



Internationalisation of Higher Education: Proposed Framework on International Students' Satisfaction

Pui-Yee, Chong

Department of Social Sciences, College of Foundation & General Studies, Universiti Tenaga Nasional, Jalan Ikram-Uniten, 43000 Kajang, Selangor, Malaysia

ABSTRACT

There are many dimensions in the internationalisation of higher education. One of the dimensions is international students. This dimension has been given great emphasis by many institutions for diverse reasons such as economy, while others are reputation and ranking of the university. Universities around the globe undergo tremendous pressure due to stiff competition both in terms of student enrolment and securing fund. All these have posed a great challenge to universities to re-look into improving services and quality to attract international students. Hence, universities need to carefully analyse key factors contributing to international students' satisfaction by developing strategies accordingly. Institutions need to provide quality service and environment for international students to ensure that they are satisfied with the services received while pursuing their studies. Students who are satisfied will help to attract more potential students to the institutions through increased student loyalty, positive word of mouth (WOM) communication and image of the higher education institutions (Arambewela, 2003; Arambewela & Hall, 2006). Based on the literature review, this paper aims to present various factors contributing to international students' satisfaction. These factors are translated into variables to measure international students' satisfaction, which can be used as a guideline by higher education institutions.

Keywords: Internationalisation of higher education; international students' satisfaction, students' satisfaction, higher education marketing

ARTICLE INFO

Article history:

Received: 24 February 2015

Accepted: 21 August 2015

E-mail address:

pychong@uniten.edu.my (Pui-Yee, Chong)

INTRODUCTION

There are many dimensions in the internationalisation of higher education (De Wit, 2002; Elkin & Devjee, 2005; Knight, 2008; Taylor, 2010). The definition of internationalisation varies, so its dimension

also differs from one institution to another in different countries. Among the dimensions, the consistently similar dimensions include international students and staff, research collaboration and mobility of students and staff through exchange programmes, and cross-border programmes. The dimension on international students has been given much attention by many researchers because international education has shown rapid demand by many growing economies in Asian countries. Asia will remain the major growth region contributing to over 70% demand, with China and India emerging as two major sources of international students (Arambewela *et al.*, 2006; Verbik & Lasanowski, 2007). A forecast by the International Development Programmes in Australia estimates a fourfold increase in the global demand for international education with approximately 7.2 million students by 2025, representing a 5.8% compound growth rate during this period. Flow of international students will continue to increase and grow worldwide in the foreseeable future (Woodfield, 2010). Data suggest that the market is expanding. Hence, this dimension of internationalisation will continue to be seen as important by higher education institutions (HEIs) around the globe.

The export and import of education have become so intense since the past two decades. In their 2007 report, Observatory of Borderless Higher Education (OBHE) highlighted countries such as Malaysia, Singapore and China as the emerging

contenders in international education market. Malaysia, though a relatively small player with around 2% of the international students market, has shown significant growth in student enrolment (Tham, 2013).

This paper aims to propose a framework on factors influencing international students' satisfaction based on the review of literatures. The paper is presented in the following headings: internationalisation of higher education in Malaysia, trade and business in higher education services, customer satisfaction, international students' satisfaction, factors that influence international students' satisfaction and the proposed framework. It is hoped that the framework will be translated into variables to measure international students' satisfaction which are useful as a guideline by higher education institutions and policy makers.

INTERNATIONALISATION OF HIGHER EDUCATION (HE) IN MALAYSIA

Malaysia aspires to be an international education hub. In order to achieve this, the Ministry of Higher Education (MoHE), Malaysia, had put in place internationalisation of HE as one of the strategic trusts as stipulated in Malaysia National Strategic Plan of Higher Education (PSPTN) Phase 1 (2007-2010). The main objective of this strategic trust is to build world recognition, produce marketable graduates, attract international students and generate innovation through research and development (Ministry of

Higher Education Malaysia / Kementerian Pengajian Tinggi Malaysia, 2007). This strategic trust will eventually help to build the brand and reputation of Malaysia as an international education provider. With that, MoHE has set the target to attract 150,000 international students by 2015 and 200,000 students by 2020, with an average consistent growth of 13.5 percent annually (Ministry of Higher Education Malaysia / Kementerian Pengajian Tinggi Malaysia, 2007).

There is a tremendous growth in the number of international students studying in the public HEIs (PuHEIs) and private HEIs (PrHEIs) in Malaysia. It was recorded that there were 18,242 international

students in 2001, and in less than ten years, it grew to 86,919 international students, with about 16 percent growth per annum (MoHE, 2011). About 70 percent of the international students enrolled at PrHEIs. With that, the PrHEIs would therefore house approximately 142,500 international students or 95 percent of 150,000 by 2015. Table 1 shows the enrolment of international students at PuHEI and PrHEI for a period of nine years (MoHE' website). It shows drastic increment of enrolment dominantly at PrHEIs. About a third are from China and Indonesia, while the rest are mainly from MENA countries (Middle East and North Africa) and Western Asia (Verbik & Lasanowski, 2007).

TABLE 1
Data of international student enrolment at Public and Private HEIs between 2001-2010

	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
Public HEI	4770	5045	5239	5735	6622	7941	14324	18486	22456	24214
Private HEI	13472	22827	25158	25939	33903	36449	33604	50679	58294	62705
TOTAL	18242	27872	30397	31674	40525	44390	47928	69165	80750	86919

(Source: MoHE, Malaysia)

TRADE AND BUSINESS IN HIGHER EDUCATION SERVICES

Higher education industry has been given much attention because of its lucrative returns. International education has marked a major contribution on international trade or exports (Radulovich, 2008). The major exporters of higher education are the United State, United Kingdom, Australia, Germany and France (OECD, 2013). Education export was recorded over US\$28 billion in 2005, with United States alone accounting to an estimated US\$14.1 billion, followed

by United Kingdom with US\$6 billion and Australia recorded US\$5.5 billion (World Bank, 2007). The estimated value derived from UK education export to the UK economy was £14.1 billion in 2008/09. Out of this figure, higher education contributed around 55% of the overall education export (London Economic, 2011). Meanwhile, the Australian Bureau of Statistics reported that the total export income from education services was AUD\$16.3 billion in 2010-2011, where higher education recorded the highest contributor. The Australian

Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade has ranked education services as Australia's third largest single export earner (AEI, 2012). As for Malaysia, the income generated through education export was recorded at RM2.6 billion in the year 2010 (MoHE, 2011).

As such, education export or trade in education is a profitable business (Altbach & Knight, 2007). In this business, students assume the role of customers as they pay fees and have set certain expectations (Voss *et al.*, 2006) in receiving education services. Some scholars contested (Tilak, 2008) that education be treated as a business, where students assuming the role as customers. For the purpose of this research, the researcher used a marketing perspective which suggests that students are treated as customers (Guolla, 1999). When students are taking on the role as customers, they are given the opportunity to provide feedbacks and institutions may review these feedbacks seriously to further improve delivery of education services. This is particularly pertinent for PrHEIs because they are operating as a business entity in providing education services. In the context of Malaysia, private institutions have been identified as the catalyst, working and partnering with the government in achieving educational excellence by raising standards and widening access, with the objective to develop a first-world talent base (Prime Minister Department, Malaysia, 2010).

CUSTOMER SATISFACTION

Customer satisfaction refers to customers' feelings and attitude after the purchase or consumption of products or services (Jamal & Naser, 2002). This reflects that prior to the purchase, customers have set certain expectations and after their purchase or consumption, they make an evaluation of the products or services. If the performance of the products or services met their expectations (Oliver, 1980, as cited in Jamal & Naser, 2002), the customer would feel satisfied. Hence, customer satisfaction measures how well customers' expectations are being met (Turkyilmaz & Ozkan, 2007).

Customer satisfaction is generally recognised as critical determinants of long-term business success (Jamal & Naser, 2002; Busacca & Padula, 2005) and overall business performance to an organisation (Ranaweera & Prabhu, 2003, cited in LeBlanc & Nguyen, 1999). The importance of customer satisfaction is derived from the commonly accepted philosophy that for a business to be successful and profitable, it must satisfy customers (Shin & Elliott, 2001, as cited in Clemes *et al.*, 2008). Customer satisfaction will impact market share, stronger competitive position, increase productivity, return of investment, profitability and quality of service (Athiyaman, 2000; Wong & Law, 2003; Grigoroudis & Siskos, 2004; Arambewela & Hall 2006; Turkyilmaz & Ozkan, 2007; Clemes *et al.*, 2008; Bianchi & Drennan, 2012).

Satisfied customers will lead to many benefits to an organization as they will engage in favorable behavioral responses (Clemes *et al* 2008). These include positive word of mouth and recommendation (Halstead & Page, 1992; Harvir & Voyer, 2000; Andaleeb 2001; Jamal & Naser, 2002; Wong & Law, 2003; Hui *et al* 2007; Turkyilmaz & Ozkan, 2007; Clemes *et al.*, 2008; Kuo *et al.*, 2009; Bianchi *et al.*, 2012; Jiewanto *et al.*, 2012). Word of Mouth (WOM) represents the client's willingness to recommend the products and service to others in the near future (Athiyaman, 2000; Jiewanto *et al.*, 2012).

Organisations that are able to satisfy their customers will gain customer retention as customers will repeat purchase, increase their purchasing from the same provider, increase customer loyalty and brand loyalty (Anderson & Sullivan, 1993; Anderson *et al.*, 1994; Liljander & Strandvik, 1995; LeBlanc & Nguyen, 1999; Harvir & Voyer, 2000; Yu & Dean, 2001; Jamal & Naser, 2002; Wong & Law, 2003; Grigoroudis & Siskos, 2004; Hui *et al.*, 2007; Turkyilmaz & Ozkan, 2007; Kuo *et al.*, 2009; Bianchi *et al.*, 2012; Jiewanto *et al.*, 2012).

On the other hand, dissatisfied customers will have increased tendency to stop repeat purchasing, give negative word of mouth (Fornell *et al.*, 1996 in Clemes *et al.*, 2008), increase merchandise return, raise more complaints (Cadotte & Turgeon, 1988, as in Bianchi & Drennan, 2012) and switch behaviour (Rust & Zahorick, 1993, as in Clemes *et al.*, 2008).

Hence, for an organisation to sustain in a highly competitive environment (Patterson *et al.*, 1997, cited in Arambewela & Hall, 2006), it needs to give attention to its customer satisfaction. Therefore, delivering satisfaction is one of the major goals of enterprise (Andaleeb, 2001). Companies should listen to and satisfy their customers in order to stay competitive, as numerous studies have shown that the long-term success of a firm is closely related to its ability to adapt to customers' needs and changing preferences (Li *et al.*, 2006; Takala *et al.*, 2006, as cited in Turkyilmaz & Ozkan, 2007).

A review of the above literatures revealed similar concepts in customer satisfaction measures, which include perceived value, perceived quality, customer expectations, customer satisfaction, customer complaints and customer loyalty (Grigoroudis & Siskos, 2004). These concepts can be divided into three key processes. The first key process is the causes or drivers of satisfaction that include customers' expectations, perceived value, perceived quality and image. The second is the attainment of satisfaction or dissatisfaction; some use the term disconfirmation (Oliver, 1980, as cited in Jamal & Naser, 2002). Finally, the third process is the results, outcomes or consequences of satisfaction which may lead to customer loyalty and complaint behaviour (Grigoroudis & Siskos, 2004). The concept of customer satisfaction illustrated in Fig.1 is adopted from Turkyilmaz and Ozkan (2007) and Grigoroudis and Siskos (2004).

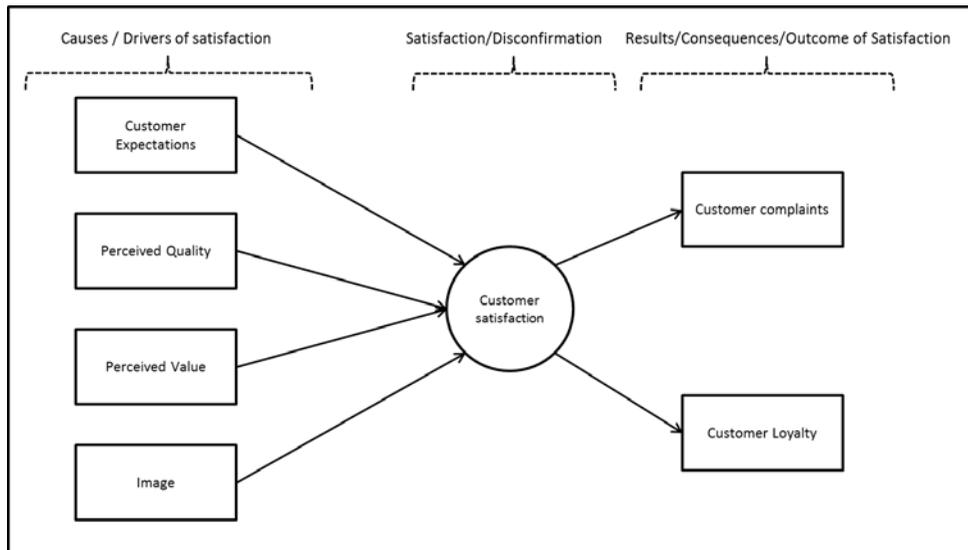


Fig. 1: Conceptual Framework of Customer Satisfaction

The following paragraph provides a brief explanation of the conceptual framework of customer satisfaction. Customer expectation is related to prior anticipations or expectations of the product or company in the eyes of the individual customers. Such expectations were derived from customers' perceptions of the product and company, which may also be influenced by information given prior to the purchase through marketing, branding or product promotion by the company, as well as their previous experiences in using the products or services (Grigoroudis & Siskos, 2004; Turkyilmaz & Ozkan, 2007). Perceived quality is the customer's evaluation of recent consumption experience. It evaluates the degree to which a product or a service meets a customer's requirements, or against the offering by the service providers (Turkyilmaz & Ozkan, 2007). Customers are always conscious about the

sacrifice they make for the services received or "cost/benefit trade-off" relationships. Perceived value is a trade-off between what customers receive such as quality, benefits and utilities, and what they sacrifice such as price, opportunity cost, time and efforts (Cronin *et al.*, 1997, 2000; Keeney, 1999; Zeithaml, 1988, cited in Kuo *et al.*, 2009). As explained by Turkyilmaz and Ozkan (2007), perceived value is generated based on the product quality relative to the price paid by customers. Image refers to "the brand name and the kind of associations and perception of customers from the product or company" (Grigoroudis & Siskos, 2004, p. 345; Turkyilmaz & Ozkan, 2007). The associations include being reliable, professional, innovative, contributions to society and adding prestige to its user (Turkyilmaz & Ozkan, 2007). According to Turkyilmaz and Ozkan (2007), image has a positive effect on customers' expectations,

as well as their satisfaction and loyalty. Customer satisfaction is a yardstick to indicate how satisfied customers are, and how well their expectations are met (Grigoroudis & Siskos, 2004; Turkyilmaz & Ozkan, 2007). Meanwhile, customer loyalty is built as a result of satisfied customers (Britner, 1990, as cited in Hui *et al.*, 2007). Studies have shown that loyal customers will demonstrate post-consumer behaviour like re-purchase, positive word of mouth and recommending to others (Andaleeb, 2001; Jamal & Naser, 2002; Hui *et al.*, 2007; Turkyilmaz & Ozkan, 2007; Clemes *et al.*, 2008). Another outcome of customer satisfaction, besides customer loyalty, is the reduced of customers' complaint behaviour. Customers who are satisfied will demonstrate less complaint behaviour (Cadotte & Turgeon, 1988, cited in Bianchi *et al.*, 2012).

INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS' SATISFACTION

The concept of student as customer is not new (Douglas *et al.*, 2008). However, this supplier/customer relationship is not as clear cut as some other service relationships, given that students are also "partners" in the learning process (Yorke, 1999, cited in Douglas *et al.*, 2008). Service quality and customer satisfaction are important issues for universities competing at undergraduate and postgraduate levels for local and international students (Douglas *et al.*, 2008). Even though there are many debates about the role of students for example, they can be customers, clients, producers

and products (Guolla, 1999), researchers who have studied student satisfaction will take the role of students as customers. As it is more appropriate in measuring students' satisfaction (Arambewela, 2003).

Satisfied students will help to attract more potential students to the institutions through increased students' loyalty, positive word of mouth (WOM) communication and image of the higher education institutions (Arambewela, 2003; Arambewela & Hall, 2006; Slethaug & Manjula, 2012). With positive WOM, students will likely recommend family members and friends to pursue higher education at the particular university that they are satisfied with (Slethaug & Manjula, 2012). This will eventually improve students' retention and growth for the university and lead to better branding and reputation for the university (Arambewela 2003). Contrary to satisfied students are dissatisfied students whose negative WOM may tarnish the reputation and brand of university, and eventually cause the university to lose potential students (Hayes, 1977, cited in Shekarchizadeh *et al.*, 2011; Guallo, 1999, cited in Arambewela & Hall, 2006) and impact the bottom line of the institution (Slethaug & Manjula, 2012). Athiyaman (2000) confirmed that there is a significantly strong relationship between satisfied students with positive WOM and student retention. Hence, universities need to ensure that they have delivered their service well and that students as their customers are satisfied with their services. This will help to increase student enrolment, reduce student attrition and

enhance students' experience (Arambewela & Hall, 2011b). Therefore, students' satisfaction is a key strategic variable in maintaining the stiff competition in international higher education (Arambewela, 2003; Arambewela *et al.*, 2006).

Past literatures demonstrate that university faces tremendous challenges due to stiff competition in terms of student enrolment and securing fund, funding constraints from federal or state government and rising cost of higher education (LeBlanc & Nguyen, 1999; DeShields *et al.*, 2005; Butt & Rehman, 2010). All these have posed a great challenge to universities to re-look into improving services and quality so as to attract more students (DeShields *et al.*, 2005). For this reason, HEIs need to carefully analyse key factors contributing to students' satisfaction and therefore develop strategies accordingly.

Based on the service-recipient paradigm, students are treated as customers (Havarnek & Brodwin, 1998, cited in Arambewela *et al.*, 2006; Arambewela & Hall, 2006); thus, universities need to be highly student-oriented in their service delivery (Arambewela & Hall, 2006). Based on the theory of customer satisfaction by Oliver (1996, cited in Arambewela *et al.*, 2006), expectation becomes important in evaluating customer satisfaction. The evaluation of the quality and performance of a service, such as university education, can only be possible after experiencing or consuming because students have limited tangible pre-choice cues. The perceptions formed during this evaluation process are

key indicators of students' satisfaction or dissatisfaction (Halstead *et al.*, 1994, cited in Arambewela *et al.*, 2006).

International education has unique characteristics because international students consume education services in a foreign country. It is similar to other industries such as tourism and healthcare services, where companies provide their services to overseas customers in domestic market, a mode that is also known as inward service exporters. The satisfaction or dissatisfaction involves not only the service outcome such as a degree in the case of education but also service process, customer interaction with other people in a new context and the role of the customer in adding value to the final experience (Berry *et al.*, 2002; Prahalad & Venkatram, 2000; Walter *et al.*, 2010, cited in Bianchi *et al.*, 2012). As customers need to travel to another country to consume the services, they face more challenges which include government immigration policies, exchange rate fluctuations and potential intercultural service problems (Bianchi *et al.*, 2012). Hence, customer satisfaction will not only be affected by the outcome of the service but the overall experiences which involve living in a new country, interaction between customers and service providers of different cultural backgrounds, and interaction with other customers (Li & Guisinger, 1992; Reardon *et al.*, 1996; Zhang *et al.*, 2010, cited in Bianchi *et al.*, 2012). Overseas customers must travel to a new country that is usually unknown and culturally different from their own (Bianchi *et al.*, 2012). The

consumption of service in education takes a longer duration and students have to live and interact with the host environment for a long period of time. This suggests that drivers of satisfaction or dissatisfaction for overseas customers involve a wide range of elements that may differ from traditional service encounters held in the domestic country of the customers (Bianchi *et al.*, 2012).

International students coming from diverse countries have different cultural backgrounds, with different needs and wants that institutions need to satisfy (Arambewela & Hall, 2011a). In addition, international students face various difficulties in adjusting to a different economic and cultural environment and to different learning and teaching styles (Mavondo *et al.*, 2004). Although quality of education undoubtedly plays an important role in students' satisfaction and should be the prime concern of universities (Mavondo *et al.*, 2004), their needs and satisfaction are not limited to merely academic needs but the entire living and learning environment at host country.

FACTORS IN MEASURING INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS' SATISFACTION

Researcher has conducted a review on primary and secondary literatures on international students and students' satisfaction. In the context of this study, the primary literatures are those written by the original authors, while the secondary literatures refer to ones that were reviewed by other authors. A total of forty two primary literatures and thirty two secondary literatures were reviewed. The findings of the review revealed that studies on international students can be categorised into five themes: (i) factors that influence the choice of study destination, (ii) international students' experience and expectations, (iii) challenges, problems and adjustment faced by international students, (iv) perspective on service quality, and (v) factors that influence satisfaction. The variables found from each theme are presented in Table 2.

TABLE 2
Variables of the Five Themes

(1) Choice of Study Destination	
1. Choice of University <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • study programmes • courses • fees • facilities • support services • intellectual climate • teaching quality • teaching staff and methods • recognition of courses • image and prestige of the university 	2. Choice of country <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • safety • life-style • cost of living • transportation • racial discrimination • visas • immigration potential • friends • family • climate • culture
(Mashkuri & Chong, 2011; Veloutsou <i>et al.</i> , 2005; Arambewela, 2003; Smith <i>et al.</i> , 2002; Townley, 2001; Geall, 2000; DETYA, 2000; Burke, 1986 in Arambewela & Hall, 2009; Lawley, 1998; Duan, 1997; International Development Programmes, 1995, cited in Arambewela & Hall, 2009).	

TABLE 2 (Continue)

<p>(2) International Students' Experience and Expectation</p>			
<p>1. Experiences of Learning</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • engagement and interaction with lecturers • teaching delivery • mentoring and tutoring assistance • counselling • club and society • socialisation • orientation. 	<p>2. Experiences of Living</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Language • Culture • friends from own country • proximity to home country • friendly people • safety and security • cost of living • employment • migration opportunity 	<p>3. Expectation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • recognition of degree • reputation of the university • good teaching quality • friendly and caring lecturer • good support staff to support admission, registration, finance and visa matters. • friendly environment • safe place to live • employment and migration opportunity 	
<p>(Azmat <i>et al.</i>, 2013; Slethaug & Manjula, 2012; Akiba, 2008)</p>			
<p>(3) Challenges, Problems and Adjustment</p>			
<p>1. Academic Challenges</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • different methods of teaching & learning 	<p>2. Non-Academic Challenges in the Campus</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • healthcare • accommodation & transportation. • loneliness • not being cared for or lack of sense of belongingness to the community in campus 	<p>3. Social challenges</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • food • discrimination • climate • religion • cost of living • difficulty in interacting with local • language 	<p>4. Adjustment</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • to new culture • lack of social support (example no friends or family members in host country).
<p>(Zuria <i>et al.</i>, 2010)</p>	<p>(Zuria <i>et al.</i>, 2010).</p>	<p>(Roselind <i>et al.</i>, 2013; Suseela & Poovaikarasi, 2011; Thavamalar & Parvinder, 2010; Abdul Rahman, 2013)</p>	<p>(Yusliza, 2011 & 2012; Yusliza <i>et al.</i>, 2010; Yusliza & Abdul Kadir, 2011; Yusliza & Shankar, 2010; Suseela & Poovaikarasi, 2011; Thavamalar & Parvinder, 2010).</p>
<p>(4) Perspective on Service Quality</p>			
<p>1. Quality of academic staff</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • engagement with students • helpful • effective delivery of teaching • advising • care and concern • English proficiency 		<p>2. Quality of support staff</p>	<p>3. Quality of facilities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • computer lab • library
<p>(Shekarchizadeh <i>et al.</i>, 2011; Azizah <i>et al.</i>, 2011)</p>			
<p>(5) Satisfaction of International Students</p>			
<p>1. Academic</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • high standard of teaching materials, meeting the objectives of the course and study outcome, academic workload, quality of lecturers, lecturers should engage, provide feedback, always available, friendly effective delivery of lessons, admission requirement. • modern and up-to-date facilities of laboratory, computing, classroom and library; • recognition of the qualification • reputation or prestige of the institution • fee 	<p>2. Non-Academic</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • easy access to information, standard of accommodation, counselling, international orientation programme, sense of belongingness, friendly environment efficient and friendly administrative staff especially those in international office, good condition of recreational and sport facilities, opportunity for socialisation in club and society, financial assistance 	<p>3. Social</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • friends and relatives, social distancing, discrimination and acceptance from community, safety and security, communication and language, employment opportunity, migration opportunity, legal framework e.g., visa • cost of living 	
<p>(Sam, 2001; Arambewela, 2003; Arambewela <i>et al.</i>, 2006; Arambewela & Hall, 2006; Arambewela & Hall, 2009; Arambewela & Hall, 2011b; Lim, 2013; Hishamuddin <i>et al.</i>, 2008; Ikwuagwu, 2010; Lim, 2013; Chong & Amlil Hazlin, 2013; Abdul Rahman, 2013)</p>			

Besides reviewing the themes on international students, literatures on student satisfaction were also included in the review of literature. As international students are in the same system as other local students, hence reviewing students' satisfaction will help to reveal factors that contribute to their satisfaction.

TABLE 3
Variables for Student Satisfaction

(6) Student Satisfaction	
<p>1. Quality Programme</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • course content • good organisation and relevant material • learning took place • equipped laboratories • computing facilities • library • conducive classrooms 	<p>2. Quality Lecturers</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • adopt different approaches to teaching • have fair assessment • give appropriate workload • are enthusiastic and energetic • deliver lessons in an interesting manner • encourage dialogues, communication and feedback • accessible and available • approachable, friendly and helpful • engaging and giving consultation at all time • are experts and qualified in their respective field
<p>(Anthony & Shaheen, 2013; Butt & Rehman, 2010; Temizer <i>et al.</i>, 2012; Brown & Mazzarol, 2009; Clemes <i>et al.</i>, 2008; Sadiq & Mohammad, 2003; Athiyaman, 2000; Guolla, 1999; LeBlanc & Nguyen, 1999; Aldridge & Rowley, 1998; Athiyaman, 1997).</p>	

Analysis carried out for the literatures presented in Table 2 and Table 3 reveals that the variables from each theme show similarity and consistency, while some are overlapping. As discussed earlier, all the five themes formed contributing factors to international students' satisfaction. These overlaps of variables are subsequently categorised into five domains that influence international students' satisfaction. The domains include: (1) Internal Environment-Academic, (2) Internal Environment Non-Academic, (3) External Environment, (4) Image, and (5) Perceived Value.

Therefore, the development of the proposed framework on the factors influencing international students' satisfaction in Fig.2 was derived from the literatures on international students, student satisfaction and adopted theory on customer satisfaction in Fig.1. The framework is

consistent with other studies (Aldridge & Rowley, 1998; Arambewela, 2003; Mavondo *et al.*, 2004; Ueltschya *et al.*, 2004, cited in Arambewela & Hall, 2011b) that categorised the factors into internal environment and external environment. In this framework, the researcher upgraded some variables into an independent domain. The tuition fee and cost of living variables were upgraded into a domain called Perceived Value, while the variable on recognition and prestige was categorised as Image. The researcher believes that the two domains deserved to be an independent domain instead of a variable of internal environment or external environment domains. This separation is consistent with the theory of customer satisfaction, where Image and Perceived Value are given the attention in the literatures discussed above and they contribute as drivers of satisfaction.

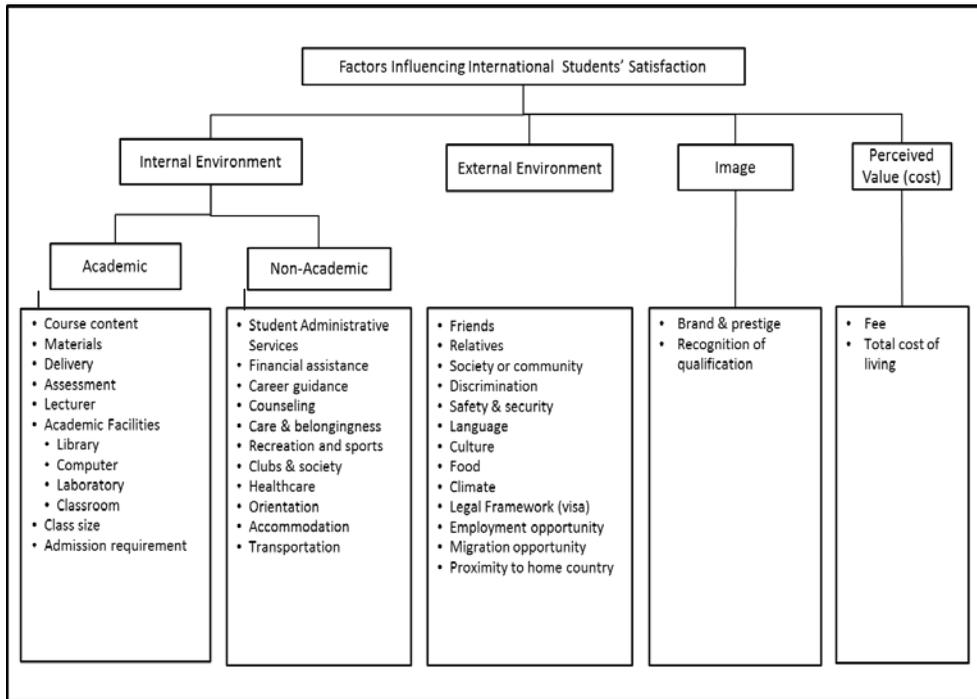


Fig.2: Proposed Framework on Factors Influencing International Students' Satisfaction

The following paragraph explains the five domains of the proposed framework. Internal Environment Academic domain covers all educational services, and it refers to teaching quality, study programme, teaching staff and method of instruction, engagement of teachers with students, academic performance of the students, industrial training and other services and facilities related to teaching and learning such as computer laboratory and library facilities (DeShields *et al.*, 2005; Arambewela, 2006; Douglas *et al.*, 2008; Bianchi & Drennan, 2012).

The Internal Environment Non-Academic domain includes other support services within the campus that are non-academic related such as accommodation,

security, student services, student clubs and society, orientation, transportation, gym and attractive campus with shops (Mavondo *et al.*, 2004; Arambewela, 2006; Douglas *et al.*, 2008; Bianchi & Drennan, 2012). The non-academic services form part of the overall students' satisfaction as they consume such services while on campus.

External environment includes the social and physical dimension outside of the university campus (Arambewela & Hall, 2011b). These include social relationships such as friendship patterns, discrimination, living arrangements, housing and accommodation, beautiful touristic attractions and good weather, receiving good support from home stay

family or friends, and well organised and safe city with good customer service, transportation and medical services, experiencing a new culture, food and language, feeling welcomed and accepted by local people (Bianchi & Drennan, 2012). All these contribute to the entire experiences and will impact the overall international students' satisfaction.

Image of an institution is a strong influence in determining student satisfaction. Image refers to the brand name that adds prestige to the students and the recognition of the degree at home country and other countries. Study by Temizer and Turkyilmaz (2012) found that image has a positive effect on students' satisfaction and loyalty.

Perceived Value is the "perceived level of service quality relative to the price paid by students" (Temizer & Turkyilmaz, 2012 p. 3804). Variables for this domain include tuition fee and total cost of living at the host country.

CONCLUSION

This paper has reviewed numerous literatures on international students from various themes, student satisfaction and theory on customer satisfaction. Subsequently, it has proposed a framework on the factors influencing international students' satisfaction. It is hoped that these factors will be translated into variables to measure international students' satisfaction, which can be used as a guideline by higher education institutions, particularly as they aim to improve their service quality. The

framework reflects the many stakeholders including the HEIs, community and the country, as a whole in providing conducive environment for learning and living for international students. Therefore, a concerted effort by all stakeholders is required to build the brand and reputation of the country instead of the isolation effort by learning institutions. Thus, the entire ecosystem needs to be in place in making Malaysia an education hub and choice of study destination.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The author acknowledges the support from Universiti Tenaga Nasional (UNITEN) in providing Seed Fund for this research and Prof. Tham Siew Yean and Dr. Andew Kam from Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia (UKM) for their valuable advice. My appreciation also goes to Ms. Evelyn Yeap who helped in proofreading the article.

REFERENCES

- Akiba, H. (2008). *The challenging face of transnational education in Malaysia: A case study of international offshore university programs*. (Doctoral thesis dissertation). University of Minnesota.
- Alavi, M., & Mansor, S. M. S. (2011). Categories of Problems among international Students in Universiti Teknologi Malaysia. *Procedia-Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 30, 1581-1587.
- Aldridge, S., & Rowley, J. (1998). Measuring customer satisfaction in higher education. *Quality Assurance in Education*, 6(4), 197-204.

- Altbach, P. G., & Knight, J. (2007). The Internationalization of Higher Education: Motivations and Realities. *Journal of Studies in International Education*, 11(3-4), 290-305.
- Andaleeb, S. S. (2001). Service quality perceptions and patient satisfaction: a study of hospitals in a developing country. *Social Science & Medicine*, 52(9), 1359-1370.
- Anthony, V., & Shaheen, M. (2013). Malaysian Private Education Quality : Application of SERVQUAL Model. *International Education Studies*, 6(4), 164-170.
- Arambewela, R. (2003). *Post-choice satisfaction of international postgraduate students from Asia studying in Victorian Universities*. (Doctoral thesis dissertation). Victoria University of Technology.
- Arambewela, R., Hall, J., & Zuhair, S. (2006). Postgraduate International Students from Asia: Factors Influencing Satisfaction. *Journal of Marketing for Higher Education*, 15(2), 105-127.
- Arambewela, R., & Hall, J. (2006). A Comparative Analysis of International Education Satisfaction Using SERVQUAL. *Journal of Services Research*, 6(Special Issue), 141-163.
- Arambewela, R., & Hall, J. (2009). An empirical model of international student satisfaction. *Asia Pacific Journal of Marketing and Logistics*, 21(4), 555-569.
- Arambewela, R., & Hall, J. (2011a). The role of personal values in enhancing student experience and satisfaction among international postgraduate students: an exploratory study. *Procedia-Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 29, 1807-1815.
- Arambewela, R., & Hall, J. (2011b). The Interaction Effects of the Internal and external university environment and the influence of personal values, on satisfaction among international postgraduate students. *Studies in Higher Education*, 1-17.
- Athiyaman, A. (1997). Linking student satisfaction and service quality perceptions: the case of university education. *European Journal of Marketing*, 31(7), 528-540.
- Athiyaman, A. (2000). Perceived service quality in the higher education sector: An empirical analysis. In *Proceeding ANZMAC 2000 Visionary Marketing for the 21st Century : Facing the Challenges*, pp. 50-55.
- Australia Education International. (2012). *International Education Snapshot*. Retrieved August 20, 2013, from <https://www.aei.gov.au/research/research-snapshots/pages/default.aspx>
- Azizah, R., Hamidah, A. R., & Roziana, S. (2011). The International Students' Perception Towards the Education Quality. *The International Journal of Social Sciences and Humanity Studies*, 3(2), 49-56.
- Azmat, F., Osborne, A., Le Rossignol, K., Jogulu, U., Rentschler, R., Robottom, I., & Malathy, V. (2013). Understanding aspirations and expectations of international students in Australian higher education. *Asia Pacific Journal of Education*, 33(1), 97-111.
- Bianchi, C., & Drennan, J. (2012). Drivers of satisfaction and dissatisfaction for overseas service consumers: a critical incident technique approach. *Australasian Marketing Journal*, 20(1), 97-107.
- Brown, R. M., & Mazzarol, T. W. (2009). The importance of institutional image to student satisfaction and loyalty within higher education. *Higher Education*, 58(1), 81-95.
- Busacca, B., & Padula, G. (2005). Understanding the relationship between attribute performance and overall satisfaction: Theory, measurement and Implications. *Marketing Intelligence & Planning*, 23(6), 543-561.

- Butt, B. Z., & Rehman, K. U. (2010). A study examining the students' satisfaction in higher education. *Procedia-Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 2(2), 5446-5450.
- Clemes, M. D., Gan, C. E. C., & Kao, T. H. (2008). University Student Satisfaction: An Empirical Analysis. *Journal of Marketing for Higher Education*, 17(2), 292-325.
- Cronin, J. J., Brady, M. K., & Hult, G. T. M. (2000). Assessing the effects of Quality, Value and Customer Satisfaction on Consumer Behavioral Intentions in Service Environments. *Journal of Retailing*, 76(2), 193-218.
- De Wit, H. (2002). *Internationalization of higher education in the United States of America and Europe: A historical, comparative and conceptual analysis*. Westport: Greenwood Publishing Group.
- DeShields Jr, O. W., Kara, A., & Kaynak, E. (2005). Determinants of business student satisfaction and retention in higher education: Applying Herzberg's two-factor theory. *International Journal of Educational Management*, 19(2), 128-139.
- Douglas, J., McClelland, R., & Davies, J. (2008). The Development Of A Conceptual Model Of Student Satisfaction With Their Experience In Higher Education. *Quality Assurance in Education*, 16(1), 19-35.
- Elkin, G., Devjee, F., & Farnsworth, J. (2005). Visualising the internationalization of universities. *International Journal of Educational Management*, 19(4), 318-329.
- Faiz, N. S. M. (2011). From theory to practice: The learning challenges for international students to succeed in a Malaysian technical and vocational (TVE) higher education institution. *Proceeding The Third Asian conference on Education 2011*, pp. 496-505.
- Grigoroudis, E., & Siskos, Y. (2004). A survey of customer satisfaction barometers: Some results from the transportation-communications sector. *European Journal of Operational Research*, 152(2), 334-353.
- Guolla, M. (1999). Assessing the Teaching Quality to Student Satisfaction Relationship: Applied Customer Satisfaction Research in the Classroom. *Journal of Marketing Theory and Practice*, 7(3), 87-97.
- Harvir, S. B., & Voyer, P. A. (2000). Word-of-Mouth within a Service Purchase Decision Context. *Journal of Service Research*, 3(2), 166-177.
- Hasan, H. F. A., Ilias, A., Rahman, R. A., & Razak, M. Z. A. (2008). Service Quality and Student Satisfaction : A Case Study at Private Higher Education Institutions. *International Business Research*, 1(3), 163-175.
- Hui, T. K., Wan, D. T. W., & Ho, A. (2007). Tourists' satisfaction, recommendation and revisiting Singapore. *Tourism Management*, 28(4), 965-975.
- Ikwuagwu, V. O. (2010). *International Student Satisfaction Levels with Student Support Services at Delaware State University*. (Doctoral thesis dissertation). Delaware State University.
- Jamal, A., & Naser K. (2002). Customer satisfaction and retail banking : an assessment of some of the key antecedents of customer satisfaction in retail banking. *International Journal of Bank Marketing*, 20(4), 146-160.
- Jiewanto, A., Laurens, C., & Nelloh, L. (2012). Influence of Service Quality, University Image and Student Satisfaction toward WOWM Intention: A Case Study on Universitas Pelita Harapan Surabaya. *Procedia-Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 40, 16-23.

- Knight, J. (2008). Internationalization of higher education in the 21st century: Concepts, rationales, strategies and issues. In K. Sarjit, M. Sirat, & A. Norzaini (Eds), *Globalisation and internationalisation of higher education in Malaysia, Pulau Pinang: Penerbit USM*, pp. 22-50.
- Kuo, Y. F., Wu, C. M., & Deng, W. J. (2009). The relationships among service quality, perceived value, customer satisfaction and post-purchase intention in mobile value-added services. *Computer in Human Behavior*, 25(4), 887-896.
- LeBlanc, G., & Nguyen, N. (1999). Listening to the customer's voice: examining perceived service value among business college students. *The International Journal of Educational Management*, 13(4), 187-198.
- Lim, K. S. E. (2013). A Qualitative Study of Factors Contributing to International Students' Satisfaction of Institutional Quality. *Asian Social Sciences* 9(3), 126-131.
- London Economics. (2011). *Estimating the Value to the UK of Education Exports*. Department of Business Innovation & Skills : BIS Research Paper Number 46.
- Malaysia Higher Education Statistics. (2011). *Malaysia Higher Education Statistics*. Ministry of Higher Education, Putrajaya, Malaysia.
- Mashkuri, Y., & Chong, P. Y. (2011). Understanding international student choices. *The Association of Commonwealth Universities: Bulletin No. 174*, pp. 12-14.
- Mavondo, F. T., Tsarenko, Y., & Gabbott, M. (2004). International and Local Student Satisfaction: Resources and Capabilities Perspective. *Journal of Marketing for Higher Education*, 14(1), 41-60.
- Mazzarol, T. (1998). Critical success factors for international education marketing. *International Journal of Education Management*, 12(4), 163-176.
- Ministry of Higher Education Malaysia. (2007). *Pelan Strategik Pengajian Tinggi Negara Melangkaui 2020*. Ministry of Higher Education Malaysia
- Ministry of Higher Education Malaysia. (2011). *Pelan Strategik Pengajian Tinggi Negara Melangkaui 2020 Fasa 2 (2011-2015)*. Ministry of Higher Education Malaysia.
- Ministry of Higher Education Malaysia. (2011). *Internationalisation Policy for Higher Education Malaysia*. Putrajaya, Malaysia. Ministry of Higher Education Malaysia.
- Ministry of Higher Education Malaysia. (2013). *Operational Framework for International Student Management*. Ministry of Higher Education Malaysia.
- Ministry of Higher Education Malaysia. (2013). *Higher Education Statistics*. Ministry of Higher Education Malaysia. Retrieved September 12, 2013, from http://www.mohe.gov.my/web_statistik/
- National Higher Education Research Institute. (2009). *Kajian Pelajar Antarabangsa di Malaysia*. Ministry of Higher Education Malaysia.
- OECD. (2013). *Education Indicators In Focus*. Retrieved May 25, 2015, from [http://www.oecd.org/education/skills-beyond-school/EDIF%202013--N%C2%B014%20\(eng\)-Final.pdf](http://www.oecd.org/education/skills-beyond-school/EDIF%202013--N%C2%B014%20(eng)-Final.pdf)
- Oh, H. (1999). Service quality, customer satisfaction and customer value: a holistic perspective. *International Journal of Hospitality Management*, 18(1), 67-82.
- Prime Minister Department Malaysia. (2010). *Economic Transformation Programme: A Roadmap for Malaysia*. Prime Minister Department Malaysia.

- Radulovich, L. P. (2008). *An empirical examination of the factors affecting the internationalization of professional services SMEs: The case of India*. (Doctoral thesis dissertation). Cleveland State University.
- Rahman, E. A. (2013). Ideas, Practices and Challenges of Internationalising Higher Education in Malaysia: Micro Perspectives. In T. S. Yean (Ed.), *Internationalizing higher education in Malaysia: Understanding, practices and challenges* (pp. 119-140). Singapore: ISEAS.
- Roselind, W., Shahrina, M. N., & Radzuan, R. (2013). International Students' Cultural Experiences: Exploring Socio-Cultural and Academic Adjustment in Malaysian Universities. *Recent Advances in Modern Educational Technologies*, 31-37.
- Sadiq, M. S., & Mohammad, S. (2003). Private Higher Education in Malaysia: Students' satisfaction level and strategic implications. *Journal of Higher Education Policy and Management*, 25(2), 173-181.
- Sam, D. L. (2001). Satisfaction with Life Among International Students: An Exploratory Study. *Social Indicators Research*, 53(3), 315-337.
- Shekarchizadeh, A., Rasli, A., & Hon-Tat, H. (2011). SERVQUAL in Malaysian universities: Perspectives of international students. *Business Process Management Journal*, 17(1), 67-81.
- Slethaug, G., & Manjula, J. (2012). The Business of Education: Improving International Student Learning Experiences in Malaysia. *World Journal of Social Sciences*, 2(6), 179-199.
- Suseela, M., & Poovaikarasi, S. S. (2011). Adjustment problems among international students in Malaysian private higher education institutions. *Procedia Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 15, 833-837.
- Taylor, J. (2010). The management of internationalization in higher education. In F. Maringe & N. Foskett (Eds.), *Globalization and internationalisation in higher education: Theoretical, strategic and management perspectives* (pp. 97-107). London: Continuum International Publishing Group.
- Temizer, L., & Turkyilmaz, A. (2012). Implementation of Student satisfaction index model in higher education institutions. *Procedia Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 46, 3802-3806.
- Thavamalar, T., & Parvinder, K. H. S. (2010). A Hermeneutic Phenomenological Approach to Socio-Cultural and Academic Adjustment Experiences of International Students. *The Journal of the South East Asia Research Center for Communication and Humanities*, 2, 91-113.
- Turkyilmaz, A., & Ozkan, C. (2007). Development of a customer satisfaction index model: An application to the Turkish mobile phone sector. *Industrial Management & data Systems*, 107(5), 672-687.
- Verbik, L., & Lasanowski, V. (2007). International Student Mobility: Patterns and Trends. *The Observatory on Borderless Higher Education (OBHE) Report, September*. Retrieved September 10, 2013, from <http://www.obhe.ac.uk>.
- Voss, R., Gruber, T., & Szmigin, I. (2006). Service Quality in higher education: The role of student expectations. *Journal of Business Research*, 60(9), 949-959.
- Wong, J., & Law, R. (2003). Difference in shopping satisfaction levels: a study of tourist in Hong Kong. *Tourism Management*, 24(4), 401-410.
- Woodfield, S. (2010). Key trends and emerging issues in international student mobility (ISM). In F. Maringe & N. Foskett (Eds.), *Globalization and internationalisation in higher education: Theoretical, strategic and management perspectives* (pp. 97-107). London: Continuum International Publishing Group.

- World Bank. (2007). *Trends In International Trade in Higher Education : Implication and Options for Developing Countries*. The World Bank: Education Working Paper Series number 6.
- Yean, T. S. (Ed.). (2013). *Internationalizing Higher Education in Malaysia: Understanding, Practices and Challenges*. Singapore: ISEAS
- Yee, C. P., & Mokhtar, A. H. A. (2013). International Students' Learning Experiences at Private Higher Education Institutions in Malaysia. In *e-Proceeding the Global Summit on Education, Kuala Lumpur*, pp. 298-312.
- Yu, Y. T., & Dean, A. (2001). The contribution of emotional satisfaction to consumer loyalty. *International Journal of Service Industry Management*, 12(3), 234-250.
- Yusliza, M. Y., Junaimah, J., & Shankar, C. (2010). *Examining The Role of perceived Social Support on Psychological Adjustment of International Students in A Malaysian Public University*. Universiti Utara Malaysia.
- Yusliza, M. Y., & Shankar, C. (2010). Adjustment in International Students in Malaysian Public University. *International Journal of Innovation, Management and Technology*, 1(3), 275-278.
- Yusliza, M. Y. (2011). International Students' Adjustment in Higher Education: Relation between Social Support, Self-Efficacy and Socio-Cultural Adjustment. *Australian Journal of Business and Management Research*, 1(1), 1-15.
- Yusliza, M. Y. (2012). Self-Efficacy, Perceived Social Support and Psychological Adjustment in International Undergraduate Students in a Public Higher Education Institution in Malaysia. *Journal of Studies in International Education*, 16(4), 353-371.
- Yusoff, Y. M., & Othman, A. K. (2011). An Early Study on Perceived Social Support and Psychological Adjustment among International Students: The Case Of A Higher Learning Institution In Malaysia. *International Journal of business and Society*, 12(2), 1-15.
- Zuria, M., Salleh, A., Saemah, R., & Noriah, M. I. (2010). Challenges for International Students in Malaysia: Culture, Climate and Care. *Procedia Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 7(C), 289-293.