

SOCIAL MEDIA USAGE, EXPECTANCY DISCONFIRMATION ELEMENTS  
AND UNIVERSITY REPUTATION

ASMARA IRFAN

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## **DEDICATION**

I dedicated this thesis to my parents and family for their continuous prayers,  
support and encouragement.

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## **ABSTRACT**

Malaysia is an educational hub and has an aim to attract 250,000 international students by 2025. However, increasing the enrolment of international students by itself is insufficient to compete with the international market. Universities also have to maintain their university reputation as this factor plays an important role to attract and retain students. To maintain university reputation, universities must provide good services and maintain a good relationship with the students. The advent of social media brings a drastic change in marketing strategies. This study has explored the usage of social media and application of expectancy disconfirmation elements on university reputation. Social media helps to create the expectations of students about foreign universities. Students make some perception about the selected foreign university and this perception may be positive or negative. If the students remain satisfied with the services provided by the university, there will be a chance of positive university reputation are created by the students. The population of the study was international postgraduate students of five public research universities of Malaysia. This research used the quantitative method with cross-sectional research design and have applied proportionate sampling technique to collect data from 320 international postgraduate students from public research universities of Malaysia. The Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) was utilized for data screening while the final analysis used Smart PLS for Structural Equation Modelling (SEM). The findings of the study indicated that there is a positive relationship between social media usage, student expectations, university performance, student satisfaction, student loyalty and university reputation. This study also proved that student loyalty mediates student satisfaction and university reputation. The current study contributed to the body of knowledge by enhancing literature of EDT and SOR by corroborating these theories with respect to the relationship between social media usage, expectancy disconfirmation elements and university reputation. Practically, this study helps policy makers of universities to promote international education by building student's trust in their institutions. The results of this study suggest that university management should provide better services to students in order to maintain positive university reputation.

## ABSTRAK

Malaysia adalah pusat pendidikan dan mempunyai tujuan untuk menarik 250,000 pelajar antarabangsa menjelang 2025. Walau bagaimanapun, peningkatan kemasukan pelajar antarabangsa dengan sendirinya tidak mencukupi untuk bersaing dengan pasaran antarabangsa. Universiti juga harus menjaga reputasi universiti kerana faktor ini memainkan peranan penting untuk menarik dan mengekalkan pelajar. Untuk menjaga reputasi universiti, universiti mesti memberikan perkhidmatan yang baik dan menjaga hubungan baik dengan para pelajar. Munculnya media sosial membawa perubahan drastik dalam strategi pemasaran. Kajian ini telah meneroka penggunaan media sosial dan penerapan elemen penafsiran harapan terhadap reputasi universiti. Media sosial membantu mewujudkan harapan pelajar mengenai universiti asing. Pelajar membuat sedikit persepsi mengenai universiti asing yang dipilih dan persepsi ini mungkin positif atau negatif. Sekiranya para pelajar tetap berpuas hati dengan perkhidmatan yang diberikan oleh universiti, ada kemungkinan reputasi universiti yang positif akan diciptakan oleh para pelajar. Populasi kajian adalah pelajar pascasiswazah antarabangsa dari lima universiti penyelidikan awam di Malaysia. Penyelidikan ini menggunakan kaedah kuantitatif dengan reka bentuk penyelidikan keratan rentas dan telah menggunakan teknik persampelan berkadar untuk mengumpulkan data daripada 320 pelajar pascasiswazah antarabangsa dari universiti penyelidikan awam Malaysia. Pakej Statistik untuk Sains Sosial (SPSS) digunakan untuk penyaringan data sementara analisis akhir menggunakan Smart PLS untuk Pemodelan Persamaan Struktur (SEM). Hasil kajian menunjukkan bahawa terdapat hubungan positif antara penggunaan media sosial, harapan pelajar, prestasi universiti, kepuasan pelajar, kesetiaan pelajar dan reputasi universiti. Kajian ini juga membuktikan bahawa kesetiaan pelajar menjadi perantara kepuasan pelajar dan reputasi universiti. Kajian semasa menyumbang kepada pengetahuan yang banyak dengan meningkatkan literatur EDT dan SOR dengan mengesahkan teori-teori ini berkenaan dengan hubungan antara penggunaan media sosial, elemen penegasan harapan dan reputasi universiti. Secara praktikal, kajian ini membantu pembuat dasar universiti untuk mempromosikan pendidikan antarabangsa dengan membina kepercayaan pelajar terhadap institusi mereka. Hasil kajian ini menunjukkan bahawa pihak pengurusan universiti harus memberikan perkhidmatan yang lebih baik kepada pelajar untuk menjaga reputasi universiti yang positif.

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# CHAPTER 1

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Background of the study

The main purpose of higher education (HE) throughout the world is to internationalize their higher education institutions (HEIs), for this purpose Higher education (HE) and government of different countries are working on producing marketable graduates and adjust more and more international students and also promotes innovation through research and development (Tham and Kam, 2008). Significantly, the internationalization of HE means to reach the point where top universities become more competitive at a global level (Hou, 2014). Internationalization of HEI is a process in which HEIs try to improve the quality of teaching and learning and to get the desired capabilities (Knight, 2004).

Furthermore, through internationalization, universities can boost up their reputation, increase knowledge efficiency of students and staff and generate financial revenues. The Malaysian government also wishes to internationalize their HEIs, for this purpose government of Malaysia announced their National Higher Education Strategic Plan 2007 to attract more and more international students (Shahijan, Rezaei and Guptan, 2018). In 2014, Canada announced plans to double international enrolment in the next decade while Japan is targeting 300,000 international students by 2020; Therefore, reputation is supposed to compare organizations and helps in explaining variability in their performance.

Similarly, reputation helps to distinguish universities from their competitors reduces information asymmetry and students' uncertainty. Moreover, reputation has been connected to organizational performance (Fombrun and Shanley, 1990; Shamsie, 2003). By itself, reputation seems to be an important element in understanding and comparing different universities (Hitt, Boydand Li, 2004). The research by Rindova,

Williamson, Petkova and Sever (2005) offers new visions and understanding of how reputation may contribute to value creation. In their study, they have proposed two dimensions of reputation with their antecedents and performance implications. These two dimensions of reputation are perceived quality and market prominence. Overall, they believe that according to some stakeholders, reputation is related to how firms provided quality goods and services, while other stakeholders believe that reputation is firms external fame. However, Rindova et al. definition of a reputation as “stakeholders’ perceptions about an organization’s abilities to create value relative to competitors” conceptualizing reputation and linking it to performance (Boyd, Berghand & Ketchen, 2010).

On international aspect different countries wish to attract more and more international students. China’s target is from 200,000 to 500,000 international higher education students by 2020. In Malaysia, the country goal is to attract 200,000 international students up from 90,000 currently by 2020 (Ministry of Higher Education, 2013). HEIs must be considered student satisfaction as their priority due to the intense competition among universities, higher expectations of students from universities and because an international student is an important source of skilled migration (Ling, Chai and Piew, 2010). Moreover, if students are satisfied there will be a good effect. The university must consider student satisfaction on regular bases by conducting survey that can help university to know the areas which needs improvement. Giving importance to student’s needs and try to solve student’s problem will lead to more competitiveness and generate more revenues and improve university ranking internationally (Hasan & Masri, 2015).

Many universities are competing with each other by presenting their brand image as students now only influenced by “what they see is what they get”. Services provided by the universities are the main source of student satisfaction. Moreover, university performance is positively related to student satisfaction and their continuance intention (Hanaysha, Abdullah and Warokka, 2011). For student satisfaction, knowledge of the total experience of students at the campus is very much important to the interaction between service providers and international student’s satisfaction is vital to look (Yee, Yean, Yi and Kam, 2018).

Many universities are using social media to attract and communicate directly with their target audience. Social media marketing tools are used to directly communicate with their audience, which is significantly changed from traditional media (Reuben, 2011; Dragseth, 2019). Mattson and Barnes (2011) explained that universities are using social media to attract more and more students, share news and information about the university services, admission, events and at the same time raising publicity for their university. Social networking sites can help students to make decisions about these universities as social media provides a platform for students to take information about these universities and also connect with other students in these universities (Almadhoun, Dominic, and Woon, 2011; Lee, Nguyen, Lee, Chua and Han, 2018). Students find social media information as more trustworthy than traditional media (Christodoulides et al. 2013).

Universities are using social media as an advertising tool that shapes the two-way communication between students and universities and reach the target audience in a short period of time with low cost. The most visited online social network is Facebook, founded in 2004 with 2.19 billion monthly users and growing day by day (Mintel 2018; Chaffey 2018). Facebook is a platform that allows people to connect with their friends and family. As with the passage of time, Facebook users are increasing, so this personal platform is also used by HEIs as a digital marketing platform. Universities can use social media to increase the enrolment of students; enrolment of students can be increased through information sharing, personal recommendation by other students and positive word of mouth about university services by other students (Boardman, 2019; Aslam, Farhat and Arif, 2019; Le, Dobele and Robinson, 2019). Student makes use of university Facebook pages when selecting a university by checking the reviews of students about university services (Wong, Lee and Ng, 2018; Le et al., 2019).

Malaysia is a knowledge-based economy that sells quality education and services to both local and international students, which is motivated by knowledge creation, innovation and commercialization. In 2012, Malaysia was the world's top 11th biggest education service providers with more than 80,000 international students. In order to maintain its position, Malaysia also has the aim to attract 250,000



international students by the year 2025. The increased use of social media serves as a great opportunity for universities to reach potential international students and engage with its current international students in a cost-effective manner.

HEIs can be regarded as a business service industry which starts to focus more on meeting the demands of students. In this research, social media was studied in three ways one for information sharing; second for giving reviews by students; and third the response of university management on such reviews on social media. This research investigated the usage of social media by international students and how university satisfies students in order to manage their reputation in the long run. Despite with the increasing importance of internationalization of HEIs, limited research has been done on the overall satisfaction of international students especially in the Malaysian public universities perspective (Shekarchizadeh, Rasli and Hon-Tat, 2011).

## **1.2 Social Media Usage**

Many companies enhance their brands using social media. In the same way, universities launched their brand pages on Social Media to enhance their image. Many universities communicate with their students on university social media. Social media marketing is a very beneficial idea to market the higher education; previous research has shown the importance of social media marketing for universities (Duesterhaus, 2015; Bélanger, Baliand Longden, 2014; Constantinides & Zinck Stagno, 2011; Kuzma and Wright, 2013). Knowledge of social media marketing is very important for university marketing managers.

Moreover, some universities have the highest number of fans and some universities receive very little feedback from their users; this is because of the lack of knowledge in the field of social media marketing in higher education. This lack of knowledge will affect the performance of university brand pages (Kuzma and Wright, 2013). In this research, main focus is given to University Facebook pages, as it is the most used social media platforms by universities. Initially Facebook was used to provide a network for Harvard students, afterwards; it was opened for the general

public. In 2015, Facebook had more than 1.4 billion active users (Kosinski, Gosling, Popov and Stillwell, 2015).

University social media pages provides an opportunity for the students to have a dialogue with the university management and with other students (Ashley and Tuten, 2015). University social media pages can be used as an effective tool in attracting new students. University social media pages can help students in their decision to select a university. Many universities manage different Facebook pages, such as an alumni Facebook page, parents' page, and sports teams' page. To communicate with the student's, university prospectus and university websites are less effective; for this social media helps the organizations to communicate with the students (Dragseth, 2019). Malaysia social networking activity has exhibited a high level of engagement. Many Malaysian universities like Universiti Teknologi Malaysia (UTM), University of Malaya (UM), Universiti Sains Malaysia (USM) are using social media marketing tool to reach the target audience (Al-Rahmi, Alias, Othman, Marinand Tur, 2018). To make social media marketing successful, institutions must know what kind of information student's wants to know and how they can get such information.

Social media marketing allows universities to make their own Facebook pages, Twitter account, and online forums to attract more and more students with low cost and widespread advertisement opportunity. Students can also share their views and ideas on university student blogs (Duffy& Bruns, 2006). Kang, Tang and Fiore (2014) found a positive relationship between the number of students who visited the university page and their liking to apply for the same university. According to Constantinides & Stagno (2013) the number of students to any university will be increased as early as the advertisement for the university reaches the maximum number of students. Social media will be effective and beneficial for the university if the student gets all the information in a click rather than follow the traditional method of collecting information regarding the university. Universities use social media for two main purposes first to guide students in each step of their journey at the university. Secondly, universities build a relationship with students through social media. The relationship between students and university will be stronger and long-lasting if the university pays attention and answer every feedback of students on social media. Neglecting student's

comments will put university reputation at stake (Brech, Messer, Vander Schee, Rauschnabel and Ivens, 2017).

### **1.3 Problem Statement**

From business point of view corporate reputation can be defined as overall assessment of the level to which an organization is significantly good or bad (Fombrun, 2000). In an educational setting, characterised by an increased marketization, reputation of university, built upon strong relationship between student and university based on quality services, which become an important factor in defining institutional competitiveness and position of university in the market (Heffernan, Wilkins & Butt, 2018). Furthermore, university reputation has been shown to influence student loyalty and satisfaction (Su et al, 2016). HEIs are tasked to provide quality services in competition with their competitors to achieve competitive edge in the educational market. To optimize reputation, HEIs develops social media pages (Hollebeek, 2015). Positive reputation of university will be created by loyal students on social media that will effect student enrolment (Brodle et al, 2016).

Reputation is concerned with the question “what do stakeholders actually think of an organization?” Previous literature studies reputation with different variables such as positive influence of internationalization on university reputation, formulation of university reputation on the bases of ranking, effect of reputation on student enrollment and trust of students (Bowman and Bastedo, 2011; Delgado-Marquez et al, 2013). However, no research has been studied on reputation which is made by students on social media after experiencing university services (Lafuente-Ruiz-de-Sabando, Zorrilla & Forcada, 2018). Many studies on social media in the HE sector have shown that the primary focus of these researches was on identifying the educational value of social media in helping to learn and supporting teaching practices (Ngai, Tao and Moon, 2015; Barn, 2016; Dabbagh and Kitsantas, 2012; Neier and Zayer, 2015; Nel, 2015). However, little research has examined the importance of Social Media marketing for higher education (Brech *et al.*, 2017).

The success of Higher education lies in managing its reputation and marketing of higher education institutions (HEIs). Although marketization is not new to the HE context, the rise of social media is rapidly changing how organizations go about with their daily marketing. Reputation risk is one of the important business activities in this competitive world and all educational institutions must deal it efficiently. Due to the existence of social media, reputation risk has expanded and become more dynamic. Therefore, it should be the priority of HEIs to manage reputation. The consequences of social media could affect the activities of an organization; and its stakeholder's trust and expectations. It is important for an educational institution to be attentive to what the stakeholders mention the institution on social media. The stakeholders, especially students, are expecting the truth about the organization, such as transparency and consistency (Othman and Isa, 2017).

By the findings of Sultana, Shahriar, Akter and Rahman (2018) Facebook from the perspective of organization is a cost effective source as it is easy and free of cost to make an account on social networking sites; to achieve marketing and branding goals at a very low-cost HEIs must take advantage of social media marketing. The universities can reach millions of students quickly. One of the benefits of using social media as a marketing platform is that students can communicate with university management and with other students studying in that university. When university markets through a social media service, it has the opportunity to influence the decision of students to take admission in that particular university. Students, when deciding about the university, look for the factors like academic reputation of university, academic reputation of professors, world ranking of university, services available for students. University, through its social media marketing, tries to boost up their positive image in the minds of the students. If students are satisfied with the information provided by the universities, they create some expectations about universities (Duffet, 2015).

Moreover, students may develop unrealistically high expectations or low expectations about university services. However, students expectations are developed through university social media marketing, but there may be a mismatch between students' expectations and the realities of university services (James, 2002; Hansson,

Wrangmoand Solberg, 2013). In order to manage and satisfy students' needs and wants, Higher education institution must be in a position to understand student's expectation as new students always have unrealistic expectations of the university experience. The perceived quality of the university service depends on students' expectations and values (Voss, Gruberand Szmigin, 2007). The universities, which understands the importance of reputation and its management always give importance to students expectations and try to improve their services according to their students demand (Shahijan et al., 2018).

As the environment of higher education experiences different changes such as changes in student fees structure, changes in the total number of students, changes in the marketing of higher education at large scale and considering students as customers (Scullion and Molesworth, 2016; Tomlinson, 2015). Such kind of changes in the higher education environment forced HEIs to attract more and more students by offering something different from other universities (Chapleo, 2007; Gai, Xu and Pelton, 2016). Students have many sources to take information about universities and have many choices to select a university as each university promising to serve better. To take competitive advantage from marketing opportunities and wish to manage its reputation in the long-run, universities must understand the importance of student's conversation about their university, which depicts true stories and pictures of student's relationship with their university (Gai et al., 2016; Tomlinson, 2015; Bolatand O'Sullivan, 2017).

As the number of HEIs is increasing day by day, universities are facing extreme competition in attracting more and more students to take admission and pursue their education at the university. Different Asian countries like Malaysia, Singapore, China, Hong Kong, Dubai, Qatar, and Japan, are trying to enhance and boost up their internationalization strategies to attract international students to their countries (Bhandari and Blumenthal, 2011). Malaysia promotes itself as a hub of international education and every year there is an increase in the number of international students which shows the success of internationalization of higher education in Malaysia. However, only to attract the highest number of international students through social

media is not a success. Universities also need to understand and solve issues related to students (Nachatar Singh, 2018).

As like in any business, success or growth of the business is related to customer satisfaction, similarly in higher education, universities success is related to its student's satisfaction. A satisfied student is the main cause of university success and its positive image. A satisfied student can contribute to its university success by promoting positive word of mouth, give recommendations about university and financially support their university (Katircioglu, Mehtap-Smadi, Kiliç and Ünlücan, 2012; Yee et al. 2018). Past literature showed that majority of the work on satisfaction is done in the business sector (Athanasopoulou, Giovanisand Binioris, 2014; Aga, Mehmet and Safakli, 2007). However, little attention has given to international student's overall satisfaction, especially in the Malaysian public university perspective (Zani, Ahmad, Mericanand Ahmad, 2011). A future call by Ibrahim, Rahman & Yasin (2014), on international student's overall satisfaction and its relationship with service quality, reputation management using a quantitative approach (Hasan et al., 2015).

Student satisfaction is highly related to the service quality provided by the service organizations and it is an important feature in determining the performance of universities (Leeand Hwan, 2005). Service quality is the determinant that helps the universities to attract new students and keep a long-lasting relationship with students and it plays its role in enhancing competitiveness (Gallifa and Batalle, 2010). Only to provide services is not enough, quality of such services also shows the credibility of universities. Students are happy with the university services if it exceeds or meets their expectations, so it is necessary for HEIs to enhance their service quality in order to meet student's expectations and needs (Hanaysha et al., 2011).

International students, when selecting a university for their further study, they create some expectations regarding the service quality provided by the university, such expectation to receive service quality evaluates the international student's satisfaction level. The problem faced by international students in UTM is there is no hostel mess for international students. It is very difficult for international students to find international food during Ramadan and Eid holidays, services and maintenance at

family housing is not up to the mark. International students in UPM feels that the insurance is beyond the range of international students; in UM many international students do not like the university culture as it is not as friendly as they expect and the visa renewal process is quite lengthy in almost all public universities of Malaysia. However, Malaysian public higher education institutions ignored to measure the international postgraduate students' total experience in Malaysia for reputation management in the long run (Shahijan *et al.*, 2018; Doña Toledo & Luque Martínez, 2018).

Moreover, one of the factors of student satisfaction is the university image and reputation. The image of the university is the brand name of the university gives international recognition of their degrees and respect in their home country. According to Temizer and Turkyilmaz (2012) image of an institution is influenced by its university ranking and is positively related to student satisfaction and loyalty. He added that the university's image could be eased if the institution shows effort in constant improvement. However, the image of the university, ranking, increased enrolment every year cannot save or maintain the reputation of the university in the long run as actual services offered to students shows the actual reputation of the university. One negative feedback about the university by a student will damage the reputation of the university (Szwajca, 2017).

Another factor for student satisfaction is perceived value. Perceived value is the "perceived level of service quality relative to the price paid by students" (Temizer & Turkyilmaz, 2012). If an educational institution wants to survive and flourish, it must give importance to student satisfaction. Universities compete to provide high-quality international student experience. Students who are satisfied with the university services will also be willing to show their loyalty towards their university to others. This means satisfied students play a major role in university success and growth. A satisfied student will show loyalty towards university, promote positive word of mouth, financially supports and recommend their university to others (Arambewela, 2006).

In any service industry to reduce the effects of unsatisfactory services, it is very much important for organizations to build stable long-term relationships with customers (Olavarría-Jaraba, Cambra-Fierro, Centeno & Vázquez-Carrasco, 2018). Similarly stable long-term relationship with students is very much important for the success of HEIs. As the main source of income for HEIs are student fees therefore, it is very much important for HEIs to retain and get loyalty of students (Bañegil-Palacios & Sánchez-Hernández, 2018). A loyal student will participate in different research activities and always spread positive WOM and recommendation about its university during and after its study. After graduation a loyal student may continue to financially support its institution., student's feedback about the university services and their total campus experience has considered important for the delivery of services to international students (Shahijan et al., 2018).

While students can help in the promotion of positive comments, they can also post negative comments. Many students criticize university services on the universities' Facebook pages when they are dissatisfied with services (Seung-A, 2012). This negative and public feedback can harm a university's reputation (Palmer and Koenig-Lewis, 2009). If universities want to manage its reputation, universities must answer to these complaints rather delete these negative comments otherwise students feel that university is not serious about solving student's problems (Champoux et al., 2012). However, organizations usually shut down their social media pages for a short period when they receive a large number of negative comments. According to Dekay (2012), universities must not delete negative comments. Instead, they must respond to these comments as students are very sensitive towards the university attitude towards their criticism. The positive response by university enhances its credibility (Hansson et al., 2013).

One of the problems with international students at Malaysian public universities is the dissatisfaction with the services of universities. Several empirical studies show that service quality is the antecedent of student satisfaction (Ismail & Abdullah, 2018; Farooq, Salam, Fayolle, Jaafar & Ayupp, 2018; Khalil, Ragheb, Ragab& Elsamadicy, 2018; Mensah & Dei Mensah, 2018; Dubey & Sahu, 2019). Universities should not only use social media for marketing purpose but also to



establish a strong relationship with students. Students use social media to keep in touch with the world. Students like to comment, share their thoughts, feelings, emotions, everything on social media. Students will not defend university reputation on university profile, university by itself has to be active on the social media platform to defend and maintain reputation. University has to answer every misunderstanding in the minds of the students. International students in Malaysia post on student blogs and university social media pages about their bad experience in the university. Some of the examples of such bad reviews are shown in Figure 1.1.

However, Malaysian universities do not answer the posts; rather, these posts are deleted immediately from these pages, so other people only know about the positive activities of the university (Stevens, Spaid, Breazeale & Jones, 2018). If Malaysian universities give importance to students' negative feedback, then these types of posts will not be deleted rather university personally remove the misunderstandings in the minds of students and try to solve student's issues. Little research has been conducted on the question of postgraduate student's behavioral use of social media. The purpose of this research is to identify the use of social media by public sector universities for marketing purpose, and use of social media by postgraduate students to share their experiences at foreign university need to be further addressed (Martin & Hatik, 2018).



Figure 1.1(a) Screen Shot of Student Review

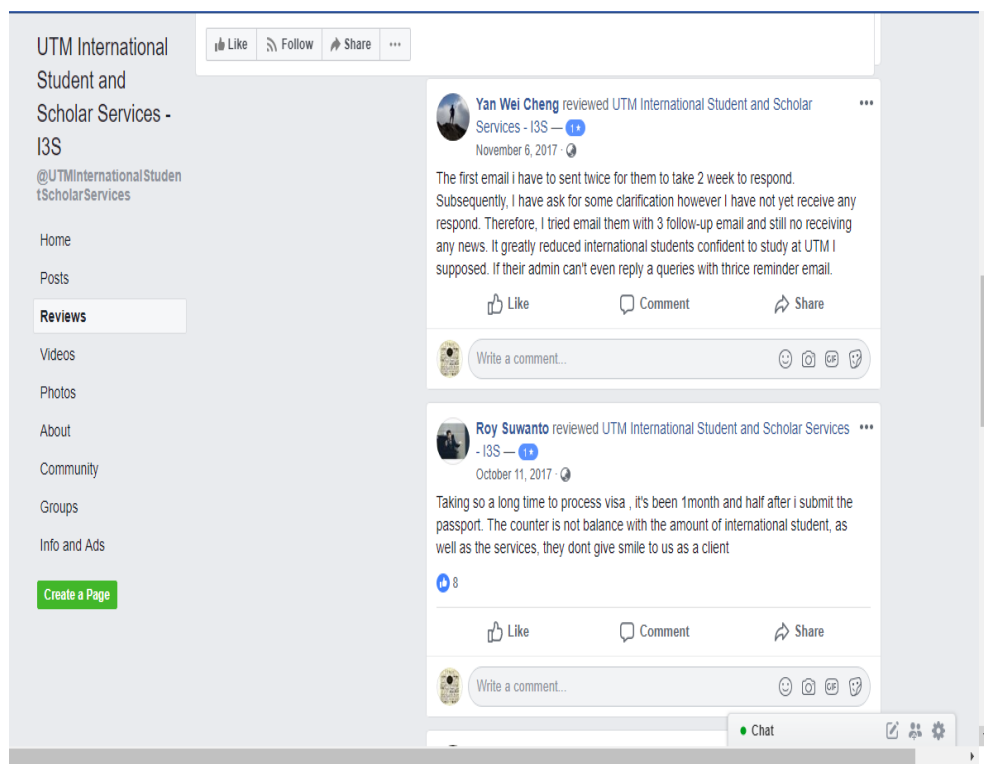


Figure 1.1(b) Screen Shot of Student Review

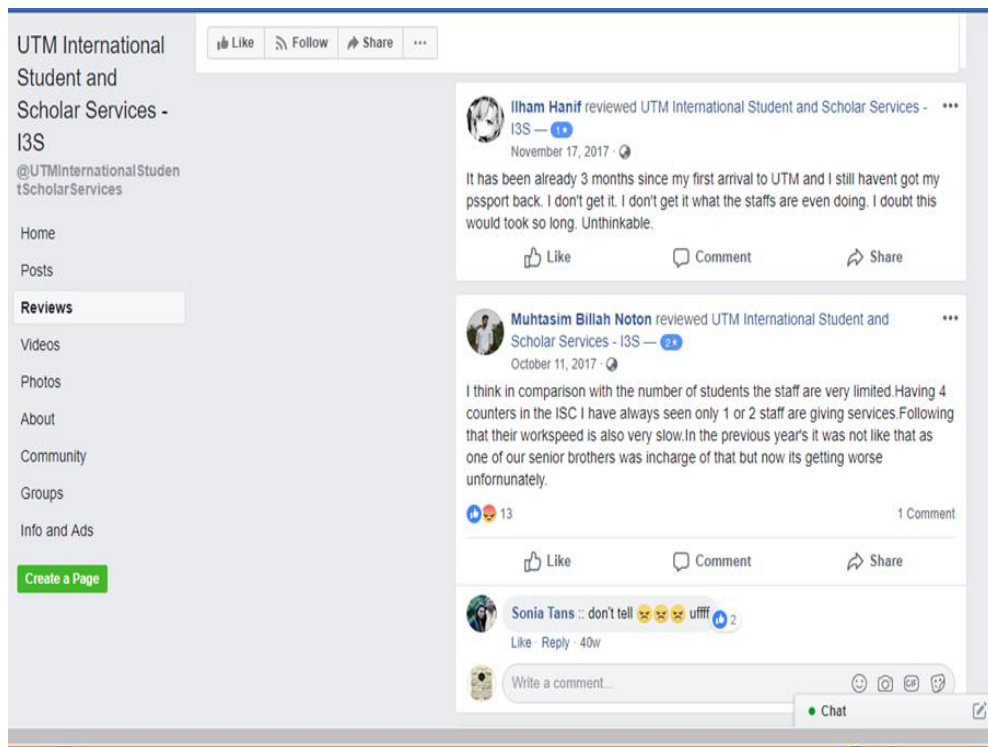


Figure 1.1(c) Screen Shot of Student Review



Figure 1.1(d) Screen Shot of Student Review



Figure 1.1(e) Screen Shots of Student Reviews

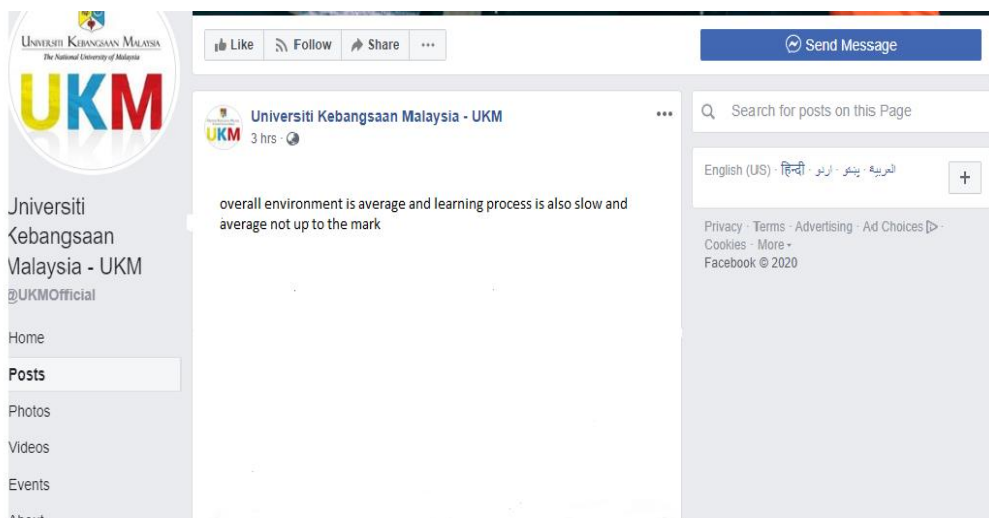


Figure 1.1(f) Screen Shots of Student Reviews

Figure 1-1 Screen Shots of Students Reviews

Satisfaction is an overall feeling of someone after buying services/products (Isnaeni & Martono, 2018). The level of satisfaction is determined by the difference between the performances of the services received with what consumers expect (Baber, 2018). Student satisfaction is supposed to be positively related to student loyalty (El-Kassar, Makki & Gonzalez-Perez, 2019). A favourable perception of loyalty is supposed to be positively related to reputation (Ashraf, & Niazi, 2018). El-

Kassar, Makki & Gonzalez-Perez (2019) verified that satisfaction has a strong influence on reputation and loyalty. Student loyalty will be a source of WOM (Word of Mouth) that is effective because students voluntarily would recommend the HEI where they got the study to others. In addition, after becoming the alumni, if they want to continue and deepen their education, then the students are likely to be loyal to continue in the same HEI (Pedro, Alves & Leitão, 2018). Students as consumers will be loyal to the institution if they are satisfied (Jamaludin, Sam, Sandal, & Adam, 2018). In addition, customer satisfaction is the impact of corporate reputation (Kaushal & Ali, 2019). Feng & Zhao (2018) & Lee (2019) verified that satisfaction has a strong influence on reputation and loyalty.

According to Abratt and Kleyn (2012) every university builds a reputation over time but strong and stable reputation is very difficult to maintain. Students evaluate university reputation on the bases of their experience with university services rather than on the external fame which is made by universities on the bases of its research output and ranking. In service sector particularly HEIs, university performance and student satisfaction determines the loyalty and reputation of universities (Su, Swanson, Chinchanchokchai, Hsu and Chen, 2016; Schlesinger, Cervera and Pérez-Cabañero, 2016; Heffernan, Wilkins & Butt, 2018).

HEIs focused on building a solid reputation as the core element in management (Aula & Tienari, 2011; Duarte, Alves & Raposo, 2010). Many HEIs need to compete for resources with other universities in order to survive in a complex, competitive environment. Therefore, universities are jumping into the bandwagon, which forced HEIs to adopt these new economic realities (Jevons, 2006; Weymnas, 2010) and focused on reputation management (Alves & Raposo, 2010). Hence, reputation serves as a valuable intangible asset for the universities to maintain a sustainable competitive advantage. However, numerous studies claimed that corporate reputation, especially in the academic or HEIs setting understudies and needs further exploration (Vidaver-Cohen, 2007; Šontaite & Bakanauskas, 2011).

This has further supported the notion of Gür (2015) who urged for more research on managing corporate reputation, especially in the universities that provide

multi-level services beyond just education, for sustainable management in the long run. In addition, past studies also highlighted that corporate reputation measurement, especially the application of Reputation Quotient presented by Fombrun (2000), particularly in the Malaysian setting, is relatively unclear. Furthermore, despite the model's popular usage in the Western and developed economy, it is still relatively uncertain how this particular model is applicable or suitable within the Asian perspectives (Kanto, de Run& Md Isa, 2016). In particular, studies of this model within Malaysian perspectives need further exploration, hence leaving a contextual gap in the literature. In addition, different stakeholders will have different expectations regarding the reputation management in a diverse educational system (Suomi & Järvinen, 2013; Jie& Hasan, 2018).

This study and the proposed framework help universities to improve their services and manage reputation in the end. This research is also useful for Malaysia to achieve its target to become an international education hub. University branding and reputation also contribute to the enrollment of international students. Universities always try to increase the number of international students, which is one of the criteria to raise university ranking; and enrollment of students will increase if universities provide quality services to its students. Therefore, understanding the factors that influence international students' satisfaction is crucial for a country that aspires to be an education hub (Yee et al., 2018).

#### **1.4 Research Questions**

Following are the research questions on the bases of discussion in problem statement:

- (a) What is the relationship between Social Media Usage and Student Expectations?
- (b) What is the relationship between Student Expectations and University Performance?

- (c) What is the relationship between University Performance and Student Satisfaction?
- (d) What is the relationship between Student satisfaction and Student Loyalty?
- (e) What is the relationship between Student Loyalty and University Reputation?
- (f) What is the relationship between Student Satisfaction and University Reputation?
- (g) Does student Loyalty mediate Student Satisfaction and University Reputation?

### **1.5 Research Objectives**

Following are the research objectives of the study based on research questions:

- (a) To identify the relationship between Social Media Usage and Student Expectations.
- (b) To determine the relationship between Student Expectations and University Performance.
- (c) To determine the relationship between University Performance and Student Satisfaction.
- (d) To determine the relationship between Student Satisfaction and Student Loyalty.
- (e) To know the relationship between Student Loyalty and University Reputation.
- (f) To know the relationship between Student Satisfaction and University Reputation.
- (g) To investigate that the Student Loyalty mediates Student Satisfaction and University Reputation.

## **1.6 Significance of the Study**

This study made a significant contribution to knowledge and practice. First of all, this research contributes to the body of knowledge by examining the relationship between social media usage, student expectations, university performance, student satisfaction, student loyalty, and university reputation. This study developed its own framework. The findings of this research were contributed to the body of knowledge in checking and finding factors in reputation formation by students on social media. Moreover, Malaysia aims to become an international education hub and has set the target to attract 250,000 international students by 2025. To attain this vision, it is important for Malaysian HEIs to know the factors that influence international students. The study was contributed to the reputation perspectives in the education sector, particularly in a Malaysian setting.

### **1.6.1 Contextual Contribution**

By the work and future calls by Ibrahim *et al* (2014), Jie *et al* (2018) and Brech *et al* (2017), this study address the literature gap and examined the relationship among social media usage, student expectations, university performance, student satisfaction, student loyalty, and university reputation. According to, Jie *et al.* (2018), there is a contextual gap in the literature regarding reputation quotient provided by Fombrun (2000) in the Malaysian education perspective. So, they suggested to further explore reputation quotient in more than one universities in Malaysia. Similarly, Brech *et al.* (2017) have examined that little research has been done on social media marketing in higher education for student's satisfaction and university reputation. Ibrahim *et al.*, 2014 identified that literature on the overall satisfaction of international students towards university services in the Malaysian perspective is still very lacking. Therefore, future research is needed to shed more light on the overall satisfaction of international students and their impact on university reputation. This study uses the Gruber *et al.*, 2010-satisfaction measurement scale. This scale measures the overall satisfaction of students for every individual service of the university.



A further review of literature, however, indicated that, to date, there is yet to be a study, which has investigated the relationship between student expectations about the university through social media and relationship between student expectation and university performance. This shows the contextual gaps in the literature. Previous literature investigated the relationship between service quality and student satisfaction but used the typical SERVQUAL model (Kashif, & Cheewakrakokbit, 2018). This study uses the Firdous Abdullah (2006) measurement scale for higher education performance (HEdPERF) for two constructs one is student expectations and other is university performance. HEdPERF measurement scale is the modified measurement scale of SERVQUAL and SERVPERF. A comprehensive review of the literature reveals that there are inconsistent findings on the use of total campus experience as instrument items of university performance. This shows the contextual gap in the literature.

### **1.6.2 Theoretical Contribution**

Literature indicates that most of the research on social media was on the use of social media by students for searching, online learning, and chatting with friends; but not for the use of social media by universities for marketing and managing reputation. Loyal students (Choudhary, & Jhamb, 2019) have done little research on the promotion of university reputation on social media. Therefore, there is a theoretical gap in the literature to find the effect of social media in the promotion of university reputation by loyal students.

This study uses the Stimulus Organism Response (SOR) theory and Expectancy Disconfirmation Theory (EDT) for reputation management by universities through social media by checking total campus experience and overall satisfaction of international postgraduate students. EDT has proposed to explain customer satisfaction in the business sector and not much used in the education service sector (Qazi, Tamjidyamcholo, Raj, Hardaker, & Standing, 2017). Chang (2016) explained the relationship between stimulus, organism and response within the service industry, but it is vital to develop an empirical model for the higher education service

industry. Goi, Kalidas & Yunus (2018), gives a future call to add a variable for stimulus in order to provide a better measurement of stimuli for HEIs. In this study, social media is used as a stimulus.

### **1.6.3 Empirical Contribution**

Additionally, the literature indicates that despite the proliferation of research on social media usage, most of the research has done in developed countries. To date, very few studies have examined the concept of social media usage in developing countries. No study has focused solely on social media usage on Malaysian public university reputation. This fact thus represents the empirical gap.

### **1.6.4 Managerial Contribution**

In strategic management, reputation is a very important concept and its role must be carefully defined. As managers continue to navigate complex environments, findings from this study suggested that reputation must be treated as a broad concept that can help them achieve superior performance. The findings of this study were helping the marketing managers to maintain reputation by using social media tools.

Top management of universities plays a very important role in managing university reputation and satisfies student's need. Our study gives a vision to university management that student satisfaction is required for managing university reputation in the long run. The empirical evidence of this study proves that the total campus experience of students and strong relationship of students with the university on social media is very important. So, to remain in the market, universities should focus on students' needs and wants and long term relationship with students to make university reputation more strong.

## **1.7 Scope of the Study**

From the theoretical perspective, this study was limited to social media usage, expectation disconfirmation elements and university reputation. The construct under study were unidimensional. From the contextual perspective this study was limited to public universities of Malaysia, specifically the research universities of Malaysia. Data was collected from the international postgraduate students of these research universities of Malaysia. Multiple regression was applied as all variables run at the same time.

## **1.8 Operational Definition**

The term operational definition talks about a specific statement of how a conceptual variable is turned into a measured variable. In conjunction, the researcher defined the following conceptual and operational definitions of the constructs, used in this study.

### **1.8.1 Social Media Usage**

Social media are defined as the means of interactions among people in which they communicate, collaborate and share information online in social dialogue as creators of user-generated content in a virtual community (Grosseck, 2009).

In this study, social media refers to the use and views about university social media site (Facebook) by students. Student uses university social media site (i.e. Facebook) to search for university information, for information sharing about the service quality and give reviews about their experience with the university on university social media.

### **1.8.2 Student Expectation**

Expectations can be defined as beliefs about the likelihood that a service or product is associated with certain attributes, benefits, or outcomes (Coye 2004). In this study, student expectation shows the perceptions of a student which will form through social media information about university services before coming to university.

### **1.8.3 University Performance**

University performance shows the service quality of the university and its provision to the students. Service quality can be provided from the perspective of how the students or the users of the service judge the service based on what they may have experienced (Kasim, Abubakar, & Ishiyaku, 2009).

In this study, university performance shows the experience of students with university services at university.

### **1.8.4 Student Satisfaction**

Satisfaction is a state felt by a person who has experienced performance or an outcome that fulfils his or her expectation (Arif and Ilyas, 2013) or Satisfaction can be measured as an overall feeling with the product and service (Zhao, Xu & Wang, 2019). Ibrahim *et al* (2014) suggested that there is a need to measure the overall satisfaction of student.

In this study, student satisfaction refers to the overall satisfaction of student towards the university services.

### **1.8.5 Student Loyalty**

According to Hennig-Thurau et al. 2001, a loyal student might continue to support his or her academic institution even after graduating (1) by providing financial support, such as donations or research projects, (2) through word-of-mouth promotion to other prospective, current, or former students, and (3) by offering cooperative services such as student placements or visiting lectures.

Student loyalty is a multiphase concept that may stretch from enrollment through the student's lifetime. Therefore, the term "student loyalty" refers to the loyalty of a student during and after his or her time at the university. In this study, student loyalty relates to all the behavioral and attitudinal loyalty. Behavioural loyalty is when students continue to study and complete their degrees in the same university and keep in touch even after completing his/her studies and wish to take admission for next degree in the same university. While attitudinal loyalty is the positive recommendation of students about their university to others.

### **1.8.6 University Reputation**

It is the assessment made by different people (insiders and outsiders) about the organization's ability to meet its expectations over time (Fombrun & Van Riel, 2003). In general, it refers to public perceptions of the organization that are shared by multiple people over time.

In this study, university reputation refers to the happiness and trust of the student towards institution's capability to meet its stakeholder's expectation, such as a student is happy with the institution environment, excellent programs availability; feel more confident to study at this university.

The Reputation Quotient recognizes the fact that a company's overall reputation is rooted in the perceptions of its stakeholders (Newburry, 2010; Basdeo et al., 2006). By examining the influence of stakeholder perception of a company, it can

better predict the dimensions that are likely to trigger stakeholders' emotional reactions of admiration, liking and trust toward a firm – its reputation.

Fombrun (2000) used six dimensions of reputation that is Products / Services, Workplace environment, emotional appeal, vision and leadership, social and environmental responsibility and financial performance. It was assumed that “product/service” refers to quality of product and services offered by companies and development of company's innovativeness. “Work place environment includes the companies' quality management; “emotional appeal” refers to the good feeling, trust, admiration and respect of companies; “vision and leadership” includes leadership qualities and using market opportunities; “social and environmental responsibility” refers to environmental responsibility of company's and standard in the way to treat people and “financial performance” refers to the financial vision performance of companies.

Harris (2012) used Reputation Quotient for the USA. He considered the same key dimensions of reputation by Fombrun (Products / Services, Workplace environment, emotional appeal, vision and leadership, social and environmental responsibility and financial performance) for measuring Trust, Admiration & Respect, Good Feeling and Overall Esteem.

## **1.9 Organization of the Study**

This thesis organized into five chapters. Chapter 1 presents the introduction of the study and discusses the importance of university reputation in HEIs and the usage of social media in creating student expectation along with the satisfaction of students with university performance. The problem statement is discussed in light of research questions and objectives. In the next part, the scope and significance of the study are discussed. In the last part, operational definitions of all variables are defined.

Chapter 2 offers a literature review of important previous studies on university reputation, social media usage, student expectations, university performance, student

satisfaction, and student loyalty and their relationship. In this chapter underpinning theories and conceptual framework also discussed.

Chapter 3 describes the research methodology used by the researchers in order to empirically test the research hypothesis. This chapter discusses the target population and sampling techniques, measures of the construct and statistical techniques which are used for data analysis purpose.

Chapter 4 reports data screening, response rate, detail of survey respondents, descriptive statistics and common method bias test. Finally, structural equation modelling was reported having two stages: stage one (measurement model) and stage two (structural model). This chapter also discusses the findings of the study.

Chapter 5 provides the highlights of the research process adopted for the current study. Furthermore, theoretic, managerial and empirical implications of the study are provided in the next section, followed by the limitation and future recommendations. The last section of the current study concludes the results.

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