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# Preliminary Study of International Students in Malaysia on Perceived University and Destination Image towards Intention to Recommend

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## Abstract

The mobility of international students worldwide has grown exponentially over the years. The Malaysian government has similarly aimed to bring in higher number of international students due to the significant economical benefits towards the country development. In task of increasing the number of international students in Malaysia, the images of the country and university plays an important role due to the global competitiveness. Thus, the purpose of this study is to investigate the determinants that lead the international students in choosing their place to further their tertiary education in terms of both country (destination) and university. Destination image was found to be associated with affective image which may affects the intention to recommend this destination to others. Additionally, the individual university image also affects the student's perception in its enrolment. This study is not without limitation whereby the data collection is still limited and it is recommended to include other constructs for model testing and validation.

**Keywords:** Destination Image; University Image; Emotion; Intention to Recommend

## 1. Introduction

The education sector has gain pivotal role over the years in bringing in more investment into the country when it was forecasted that a total of RM19 billion would be generated by attracting a total of 200,000 international students by the year 2020 (Kamaruddin, 2015; MoHE, 2011). This was highlighted by Higher Education Minister Datuk Seri Idris Jusoh from the same report that based on the estimation used, every international student would spend as much as RM46,000 per year. Additionally, it was further forecasted that if they are married and bringing their family together to Malaysia, then the spending would increase to about RM88,000 per year. All these contributions come directly and indirectly show the benefits that the country reaped from the economic benefits while they are staying in the country (García-Rodríguez & Jiménez, 2015).

Over the years, there seems to be a higher mobility of international students with the exception to year 2011 and 2014 where there is a dip in the number of enrolment of international student (Table 1). Even though, the numbers does indicate that there are more international student's placement in Malaysia tertiary institutions for both private and public universities, yet having more international students do create more responsibilities and expectations for institutions to manage (Chong and Ahmad Mokhtar, 2013). Table 1 also shows the changes of the enrolment for both public and private universities from 2002-2014 (except in the year 2012 and 2013 there are no available data for private universities in Malaysia).

| Table 1 Enrolment of International Students in Malaysian Universities from 2002-2014 | | |
|---|---|---|
| **Year** | **Total Number of Enrolment** | **Changes in %** |
| 2002 | 27,872 | - |
| 2003 | 30,397 | 9.06 |
| 2004 | 31,674 | 4.20 |
| 2005 | 40,525 | 27.94 |
| 2006 | 44,390 | 9.54 |
| 2007 | 47,928 | 7.97 |
| 2008 | 69,164 | 44.31 |
| 2009 | 80,750 | 16.75 |
| 2010 | 86,919 | 7.64 |
| 2011 | 70,509 | -18.88 |
| 2012 | 26,232* | Not applicable |
| 2013 | 81,424 | Not applicable |
| 2014 | 79,122 | -2.83 |
| 2015 | 113,407 | 43.33 |

Remark:*MOHE does not provide the figure for private university. Only consist of public university figure.

**Source:** Higher Education Statistics, retrieved from MOHE

Education coupled with rapid globalization that takes place around the world has changed the landscape of how consumer's demand and behave towards their own living and lifestyle. Due to such demands and changes, more and more people are engaging in travelling. This leads to the rapid growth in world's tourism receipts (UNWTO, 2015). Within the broad sector of tourism, one of the niche areas is educational tourism (edu-tourism). The educational tourism studies (Llewellyn-Smith & McCabe, 2008; García-Rodríguez & Jiménez, 2015) have drawn the link in studying between universities factors and tourist destination factors. An educational tourist is a person that will personally involve in travelling and actively participating in the learning experience available there (Kelly and Brown, 2004). According to Lam, Ariffin & Ahmad (2011), the performance of tourism industry has increase tremendously by combining both tourism and education. This has been well supported by the local Malaysian government due to the economic justification towards the country wealth creation. Thus, this study will helps both the government and respective institutions to set better policies when recruiting the international students into Malaysia. Additionally, they will be able to better target and promote the destination according to what factors that will lure the prospective students when deciding which country and institution to study.

Even though it was well acknowledged that education plays a pivotal role towards tourism sector, yet the combination of these two sectors into research studies is not as overwhelming as it was reflected by lack of studies (Abubakar, Shneikat, & Oday, 2014; García-Rodríguez & Jiménez, 2015) as compared to the main stream studies of destination image in tourism. Furthermore, the quest for knowledge and understanding via travelling will grow in its importance for future research (Falk, Ballantyne, Packer & Benckendorff, 2012). Thus, the purpose of this study is to investigate the determinants that lead the international students in choosing their place to further their tertiary education in terms of both country (destination) and university.

# 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

## 2.1 Theoretical Background

Education tourism is a sector which is intangible in nature and it is risky with high level of uncertainty. It can leads to highly emotional and subjective judgment involved (Abubakar et al., 2014) when a potential student is making decision on deciding where to further their education which can affects their future. Due to such intense decision-making are involved, the birth on the study of consumer behaviour has started since 1960s (Fullerton, 2011) and still found its relevancy till this day. Based on the consumer behaviour model, it involves the study of consumer's action concerning searching, buying, consuming and discarding products or services that meets their needs or wants (Schiffman & Wisenblit, 2015). In terms of the education tourism context, consumer behaviour theory can be applied (Abubakar et al., 2014) since every student will have to search for, purchase and ultimately enroll in the university of their choice.

When they are searching for information, they will be facing with the issue of information overloading both via marketer dominated or non-marketers dominated channel (Blackwell, D'Souza, Taghian, Miniard & Engel, 2007). Marketers dominated information will be the information that supplies by the company via their advertising, materials, websites, salespeople and etc. Non-marketers dominated information, on the other hand, will be channeled through sources such as word-of-mouth communication, internet sources, media, and etc (Blackwell et. al., 2007). Collectively, the information will form a perception on the university and country (destination) image from the student's perspective. Image was found to be a critical factor in the whole process of selecting a destination (Hunt, 1975). García-Rodríguez & Jiménez (2015) basing on the model of Llewellyn-Smith & McCabe (2008) supported that a dual model can be used to link the relationship between international students and tourist destinations where the studies include both tourist destination and university factors. Singh (2016) argued that when student make choices about their destination for further studying, it is aforethought of a two-stage process, where the country is selected first followed by the institution. However, both the choices of the country and institution can also be a separate and independent decision from each other. Due to the high cost involved in the selection, thus, students are becoming more demanding of their choices to ensure better value for money.

## 2.2 Intention to Recommend

Intention to recommend is a type of behavioral intention. Behavioral intention is the likelihood of an individual to continue performing a particular behavior in the future (Ajzen, 1991). Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA) was developed to predict and explain human's behavioral intention (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1980; Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975). TRA uses the behavioral intention to predict the actual behavior by measuring how much effort one is willing to exert by measuring the attitude and subjective norm underlie in the person when performing the behavior (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1980).

Attitude towards the behavior is 'predicted by salient beliefs about a behavior, weighted by the person's estimation of the likelihood that behavior will result in a given outcome' (Thompson & Panayiotopoulos, 1999, p. 90). Subjective norm is predicted by normative beliefs about how others view is important to them which affects the person's motivation to comply to the behavior (Thompson & Panayiotopoulos, 1999).

Loyalty is argued to be important to any managers, academicians and decision-makers due to the general benefits such as higher retention rate, higher spending and likelihood to give positive recommendation to others (Reichheld & Sasser, 1990). Among all the loyalty metrics, Reichheld (2003) recommended that intention to recommend is the best predictor compared to the rest. Intention to recommend or giving word of mouth is defined as the informal communication about the seller and its products/services that targeted at other consumers (Westbrook, 1987). Wholly, it represent whether an individual will recommend the firm/brand/destination to another person.

Word of mouth can be the result of satisfaction or dissatisfaction (Zeelenbeg & Pieters, 2004). Service providers may have assumed that as long as the services provided is satisfactory, customers will provide positive word of mouth (Abubakar & Marondo, 2013) but researchers have suggested that it may not necessarily be most of the time (Gremler, Gwinner & Brown, 2001).

Due to the various exposures of marketer-generated communications, word of mouth is viewed as a highly trusted information service which includes giving recommendation, encouraging purchase and passing along positive comment (Ng, David & Dagger, 2011) compared to the rest. Word of mouth was found to be more important for service providers where their offerings are largely intangible and based on experience or credence-based (Ng et al., 2011). Consumers rely more heavily on advice and suggestions on whom that have experiences with such services (Kinard & Capella, 2006) and are more trustworthy of such communication compared to those from the company (Zeithaml & Bitner, 1996).

Within the context of education tourism, several past studies have shown that there are positive relationship between service quality, perceived value, satisfaction and intention to recommend (Ledden, Kalafatis & Mathioudouis, 2011; Casidy, 2014; Bruce & Edgington, 2008). For instances, using service quality, university image and satisfaction, Jiewanto, Laurens & Nelloh (2012) study found that these constructs have impact on word-of-mouth intention for university students in Surabaya, Indonesia. Where else, within the larger context of tourism, perceived destination image also affects intention to recommend (Chen & Tsai, 2007; Prayag & Ryan, 2012; Zhang, Fu, Chai & Lu, 2014).

## 2.3 Image Conceptualization

The study on image has been divided into various types which includes and not limited to such as brand image, corporate image, destination image and etc. As cited in Alves & Raposo (2010), Kennedy (1977) has distinguished image into two components which comprises of functional and emotional. Functional image relates to the tangible stimuli that can be easily measured where else emotional are linked to psychological conditions that developed in feelings and attitudes. Within the context of tourism, past studies has established the usage of destination image to be represented by subjective terms such as "impression", "perception" or "mental representation" towards a place (San Martín & Rodríguez del Bosque, 2008) due to the difference between reality and it perceived image (Gartner, 1989). As for the university image it can be defined as "the sum of all the beliefs an individual has towards the university" (Raposo, 2010, p.75). However, within the sub-sector of edu-tourism, the adoption of definition used by Canally (2010, p.16) which states that destination image includes "the expression of all objective knowledge, impressions, prejudices, imaginations, and emotional thoughts with which a person or group judges a particular object or place". This definition has covered both the cognitive and affective portion of destination image where the cognitive covers the student's perception of the destination and the university where else the affective portion stems from the emotional thoughts that one has over the place.

### 2.3.1 Perceived Destination (Cognitive) Image

The conceptual framework developed to explore destination image empirically to measure the attitudes of tourists in past literatures were aplenty (Baloglu & McCleary, 1999; Beerli & Martin, 2004; Agapito, Valle, & Mendes, 2013; Basaran, 2016). The study on destination image is not static but it develops over time. Study on destination image using attitudes has long started since Crompton (1979) firstly supported the notion that destination image consists of dual components. The first component is the cognitive dimension which inclines toward the knowledge, belief, or impression that an individual or group might have (Crompton, 1979; Baloglu & McCleary, 1999) toward a place. Affective dimension is the representation of one's emotional feeling towards the place (Baloglu & Brinberg, 1997; Hosany & Gilbert, 2010; Hosany, Prayag, Deesilatham, Causevic & Odeh, 2014). Destination image is thus the collective perceptions of the attributes or attractions available within a destination (Hallman, Zehrer, & Müller, 2015).

Based on Gunn (1972) stage-theory of image development and Stabler's (1988) model, past researchers have supported the importance of developing destination image, yet many factors and vast amount of information available affects the construction of destination image (Echther & Ritchie, 1991; Jeong et al, 2012). Since every destination is unique and special, thus, it is vital to analyze the factors that support the development of a positive image. For instances, studies on different countries destination image such as Austalia (Young, 1999), United Kingdom (Greaves & Skinner, 2010), South Korea (Jeong, Tkachenko & Sil, 2010), and Thailand (Rittichainuwat, Qu & Brown, 2001). Malaysia may have it fair share of past studies conducted in general (Mohamad, Ali & Ab Ghani, 2011; Mohamad, Abdullah & Mokhlis, 2012; Mohamad & Ghani, 2014; Nghiêm-Phú, 2014). Those studies investigated the European and Japanese viewpoint of Malaysia as a tourist destination in terms of its image either towards satisfaction and/or loyalty such as intention to recommend and intention to visit/re-visit. However, it was argued that the cognitive image analysis still lacks of homogeneity and idiosyncratic based on different studies (Lee, Lee & Lee, 2005; Alcañiz, Garcia & Blas, 2009). It was found that intention to recommend to others or the usage of giving word of mouth was greatly affected by the destination image (Chi & Qu, 2008; Prayag & Ryan, 2012, Zhang, et al., 2014; De Nisco, Mainolfi, Marino & Napolitano, 2015). Thus, the following hypothesis was proposed:

**H1:** Perceived destination (cognitive) image has a significant relationship with intention-to-recommend.

Most studies of destination images were conducted from the tourist's perspective (Baloglu, 1887; Prayag, Hosany, Muskat, Del Chiappa, 2017; Prebensen, 2007). Thus, it is needed to conduct studies specifically for the niche sector such as education tourism in terms of their viewpoint of what constitutes the factors that support development of a destination image. This is because García-Rodríguez & Jiménez (2015) found that students generally choose a place to study based on the attractiveness of the destination rather than the university. This however contradict with the findings of Llewellyn-Smith & McCabe (2008), which found that both university image or destination image were not the main reasons why the student chooses that particular destination or university but rather due to other factors.

### 2.3.2 Perceived University Image

As there are various types of studies of images, the university image is viewed as "the sum of all the beliefs an individual has towards the university" (Alves and Raposo, 2010). Rahman, Osmangani, Hassan, Anwar, & Abdel Fattah (2016) put forth that there are substantial amount of gap exists in formation of attitudes toward selection of a destination for education. As image can be formed via both cognitive and affective component, past studies indeed supported this proposition that university image comprises of both cognitive and affective dimensions (Duarte, Alves, & Raposo, 2010; Palacio, Meneses, & Pérez, 2002). Wilkins & Huisman (2013) postulated that university images are distinctive from other type of images, whereby there are a number of issues that affect how these images are formed. They highlight that in the past, universities are viewed to be part of the public good/service which is essential domain for the public (Daviet, 2016) provided without profit for the society but this view has change where many profit-oriented organization has enter the industry to provide education with profit in mind.

Alves & Raposo (2010) found that university image has the most influence on student's satisfaction and loyalty. Ahmad, Buchanan & Ahmad (2016) found that international higher education students in United Arab Emirates (UAE) chooses to study in that country because primarily attracted to the country first while the institutional image came as a secondary criteria for decision-making.

Compared to some past studies conducted in Malaysia, researchers tend to only focus on the institutional experiences alone as their understanding to the international students acceptance of studying in this country. For instances, Malaklolunthu & Selan (2011) found that academic related matters such as administration and facilities of the university are the greatest concern to the international students. They mainly have adjustment problems in terms of the new learning environment and due to the expectations that they formed earlier which are different from what they expected. In fact, language was not found in their study to be primary issues since most of the courses are conducted in English language.

Singh, Schapper, & Jack (2014), they uses the semi-structured qualitative studies based on 33 postgraduate international students enrolled in Malaysia found that it is the pull factor that attracts them here. They compared between the Asian and Middle Eastern students in terms of their reasons for selecting this destination and university. The Middle Eastern students specify three main reasons to travel to Malaysia to see for higher education where it is considered safer and peaceful compared to their own country; sense of similarity between their culture and Malaysia culture, and lastly, the perceived reasonable tuition fees and low cost of living compared to Western counterpart. However, the Asian students perceived differently from the Middle Eastern students about Malaysia whereby it is the close proximity of the university/country to their home country; sense of sharing the same culture and/or languages, and perceived low cost of living compared to Western country and reasonable tuition fees. In addition, the perceived quality of education received in Malaysia and also due to friend's recommendations that generally attracts them to come here. Singh et al., (2014) did however highlight that the quality of the individual institution are also judged to be important criterion in the student's selection but considered secondary compared to the country attractiveness.

In another recent study by Singh (2016), she uses the postgraduate international student in one of the public university in Malaysia via qualitative study of using focus group interview to identify the factors that influence them to study in Malaysia based on socio-economic, environment and personal factors. The socio-economic factors include cost, ranking, reputation, teaching approaches, facilities and duration of the Master program. Environmental factor includes the official religion being a Muslim country, political stability, safety, multicultural, and the usage of English as a medium of communication makes the destination attractive in the eyes of the international students. Lastly, in terms of the personal factors, few factors identified includes due to limited placement in their home country, positive recommendation by others as well as to follow spouse or siblings who are currently attached to the institution in Malaysia.

However, in another study carried out by Chong & Ahmad Mokhtar (2013), they found that language is indeed the biggest barrier that students faced especially for those students when English language is their second or foreign language when studying in Malaysia. Additionally, they also found that there is a gap in terms of their expectations towards the academicians. Students expect that there is a higher level of interaction and involvement from the faculty members in research rather than interaction with students due to the cultural differences of the students themselves.

Even though prior studies have been conducted on the factors that influence international students in their choice of using Malaysia as their destination to further their study, however, higher education does not provide the same experience for everyone (Reay, Davies, David, & Ball, 2001) since it is not a homogeneous market where personal consumption experiences are involved. Thus, it is unlikely that a single list of factors or short-list of factors will be able to provide a definite answer as to why students choose a place (Hemsley-Brown & Oplatka, 2015). Hence, the

usage of samples from single institutions may create biases towards the specific strength of the institution where the study was carried out. Likewise, studies from a single country may not provide insights into the selection of a university for that country provided a wide range of institutions has been used in the sample (Hemsley-Brown & Oplatka, 2015). There are still underexplored areas in term of the student's choice since it is unstable but changes over time thus it is necessary to provide insights in order to keep up-to-date with the latest development.

Ali, Zhou, Hussain, Nair, & Ragavan (2016) examined foreign student's satisfaction in Malaysia using service quality, perception of institutional image and loyalty. Indeed, they found that the dimensions of higher education service quality does influence student's satisfaction which in turn will leads to positively influencing the institutional image and their loyalty. Jiewanto et al. (2012) and Alves & Raposo (2010) similarly found that university image will positively influence the student's intention to recommend. Thus, it was posited that:

**H2:** Perceived university image has a significant relationship with intention-to-recommend.

### 2.3.3 Emotion

Affective in general has a wider context in comparison to specific feelings, emotions or mood (Hosany & Gilbert, 2010). Emotions are more suitable in this context for the purpose of study due to its coherent characteristics (Cohen & Areni, 1991) compared to the other types of affective phenomena (Scherer & Peper, 2001). Emotion is treated as the "*mental state of readiness that arises from cognitive appraisals of events or thoughts; coupled with physiological processes; and may result in specific actions to affirm or cope with the emotions*" (Bagozzi, Gopinath, & Nyer, 1999, p. 184).

White (2010) argued that it can be of little value to know how consumers feel if there are no relationship to any context or outcome. Thus, emotions have been investigated with relation to different outcomes in marketing such as consumption experiences, customer satisfaction and loyalty (Huang, 2001; Hirschman & Stern, 1999; Walsh et al., 2011, White, 2010). Dube-Rioux (1990) studies shows that affective dimension have more predictive power than cognitive dimension. Additionally, emotion is also being tested as a mediator in various past studies (Ding & Tseng, 2015; DeWitt, Nguyen & Marshall, 2008; Gracia, Bakker & Grau, 2011).

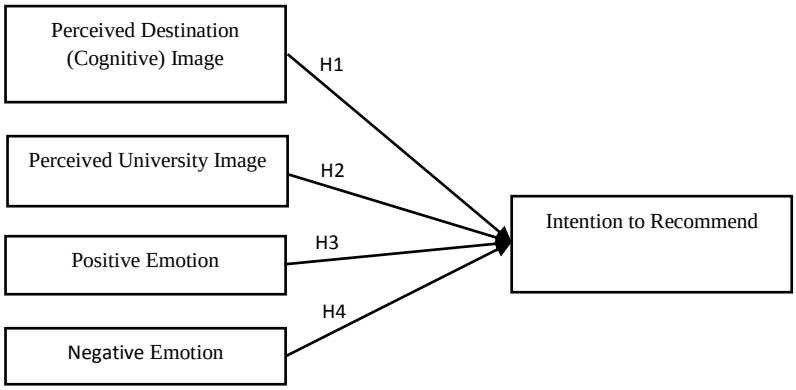
Education tourism being part of the service sector, Bitner (1992) suggests that emotions represent a more significant role in the service industry due to its intangibility characteristics compared to tangible product. Within the context of tourism industry, Hosany and Prayag (2013) uses different emotional responses to group the tourists into diverse grouping and established that the different grouping have distinctive emotional outcomes which affect their satisfaction and intention to recommend. They found that '*delighted'* group of tourists which highly comprises of positive emotions have higher intention to recommend and vice-versa the '*negatives'* which comprises of highly negative emotions group have lowest intention to recommend. Han & Back (2008) did a study based on the hotel industry and found that both positive and negative consumption emotions affect the satisfaction and intention to revisit. They further commented that negative emotions seems to have greater impact compared to positive emotion on both the customer's satisfaction and revisit intention. Hosany et al. (2014) further supported that positive emotions are highly related to the propensity to recommend the destination. Hence the following hypotheses were proposed:

**H3:** Positive emotion has a positive impact on intention-to-recommend.

**H4:** Negative emotion has a negative impact on intention-to-recommend.

Based on the literatures proposed, Figure 1 presents the proposed framework and hypotheses for the study.

**Figure 1: Study Framework and Hypotheses**



## 3. METHODOLOGY

The study uses quantitative research method where respondents from both public and private higher education institutions in Malaysia were surveyed to find out their reasons for choosing Malaysia as the place for their tertiary education. The sample was selected based on random sampling among the international students in private versus public higher education institutions. There are 245 samples that were collected for the purpose of this study. The questionnaire was adapted from various sources such as Mohamad & Ab Ghani (2014) and Palacio, Meneses & Pérez (2002) for university and destination image. Respondents rate their level of agreement or disagreement on the items using a 5-point Likert Scale from the scale of 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). The positive and negative emotion destination scale was adopted from Hosany & Prayag (2013). Respondents rate the emotional scale uses a 5-point scale which indicates 1 (not at all) to 5 (very much). Reliability is tested using Cronbach Alpha to determine the reliability of the items adapted from the various sources. According to Nunnally (1978), Cronbach Alpha should be higher than 0.7 for the items internal consistency to be considered acceptable and good to measure what the items intend to measure. Content validity was determined via the distribution of panel experts of between 3-10 experts (Rubio, Berg-Weger, Tebb, Lee & Rauch, 2003).

## 4. RESULTS

The profiles of the respondents were shown in Table 2. There are quite equal numbers of respondents from both gender of male (50.2%) and female (49.8%). The study were collected randomly there are 12.2% of them are from pure science and 87.8% from social sciences. Out of the 245 samples, only 88 were from public universities and the rest of 157 were from private universities. Majority of them were from undergraduate (77.6%) and the rest were students undertaking postgraduate studies (22.4%).

**Table 2: Profile of the Respondents**

| Item | Frequency (n=245) | % |
|---|---|---|
| Gender | | |
| Male | 123 | 50.2 |
| Female | 122 | 49.8 |
| Field of Study | | |
| Pure Science | 30 | 12.2 |
| Social Science | 215 | 87.8 |
| Year of Study | | |
| Year 1 | 64 | 26.1 |
| Year 2 | 40 | 16.3 |
| Year 3 | 119 | 48.6 |
| Year 4 | 22 | 9.0 |
| Status | | |
| Undergraduate | 190 | 77.6 |
| Postgraduate | 55 | 22.4 |
| University | | |
| Private | 157 | 64.1 |
| Public | 88 | 35.9 |

The reliability of the study (as shown in Table 3) were calculated using Cronbach's Alpha and all the constructs shows to have internal consistency where the value are higher than 0.80 (Nunnally, 1978).

**Table 3: Reliability Testing for the Constructs**

| Item | Number of Items | Cronbach Alpha |
|---|---|---|
| Perceived Destination Cognitive Image | 10 | 0.86 |
| Perceived Institution Image | 22 | 0.915 |
| Positive Emotion | 15 | 0.944 |
| Negative Emotion | 5 | 0.922 |

Table 4 shows that intention to recommend can be explained by these four variables which represented by 43.7%. The F-value of 48.325 with a p-value of less than 0.001 indicates that the model is fit to be used to explain intention to recommend.

**Table 4: Model Summary Of The Factors Influencing Intention To Recommend**

| R | $R^2$ | Adjusted $R^2$ | Std Error of the Estimate | F | Sig (p-value) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 0.668 | 0.446 | 0.437 | 0.52857 | 48.325 | 0.000 |
| Predictors: (Constant), Mean_EMO_NEG, Mean_PDI_INST, Mean_EMO_POS, Mean_PDI_C | | | | | |

Table 5 shows the coefficient results between the independent variables on the dependent variables. H1 proposes that there is a positive relationship between perceived destination (cognitive) image and intention to recommend. The result shows that H1 was not supported where t=0.399, p>0.05. However, H2, H3 and H4 are supported where perceived university image (t=6.86, p<0.001), positive emotion (t=7.199, p<0.001) and negative emotion (t=-2.584, p<0.05) are linked to intention to recommend.

**Table 5: Coefficient Results of the Influence Of Independent Variable on Intention to Recommend**

| Variables | Unstandardized coefficients | | Standardized coefficients | | | Collinearity statistics | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Beta | Std error | Beta | t | Sig | Tolerance | VIF |
| Constant | 0.258 | 0.254 | | 1.015 | 0.311 | | |
| Perceived Destination (Cognitive) Image | 0.031 | 0.077 | 0.024 | 0.399 | 0.690 | 0.621 | 1.611 |
| Perceived University Image | 0.549 | 0.080 | 0.399 | 6.860 | 0.000 | 0.682 | 1.466 |
| Positive Emotion | 0.437 | 0.061 | 0.425 | 7.199 | 0.000 | 0.661 | 1.512 |
| Negative Emotion | -0.108 | 0.042 | -0.137 | -2.584 | 0.01 | 0.824 | 1.214 |

# 5. DISCUSSIONS, IMPLICATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

## 5.1 Theoretical and Practical Implications

Various studies have called for the development of a more integrative model in general tourism area (del Bosque and San Martin 2008; Chen and Phou 2013). Yet, other niche area such as education tourism has yet to receive such emphasis which led to the development of this research study. Emotion-based studies have grown its importance over years especially in the field of tourism as the emphasis given by the researchers led by Hosany and his team. As such, the result of this study have shown that cognitive do not directly impact behavioral intention but affective impact behavioral intention directly which was also supported by the study done by Chiu, Zeng & Cheng (2016). Lin, Morais, Kerstetter and Hou (2007) argued that there are instances where when different type of destination is in question; the effect of cognitive and affective images may be altered accordingly depending on the destination. Thus, this study has contributed theoretically towards the study in the education tourism sector whereby it indicates that students will recommend a destination for further education is basing on the university image and both the positive and negative emotion formed-image of the destination and country. This study supports Hosany & Prayag's (2013) study that those experiencing positive emotion tends to have higher intensity to recommend comparing to those who are enduring negative emotions who are unlikely to provide positive word-of-mouth. Similarly, Palmer & Koenig-Lewis (2015) found that those with positive emotions are more likely to recommend than those with negative emotions especially for high involvement types of services.

As for the study of university image similarly needs to be given greater attention (Aghaz, Hashemi & Sharifi Atashgah, 2015). Hence, in the current study it indicates that university image does play an important role in affecting the student's intention to recommend the place to others. This was supported by the studies by Nguyen & LeBlanc (2001) and Alves & Raposo (2010) but contradicts Singh et al. (2014) and Ahmad et al. (2016) studies where emphasis were given to country's attractiveness. Hence, this indicates that there are still inconsistent result on the importance of one's destination attractiveness when selecting destination for further education.

From the practical viewpoint, this study shows that institutional marketers need to provide a more specific university image when promoting and marketing their specific institutions to increase the students' enrolment. In addition, the marketing campaign carried out should also emphasize on the student's positive emotional experiences which can be evoked via the advertising appeal as well as the usage of testimonials. Prayag et al. (2017) also supports that advertising messages that contains emotional appeals tends to be more effective in influencing ones' decision-making.

## 5.2 Limitations and Recommendations for Future Research

To some extent, the generalization of the study is not without its limitations. Firstly, the study examines the relationship of the behavioral of international students in giving word-of-mouth recommendation using only few constructs. Thus, expansion of the model for future research could include other relevant variables such as destination personality, motivations, and the student's cultural values. Secondly, the future study is suggested to increase the number of data collection since the number collected is still limited and small for generalization purposes. Lastly, as the study only involve cross-sectional study with a specific group of respondents; this snapshot design may result in different results when other time frame was chosen with another group of respondents.

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