specific country and institution to further their study. Some factors that influence the students' decision to study abroad are personal factor, family and friends, social media, institutions, attitudes, and gender. All the authors looked at the factors influencing the international students to study abroad, but Branco Oliveira and Soares (2016) looked at the whole decision-making process and divided it into three stages namely pre-purchase entailing need recognition, information search, and evaluation of alternatives, purchase stage, and finally post-purchase evaluation. For the author, the whole decision-making process ends once the international students evaluate their decision.

2.4.3 Decision Making Model of International Students

In understanding international students' decision-making process, the decision-making model and three-stage service consumption process were used extensively (see Figure

2.5). The decision-making process begins with an investigation of the international students seeking to study abroad, covering everything in the pre-purchase stage, including the factors that can be grouped as push and pull factors. The assessment was then followed by the search for information to help the international students make their final decision. The international students evaluate all the alternatives they have from all their information before purchasing. Once the purchase is made, it is followed by the post-purchase evaluation analysis based on the international students' satisfaction. Branco Oliveira and Soares (2016) conducted a qualitative study on factors but ignore the CDM's post-purchase evaluation stage, although it is the final stage in the consumer decision-making model. Meanwhile, need recognition, information search, and alternative evaluation are all part of the first stage of the service consumption process, namely the pre-purchase stage.

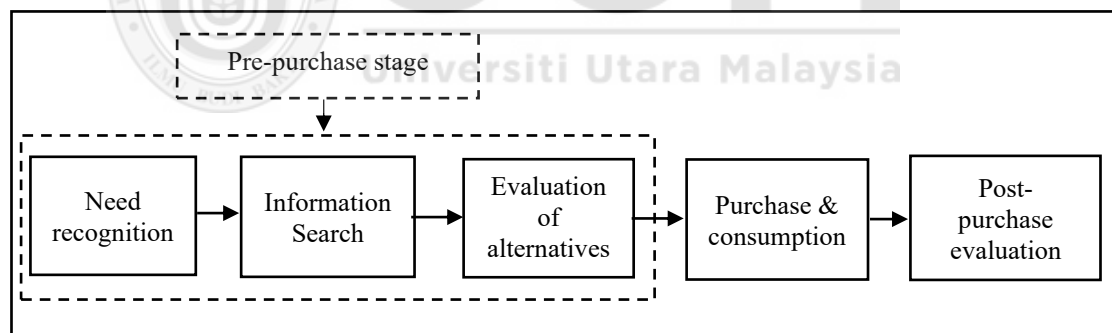


Figure 2.5:
Decision-Making Model of International Students

2.4.4 Integrated Model of Pull and Push Theory, Decision-Making Model and Three-Stage Service Consumption Process.

Linking the Push and Pull Theory, the CDM model, and the Three-Stage Service Consumption process helps form the theoretical foundation of this study, which in turn aids in forming the conceptual study framework discussed in Section 2.9.

The Push and Pull Theory exclusively considers the factors that influence students' decisions to study abroad from the standpoint of the home country, the host country, and institution. It is associated with the first three stages of CDM namely need awareness, information search, and alternative evaluation. It is also related to the pre-purchase stage in the three-stage service consumption process. At this point, all three theories are focusing on the same thing: the factors that influence people's decision.

The decision-making process will come to an end once the decision and evaluation have been made. In PPT, the theory only considers influencing factors, whereas CDM and the Three-Stage Service Consumption Process include the decision and post-purchase evaluation stages in the decision-making process. The sole difference between CDM and the Three-Stage Service Consumption Process is that former focuses on making choices for goods or products, whereas the latter focuses on purchasing decisions for services such as education and insurance.

In conclusion, the PPT explains the influencing factors in the pre-purchase stage. In contrast, the CDM model and the Three-Stage Service Consumption process discuss the whole process of decision making, from pre-purchase to the post-purchase evaluation stage. Hence, to study the decision-making process of international students, an integrated approach of the three theories is used to enhance understanding of international students' decision to study abroad (see Figure 2.6).

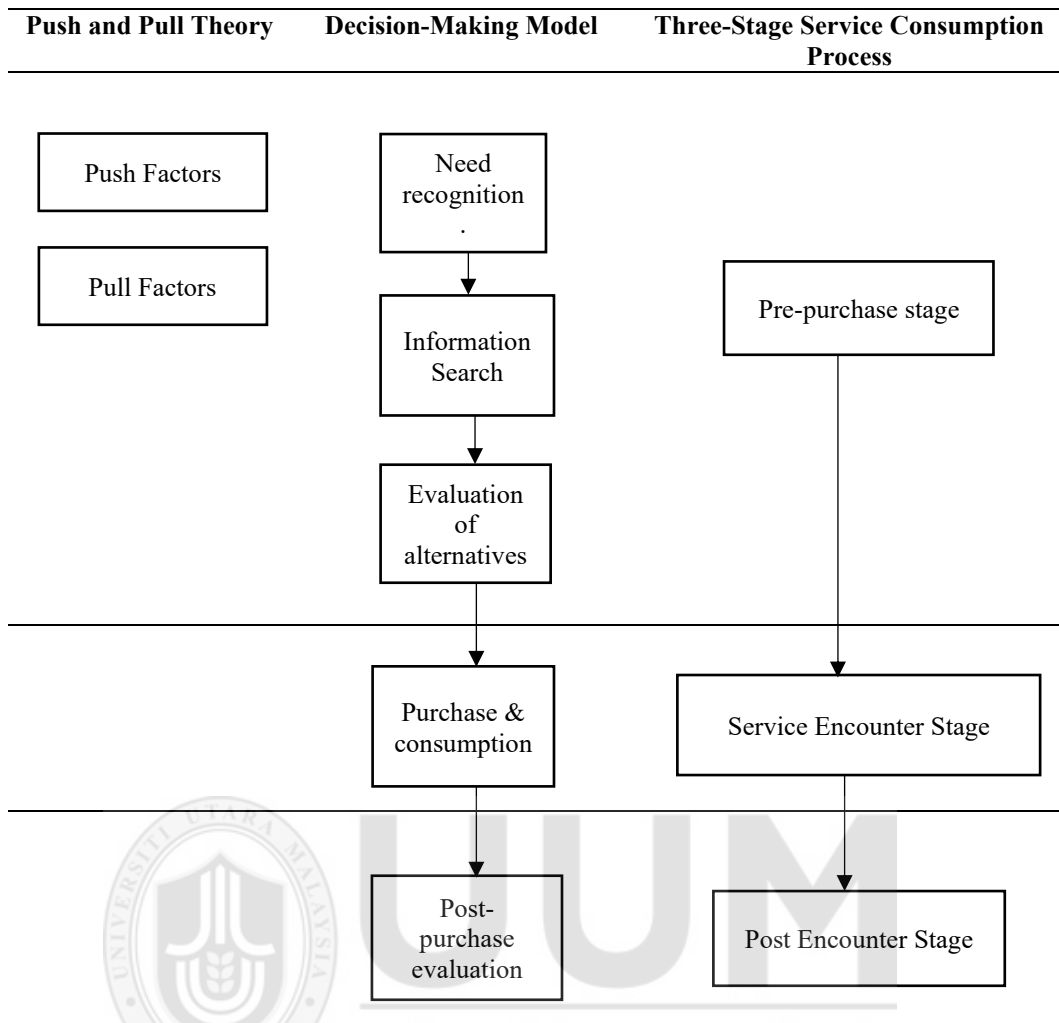


Figure 2.6:
The Integrated Model of Pull and Push Theory, Decision-Making Model and Three-Stage Service Consumption Process.

2.5 Post-purchase Evaluation

The decision-making process of the consumer does not come to an end once they have purchased the product or services. Students are the customers and the main stakeholders in HEIs (Abbas, 2020). After the students reach a decision, they will evaluate their levels of satisfaction or dissatisfaction with the product or services purchased, and this happens at the post-purchase evaluation stage (Dejsiriphun & Suviratvithayakit, 2011). Post-purchase evaluation is the final stage of the customer's decision-making process and is associated with post-purchase behaviour, most particularly customer satisfaction (Sabatayeva et al., 2018). Following their decision

to study abroad, international students will evaluate their experience. Sometimes, the term after-sales are used at the post-purchase evaluation stage (Dahl et al., 2016).

The post-purchase evaluation stage occurs after the customers has acquired a product or service or after the purchase stage (Dahl et al., 2016; Tsiotsou, & Wirtz, 2015). After purchasing the product, the consumer will assess the product performance (Mishra, 2018). This reveals the satisfaction or dissatisfaction of the consumer as measured by their perception, expectation, and satisfaction (Kathiravan, 2016). Therefore, to illustrate the post-purchase evaluation stage of the decision-making process of international students, student satisfaction was assessed.

International students will evaluate their decision to study abroad and its impact on their level of satisfaction at this stage. If they are satisfied, they will contribute to the enrolment of other potential students via positive word-of-mouth communication, resulting in a positive image for the HEIs and customer loyalty (Hamzah, 2017; Dahl et al., 2016). If they are dissatisfied, there will be future decline in the enrolment of international students. As a result, the host country will miss out on currency inflows and a global outlook (Pawar et al., 2019).

Unlike the post-purchase of goods, post-purchase evaluation of services is more complicated because service is high in experience qualities that can only be discerned post-purchase (Grace & O'Cass, 2014). For example, when travel agencies offer their holiday package, customers can only evaluate their purchases once they have travelled as the features of the services are intangible. The same goes for the education sector which focuses on the provision of services. The services acquired by the students will

influence their evaluation, whether good or poor. It is directly related to their satisfaction or dissatisfaction with the service (Jessie Chen-Yu & Doris Kincade, 2001). Table 2.6 shows the various definitions for post-purchase evaluation.

Table 2.6:
Definition of Post-Purchase Evaluation

Author	Definition of Post-Purchase evaluation
Mohammad (2019).	All the activities and experiences that follow pre-purchase and purchase are depend on whether the customer is satisfaction or dissatisfaction with their purchase.
Dejsiriphun, & Suviratvithayakit (2011).	The process after the purchasing process, where customers will evaluate their satisfaction and dissatisfaction of the product.

The operational definition for post-purchase evaluation in the context of this study follows the definition of Dejsiriphun and Suviratvithayakit (2011). Study abroad evaluation is the process that occur following the study abroad purchase decision process where international students will evaluate their decision and state whether they are satisfied or dissatisfied with it through the evaluation of many factors.

Essentially, for consumers who buy products or services, their post- purchase evaluation is essential to maintain them as customers. Knowing the customer's post-purchase evaluation allows traders or retailers to understand whether the customer is satisfied or vice versa. When customers are indirectly satisfied, the traders or retailers can maintain them as customers and later loyal customers. Similarly, in the field of education, customer satisfaction is essential. The services provided by the education provider must meet the needs of the customers. Once students see and feel the real situation, they will evaluate whether their decision right. Factors such as facilities and customer service influence their expectations. When consumers purchase a product and are satisfied with it, positive post-purchase outcomes are likely to take place.

These post-purchase outcomes include customer loyalty, positive word-of-mouth, and the intention to repurchase the product or services will occur (Chauke & Duh, 2019).

Thus, in post-purchase evaluations, international students will rate the HEIs services by stating whether they are satisfied or dissatisfied. Since international students are their customers, HEIs make it a priority to meet their expectations and needs because students are highly vocal in expressing their preferences (Uncles, 2018). Thus, assessing student satisfaction is critical because it serves as an indicator of a HEI's overall performance.

Moreover, international student satisfaction should be the principal objective of higher education sector. Therefore, if Malaysia wants to gain a sustainable competitive advantage in this highly competitive industry, the universities' management must acquire a comprehensive understanding of university services that have the greatest impact on student satisfaction (Hamzah & Abdullah, 2017).

Schiffman and Kanuak, (2004) as cited in Kumar et al. (2017) stated three possible post-purchase stage evaluation outcomes: neutral feeling, satisfaction, and not satisfied. Neutral feeling occurs when the actual performance matches the expected performance of the student, while satisfaction is when the actual performance is above the student's expected performance of the student. Finally, dissatisfaction occurs when the actual performance is below the student's expected performance (see Table 2.7). While Mishra (2018) divided post-purchase evaluation into three namely, satisfied, delight, and dissatisfaction.

Table 2.7:
Post-purchase Evaluation Outcomes

Author	Post-purchase evaluation	Explanation
Schiffman & Kanuak (2004, p.571)	A complete neutral feeling	Actual performance matches the expected performance.
	A feeling of satisfaction or delight	Actual performance is above the expected performance.
	A feeling of dissatisfaction	Actual performance is below the expected performance.
Mishra (2018)	Satisfied	The product performance is up to the expectation of the consumer.
	A feeling of delight	The product performance is beyond the expectations “of the consumer.
	Feeling of dissatisfaction	The product performance is not up to the expectation of the consumer.

Fundamentally, employees' service is argued to play an important role in consumers' service performance evaluations (Broderick, 1999, cited in Grace & O'Cass, 2004). If the employee provides excellent service to the customer, the customer will be satisfied. Therefore, universities must provide excellent service to satisfy their students (Hamzah, & Abdullah, 2017). Another study conducted in Turkey on service quality from the perspective of students revealed that the quality of facilities and support staff are two of the six factors affecting the service quality of HEIs from the perspective of students (Abbas, 2020).

Table 2.8:
Definition of Satisfaction

Author	Definition of Satisfaction
Sanchez, Callarisa, Rodriguez & Moliner, (2006)	Satisfaction depends on the experience of using the product or service.
Sanchez, Callarisa, Rodriguez & Moliner, (2006, p. 397)	Satisfaction is a comparison between the expectation of value (before the purchase) and the perceived post-purchase value (after the purchase).
Kotler et al., (2012)	Satisfaction is a person's feeling of pleasure or disappointment resulting from comparing a product's perceived performance (or outcome) concerning their expectation.
Worland, Black & Freeman, (2017).	Post-purchase satisfaction is the consumers' experience with their previous purchase.

A high level of satisfaction among students can lead to positive word of mouth regarding HE as well as the desire to make more purchases. A satisfied student would

increase student loyalty, give a good image to the HEI, and result in competitive advantage and the shaping of marketing and business strategies for the HEI (Hamzah, & Abdullah, 2017). It will also help in attracting more potential customers to the institutions.

Therefore, it is essential to predict and track the level of satisfaction among students from diverse cultural contexts studying in Malaysian HEIs. In turn, the insights gained into student satisfaction would allow universities to develop strategies to attract more students. (Sabatayeva et al., 2017). Finn and Darmody (2017) analysed the experiences of international students studying in higher education institutions in Ireland and found that the students' is shaped by several factors with the institution being the most prominent.

In general, student satisfaction is a multidimensional construct that can be influenced by different factors (Weerasinghe & Fernando, 2018). This study divided the students' post-purchase evaluation into service quality evaluation and university facilities evaluation.

2.5.1 Service Quality Evaluation

Weerasinghe and Fernando (2017) defined student satisfaction as a short-term attitude resulting from the students' evaluation of their educational experience as well as the services, and facilities provided to them. This satisfaction is the pleasure that someone derives from the consumption of goods or services offered by another person, group of people or organization (Agbor, 2011). How students evaluate their purchase is one exciting aspect to be discussed. Kotle and Keller (2003) adopted the SERVQUAL

approach to measure educational service quality, consisting of assurance, empathy, reliability, responsiveness, and tangibles (Parasuraman et al., 1988).

Parasuraman et al. (1985) proposed the SERVQUAL model consisting of 10 quality factors namely, dependability, responsiveness, competence, accessibility, courtesy, security, credibility, and tangibles. Later on, Parasuraman et al. (1988) reduced the criteria to five. The SERVQUAL model now includes dependability, responsiveness, assurance, empathy, and tangibles. SERVQUAL is a tool used in the service and retail industries. In higher education study, the SERVQUAL is a popular tool for assessing student satisfaction (Quinn et al., 2009). Service quality in HEIs is important, especially in private HEIs, as they offer their services at a higher price (Van Truong et al., 2016). However, there is no single set of components or variables used for measuring student satisfaction within this framework, as such different studies have used various sets of components (Arambewela & Hall, 2008; Gibson, 2010; Li-Wei, 2005). Regardless of this issue, the use of SERVQUAL as a tool for measuring satisfaction is still important (Sabatayeva et al., 2017).

Also, administrative and staff support is directly related to the quality of services provided. Eagerness to provide information, good manners, understanding the problems at hand, problem-solving abilities, and effectiveness are some of the important factors influencing international students' satisfaction while studying abroad. Administrative and staff support is one of the most important factors influencing international students' satisfaction while studying in Thailand (Ngamkamollert & Ruangkanjanases, 2015). Abbas (2020) indicated that support staff quality is one of the indicators of service quality from students' perspective in Turkey.

An improvement in service quality can increase and cultivate consumer satisfaction, leading to the retention of valued customers (Ravichandran et al., 2010).

However, a study conducted in Vietnam discovered a moderately positive correlation between service quality variables and student satisfaction, indicating that there is still room for continuous improvement (Van Truong et al., 2016).

2.5.2 University Facilities Evaluation

International student will evaluate the facilities provided by the HEIs, which will influence their satisfaction (Weerasinghe & Fernando, 2017). Yee et al. (2018) found that one of the factors influencing international students' satisfaction in Malaysia is the internal environment which includes academic and non-academic factors such as academic facilities, recreation and sports clubs and societies. This demonstrates that international students evaluate the facilities provided by the HEIs where they are studying.

Another quantitative study was carried out at the Vietnam National University. Out of 618 third-year students from 24 departments and faculties at the university, 618 were found to be moderately satisfied with the campus environment, including the campus landscape, parking, and conservation (Duong, 2015). Table 2.9 below shows the summary of empirical studies on post-purchase evaluation factors.

Table 2.9:

Summary of Empirical Studies on Post-Purchase Evaluation Factors.

Author	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
Abbas (2020)			√								
Abdulmalik Adozuka					√						
Aliu & Nor Rima											
Muhamad Ariff (2018)											
Napitupulu, Rahim, Abdullah, Setiawan, Abdillah, Ahmar, & Pranolo (2018)		√	√		√						
Vallejo, Stefos & Narvaez (2018).			√						√		
Weerasinghe & Fernando (2018).			√		√					√	
Hamzah & Abdullah (2017)									√		
Santini, Ladeira, Sampaio, & Da Silva Costa (2017)	√	√	√			√	√	√			
Sabatayeva, Saduov, Madiyarova, Jempeissova, Selezneva, Shtiller & Fursova, (2017).			√		√						
Van Truong, Pham & Vo (2016).				√							
Ngamkamollert & Ruangkanjanases (2015)	√		√							√	
Duong (2015)							√				
Ahmad (2014)											√

Note: 1. Educational Services 2. Resources Provided 3. Service Quality 4. SERVQUAL 5. Facilities 6. Marketing Orientation 7. University Environment 8. Identity of the Higher Education 9. Social Adjustment (Emotion)/ Personal 10. Image and Prestige of the University 11. SERVPERF

2.6 Influencing Factors

Once the student decides to go abroad, many push-pull factors such as home country, host country, and personal factors influence the student's decision (Akalamkam & Mitra, 2018). As discussed above, need recognition is one of the pre-purchase stage elements related to factors influencing the student's decision. Once the student recognizes his need, he will search for information to help him decide. International students use various information sources including university websites, social media, agent, and information from reference groups such as friends (Kusumawati, 2020).

From all the information gathered, the international students will evaluate their alternatives. The evaluation of alternatives helps the students rank their various options. This is related to decision factor such as academic factors, which help the students decide whether or not to study abroad. All the factors are discussed further below.

2.6.1 Home Country Factors

Home country factors push students to study abroad (Ghazarian, 2016). Political, economic, and educational conditions in the home country are factors that student will consider before deciding to study abroad. These factors are referred to as push factors. Push factors are the internal motivators that drive consumers to fulfil certain desires (Shkoler, & Rabenu, 2023). In the context of studying abroad, push factors are perceived as factors that cause students to be pushed away from their home country due to insufficient educational resources (Shkoler, & Rabenu, 2023). Previously, less attention was placed on the home country factors as there is a small sign of push factors in the decision-making process (Rembielak et al., 2020). At the same time, economic condition and political condition are the most studied push factors in this context (Rembielak et al., 2020; Choy & Lau, 2019; Sung & Lin, 2018).

In general, when students are faced with an unfavourable condition in their home country, such as unstable political and economic conditions, they will be motivated to study abroad. Choy and Lau (2019) found that the poor political environment in China encouraged students to study in Taiwan. In Vietnam, the Hanoitimes (June 2018) reveal that due to poor education quality in the home country, as many as 110,000 Vietnamese students have decided to study abroad in 47 countries which contributed

to the outflow of US\$3 to \$4 billion a year. This is supported by Izadi Yazdan Abadi (2022), who discovered that Iran's unstable political and economic situation had influenced Iranian students to look for study opportunities abroad.

Besides political and economic conditions, the home country's education condition also influences students to study abroad. In a recent study, Rembielak et al. (2020) found that less innovative programmes offered in the home country had motivated students to study abroad. Limited access to local higher institutions also influences students to study abroad (Ahmad et al., 2016; Oliveira & Soares, 2016).

Political, economic, and educational conditions in the home country influence individual decisions to study abroad (Kim Khanh & Ngoc, 2022). Rembielak et al. (2020) found that economic, educational, and political factors had influenced the decision of international students from Poland to study in the UK.

Previously, the movement of students to study abroad was from developing countries to developed countries. Recently, there has been a shift of students moving from developed countries to Asian countries such as Malaysia. Several studies on Malaysia as a destination country have shown that home country conditions have pushed international students to further their study in Malaysia. Many unfavourable home country factors influence students to study abroad, such as political and economic instability as well as limited access to HEIs, as shown in Table 2.10.

Table 2.10:

Summary of Empirical Studies on Home Country Factors that Influence International Student to Study Abroad.

Authors	Economic Condition	Political Condition	Education Conditions	Admission Process/ Limited Access to HEIs	Financial Aid/ Scholarship
Izadi Yazdan Abadi (2022)	√	√			
Kim Khanh & Ngoc (2022)	√				
Rembielak, Rashid, Parlińska (2020)	√		√		
Choy & Lau (2019)		√			
Nghia (2019)			√		
Sung & Lin (2018)	√	√			
Nafari, Arab, & Ghaffari (2017)	√	√			
Whatley (2017)					√
Singh (2016)			√		
Ahmad, Buchanan, & Ahmad (2016)				√	
Oliveira & Soares (2016)				√	

2.6.2 Host Country Factors

Another external factor that influences students to study abroad is the host country factors. The conditions of the host country are known as the pull factor. Pull factors operate within the host country and make it more appealing to international students (Rembielak et al., 2020). Various aspects of the host country, such as stable political conditions, availability of information, education environment, lifestyles, and cultural attraction, motivate students to study abroad. Some of the previous empirical research on this subject had focused solely on specific host countries such as Malaysia, Australia, China, India, the UK, and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) (Rembielak et al., 2020; Zhang, 2019). Others meanwhile had studied the host country factors in general (Zhu, & Reeves, 2019; Acheampong et al., 2018).

A study conducted in Malaysia by Chin (2019) revealed Malaysia's political stability and open-market economy provided a secure environment for international students,

thus attracting them to study here. The availability of information about the host country is also important for the student in making a decision.

Cultural attraction and lifestyle in the host country are also push factors that influence students to study abroad. Malaysia attracts many international students due to its culture that is similar to that of the international students' home countries (Singh, 2016). In another example, international students choose Yunnan as they are attracted to its colourful culture and cultural heritage (Zhang, 2019). Cultural factors have been cited the most in the relevant literature (Rembielak et al., 2020; Zhang, 2019; Moogan, 2018).

Other factors such as geographic location and proximity to the students' family home have major impacts on the students' choice of host country (Gill et al., 2018). Geographical proximity is related to the geographical closeness of the potential destination country to the student's home country (Mazzarol & Soutar, 2002). Geographical proximity indirectly influences the travelling time. A greater distance between the host country and the home country would incur the student, a longer travelling time and higher travelling cost. Ahmad and Buchanan (2016) found that international students prefer to choose a host country that is close to their home country. Similarly, Oliveira and Soares (2016) proposed short travelling distances as a strong factor influencing student to study abroad.

In comparing international and local students on recommendation and references factors, Lei et al. (2021) found that recommendations from others, such as family and friends, are one of the most important factors influencing students to study abroad.

Meanwhile, Alfattal (2017) discovered that family recommendation are the main factors that influence students to study abroad. Financial aids and scholarship offered by the host country are among the current factors attract students to study abroad (Gbollie & Gong, 2020; Rembielak et al., 2020; Zhang, 2019; Alfattal, 2017). Financial aids and scholarships, it helps students in terms of study cost. The host country's scholarship is an attractive factor influencing students to study abroad (Zhang 2019). Apart from scholarships, student loans are also offered by the host country or institution, but they have a negative influence on the decision of students to study abroad (Whatley, 2017).

Table 2.11 below shows the summary of empirical studies on host country factors that influence the decision of international students to study abroad. It shows that the country's environment safety/political stability, geographical location /proximity, cultural/ lifestyle, social references/ recommendation, and host country government incentives (eg: financial aids/scholarship)/policy are the factors that have been extensively studied in the past.

Table 2.11:

Summary of Empirical Studies on Host Country Factors that Influence International Students to Study Abroad.

Author	Host Country	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Lei et al., (2021)	-							√			
Gbollie & Gong (2020)											√
Rembielak, Rashid, Parlińska (2020)	UK			√	√						√
Zulkifli, Abdul-Aziz, Jamil, Ali & Emilda (2020).	-				√						
Lei et al. (2021)								√			
Choy & Lau (2019)	Taiwan/ HK		√								
Snodin (2019)	-			√	√						√
Khanal & Gaulee (2019)	-	√					√				
Zhang (2019)	China		√	√	√						√
Zhu & Reeves (2019)	-		√				√				
Pawar, Dasgupta & Vispute (2019).	India				√					√	

Table 2.11 (Continued)

Chin (2019)	Malaysia	√								
Tamtik (2019)	Canada			√						
Liu, Kamnuansilpa & Hirofumi (2018)	-		√							
Gill, Rodeiro, and Zanini 2018	-			√						
Nicholls (2018)	-	√								
Moogan (2018)	UK						√			
Derrick Acheampong, Liu Yu, Kenneth Wilson Adjei Budu, Kingsford Kissi Mireku. (2018).	China			√						√
Singh & Srivastava (2018)	-	√								
Marjanović & Križman Pavlović (2018)	-			√						√
Alfattal (2017)	-		√				√			√
Nafari, Arab & Ghaffari (2017)	-	√			√	√			√	√
Jupiter, Othman, Suki, Yusoff, Awang & Razak (2017).	-		√							
Whatley (2017)	-									√
Ahmad, Buchanan, & Ahmad (2016).	UAE		√				√			
Singh (2016)	Malaysia	√	√			√	√	√		
Ahmad & Buchanan (2015).	Malaysia	√	√	√		√	√	√	√	√

Note: 1. Host Country Information 2. Country Environment Safety/Political Stability 3. Geographical Location /Proximity 4. Cultural/ Lifestyle 5. Language Commonality 6. Visa Processing 7. Social References/ Recommendation 8. Religion 9. Job Opportunities 10. Host Country Government Incentives (eg: financial aids/scholarship)/Policy.

2.6.3 Cost

Students studying abroad would incur various costs including program cost, tuition fees, accommodation cost, and living costs. This greatly influences their decision to move (Shkoler & Rabenu, 2023). Wen and Hu (2019) found that education cost is one of the main factors that influence Asian students compared to students from Europe to study in China. Similarly, Yusuf et al. (2017) stated that cost greatly influences international students' decision to study in Malaysia. More importantly, the authors concluded that the institution's location and the influence of others are important factors that the respondents consider when making a decision. However, this study did not focus on a certain category of higher education institutions. For example, Malaysia has two different types of higher education (public and private). Different categories may come up with different results. Some studies had focused on the cost of education as one of the important factors influencing students to study abroad (Amani & Kim,

2018). In contrast, Qasim et al. (2020) found that cost of the education is non influential in this case.

2.6.4 Personal Factors

International students will choose to study abroad if they recognise the need to physically experience life and believe that studying in a host country will provide them with an enriching educational experience (Nghia, 2019). The international experience that the student will gain, such as personal development and growth, when they study abroad, motivates them to leave their home country.

In Australia, the government encourages institutional diversity. Shah et al. (2012) studied the factors influencing students to study abroad and grouped the factor into six: learning environment, student perception, access, and opportunity, graduate success, quality of teacher, and course design. Out of all the factors, student perception is the main factor influencing students to study abroad (Shah et al., 2012; Schnusenberg et al., 2012) on top of intercultural experience (Tompkin et al., 2017).

Personal growth, improvement of language ability, and future career are also factors considered as the personal factors that push students to study abroad. International experience studying abroad would help the student in finding a better job, as asserted by Rembielak et al. (2020, p.9):

“If you graduate from a British university, it is definitely better for you to find a prestigious job in Poland. Employers value you higher as they know you speak fluent English, and you have more practical experience.”

In addition, Gbollie and Gong (2020) found that career development is the most significant factor influencing Asian and African international students to study abroad.

Michelle Bartlett et al. (2018) found that Chinese students choose to study abroad because they know that getting a degree in a developed country will help them get a better job in the future. Table 2.12 shows the summary of empirical studies on personal factors that influence international student to study abroad.

Table 2.12:

Summary of Empirical Studies on Personal Factors that Influence International Student to Study Abroad.

Author	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Wang & Crawford (2021)					√		
Gbollie & Gong (2020)		√		√			
Zulkifli, Abdul-Aziz, Jamil, & Ali & Emilda (2020).		√				√	
Liwiski (2019)			√				
Nghia (2019)					√		
Zhu & Reeves (2019)	√	√			√	√	√
Pawar, Dasgupta & Vispute (2019).	√						
Yang, Volet, & Mansfield (2018)		√				√	
Moogan (2018)		√					
Michelle Bartlett, Wei Han, James Bartlett (2018)					√		
Nafari, Arab & Ghaffari (2017)	√			√			

Note: 1. Language benefits/ English 2. Career development/ Prospect 3. Future income 4. Value of overseas degree/ Value of Study Abroad 5. Employment opportunities/ Better job 6. Foreign/ Learning Experience 7. Cultural Adventure/Experience

2.6.5 Information Sources

Searching for information is an essential step for students to decide where to study, what to study and minimising the margin of error in their decision (Areces et al., 2016). Before deciding and choosing the institution to study in, international students will explore information from various source to assist them in making a decision. The information they received is critical because inaccurate information leads to poor decision making.

European developed countries such as Germany, Spain and the UK have created promotion activities and information dissemination incentives to attract and retain non-EU/EEA international students in these respective countries (Dubow et al., 2020).

This illustrates the need for a source of information in dealing with the challenge of attracting international students.

When consumers develop a need or desire, they begin with an information search to identify various alternatives to satisfy that need or desire. This is the second stage of decision making, known as information search and sources (Stankevich, 2017). Once the students have decided to study abroad, they will search for information about the host country's HEIs and begin to narrow down their choices. For this study, information sources are classified as internal, external, or interpersonal.

2.6.5.1 Internal Sources

Internal sources of information are sources that can be controlled by the HEIs (Branco Oliveira, & Soares, 2016). HEIs can use different internal sources such as university websites, university fairs and direct communication through email, fax, or newsletters. These tools are considered as internal sources of information search in disseminating information to the prospective student. For example, HEIs use university websites to disseminate information about the programs they offer. They also provide students with detailed information, such as tuition fees, requirements, program offers and application process.

When initiating an information search, students may start searching on the university website, as it can be utilised as a useful platform to influence students' decisions to study abroad (Wilkins & He, 2020). Based on Wang and Crawford's (2021) findings, the university website is considered as one of the most useful information sources for students when searching for an institution. John and De'Villiers (2020) reported that websites influence consumers' decisions. The significance of websites cannot be

neglected, as they possess a vast audience and hold immense potential for impact. Therefore, it is imperative for educational institutions to furnish prospective students with the necessary information to enable them to make well-informed decisions. Zhu (2019) discovered a positive relationship between HEIs' social media participation and the increase in international students studying abroad.

Besides university websites, students also search for information through the host country's websites and advertisements (Branco Oliveira, & Soares, 2016; Saif et al., 2016).

In conclusion, the internal source of information is measured by the university website (Wilkins & He, 2020; John & De'Villiers, 2020; Zhu, 2019; James-MacEachern & Yun, 2017) and host country website (Branco Oliveira, & Soares, 2016). Other than internal sources of information, international students also search for information from external sources.

2.6.5.2 External Sources

External sources of information are those that cannot be controlled by the institutions (Branco Oliveira, & Soares, 2016). Social media, agents and alumni are the international students' sources to get more information before deciding to study abroad.

Social media refers to relatively new and rapidly expanding technologies that facilitate that facilitate interactive communication and information exchange between internet users and businesses (Teng, Khong, & Chong, 2015). Today, institutions are

increasingly using social media to market higher education to students (Teng, Khong, & Chong, 2015). This communication channel entails many online platforms, such as Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and YouTube. Beech (2015) interviewed international students at three higher education institutions in the United Kingdom (UK) and found that social media influences international students to study abroad. Furthermore, Constantinides and Stagno, (2011) as cited in Teng, Khong, and Chong, (2015) indicated that social media plays an important role and has a significant impact on the selection of universities by students in the Netherlands. Additionally, previous studies have found that social media also contributes to the increasing the number of enrolments in education institutions (Barnes & Mattson, 2009).

Mason et al. (2021) findings showed that social media's importance has grown since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Social media had improved the communication between the institution and students. Through social media current student also influence the decision of prospective students about certain HEIs. This could sufficiently influence the prospective student to consider the university as his main choice (Beech, 2015).

In addition to social media, agents and alumni are also potential sources of information that may exert an influence on the decision of international students to study abroad (Moogan, 2018). Agents act as an intermediary between the institution and international students. The agent assists the international students in making decisions, including choosing the host country and education institution, providing up-to-date information on the application process, and providing answers to any questions that the students may have (flywire.com, 2023). Lim (2022) stated that an agent helps international students in making decisions to study abroad by providing information

related to the host country and choice of universities. In contrast, Budjko (2019) does not see agents as a source of information in international students' decision-making. Alumni are also a resource used by international students when making decisions to study abroad. Wang and Crawford (2021) found that the alumni have the least influence on Chinese international students' decision to study abroad. The study found that Chinese international students increasingly use social media more than the alumni to get information about studying abroad.

In conclusion, external information sources are measured by social media (Mason et al., 2021), agents (Andrew Lim 2022; Moogan, 2018) and alumni (Wang & Crawford, 2021; Moogan, 2018).

2.6.5.3 Interpersonal Sources

Besides the internal and external sources of information, international students can get information about studying abroad from interpersonal sources. Interpersonal sources refer to a person or group whose beliefs are important to the international student, such as family and friends (Hegner et al., 2017). For example, if an international student believes that his family approves of his decision to study abroad, he will consider doing. Lei et al., (2021) discovered that friends are the primary sources of information that can influence a student's decision. Calitz et al. (2020), also stated that family members and friends might influence students in their decision to study abroad, both directly and indirectly.

Wang and Crawford (2021) reported that family influence strongly affects student's education choice. In a further study, Snodin (2019) reported family as the push factor

influencing Thailand students' choice of international education. Family influences from finances, information, expectation, persuasion, and competition were investigated in the study. A study conducted in Asian countries including Taiwan and Thailand showed a positive relationship between family and friends and studying abroad (Manning, 2020; Snodin, 2019). Dubow et al. (2020) attained a similar finding in the context of a developed country namely the UK. They showed that family members are the most reliable source of information regarding overseas education. Zulkifli et al. (2020) restated the importance of social groups, friends, family, and teachers in influencing the decision to study abroad.

In conclusion, interpersonal sources of information sources have been measured by various elements including family (Wang & Crawford, 2021; Zulkifli et al., 2020; Manning, 2020; Calitz et al., 2020; Snodin, 2019), friends (Zulkifli et al., 2020; Snodin, 2019; Wang et al., 2016), and relatives (Kakkad & Nair, 2015). Table 2.13 shows summary of empirical studies on information source factors that influence international students to study abroad.

Table 2.13:

Summary of Empirical Studies on Information Source Factors that Influences International Students to Study Abroad

Author	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
Wang & Crawford (2021)					√	√	√			√		
Lei et al., (2021)										√		
Dubow, Marchand, & Siegel, (2020)												√
Calitz, Cullen & Jooste (2020), Wilkins & He (2020)	√						√			√		
Calikoglu (2018)			√									
Sarah Bukhari, Suraya Hamid, Sri Devi Ravana, & Mohamad Taha Ijab (2018)						√						
Whatley (2018)										√		
Moogan (2018)				√	√	√						
James-MacEachern & Yun (2017)	√						√			√		
Amani & Kim (2017)							√			√		
Wang, Gault, Christ and Diggin (2016)							√			√		
Saif, Nipa & Siddique (2016).			√									

Branco Oliveira, & Soares, (2016)	√	√	√	√
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Note: 1. HEI Website 2. Host Country Government Website 3. Advertisement 4. Alumni 5. Agent 6. Social Media 7. Parents/Family 8. Sibling 9. Relatives 10. Friends 11. Teacher 12. General Discussion on Information Source of Information

2.6.6 Academic Factors

Academic factor includes the institution's image, institution quality and ranking, and the programs and courses offered by the institution.

Quality of education and the ranking of the university and programme are the most critical factors influencing students' education destination choice (Nicholls, 2018). Qasim et al. (2020) conducted a study in Iraq and found that university reputation influences students' decisions. In addition, Pawar et al. (2020) found quality of education as one of the most important factors in the host country influencing international students' destination choice of higher education institutions in India. These empirical studies show that academic reputation, quality, and the programmes or courses offered are the main factors that students will look at before deciding to study abroad.

Several studies revealed that the reputation of the university influences students' decision to study abroad, such as in China (Wen & Hu, 2019; Cheung et al., 2019; Pawar et al., 2019; Zhu & Reeves, 2019). In contrast, Yusuf et al. (2017) found that the reputation of the university and the programmes offered do not influence students to study in higher education institutions in Malaysia.

In Malaysia, Malaysia Research Assessment (MyRA) was created to improve the quality of HEIs. Institutions are working hard to increase their ranking and quality in the aspect of learning, teaching, and research. With a good ranking, the international

student is more confident in choosing the institution as their study destination. Table 2.14 below shows the summary of empirical studies on factors that influence international students to study abroad.

Table 2.14:

Summary of Empirical Studies on the Factors of Academic that Influences International Student to Study Abroad.

Author	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
Wong, Cheung & Yuen (2020)	√										
Zulkifli, Abdul-Aziz, Jamil, Ali & Emilda (2020).	√										
Qasim, Al-Askari, Massoud, & Ayoubi (2020).	√	√			√				√	√	
Rembielak, Rashid, Parlińska (2020)	√	√							√		
Al-Saadi, Malallah, AL-Kalbani, Al-Saadi, Al-Saadi, Al-Saadi, Al-Balushi, & Al-Saadi (2020).								√			
Wen & Hu, 2019	√										
Cheung, Guo, Wang & Miao (2019)	√	√									
Pawar, Dasgupta & Vispute (2019).	√										
Zhu & Reeves (2019)	√			√		√	√	√			
Singh & Srivastava (2018)	√										
Raczkoski, Robinson, Edwards & Baker (2018)					√						
Derrick Acheampong, Liu Yu, Kenneth Wilson Adjei Budu, Kingsford Kissi Mireku. (2018).	√				√						
Moogan (2018)	√				√			√			√
Yang, Volet & Mansfield (2018)								√			
Nicholls (2018)	√	√	√		√	√				√	
Alfattal (2017)	√	√		√	√				√		
Jupiter, Othman, Suki, Yusoff, Awang & Razak (2017).	√	√			√						
Nafari, Arab & Ghaffari (2017)	√			√			√				

Note: 1. HEI/Academic Reputation/Image/ Quality 2. Academic Program/Courses 3. Location 4. Academic Admission Process 5. Academic Cost/ Tuition Fees 6. Cost of Living 7. Visa Processing 8. Influence from Others 9. HEIs Facilities/ Infrastructure 10. Academic Staff Reputation/ Quality 11. Internship Opportunities.

Many factors influence student to study abroad including home country, host country, the outcome of the international experience, internal source, external source, interpersonal source, academic reputation and quality, education offer and cost. Together, all the empirical studies provide important insights into how international students decide to study abroad. With the increasing number of international students

studying abroad, studies exploring the reasons for them doing so and how they evaluate their decision behave become critical.

2.7 Decision to Study Abroad

The influencing factors to study abroad can impact the international students' purchase decision and finally their post-purchase evaluation, namely, their satisfaction. The second stage of the decision-making process is the purchase decision. Decisions act as direct responses to antecedents (Vidal-Ayuso et al., 2023). Once students have decided which institution they want to attend, they must decide and make the actual purchase (Mishra, 2018). For the study abroad decision-making process, after the student has evaluated all the factors, he will decide the host country and institution to enrol in. In the context of studying abroad, a purchase is a process where international students make their decision.

Additionally, the purchase is also associated with post-purchase evaluation. After the student makes a purchase and uses the services or goods, he will evaluate if he is satisfied or dissatisfied with the services received. The purchase decision directly has a positive and significant effect on customer evaluation and satisfaction (Anggriani et al., 2022; Yanto et al., 2020). For example, Moslehpour et al. (2020) reported that service quality provided by the HEIs influences student satisfaction. This is supported by Hwang and Choi (2019) who stated that university service quality has a significant and positive effect on student satisfaction. Other than the quality of services, international students also evaluate the facilities provided by the university, which significantly influence their satisfaction levels (Khan & Haque, 2018).

Purchase decision can also be regarded as the mediator between the influencing factors and post-purchase evaluation. A mediator is a variable that surfaces as a function of the independent variable and helps explain why such a relationship exists between the independent and dependent variables (Sekaran & Bougie, 2019). A study on a restaurant showed that the independent variable has an indirect and significant effect on the dependent variable of customer satisfaction through the mediating variable of purchase decision. Furthermore, a study on airline services discovered that decisions strongly mediate the relationship between passenger concern and their satisfaction with the airport (Romadlon et al., 2022). This shows that purchase decisions can be a good mediating variable.

On the other hand, purchase decision does not serve as a mediating variable in a study on organic food (Chauke & Duh, 2019). This is supported by a study on the banking industry which found the insignificant mediating role of financial decisions in the relationship between capital structure and firm performance (Imelda & Himelda, 2021).

2.8 Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework utilized in this study are Push and Pull Theory (PPT) described by Mazzarol and Soutar (2002) and the Decision-Making Model (DMM) of International Students by Branco Oliveira and Soares (2016). The PPT and the DMM are suitable for analysing the connection between the influencing factors, study abroad decision, and post-purchase evaluation.

Based on the theory and model, the conceptual framework is illustrated in Figure 2.7 above, which explains how the influencing factors are expected to affect the study

abroad purchase decision and post-purchase evaluation. The framework shows that the influencing factors (home country, host country, cost, information source, personal, and academic factors) are hypothesised to influence the degree of study abroad purchase decision and post-purchase evaluation significantly. As each hypothesis is developed, more details of the research framework are discussed in subsequent sections.

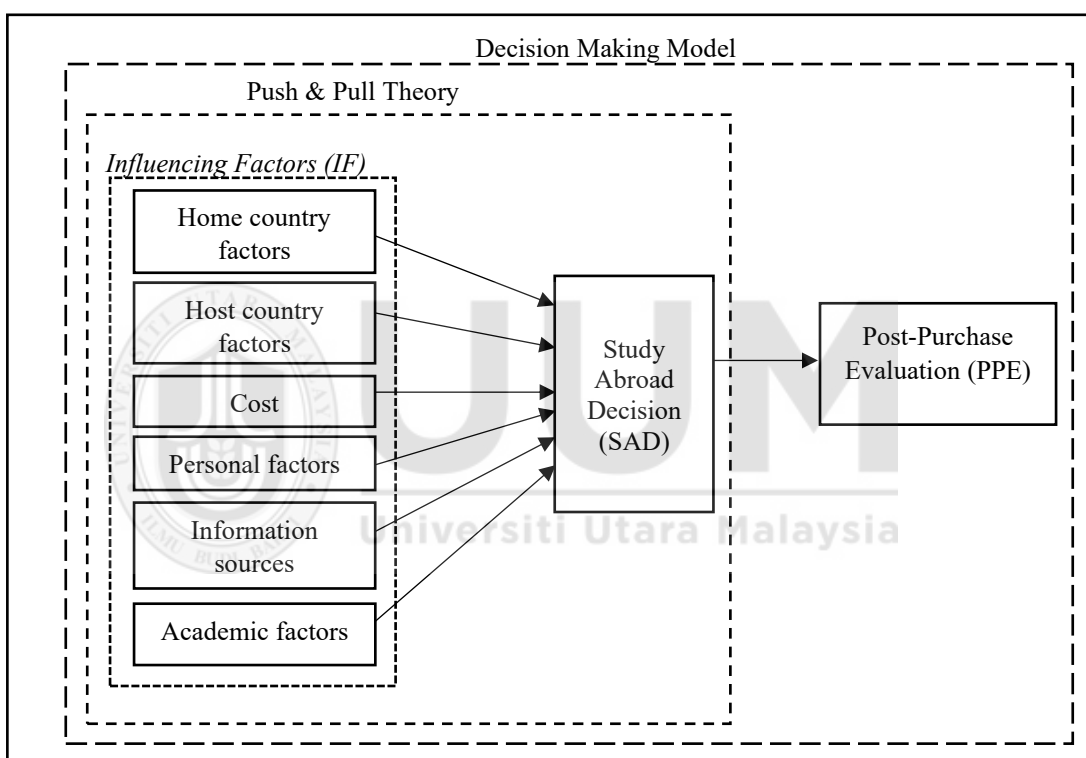


Figure 2.7:
Conceptual Framework of the International Student Decision Making Process

2.9 Research Framework

Pull and Push Theory by Mazzarol and Soutar (2002) and the Decision Making Model of International Students by Branco Oliveira and Soares (2016) were used extensively in this study as presented in Figure 2.7 as the basis for the research framework.

As presented in Figure 2.8 below, the study theorizes that home country, host country, cost, information source, outcome, and academic reputation would influence the international students decision to study abroad. The study also theorizes that study abroad decision would affect the international students' post-purchase evaluation.

As in Figure 2.8, the main constructs are home country, host country, information source, outcome, academic, and cost as the independent variables, study abroad decision as the mediating variables, and post-purchase evaluation as the dependent variable. Figure 2.9 further illustrates the relationship between the influencing factors, study abroad decision, and post-purchase evaluation which this research aims to develop and test. In the following sections, nine main hypotheses are proposed to validate the framework.

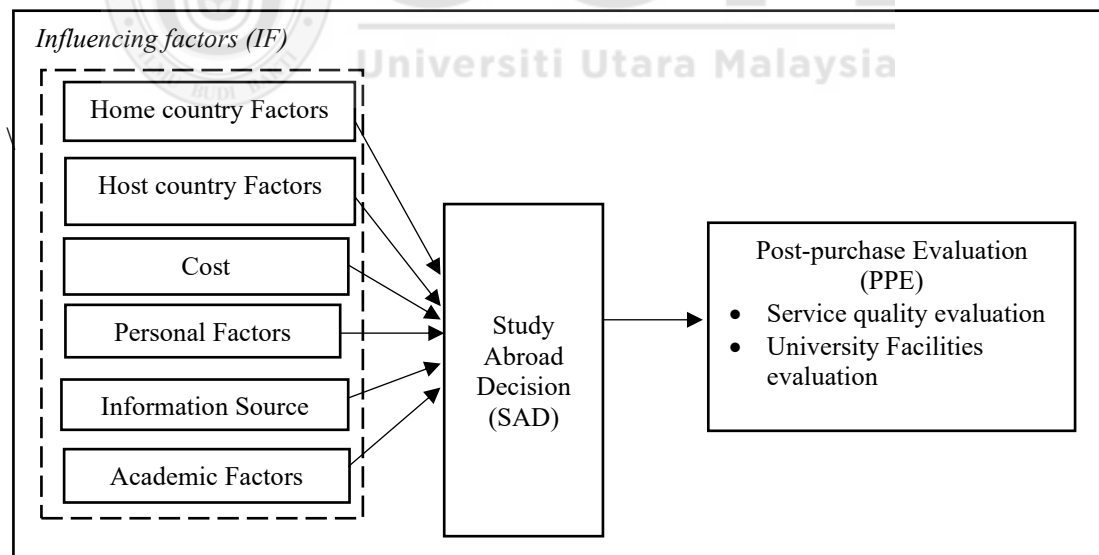


Figure 2.8:
Research Framework of the International Students' Decision-Making Process

2.10 Hypotheses Development

Students choose to study abroad because of several reasons. Freeman (as cited in Tan, 2015, p.2) stated that students from diverse countries and cultures display different behaviours, and that there are several reasons for their decision to study abroad. The factors influencing international students to study abroad have been explored in numerous studies (Hurst, 2018; James-MacEachern, & Yun, 2017). Some of the factors can be grouped as factors that motivate students to leave their home country and opt for foreign institutions in the host country (Branco Oliveira, & Soares, 2016). These factors are also known as push and pull factors, as described by Mazzarol and Soutar (2002). Some of the factors that lead students to study abroad are the condition of the home country, international experience, the environment of the host country, availability of information on the host country, location, and cost of living in the host country (Tompkin et al., 2017; Nafari et al., 2017; Branco Oliveira, & Soares, 2016; Tan, 2015; Hujak, 2015).

Many factors influence students to study abroad, and students from different countries are influenced by different factors (Kusumawati, 2013). For example, James-MacEachern and Yun (2017) conducted a study which revealed that Chinese students' decision to study abroad is influenced by various factors such as sources of information, pull factors and reference groups. For source of information, international students from China are more likely to use sources from agents and local government websites than students from other nationalities.

For Iranian students, home country environment, aids and scholarships provided by host countries, and cost issues, are the main factors that influence them to study abroad

(Nafari et al., 2017). On the contrary, Tan (2015) found friend and family recommendation as the main influencing factor for international students from different nationalities to study in South Texas, US. This shows that various factors influence international students' decision to study abroad based on previous empirical studies. As discussed in Section 2.6, there are six factors influencing international student decision to study abroad namely home country factors, host country factors, cost, personal factors, information sources, and academic factors. Research hypotheses for this study were developed based on the research framework, as illustrated in Figure 2.9.

2.10.1 Home Country Factors

Students' decision to pursue studies in their home country or abroad is influenced by the country's current situations. Kim Khanh and Ngoc (2022) revealed that international students decide to study in Vietnam due to undesirable economic situations in their home country. Likewise, Rembielak et al. (2020) and Nafari et al. (2017) discovered that uncertain economic conditions in the home nation influence international students to study abroad.

Rembielak et al. (2020) added educational conditions in the home country as another push factor. This is supported by Nghia (2019) who noted the poor quality of university education, inappropriate practices in the local educational system, lack of a preferred programme, and competitive entry into higher institutions as reasons why local students study abroad. Nafari et al. (2017) found that uncertain political conditions in Iran drive Iranian students to study abroad.

Previous empirical studies have also revealed that the home country significantly influences student decision to study abroad as illustrated in Table 2.15 (Kim Khanh & Ngoc, 2022; Rembielak et al., 2020; Nghia 2019; Nafari et al., 2017).

Table 2.15:
Summary of Studies on Home Country Factors and Study Abroad.

Name	Area	Finding
Kim Khanh & Ngoc, (2022)	Attracting international students to a developing Asian country: Push–pull factors for a niche market, the case of a Vietnamese higher education institution.	Significant (negative)
Rembielak et al. (2020)	Factors influencing students’ choices and decision-making process: A case study of Polish students studying in a British higher education institution.	Significant (negative)
Nghia (2019)	Motivations for studying abroad and immigration intentions: The case of Vietnamese students.	Significant (negative)
Nafari et al. (2017)	Through the looking glass: Analysis of factors influencing Iranian student's study abroad motivations and destination choice.	Significant (negative)

Based on the prior arguments, the following hypothesis is proposed regarding the relationship between home country factors and study abroad decision.

- H1: Home country factors has a significant and negative influence on international students' decision to study at a private university in Malaysia.

2.10.2 Host Country Factors

Various factors related to the host country also influence international students' decision to study abroad. The more fascinating the factors in the host country, the more likely that the country will be chosen. Some of the host country factors are political and economic conditions, lifestyle, culture, financial aid, scholarship, education loan, and geographic location.

Financial aid provided by the host country is seen as one of the factors that attracts international students to study there. This factor is seen to have a significant

relationship with studying abroad (Derrick Acheampong et al., 2018). A study conducted in China discovered that the availability of scholarship opportunities in the host country influences African and Asian students to study at Chinese universities (Gbollie & Gong, 2020). In addition, Whatley (2017) also reported that financial aid provided by the host country positively increases international students' decision to study abroad. Apart from financial aid, student loans may also be offered by the host country or higher education institution, but they have a negative influence on the decision of students to study abroad (Whatley, 2017).

Aside from financial aid, host country factors such as lifestyle and culture also significantly influence students to study abroad (Acheampong et al., 2018). Wong et al. (2020) found that the lifestyle in the host country influences Macau students to study there. In addition, geographic location and proximity also influence the students' choice of host country (Gill et al., 2018) on top of the political and economic stability of the home country. Chin (2019) revealed that Malaysia's political stability and open-market economy provide a secure environment for international students, thus attracting them to study here.

Previous empirical studies have revealed that the host country significantly influences student decision to study abroad as illustrated in Table 2.16 (Chin, 2019; Derrick Acheampong et al., 2018; Gill et al., 2018; Whatley, 2017).

Table 2.16:
Summary of Studies on Host Country Factors and Study Abroad.

Name		Area	Finding
Gbollie & Gong, (2020).	Emerging destination mobility: Exploring African and Asian international students' push-pull factors and motivations to study in China		Significant (positive)

Table 2.16 (Continued)		
Wong et al. (2020)	A study of the mobility of mainland students: factors and issues behind pursuing a teacher education program in Macau	Significant (positive)
Chin (2019)	Malaysia: From hub to exporter of higher education and implications.	Significant (positive)
Acheampong et al., (2019)	Factors Influencing International Students' Selection of Universities in China: A Case Study of Selected Universities in China	Significant (positive)

Based on the prior arguments, the following hypothesis is proposed on the relationship between host country factors and study abroad decision.

H2: Host country factors has a significant and positive influence on international students' decision to study at a private university in Malaysia.

2.10.3 Cost

Cost is one of the factors considered during the decision-making process to study abroad and become the critical factor influencing students' decision to study abroad (Nicholls, 2018). Among the costs involved are accommodation and living costs, as well as tuition fees. The cost of living is a significant consideration when deciding where to study abroad. The tuition fee is also an essential factor that students frequently consider. Hence, these are the main factors that motivate international students to study abroad (Wong et al., 2020).

Trujillo et al. (2020) reported that one of the important factors in attracting international students to study in Hungary is the low cost of living. This is aligned with the assertion of Wong et al. (2020) that the lower cost of study is one of the significant factors influencing Macau students to study abroad in the US, Australia, and Singapore. In addition, Acheampong et al. (2019) identified that cost-related issues such as fees and cost of living affect international students' decision to study abroad in China.

Previous empirical studies revealed that cost significantly influences students' decision to study abroad as illustrated in Table 2.17 (Wong et al., 2020; Trujillo et al., 2020; Acheampong et al., 2019).

Table 2.17:
Summary of Studies on Cost Factors and Study Abroad.

Name	Area	Finding
Wong et al. (2020)	A study of the mobility of mainland students: factors and issues behind pursuing a teacher education program in Macau.	Significant
Trujillo et al. (2020)	Students' Motivations to Study Abroad: The Case of International Students at the University of Debrecen	Significant
Acheampong et al. (2019)	Factors Influencing International Students' Selection of Universities in China: A Case Study of Selected Universities in China	Significant

Based on the prior arguments, the following hypothesis is proposed on the relationship between the cost and study abroad decision.

H3: Cost has a significant and negative influence on international students' decision to study at a private university in Malaysia.

2.10.4 Personal Factors

Personal factors such as career development, career prospects, intercultural experience, and individual growth significantly influence the decision of student to study abroad (Zulkifli et al., 2020; Gbollie & Gong, 2020; Tamtik, 2019).

Students are influenced to study abroad by factors such as better career growth and employment opportunities. Students believe that studying abroad offers them an advantage when searching for jobs in their home country. Yasmin and Slaninová (2022) reported that better employment prospects after the completion of a degree are the key intentions that shape students' decision to enrol in Chinese universities. While

Gbollie and Gong (2020) found career development as the most important motivator for African and Asian students to study in China. Also, Tamtik (2019) reported that the key factor influencing decisions to study in Canada is enhanced career prospects.

In addition, international students in China consider studying abroad due to personal reasons and own preferences such as the desire to experience a different type of study culture (Lei et al., 2021).

In conclusion, personal factors such as career development, career prospects, intercultural experience, and individual growth significantly and positively influence the decision of student to study abroad (Yasmin & Slaninová, 2022; Lei et al., 2021; Gbollie & Gong, 2020; Tamtik, 2019) as presented in Table 2.18.

Table 2.18:
Summary of Studies on Personal Factors and Study Abroad.

Name	Area	Finding
Yasmin & Slaninová (2022)	Exploring the Motivational Factors for International Students to Study in Chinese Higher Education Institutions	Significant
Lei et al., (2021).	African students' motivations for studying in China's higher education	Significant
Gbollie & Gong (2020)	Emerging destination mobility: Exploring African and Asian international students' push-pull factors and motivations to study in China	Significant
Tamtik (2019)	School-aged children and decisions for studying abroad in Canada	Significant

Based on the prior arguments, the following hypothesis is proposed on the relationship between the personal factors and study abroad decision.

H4: Personal factors have a significant and positive influence on international students' decision to study at a private university in Malaysia.

2.10.5 Information Sources

International students will search for information to help them reach a final decision. They will use a variety of resources to gather information about studying abroad. The information source factors include internal sources, external sources, and interpersonal sources.

Information from internal sources such as university websites and host country websites are extremely beneficial for international students before making decision. When searching for an institution, students believe the university website to be the most valuable information source (James-MacEachern & Yun, 2017). Hence, internal sources of information significantly influence student decisions.

As for external sources of information, aside from agents, technological advances in the 21st century provide another source of information for students interested in studying abroad. Visual media such as websites and social networking sites impact consumers' purchase decisions (John & De'Villiers, 2020). Zhu (2019) found a positive association between HEIs' social media engagement and increase in Chinese student studying abroad. Sarah Bukhari et al. (2018) revealed that social media is more dominant information source than search engines and face-to-face communication.

Students' decisions are also influenced by information from interpersonal sources. Interpersonal sources include family, friends, relatives, and siblings. Lei et al. (2021) found the significant influence of friends on students' decision to study abroad. Friends are not only a source of information, but also facilitators for the students when applying to their institution of choice. Chauke and Duh (2019) further identified that family members strongly influence the purchasing of goods and services they perceive

as expensive, and of which involve the student's future. In another study, Li and Qi (2019) identified family and friends as factors motivating Chinese doctorate students to study abroad.

In conclusion, information sources including internal, external, and interpersonal significantly and positively influence the decision of students to study abroad (Lei et al., 2021; John& De'Villiers, 2020; Sarah Bukhari et al., 2018; Lei et al., 2021; Li & Qi, 2019; Chauke & Duh, 2019; James-MacEachern & Yun, 2017) as presented in Table 2.19.

Table 2.19:
Summary of Studies on Information Sources Factors and Study Abroad.

Name	Area	Finding
John& De'Villiers, (2020).	Elaboration of marketing communication through visual media: An empirical analysis	Significant
Lei et al., (2021).	African students' motivations for studying in China's higher education	Significant
Zhu (2019).	Social media engagement and Chinese international student recruitment: understanding how UK HEIs use Weibo and WeChat	Significant
Li& Qi, (2019)	An investigation of push and pull motivations of Chinese tourism doctoral students studying overseas	Significant
Chauke & Duh (2019)	Marketing and socio-psychological factors influencing organic food purchase and post-purchase outcomes	Significant
James-MacEachern & Yun, (2017).	Exploring factors influencing international students' decision to choose a higher education institution: A comparison between Chinese and other students	Significant

Based on the prior arguments, the following hypothesis is proposed on the relationship between information source and study abroad decision.

- H5: Internal information source significantly and positively influences international students' decision to study at a private university in Malaysia.
- H6: External information source significantly influences international students' decision to study at a private university in Malaysia.

H7: Interpersonal information source significantly influences international students' decision to study abroad at a private university in Malaysia.

2.10.6 Academic Factors

Various academic factors in the host country influence international students' decision to study abroad. Academic reputation, institution ranking, and programme offerings significantly influence students' decision (Zulkifli et al., 2020; Nicholls, 2018; Derrick Acheampong et al., 2018; Singh & Srivastava, 2018).

Wong et al. (2020) found that academic excellence in terms of academic quality and reputation influence Macau students to study abroad in the US, Australia, and Singapore. In addition, Pawar et al. (2020) discovered that the quality of education in the host country is one of the factors that influence students' decision to study in India. Sun et al. (2020) also stated that academic factors namely reputation and value of degree influence and motivate international students to study abroad. The same finding was reported by Cheung et al. (2019) who found the significance of academic factors in influencing Chinese students to study abroad in Hong Kong. Meanwhile, Acheampong et al. (2019) found that institutional reputation has a relatively low importance in explaining international students' selection of universities in China.

Previous empirical studies have revealed that the academic factors significantly influence student decision to study abroad as illustrated in Table 2.20 (Wong et al., 2020; Sun et al., 2020; Zulkifli et al., 2020; Cheung et al., 2019; Nicholls, 2018; Acheampong et al., 2019; Singh & Srivastava, 2018).

Table 2.20:

Summary of Studies on Academic Factors and Study Abroad.

Name	Area	Finding
Wong et al. (2020)	A study of the mobility of mainland students: factors and issues behind pursuing a teacher education program in Macau.	Significant (positive)
Sun et al. (2020)	Exploring the study abroad journey: Chinese and Indian students in US Higher Education.	Significant (positive)
Pawar et al. (2020)	Analysis of factors influencing international student destination choice: A case of Indian HE	Significant (positive)
Cheung et al. (2019)	Push and pull factors influencing Mainland Chinese MEd students in Hong Kong.	Significant (positive)
Acheampong et al. (2019)	Factors Influencing International Students' Selection of Universities in China: A Case Study of Selected Universities in China	Significant

Based on the prior arguments, the following hypothesis is proposed on the relationships between the academic factors and study abroad decision.

H8: Academic factors significantly and positively influence international students' decision to study at a private university in Malaysia.

2.10.7 Study Abroad Decision

Service quality is an essential and important dimension in the field of higher education (Hwang & Choi, 2019). The effectiveness of the services purchased by international students will affect their opinion of the services that they received as either good or bad. When the services received are good, it will create a feeling of pride, excitement, happiness, and confidence, and vice versa (Kotler et al., 2018). This is directly linked to the degree of satisfaction or dissatisfaction with the services received (Jessie Chen-Yu & Doris Kincade, 2001).

The service provided by the university to their international students is an aspect that greatly affects student satisfaction. International students will have high satisfaction when they receive good services and vice versa. By determining the students' level of satisfaction with the quality of services provided, HEIs can identify their failures and

take action to improve their services (Nastasic, 2019). Service quality evaluation covers reliability, responsiveness, empathy, and staff assurance towards students. As stated in various past studies, service quality has a positive relationship with student satisfaction (Moslehpour et al., 2020; Hwang & Choi, 2019; Napitupulu et al., 2018). Moslehpour et al. (2020) reported that service quality is the most influential variable in determining the satisfaction level of international students in Taiwan. Hwang and Choi (2019) stated that university service quality from the aspects of tangibles, reliabilities, responsiveness, empathy, and assurance has a significant and positive effect on student satisfaction. In contrast, Nastasic (2019) reported that international students studying in Indian universities are dissatisfied with the university services they receive.

Additionally, HEIs also provide facilities to the student to facilitate the smooth operations of the organization. The facilities offered by HEIs can have an impact on student satisfaction (Khan & Haque, 2018). The evaluation of facilities covers academic and campus facilities such as classroom environment, sports and recreation, library, and accommodation. The quality of existing service facilities is believed to improve user satisfaction (Napitupulu et al., 2018). According to Napitupulu et al. (2018), the higher institution's facilities have a strong and positive relationship with student satisfaction. Nastasic (2019) found library facilities and class size influence students satisfaction. Khan and Haque (2018) also found that facilities significantly influence international students' satisfaction level in the context of HEIs in Malaysia. In addition, Weerasinghe and Fernando (2018) found the significant influence of university facilities on student satisfaction.

In conclusion, previous empirical studies revealed that study abroad decision significantly influence post-purchase evaluation on service quality and university facilities (Moslehpour et al., 2020; Hwang & Choi, 2019; Napitupulu et al., 2018; Weerasinghe & Fernando, 2018).

Based on the prior arguments, the following hypothesis is proposed on the relationship between study abroad decision and post-purchase evaluation.

H9: Study abroad decision positively influences international students' evaluations of the services they receive in the private university.

H10 Study abroad purchase decision positively influences international students' evaluations of the private university's facilities.

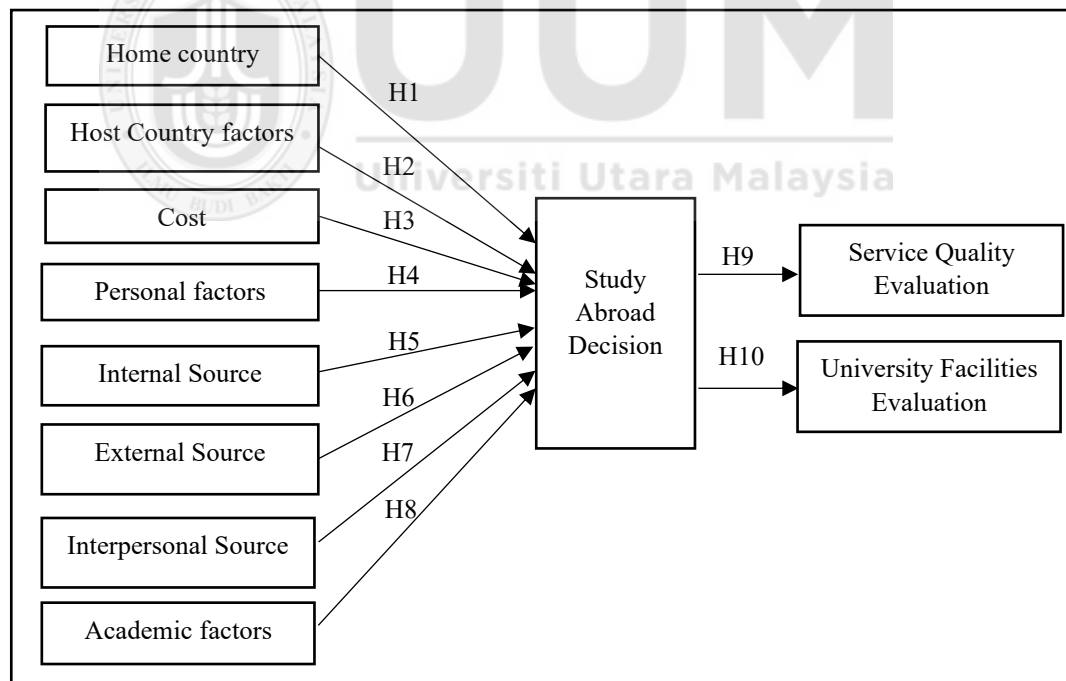


Figure 2.9:
Hypothesis

2.10.8 Mediating Effects of Study Abroad Decision

Study Abroad Decision can also be regarded as the mediator between the influencing factors and post-purchase evaluation. A mediator is a variable that emerges as a function of the independent variable and helps explain why the independent and dependent variables are related (Sekaran & Bougie, 2019).

International students' satisfaction is shaped by prior expectations before the study abroad decision was made; a comparison is then made between their actual experience and their prior expectations to determine their level of satisfaction (Moslehpour et al., 2020). In this process, the decision is regarded as the mediator which explains the relationship between the influencing factors (prior expectation) and decision experience (post-purchase evaluation). For example, the stability of the host country, the image and ranking of the university, the quality of programmes offered, the cost, and the facilities in the HEIs would influence the students to study abroad. Once they have made the decision to enrol and study in the selected HEIs, they would either be satisfied or dissatisfied.

Various studies in numerous fields have regarded decision as a mediating variable. A study on airline services found that decisions strongly mediate the relationship between passenger concern and their satisfaction in the airport (Romadlon et al., 2022). A study on a restaurant involving the role of purchase decision as a mediating variable showed that the independent variable has a positive and significant effect on the dependent variable of customer satisfaction. Previous studies have shown that study abroad decision can be incorporated as the mediating variable in post-purchase evaluation ((Niode et al., 2020). However, Chauke and Duh (2019) found that purchase

decision does not mediate the relationship between factors influencing the purchase of organic food and customer satisfaction. A study on the banking industry indicated that financial decisions insignificantly mediate the relationship between capital structure and firm performance (Imelda & Himelda, 2021).

Hence, based on the prior arguments, the following hypothesis is proposed on the relationship between the influencing factors and post-purchase evaluation through service quality evaluation and university facilities evaluation.

- H11: Study abroad decision mediates the relationship between home country factors and service quality evaluation of the international student.
- H12: Study abroad decision mediates the relationship between host country factors and service quality evaluation of the international student.
- H13: Study abroad decision mediates the relationship between cost and service quality evaluation of the international student.
- H14: Study abroad decision mediates the relationship between personal and service quality evaluation of the international student.
- H15: Study abroad decision mediates the relationship between internal source and service quality evaluation of the international student.
- H16: Study abroad decision mediates the relationship between external source and service quality evaluation of the international student.
- H17: Study abroad decision mediates the relationship between interpersonal source and service quality evaluation of the international student.
- H18: Study abroad decision mediates the relationship between academic and service quality evaluation of the international student.

- H19: Study abroad decision mediates the relationship between home country and university facilities evaluation of the international student.
- H20: Study abroad decision mediates the relationship between host country and university facilities evaluation of the international student.
- H21: Study abroad decision mediates the relationship between cost and university facilities evaluation of the international student.
- H22: Study abroad decision mediates the relationship between outcome and university facilities evaluation of the international student.
- H23: Study abroad decision mediates the relationship between internal sources and university facilities evaluation of the international student.
- H24: Study abroad decision mediates the relationship between external sources and university facilities evaluation of the international student.
- H25: Study abroad decision mediates the relationship between interpersonal sources and university facilities evaluation of the international student.
- H26: Study abroad decision mediates the relationship between academic and university facilities evaluation of the international student.

2.11 Chapter Summary

This chapter provides an overview of higher education in Malaysia, the theoretical foundation and relevant literature on the factors that influence study abroad decision and post-purchase evaluation. The research framework was developed using the Push and Pull Theory, the Decision-Making Model, and other supporting resources. Twenty-six hypotheses were developed from the research framework to reflect the proposed relationships. The following section will discuss the methodology aspect of the study.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses the methods and procedures used in the study research design process followed by the research setting and scope, data collection procedures, survey instrument and operationalisation of research, questionnaire structure, pilot study and statistical analysis. A summary of the chapter is later presented.

3.2 Research Design

A research design is a blueprint for collecting, measuring, and analysing data created to answer the study's research queries (Sekaran & Bougie, 2019). The authors asserted that five fundamental aspects must be taken into account when designing the research: research strategies, the extent of research interference, the study setting, the unit of analysis, and the time horizon.

Along with the five fundamental aspects, Saunders, Lewis, and Thornhill (2009) proposed a research onion as described by Saunders et al. (2019) to clarify six aspects of the research design. Philosophies, approaches, strategies, choices, time horizons, and techniques and procedures (see Figure 3.1).

This study is grounded in the philosophical framework of positivism, which posits that objective methods should be employed to study the subject of research, rather than

subjective ones. This ontological assumption guides the approach taken in this study. (Kulatunga et al., 2007). Positivism also comes up with research questions and hypotheses that can be tested as performed by the researcher in this study.

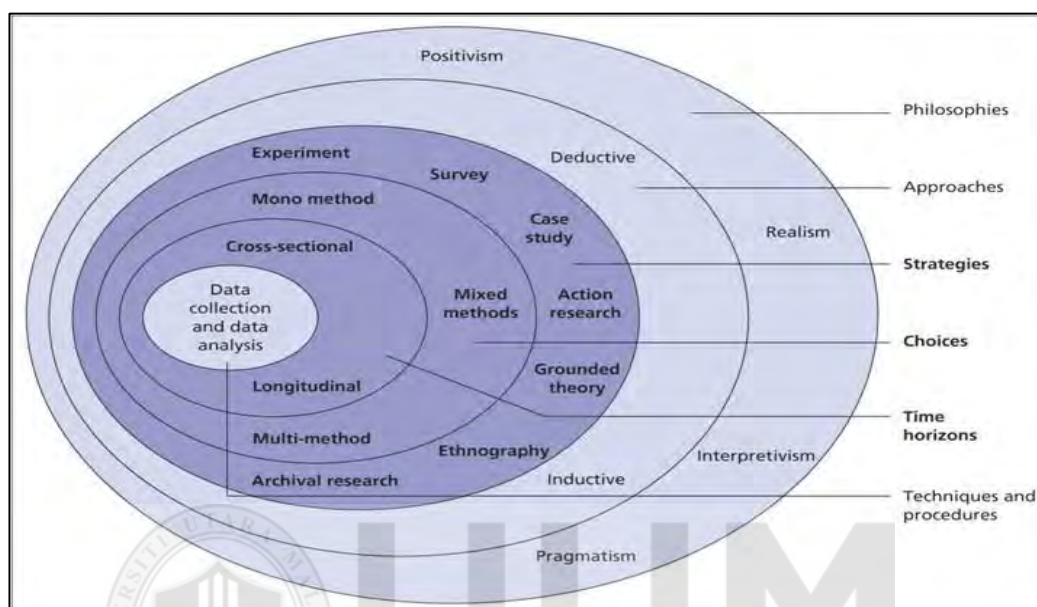


Figure 3.1:
The Research Onion.
Source: Saunders et al. (2019)

The deductive and inductive approaches are the second aspect in the research onion. As this study aims to find the answer to the research questions, the study approach is deductive in nature. The study phenomenon leads to the production of credible data, and the existing theory is used to develop the hypotheses which will then tested and confirmed.

The third aspect of the onion is the strategies. This study uses the survey strategy which is often linked to the deductive approach. This study also uses the mono method, whereby quantitative information is gathered. Finally, the study employs a cross-sectional time horizon method as the study was conducted in a short time.

The final aspect of the research onion relates to the practicalities of the data collection and analysis. For this study, the data collection technique is a questionnaire, and the data collected was analysed using the IBM SPSS Statistical software and PLS SEM software. Figure 3.2 summarises the research design of this study.

Aspects	Details
Philosophy	Positivism
Approach	Deductive
Strategy	Survey
Choice	Mono method
Time horizons	Cross-sectional
Data collection techniques and procedures	Questionnaire/ data analysis

Figure 3.2:
The Research Design of the Study.

3.3 Research Process

A research process provides a roadmap with directions for conducting research and it involves several stage processes representing the overall process of the study (Hair Jr et al., 2020). It includes defining the problem of the study and formulating the hypotheses, collecting, and evaluating the research data, and making conclusions and findings. The flowchart of the research process for this study is shown in Figure 3.3. It involves four stages: inquiry stage, collection stage, analysis stage, and presentation stage.

The researcher will conduct a literature review on previous studies related to the current study in stage one. The research problem is defined at this point, and the theoretical framework and hypotheses are developed. The research design is then discussed. In the second stage, the researcher creates the research sampling, measurement, and scaling, as well as the questionnaire design. After the data is collected, the third stage starts with the analysis. Data analysis and interpretation is carried out using the appropriate software. The final stage is the presentation stage, in

which the research report completed based on the analysis performed. At this stage, the findings are discussed.

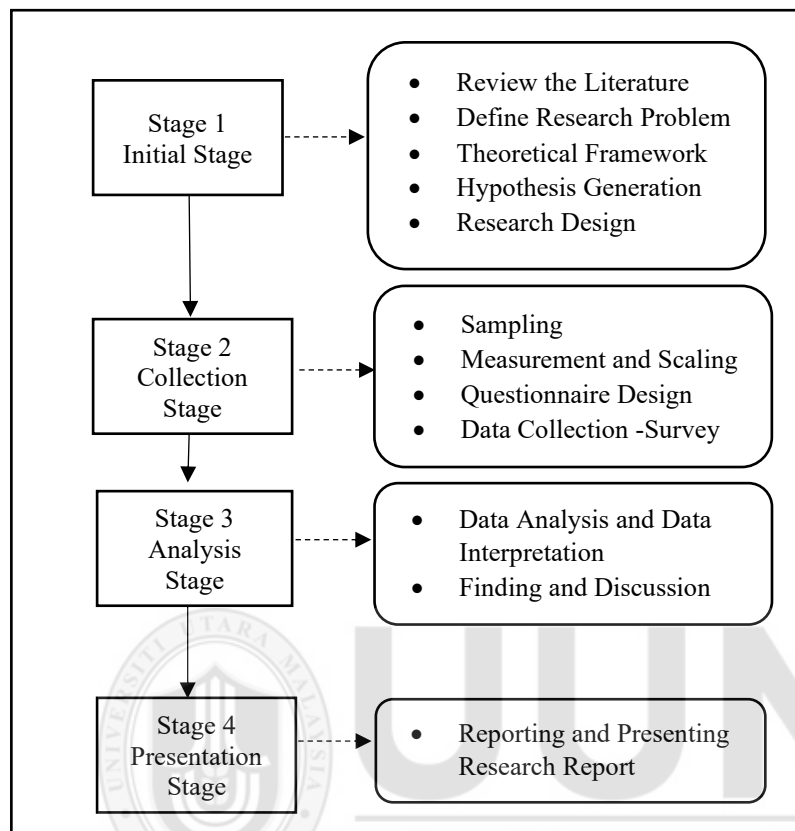


Figure 3.3:
Research Process Flow

3.4 Research Setting and Scope

The current study has chosen Malaysia as the chosen geographical location and setting for examining the proposed theoretical framework. This decision has been made due to the scarcity of research conducted on students' decisions to study abroad, particularly in developing countries like Malaysia. Previous researchers had centred their research on developed countries such as Australia and the U.S (Nafari et al., 2017; Tan, 2015).

This study focuses on international students enrolled in private universities in Malaysia's central zone (Selangor, Kuala Lumpur, and Putrajaya) for undergraduate

programmes (diploma and Bachelor's degree). This region was chosen because it has the highest percentage of international students (90.67%) compared to other zones in Malaysia, as shown in Table 3.4. Additionally, when compared to the other zones, the central zone has the most private universities (36 in total).

3.4.1 Sampling Technique

There are two types of sampling methods: probability and nonprobability sampling (Sekaran & Bougie, 2019). According to Sekaran and Bougie (2019), probability sampling designs are employed when the representativeness of the sample is crucial for broader generalizability. There are several methods available for probability sampling, including simple random sampling, cluster sampling, systematic sampling, and stratified random sampling. On the other hand, nonprobability sampling methods include convenience, purposive, quota, and snowball sampling.

This study uses probability sampling, where elements in the population have the probability of being selected as a sample. The method used for this study is cluster random sampling, where the samples gathered in groups are, ideally, natural aggregates of elements in the population (Sekaran & Bougie, 2019). The number of international students for every private HEI is not available due to confidential issues. However, the general population of international students in Malaysia is available through MoHE. Therefore, the suitable method used for this study is random sampling. The justification on the chosen sampling technique is discussed further in Section 3.4.4 (sample size) and Section 4.3.1 (response rate). When several groups with intergroup homogeneity are found, cluster sampling is carried out and information is gathered from each of the members in the randomly chosen cluster (Sekaran & Bougie, 2019).

For this study, the international students studying in the private universities is divided into six zones namely the southern zone (Johor, Melaka, Negeri Sembilan), central zone (Selangor, Wilayah Persekutuan, Putrajaya), northern zone (Perak, Pulau Pinang, Kedah, Perlis), east coast zone (Pahang, Terengganu, Kelantan) and Sarawak and Sabah as in Table 2.4 in Chapter 2. As the majority of the international students are studying in the central zone, this study hence focuses on the central zone namely international students studying in private universities in Kuala Lumpur, Selangor, and Putrajaya. As the data collection took place during COVID-19, it was difficult to reach the respondents; hence, the officer-in-charge in the international office at each private university was contacted to assist in distributing the Google Form link to the respondents. In addition, to reach potential responders, a message with important information of the study and a questionnaire link was sent to the international student club of each private university's social media (Facebook).

3.4.2 Population

The term population refers to the entire group of people being studied by the researcher (Sekaran & Bougie, 2019). The population for this study is international students over the age of 18 who are enrolled in private higher education institutions in Malaysia with university status. According to Mohamed Berawi and Fuad, (2017), a population has three components: the total population, the target population, and the accessible population. For this study, the total population entails all international students studying in private HEIs in Malaysia. While the target population entails international students studying in private HEIs, category private university in Malaysia. Finally, the accessible population are the international students studying in the private HEIs, under the category of private university in Malaysia and taking undergraduate programs.

In 2018, there were 91,707 international students studying in private HEIs in Malaysia. Therefore, this study's target population entails 48,445 international students studying at private HEIs, under the category of private universities in Malaysia. As shown in Table 3.1, the study's accessible population entails 36,051 international students (studying in private HEIs, under the category of private universities in Malaysia, and taking undergraduate programmes).

Table 3.1:
Population of the Study.

Population	International students studying in private HEIs in Malaysia.	91,707
Target Population	International students studying in private HEIs with private university status in Malaysia.	48,445
Accessible Population	International students studying in private university in Malaysia and taking undergraduate programs.	36,051

Source: Jabatan Pengajian Tinggi and Author, 2019

Basically, there are four categories of private HEIs: private HEIs with university status or private universities, private HEIs with university status (branch campus of a foreign university), university college, and college. This current study focuses on private universities as the number of international students enrolled there is one of the highest. As presented in Table 3.2, in 2018, there were 91,707 international students enrolled in private HEIs in Malaysia. The largest enrolment is in the private university category with a total of 48,445 (52.42%) international students. At the same time, 7,377 (8.04%) international students enrolled in university colleges and 4,513 (4.92%) in foreign university branch campuses. Furthermore, this study focuses exclusively on international undergraduate students because the undergraduate level (Bachelor's and diploma) enrolls a larger number of international students than the postgraduate level (PhD and Master's).

Table 3.2:

Total Number of International Students Studying in Private Higher Education Institutions in Malaysia in 2018.

Private HEIs categories	Total number of international students	%
Private University	48,445	52.42
University College	7,377	8.04
Foreign University Branch Campus	4,513	4.92
College	31,332	34.62
Total	91,707	100

Table 3.3 illustrates this by presenting the number of international students enrolled in private universities at the undergraduate and postgraduate levels over the last three years (2016 to 2018). There are 79.33% of international students enrolled in undergraduate (Bachelor's and diploma) programmes in 2018 as opposed to postgraduate programmes (20.67%). Again, undergraduate programme attracts a greater number of international students than postgraduate programmes. As a result, this study is limited to international undergraduate students.

Table 3.3:

Number of International Students Enrolled in Private Higher Education Institution with University Status from 2016 to 2018

Year	Postgraduate (PhD/Master)	%	Undergraduate (Bachelor/Diploma)	%	Total
2018	9,395	20.67	36,051	79.33	45,446
2017	7,978	18.82	34,418	81.18	42,396
2016	6,971	18.50	30,747	81.5	37,718

Source: mohe.gov.my, 2019

In addition, as shown in Table 3.4, international students who enrol in private universities and taking undergraduate program are concentrated primarily in the central zone of Malaysia, at a total of 32,687. Specifically, 23,097 international students enrolled in private universities in Selangor and another 9,590 in Wilayah Persekutuan in 2018. This represents 90.67% of the total enrolment in private universities in Malaysia.

Table 3.4:
Enrolment of International Students in Private HEIs with University Status in 2018 (Undergraduate Level) by Zone.

State	Zone	Number of enrolments of international students in private universities in 2018 (Undergraduate Level)		%
Selangor	Central	23,097		
Wilayah Persekutuan Putrajaya		9,590	32,687	90.67
		0		
Johor	Southern	31		
Melaka		543	574	1.60
Negeri Sembilan		0		
Perak	Northern	2,330		
Pulau Pinang		0		
Kedah		396	2,726	7.56
Perlis		0		
Pahang	East Coast	17		
Terengganu		46	63	0.17
Kelantan		0		
Sabah	Sabah	0	0	0
Sarawak	Sarawak	1	1	0
Total		36,051		100

Source: mohe.gov.my (2018) and Author

International students, particularly those enrolled in undergraduate programmes abroad face various challenges in terms of a new environment as well as social, academic, and emotional challenges in the transition from studying in their home country to studying abroad (Jailani et al., 2020). They have less experience studying abroad because they are between the ages of 18 and 24, compared to postgraduate students. Hence, understanding the factors that influence their decision-making and evaluation is important.

3.4.3 Sample

A sample is a subset of the population from which the data will be collected, and of which includes some population elements. Basically, the size of the sample is less than the total population (Bhandari, 2023; Sekaran & Bougie, 2019). For this study, the sample entails undergraduate international students studying in private universities in the central zone in Malaysia. By studying the sample, the findings can be generalised

to the entire population of international students studying in private HEIs in Malaysia (Sekaran & Bougie, 2019).

The sample for this study was determined by the number of international students enrolled and studying in private universities category in Malaysia. As shown in Table 3.4 international students are concentrated primarily in the central zone of Malaysia, at a total of 32,687. Specifically, 23,097 international students enrolled in private universities in Selangor and another 9,590 in Wilayah Persekutuan in 2018. This represents 90.66% of the total enrolment in private universities in Malaysia.

In conclusion, the study sample comprises of 32,687 international students studying in private universities located in the central zone of Malaysia and taking undergraduate programmes as this is where that the data will be collected from. Table 3.5 summarises the accessible population and sample of the study.

Table 3.5:

Accessible population and sample of the study

Accessible Population	Undergraduate international students studying in private university category in Malaysia.	36,051
Sample	Undergraduate international students studying in private university category in the central zone of Malaysia.	32,687

Source: mohe.edu.my (2018) & Author

3.4.4 Sample Size

A sample size is a group of subjects selected from a sample that is representative of the real population of the study (Bhandari, 2023). For this study, the sample of undergraduate international students studying in private universities in the central zone of Malaysia amounts to 32,687. Following Krejci and Morgan's (1970)

recommendation, a sample size of 380 is appropriate for a sample of 40,000, as presented in Table 3.6.

As the data will be collected from 32,687 international students studying in private universities located in the central zone of Malaysia and taking undergraduate programmes, i.e., ranging between 30,000 to 40,000, the appropriate sample size is therefore 380 (between 379 and 380). Additionally, to determine the statistical power of a study, researchers conduct power analyses using the G*Power software (Faul et al., 2009).

Table 3.6.:
Determining the Sample Size of Given Population

Number of Population size (N)	Sample size (S)
30000	379
40000	380
50000	381
75000	382
1000000	384

Source: Krejci & Morgan (1970)

G*Power is a comprehensive popular analysis program for conducting statistical tests in computer and social science research. This study employed the F test of regression using the G*Power software. The power analysis is used to determine the accurate sample size for multiple regression with eight predictors. The alpha was set to 0.05, the power was set to 0.95, and the effect size was set to a medium of ($f^2=0.15$). As a result, as shown in Figure 3.4, 160 international students were considered the minimum sample size for the study, as recommended by the G*Power software (Faul et al., 2009). The sample size in the actual study is 241 respondents (as in Chapter 4) and thus exceeds the G*Power minimum criteria.

There are 36 private universities in the central zone of Malaysia, as discussed in Section 2.2.2.2. The sampling techniques used in this study are probability sampling and random sampling. As the minimum sample size is 160 as recommended by the G*Power software, the study chose at least five undergraduate international students randomly (five undergraduate international students x 36 private universities in central zone of Malaysia = 180 undergraduate international students) from each private university although the private universities in the central zone differ in the number of international students enrolled. All undergraduate international students in the 36 private universities in the central zone of Malaysia are part of the sample size.

In addition, to control the distribution of survey links and ensure a balanced representation from all the private universities in the central zone, the researcher contacted the person-in-charge of each private university and requested for the survey questionnaire link to be distributed to at least five undergraduate international students.

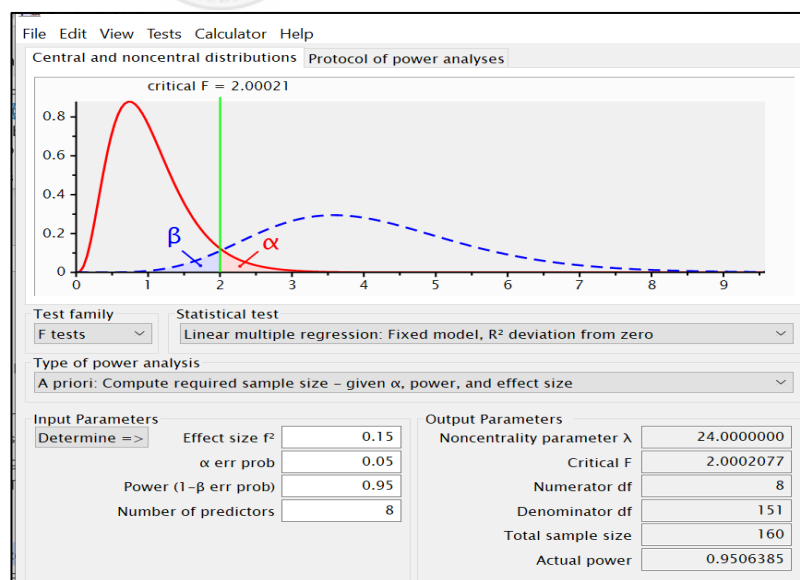


Figure 3.4:
*G*Power Analysis on Sample Size*

3.4.5 Sampling Frame

The sampling frame is a physical representation of the population elements from which the sample is drawn (Sekaran & Bougie, 2019). Even though the sampling frame is useful, it may not always be a current, up-to-date document (Sekaran & Bougie, 2019). This study focuses on private HEIs. In 2018 there are 480 private HEIs in Malaysia, as reported by the Ministry of Higher Education. In Malaysia, Selangor, has the highest number of private HEIs (136), followed by Wilayah Persekutuan with 109 private HEIs as shown in Table 2.4 in Chapter 2.

The private HEIs are scattered across the country. The spread of private HEIs can be classified based on six zones, namely the southern zone (Johor, Melaka, Negeri Sembilan), central zone (Selangor, Wilayah Persekutuan, Putrajaya), northern zone (Perak, Pulau Pinang, Kedah, Perlis), east coast zone (Pahang, Terengganu, Kelantan) and Sarawak and Sabah (mohe.gov.my, 2018). For the private university category, in 2018, there were 36 private universities in the central zone of Malaysia, with 22 of them located in Selangor, 13 in Wilayah Persekutuan, and one in Putrajaya. There are three states without private HEIs with university status namely Sabah, Kelantan, and Perlis. Table 2.4 in Chapter 2 presents the number of private HEIs by status and state.

The central zone has the highest percentage of private HEIs with 36 private universities (67.92%). Six private universities (11.32%) are located in the southern zone and seven private universities (13.215) in the northern zones, while the lowest is in Sarawak with only one private university (1.89%), the East Coast with three private universities (5.66%), and none in Sabah, as presented in Table 2.4 in Chapter 2. Therefore, this study focuses on private HEIs with university status in the central zone.

Furthermore, the number of international students enrolled in private universities category is higher than in universities and colleges with other statuses. There are 48,445 international students (40.89%) studying at private universities compared to other categories in 2018. Out of the 48,445 international students studying at private HEIs with university status, 32,687 are enrolled Bachelor's programmes, as presented in Table 3.2.

3.4.6 Unit of Analysis

The concept of a unit of analysis encompasses both, the primary entity being examined and the location from which relevant data is gathered. As this study aims to create a clear understanding of the international student decision-making process, the unit of analysis in this study is individual, international students studying in undergraduate programmes at private universities in Malaysia.

3.5 Data Collection Procedure

The data acquired and used for analysis in this study were obtained directly from primary sources. The study employs a survey approach using an online survey questionnaire due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Careful planning was done, and the step-by-step procedures for this study are presented in Figure 3.5. Firstly, the details of the private universities obtained from the Ministry of Higher Education were saved and used as the main source for distributing the questionnaire. An email was sent to the person-in-charge of each private university, along with the survey questionnaire link. Phone calls were made to guarantee that the researcher's email is delivered and received by the person-in-charge at the international student's office. The researcher also collected data on the number of survey links shared with the international students

in order to ensure that the minimum number of international students in each private university is met.

Next, to increase the number of respondents, a message with relevant information such as the purpose of the study and a questionnaire link was sent to the international student association and club of each private university's social media (Facebook) to reach the potential respondents.

The questionnaire is enclosed with a cover letter that clearly explains the purpose of the study to ensure the confidentiality of the responses. The respondents were allowed to the questionnaire at their convenience. This allows the respondents to respond without any pressure, and thus provide their genuine opinion.

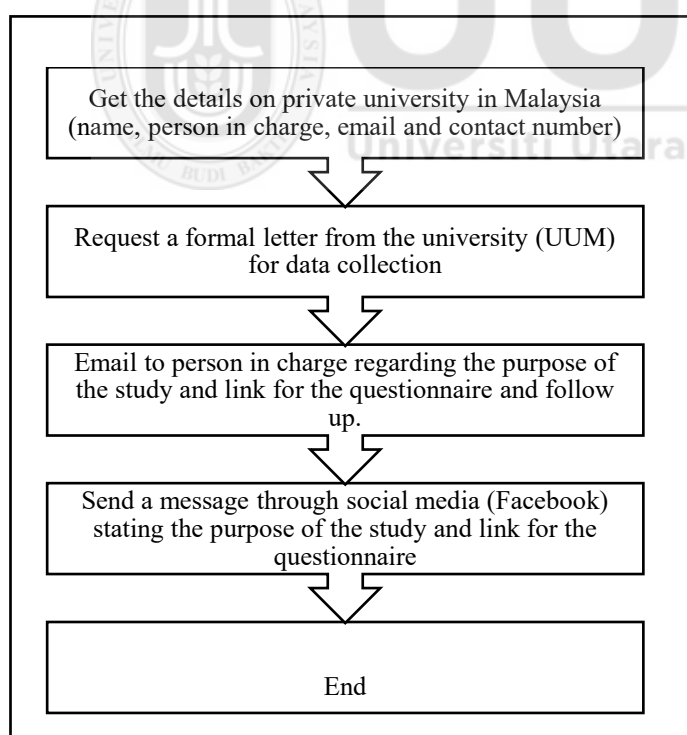


Figure 3.5:
Data Collection Procedure

The following is the rationale for employing the online survey questionnaire method as the primary survey instrument in this study:

- a. Based on Sekaran and Bougie (2019), an online questionnaire is a convenient and efficient method of data collection since respondents are able to complete the survey at their own pace at their convenience, and the automatic processing of the survey result in costs, time, and energy savings. Additionally, it also makes the most of the ability of the Internet to grant access to groups and individuals who would be difficult, if not impossible, to reach through conventional methods.
- b. This study utilises an online survey because, as stated by Hair et al. (2020), online surveys provide quick responses and high-quality data.
- c. Besides that, it does not require much skill as compared to conducting interviews.

3.6 Survey Instrument and Operationalization of Research Constructs

3.6.1 Questionnaire Design

The research instrument used in this study is a questionnaire. Some of the benefits of using a questionnaire are that it provides an effective way of collecting data because the respondent can complete the questionnaire at a time that is convenient for them and that it can be easily analysed after the respondent has completed it (Awang, 2012; Birmingham & Wilkinson, 2003).

The process of designing the questionnaire for this study is illustrated in Figure 3.6. Firstly, the questionnaire was developed from the existing literature. The information utilised in this study was obtained from secondary data sources such as articles, books,

journals, and publications. All items used in the study have been carefully modified to align with the objective of the study and ensure that the respondents understand the questions. Additionally, the wording and length of the items have been improved to ensure that the item accurately reflects the nature of the problems under study. Several questions are used in the measurement items. All the questions on the independent variables, dependent variable and demographic profile are structured as close ended questions.

In order to establish credibility and legitimacy, the introduction and opening paragraphs of the questionnaire explained that the study belonged solely to Universiti Utara Malaysia and that all information collected would be classified as private and confidential, used only for the study, and reported only in aggregate form. Questions on the demographic background such as (1) gender, (2) age, (3) education level, (4) year of study, (5) country of origin, (6) university type, (7) location of university, (8) field of study and (9) application to other countries other than Malaysia were tabulated in the questionnaire's first section (Section A). Question numbers six and seven used to filter the responses by location and university type. Only responses from private universities in Malaysia's central zone were used for analysis purposes. The respondent then proceeds to answer the remaining questions on the variables on pages three to 10.

A researcher should not conduct a questionnaire before assessing the likely accuracy and consistency of the responses (Hair et al., 2020). This is accomplished by pretesting the questionnaire using a sample of respondents with characteristics similar to those of the target population. Hence, after the questionnaire was developed, it was sent to two academicians for expert review and validation. Besides that, a discussion with five

prospective respondents was conducted to get feedback from them regarding the relevancy and clarity of the language and sentences in the questionnaire. The initial questionnaire was then improved based on the feedback and comments of the academicians and prospect respondents. Next, a comprehensive questionnaire was developed before a pilot test is conducted.

3.6.2 Questionnaire Language

The questionnaire used in this study was written in English. The use of English in the questionnaire was deemed appropriate due to the fact that all of the target respondents are international students who are literate in English.

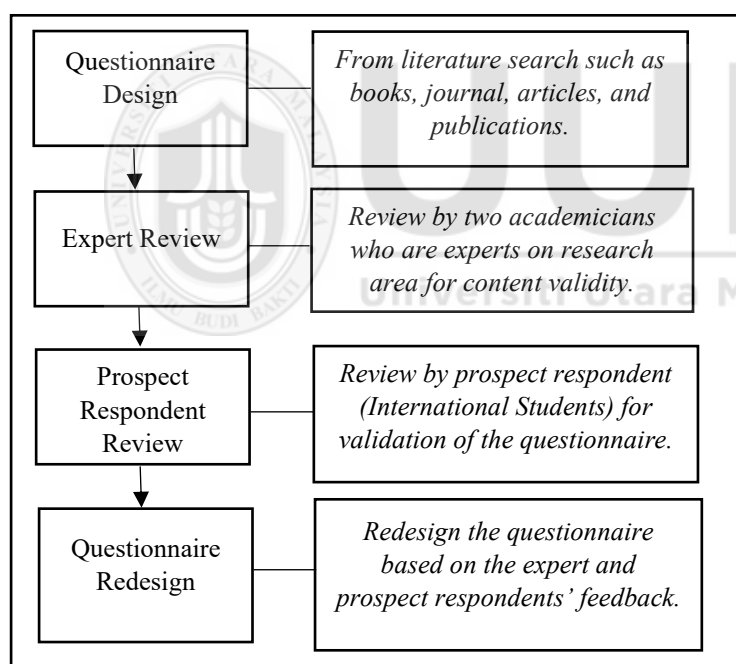


Figure 3.6:
Overview of Questionnaire Design

3.6.3 Measurement of Constructs

The measurement of constructs is based on previous literatures. The content of the instrument was adopted from multiple sources and modified to suit the study objectives. As a result, a number of items have been identified to represent the

dependent and independent variables in order to meet the study objectives. Eight constructs were measured in the survey, namely home country factors (HM), host country factors (HC), personal factors (PF), cost (CO), information source (InS), academic factors (AR), study abroad decision (SAD) and post-purchase evaluation (PPE). Also, a demographic section of the respondents' background was included in the questionnaire. The following section illustrates and summarizes the instrument used for all the variables with their sources.

3.6.4 Scale Development

As stated previously, all the constructs in this study were adapted from the established questionnaire. There are eight constructs in the study, excluding the demographic profiles. The constructs are home country, host country, cost, personal factors, information source, academic, study abroad decision and post-purchase evaluation. The total number of items for all constructs is 64. Each construct consists of several items. Table 3.7 below presents the details of each construct.

Table 3.7:
Details of Questionnaire Constructs

Constructs	Number of Items	Sources
Home country	5	Tan (2015), Wu (2014)
Host country	5	James-MacEachern & Yun (2017), Wu (2014)
Personal factors	5	Tan (2015), James-MacEachern & Yun (2017), Wu (2014)
Cost	3	Migin, et al., (2015), James-MacEachern & Yun, (2017)
Information sources	16	James-MacEachern & Yun (2017), Pimpa (2003)
Academic factors	7	James-MacEachern & Yun (2017), Migin, Falahat, Yajid & Ali Khatibi (2015)
Study abroad decision	4	Migin et al., (2015)
Post-purchase evaluation	19	Sánchez et al., (2006), Liljander & Strandvik (1997)
Total	64	

All the constructs were operationalised using a five-point Likert scale. The instrument of the study was adapted from previous published studies. For the independent variable items (home country, host country, personal factor, cost, information source and academic factors), a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1=not at all influential to 5=extremely influential was used. For study abroad decision, a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1=not at all agreed and 5= strongly agreed was used. Finally, for post-purchase evaluation, a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1=not at all agreed and 5= strongly agreed and 1= Not at all satisfied and 5= Extremely satisfied was used. Table 3.8 summarises the details of the scale development which was adopted from Vagias (2006).

Table 3.8:
The Likert Scale used in the Study.

Constructs	Scale	Description
Home country Host country Personal factors Cost Information source Academic factors	5-point Likert scale	1=Not at all influential to 5=Extremely influential.
Study abroad decision	5-point Likert scale	1= Not at all agreed and 5= Strongly agreed.
Post-purchase evaluation	5-point Likert scale	1= Not at all agreed and 5= Strongly agreed. 1= Not at all satisfied and 5= Extremely satisfied.

3.6.4.1 Demographic Variables

- a. Gender: Participants were requested to indicate their gender: a) male or b) female.
- b. Age: Participants were asked to state which age group they belong to, i.e., less than 20 years old, 20 to 22 years old, 23 to 25 years old and 26 and above.

As required by the Ministry, the minimum age group for a student furthering their study in higher education institution is 18 years old, the age after the student had complete high school.

- c. Education level: Participants were asked to state their current education level, i.e., either diploma or Bachelor's degree level.

As this study only focuses on undergraduate level students, the respondents therefore are taking either a diploma or a Bachelor's degree.

- d. Year of study: Participants were asked to state their current year of study, i.e., 1st year student, 2nd year student, 3rd year student or 4th year student.

In Malaysia, the undergraduate program is two and a half year for diploma level and three- or four-years for Bachelor's degree level.

- e. Country of origin: Participants were asked to state their country of origin or home country. The home country would be among the top 15 countries reported by the Ministry of Higher Education (2016).
- f. University type: Participants were asked to state the type of university they belong to, i.e., either public university or private university.

This question is considered as the filter question. If the participant is from a public university, the data is void and will not be used for further analysis.

- g. Location of University: This question is considered a filter question too. As the focus of the study is on the central zone only, any participant from other zones will be void and will not be used for further analysis.
- h. Field of study: Participants were asked to state the course taken. There are 12 choices of program, i.e., Accounting and Finance; Art and Design; Architecture, Business and Management; Education; Engineering; Health Sciences and Nursing; Hospitality, Tourism and Culinary; Information Technology and Computer Science; Law; Mathematics and Statistics; and Social Sciences.
- i. Application to countries other than Malaysia: The participants were asked if they have applied to other countries, i.e., Australia, China, France, Germany, the United States, the United Kingdom, and others. If the participant did not apply to any country, they can state not applicable. This question is important as it aims to see if the respondents only focused on Malaysia or have several alternative countries in mind when making the decision to study abroad. The information received can be used as the foundation for developing a good marketing strategy so that international students would choose Malaysia as their destination. It can also be used to understand the competition among host countries in attracting international students.

3.6.4.2 Home Country Measure

Home country refers to factors that influence and push international students to study abroad (Mazzarol & Soutar, 2002). For the home country, the measurement items were

adapted from Tan (2015) and Wu (2014). Table 3.9 shows the items, the item codes, as well as the measurement statement used to measure the home country factors that influence the international students to study in Malaysia.

Table 3.9:

Measurement Items for Home Country Factors

Items code	Items statements	Source(s)
HM1	The political condition in your home country.	Tan (2015)
HM2	The economic condition in your home country.	Wu (2014).
HM3	The quality of higher education in your home country.	
HM4	The admission process to the university in your home country.	
HM5	The financial aid provided in your home country.	

3.6.4.3 Host Country Measure

In this study, host country refers to factors that push or attract international students to study in another country. For the host country, the measurement items were adapted from James-MacEachern and Yun (2017), and Wu (2014). Table 3.10 shows the items, the item codes, as well as the measurement statements used to measure the host country factors that influence the international students to study in Malaysia.

Table 3.10:

Measurement Items for Host Country Factors

Items code	Items statements	Source(s)
HC1	The political condition in Malaysia	James-MacEachern & Yun (2017)
HC2	The available information about Malaysia.	
HC3	The education environment in Malaysia.	Wu (2014)
HC4	The lifestyle in Malaysia.	
HC5	The cultural attraction in Malaysia.	

3.6.4.4 Cost Measure

In this study, cost relates to factors such as accommodation cost, living costs and program cost. The cost items were adapted from Migin et al. (2015) and James-MacEachern and Yun (2007). Table 3.11 displays the items, item codes, and

measurement statements used to measure the cost factors that influence international students to study in Malaysia.

Table 3.11:

Measurement Items for Cost

Items code	Items statements	Source(s)
CO1	Living cost in Malaysia.	Migin, Falahat, Yajid & Ali Khatibi, (2015).
CO2	Accommodation cost in Malaysia.	
CO3	Travelling cost from your home country to Malaysia.	
		James-MacEachern & Yun, (2017)

3.6.4.5 Personal Factors Measure

In this study, personal factors are related to personal growth, improvement of language ability, and future employment prospects. For personal factors, the measurement items were adapted from Tan (2015), James-MacEachern and Yun (2017), and Wu (2014). Table 3.12 shows the items, the item codes, as well as the measurement statements used to measure the personal factors that influence international students to study in Malaysia.

Table 3.12:

Measurement Items for Personal Factors

Items code	Items statements	Source(s)
PF1	The value of the degree in your home country.	Tan (2015)
PF2	The future income upon return to your home country.	
PF3	The high income obtained via overseas study.	James-MacEachern & Yun (2017)
PF4	The employment opportunities in your home country	
PF5	The employment opportunities in a foreign country.	Wu (2014)

3.6.4.6 Information Sources Measure

The source of information is important in the international students' search for information that can help them in making a decision. The information sources are divided into three dimensions: internal, external, and interpersonal sources (Branco Oliveira & Soares, 2016). For information sources, the measurement items were

adapted from James-MacEachern and Yun (2017) and Pimpa (2003). Each of the questions used a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from 1=not at all influential to 5=extremely influential. Table 3.13 shows the items, the item codes, as well as the measurement statements used to measure the information source that influence the international students to study in Malaysia.

Table 3.13:
Measurement Items for Information Sources

Items code	Items statements	Source(s)
IS1	Information from university website.	James-MacEachern & Yun (2017)
IS2	Information from Malaysian government website.	
IS3	Information from pamphlets about the university.	Pimpa (2003)
IS4	Information from workshops.	
IS5	Information from university fairs.	
IS6	Direct information from the institution through email, letter, fax, and others.	
ES1	Information from agent.	Universiti Utara Malaysia
ES2	Information from social media (e.g., Facebook, YouTube, Twitter)	
ES3	Information from advertisements in magazines.	
ES4	Information from stories in newspapers.	
ES5	Information from alumni of the institution.	
IP1	Information from parents.	Universiti Utara Malaysia
IP2	Information from siblings.	
IP3	Information from relatives.	
IP4	Information from friends.	
IP5	Information from teacher in your home country.	

3.6.4.7 Academic Factors Measure

For academic factors, the measurement items were adapted from James-MacEachern and Yun (2017) and Migin et al. (2015). Table 3.14 shows the items, the item codes, as well as the measurement statements used to measure the academic factors that influence the international students to study in Malaysia.

Table 3.14:
Measurement Items for Academic Factors

Items code	Items statements	Source(s)
AR1	The university's well-known brand name.	James-MacEachern & Yun (2017)
AR2	The university's standard of education.	
AR3	The university's years of academic experience.	
AR4	The university's quality courses.	

AR5	The university's achievement.	Migin, Falahat, Yajid & Ali Khatibi (2015).
AR6	The university's reputation in the home country.	
AR7	The reputation of academic programs.	

3.6.4.8 Study Abroad Decision Measure

The study abroad decision measurement items were adapted from Migin et al. (2015).

Table 3.15 shows the items, the item codes, as well as the measurement statements used to measure the study abroad decision factors.

Table 3.15:
Measurement Items for Study Abroad Decision

Items code	Items statements	Source(s)
SAD1	My decision to study abroad in Malaysia was certain.	Migin, Falahat, Yajid & Ali Khatibi (2015)
SAD2	It is my own decision to study abroad.	
SAD3	It is my decision to choose Malaysia as my study destination.	
SAD4	It is my decision to choose the current private university.	

3.6.4.9 Post-Purchase Evaluation Measure

Finally, the post-purchase evaluation measurement items were adapted from Sánchez et al. (2006) and Liljander and Strandvik (1997). Post-purchase evaluation is divided into two dimensions: service quality evaluation and university facilities evaluation.

Table 3.16 shows the items, the item codes, as well as the measurement statements used to measure the post-purchase evaluation factors.

Table 3.16:
Measurement Items for Post-Purchase Evaluation

Items code	Items statements	Source(s)
QRL1.	When the university promises to do something by a certain time, it does so.	Sánchez et al., (2006)
QRL2.	The staff in the university are interested in solving a customer's problem.	
QRL3.	The staff in the university perform the service correctly the first time.	Liljander & Strandvik (1997)
QRP1.	The staff in the university tell the customer exactly when the services will be performed.	
QRP2.	The staff in the university give the customer prompt service.	
QRP3.	The staff in the university give the customer efficient service.	

QRP4.	The staff in the university are always willing to help the customer.	Sánchez et al., (2006)
QRP5.	The staff in the university always respond to the customer's requests.	
QEM1.	The staff in the university advise customers on an individual basis.	Liljander & Strandvik (1997)
QEM2	The staff in the university evaluate their customers situation on an individual basis.	
QEM3.	The staff in the university understand the customer's needs.	
AFE1.	Classroom.	
AFE2.	Lecture Theatre.	
AFE3	Computer Lab	
AFE5.	Library.	
AFE6	Sports and recreation facilities.	
AFE7	Accommodation facilities.	
AFE8	Café.	
AFE9	Range of shops (eg. Bank, bookshop).	

3.7 Structure of the Questionnaire

The study investigates the relationship between home country, host country, personal, cost, information source, academic, study abroad decision and post-purchase evaluation. A set of questionnaires was carefully designed to ensure that most of the influencing factors, study abroad decisions, and post-purchase evaluation issues were included. The final form of the questionnaire is divided into four main sections namely general information (Section A), influencing factors (Section B), study abroad decision (Section C), and post-purchase evaluation (Section D). Section A includes different personal and demographic variables. Section B relates to the independent variables, namely home country, host country, personal, cost, information source, and academic factors. Section C relates to study abroad decisions, and section D relates to the dependent variable namely post-purchase evaluation. The questionnaire design is summarised in Table 3.7.

The online survey was designed to take approximately 15 minutes for the respondent to complete. The online survey was sent to international students who had already enrolled in a private university located in the central zone in Malaysia.

3.8 Pilot Test

To revise the questionnaire and validate the measurement items, one pre-test was carried out, involving both experts and potential respondents, as depicted in Figure 3.7. Using a small number of respondents, the pre-testing study was conducted to assess the appropriateness of the questions and the respondents' comprehension. This helps in identifying and addressing any potential inadequacies before administering the questionnaire to actual respondents, and thus minimising the risk of bias (Sekaran & Bougie, 2019). Thus, to revise the questionnaire and validate the measurement items, one pre-test was conducted involving two experts and five potential respondents.

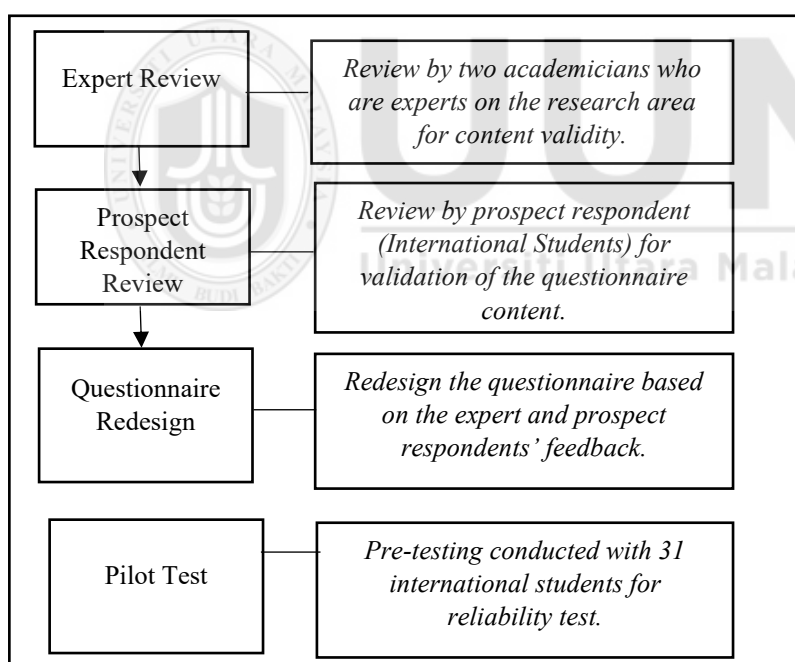


Figure 3.7:
Overview of Pilot Test of the Study

3.8.1 Expert Validation

The expert was provided with the final draft of the questionnaire for content validity assessment. The expert panel consists of two academicians who hold a Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) degree as shown in Table 3.17. The experts were tasked with

reviewing the questions based on the operational definition of each construct and providing feedback on the item's relevance, representativeness, and language clarity. Most of the responses received were positive. Through this process, the survey items were modified. The summary of the experts' comments and suggestions is presented in Table 3.18.

Table 3.17:
The Expert Panel Members

Name	Expert Profile
AA	AA is an Associate Professor in the business and accountancy area. She provides lectures and supervision and received positive evaluations from both undergraduates and postgraduate students. She has published research papers in several refereed journals and authored several books. She also received research funding from the Fundamental Research Grant Scheme (Malaysia), Selangor state, and university grants. Her excellence in academics and research has gained her several awards including the Best Academic Staff Award in 2018 and Best Papers Awards. She is a member of Akademik Professor Malaysia (APM).
SA	SA has a Doctorate in Business Management and Entrepreneurship. His focus areas of research are management and entrepreneurship. He provides lectures and supervision and has received positive evaluations from students.

Table 3.18:
Summary of Comments and Suggestions from the Experts

Expert	Comment/ Suggestion
AA	Overall, the items in the questionnaire have been developed to measure factors associated with foreign students studying in Malaysia. Nevertheless, there are several items that are double-barreled such as IS4 and ES4. Therefore, it is suggested to prepare two different statements for two different ideas/issues. There are items that are subsets to other items in a similar construct. In other words, it carries a similar meaning in representing the factor. It is suggested for PF1=PF7, PF3=PF5 to be revised.
SA	Suggest changing pre-purchase, purchase, and post-purchase evaluation to pre-enrolment, enrolment, and post-enrolment evaluation. Make sure the minimum number of items for each construct is between three to four items.

3.8.2 Potential Respondents

The final draft of the questionnaire was also sent to potential respondents for review, focusing on the relevance and representativeness of the questions as well the clarity of the language. The potential respondents were requested to read the questionnaire,

respond to the statements, and comment and give feedback on any statements that were ambiguous or unclear. The potential respondents consist of five international students. Table 3.19 summarises the potential respondent comments and suggestions. Some minor wording modifications were made to this process.

Table 3.19:
Summary of Comments and Suggestions from Potential Respondents

Potential Respondent	Comment/Suggestion
A	The questionnaire is too long.
B	Lots of questions.
C	Construct- Purchase - Not understand the term purchase. Students suggest using other terms such as decision.
D	Demographic question number seven – suggest combining with question number eight.
E	The questionnaire is ok.

3.8.3 Pilot Test and Result

Based on the expert and potential respondents' feedback, the questionnaire was amended. The final questionnaire was distributed to international students, and the reliability of the measurement was empirically tested. Table 3.20 below presents a summary of the final questionnaire.

Table 3.20:
Summary of Final Questionnaire

Section	Constructs	No. of Items (Before Pilot Test)	No. of Items (For Pilot Study)
A	General Information	8	9
B	Home country factor	5	5
	Host country factor	8	5
	Personal factor	7	5
	Cost	4	3
	Information source	16	16
	Academic factor	9	7
C	Study abroad decision	4	4
D	Study abroad evaluation	19	19

3.8.3.1 Pilot Test

A pilot study is small-scale research that collects data from respondents similar to those used in the real study to help identify any issues or challenges that the researcher will face (Hair et al., 2020; Zikmund et al., 2013). For this study, the pilot study respondents entailed 31 international students, similar to the final sample of the study. In terms of sample size for the pilot test, this study follows the suggestion of Johanson and Brooks (2010), who stated that a pilot test is a preliminary survey that requires a minimum of 30 representative participants from the population of interest as a reasonable minimum recommendation. The pilot data were analysed using IBM-SPSS software.

3.8.3.2 Result

A total of 31 responses were successfully collected from a simple random sample of international students. A majority of the respondents was male (54.8%), and all of them are studying at Bachelor's degree level (100%) with a majority in their third year (45.2%). For the country of origin (home country), students from Somalia make up the majority (48.4%), followed by students from Bangladesh, while eight students did not answer (25.6%) as the question is open-ended. Therefore, to avoid the same issue in the real study, the researcher modified the question to become a categorical question to avoid missing data.

A total of 19 respondents (61.3%) stated that they chose higher education institutions in Malaysia without even looking at other higher education institutions in other countries as their choice to study abroad. The summary background of the respondents is presented in Table 3.21.

Table 3.21:
The profile of the respondents (n=31)

Construct/Measures	Frequency	Percent (%)
Age		
21	7	22.6
22	5	16.1
23	5	16.1
24	5	16.1
25	2	6.5
27	3	9.7
Missing	4	12.9
Gender		
Male	17	54.8
Female	14	45.2
Education level		
Diploma	0	0
Bachelor's degree	31	100
Year of study		
1 st year	5	16.1
2 nd year	9	29.0
3 rd year	14	45.2
4 th year	3	9.7
Country of origin/Home country		
Afghanistan	1	3.2
Bangladesh	4	12.9
India	1	3.2
Kenya	1	3.2
Oman	1	3.2
Somalia	15	48.4
Missing	8	25.8
Field of study		
Accounting & Finance	13	41.9
Art & Design	0	0
Architecture	1	3.2
Business & Management	13	41.9
Education	0	0
Engineering	0	0
Health Sciences/ Nursing	1	3.2
Hospitality/Tourism/Culinary	0	0
Information Technology (IT)/ Computer Science	0	0
Law	0	0
Mathematics/Statistics	0	0
Social Sciences	0	0
Others	1	3.2
Missing	2	6.5
Apply to more than one country		
Yes	11	35.5
No	19	61.3
Missing	1	3.2
Country applied other than Malaysia		
United States	0	0
United Kingdom	2	6.5
France	0	0
Germany	1	3.2
Australia	2	6.5
China	5	16.1
Others	6	19.4
Missing	15	48.4

Furthermore, the reliability of the measurement items was empirically tested. Cronbach's alpha and item-to-total correlation were used to test the construct reliability. As shown in Table 3.22, the Cronbach's alpha for home country, host country, personal factors, cost, information source, academic factors, study abroad decision, and post-purchase evaluation scale are 0.777, 0.864, 0.790, 0.774, 0.826, 0.819, 0.774 and 0.916, respectively. Thus, the Cronbach's alpha values met the recommended threshold of 0.7 for the reliability coefficient for all scales (Pallant, 2016). In general, reliability values within 0.70 range are acceptable, and those exceeding 0.80 are good (Sekaran, & Bougie, 2019).

Table 3.22:
Details of Reliability Results

Construct	Cronbach's Alpha	No. of Items
Home country factors	0.777	5
Host country factors	0.864	5
Personal factors	0.790	5
Cost	0.795	3
Information source	0.826	16
Academic factors	0.819	7
Study abroad decision	0.774	4
Post-purchase evaluation	0.916	19

Finally, Figure 3.8 demonstrates further description and details on the research setting and scope, instrument development and pilot test used in the study including the population, sample size, unit of analysis, instrument development, and pilot test and result.

3.9 Final Survey

The final survey was executed through an electronic medium, an online survey. The use of this type of survey offers numerous advantages, including faster distribution of

the online questionnaires, access to individuals who would be difficult to reach through other channels, and the ability for respondents to complete the survey at their convenience and at their own pace (Sekaran & Bogie, 2019). In fact, by using an online survey, the automatic processing of the survey saves costs, time, and energy. Despite the difficulties of online surveys, this is the ideal way in times of pandemic, i.e., during when the surveys were conducted, considering the elements that improve the quality of the data gathered, and its ability to save money, time, and energy.

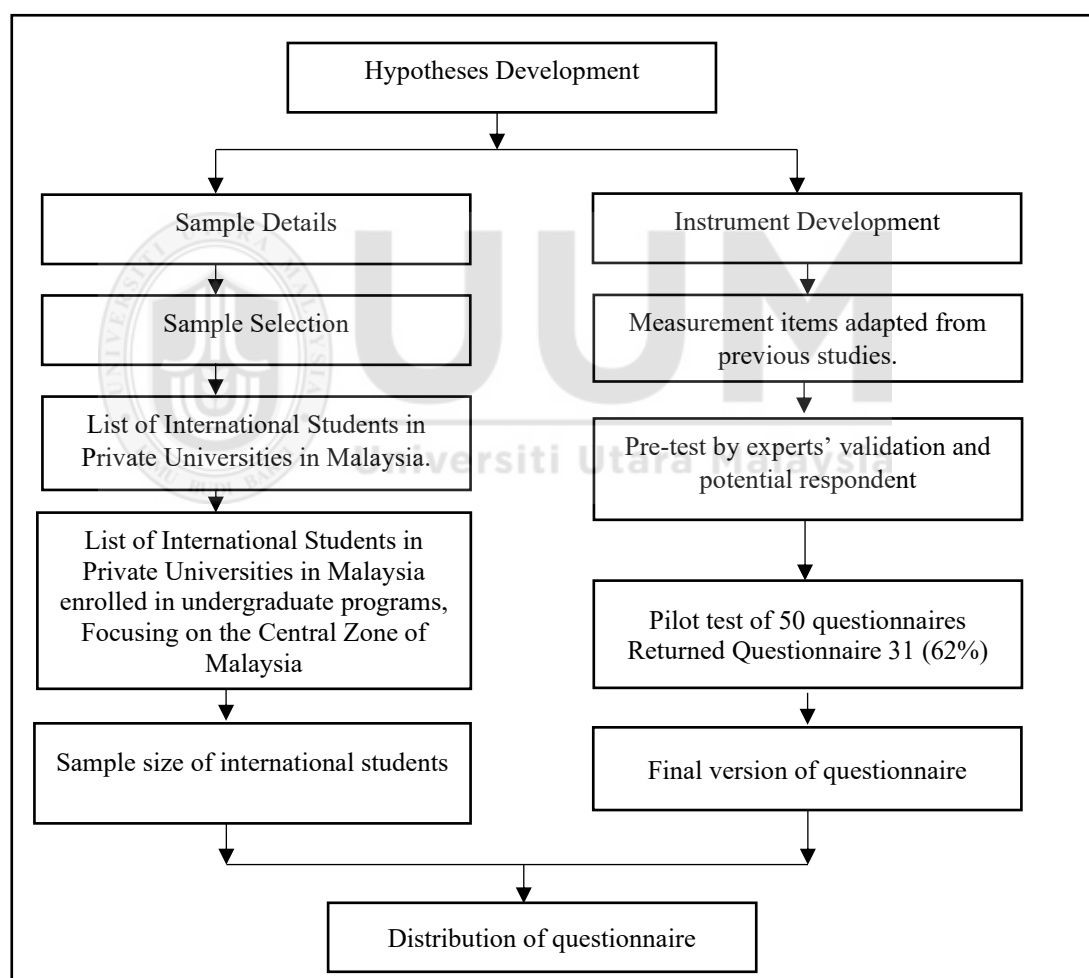


Figure 3.8:
Details on the Research Setting and Scope, Instrument Development and Pilot Test of the Study.

3.10 Statistical Analysis

In order to achieve the research objectives of the study, the data collected from the questionnaire were analysed using IBM SPSS statistical software and SmartPLS 3.0 software.

3.10.1 Statistical Analysis using IBM SPSS

In data analysis, IBM SPSS software was utilised for all data entry and data preparation processes. The software assists the researcher in cleaning the data. Also, data screening procedures were conducted to detect blank responses, missing values, and data normality. All collected data underwent editing, coding, and then keying into the software. Basically, data preparation is the first step in the data analysis process. This step involves the validation of the collected data to ensure its appropriateness for the study. All the data were entered into IBM SPSS version 23 software. Besides that, the demographic data was examined using the same application via frequency and descriptive analysis.

In addition, descriptive analysis, to determine the minimum, maximum, means, standard deviations, and variance was conducted for the interval-scaled independent, dependent, and mediating variables in this study.

3.10.2 Statistical Analysis using Structural Equation Model

Following the data screening procedures, the Partial Least Squares (PLS-SEM) method was used to test the hypotheses developed in the study. The primary objective of applying structural modelling (PLS-SEM) is to predict and explain the target constructs (Hair et al., 2020).

Justification of Using PLS-SEM

This study chose the PLS-SEM for the research model because:

- a. PLS requires a smaller sample size compared to other methods.
- b. The normal distribution of input data is not a requirement.
- c. The PLS method is beneficial for making predictions (Urbach & Ahlemann, 2010).
- d. PLS-SEM has been deployed in many studies related to studying abroad such as Chelliah et al. (2019), Roostika (2017), and Shahijan et al. (2016).

The above reasons prove that the tool chosen is suitable for this study. The following sections will discuss the guidelines used to examine the PLS-SEM result which employs a two-stage procedure: measurement model assessment and structural model estimation.

3.10.3 Measurement Model Assessment

There are four assessments in the measurement model assessment: internal consistency reliability, indicator reliability, convergent validity, and discriminant validity, as shown in Table 3.23.

Table 3.23:

Procedures in the Measurement Model

Assessment 1	Internal consistency reliability.
Assessment 2	Indicator reliability.
Assessment 3	Convergent validity.
Assessment 4	Discriminant validity.

Source: Hair et al., (2020)

In the first assessment, item reliability and validity are the focus in the internal consistency reliability step. Higher values indicate higher levels of reliability when interpreting internal consistency reliability results. In exploratory research, values between 0.60 and 0.70 are acceptable, while values between 0.70 and 0.95 are satisfactory to good. If the reliability is greater than 0.95, it is unrealistic and indicates that the items are redundant or that there is a systematic pattern of responses (Hair et al., 2020).

The second assessment relates to indicator reliability. The assessment of indicator reliability is conducted to test the extent to which the indicators align with what they intend to measure (Urbach & Ahlemann, 2010). For this study, a threshold of 0.5 was used as a standard to determine the statistically significant value of each indicator (Hair et al., 2020). Therefore, loading values that are equivalent to or surpassing 0.5 are acceptable.

The third assessment entails the convergent validity. Convergent validity is assessed using the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) across all indicators associated with a particular construct, and the rule of thumb for an acceptable AVE is 0.50 or higher (Hair et al., 2020). The final step is the assessment for discriminant validity. There are two measurements used namely: the Fornell-Larcker's criterion (Fornell & Larcker, 1981) and cross-loading (Chin, 1998). A summary of the guidelines for assessing the validity of a measurement model is presented in Table 3.24 below. The structural model assessment can be conducted when the measurement model has met the reliability and validity criteria (Hair et al., 2020).

Table 3.24:

Summary of Indices for Measurement Analysis

No	Assessment	Name of Index		Guidelines		
1.	Internal Consistency	Composite (CR)	Reliability	CR>0.95 (Not Unrealistic) CR>0.7-0.95 (Satisfactory) CR>0.6 (for exploratory research)	(Not	Desirable/
2.	Indicator Reliability	Factor Indicator Loadings	Loadings/ Indicator Loadings	Loading 0.708 or higher is recommended, but loadings >0.7, 0.6, 0.5 or 0.4 is adequate if other items have higher loadings to complement the AVE and CR.		
3.	Convergent Validity	Average Extracted (AVE)	Variance	AVE>0.50		
4.	Discriminant Validity	HTMT Criterion		HTMT .85 HTMT inference using bootstrapping technique (Henseler et al., 2015): Does 90% bootstrap confidence interval of HTMT include the value 1<HTMT<1 (Liberal Criterion).		

Source: Ramayah, Jacky, Chuah, Ting & Memon (2018) and Hair, Black, Babin, & Anderson (2019)

3.10.4 Structural Model Estimation

After the measurement model is established, the assessment of structural model is conducted. Hair et al. (2017) proposed six steps for assessing a structural model in the context of PLS-SEM, which are shown in Table 3.25.

Table 3.25:

Procedures in the Structural Model Assessment

Assessment 1	Assessment for Collinearity Issues.
Assessment 2	Assessment for the significance and relevance of the structural model relationship.
Assessment 3	Assessment of the level of R ² .
Assessment 4	Assessment of the effect size (f ²).
Assessment 5	Assessment of the predictive relevance Q ² .
Assessment 6	Assessment of the q ² effect size.

Source: Hair et al., (2017, p. 207)

Step one is the assessment for collinearity issues. This is to ensure that the data introduces no bias to the regression results. Each predictor construct tolerance (VIF) value should be lower than five (Hair et al., 2017).

The second step entails assessing the significance and relevance of the structural model relationship, commonly referred to as the path coefficients. The assessment represents the hypothesised relationships among the constructs. The path coefficients have standardised values between -1 and $+1$ and the p values are identified to assess the significance levels (Hair et al., 2017).

In the third step, the predictive accuracy of the model is evaluated using the coefficient of determination (R^2). Coefficient of determination (R^2), ranging from 0 to 1 depending on the particular model and research discipline, with higher values indicating higher levels of predictive accuracy (Hair et al., 2017). In addition, a R^2 value of 0.67 indicates significant predictive power, 0.333 indicates average predictive power, and 0.19 indicates weak predictive power (Chin, 1998).

Next, f^2 is then used to measure the relative impact of a predictor construct on the endogenous construct. It is essential to report the effect size. As shown in Table 3.26, Cohen (1988) introduced a guideline to measure effect size. The table shows that values of 0.02, 0.15 and 0.35 correspond to small, medium, and large effect sizes, respectively.

Finally, the predictive relevance (Q^2) of the model is assessed after measuring the effect size. The Q^2 value is obtained using the blindfolding procedure for a specified omission distance D (Hair et al., 2017). The guidelines for validating the structural model are presented in Table 3.26.

Table 3.26:

Summary of Indices for Structural Model

No	Assessment	Name of Index	Guidelines	Literature Support
1.	Lateral Collinearity	Variance Inflator Factor (VIF)	$VIF \leq 3.3$ $VIF \leq 5.0$	Diamantopoulos & Siguaw (2006) "Hair et al., 2017"
2.	Path Coefficient	Path Coefficient	p value < 0.01 t value > 2.58 (two-tailed) t value > 2.33 (one-tailed) p value < 0.05 t value > 1.96 (two-tailed) t value > 1.645 (one-tailed) p value < 0.10 t value > 1.645 (two-tailed) t value > 1.28 (one-tailed)	Hair et al. (2017) Hair et al. (2017) Hair et al. (2017)
3.	R^2	Coefficient of determination	0.26-Substantial 0.13-Moderate 0.02-Weak 0.67-Substantial 0.33-Moderate 0.19-Weak 0.26-Substantial 0.13-Moderate 0.02-Weak	Cohen (1988) Chin (2010) Hair et al., (2017)
4.	f^2	Effect size to R^2	0.35-Substantial/large 0.15-Moderate/ medium 0.02-Weak/ small	Cohen (1988)
5.	Q^2	Stone Geisser Q^2 Predictive Relevance"	> 0 indicates that exogenous constructs have predictive relevance for endogenous constructs.	Hair et al., (2017), Stone (1974), Geiser (1974).

Source: Ramayah et al. (2018).

3.11 Chapter Summary

This chapter discussed the methods and procedures used in the study. It starts with the research design, research process, research setting and scope, population and sampling, measurement items, questionnaire design, and questionnaire development. This chapter also discussed the data collection procedure and data analysis. The next chapter will discuss the data analysis in detail.

CHAPTER 4:

ANALYSIS AND RESULT

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the statistical assessment of the study. The process begins with data preparation prior to the PLS-SEM assessment. The assumptions underlying the multivariate analysis is presented next, followed by the basic descriptive statistics of the respondents' profile. Sections 4.5 and 4.6 offer the measurement and structural models assessment evaluation along with the assessment of the mediating variables. A summary of the chapter is later presented.

4.2 Data Preparation

Data preparation is the first step of data analysis prior to evaluating the research model. The process of data preparation involves several steps including editing, coding, and data entry, which are essential for achieving precision and adequacy in the data (Cooper & Schindler, 2014).

4.2.1 Creating Data Structure

This study utilised an online data collection technique. The first stage after the information has been collected is the create of the data structure. This process begins by indicating the name of the variables involved. The closed-ended questionnaire used in this study comprised 41 items for the independent variables (IV), four items for the

mediating variables, 19 items for the dependent variable (DV), and nine items for the demographic questions.

The next step is the coding process, in which numbers are assigned to the categories to facilitate the measurement of items into a certain number of groups or categories (Hair et al., 2018; Cooper & Schindler, 2014). In this study, the responses for all the independent variables, were pre-coded as 1 to 5, whereby 1 indicates 'not at all influential' and 5 indicates 'extremely influential'. For the dependent variable, the responses were coded as 1 to 5, with 1 denotes 'strongly disagree' and 5 denotes 'strongly agree', except for the items for university facilities evaluation, whereby 1 denotes 'not at all satisfied' and 5 denotes 'extremely satisfied'. Additionally, for the mediating variables, the responses were coded as 1 to 5, whereby 1 denotes 'strongly disagree' and 5 denotes 'strongly agree'.

4.2.2 Data Screening

Blank responses were checked as the first step in data screening. A total of 286 questionnaires were received for data screening.

4.2.2.1 Blank Responses

Each response received were checked for blank responses. Responses of which 25% of the items were left unanswered were exclude from the data set for analysis, following the suggestion of Sekaran and Bougie (2019). The author suggested that any items in the questionnaire that have been left unanswered at more than 25% should be omitted from the questionnaire. In this study, there were two cases; after the omission, 284 cases remained.

4.2.2.2 Missing Value

The next step in data analysis is data cleaning, which is the process of identifying any missing value in the data set. No issues on missing value were found as the respondents were required to answer all the questions before they can submit the online questionnaire form. Hence, 284 cases remained.

4.2.2.3 Filter Question

Filter questions were also included in the demographic section of the questionnaire to verify that the respondents selected met the criteria of the study. The filter questions were on the type of university and location of the university. During the filtering process, 19 cases were deleted as they no longer fulfil the study's requirement. The universities were identified as public universities, university colleges, or colleges, which are not located in Malaysia's central zone. Three respondents were enrolled in public universities, five in university colleges, and one in a college. Six respondents attended private higher education institutions on the east coast, whilst another two in the northern, southern, and Sarawak and Sabah regions, respectively, as shown in Appendix A. After omitting the 19 cases, a total of 265 cases remained.

4.2.2.4 Outliers

Next, the potential outliers were examined. Outliers entail observations that is substantially different from other observations (Sekaran & Bougie, 2019). Examining the outliers is essential as they lead to distorted results and affect data normality (Hair et al., 2020).

The process of outlier detection was carried out using IBM SPSS version 23. Table 4.1 indicates that there are 23 cases of outliers. Based on the boxplot in Appendix D, a total of 23 cases shows characteristics of outliers.

Table 4.1:
Outliers Detection

Outliers	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Case Number	5	64	114	120	129	131	191	192	204	207

Outliers	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20
Case Number	211	215	217	218	220	221	223	229	236	237

Outliers	21	22	23
Case Number	238	241	247

The dataset was then checked for outliers using the Mahalanobis Distance (D2). The criteria utilised for detecting multivariate outliers are the Mahalanobis Distance at a significance level of $p < 0.001$. The threshold value of 0.001 was proposed by Tabachnick and Fidell (2007), who claimed that a very conservative approximation of the probability for outlier identification is reasonable for the Mahalanobis Distance. As shown in Appendix D, one outlier, namely, data number 165 was discovered during the analysis as the data values were less than 0.001. By the end of the process, a total of 241 cases remained. Next, normality test was conducted.

4.3 Normality Testing

Following the data cleaning process is the test for normality. The first assumption in multivariate analysis is normality, which is embodied by the assumption of normal

distribution in every item and in all linear combinations of the item (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2012). The rule of thumb is that skewness values between -3 and +3 are deemed acceptable while kurtosis should be in the range of -10 to +10 (Kline, 2011). Table 4.2 and Appendix D indicate the results of the data. Two constructs, i.e., host country and cost were not normally distribution with a z-skewness value greater than ± 3.00 . The other constructs were approximately in a normal distribution with a z-skewness value ranging between ± 3.00 and z-kurtosis value ranging between ± 10.00 .

Table 4.2:
Skewness and Kurtosis for Normality Assumption

Construct	Skewness (± 3)			Kurtosis (± 10)			Normality Assumption
	Statistic	Std. Error	Z-value skewness	Statistic	Std. Error	Z-value kurtosis	
Home country factors (HM)	-.151	.157	-0.962	-.557	.312	-1.785	Normal
Host country factors (HC)	-.596	.157	-3.796	-.292	.312	-0.936	Not normal
Cost (CO)	-.872	.157	-5.554	.143	.312	0.458	Not normal
Personal factors (PF)	-.440	.157	-2.803	-.300	.312	-0.962	Normal
Information Source (InS)	.012	.157	0.076	-.474	.312	-1.519	Normal
Academic factors (AR)	-.351	.157	-2.236	-.405	.312	-1.298	Normal
Study abroad decision (SAD)	-.297	.157	-1.892	-.411	.312	-1.317	Normal
Service Quality Evaluation (SQE)	-.463	.157	-2.949	-.096	.312	-0.308	Normal
University Facilities Quality (AFQ)	-.112	.157	-0.713	-.565	.312	-1.811	Normal

In conclusion, the test results show that the normal distribution assumption of the data was violated. This calls for the use of SmartPLS, a non-parametric analysis tool.

4.3.1 Response Rate

The study was conducted by distributing an online questionnaire in two phases. The first phase was conducted by emailing all the persons-in-charge at the international office of the private universities in the central zone of Malaysia. The purpose is to request for the officers' help in disseminating the Google Form questionnaire link. The list of officers-in-charge was derived from the Ministry of Higher Education. Although there are 36 private universities in the central zone of Malaysia, only 19 emails were successfully sent and returned, with 176 questionnaires received.

The second phase was conducted through international student associations. The researcher searched for student associations through social media, specifically Facebook. Five associations were contacted, and an online questionnaire link was shared with the administrator of the page to be disseminated to the association members.

Following analysis, some missing information was detected in two datasets. This is considered as incomplete data and therefore omitted from the data analysis. In addition, 19 datasets were omitted after the filtering process, and another 24 were deleted due to outliers. Ultimately, there were 241 usable datasets for analysis, i.e., a response rate of 25.2% as presented in Table 4.3. The data for this study is in line with several other studies related to international students, entailing 130 to 200 students (Wong et al., 2020), 122 international students from 35 countries (Pawar et al., 2020), 200 international students studying in Malaysia (Thoo et al., 2022), and 195 international students studying in Finland (Nikou et al., 2023).

Table 4.3:
Summary on Questionnaires Distribution

	Number of questionnaires distributed.	Number of questionnaires returned.
Emailed the international office of a private university in the central zone.	956*	176
Message to the administrator for the international student's association at a private university.		110
Total		286
Final usable questionnaire		241
Response Rate (%)		25.2% (241/ 956 * 100)

Note: The final usable data after deleting the outlier.

*The number of distributed survey links was received from the person-in-charge of international students in each private university in the Central Zone as in Appendix F.

4.3.2 Response Bias

To prevent biases in the study, a t-test was used to assess the significant differences between the international students' countries of origin and home country factors. An independent t-test was run on the data with a 95% confidence interval (CI) for the mean difference. The results showed no significant difference in demographic variables, country of origin, and home country factors ($t(56) = 1.940$, $p < 0.050$).

4.4 Descriptive Analysis

Following the data cleaning and assumptions tests, a descriptive analysis was performed. This study involved a non-face-to-face interaction between the respondents and the researcher as it was conducted online. The final survey was conducted from October 2020 to June 2021.

4.4.1 Descriptive Analysis of Respondents

The descriptive analysis of the respondents comprised seven items namely gender, age, education level, year of study, home country, field of study, and application to other

than Malaysia. Table 4.4 and Appendix B highlight the results of the respondents' demographic details. A total of 241 data was used for the analysis.

In terms of gender, there were 135 male respondents (56%) and 106 female respondents (44%), which represent a rather balanced data. In terms of age, 38 respondents (15.8%) were below 20 years old, 88 respondents (36.5%) were between 20 to 22 years, 64 respondents (26.6%) were in the 23 to 25 age group, and 51 respondents (21.2%) were 26 years and above. Most of the respondents namely 224 (92.9%), hold a Bachelor's degree and only 17 respondents (7.1%) had studied at the diploma level.

In terms of year of study, those in their third year make up the highest number of respondents namely 88 (36.5%), followed by 51 respondents (21.2%) in year one and 50 respondents (20.7%) in year two. Finally, 52 respondents (21.6%) were in year 4.

In terms of country of origin or home country, the majority of the respondents was from Somalia, namely 54 (22.4%), followed by, 45 respondents (18.7%) from China, 30 (12.4%) from Indonesia, 28 (11.6%) from Bangladesh, eight (3.3%) from India, seven (2.9%) from Yemen, and three (1.2%) each from Pakistan, South Korea and Syria. Three respondents (1.1%) from Pakistan, Two respondents (0.8%) each from Maldives, Nigeria, and Sudan, one respondent (0.4%) from Egypt and 53 respondents (22%) from other countries. None of the respondents were from Saudi Arabia and Sri Lanka.

In terms of field of study, most of the respondents namely 97 (40.2%) were enrolled in the business and management program followed by 78 respondents (32.4%) studying accounting and finance. 19 respondents (7.9%) studying information technology/ computer science, and 16 respondents (6.6%) taking engineering. Seven respondents (2.9%) were studying mathematics/ statistics, six respondents (2.5%) taking health sciences and nursing, three respondents (1.1%) taking architecture, two respondents (0.8%) studying hospitality/tourism/culinary and social sciences, and finally, 10 respondents (4.1%) taking other programs.

Next, a total of 139 respondents (57.7%) did not apply to other countries. Meanwhile, 23 respondents (9.5%) had applied to China, 10 respondents (4.1%) applied to Australia, 14 respondents (5.8%) applied to the United Kingdom, nine respondents (3.7%) applied to the United States, six respondents (2.5%) applied to Germany, three respondents (1.2%) applied to France and remaining 37 respondents (15.4%) applied to other countries.

Table 4.4:
Respondents' Profile (n=241)

Constructs	Item	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	135	56.0
	Female	106	44.0
Age	Below 20	38	15.8
	20 to 22	88	36.5
	23- to 5	64	26.6
	26 and above	51	21.2
Education level	Diploma	17	7.10
	Bachelor's degree	224	92.9
Year of Study	1 st year	51	21.2
	2 nd year	50	20.7
	3 rd year	88	36.5
	4 th year	52	21.6
Home country	Bangladesh	28	11.6
	China	45	18.7
	Egypt	1	0.40
	India	8	3.30
	Indonesia	30	12.4
	Maldives	2	0.80

Home country	Nigeria	2	0.80
	Pakistan	3	1.20
	Saudi Arabia	0	0.00
	Somalia	54	22.4
	South Korea	3	1.20
	Sri Lanka	0	0.00
	Sudan	2	0.80
	Syria	3	1.20
	Yemen	7	2.90
	Others	53	22.0
Field of Study	Accounting & Finance	78	32.4
	Art & Design	1	0.80
	Architecture	3	1.20
	Business & Management	97	40.2
	Education	0	0.00
	Engineering	16	6.60
	Health Sciences & Nursing	6	2.50
	Hospitality/Tourism/Culinary	2	0.80
	Information Technology	19	7.90
	(IT)/ Computer Science		
	Law	0	0.00
	Mathematics/ Statistics	7	2.90
	Social Sciences	2	0.80
	Others	10	4.10
Applied to countries other than Malaysia?	Australia	10	4.10
	China	23	9.50
	France	3	1.20
	Germany	6	2.50
	United States	9	3.70
	United Kingdom	14	5.80
	Others	37	15.4
	Not applicable	139	57.7

4.4.2 Descriptive Statistics of All Items and Constructs

The Statistical Package for the Social Sciences software (SPSS) version 23 was utilised to compute the minimum, maximum, mean, and standard deviations. The data were calculated after ensuring that the data were free from outliers and missing data. Table 4.5 and Appendix C show the descriptive analysis for all the study constructs, reporting the minimum, maximum, mean, and standard deviation value for each item.

The mean ratings were divided into three categories namely low, medium, and high indicators. A mean value less than 1.34 was interpreted as low, between 1.34 to 3.33 as moderate, and above 3.33 as high indicators. From the analysis, the mean scores for two constructs, i.e., home country and interpersonal source are 3.27 and 3.10

respectively, thus indicated as moderate. In addition, another construct, i.e., host country, cost, personal factors, internal information source, external information source, academic factor, study abroad decision, service quality evaluation and university facilities evaluation showed a high score of above 3.33, thus indicated as high. The construct of personal factor recorded the highest mean score (3.99) followed by host country (3.94). The lowest mean score was for interpersonal source (3.10).

Table 4.5:
Descriptive Statistics for all Items and Construct (n=241)

Construct	Items	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Home country Factors (HM)	HM1	1	5	3.10	1.281
	HM2	1	5	3.34	1.238
	HM3	1	5	3.60	1.114
	HM4	1	5	3.24	1.280
	HM5	1	5	3.08	1.262
Average Home Country Score				3.27	1.235
Host country Factors (HC)	HC1	1	5	3.60	1.248
	HC2	1	5	4.03	0.957
	HC3	1	5	3.99	0.913
	HC4	1	5	4.10	0.924
	HC5	1	5	4.00	1.072
Average Host Country Score				3.94	1.023
Cost (CO)	CL1	1	5	3.97	1.068
	CL2	1	5	3.97	1.042
	CL3	1	5	3.78	1.230
Average Cost Score				3.91	1.110
Personal Factors (PF)	PF2	1	5	4.04	0.848
	PF3	1	5	4.12	0.942
	PF4	1	5	4.04	0.919
	PF5	1	5	3.97	0.968
	PF6	1	5	3.78	0.985
Average Personal Factors Score				3.99	0.932
Internal information Source (IS)	IS1	2	5	3.69	0.875
	IS2	1	5	3.39	0.860
	IS3	2	5	3.57	0.859
	IS4	2	5	3.52	0.827
	IS5	1	5	3.11	1.182
	IS6	1	5	3.57	0.915
Average Internal Source Score				3.48	0.920
External information Source (ES)	ES1	1	5	3.46	0.926
	ES2	1	5	3.76	0.907
	ES3	1	5	3.58	0.882
	ES4	2	5	3.49	0.842
	ES5	1	5	3.49	0.867
	ES6	1	5	3.45	1.106
Average External Source Score				3.54	0.922
Interpersonal information Source (IP)	IP1	1	5	3.33	1.344
	IP2	1	5	3.04	1.385
	IP3	1	5	3.17	1.261

Interpersonal information Source (IP)					
	IP4	1	5	3.19	1.266
	IP5	1	5	2.77	1.266
Average Interpersonal Source Score				3.10	1.304
Academic Factors (AR)	AR1	1	5	4.16	0.856
	AR2	1	5	4.27	0.793
	AR3	1	5	3.80	1.002
	AR4	2	5	4.09	0.835
	AR5	1	5	4.01	0.832
	AR6	1	5	3.94	0.977
	AR7	1	5	4.02	0.861
Average Academic Reputation Score				4.04	0.879
Study Abroad Decision (SAD)	SAD1	1	5	3.87	0.920
	SAD2	2	5	4.00	0.929
	SAD3	1	5	3.97	0.985
	SAD4	1	5	3.56	1.007
Average Study Abroad Decision Score				3.85	0.960
Service Quality Evaluation (SQE)	QRL1	1	5	3.49	1.029
	QRL2	1	5	3.60	0.991
	QRL3	1	5	3.64	0.965
	QRP1	1	5	3.71	0.938
	QRP2	1	5	3.59	0.945
	QRP3	1	5	3.58	0.959
	QRP4	1	5	3.83	0.949
	QRP5	1	5	3.66	0.949
	QEM1	1	5	3.70	1.043
	QEM2	1	5	3.66	1.004
	QEM3	1	5	3.67	1.063
Average Service Quality Evaluation Score				3.65	0.985
University Facilities Evaluation (AFE)	AF1	1	5	3.54	0.996
	AF2	2	5	3.96	0.884
	AF3	2	5	3.85	0.846
	AF5	2	5	3.93	0.908
	AF6	1	5	3.68	0.971
	AF7	1	5	3.71	0.969
	AF8	1	5	3.78	0.935
	AF9	1	5	3.54	0.996
Average University Facilities Evaluation Score				3.75	0.938

Note: N = 241; Mean values measured on five-point rating scale.

Following the descriptive analysis, an assessment of the measurement model was carried out to determine the adequacy of the measurement items. The study employed Partial least squares (PLS) modelling technique through the SmartPLS 3.2.8 version as the statistical tool for examining the measurement and structural models (Ringle et al., 2005). This approach was preferred as it does not require the normality assumption, which is a prerequisite for the survey research to be normally distributed (Chin et al., 2003).

Prior to the assessing the measurement model, the data was assessed for Common Method Bias by following the suggestions of Kock and Lynn (2012), and Kock (2015), i.e., by assessing the full collinearity. In this method all the variables are regressed against a common variable and if the variance inflation factor (VIF) is less than 3.3, then there is no bias from the single source data. Based on the results of the analysis, it can be concluded that the VIF value is less than 3.3. This indicates that the presence of single source bias in the data, as shown in Table 4. 6, is not a significant or serious issue.

Table 4.6:
Full Collinearity Testing

	AFE	AR	CO	ES	HC	HM	IP	IS	PF	SAD	SQE
VIF	1.190	1.308	1.324	1.170	1.373	1.149	1.300	1.413	1.446	1.195	1.200

Note: AFE=University Facilities Evaluation, AR=Academic Factors, CO=Cost, ES=External Source, HC=Host Country, HM=Home Country, IP=Interpersonal; Source, IS=Internal Source, PF=Personal Factors, SAD=Study Abroad Decision and SQE=Service Quality Evaluation

4.5 Measurement Model Assessment

Measurement model assessment was conducted to test the validity and reliability of the instruments used following the guidelines of Hair et al. (2019). Three primary assessments were performed when evaluating the study's reflective measurement model namely: internal consistency reliability, convergent validity, and discriminant validity. Appendix G shows the model of the study.

The measurement model depicted in Figure 4.1 illustrates the initial measurement model of the study in PLS-SEM analysis. The model outlines the relationship between the latent variables and their corresponding indicators. The following sub-sections delineate the findings of each analyses performed to assess the reliability as well as validity of the measurement.

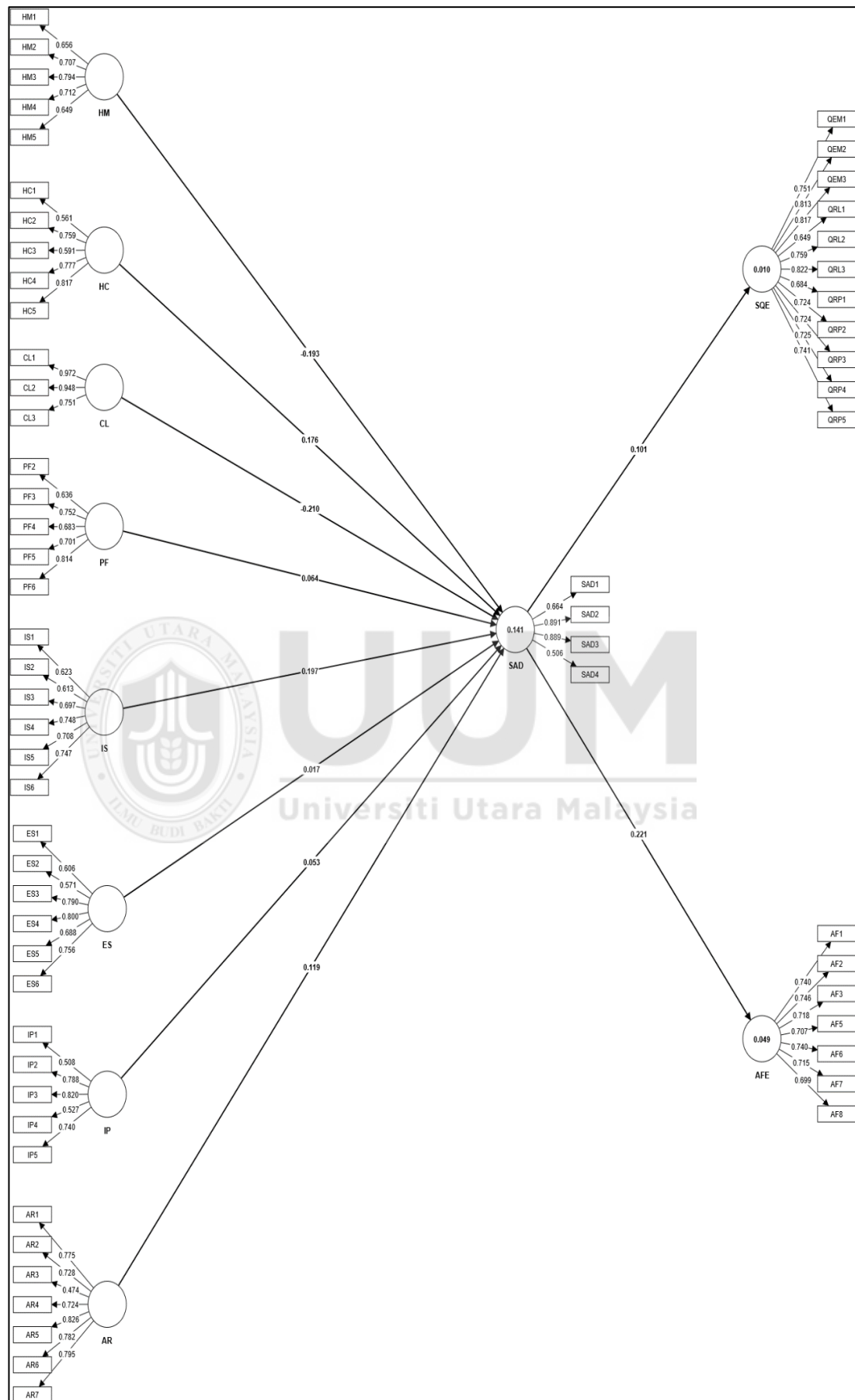


Figure 4.1:
Initial Measurement Model

4.5.1 Internal Consistency Reliability

In ensuring internal consistency reliability, the Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability were assessed.

4.5.1.1 Cronbach's Alpha

The reliability of both the construct and the items for each construct were assessed through the utilisation of Cronbach's alpha value. The test of reliability was conducted using IBM SPSS version 23. The Cronbach's alpha value for each construct falls within the range of 0.720 to 0.926, as indicated by the data provided in Table 4.7 and Appendix E. This shows that the Cronbach's alpha results for all the constructs are above 0.7. Generally, researchers consider an alpha value of 0.7 as a minimum coefficient, although lower coefficients may be acceptable (Hair et al., 2020). Therefore, the Cronbach's alpha values for all the constructs in this study had satisfied the recommended value for the reliability coefficient for all constructs.

Table 4.7:
Details of Reliability Results

Construct	Cronbach's Alpha Value	No of Items
Home country factors (HM)	0.773	5
Host country factors (HC)	0.733	5
Cost (CO)	0.888	3
Personal Factors (PF)	0.779	5
Information source (InS):		
Internal information Source (IS)	0.760	6
External information Source (ES)	0.787	5
Interpersonal information Source (IP)	0.720	5
Academic Factors (AR)	0.873	7
Study Abroad Decision (SAD)	0.790	4
Post Purchase Evaluation (PPE):		
Service Quality Evaluation (SQE)	0.926	11
University Facilities Evaluation (AFE)	0.872	8
Total		64

In addition, a reliability test can be conducted through composite reliability analysis. Composite reliability is preferable to Cronbach's alpha as a convergent validity test because Cronbach's alpha may overestimate or underestimate the scale reliability (Garson, 2016). Similarly, Gefen et al. (2000) suggested that composite reliability is a more appropriate measure for internal consistency reliability than Cronbach's alpha. For this reason, composite reliability was employed in this study as it may lead to higher estimates of true reliability.

4.5.1.2 Composite Reliability

Composite reliability (CR) was assessed for all the constructs. Compared to Cronbach's alpha, CR is considered a more accurate approach (Hair et al., 2020). Composite reliability was conducted by measuring the reliability and internal consistency of the measured variables representing a latent construct. As a general guideline, the composite reliability value should be above 0.70, but lower than 0.95 (Hair et al., 2018). All the constructs in Table 4.8 show adequate internal consistency as the composite reliability is greater than 0.7, i.e., between 0.823 to 0.929. The drawing of the model on CR is presented in Appendix G.

Table 4.8:
Composite Reliability Result

Construct	Composite Reliability Value
Home country factors (HM)	0.833
Host country factors (HC)	0.831
Cost (CO)	0.921
Personal Factors (PF)	0.845
Internal information Source (IS)	0.838
External information Source (ES)	0.854
Interpersonal information Source (IP)	0.823
Academic Factors (AR)	0.902
Study Abroad Decision (SAD)	0.882
Service Quality Evaluation (SQE)	0.929
University Facilities Evaluation (AFE)	0.898

Like the Cronbach's alpha result earlier, this result shows that all the constructs have met the requirement of internal consistency by applying composite reliability. For this reason, composite reliability is favoured over Cronbach's alpha in this study due to this rationale. Hair et al., (2018) supported this, stating that when SEM is used with reflectively measured constructs, composite reliability is a more appropriate criterion of reliability than Cronbach's alpha which considered a conservative measure of internal consistency reliability.

4.5.2 Convergent Validity

Convergent validity assesses the extent to which two measures of the same concept are correlated or share a high proportion of variance in common (Hair et al., 2020). In assessing the convergent validity, indicator reliability (outer loading) and AVE test are conducted. In assessing the AVE, outer loading testing should also be conducted. The omission of an indicator must be done based on the AVE. In general, it is recommended that the loading value should be greater than 0.5, and AVE exceed 0.5 (Hair et al., 2020).

4.5.2.1 Indicator Reliability (Outer Loading)

The evaluation of indicator reliability refers to the degree of consistency between an indicator and its intended measurement (Urban & Ahlemaan, 2010). A good rule of thumb is that the standardised loading estimates should be at least 0.5, and preferably 0.7 or higher (Hair et al., 2020). Figure 4.2 shows the omitted and retained indicators based on the AVE.

Indicator reliability was assessed in this study by deleting any indicator with a loading value less than 0.6. Seven items namely AR3, SAD4, IP1, ES1, HC1, ES2 and IS2 were deleted due to low loading values. Appendix H shows the details of outer loading for each indicator.

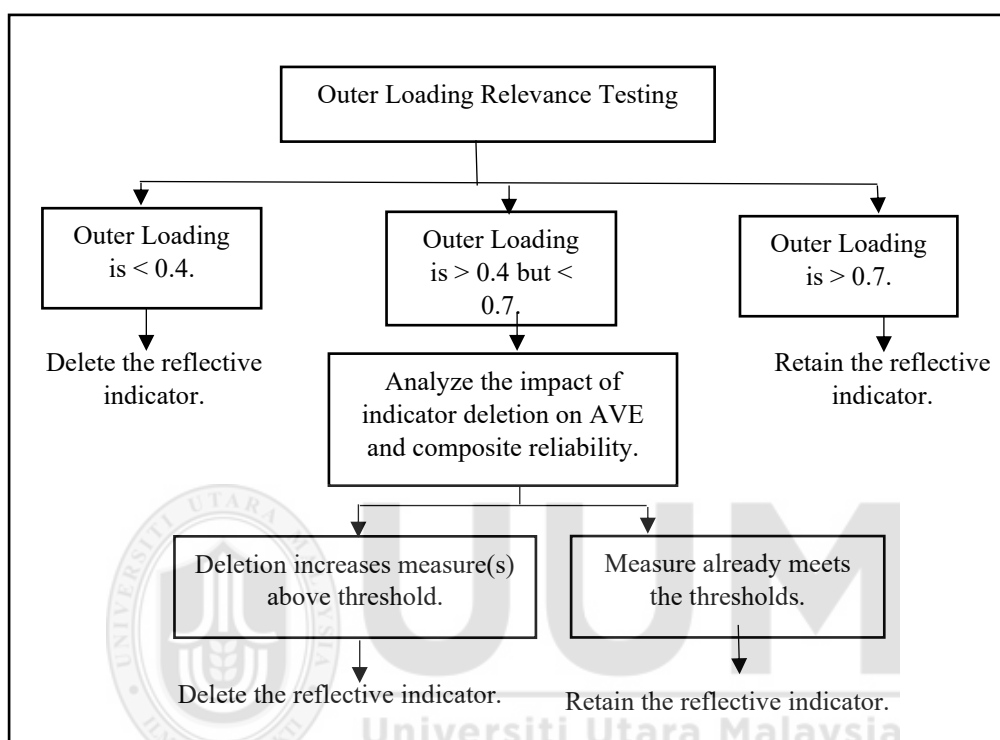


Figure 4.2:
Deleting and Retaining of Indicators based on AVE.
Source: Hair et al., (2019)

4.5.2.2 Average Variance Extracted (AVE)

The average variance extracted is a measure of convergence among a set of items representing a latent construct. The average percentage of variation explains the variance derived from a construct's items (Hair et al., 2019). In order to attain adequate convergent validity, it is necessary for each construct to explain a minimum of 50 percent of the variance in the assigned indicators ($AVE > 0.50$).

Along with testing the outer loading value, the impact of the omitted indicator on AVE was also analysed. If any construct does not meet the AVE and CR acceptance values,

the lowest loadings in the construct would be identified and subsequently omitted until satisfactory AVE value is achieved as indicated in Figure 4.1 above (Ramayah et al., 2018, p.93). From the analysis, it is evident that all the constructs have fulfilled the AVE requirement of being greater than 0.50. Therefore, all the reflective indicators were retained as the measurement had met the AVE requirement of 0.50 and above.

Finally, Table 4.9 presents the indicator loadings, composite reliability, and AVE of the reflective constructs. The measurement model, along with AVE value, is shown in Figure 4.3.

Table 4.9:
Summary of Indicator Loadings, Cronbach's Alpha, Composite Reliability and Average Variance Extracted

Construct	Item	Loadings	Cronbach's Alpha	Composite Reliability (CR)	Average Variance Extracted (AVE)
University Facilities Evaluation (AFE)	AF1	0.739	0.872	0.898	0.525
	AF2	0.756			
	AF3	0.725			
	AF4	0.724			
	AF5	0.732			
	AF6	0.702			
	AF7	0.686			
	AF8	0.730			
Academic Factors (AR)	AR1	0.784	0.873	0.902	0.604
	AR2	0.742			
	AR3	0.744			
	AR4	0.826			
	AR5	0.776			
	AR6	0.790			
	AR7	0.784			
Cost (CO)	CL1	0.971	0.888	0.921	0.798
	CL2	0.954			
	CL3	0.735			
External information Sources (ES)		0.802	0.787	0.854	0.595
	ES3				
	ES4	0.813			
	ES5	0.672			
	ES6	0.790			

Table 4.9 (Continued)

Host Country Factors (HC)	HC2	0.728	0.733	0.831	0.554
	HC3	0.632			
	HC4	0.789			
	HC5	0.815			
Home Country Factors (HM)	HM1	0.679	0.773	0.833	0.502
	HM2	0.738			
	HM3	0.813			
	HM4	0.663			
	HM5	0.634			
Interpersonal information Source (IP)		0.774	0.720	0.823	0.542
	IP2				
	IP3	0.854			
	IP4	0.618			
	IP5	0.677			
Internal information Source (IS)	IS1	0.614	0.760	0.838	0.509
	IS3	0.704			
	IS4	0.763			
	IS5	0.720			
	IS6	0.756			
Personal Factors (PF)	PF2	0.676	0.779	0.845	0.521
	PF3	0.736			
	PF4	0.710			
	PF5	0.720			
	PF6	0.765			
Services Quality Evaluation (SQE)	QRL1	0.734	0.926	0.929	0.545
	QRL2	0.826			
	QRL3	0.817			
	QRP1	0.619			
	QRP2	0.757			
	QRP3	0.840			
	QRP4	0.671			
	QRP5	0.699			
	QEM1	0.697			
	QEM2	0.710			
	QEM3	0.717			
Study Abroad Decision (SAD)	SAD1	0.665	0.790	0.882	0.719
	SAD2	0.927			
	SAD3	0.925			

Note: AR3, SAD4, IP1, ES1, HC1, ES2 and IS2 were deleted due to low loadings.

In summary, all the loadings are greater than 0.6, and all the constructs had met the requirement for composite reliability whereby all the CRs are greater than 0.7 ($CR >$

0.7). Furthermore, after item deletion, all the constructs had also met the satisfactory level of AVE, i.e., ranging from 0.502 to 0.798 (Hair et al., 2020).

4.5.3 Discriminant Validity

The discriminant validity of the model was assessed following the convergent validity testing. Discriminant validity refer to which a construct is distinct from other constructs in a theoretical structural model (Hair et al., 2018). In this study, discriminant validity is assesses based on the Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio of Correlations (HTMT) technique, as introduced by Henseler et al. (2019).

4.5.3.1 Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio of Correlations (HTMT)

In order to assess discriminant validity, two methods were used. The first method is when the HTMT value is greater than HTMT_{.85}, which shows evidence of discriminant validity issues (Kline, 2011). As seen in Table 4.10, from the PLS Algorithm calculation, all the constructs' values are lower than HTMT_{.85} and fulfil the criterion of HTMT_{.85} (Kline, 2011). This means that discriminant validity is established for the constructs in the measurement model in this study.

Table 4.10:
HTMT Results

	AFE	AR	CO	ES	HC	HM	IP	IS	PF	SAD	SQE
AFE											
AR	0.081										
CO	0.099	0.301									
ES	0.284	0.186	0.158								
HC	0.145	0.460	0.363	0.164							
HM	0.176	0.177	0.210	0.122	0.290						
IP	0.198	0.159	0.240	0.277	0.109	0.143					
IS	0.361	0.187	0.266	0.290	0.163	0.188	0.540				
PF	0.135	0.427	0.432	0.215	0.401	0.241	0.257	0.275			
SAD	0.235	0.174	0.088	0.118	0.209	0.148	0.136	0.218	0.105		
SQE	0.139	0.225	0.251	0.208	0.308	0.188	0.128	0.181	0.389	0.068	

The second method is HTMT inference using a bootstrapping to test whether the HTMT value is significantly different from 1.00 (Henseler et al., 2015). Table 4.10 shows the result of the HTMT value and confirmed that the confidence interval is significantly different from 1.00 for all the constructs, and this also confirms discriminant validity.

Finally, Table 4.11 presents the detailed measurement model analysis for this study. It shows that all the requirements for internal consistency, convergent validity and discriminant validity had been met.

Table 4.11
Summary of the Measurement Model Analysis of the Study

Construct	Internal Consistency		Convergent Validity	Discriminant Validity	
	Indicator Loadings	CR	AVE	HTMT	
				Construct value is lower than HTMT _{.85}	Confident interval does not include 0
	> 0.5	0.5-0.9	> 0.5		
Home country (HM)	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Host country (HC)	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Cost (CO)	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Personal Factors (PF)	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Internal information source (IS)	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
External information source (IS)	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Interpersonal information source (IS)	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Academic Factors (AR)	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Study abroad decision (SAD)	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Service Quality Evaluation (SQE)	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
University Facilities Evaluation (AFE)	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

Upon completion of the assessment of the measurement model, the structural model was subsequently assessed. The following section discusses the assessment of the structural model.

4.6 Structural Model Assessment

Structural model assessment is conducted to determine the model capabilities to predict one or more target construct or to test the hypothesis developed. There are six steps in the structural model assessment, i.e., assessment of collinearity issues, assessment of the significance and relevance of the structural model, assessment of the level of R^2 , assessment of the effect size, assessment of predictive relevance Q^2 , and assessment of the q^2 effect size (Ramayah et al., 2018). The hierarchical component path model for this study is represented in Figure 4.2 and Appendix G, which displays the result of the PLS algorithm.

4.6.1 Assessment of the Structural Model for Collinearity Issues

Assessing collinearity issues is the first step in the assessment of the structural model. It is crucial to address the collinearity issue between the constructs. VIF value is used to measure the collinearity. It is recommended that the VIF value be less than 5.0 or 3.3 as suggested by Hair et al., (2020), and Diamantopoulos and Siguaw (2006) respectively.

As shown in Table 4.12, all the inner VIF values for the constructs are less than 3.3, whereby the VIF value is within the range of 1.091 to 1.379 (Diamantopoulos & Siguaw, 2006). This indicates that there are no collinearity issues in this study.

Table 4.12:
Result of VIF value of the Study (n=241)

	SAD	AFE	SQE
AR	1.282		
CO	1.261		
ES	1.124		
HC	1.298		
HM	1.091		

Table 4.12 (Continued)

IP	1.296		
IS	1.313		
PF	1.379		
SAD	1.000	1.000	

4.6.2 Assessing the Significance of the Structural Model Relationship

The structural model relationship evaluation is the second step in the structural model assessment. It is done to test the hypotheses. Mardia's multivariate analysis for assessing multivariate skewness and kurtosis was conducted as suggested by Hair et al. (2019) and Cain et al. (2017). The results showed that the data collected is not multivariate normal, i.e., Mardia's multivariate skewness ($\beta = 10.052$, $p < 0.01$) and Mardia's multivariate kurtosis ($\beta = 148.104$, $p < 0.01$), which show that the data is not normally distributed. Hence, to generate results for each path relationship in the model, a 5,000-sample re-sample bootstrapping procedure was performed (Ramayah et al., 2018). Following the suggestions of Hair et al. (2019) the path coefficients, standard errors, t-values, and p-values for the structural model were also reported.

Likewise, Hahn and Ang (2017) stated that p-values are not a good criterion for testing the significance of hypothesis and therefore recommended using a combination of criteria such as p-values, confidence intervals and effect sizes. Table 3.28 in Chapter 3 shows the summary of the criteria used to test the hypotheses developed.

For this study, ten hypotheses were developed for the construct. A bootstrapping with 5000 re-samples was performed as suggested by Hair et al. (2019). The bootstrapping function was also employed to generate t-statistics for all the paths, in order to test the level of significance. The statistical analysis employed a bootstrapping technique with a significance level of 0.05 using a one-tailed test and 5,000 subsamples. At a

significance level of 1 percent ($\alpha = 0.01$), the critical value for the one-tailed test is 2.33. At a significance level of 5 percent ($\alpha = 0.05$), the critical value is 1.645, and at a significance level of 10 percent ($\alpha = 0.1$), the critical value is 1.28 (Ramayah et al., 2018). Moreover, a weak relationship is associated with estimated path coefficients that are close to 0, whereas strong positive relationships are associated with estimated path coefficients that are close to +1 (Hair et al., 2019). The result of the structural model relationship for the study is shown in Table 4.13.

Based on Table 4.13, the value of the path coefficients has a standardised value of approximately between -1 and +1. While, for the t-test, the relationships showed mixed results whereby only six relationships were found to have a t-value ≥ 1.645 , thus significant at 0.05, and four relationships were less than the t-value ≥ 1.645 . Table 4.12 presents a summary of the findings.

Table 4.13:
Summary of the Structural Model Assessment

Hypothesis	Relationship	Std Beta	Std Error	t-value	p-value	Decision	f ²	Effect size	VIF
H1	HM -> SAD	-0.200	0.088	2.289	P<0.05	Supported	0.079	Small	1.091
H2	HC -> SAD	0.190	0.067	2.833	P<0.05	Supported	0.102	Small	1.298
H3	CO -> SAD	-0.213	0.098	2.177	P<0.05	Supported	0.107	Small	1.261
H4	IS -> SAD	0.177	0.065	2.713	P<0.05	Supported	0.114	Small	1.313
H5	ES -> SAD	-0.006	0.075	0.075	0.470	Not Supported	0.499	Small	1.124
H6	IP -> SAD	0.046	0.078	0.597	0.275	Not Supported	0.436	Large	1.296
H7	PF -> SAD	0.058	0.099	0.587	0.279	Not Supported	0.424	Large	1.379
H8	AR -> SAD	0.125	0.074	1.699	P<0.05	Supported	0.217	Medium	1.282
H9	SAD -> AFE	0.203	0.056	3.625	P<0.05	Supported	0.075	Small	1.000
H10	SAD -> SQE	0.088	0.158	0.554	0.290	Not Supported	0.354	Large	1.000

4.6.3 The Coefficient of Determination (R²)

In step three, the coefficient of determination” (R²) is conducted to evaluate the model predictive accuracy. R² is a measure of the model’s predictive accuracy ranging from

0 to 1, and it can also be viewed as the combined effect of the exogenous variables on the endogenous variable (Ramayah et al., 2018). Cohen (1989) stated that a value of 0.26 indicates substantial predictive power, 0.13 moderate predictive power, and 0.02 weak predictive power. In another work, Hair et al. (2019) stated that a value of 0.75 indicates a substantial level of predictive power, 0.50 a moderate level of predictive power, and 0.25 a weak level of predictive power. Cohen's (1989) value predictive power was used in this study for explaining the level of R^2 as presented in Table 4.14.

Table 4.14:
The Coefficient of Determination (R^2)

	R Square
Post-purchase evaluation (PPE)	0.069
Study abroad decision (SAD)	0.203

Based on Table 4.14, the value of the coefficient of determination for post-purchase evaluation and study abroad decisions. The value for post-purchase was 0.069, which indicates weak predictive power. While for the study abroad decision, the value was 0.203, which indicates moderate predictive power.

4.6.4 Assessment of Effect Size (f^2)

In addition to the p-value, it is also essential to include the effect size in reporting statistical results (Sullivan & Feinn, 2012). The effect size of the predictor construct is evaluated using (f^2) as introduced by Cohen (1988) whereby values from 0.02 to 0.14 are considered a small effect size, 0.15 to 0.34 a medium effect size, and 0.35 and above a large effect size. Table 4.13 above shows the effect size of the predictor construct and a summary of the structural model assessment of the study.

The table shows that home country (0.079), host country (0.102), cost (0.107), and internal information source (0.114) have small effects in producing R^2 for study abroad decision. Academic factor (0.217) has small effects in producing R^2 for study abroad decision. Personal factor (0.424) and interpersonal information source (0.436) have large effects in producing R^2 for study abroad decision. In comparison, study abroad decision have large and small effects in producing R^2 for post-purchase evaluation through service quality evaluation (0.354) and university facilities evaluation (0.075) respectively.

4.6.5 Assessment of the Predictive Relevance (Q^2)

Finally, the blindfolding procedure was conducted to assess the predictive relevance (Q^2) of the model, as suggested by Hair et al. (2018). The resampling technique known as blindfolding procedure involves the systematic deletion and prediction of each data point of the indicators in the reflective measurement model of the endogenous construct (Ramayah et al., 2018). If $Q^2 > 0$, the model has exhibits sufficient predictive relevance (Fornell & Cha, 1994). Table 4.15 show the finding of the Q^2 .

Table 4.15:
Predictive Relevance (Q^2)

	SSO	SSE	$Q^2 (=1-SSE/SSO)$
University Facilities Evaluation (AFE)	1928	1896.415	0.016
Service Quality Evaluation (SQE)	2651	2651.143	0.000
Study Abroad Decision (SAD)	723	675.519	0.066

The Q^2 for one construct namely, university facilities evaluation is larger than 0, and one construct namely service quality evaluation is equal to 0. This indicates that the model has mixed predictive relevance. The predictive relevance Q^2 of study abroad decision has a value of 0.066, and university facilities evaluation has a value of 0.016, indicating that the model has predictive relevance based on the endogenous constructs

because the Q^2 value is considerably above zero. In addition, the predictive relevance Q^2 of study abroad decision has a value of 0.066, and service quality evaluation has a value of 0.000, indicating that the model has a lack of predictive relevance based on the endogenous constructs because the Q^2 value is considerably equal to zero (Hair et al., 2020). This confirms that the model has a predictive relevance only between study abroad decision and university facilities evaluation because the Q^2 value is greater than zero ($Q^2 > 0$).

4.7 Mediating Effect Results

To test the mediation hypotheses, this study followed the suggestions of Preacher and Hayes (2004; 2008) by bootstrapping the indirect effect. If the confidence interval does not straddle 0, then we can conclude that there is significant mediation, HC $\rightarrow$ SAD $\rightarrow$ AFE ($\beta = 0.039$, $p < 0.1$) and IS $\rightarrow$ SAD $\rightarrow$ AFE ($\beta = 0.036$, $p < 0.1$) whereby both are significant, as shown in Table 4.16. The confidence intervals bias corrected 95% also did not show any intervals straddling a 0 thus confirming our findings. Hence, only H20, and H23 were supported.

Table 4.16:
Summary of Hypotheses Analysis.

Hypotheses		Std Beta	Std Error	t-value	p-value	Decision
H11	HM $\rightarrow$ SAD $\rightarrow$ SQE	-0.018	0.037	0.476	0.317	Not supported
H12	HC $\rightarrow$ SAD $\rightarrow$ SQE	0.017	0.031	0.528	0.299	Not supported
H13	CL $\rightarrow$ SAD $\rightarrow$ SQE	-0.019	0.037	0.509	0.305	Not supported
H14	OE $\rightarrow$ SAD $\rightarrow$ SQE	0.005	0.021	0.244	0.404	Not supported
H15	IS $\rightarrow$ SAD $\rightarrow$ SQE	0.015	0.030	0.518	0.302	Not supported
H16	ES $\rightarrow$ SAD $\rightarrow$ SQE	0.000	0.014	0.036	0.486	Not supported
H17	IP $\rightarrow$ SAD $\rightarrow$ SQE	0.004	0.016	0.247	0.402	Not supported
H18	AR $\rightarrow$ SAD $\rightarrow$ SQE	0.011	0.024	0.452	0.326	Not supported
H19	HM $\rightarrow$ SAD $\rightarrow$ AFE	-0.041	0.023	1.733	0.042	Not supported
H20	HC $\rightarrow$ SAD $\rightarrow$ AFE	0.039	0.019	1.997	0.023	Supported
H21	CL $\rightarrow$ SAD $\rightarrow$ AFE	-0.043	0.025	1.718	0.043	Not supported
H22	OE $\rightarrow$ SAD $\rightarrow$ AFE	0.012	0.023	0.505	0.307	Not supported
H23	IS $\rightarrow$ SAD $\rightarrow$ AFE	0.036	0.020	1.835	0.033	Supported

Table 4.16 (Continued)

H24	ES -> SAD -> AFE	-0.001	0.017	0.066	0.474	Not supported
H25	IP -> SAD -> AFE	0.009	0.018	0.514	0.304	Not supported
H26	AR -> SAD -> AFE	0.025	0.018	1.399	0.081	Not supported

4.8 Chapter Summary

This chapter reported the data analysis results gained using the techniques described in Chapter 3. The next chapter will discuss the research findings and discussion.



CHAPTER 5

RESEARCH FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

5.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the concluding remarks, which are divided into four sections. The first section provides a summary of the findings. Following this, the study discusses the findings of the research. Finally, the summary of the chapter is presented.

5.2 Overview of the Study

This study aims to investigate and examine the factors that influence international students to study abroad and their post-purchase evaluation. Referring to the findings in the previous chapter, five factors were found to influence study abroad decisions. In addition, study abroad decision mediates the relationship between the influencing factor of host country and internal information source and university facilities evaluation. A summary of the research hypotheses related to each research question has been presented in a concise manner in Tables 5.1, 5.2, and 5.3. The empirical findings support the eight hypotheses.

5.3 Discussion of the Findings

This section discusses the findings in detail. Firstly, this section discusses the overview of the respondents' characteristics. This is followed by a discussion on the findings based on the research questions developed.

This study combined the concepts from the push and pull theory and consumer decision-making model to create an integrated framework for investigating the extent to which influencing factors influence international students' decision to study in Malaysia. It also examined the post-purchase evaluation of the international students following their decision to study in Malaysia.

5.3.1 Overview of the Respondents Characteristics

The study sample entails international students enrolled in private universities in Malaysia's central zone. Random cluster sampling was conducted, resulting in the attainment of 241 undergraduate international students currently enrolled in private universities in Malaysia, specifically at the central zone (Selangor, Kuala Lumpur Putrajaya, and Wilayah Persekutuan). The study only focused on the central zone as these areas have the highest number of private HEIs in Malaysia, with the highest number of international student enrolments of 24,866 in 2016 as discussed in Section 3.4.2, Table 3.4.

There are more male respondents (56%) in this study compared to female respondents (44%) as presented in Section 4.4.1, Table 4.3. This corresponds to the study of Di Pietro (2022) which examined the changes in gender and participation in study abroad programmes. The study found that there is evidence of a systematic decline in the overrepresentation of women in European study abroad programmes over time. This situation can also be observed in Asian nations. In terms of age, most of the respondents were between 20 to 22 years old (30.5%), with most being in their third year of study (30.5%).

For the country of origin, the 2019 report from the Ministry of Higher Education was used as the benchmark for the top 15 countries of origin (namely, Bangladesh, China, Egypt, India, Indonesia, Maldives, Nigeria, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, Somalia, South Korea, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Syria, and Yemen) of the respondents. The survey showed that from out of the 241 international students, 78% are from the top 15 countries of origin. This result closely matches the 2019 report from the Ministry of Higher Education. It also shows the diversity of respondents in terms of nationality and culture. Another 22% of the respondents are from countries other than the top 15.

In addition, international students from China (18.7%) made up the highest respondents in this study. Basically, Chinese students are more interested in studying abroad, with the number increasing from 413,000 in 2013 to 662,000 in 2018. This proves why most of the respondents are from China (Xiao & Li, 2020).

In general, the respondents can be grouped by region, whereby most of the international students are from Asia, Africa, and the Middle East region. Again, this finding also corresponds with the 2019 report by the Malaysian Higher Education, which reported that the top enrolment of international students come from Asia and the Middle East region, as shown in Table 4.3. This finding is also supported by Chin (2019), who mentioned that Malaysia is currently a preferred choice among international students from Africa, Bangladesh, India, the Middle East, and Eastern Europe. Furthermore, the political stability of Malaysia, due to its open-market economy, fosters a safe and secure environment for international students, thereby enhancing the previously mentioned benefits. Also, Lipura (2022) stated that

international students studying in the Philippines reimagine Asia as more than a destination for non-elites students.

The 241 international students in this study are taking various courses offered by the private universities in Malaysia. According to the 2019 report by the Ministry of Higher Education, student enrolment in private HEIs is greater than that in public HEIs specifically in Social Sciences, Business and Law courses. This current study also found a similar result, whereby 40.2% of the international students chose business and management programs, as shown in Section 4.4.1, Table 4.3.

In term of the choice of destination to continue their studies, 139 of the international students (57.7%) chooses Malaysia as their only study destination, as presented in Table 4.3 in Section 4.4.1 This shows a positive indicator for the higher education sector. The Malaysian government and higher education institutions, especially private universities, should highlight this aspect to ensure that more international students would choose Malaysia as their first destination to further their studies. This is in line with Malaysia's goal to be an excellent education hub in Southeast Asia.

5.3.2 Discussion of the Result

The research findings are discussed based on the research questions developed in this study. The arguments are clarified through the testing of its hypothesis in the research model. The results are then compared with previous studies on the factor influencing international students to study abroad and their post-purchase evaluation. It is important to understand that the study was made on the reflective basis of the influencing factors to study abroad and post-purchase evaluations.

5.3.2.1 What are the influencing factors that cause the international students to study in private universities in Malaysia?

As discussed in Section 2.6, there are many factors that influence students' decision to study abroad. This study discovered eight influencing factors namely home country, host country, cost, personal factors, information sources (internal, external, and interpersonal information source), and academic factors.

Table 4.4 shows the means for all the influencing factors. Academic factors are considered the main factors influencing study abroad decision with a mean score 4.04, while interpersonal information source is the least influencing factor with a mean score 3.10. In conclusion, the mean for all the factors falls within the ranges of 3.10 to 4.04, indicating a moderate to high level exerted by these factors on the students' decision to study in Malaysia (see Table 4.4).

From the analysis in Table 4.4, it can be concluded that the factor of home country moderately influences the international students' decision to study abroad with a mean score of 3.27. This is supported by Hosgorur and Aysel, (2022) who found that economic factors in the home country including political issues that lead to state of war and low-quality education push local students to study abroad. Meanwhile, the other six factors of host country (3.94), cost (3.91), personal factors (3.99), internal information source (3.48), external information source (3.54), and academic factors (4.04) were found to highly influence the international students' decision to study in Malaysian private universities. All these factors had been widely studied in past research (Zulkifli et al., 2020; Rembielak et al., 2020; Qasim et al., 2020; Sung & Lin,

2018; Khanal & Gaulee, 2019; Zhu & Reeves, 2019; Moogan, 2018; James-MacEachern & Yun, 2017; Ahmad et al., 2016).

For the host country factor, economic, political, and educational factors have been identified as determinants that pull international students to study in a different country (Hosgorur & Aysel, 2022). In addition, Aydin (2021) reported that positive factors such as cost advantages also pull students to study abroad.

In terms of source of information, the analysis in Table 4.4 shows, internal and external information sources highly influence international students' decision to study abroad, with mean scores of 3.48 and 3.54, respectively. Meanwhile interpersonal information source was found to moderately influence their study abroad with a mean score 3.10. The current study had identified similar factors that contribute to international students' decision to study abroad. Changes in the digital world today and in the immediate wake of the COVID-19 pandemic have had a substantial impact on the use of digital sources of information not only in the business sector, but also among international students seeking information to study abroad.

Hence, it is advisable for the government and HEIs to create more detailed marketing plans and digital materials on websites. This will make it easier for information about the university to reach the intended students. This could also help in promoting Malaysia's higher learning institutions to prospective students. Additionally, this can contribute to a higher level of satisfaction, as the students will have more information about the targeted country and its higher education institutions prior to their arrival in Malaysia.

Finally, academic factors also influence students' decision to study abroad. Based on the findings presented in Table 4.4, it can be concluded that academic factors highly influence the students' decision to study in the private HEIs in Malaysia. This statement is supported by a study conducted in Finland, which found quality and university reputation as important motivating factors for choosing to study abroad (Calikoglu, 2018).

In conclusion, all the influencing factors namely, home country, host country, cost, personal factors, information sources (internal, external, and interpersonal information sources), and academic factors influence students' decisions to enrol in Malaysian higher education institutions. The effects of these factors on international students are then investigated.

5.3.2.2 Does the influencing factors affect international students' decision to study in private universities in Malaysia?

Research question two examines whether the influencing factors significantly influence the international students' decision to study in private higher education in Malaysia.

In general, the changing world situation due to the pandemic has changed the behaviour of international students in their decision to study abroad. The COVID-19 pandemic had caused a shift from traditional to virtual study methods. During the pandemic, most of the students stayed in their home countries and studied online. Therefore, this scenario influenced the students' responses to the questionnaire. Their inability to physically interact with other students and staff at the university and assess

the services and facilities provided can also influence their responses. When students are comfortable with virtual learning methods and gain experience studying abroad digitally, influencing factors such as that of the home country and host country become less important, as the students do not have to travel to the host country. Hence, the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the study cannot be overlooked.

The research questions were answered by discussing hypothesis one (H1) to hypothesis eight (H8).

5.3.2.2.1 Home country has a significant and negative influence on the international students' decision to study at a private university in Malaysia.

Hypothesis H1, in Table 5.1 postulates that home country factors influence the international students' decision to study abroad. Based on the results in Table 4.12, the factor of Home Country (HM) was found statistically and significantly influence Study Abroad Decision (SAD) ($\beta = -0.200$, $t = 2.289$, $p = 0.01$). The results indicate that situations in the HM can influence the decision of international students to study abroad. As a result, hypothesis H1 supported. If the home country's political and economic situations are favourable, the student will decide to study locally, and vice versa. Also, substantively the effect size of HM on SAD is small ($f^2 = 0.079$).

The finding is supported by that of Nafari et al. (2017), which discovered that Iran's unstable political and economic situation had influenced and motivated its students to look for study opportunities abroad. This shows that the political and economic situation in the home country creates needs and motivate students to search for other places and countries to further their study. Therefore, the government and higher

education institutions must strategize to make Malaysia an economically and financially attractive destination.

At the same time, high competition, and high restrictions on admissions to local higher education institutions also cause students to study abroad. This is aligned with the finding of Wong et al. (2020), which mentioned quality as one of the primary considerations and most essential attraction factor for students in choosing international education institutions. Nghia (2019) also found that poor educational quality in Vietnam influence students' decisions to study abroad. Hence, HEIs need to take their institutional quality as a serious concern in influencing students' decision to study there.

Financial aid provided by the home country also influences the decision of whether to study domestically or abroad. If the home country provides financial aid such as tuition fees, students would be able to resume their education at a higher level. Tham et al. (2013) found that the implementation of domestic policy initiatives has enhanced the conditions of the host environment, thereby increasing its attraction to international students to study locally. This means that attractive financial aid provided by the home country would have a significant impact on the decision-making process of the students with regards to pursuing their studies locally.

In conclusion, although less attention has been given to the home country factor, the findings show that knowing the home country situation including its political and economic conditions, quality of higher education, admission process, and financial aid is important in determining what motivates students to study abroad. HEIs in Malaysia

can formulate specific plans and strategies to attract students to choose the country as their study location when they are aware of their home country's situation.

5.3.2.2.2 Host country has a significant and positive influence on international students' decision to study at a private university in Malaysia.

Based on the results in Table 4.12, Host Country (HC) has significant and positively influenced on Study Abroad Decision (SAD) ($\beta = 0.190$, $t = 2.833$, $p = 0.01$). The results indicate that HC can increase the decision of international students to study abroad. As a result, hypothesis H2 is supported. This demonstrates that increases in host country factor would lead to increases in study abroad decisions. Also, substantively the effect size of HC on SAD is small ($f^2 = 0.102$).

The finding of this study is supported by the 2014 International Students Mobility Survey conducted by the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), whereby Malaysia is ranked as 12 of the most desired education locations in the world. This mainly driven by the stable political and economic situation in Malaysia.

Students' decision to enrol and study in Malaysia is also affected by how much information they have about the country. One of the efforts taken by the ministry to disseminate information about Malaysia and its HEIs is by signing memorandums of understanding with institutions in India, Qatar, the UK, Romania, and Turkey, so that its economic, politics, utilities, lifestyle, and HEI information can be better

disseminated to the local students (Azalea Azuar, 2022). This will indirectly attract more students to enrol and study in Malaysia.

Various policies and initiatives have been carried out by the government to create a good educational environment. For example, in 2007, a rating system was implemented in Malaysia to rate the quality of teaching and learning at the undergraduate level in higher education institutions. The basic idea of the rating system is to encourage continuous improvement, enhance the reputation of the country and restrict the recruitment and enrolment of international students solely to accredited programmes. All of this contributes to improving the image, ranking, and educational environment in Malaysia (Tham et al., 2013).

Additionally, Education Malaysia Global Services (EMGS), an organisation that oversees international students in Malaysia, had implemented a variety of initiatives such as improving its operations and marketing and providing new value-added services, to make students feel safer while studying here. This will indirectly spread accurate information about Malaysia's educational system and entice student to enrol in Malaysia's HEIs (Rebecca Rajaendram, 2021).

Additionally, the statement released by StudyMalaysia.com (2017) stated that international students select Malaysia as their study location because they can experience a variety of cultures here. Malaysia's racial variety has also drawn students to enrol and pursue their education here.

In conclusion, the situation in the host country such as its economic condition, education environment, culture and lifestyle can influence international students to study abroad.

5.3.2.2.3 Cost has a significant and negative influence on international students' decision to study at a private university in Malaysia.

Hypothesis 3 predicted the significant influence between cost and study abroad decision. Based on the results in Table 4.21, Cost (CL) has statistically significant and negative influenced on Study Abroad Decision (SAD) ($\beta = -0.213$, $t = 2.177$, $p = 0.01$). The results indicate that an increase in CL would lead to a decrease in SAD. As a result, hypothesis H3 of the study is supported. This demonstrates that cost increases are associated with decreases in study abroad decisions and vice versa. Also, substantively the effect size of CL on SAD is small ($f^2 = 0.107$).

Cebolla-Boado et al., (2018) concluded that cost may play a significant role in attracting international students to study abroad especially those from middle-income background. Those from high-income backgrounds do not find cost a significant issue. In addition to tuition fees, student also take into account the living expenses, accommodation costs, and travel costs in their decision to study abroad.

AfterSchool.my (2022) reported that many international students find the cost of living in Malaysia as more manageable and affordable than that of other countries. The findings of this study are consistent with those reported by Brown et al. (2016) and Tham et al. (2013). In the review, the author discovered cost as a significant factor influencing students to study abroad. Lower tuition fees in Malaysia compared to

Singapore, Australia, and Canada along with the significantly lower living costs have effectively rendered Malaysia as a lower cost destination for studies. The more attractive the cost of the study abroad programme, the more likely students will sign up for it. Liu et al. (2018) revealed similar findings on the factors affecting international students' decisions to study in China.

In conclusion, regardless of whether international students choose to study in developing or developed countries, cost remains a significant deciding factor in their decision.

5.3.2.2.4 Personal factors have a significant and positive influence on international students' decision to study at a private university in Malaysia.

Hypothesis 4 predicted the influence of personal factors on study abroad decision. Based on the results in Table 4.21, Personal factors (PF) was positively influences by Study Abroad Decision (SAD) ($\beta = 0.058$, $t = 0.587$, $p > 0.01$) but is statistically insignificant. The results indicate that personal factors can increase the decision of international students to study abroad. As a result, hypothesis H4 is not supported. However, substantively the effect size of PF on SAD is large ($f^2 = 0.424$).

Personal factors such as future employment opportunities, future income and future career development have been found to be statistically insignificant in influencing international students' decision to study abroad. This is supported by Wintre et al. (2015) who discovered that students from East Asia, such as China, consider other criteria, such as the quality of the education as more influential in their study abroad decision than the outcome of the international experience factor.

Although some previous studies found a significant relationship between personal factors and study abroad decision, they were mostly carried out in developed countries such as Australia, Finland the US, and the UK (Calikoglu, 2018). Additionally, the student's perception of studying overseas is influenced by the environment. Pandemics and digital transformation also affect their perceptions when they can study at foreign universities directly from their home country.

5.3.2.2.5 Internal information source significantly influences international students' decision to study at a private university in Malaysia.

Hypothesis 5 predicted the influence of internal source on study abroad decision. Based on the results in Table 4.12, Internal Source (IS) statistically and significantly influenced Study Abroad Decision (SAD) ($\beta = 0.177$, $t = 2.713$, $p = 0.01$). The results indicate that information from IS can increase the decision of “international students” to study abroad. As a result, hypothesis H5 supported. This shows that better internal sources of information would increase international students’ decision to study abroad. However, the effect size of IS on SAD is small ($f^2 = 0.114$).

This result is highly supported by previous findings which identified the university's website as the most useful source for international students seeking information about higher education institution (Wang & Crawford, 2021; James-MacEachern & Yun, 2017). In addition, the information on government websites also influences students’ decisions. Information that is complete and easy for students to access is important in attracting them to study in Malaysia. Therefore, all HEIs need to update their websites with the latest programs, relevant information to the application process, and

interesting activities to help students make decisions. Hence, the significance of the website as one of the organization's internal information sources cannot be ignored (Wilkins & He, 2020).

Other than government and HEIs websites, direct email is also one of the most widely used communication tools today (Anton Vdovin, 2020). Through direct email to the person in charge in the HEIs, international students can ask a variety of questions. Moogan (2018) found that the speed of reply via email as one of the factors influencing the decision for international students to study abroad. In short, information from the university website and direct communication through email are crucial sources of information in assisting students in making their decisions; hence HEIs must consider these aspects when developing their marketing and recruitment strategies. With complete information, international students can make better decisions, and higher education institutions can indirectly increase international student enrolment.

Other than internal source of information, the influence of external information sources namely media social, agent, magazine and television also need to be investigated.

5.3.2.2.6 External information source significantly influences international students' decision to study at a private university in Malaysia.

Hypothesis 6 predicted the influence of external source on study abroad decision. Based on the results in Table 4.21, External Source (ES) has a positive relationship with study abroad decision but statistically insignificantly in influencing Study Abroad

Decision (SAD) ($\beta = -0.006$, $t = 0.075$, $p > 0.01$). As a result, hypothesis H6 is not supported. However, substantively the effect size of ES on SAD is large ($f^2 = 0.499$).

Previous studies have indicated that external information sources such as social media strongly influence students' decision to study abroad (Teah, 2018; Beech, 2015; Constantinides & Stagno, 2011). However, this current study found a different result. Information dissemination is currently greatly facilitated by technology. Therefore, many HEIs apply online application systems and use websites for disseminating information, making it easier for people including international students to look for information immediately. This reduces the usage of external information sources such as from agents, magazines, newspapers, and social media. This is supported by Paulino and Castaño, (2019) who reported that a vast number of research investigated the factors influencing students' decision of study abroad but with mixed results.

Additionally, the use of digital media such as e-newspapers and e-magazines has also reduced the function of advertisements in physical magazines and newspapers but has not directly become a medium in influencing students' decisions to study abroad.

Other than external sources of information, the influence of interpersonal information sources namely family, sibling and friends also needs to be investigated.

5.3.2.2.7 Interpersonal information source significantly influences international students' decision to study abroad at a private university in Malaysia.

Hypothesis 7 predicted the relationship between interpersonal source and study abroad decision. Based on the results in Table 4.12, Interpersonal Source (IP) has a positive but statistically insignificantly effect in influencing Study Abroad Decision (SAD) ($\beta = 0.046$, $t = 0.597$, $p > 0.01$). As a result, hypothesis H7 not supported. However, substantively the effect size of IP on SAD is large ($f^2 = 0.436$).

In today's current and digital situation, friends have less influence on a person's decision to study abroad. Choy and Lau (2019) found the insignificant influence of friends in influencing study abroad decisions. In recent years, Chinese students have gained more power over their parents in their decision-making process to study abroad (Bodycott & Lai, 2012 as cited in Wang & Crawford, 2021). This shows the decreasing influence of family and friends in study abroad decisions.

In conclusion, although some previous studies found a significant relationship between internal, external, and interpersonal information sources with study abroad decision (Wang & Crawford, 2021; Calikoglu, 2018), the result are largely mixed. As the respondents in this study are mostly from generation Z, characteristic differences, such as in decision-making styles contribute to the differences found in this study. Generation Z is made up of technological wizards who are overly reliant on technology. The digital revolution has influenced their lives which leads to contradictory findings from those of prior research.

5.3.2.2.8 Academic factors significantly and positively influence international students' decision to study at a private university in Malaysia.

Hypothesis 8 predicted the influence of academic factors on study abroad decision. Based on the results in Table 4.12, Academic factors (AR) statistically and significantly influence Study Abroad Decision (SAD) ($\beta = 0.125$, $t = 1.699$, $p = 0.01$). As a result, hypothesis H7 is supported. Also, substantively the effect size of AR on SAD is medium ($f^2 = 0.217$). This demonstrates that increases in academic factors are linked to increases in the decision to study abroad. Academic factors such as university ranking, university image, education quality and academic programs influence students' decision to study abroad.

In Malaysia, half of all international students are enrolled in private HEIs. Students choose to enrol and study in the institution because of the quality of education offered. Government assistance such as the creation of policies, and responsible bodies such as MQA, ensure that the programs offered are of high quality. This indirectly attracts the interest of international students to enrol. A study conducted in Finland found that the education quality and university reputation are significant factors that drive students in choosing Finland to further their studies (Calikoglu, 2018). This finding indicates that education quality is one of the significant factors that influence students' decision to study abroad.

In addition, institution reputation, ranking, and program recognition also influence students' decisions. Institution reputation, ranking and program recognition are essential to universities because they serve as an attraction for students seeking to further their study and individuals seeking teaching positions. University ranking also drives academic collaboration with international partners and commonly used as a yardstick of quality. Consequently, ranking assurance is a strategy that each private

HEI takes seriously. Singh and Srivastava (2018) stated that the factor affects students' preferences to study abroad. Likewise, Cheung et al. (2019) discovered that recognition as a key factor influencing Chinese students when selecting a study destination, i.e., more important than cultural, social, and economic factors.

In conclusion, this finding is consistent with that of McLeay et al. (2020) which found that education quality is one of the factors influencing international students' decisions to attend universities in the United Kingdom. Similar findings were indicated by Wong et al. (2020), Nicholls, (2018) and Qasim et al. (2020) as discussed in Section 2.6.6.

In conclusion, HEIs must uphold a high standard of education standard, image, and quality programs as to attract and influence international students' decision to enrol and study in PHEIs in Malaysia.

In summary, Table 5.1 below shows the results for H1 to H8.

Table 5.1:
Hypotheses Testing Results (H1-H8)

Hypotheses	Finding
H1: Home country has a significant and negative influence on international students' decision to study at a private university in Malaysia	Supported
H2: Host country has a significant and positive influence on international students' decision to study at a private university in Malaysia.	Supported
H3: Cost has a significant and negative influence on influence on international students' decision to study at a private university in Malaysia.	Supported
H4: The outcome of international experience has a significant and positive influence on international students' purchase decision to study at a private university in Malaysia.	Statistically Not Supported
H5: Internal information source significantly influences international students' decision to study at a private university in Malaysia.	Supported
H6: External information source significantly influences international students' decision to study at a private university in Malaysia.	Statistically Not Supported

Table 5.1 (Continued)

H7: Interpersonal information source significantly influences international students' decision to study abroad at a private university in Malaysia.	Statistically Not Supported
H8: Academic has a significant and positively influence on international students' purchase decision to study at a private university in Malaysia.	Supported

As a conclusion, only five hypotheses are supported, whilst the remaining three hypotheses are statistically not supported due to the digitalization reason. Changes in the digital world influence international students' decision to study abroad. This is consistent with the finding of Kirloskar and Inamdar (2021) who examined the change in study abroad factors in developing and developed countries. The authors revealed that several factors such as linguistics, environment of the host country, and the quality of higher education institutions have become important factors for students choosing to study abroad. Also, in the digital era, the global landscape for decisions to study abroad has been influenced by many factors, such as economic and political, cultural, and global geopolitical realities. In fact, factors influencing study choices of international students are varied, hence policymakers and leaders in higher education need to be aware of student motivations when formulating policies and strategies in higher education.

5.3.2.3 What are the international students' post-purchase evaluation of their decision to study in private universities in Malaysia?

Research question three examined whether study abroad decisions significantly influence international students' post-purchase evaluations. When examining the endogenous construct of post-purchase evaluation, two constructs are related: service quality evaluation and university facilities evaluation. Hence, the research questions were answered by discussing the hypotheses H9 and H10.

Hypothesis H9 in Table 5.2 postulates that study abroad decision positively and significantly influence international students' evaluations of the services they receive in the private university. Based on the results in Table 4.12, Study Abroad Decision (SAD) is not significantly influenced by Service Quality Evaluation (SQE) ($\beta = 0.088$, $t = 0.554$, $p > 0.01$). As a result, hypothesis H9 is not supported. However, substantively the effect size of SAD on SQE is large ($f^2 = 0.354$).

During the COVID-19 pandemic, students did not physically attend classes and were not at the university. Therefore, they did not directly receive services from the university staff or organisation. This contributes to the distinct result in comparison to that of past studies such as Wong et al. (2020). Although statistically the service quality factor is not significant, substantively the decision factor has a great impact on the service quality evaluation.

In addition, post-purchase evaluation was measured through university facilities provided to the international students. Hypothesis 10 in Table 5.2 postulates that study abroad decision positively and significantly influence international students' evaluations of the private university's facilities. Based on the results in Table 4.21, Study Abroad Decision (SAD) significantly and positively influence university facilities evaluation (AFE) ($\beta = 0.203$, $t = 3.625$, $p = 0.01$). As a result, hypothesis H10 is supported. Also, substantively the effect size of SAD on AFE is small ($f^2 = 0.075$).

Other than service quality, the physical environment such as accommodation, classroom, lab facilities, library, shops, and others also influence student evaluation. This finding is supported by the study of Chelliah, Khan et al. (2019), which found

that the physical environment, including onsite accommodation, buildings, grounds, and general facilities influence the satisfaction of students. In short, the finding revealed that the physical environment has a positive relationship with student evaluation. An excellent learning environment, world-class academic facilities and the comfort of modern city life further enable international students to experience quality time when they enrol and study in private HEIs here (AfterSchool.my, 2022).

This finding is also consistent with that of Sabatayeva et al. (2018) which revealed that international students are satisfied with the facilities provided by their university such as computer and library facilities. The authors also reported that when students have a high level of satisfaction in this aspect, they will likely spread positive word-of-mouth about the HEIs and exhibit a higher intention towards making repeated purchases. Hence, it is essential to evaluate the level of satisfaction among students from diverse cultural background, as this may provide different results.

In conclusion, as presented in Table 5.2, the results of H9 and H10 indicate that among the two significant factors tested in terms of post-purchase evaluation, the factor of university facilities evaluation significantly influences the students' decision to study abroad. This is supported by Santini et al. (2017) who concluded that the numerous studies on student decision evaluation had generated mixed findings in terms of statistical significance, direction and even magnitude.

Table 5.2:
Hypotheses Testing Results (H9 and H10)

Hypothesis	Overall
H9: Study abroad purchase decision positively influences international students' evaluations on the services they receive in the private university.	Not Statistically Supported
H10: Study abroad purchase decision positively influences international students' evaluations of the private university's facilities.	Supported

5.3.2.4 Does the decision to study abroad mediate the relationship between the influencing factors and the post-purchase evaluation?

Hypotheses H11 to H26 in Table 5.3 postulate that study abroad decision mediates the relationship between the influencing factor and post-purchase evaluation of the international student. The findings indicate mixed results.

Based on Table 5.3, the results of H11 to H26 revealed that among the sixteen significant factors tested in the context of post-purchase evaluation, Study Abroad Decision (SAD) only mediates the relationship between Internal Source (IS) and University Facilities Evaluation (AFE), (IS-SAD-AFE), and Host Country (HC) and University Facilities Evaluation (AFE), (HC-SAD-AFE). Based on the results in Table 4.12, Study Abroad Decision (SAD) mediates the relationship between Information Source (IS) and University Facilities Evaluation (AFE) ($\beta = 0.036$, $t = 1.835$, $p = 0.01$). As a result, hypothesis H23 of the study is supported. In addition, Study Abroad Decision (SAD) only mediates the relationship between Host Country (HC) and University Facilities Evaluation (AFE) ($\beta = 0.039$, $t = 1.997$, $p = 0.01$). As a result, hypothesis H26 is supported.

Table 5.3:
Hypotheses Testing Results (H11-H26)

Hypotheses	Overall
H11: Study abroad decision mediates the relationship between home country and service quality evaluation of the international student.	Not Supported
H12: Study abroad decision mediates the relationship between host country and service quality evaluation of the international student.	Not Supported
H13: Study abroad decision mediates the relationship between cost and service quality evaluation of the international student.	Not Supported
H14: Study abroad decision mediates the relationship between outcome and service quality evaluation of the international student.	Not Supported

Table 5.3 (Continued)

H15: Study abroad decision mediates the relationship between internal source and service quality evaluation of the international student.	Not Supported
H16: Study abroad decision mediates the relationship between external source and service quality evaluation of the international student.	Not Supported
H17: Study abroad decision mediates the relationship between interpersonal source and service quality evaluation of the international student.	Not Supported
H18: Study abroad decision mediates the relationship between academic and service quality evaluation of the international student.	Not Supported
H19: Study abroad decision mediates the relationship between home country and university facilities evaluation of the international student.	Not Supported
H20: Study abroad decision mediates the relationship between host country and university facilities evaluation of the international student.	Not Supported
H21: Study abroad decision mediates the relationship between cost and university facilities evaluation of the international student.	Not Supported
H22: Study abroad decision mediates the relationship between outcome and university facilities evaluation of the international student.”	Not Supported
H23: Study abroad decision mediates the relationship between internal source and university facilities evaluation of the international student.	Supported
H24: Study abroad decision mediates the relationship between external source and university facilities evaluation of the international student.	Not Supported
H25: Study abroad decision mediates the relationship between interpersonal source and university facilities evaluation of the international student.	Not Supported
H26: Study abroad decision mediates the relationship between academic and university facilities evaluation of the international student.	Supported

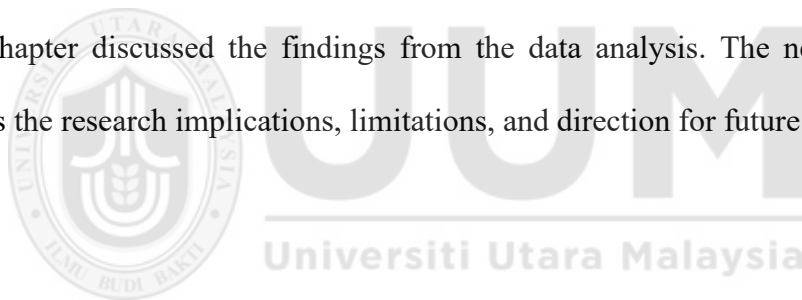
Previous studies on study abroad decision also showed mixed results. A significant relationship was found in a study on customer evaluation of a store's atmosphere and the purchase decision of an Indonesian product (Anggriani et al., 2022; Yanto et al., 2020). In another study, Chauke and Duh, (2019) found that purchase decisions explain 48% of consumption evaluation. However, this study did not measure purchase decision as a mediating variable and only focused on a tangible product. Meanwhile, Tan (2019) included purchase decision as a variable but did not treat as a mediating variable.

In addition, the test result of the mean of post-purchase evaluation of international students on private higher education in Malaysia indicates that it highly influences student satisfaction as shown in Table 4.4. In general, the mean score of post-purchase evaluation for service quality evaluation is 3.65 and university facilities evaluation is 3.79. This shows that the international students are either satisfied and highly satisfied with their decision to study abroad as the mean is greater than 3.00.

In conclusion, interesting mixed findings were found in the examination of study abroad decision as the mediating variable.

5.4 Chapter Summary

This chapter discussed the findings from the data analysis. The next chapter will discuss the research implications, limitations, and direction for future research.



CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

6.1 Introduction

This final chapter presents the concluding remarks which are divided into three sections. The study discusses the research contribution, limitations of the study, and recommendations for future studies. Finally, this section ends with a chapter summary.

6.2 Research Contribution

This section discusses the contribution of this study from two perspectives: practical and academic. As stated in Chapter One, the aim of this study is to investigate the factors that influence international students to study abroad and their post-purchase evaluation. The findings could be of great significance for Malaysia, specifically, the higher education sector, private higher learning institutions, government, academia, and the public. The specific contributions made to each sector are discussed in the following section.

6.2.1 Practical Contribution

The findings of this study indicate that one tested construct of the decision-making model is equally significant in influencing international students' satisfaction via the post-purchase evaluation on university facilities. In light of this, the practical contribution of the study can be looked at from three aspects namely the government (Ministry of Higher Education), Industry (Higher Education Institutions), and society.

Government

In general, the findings from this study can be used as a mechanism for control, continuous improvement, and future sustainability of the education sector through policy implementation, higher education promotion, and others.

The government through the Ministry of Higher Education (MoHE) aims to increase the number of international students in Malaysia, and this study can serve as a basis for studying the behaviour of international students especially in their decision making. Knowing the factors that influence students' decision to study in Malaysia and their post-purchase evaluation (satisfied or unsatisfied) helps the government identify factors that are crucial to international student decision-making process. By knowing the crucial factors, the government can continuously take appropriate steps to improve and develop higher education strategies and initiatives to better satisfy the international students' needs. Indirectly, it can also help achieve the government's Malaysia Blueprint 2015-2025 (Higher Education) goal, i.e., enrolment of international students of up to 250,000 by 2025 on top of facilitating the development of the country's economy and image.

Secondly, based on the finding of this study, the government can focus beyond the aspect of quantity of international students' enrolment in achieving the government aims. Providing quality service quality, in particular, must be prioritised towards achieving the government's goals and maintaining the image and ranking of the country as a choice destination for students. Aspects of quality related to the programmes offered, international student management, and service and facilities must be looked into. The government through the MQA can implement policies to monitor

the programmes offered by each private higher education institution and constantly review and ensure that all the programmes offered comply with the MoHE and MQA requirements and are comparable to international standards. This is in line with the 4th SDG of Quality Education.

In addition, the findings for information source used by the international students can help the MoHE in updating the right information. For example, the MOHE needs to update the information on its own website as well as that of the government. The updated information must include real depictions related to the higher education institution environment in Malaysia.

Finally, the findings on home country factors serve as an indicator for the government to increase promotions and relations with other countries through memorandums of understanding and agreements. For example, in 2022, the government through the MoHE signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) and memorandum of agreement (MoA) with countries such as Qatar, the United Kingdom, Romania, Turkey, and Canada (STARPICKS, 2022). This is aimed at creating good relations with these countries in terms of education, focusing on attracting international students to study in Malaysia. Also, various issues had been discussed to improve the higher education sector and channel students to study in Malaysia with agreements on the best policies.

In conclusion, understanding the international students' decision to study in Malaysia can help the government provide the best consumer-oriented marketing and

management strategy and indirectly attract prospective students to enrol in Malaysian private HEIs.

Private Higher Education Institution/Industry

The findings of this study revealed that some of the factors are significant in predicting international students' decision and evaluation to study abroad particularly in Malaysia. By using this information, private HEIs in particular could benefit from gaining new insights into the influencing factors and evaluation of international students on the services and facilities provided by the local institutions. For example, cost was previously deemed as one of the important factors influencing students to study abroad. However, this study revealed that cost is no longer an important factor. Therefore, private HEIs not only need to devise strategies based on the financial benefits received by the international students, but also on the value gains.

In addition to the findings of the study, private HEIs also need to look at other factors such as internal and external information sources. This finding can assist private HEIs in formulating their offers, designing promotional efforts, and improving their marketing strategies. In addition, designing multilingual websites for international students is also one of the ways to attract international students from various countries and regions.

Attracting international students has become a challenge; therefore, the stakeholders of the higher education system can use the findings from this study to specify the policies and strategies of individual institutions. In terms of institutional contribution, knowing the factors that drive students to study abroad and their post-purchase

evaluation could assist in the formulation of specific management and marketing strategies for private HEIs to increase international student enrolment. International students have the potential to serve as future contacts for encouraging the influx of more international students, via social networks or verbal recommendations (word-of-mouth referrals); therefore, HEIs can engage with these students and appoint them as ambassadors, establishing connections with them before, during, and after they have graduated. This could potentially increase the global marketability of the HEIs in Malaysia, especially the private HEIs. Indirectly, it can contribute to the government's goal of Malaysia becoming an excellent education hub.

Secondly, this study contributes to the sustainability of the HEIs, especially private HEIs with university status, by providing good education and marketing effort. A better understanding of human behaviour can help the institutions' marketing experts in developing and promoting study abroad programmes. Understanding the target students will help private universities to develop marketing strategies such as communication campaigns by highlighting the benefits that the international students will receive. It can also increase the image of the private HEIs. As stated by Kusumawati (2013), HEIs should view students as consumers and market their institutions intensively due to the increasing competition among HEIs around the world.

By understanding the evaluation of international students on the services and facilities they receive in private HEIs, various plans can be devised especially with regards to international student management practices. Universities should create an online feedback system which enables international students to channel their feedbacks about

the university. As such, improvement measures can be taken to increase the international students' level of satisfaction with the HEIs.

When the students are satisfied, the institution benefits indirectly since the international students would share their experience with other prospective international students through word-of-mouth or social media. Furthermore, when international students continue their studies at the postgraduate level, the students might serve as feeders for postgraduate programmes.

One of the most important factors influencing international students' decision to study abroad is internal information sources such as the university website as discussed in Section 5.3.2.1. Hence, to attract more international students to study in Malaysia, especially in private HEIs, it is crucial to adopt technologies for the dissemination of information. In the age of digital transformation, every higher education institution must incorporate a captivating video on their university website. This video serves as a window into the university experience, showing students the real environment of the campus, the classrooms, and various places in the university. Indirectly, this approach will increase the interest of prospective international students and encourage them to choose Malaysia as their preferred education destination.

In conclusion, based on the finding of the study, the author suggests that a restructuring of the services offered to undergraduate international students is necessary for the private university management to align with these valued areas. Universities could also take the necessary actions and invest in upgrading the facilities such as computer labs, hostel facilities, lecture halls, libraries, social areas, student cafeterias, and other

facilities to increase the international student satisfaction. Policies and strategies as discuss earlier need to be implemented.

International students and future prospect

When the international students' satisfaction level increases, their motivation will also increase and ultimately have a positive effect on their academic performance and personal life. Student satisfaction is likely to change over time. As such, research on international students' satisfaction with HEIs should be a continual process in order to understand the changing nature of student satisfaction over time (Wong & Chapman, 2023).

In conclusion, this study contributes to the knowledge of international students' complex decision-making process. As a result, students will be more careful when making decisions in their life.

6.2.2. Academic Contribution

The academic contribution of this study can be seen in the body of knowledge, methodological aspects, and theoretical aspects.

Body of Knowledge

From the research and future research perspective, this study contributes to the existing literature in the marketing, decision-making area. This study combined the Push and Pull Theory and Decision-Making Model, which helps researchers and future researchers in explaining the complexity of international student decision-making. The combination of these two theories also provides a new perspective and direction in the

marketing focusing on consumer decision field, especially for study abroad programmes and private higher educations in Malaysia.

Additionally, the findings of this study contribute a novel viewpoint to the existing literature by highlighting the perspectives of international students who opted for a university in a non-traditional destination outside of the major receiving countries such as Australia, the United Kingdom, and the United States.

As a matter of fact, this study represents the first of its kind to be conducted in Malaysia and of which examined the whole decision-making process of international students, i.e., covering the influencing factors, decision-making, and post-purchase evaluation. Therefore, the study has revealed new insights for interested parties and academicians to explain the decision-making process of international students. This study also provides a better understanding and extends the current research on the concept of decision-making process, as minimal evidence had been found in the topic area.

Methodological Contribution

From the methodological perspective, this study is one of the first studies to develop and test an integrated model that examines the whole decision-making process of international students to study abroad. Past studies on the topic are mostly qualitative in nature. Therefore, the quantitative nature of this current study may further develop knowledge in the field of consumer behaviour, especially in relation to studying abroad or international students. Furthermore, the construct of study abroad decision is employed as a mediating variable in this study, which contributes to a new perspective in this field.

Theoretical Contribution

Furthermore, from the theoretical perspective, this study fills the literature gap in describing the influencing factors to study abroad and post-purchase evaluation, specifically in relation to private HEIs. The study also offers a holistic theoretical framework to guide future researchers in studying the decision-making of international students. The findings may enrich the existing empirical findings on consumer behaviour especially in term of decision-making on top of. Enriching the conceptualization of decision-making behaviour to study abroad in the context of higher education institutions in Malaysia. This study is also among the first to integrate the push and pull theory and decision-making model, into one research model. As previously mentioned, the study aims to examine the influencing factors and post-purchase evaluation of international students to study in HEIs in Malaysia. This study confirms the applicability of the integration of the decision-making process and the push and pull theory in explaining the influencing factors and post-purchase evaluation, especially in a developing country like Malaysia.

Two models, PPT and DMM, were integrated. Based on the literature search, there are limited studies on studying abroad which integrated the two theories particularly in the context of Malaysia. Although PPT and DMM can still be utilised separately for examining study abroad decision, the integrated model is more effective. This opens a new avenue in the field of decision-making research, especially in the consumer behaviour field whereby several models can be integrated to investigate the decision-making process, especially in the context of HEIs in Asia.

The findings also disclosed the effect of the influencing factors on the students' decision to pursue their studies abroad, thereby contributing to the existing body of empirical literature in the fields of marketing and management. The direction of the relationship in this study confirms both the theoretical inconsistency and consistency that exist in previous literatures. Table 6.1 below presents a summary of the contributions of the study.

Table 6.1:
Contributions of the Study.

No	Topic	Replicate	Extension
1.	<u>Theoretically:</u> Theory/Concept	√ Using the Pull and Push Theory and Decision-Making Model	√ Developing a conceptual framework- as an extension of the whole decision-making process for international students. Combining PPT and DMM theories/models in one study.
	Literature	√ Review in general dan concept	√ Studying the whole process from pre-purchase to post-purchase evaluation.
2.	<u>Methodologically:</u> Methodology		√ Detail sampling frame
	Construct		√ Study abroad decision as mediating variable
	Research Analysis		√ PLS-SEM
3.	<u>Empirically:</u> Research Finding	√	√ New finding that is different from previous studies.
4.	<u>Practically (Impact):</u> Government		√ Political-Policy Maker
	Industry	√ Economy (income)	√ Marketing (online and offline promotion), Management & Quality Improvement Policies

Table 6.1 (Continued)

Academic		√ Researcher & Future Researcher √ New perspective in study abroad field.
Society	√	√

Source: *Author*

6.3 Limitations of the Study

While this study is one of the first to develop an understanding of the factors influencing international students to study abroad and their post-purchase evaluation, it still has several limitations which are important to discuss and taken into serious consideration. The limitations may restrict the generalization of the findings and is hence open for new directions in the further studies. The limitation of the study is discussed from the aspects of scope, theory, methodology and analysis.

6.3.1 Scope Limitation

In assessing the factors influencing the international students' study abroad choice and post-purchase evaluation, this study only focused on several influencing factors namely home country factors, host country factors, cost, information source, personal factors, and academic factors. While for post-purchase evaluation, this study only took two perspectives into consideration namely service quality evaluation and university facilities evaluation. In theory, there are other influencing factors and post-purchase evaluation aspects.

6.3.2 Theoretical Limitation

The theoretical foundation of this study is based on the Push and Pull Theory and Decision-Making Model. There are currently numerous models and theories on the decision-making and satisfaction of international students such as the HEdPERF and MISS Model. Therefore, future research can apply these theories to study the decision of international students to study abroad.

6.3.3 Methodological Limitation

The geographical area in this study is one single country sample namely Malaysia. Therefore, the findings of the study cannot be generalized to other countries.

The scope of this study was limited to the central zone of Malaysia namely, Selangor, Wilayah Persekutuan, and Putrajaya. This zone was selected due to the notable number of private HEIs located here. However, other areas in Malaysia also have private HEIs enrolling international students. The utilisation of participants taken solely from one single zone may lead to over-representation of the research outcome; thus, the findings of this study may lack applicability and generalizability to international students situated in other areas or zones in Malaysia.

In addition, the study only focused on one category of private HEIs namely private universities. Basically, there are four categories of private HEIs. Therefore, the results from this study cannot be generalized to all international students who are studying in Malaysia as many of them are also enrolled in other categories of private HEIs and public HEIs in the country.

Finally, the sample size of the study only entails 241 international students, i.e., one % out of the total sample of international students as stated in Table 3.5 in Chapter 3. Therefore, the finding cannot be generalized as the sample size is too small compared to the whole population of international students in Malaysia. A larger sample size may provide different findings.

6.3.4 Analysis Limitation

This study analysed its data using SPSS and PLS-SEM. Previous researchers had employed other types of analysis techniques including SEM-AMOS and qualitative analysis. Diversity in analysis generates unique answers to the research questions.

Despite these limitations, this research still provides meaningful insights into the factors that influence international students to study abroad and their post-purchase evaluation. Hence, recommendations for future studies are suggested.

6.4 Recommendations for Future Research

Considering the limitations mentioned above, this research provides a number of recommendations for future research. The study puts forward a proposal for expanding the research scope and sample size as explained below.

Firstly, future studies should focus on other influencing factors and post-purchase evaluation factors such as personal evaluation. It is also suggested for future studies to look into other influencing factors such as country location, social media, institution image, and visa procedures that are not covered in this study. Many questions in study abroad research remain unanswered. Marjanovic and Krizman Pavlovic (2018) found

114 factors influencing international students to study abroad. As this current study only focused on eight influencing factors, there is still a broad opportunity to study the remaining factors.

Secondly, future research should consider repeating this study using other theories or models such as the HEdPERF and MISS Model. By using other decision-making theories or models, a variety of findings could be obtained which, will contribute to the expansion of knowledge in the areas of decision-making and studying abroad.

Thirdly, it is recommended that future research broaden the scope of study to include private higher education institutions in other zones in Malaysia. Expanding the scope of the geographical area of investigation may be beneficial in evaluating the influencing factors and post-purchase evaluation on international students' decision to pursue their study in Malaysia. Also, a broader scope of institutions may enhance the generalization of the findings.

Fourthly, this study only focused on undergraduate students. Studying postgraduate students and comparing them with undergraduate students can provide interesting findings for discussion. Future studies can look at public HEIs and compare the post-purchase evaluations of international students in private and public HEIs.

Fifthly, future efforts could increase the sample size for analysis using SEM. A bigger sample size can generate different results.

Finally, future studies could compare the students' post-purchase evaluation-based on region/country of origin. This is because different cultures may influence the students' decision and satisfaction differently, hence leading to distinct study outcomes.

A summary of the study limitations and recommendations for future research is shown in Table 6.2 below.

Table 6.2:
Summary of the Study Limitations and Recommendations for Future Research

	Limitation	Recommendation
Scope	Focus on limited influencing and post-purchase factors	Add more influencing factors and post-purchase factors.
Theory	Applied the Push and Pull Theory and Decision-Making Model	Apply other theories or models such as HEdPERF and MISS Model.
Methodology	- Focused only on the central zone of Malaysia. - Focused only on one category of private HEIs.	- Include private higher education institutions in other zones in Malaysia. - Look at postgraduate students. - Compare between undergraduate students. - Add international students from public HEIs. - Increase the sample size.
Analysis	Only use SPSS and PLS-SEM.	Use SEM-AMOS and qualitative analysis software.

6.5 Chapter Summary

The concluding remarks of this study are presented in the final chapter, which is segmented into three sections namely: the contribution, limitations, and recommendations for future research. The summary provided in this chapter serves to conclude the whole study.

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APPENDIX A: QUESTIONNAIRE



Dear Participant,

Thank you for your contribution to this study.

My name is Nor Azah binti Jahari (a DBA candidate at Universiti Utara Malaysia) and my supervisor is Associate Prof. Dr. Sabariah Yaakub.

The study aims to gather opinions on the influencing factor and post- purchase evaluation of international students' decision-making process. Hence, I would like to invite you to complete my survey which will enable me to understand what factors lead international students to study abroad, why they choose a particular country and institution and finally evaluate their purchase.

Important clarifications:

There are no right or wrong answers, but please, provide the answer that you think suits your circumstance. Your response will be dealt with in confidentially. Any information provided will be used solely for this study and will only be reported in an aggregate format. All the information provided will be anonymous and will not be linked to you.

You will need approximately 15 minutes to complete the questionnaire.

Researcher Contact Detail:

The researcher can be reached using the contact detail below should you have any doubts or questions.

Thank you in advance for your participation.

Sincerely,

The Researcher

Nor Azah Jahari

Othman Yeop Abdullah (OYA) Graduate School of Business

Universiti Utara Malaysia

Email: acahazah@gmail.com

Mobile: +60196667126

Part A: Personal Profile

Please tick (/) your preferred answer.

1.	Age as of last birthday		Less than 20 years		20 –22		23-25		26 and above
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2.	Gender		Male		Female
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3.	Education level		Diploma		Bachelor's degree
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4.	Year of study		1 st Year		2 nd Year		3 rd Year		4 th Year
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5.	Country of origin/ Home Country	
	Bangladesh	
	China	
	Egypt	
	India	
	Indonesia	
	Maldives	
	Nigeria	
	Pakistan	
	Saudi Arabia	
	Somalia	
	South Korea	
	Sri Lanka	
	Sudan	
	Syria	
Yemen		
Others		

6.	University type:		Private University
			Public University
			University College
			College

7.	Location of University:		Central zone (Selangor, Wilayah Persekutuan, Putrajaya)
			East coast zone (Pahang, Terengganu, Kelantan)
			Northern zone (Perak, Pulau Pinang, Kedah, Perlis)
			Southern zone (Johor, Melaka, Negeri Sembilan)
			Sarawak and Sabah

8.	Field of study		Accounting & Finance
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		Art & Design
		Architecture
		Business & Management
		Education
		Engineering
		Health Sciences/ Nursing
		Hospitality/Tourism/Culinary
		Information Technology (IT)/ Computer Science
		Law
		Mathematics/ Statistics
		Social Sciences
		Others (please specify)

9.	Any other countries (not counting your home country) did you apply to other than Malaysia?	Australia
		China
		France
		Germany
		United States
		United Kingdom
		Others
		Not applicable

Part B: Pre-Purchase						
We would like to find out your opinion about the factors that influence you to study abroad.						
Please tick (/) your preferred answer. (1=Not at all influence, 2= Slightly influential, 3=Somewhat influential, 4=Very influential and 5= Strongly influence)						
HOME COUNTRY FACTORS (HM) To what extent do your home country factors influence you to study abroad?		1 not at all influential	2	3	4	5 extremely influential
HM1.	The political condition in your home country.					
HM2.	The economic condition in your home country.					
HM3.	The quality of higher education in your home country.					
HM4.	The admission process to the university in your home country.					
HM5.	The financial aid provided in your home country.					
Please tick (/) your preferred answer. (1=Not at all influence, 2= Slightly influential, 3=Somewhat influential, 4=Very influential and 5= Strongly influence)						
HOST COUNTRY FACTORS (HC) To what extend the host country factors influence you to study in Malaysia?		1 not at all influential	2	3	4	5 extremely influential
HC1.	The political condition in Malaysia					
HC2.	The available information about Malaysia.					

HC3.	The education environment in Malaysia .					
HC4.	The lifestyle in Malaysia.					
HC5.	The cultural attraction in Malaysia.					
Please indicate to what extent the following cost influence you to study abroad. Please tick (/) your preferred answer. (1=Not at all influence, 2= Slightly influential, 3=Somewhat influential, 4=Very influential and 5= Strongly influence)						
COST (CO) To what extend the following cost influence you to study in Malaysia?		1 not at all influential	2	3	4	5 extremely influential
CL1.	Living cost in Malaysia.					
CL2.	Accommodation cost in Malaysia.					
CL3.	Travelling cost from your home country to Malaysia.					
Please indicate to what extent personal factors influence you to study abroad. Please tick (/) your preferred answer. (1=Not at all influence, 2= Slightly influential, 3=Somewhat influential, 4=Very influential and 5= Strongly influence)						
PERSONAL FACTORS (PF) To what extend the outcome of international experience influence you to study in Malaysia?		1 not at all influential	2	3	4	5 extremely influential
PF1.	The value of the degree in your home country					
PF2.	The future income upon return to your home country.					
PF3.	The high income obtained via overseas study.					
PF4.	The employment opportunities in your home country.					
PF5.	The employment opportunities in a foreign country.					
INFORMATION SOURCES We would like to find out the sources of information that influence you to study abroad.						
Please indicate to what extent the following internal sources of information influence you to study abroad. Please tick (/) your preferred answer. (1=Not at all influence, 2= Slightly influential, 3=Somewhat influential, 4=Very influential and 5= Strongly influence)						
INTERNAL SOURCES (IS) To what extend the following source of information influence you to study in Malaysia?		1 not at all influential	2	3	4	5 extremely influential
Information from:						
IS1.	University website.					
IS2.	Malaysia government website.					
IS3.	Pamphlets about the university.					
IS4.	Workshop					
IS5.	University fairs.					
IS6.	Direct information from the institution through email, letter, fax, and others.					

Please indicate to what extent the following external sources of information influence you to study abroad.
Please tick (/) your preferred answer.
(1=Not at all influence, 2= Slightly influential, 3=Somewhat influential, 4=Very influential and 5= Strongly influence)

EXTERNAL SOURCES (ES) To what extend the following source of information influence you to study in Malaysia?		1 not at all influential	2	3	4	5 extremely influential
Information from:						
ES1.	Agent.					
ES2.	Social media (e.g., Facebook, YouTube, Twitter)					
ES3.	Advertisements in magazines.					
ES4.	Stories in newspapers					
ES5.	Alumni of the institution.					

Please indicate to what extent the following interpersonal sources of information influence you to study abroad.
Please tick (/) your preferred answer.
(1=Not at all influence, 2= Slightly influential, 3=Somewhat influential, 4=Very influential and 5= Strongly influence)

INTERPERSONAL SOURCES (IP) To what extend the following sources of information influence you to study in Malaysia?		1 not at all influential	2	3	4	5 extremely influential
Information from:						
IP1.	Parent					
IP2.	Siblings					
IP3.	Relatives					
IP4.	Friends					
IP5.	Teacher in your home country.					

DECISION FACTORS
We would like to find out your opinion about the decision factors that influence you to study abroad.

Please indicate to what extent the academic reputation and quality of the institution influence you to study abroad?
Please tick (/) your preferred answer.
(1=Not at all influence, 2= Slightly influential, 3=Somewhat influential, 4=Very influential and 5= Strongly influence)

ACADEMIC FACTORS (AR) To what extend the academic factors of the university influence you to study in Malaysia?		1 not at all influential	2	3	4	5 extremely influential
AR1.	The university is a well-known brand name.					
AR2.	The university standard of education.					
AR3.	The university years of academic experience.					
AR4.	The university quality courses.					
AR5.	The university achievement.					
AR6.	The university reputation in the home country.					

AR7.	The reputation of academic programs.					
Part C : Study Abroad Decision						
Please indicate to what extent you agree to the following statement. Please tick (/) your preferred answer. (1=Not at all agreed, 2= Disagree, 3= Neither Agree or Disagree, 4= Agree and 5= Strongly Agreed))						
STUDY ABROAD DECISION (SAD) To what extent you agree to the following statement		1 Strongly disagree	2	3	4	5 Strongly agree
SAD1.	My decision to study abroad was certain.					
SAD2.	It is my own decision to study abroad.					
SAD3.	It is my decision to choose Malaysia as my study destination.					
SAD4.	It is my decision to choose the current private university.					
Part D: Post-Purchase Evaluation						
We would like to find out your opinion and feelings about the university you attend.						
Please indicate to what extent you agree to the following statement. Please tick (/) your preferred answer. (1=not at all agreed, 2= Disagree, 3= Neither Agree or Disagree, 4= Agree and 5= Strongly Agreed)						
SERVICE QUALITY EVALUATION (SQE)		1 Strongly disagree	2	3	4	5 Strongly agree
QRL1.	When the university promises to do something by a certain time, it does so.					
QRL2.	The staff in the university are interested in solving a customer's problem.					
QRL3.	The staff in the university performs the service correctly the first time.					
QRP1.	The staff in the university tell the customer exactly when the services will be performed.					
QRP2.	The staff in the university give the customer prompt service.					
QRP3.	The staff in the university give the customer efficient service					
QRP4.	The staff in the university are always willing to help the customer.					
QRP5.	The staff in the university always respond to the customer's requests.					
QEM1.	The staff in the university advise customers on an individual basis.					
QEM2.	The staff in the university evaluate their customers situation on an individual basis.					
QEM3.	The staff in the university understand the customer's needs.					
Please indicate to what extent you satisfied with the following facilities provided by the university. Please tick (/) your preferred answer. (1= Not at all satisfied and 5= Extremely satisfied)						
UNIVERSITY FACILITIES EVALUATION (AFE)		1 Not at all satisfied	2	3	4	5 Extremely satisfied

AFE1.	Classroom					
AFE2.	Lecture Theatre.					
AFE3.	Computer lab					
AFE4.	Library					
AFE5.	Sports and recreation facilities					
AFE6.	Accommodation facilities.					
AFE7.	Cafe					
AFE8.	Range of shops (eg. Bank, bookshop)					

Thank You for Your Cooperation in This Study.



APPENDIX B: DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Gender

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Male	135	56.0	56.0	56.0
	Female	106	44.0	44.0	100.0
	Total	241	100.0	100.0	

Age

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Less than 20 years	38	15.8	15.8	15.8
	20 –22	88	36.5	36.5	52.3
	23-25	64	26.6	26.6	78.8
	26 and above	51	21.2	21.2	100.0
	Total	241	100.0	100.0	

Home Country

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Bangladesh	28	11.6	11.6	11.6
	China	45	18.7	18.7	30.3
	Egypt	1	.4	.4	30.7
	India	8	3.3	3.3	34.0
	Indonesia	30	12.4	12.4	46.5
	Maldives	2	.8	.8	47.3
	Nigeria	2	.8	.8	48.1
	Pakistan	3	1.2	1.2	49.4
	Somalia	54	22.4	22.4	71.8
	South Korea	3	1.2	1.2	73.0
	Sudan	2	.8	.8	73.9
	Syria	3	1.2	1.2	75.1
	Yemen	7	2.9	2.9	78.0
	Others	53	22.0	22.0	100.0
	Total	241	100.0	100.0	

Education Level

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Diploma	17	7.1	7.1	7.1
	Bachelor Degree	224	92.9	92.9	100.0
	Total	241	100.0	100.0	

Year of Study

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1st Year	51	21.2	21.2	21.2
	2nd Year	50	20.7	20.7	41.9
	3rd Year	88	36.5	36.5	78.4
	4th Year	52	21.6	21.6	100.0
	Total	241	100.0	100.0	

Field of Study

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Accounting & Finance	78	32.4	32.4	32.4
	Art & Design	1	.4	.4	32.8
	Architecture	3	1.2	1.2	34.0
	Business & Management	97	40.2	40.2	74.3
	Engineering	16	6.6	6.6	80.9
	Health Sciences & Nursing	6	2.5	2.5	83.4
	Hospitality/Tourism/Culinary	2	.8	.8	84.2
	Information Technology (IT)/ Computer Science	19	7.9	7.9	92.1
	Mathematics/ Statistics	7	2.9	2.9	95.0
	Social Sciences	2	.8	.8	95.9
	Others	10	4.1	4.1	100.0
	Total	241	100.0	100.0	

Apply Other

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Australia	10	4.1	4.1	4.1
	China	23	9.5	9.5	13.7
	France	3	1.2	1.2	14.9
	Germany	6	2.5	2.5	17.4
	United States	9	3.7	3.7	21.2
	United Kingdom	14	5.8	5.8	27.0
	Others	37	15.4	15.4	42.3
	Not Applicable	139	57.7	57.7	100.0
	Total	241	100.0	100.0	

Descriptive Statistics

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
The political situation in your home country.	241	1	5	3.10	1.281
The economic situation in your home country.	241	1	5	3.34	1.238
The quality of higher education in your home country.	241	1	5	3.60	1.114
The admission process to the university in your home country.	241	1	5	3.24	1.280
The financial aid provided in your home country.	241	1	5	3.08	1.262
The political condition in Malaysia.	241	1	5	3.60	1.248
The available information about Malaysia.	241	1	5	4.03	.957
The education environment in Malaysia.	241	1	5	3.99	.913
The lifestyle in Malaysia.	241	1	5	4.10	.924
The cultural attraction in Malaysia.	241	1	5	4.00	1.072
Living cost in Malaysia.	241	1	5	3.97	1.068
Accommodation cost in Malaysia.	241	1	5	3.97	1.042
Travelling cost from your home country to Malaysia.	241	1	5	3.78	1.230

The value of the degree in your home country.	241	1	5	4.04	.848
The future income upon return to your home country.	241	1	5	4.12	.942
The employment opportunities in your home country.	241	1	5	4.04	.919
The employment opportunities in a foreign country.	241	1	5	3.97	.968
The future career development once obtained the foreign degree.	241	1	5	3.78	.985
Information from University website.	241	2	5	3.69	.875
Information from Malaysia government website.	241	1	5	3.39	.860
Information from Brochures / pamphlets about the university.	241	2	5	3.57	.859
Information from Education Fair.	241	2	5	3.52	.827
Information from university fairs.	241	1	5	3.11	1.182
Direct information from the institution through email, letter, fax and others.	241	1	5	3.57	.915
Information from agent.	241	1	5	3.46	.926
Information in social media (e.g., Facebook, YouTube, Twitter)	241	1	5	3.76	.907
Information from advertisements / stories in magazines.	241	1	5	3.58	.882
Information from advertisements / stories in newspapers.	241	2	5	3.49	.842
Information from advertisements on television (TV) shows in your home country.	241	1	5	3.49	.867
Information from Alumni of the institution.	241	1	5	3.45	1.106

Information from Parent.	241	1	5	3.33	1.344
Information from Siblings.	241	1	5	3.04	1.385
Information from Relatives.	241	1	5	3.17	1.261
Information from Friend.	241	1	5	3.19	1.266
Information from teachers in your home country.	241	1	5	2.77	1.266
The university well-known brand name.	241	1	5	4.16	.856
The university high standard of education.	241	1	5	4.27	.793
The university years of academic experience.	241	1	5	3.80	1.002
The university high quality courses.	241	2	5	4.09	.835
The university achievement.	241	1	5	4.01	.832
The university reputation in the home country.	241	1	5	3.94	.977
The university ranking.	241	1	5	4.02	.861
My decision to study abroad in Malaysia was certain.	241	1	5	3.87	.920
It is my own decision to study abroad	241	2	5	4.00	.929
It is my decision to choose Malaysia as my study decision	241	1	5	3.97	.985
It is my decision to choose the current private university	241	1	5	3.56	1.007
When the university promises to do something by a certain time, it does so.	241	1	5	3.49	1.029
The staff in the university interested in solving a customer's problem.	241	1	5	3.60	.991
The staff in the university performs the service correctly the first time.	241	1	5	3.64	.965
The staff in the university tell the customer exactly when the services will be performed.	241	1	5	3.71	.938
The staff in the university give the customer prompt service.	241	1	5	3.59	.945

The staff in the university give the customer efficient service.	241	1	5	3.58	.959
The staff in the university are always willing to help the customer.	241	1	5	3.83	.949
The staff in the university always respond to the customers' requests.	241	1	5	3.66	.949
The staff in the university advise customers on an individual basis.	241	1	5	3.70	1.043
The staff in the university evaluate customers situation on an individual basis.	241	1	5	3.66	1.004
The staff in the university understand the customer's needs.	241	1	5	3.67	1.063
Classroom.	241	1	5	3.54	.996
Lecture Theatre.	241	2	5	3.96	.884
Lab.	241	2	5	3.85	.846
Library.	241	2	5	3.93	.908
Sports and recreation facilities.	241	1	5	3.68	.971
Accommodation facilities.	241	1	5	3.71	.969
Cafe.	241	1	5	3.78	.935
Range of shops (eg. Bank, bookshop)	241	1	5	3.54	.996
Valid N (listwise)	241				

APPENDIX C: MINIMUM, MAXIMUM, MEAN, AND STANDARD DEVIATION VALUE FOR EACH ITEM.

Descriptive Statistics					
	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
The political situation in your home country.	241	1	5	3.10	1.281
The economic situation in your home country.	241	1	5	3.34	1.238
The quality of higher education in your home country.	241	1	5	3.60	1.114
The admission process to the university in your home country.	241	1	5	3.24	1.280
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Travelling cost from your home country to Malaysia.	241	1	5	3.78	1.230
The value of the degree in your home country.	241	1	5	4.04	.848
The future income upon return to your home country.	241	1	5	4.12	.942
The employment opportunities in your home country.	241	1	5	4.04	.919
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Information from advertisements on television (TV) shows in your home country.	241	1	5	3.49	.867
Information from Alumni of the institution.	241	1	5	3.45	1.106
Information from Parent.	241	1	5	3.33	1.344
Information from Siblings.	241	1	5	3.04	1.385
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Information from Friend.	241	1	5	3.19	1.266
Information from teachers in your home country.	241	1	5	2.77	1.266
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The university high standard of education.	241	1	5	4.27	.793

The university years of academic experience.	241	1	5	3.80	1.002
The university high quality courses.	241	2	5	4.09	.835
The university achievement.	241	1	5	4.01	.832
The university reputation in the home country.	241	1	5	3.94	.977
The university ranking.	241	1	5	4.02	.861
My decision to study abroad in Malaysia was certain.	241	1	5	3.87	.920
It is my own decision to study abroad	241	2	5	4.00	.929
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It is my decision to choose the current private university	241	1	5	3.56	1.007
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The staff in the university performs the service correctly the first time.	241	1	5	3.64	.965
The staff in the university tell the customer exactly when the services will be performed.	241	1	5	3.71	.938
The staff in the university give the customer prompt service.	241	1	5	3.59	.945
The staff in the university give the customer efficient service.	241	1	5	3.58	.959
The staff in the university are always willing to help the customer.	241	1	5	3.83	.949
The staff in the university always respond to the customers requests.	241	1	5	3.66	.949

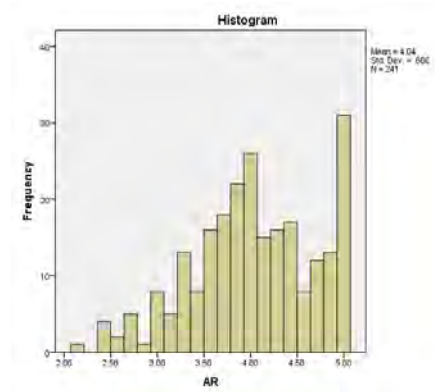
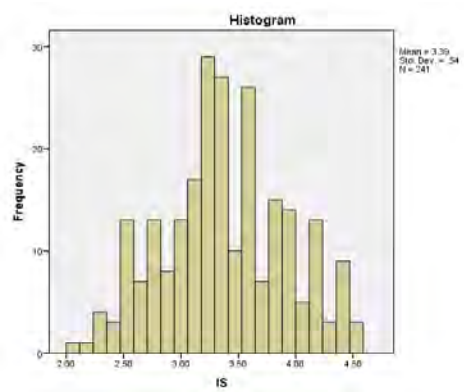
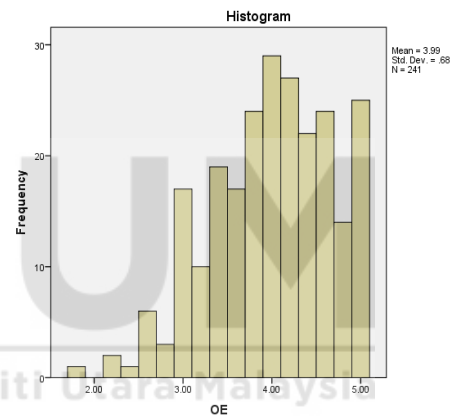
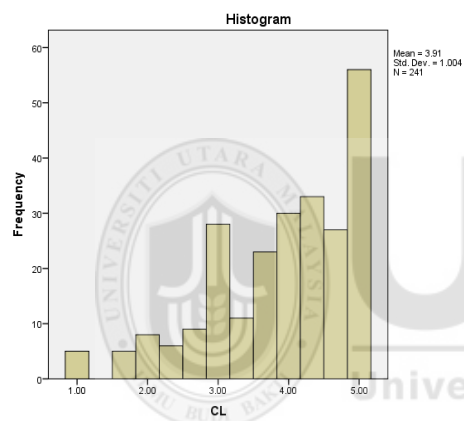
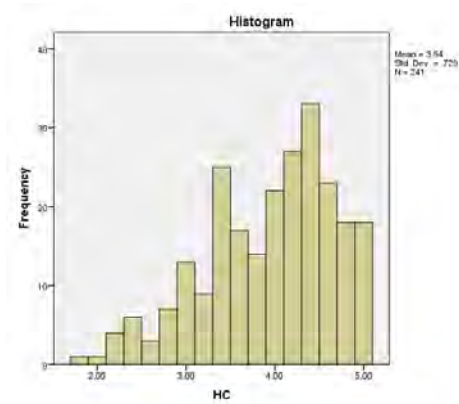
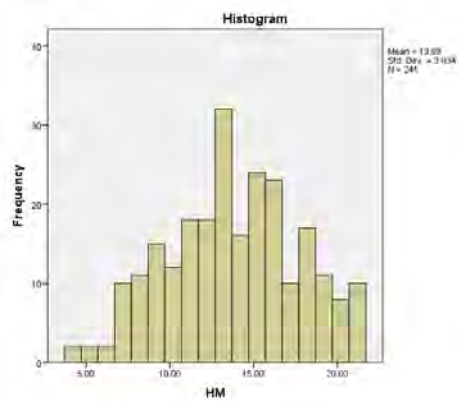
The staff in the university advise customers on an individual basis.	241	1	5	3.70	1.043
The staff in the university evaluate customers situation on an individual basis.	241	1	5	3.66	1.004
The staff in the university understand the customer's needs.	241	1	5	3.67	1.063
Classroom.	241	1	5	3.54	.996
Lecture Theatre.	241	2	5	3.96	.884
Lab.	241	2	5	3.85	.846
Library.	241	2	5	3.93	.908
Sports and recreation facilities.	241	1	5	3.68	.971
Accommodation facilities.	241	1	5	3.71	.969
Cafe.	241	1	5	3.78	.935
Range of shops (eg. Bank, bookshop)	241	1	5	3.54	.996
Valid N (listwise)	241				

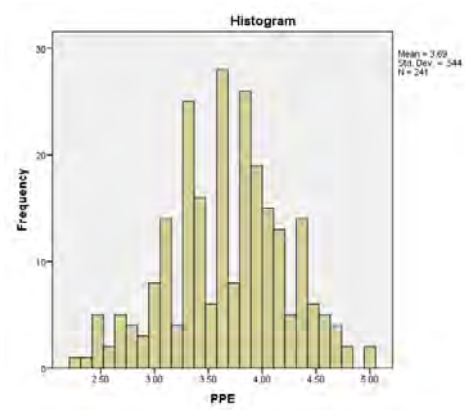
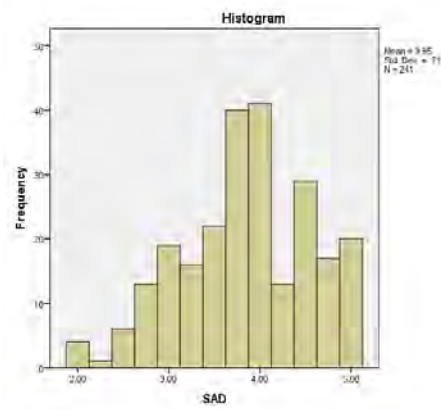


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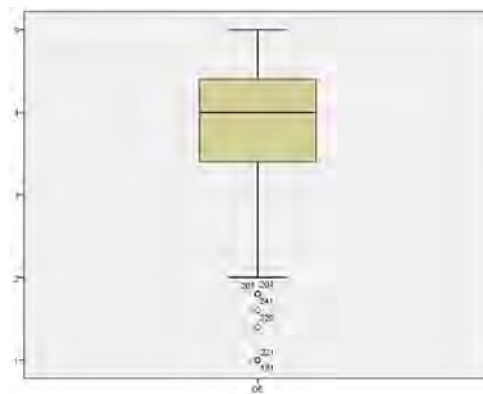
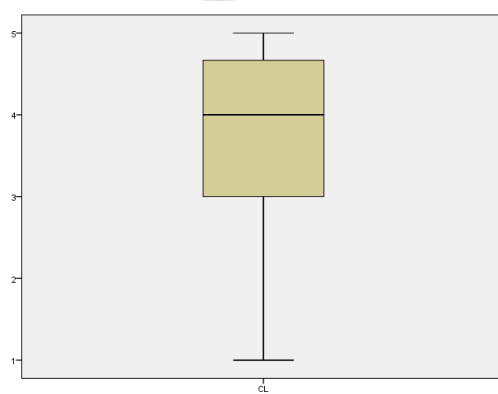
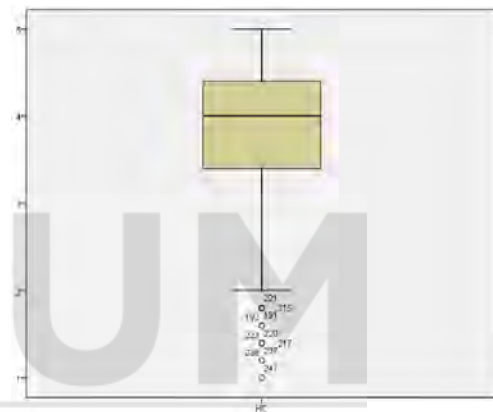
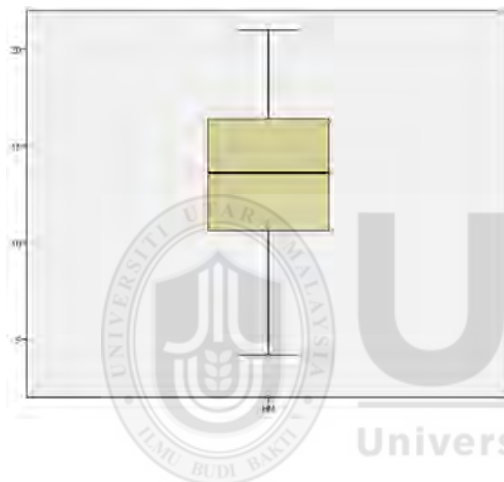
APPENDIX D: NORMALITY ANALYSIS

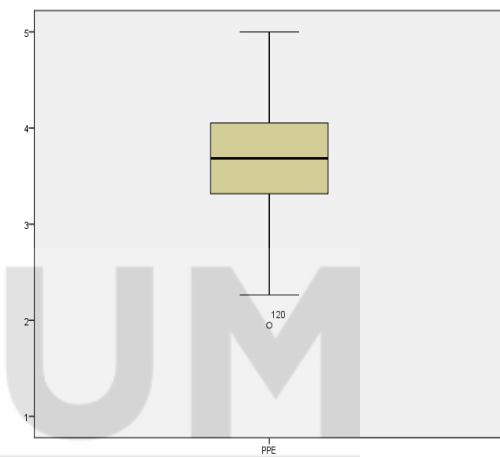
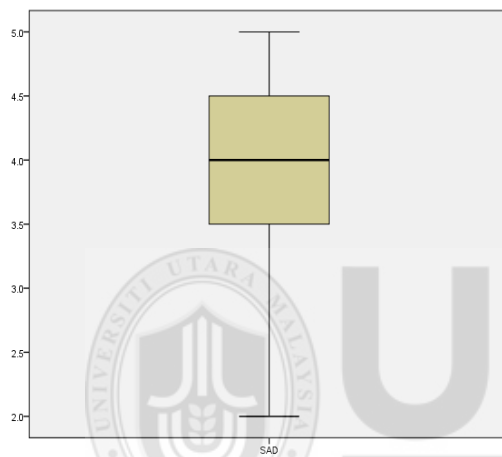
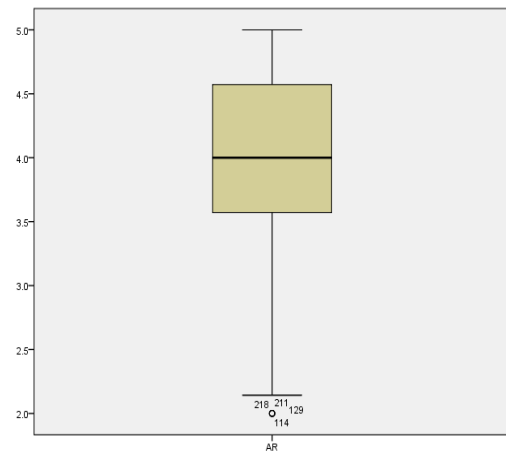
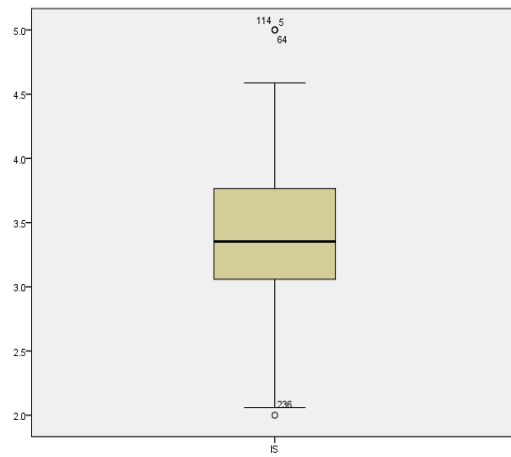
HISTOGRAM



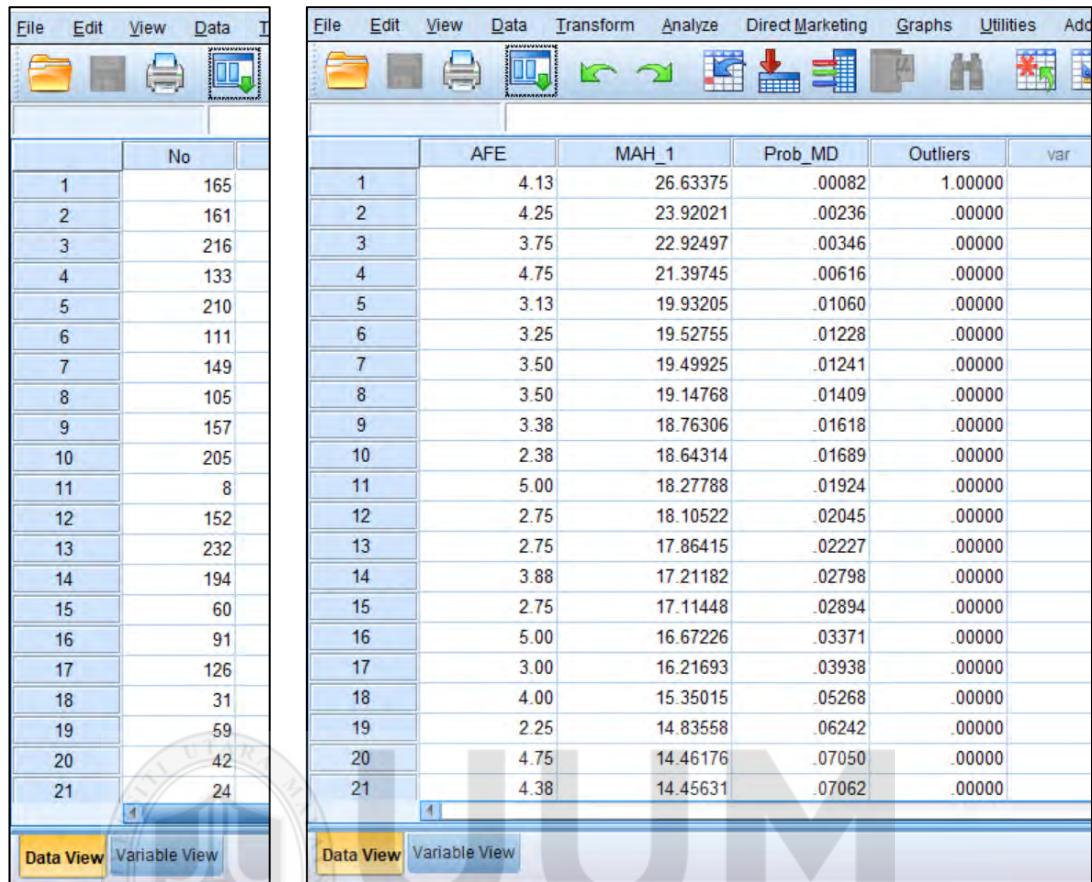


BOXPLOT





MAHALANOBIS DISTANCE



	No
1	165
2	161
3	216
4	133
5	210
6	111
7	149
8	105
9	157
10	205
11	8
12	152
13	232
14	194
15	60
16	91
17	126
18	31
19	59
20	42
21	24

	AFE	MAH_1	Prob_MD	Outliers	var
1	4.13	26.63375	.00082	1.00000	
2	4.25	23.92021	.00236	.00000	
3	3.75	22.92497	.00346	.00000	
4	4.75	21.39745	.00616	.00000	
5	3.13	19.93205	.01060	.00000	
6	3.25	19.52755	.01228	.00000	
7	3.50	19.49925	.01241	.00000	
8	3.50	19.14768	.01409	.00000	
9	3.38	18.76306	.01618	.00000	
10	2.38	18.64314	.01689	.00000	
11	5.00	18.27788	.01924	.00000	
12	2.75	18.10522	.02045	.00000	
13	2.75	17.86415	.02227	.00000	
14	3.88	17.21182	.02798	.00000	
15	2.75	17.11448	.02894	.00000	
16	5.00	16.67226	.03371	.00000	
17	3.00	16.21693	.03938	.00000	
18	4.00	15.35015	.05268	.00000	
19	2.25	14.83558	.06242	.00000	
20	4.75	14.46176	.07050	.00000	
21	4.38	14.45631	.07062	.00000	

MARDIA'S MULTIVARIATE SKEWNESS AND KURTOSIS

	b	z	p-value
Skewness	10.05229	403.7668	5.3613210000E-06
Kurtosis	148.1041	2.342665	1.9146580000E-02

APPENDIX E: REALIBILITY ANALYSIS

Case Processing Summary

		N	%
Cases	Valid	241	100.0
	Excluded ^a	0	.0
	Total	241	100.0

a. Listwise deletion based on all variables in the procedure.

Home Country

Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's	
Alpha	N of Items
.773	5

Host Country

Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's	
Alpha	N of Items
.750	5

Cost

Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's	
Alpha	N of Items
.881	3

Personal Factor

Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's	
Alpha	N of Items
.779	5

Internal information sources

Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's	
Alpha	N of Items
.777	6

External information sources

Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's	
Alpha	N of Items
.803	6

Interpersonal information sources

Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's	
Alpha	N of Items
.761	5

Academic factor

Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's	
Alpha	N of Items
.874	7

Study abroad decision

Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.723	4

Service quality evaluation

Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.926	11

University facilities evaluation

Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.875	8

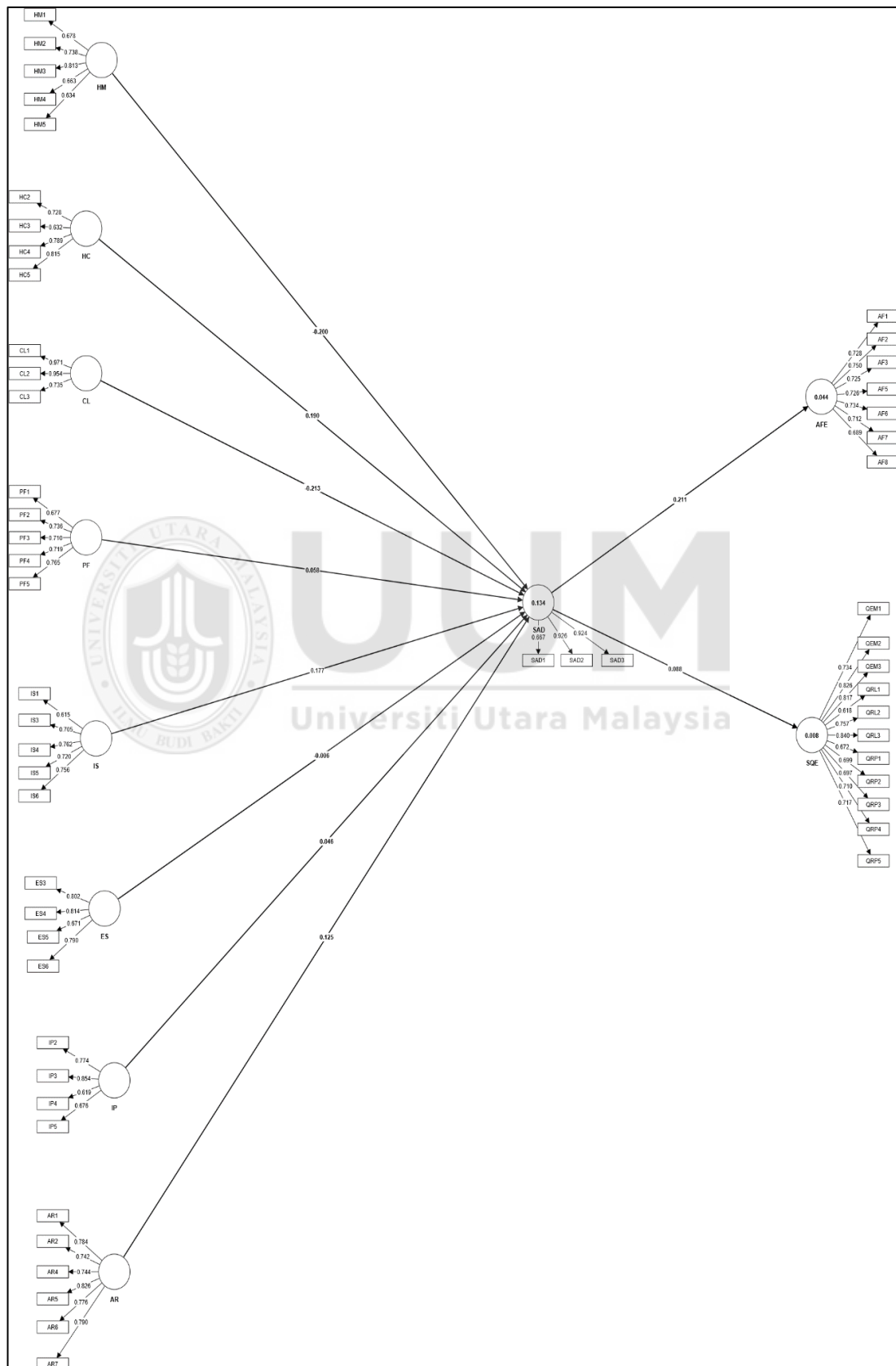


APPENDIX F: NUMBER OF SURVEY LINK DISTRIBUTED AT PRIVATE UNIVERSITY IN CENTRAL ZONE OF MALAYSIA

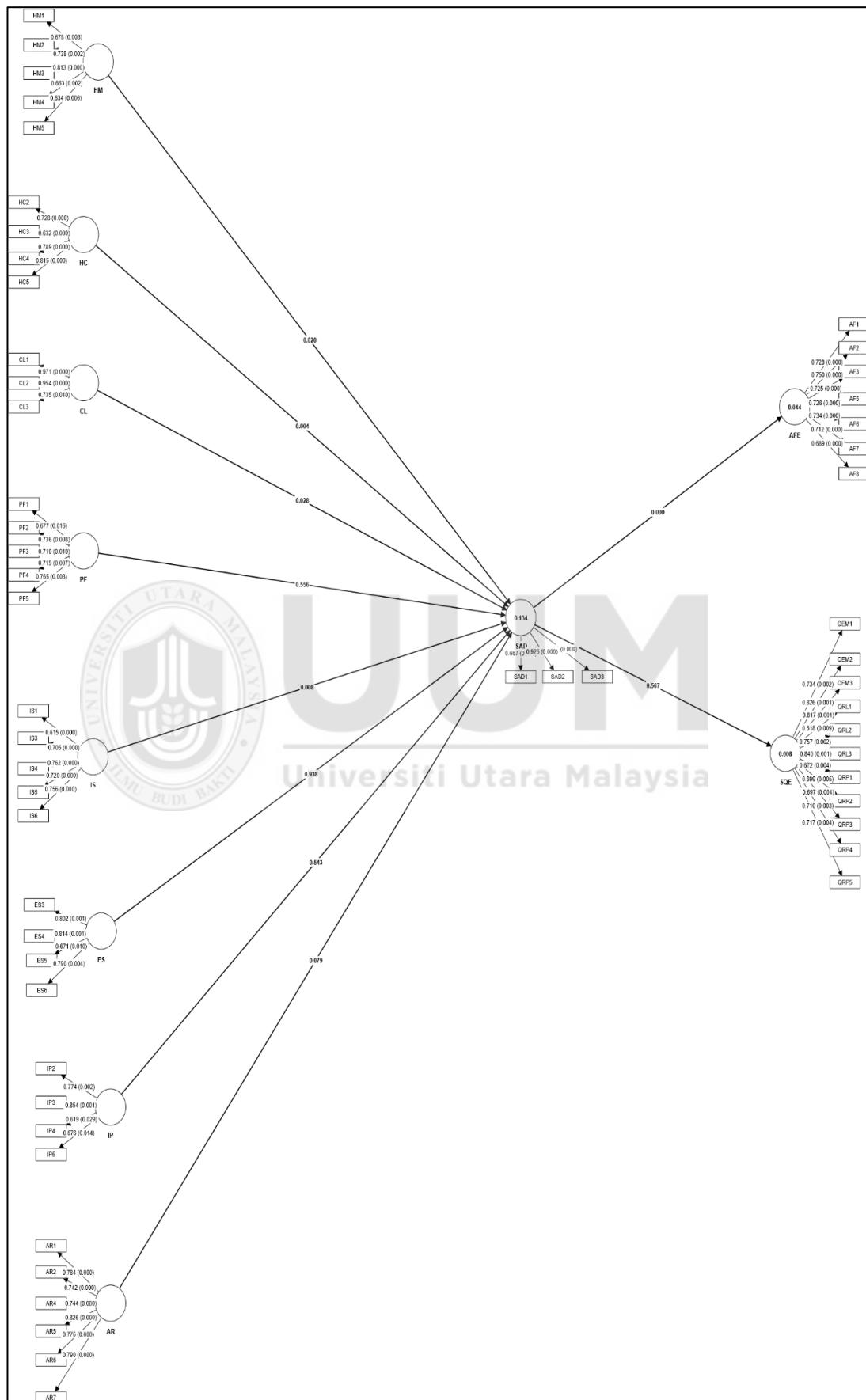
Private University in Central Zone (PU)	Number of Survey Link Distributed
PU 1	62
PU 2	42
PU 3	34
PU 4	37
PU 5	28
PU 6	31
PU 7	68
PU 8	33
PU 9	52
PU10	41
PU11	48
PU12	78
PU13	87
PU14	75
PU15	58
PU16	38
PU17	45
PU18	51
PU19	48
Total	956

APPENDIX G: MEASUREMENT MODEL

MEASUREMENT MODEL – PATH COEFFICIENTS



MEASUREMENT MODEL – OUTER LOADING AND P-VALUE



APPENDIX H: INDICATOR RELIABILITY (OUTER LOADING)

	AFE	AR	CO	ES	HC	HM	IP	IS	PR	SAD	SQE
AF1	0.739										
AF2	0.756										
AF3	0.725										
AF4	0.724										
AF5	0.732										
AF6	0.702										
AF7	0.686										
AF8	0.730										
AR1		0.784									
AR2		0.742									
AR4		0.744									
AR5		0.826									
AR6		0.776									
AR7		0.790									
CO1			0.971								
CO2			0.954								
CO3			0.735								
ES3				0.802							
ES4				0.813							
ES5				0.672							
ES6				0.790							
HC2					0.728						
HC3					0.632						
HC4					0.789						
HC5					0.815						
HM1						0.679					
HM2						0.738					
HM3						0.813					
HM4						0.663					
HM5						0.634					
IP2							0.774				
IP3							0.854				
IP4							0.618				
IP5							0.677				
IS1								0.614			
IS3								0.704			
IS4								0.763			
IS5								0.720			
IS6								0.756			
PF1									0.676		
PF2									0.736		
PF3									0.710		
PF4									0.720		

PF5									0.765		
QEM1											0.734
QEM2											0.826
QEM3											0.817
QRL1											0.619
QRL2											0.757
QRL3											0.840
QRP1											0.671
QRP2											0.699
QRP3											0.697
QRP4											0.710
QRP5											0.717
SAD1										0.665	
SAD2										0.927	
SAD3										0.925	



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APPENDIX I: CROSS LOADING

	AFE	AR	CO	ES	HC	HM
AF1	0.739	0.063	0.005	0.147	-0.101	-0.029
AF2	0.756	0.029	0.091	0.161	0.005	0.125
AF3	0.725	-0.004	0.087	0.210	-0.045	0.065
AF4	0.724	-0.067	0.022	0.106	-0.092	0.076
AF5	0.732	-0.033	-0.116	0.137	0.024	0.005
AF6	0.702	0.029	-0.044	0.201	0.044	0.044
AF7	0.686	-0.060	-0.049	0.139	-0.109	-0.076
AF8	0.730	0.046	0.047	0.244	0.020	-0.020
AR1	0.002	0.784	0.208	0.171	0.339	0.158
AR2	-0.051	0.742	0.221	0.074	0.310	0.102
AR4	-0.003	0.744	0.261	0.096	0.186	0.050
AR5	0.031	0.826	0.163	0.143	0.342	0.141
AR6	0.023	0.776	0.184	0.147	0.257	0.174
AR7	-0.052	0.790	0.149	0.112	0.280	0.076
CO1	-0.007	0.218	0.971	0.044	0.262	0.077
CO2	0.004	0.233	0.954	0.079	0.308	0.129
CO3	0.025	0.239	0.735	0.163	0.240	0.129
ES3	0.207	0.083	0.110	0.802	0.167	0.035
ES4	0.194	0.144	0.057	0.813	0.103	0.018
ES5	0.186	0.118	0.142	0.672	0.090	-0.039
ES6	0.149	0.159	-0.002	0.790	0.024	-0.074
HC2	-0.002	0.331	0.221	0.124	0.728	0.192
HC3	-0.077	0.231	0.061	0.041	0.632	0.099
HC4	-0.117	0.279	0.319	0.079	0.789	0.122
HC5	0.036	0.282	0.265	0.097	0.815	0.225
HM1	0.115	0.078	0.006	-0.144	0.080	0.679
HM2	0.139	0.109	0.134	-0.028	0.165	0.738
HM3	-0.052	0.156	0.002	-0.019	0.173	0.813
HM4	0.080	0.121	0.152	0.085	0.166	0.663
HM5	-0.024	0.062	0.236	0.042	0.231	0.634
IP2	0.064	-0.030	0.178	0.111	-0.053	-0.052
IP3	0.164	0.108	0.143	0.132	-0.016	0.041
IP4	0.024	0.040	0.123	0.037	0.057	0.026
IP5	0.114	0.115	0.099	0.331	-0.004	-0.060
IS1	0.176	0.101	0.103	0.135	0.024	-0.026
IS3	0.174	0.112	0.110	0.163	0.066	0.009
IS4	0.167	0.117	0.095	0.175	0.069	0.080
IS5	0.219	0.111	0.290	0.197	0.155	0.156
IS6	0.290	-0.003	0.165	0.195	-0.036	0.074
PF1	0.086	0.304	0.270	0.141	0.176	0.103
PF2	0.083	0.226	0.319	0.018	0.267	0.186
PF3	0.085	0.199	0.236	0.156	0.222	0.161
PF4	0.069	0.308	0.245	0.176	0.261	0.167

PF5	0.062	0.228	0.299	0.127	0.193	0.128
QEM1	0.157	0.158	0.220	0.169	0.288	0.089
QEM2	0.101	0.182	0.188	0.137	0.233	0.094
QEM3	0.150	0.112	0.161	0.165	0.243	0.079
QRL1	0.103	0.139	0.148	0.125	0.145	0.138
QRL2	0.040	0.173	0.202	0.113	0.195	0.153
QRL3	0.077	0.131	0.231	0.089	0.156	0.181
QRP1	0.085	0.157	0.039	0.154	0.152	0.091
QRP2	0.004	0.166	0.115	0.145	0.192	0.133
QRP3	-0.002	0.123	0.161	0.127	0.121	0.148
QRP4	0.014	0.132	0.160	0.080	0.198	0.128
QRP5	0.074	0.180	0.249	0.111	0.250	0.091
SAD1	0.242	0.139	-0.057	0.010	0.037	-0.060
SAD2	0.146	0.120	-0.078	0.099	0.186	-0.131
SAD3	0.131	0.140	-0.067	0.113	0.170	-0.144

	IP	IS	PF	SQE	SAD
AF1	0.097	0.246	0.075	0.114	0.076
AF2	0.021	0.255	0.115	0.089	0.117
AF3	0.131	0.253	0.096	0.056	0.129
AF4	0.154	0.170	0.097	0.119	0.194
AF5	-0.017	0.194	0.028	0.039	0.164
AF6	0.014	0.223	0.073	0.090	0.149
AF7	0.168	0.213	-0.006	0.025	0.143
AF8	0.240	0.188	0.133	0.145	0.143
AR1	0.153	0.149	0.320	0.171	0.123
AR2	0.132	0.161	0.329	0.230	0.093
AR4	0.086	0.036	0.298	0.127	0.050
AR5	0.052	0.059	0.273	0.080	0.109
AR6	0.076	0.142	0.236	0.112	0.149
AR7	-0.026	-0.009	0.263	0.160	0.151
CO1	0.151	0.192	0.359	0.190	-0.091
CO2	0.194	0.229	0.376	0.248	-0.071
CO3	0.170	0.183	0.243	0.182	-0.019
ES3	0.160	0.155	0.170	0.230	0.067
ES4	0.058	0.118	0.141	0.177	0.067
ES5	0.164	0.147	0.102	0.086	0.024
ES6	0.274	0.289	0.147	0.028	0.088
HC2	-0.040	0.066	0.291	0.229	0.102
HC3	-0.065	-0.061	0.154	0.103	0.101
HC4	-0.024	0.088	0.192	0.150	0.098
HC5	0.057	0.104	0.249	0.254	0.154
HM1	-0.021	0.096	0.078	0.104	-0.078
HM2	-0.029	0.134	0.168	0.123	-0.032

HM3	-0.075	0.016	0.222	0.076	-0.147
HM4	0.091	0.127	0.109	0.170	-0.077
HM5	0.051	0.032	0.064	0.124	-0.062
IP2	0.774	0.345	0.079	-0.007	0.064
IP3	0.854	0.407	0.274	0.100	0.105
IP4	0.618	0.188	0.129	0.024	0.048
IP5	0.677	0.280	0.104	0.092	0.080
IS1	0.322	0.614	0.137	0.115	0.112
IS3	0.151	0.704	0.113	0.097	0.083
IS4	0.280	0.763	0.141	0.077	0.132
IS5	0.399	0.720	0.184	0.125	0.126
IS6	0.339	0.756	0.195	0.131	0.144
PF1	0.218	0.060	0.676	0.077	0.070
PF2	0.142	0.167	0.736	0.308	0.031
PF3	0.138	0.143	0.710	0.273	0.048
PF4	0.141	0.190	0.720	0.294	0.066
PF5	0.131	0.230	0.765	0.302	0.079
QEM1	-0.008	0.059	0.236	0.734	0.022
QEM2	0.065	0.094	0.287	0.826	0.074
QEM3	0.070	0.152	0.223	0.817	0.082
QRL1	0.087	0.092	0.125	0.619	-0.007
QRL2	0.130	0.155	0.266	0.757	0.036
QRL3	0.082	0.146	0.313	0.840	0.106
QRP1	0.025	0.058	0.217	0.671	0.044
QRP2	0.058	0.096	0.223	0.699	0.018
QRP3	0.021	0.117	0.320	0.697	0.006
QRP4	0.029	0.140	0.258	0.710	0.011
QRP5	0.054	0.114	0.191	0.717	0.010
SAD1	0.112	0.161	0.112	0.090	0.665
SAD2	0.073	0.131	0.058	0.059	0.927
SAD3	0.088	0.145	0.056	0.074	0.925

APPENDIX J: CERTIFICATE OF PARTICIPATION AND CERTIFICATE OF AWARD



1 BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

- Current situation:
 - National Higher Education Strategic Plan (NHESP) beyond 2020 was launched on August 2007, with the aim to transform higher education in Malaysia as the hub of higher education excellence in Southeast Asia region.
 - Also, Malaysia Education Blueprint, 2015 – 2025 (Higher Education) with 10 Shifts was introduced, with one of it is to expand the enrolment of international students to reach 200,000 international students by the year 2025.
 - To make it a reality, the factors that influence the international students during the decision making need to be known.
 - However, is it enough to focus only on the first stage of decision making?
- What we will deliver:
 - Full stages of decision making in purchasing a services.

2 OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

- To examine the decision making process of international student to study abroad

3 MODEL OF THE STUDY

Three Stage Service Consumption Process Model

- PRE – PURCHASE STAGE**
 - Limited study on the full stages of decision making.
 - Understanding the whole stages of decision making is important as an effort to attract more student to study in Malaysia.
- SERVICE ENCOUNTER STAGE**
 - Leads customers to the needs.
 - Uncertainty about outcome.
- POST ENCOUNTER STAGE**
 - Moment of truth.
 - Evaluation of service performance.

4 IMPACT OF THE STUDY

- Economy of the country.** Through currency inflow to the country, in term of tuition fees and accommodation: RM4billion (2012).
- Tourism Sector.** Visiting by students, friend and family (VFF), during the international students' study in Malaysia will also create an inflow of money.
- Sustainability of Higher Learning Institutions.** Through better understanding on the human behaviour and this will help the marketing practitioners in developing their marketing strategies, policies and finally provide better quality of education.

5 CONCLUSION OF THE STUDY

- Examining the 3 stages of decision making will help the concern parties to strategize their plan to attract more international students from countries all around the world to study in Malaysia.

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• +60 12 666 7128

CERTIFICATION OF PARTICIPATION ICABEC 2020



CERTIFICATE OF PARTICIPATION ACBESS 2021



APPENDIX K: CURRICULUM VITAE

Name : **NOR AZAH BINTI JAHARI**
Date of Birth : 27th January 1975
Age : 48 years old
Nationality : Malaysian
Race : Malay
Marital Status : Married
Home Address : No 22 Jalan Gunung Nuang U11/19,
Bukit Bandaraya, Seksyen U11
40170 Shah Alam, Selangor.
Contact Number : 012-6667126
Email : acahazah@gmail.com

ACADEMIC BACKGROUND

Secondary Education Sekolah Menengah (P) Sultan Ibrahim, Johor Bahru
SRP- Aggregates 11

Sekolah Menengah Teknik, Melaka
SPM- 1st Class (Aggregates 23)

Tertiary Education Certificate in Programming
Universiti Teknologi MARA
CGPA: 3.73 out of 4.00

Politeknik Kota Bharu, Kelantan
Diploma in Marketing
CGPA: 3.32 out of 4.00

Universiti Utara Malaysia
Bachelor of Business Administration
CGPA: 3.03 out of 4.00

Universiti Utara Malaysia
Master of Business Administration
CGPA: 3.63 out of 4.00

PROCEEDING PUBLICATION

2020 **Jahari, N.A. & Yaakub, S. (2020).** *Sustaining Business Through International Students for Malaysia Higher Education Sector*. Proceeding of the 6th ICABEC 2020 (pp.275). Universiti Malaysia Terengganu.

2021 **Jahari, N.A. & Yaakub, S. (2021).** *Critical Success Factors of Information Source on International Students Decision to Study Abroad*. Proceeding of the Asean Conference on Business, Economics and Social Sciences (ACBESS) 2021, Universiti Teknologi MARA, Cawangan Melaka, Malaysia.

CONFERENCE PRESENTATION

2020 **Jahari, N.A. (2020, December 16-17).** *Sustaining Business Through International Students for Malaysia Higher Education Sector* [Paper Presentation]. 6th International Conference on Accounting, Business and Economics (ICABEC 2020), Universiti Malaysia Terengganu, Malaysia.

- 2021 **Jahari, N.A.** (2021, May 24-25). *Critical Success Factors of Information Source on International Students Decision to Study Abroad* [Paper Presentation]. Asean Conference on Business, Economics and Social Sciences (ACBESS 2021), Universiti Teknologi MARA, Cawangan Melaka, Malaysia.

POSTER COMPETITION

- 2019 *Decision Process of International Students at Malaysia Private Higher Learning Institutions*, IRIS 2019, Universiti Selangor (UNISEL).
-

