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The effect of service quality, reputation and relationship benefits on student loyalty in the Malaysian private higher education industry

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ABSTRACT

Student loyalty is a major goal of education institutions due to its various benefits like competitive advantage, providing financial support and influence teaching quality via committed behaviour. The objectives of this study were to determine the level of student loyalty in Private HEIs in Malaysia and to determine the effects of service quality, reputation and relationship benefits on student loyalty. Using a personally administered questionnaire survey, 400 students from the various Private HEIs statuses: University, University College, Foreign University Branch campus and College, participated in this study. The findings found that the loyalty levels of students' in Malaysian Private HEIs are moderate. Empirical evidence concludes that service quality; reputation and relationship benefits have significant effects on students' loyalty. Among these three drivers, reputation was the most important factor affecting student loyalty, followed by relationship benefits and lastly, service quality. The findings in this study can be used by managers of Private HEIs in Malaysia to better understand their students' perceptions, and help them in developing competitive strategies that differentiate themselves from competitors and to win student loyalty in an aggressive and competitive education market.

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1. INTRODUCTION

The Malaysian private higher education industry has seen tremendous growth in the past two decades. The passing of the Private Higher Educational Institutions Act.1996 (Act 555) has opened the floodgates to the growth of privately owned higher education institutions. This act was an official move by the government to fulfil the rising demand for tertiary education through the privatization of the education sector (Wee & Thinavan, 2013).

Prior to 1996 before the passing of the act, there were only nine public universities and no private universities, As at November 2015, the latest statistics indicate that there are now

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20 public universities, 111 private universities and university colleges, 402 private colleges, 34 polytechnics and 94 community colleges with an estimated student population of 1.2 million (Tapsir, 2016).

The positive side effect of the growth in the Malaysian private higher education industry is that it has provided more chances for prospective students to pursue their tertiary education at institutions of higher education. Overall, it is both beneficial for the students and Malaysia as well. For Malaysia, she will have an educated, knowledgeable and skilled labour force who can contribute towards her economic development and her aspiration to be a developed nation by 2020.

However, this situation is not beneficial for Private HEIs. Students now have more choices to choose from to pursue their studies. This gives students extra "bargaining power" in comparison to their predecessors. Private HEIs now have to compete aggressively for students. Private HEIs do not receive any funding from the Government and are dependent on student's fees to run the institution. Thus, if they cannot retain or recruit students, they will not have any source of income, resulting in closure of the institutions/faculties or programs. An example of this is Allianz University College of Medical Sciences closure in 2014 (Samy et al., 2014). A more recent example was in May 2017 when UNITAR had to close down their architecture faculty less than a year into the program citing insufficient revenue (Landau, 2017).

Private HEIs now have to step up their marketing programs to draw in potential students and keep current ones. Thus, the issue of students' loyalty becomes paramount if they wish to exist and prosper in the aggressive private higher education market.

Even though student loyalty is a form of competitive advantage, managers of Private HEIs seem to be neglecting it. They are mostly myopic only looking at the short term when focusing on recruitment and retention. Ultimately, loyalty will be the one bringing the student back to support in terms of re patronage (to continue with their post graduate studies), to recommend (positive word of mouth) and supportive behaviour (financially, by giving donations or financial support to the university or through some form of cooperation like offering internship, job placement, giving lectures, etc.).

Managers in Private HEIs must recognize that poor loyalty levels impacts the financial viability of their education institutions and ultimately their survival. Thus, to ensure their viability and continued success, it would be important for managers of Private HEIs to determine the factors that drive their students' loyalty.

Based on the review of literature, service quality, reputation and relationship benefits have been recognized as important predictors of students' loyalty. However, there is paucity and inconsistencies in research on the relationships and effects of these variables in the higher education context.
Some studies have linked service quality to positive students' loyalty whilst others have results to the contrary. Majority of research on reputation in the education context has focused on

this variable as a determinant of student's choice of a higher education institution, rather than on student loyalty, thus indicating a paucity of research. There are also inconsistencies with regards to its effectiveness. There is also a dearth of studies in the education industry on the effects of relationship benefits on students' loyalty. Those few that have, have been from Western countries. As the literature on this issue is still limited, it would be important to examine this research gap further.

In summary, this study aims to fill research gaps and to advance the knowledge on the student loyalty formation process in the Malaysian context, and specifically in the private higher education sector.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Student loyalty is defined as loyalty of a student during and after his/her time at an education institution. It is usually demonstrated by re patronage, positive word of mouth and supportive and committed behaviour towards the education institution (Kunanusorn & Puttawong, 2015).

Student loyalty is a major goal of education institutions. According to Thomas (2011), a higher education institution will have a competitive advantage in the market if they can cultivate a pool of students who are loyal to them. The positive outcome could include retention, repeat and positive word of mouth communication.

There are many benefits to be had to have a pool of loyal students. Besides helping to improve retention rates, students that are loyal will contribute to a positive classroom atmosphere. This is because the lecturer's involvement in the class will increase once students are highly motivated and interested to participate in the class, contributing to a conducive learning environment. Students that are highly motivated will contribute and participate in research activities by conducting research and writing theses. Subsequently, after graduation, students who are loyal may carry on supporting his/her education institution through various ways. They can support by financial means, such as by giving donations or other forms of financial support, through positive word of mouth recommendation to potential, present or past students or via some medium of collaboration like job placements, internships, giving talks, conducting lectures, etc. By being supportive through such actions, loyal students act as supportive base for enhancing the university's image and reputation to prospective students. Higher education institutions can ensure they have a predictable and secure financial base for their new future activities by developing loyalty with their students (Hennig-Thurau et al., 2001).

Drawing upon evidences found in loyalty literature, service quality (Munizu & Hamid, 2015; Usman et al., 2016); reputation (Fares et al., 2013; Wei & Wongloraischon, 2014) and relationship benefits (Holford & White, 1997; Hennig-Thurau et al., 2002) are suggested as factors highly relevant in determining student loyalty.

Service quality

In the higher education environment which is becoming more aggressive and competitive, delivering superior service quality is believed to be a necessity to ensure an education institution's success or failure (Fares et al., 2013; Munizu & Hamid, 2015; Usman et al., 2016).

Most researchers agree that higher education can be regarded as a service and not a product, in which education institutions provide educational services to their customers, or some would say, their students. Educational service is an essential component in the success of an education institution. Therefore, it is important to ensure that the quality of service being offered to students is of a high standard.

One of the earlier definitions of service quality was presented by Parasuraman et al. (1988) who defined service quality as a customer's evaluation, judgement or disposition in relation to the "superiority" of the service received. In the education context, Nitecki and Hernon (2000) defined service quality in terms of "meeting or exceeding students' expectations."

Past research has recognized the importance of service quality on students' loyalty. In the education context, superior service quality would provide education institutions with a competitive advantage, setting their institution apart from their competitors as well as the ability to charge higher tuition fees leading to higher margins of profitability (Dib & Alnazer, 2013; Mansori et al., 2014). Since Hennig-Thurau et al. (2001) research which underlined the significant effect of service quality on student loyalty in the higher education context, subsequent researchers have also empirically validated service quality as a predictor of students' loyalty (Fares et al., 2013; Munizu & Hamid, 2015; Usman et al., 2016).

Considering the above, the following hypothesis was formulated:

H1: Students' perception of the higher education institution's service quality has a significant positive effect on their loyalty.

Reputation

A strong reputation will help an organization stand out from their competitors. This is especially important in the highly competitive private higher education industry where the competition for students is stiff. Having a strong reputation in your stakeholder's minds will have an impact on students' loyalty as well as attracting new students (Fares et al., 2013; Thomas, 2011).

According to Walsh et al. (2009) the importance of reputation is more important for organizations in the service industry than in the manufacturing industry. This is because reputation becomes particularly important in services when there is little physical or tangible evidence that customers can use to evaluate.

Having a strong reputation brings many benefits, such as being able to attract top class academic staff which in turn could be used as a strong marketing tool when recruiting new students. The high reputation of the university also serves as a source of prestige that can attract students as this prestige would enhance their employability upon graduation (Zabala et al., 2005).

Definitions of reputation abound in marketing and psychology literature. Earlier researcher such as Dowling (1986) suggests that although researchers have used different terms to define and describe reputation, an agreement exists on the core foundation of the concept. It is the "result of past actions of an organization." Reputation is seen as a reflection of the organization's history. This history communicates information to the organization's stakeholders on the quality of its products/services in contrast with those of its competitors.

MacMillan et al. (2005) state that the majority of definitions of reputation have considered it as the whole perception of all constituents towards an organization. Key words for defining reputation include the total, aggregate or overall perception of a company from its stakeholders after buying or using the products/services of the organization. It reflects the "general esteem" in which an organization is held by its stakeholders.

Several researchers have found causal relationships between reputation and student loyalty (Fares et al., 2013; Sung & Yang, 2009; Wei & Wonglorsaichon, 2014) and concluded reputation as a predictor of student loyalty. Based on the evidence, the formulation of the second hypothesis is as follows:

H2: Students' perception of the higher education institution's reputation has a significant positive effect on their loyalty.

Relationship benefits

The globalization of educational services coupled with the surge in competition in the private higher education sector has pushed higher education institutions to look at ways to increase their students' loyalty. Many educational marketers are now looking towards the area of relationship marketing to find the required solutions (Carvalho & de Oliveira Mota, 2010).

Management of education institutions are beginning to focus on building strong relationships with their students to achieve loyalty (Adidam et al., 2004; Wong & Wong, 2012). According to Bowden-Everson and Moore (2012), the concept of strong relational bonding is of importance for the higher education industry since a strong student-institution association could reduce student attrition as well as increase the students' loyalty towards the institution. Positive outcomes of having strong relational bonds would be positive recommendations, alumni support, continuance of further studies, employment opportunities, etc.

In a similar vein, Hassel and Lourey (2005) also posit that relationship benefits as important in the educational context. They postulate that the Exchange Theory depicts students and the education institution in a reciprocal and restrictive exchange, involving quid pro quo behaviour. Thus, when students pay tuition fees for the services of education, they

would expect some form of benefits in exchange.

Morgan and Hunt (1994) defined relationship benefits as the quality of services and goods relative to other suppliers. Relationship benefits are the superior benefits provided to customers which are highly valued by customers. In the education context, Adidam et al. (2004) defined relationship benefits as the superior benefits offered by an education institution that would influence students to continue their relationships with an education institution. In short, it refers to the quality of services and goods relatives to other options.

The ability of an organization to be able to provide remarkable and preferable benefits to their customers is essential when building loyalty with their customers. (Adidam et al., 2004; Wong & Wong, 2012). In the education context, relationship benefits were found to have significant effects on student

loyalty (Adidam et al., 2004; Holford & White, 1997; Wong & Wong, 2012). Gwinner et al. (1998) and Hennig-Thurau et al. (2002) found significant positive effects and relationships between relationship benefits and customer loyalty in the service industry. This significant effect was also studied into other industries, Dimitriadis (2010) in the banking industry and Chen and Hu (2010) in the coffee outlets industry, with similar results being concluded. Based on the above discussion, the following hypothesis was formulated:

H3: Students' perception of the relationship benefits between hem and the higher education institution has a significant positive effect on their loyalty.

Research Framework

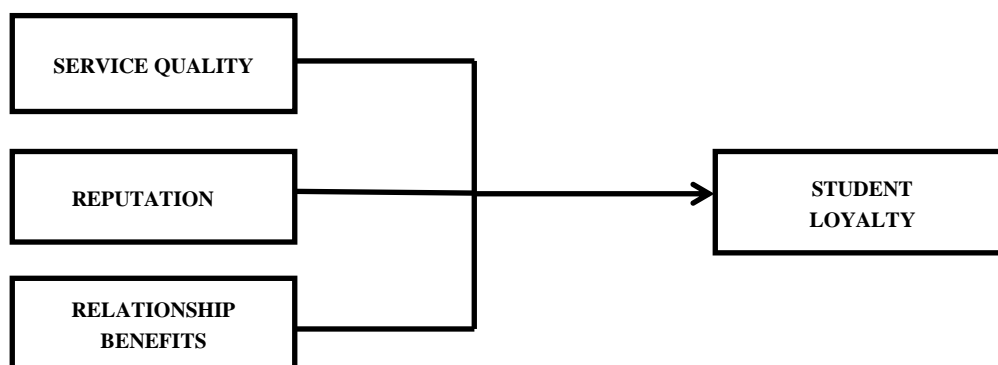Based on the hypotheses above, the research framework for this study is as shown in Figure 1.

Figure 1: Research framework of the study

3. METHODOLOGY

The research design for this study was a quantitative cross sectional study. The population for this study consisted of students enrolled at Private HEIs in Malaysia with a population size of 580,928 students.

The sampling design for this study was the proportionate stratified random sampling design. The sampling frame was obtained from the Ministry of Higher Education and consisted of 439 Private HEIs. These Private HEIs were stratified according to their statuses: University, University Colleges, Foreign University Branch campus and College status and placed alphabetically in the respective strata. A Private HEI or HEIs were selected within each strata randomly. Approval was obtained from the selected Private HEIs to visit their campus to conduct a survey. The respondents were students enrolled at the Private HEIs at the time of survey.

Based on the population size, a sample size of 400 was determined. The survey instrument was a personally administered questionnaire to the systematic randomly

selected students and was collected back by the researcher upon completion. All questionnaires were checked for completeness and usability on the spot by the researcher. Samples collected were in accordance to the number required for each strata (PHEI status).

The variables in this study were measured using established measures from past studies. Responses for all these constructs were captured on a five-point Likert-type scale (strongly disagree = 1 to strongly agree = 7). Student loyalty was assessed by Nguyen & LeBlanc (2001) scale (Cronbach's Alpha = .93). Service quality was assessed by Abdullah (2009) scale consisting of the dimensions of academic, non-academic, access, programme issues and understanding (Cronbach's Alpha = .84). Reputation was assessed by Sung & Yang (2009) scale (Cronbach's Alpha = .86). Relationship benefits was assessed by Wong & Wong (2012) scale (Cronbach's Alpha = .78)

Data collected from the survey questionnaires was analysed using SPSS. Descriptive analysis was used to determine the first research objective of this study which was to determine

the level of student loyalty. Multiple regression analysis was used to determine the second research objective which was to determine the significant effects of the three independent variables on student loyalty.

4. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Demographics

Table 1 presents the demographic profiles of the respondents. Out of the 400 samples collected, in terms of gender, 156 or 39 percent were male and 244 or 61 percent of respondents were female. In terms of nationality, the majority of respondents were Malaysians, 380 or 95 percent and 20 or 5 percent of the respondents were non-Malaysian, In terms of race, and the majority of the respondents were Chinese, 243 or 60.8 percent. Followed by Indians, 95 or 23 percent. Malays,

41 or 10.3 percent and others, 21 or 5.3 percent. In terms of age group, majority of the respondents, 216 or 54 percent were aged between 17 – 20 years, followed by 166 or 41.5 percent of the respondents aged 21 – 24 years old and 13 or 3.3 percent aged between 25 – 28 years. Three respondents were aged between 29 – 32 years and two respondents aged 32 years and above. Lastly, in terms of years of studying at current education institution, slightly more than half of the respondents, 51 percent or 204 students reported having studied at their current education institution between 1 – 2 years. This was followed by 84 or 21 percent of students having studied at their current education institution less than a year, 58 or 14.5 percent of students with 2 – 3 years of study, 15 or 3.8 percent with 4 -5 years of study. Lastly, only 7 or 1.8 percent of the students have studied at their current education institution more than 5 years.

Table 1: Demographic information

Characteristics	Frequency	Percentage (%)	Cumulative (%)
Gender			
Male	156	39	39
Female	244	61	100
Nationality			
Malaysian	380	95	95
Non Malaysian	20	5	100
Race			
Malay	41	10.3	10.3
Chinese	243	60.8	71.1
Indian	95	23.8	94.9
Others	21	5.3	100
Age group			
17-20 years	216	54	54
21-24 years	166	41.5	95.5
25-28 years	13	3.3	98.8
29-32 years	3	0.8	99.6
Above 32 years	2	0.5	100
Years studying at current education institution			
Less than 1 year	84	21	21
1-2 years	204	51	72
2-3 years	58	14.5	86.5
3-4 years	32	8	94.5
4-5 years	15	3.8	98.3
More than 5 years	7	1.8	100

Descriptive analysis

To achieve the first research objective of this study, which was to determine the level of student loyalty in private higher education institutions in Malaysia, the level of student loyalty was categorized in ranges, from low, moderate to high. The results are presented in Table 2 and 3. From Table 2, the mean and median for student loyalty were 3.556 and 3.666, respectively. Based on Table 3, the mean and median fell within the moderate level range (3.334 to 3.833). Hence, the results indicate that the level of student loyalty in private higher education institutions in Malaysia is moderate.

Table 2: Mean, median and cut off points for levels of students' loyalty

Student loyalty		
Mean		3.556
Median		3.666
Std. Deviation		.721
Minimum		1
Maximum		5
Percentiles	33.333	3.333
	66.667	3.833

Table 3: Range for every level of students' loyalty

Mean value	Level of student loyalty
≤ 3.333	Low
3.334 to 3.833	Moderate
≥ 3.834	High

Plausible reasons for moderate loyalty levels of students' in Malaysian Private HEIs could be attributed to the similar competitive offerings available in the market. As postulated by Wan (2007), most Private HEIs offer similar courses/programs which are popular and high in demand. Thus, students' are spoilt for choices and more prone to leave when they do not receive what they expected.

The exponential growth in the number of private higher education institutions in Malaysia is another contributing factor. As at November 2015, with an estimated number of 111 private universities and university colleges and 402 private colleges, this number is expected to grow even larger.

Against this back drop of a highly competitive education landscape, a rift had developed between students' expectations and what they are receiving. As paying "customers", students' expectations are high and if their current education institution is unable to deliver, it would impact on their loyalty.

Multiple regression analysis

To answer the second research objective and hypotheses of this study, multiple regression analysis was conducted. The

Table 4: Summary of multiple regression between dependent variable (student loyalty) with independent variables (service quality, reputation and relationship benefits)

Student loyalty		
	β	**Sig**
Constant		
Service quality	.160	.002
Reputation	.387	.000
Relationship benefits	.197	.000
R^2	.419	
F	92.383	
Sig	.000	
df_1 df_2	3,385	

results of the multiple regression indicated that the three independent variables had successfully regressed on student loyalty. They explained 41.9% of variance towards student loyalty. The 58.1% could be due to error or explained by other factors not included in this study. This model is significant at (F (3,385) = 92.383, p <.001). Table 4 presents the result of the regression analysis between service quality, reputation and relationship benefits with student loyalty. The results of the hypothesis testing in this study indicated that service quality (β = .160, p <.01), reputation (β = .387, p < .001), and relationship benefits (β = .197, p < .001) were found to have significant effects on student loyalty. Based on the results, the most significant predicator of student loyalty was reputation, followed by relationship benefits and lastly, service quality.

In terms of effect size, following Cohen's (1998) conventions, the combined effect of the three independent variables on student loyalty can be considered large. Cohen (1988) suggested than a f^2 of .02 (or R^2 of .196 can be considered small, a f^2 of .15 (or R^2 of .13) can be considered medium, and a f^2 of .35 (or R^2 of .25) can be considered large.
Thus, the findings support hypotheses H1, H2 and H3 of this study.

The results of the Multiple Regression conclude that service quality has a significant positive effect on student loyalty. The results indicate that the higher the student's perception of the service quality that they receive from their education institution, the higher their loyalty levels. This result is broadly consistent with findings by other researchers like Fares et al. (2013) and Usman et al. (2016) in the education context. Thus, this result further confirms the importance of service quality as a determinant of student loyalty.

As higher education institution provides educational services to their students, they must ensure that the services being provided are of high standards or suffer the consequences. In the private higher education context, students as paying customers expect more when they pay a premium for a service. Ng and Forbes (as cited in Bowden, 2011) said that a

student from the prestigious Standford Business School in the United States told his professor that he "didn't pay $40,000 for this bullshit" and stormed out of the classroom.

The results of the multiple regression also revealed that reputation had a significant positive effect on loyalty. The results can be interpreted that when students' perception of the higher education's reputation is high, so would be their loyalty. This finding supports the results of other studies conducted by Fares et al. (2013); Sung and Yang (2009) and Wei and Wonglorsaichon (2014) that determined reputation as a significant predictor of student loyalty.

In the higher education context, this finding is consistent with the fact that higher education is a service and not a product (Walsh et al., 2009). When a customer is dealing with something intangible, the reputation of the service provider is of utmost importance. For students, pursuing an academic qualification is associated with large monetary cost and time spent. Most students spend a minimum of 2 years with an education institution, with some at even longer durations. Parents of students' are willing to pay expensive tuition fees to ensure that their children obtain an academic qualification from a reputable education institution. Therefore, being perceived as being reliable, trust worthy and responsible are important criteria's for students (Awang & Jusoff, 2009).

However, this finding contradicts the findings by Barusman's (2014) study conducted amongst five private universities in Bandar Lampung, Indonesia, which found that university reputation had no direct effect on student loyalty. Even though, this study was the closes in terms of context and cultural aspects to this current study, yet the findings were different. Similarly, the study by Thomas (2011) in higher education institutions in India indicated that reputation had no direct effect on students' loyalty and only had an effect on students' loyalty when mediated by student satisfaction, suggesting that reputation is not a strong predictor of students' loyalty as assumed. These differences in results suggest that reputation is very sensitive towards cultural, indigenous and individual factors which temper its effects on student loyalty.

The results of the multiple regression conclude that relationship benefits have a significant positive effect on student loyalty. The finding indicate that the higher the students' perception of the relationship benefits between them and the higher education institution, the stronger the loyalty of the said students' towards the said education institution.

In accordance with the present result, previous studies conducted by Gwinner et al. (1998); Holford & White (1997) and Hennig- Thurau et al. (2002) found similar results in various different consumer industries. In the higher education context, the findings of Adidam et al. (2004) and Wong & Wong (2012) indicated that relationship benefits when mediated by commitment had an effect on student loyalty. As paying customers, when students pay tuition fees for the services of education, they expect some form of benefits in exchange (Hasel & Lourey, 2005). As observed earlier, students' would spend large sums of money and time in pursuing an academic qualification at an education institution,

thus it would be logical that they would expect something in return. In a similar vein, Finney and Finney (2010) state that students are like every other paying consumer, they are always looking for some form of benefits in their relationship with their education institution.

Theoretical and practical implications

The findings of the study have contribution towards theory and practice. From a theoretical perspective, the finding of this study has contributed to the pool of knowledge on the predictors of student loyalty in general, and specifically in the Malaysian private higher education context. It is also the first study to empirically confirm relationship benefits as a determinant of student loyalty in the Malaysian private higher education context.

For practical implications, the findings from this study have direct practical relevance for managers of Private HEIs in terms of their strategy implementation and marketing activities. As this study found that all the independent variables had different degrees of importance in predicting students' loyalty, it could serve as a guide for managers to know which factors to focus on more. They were ranked as follows: reputation, relationship benefits and service quality. Thus, it would be imperative for management of Private HEIs to focus on reputation management first, followed by relationship benefits enhancement and lastly, service quality maintenance.

5. LIMITATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

There are a few limitations in this study. The first limitation is related to the generalizability of the results. The findings from this study cannot be generalized to other industries as it was conducted specifically in the education industry. This study was conducted in the Malaysian private higher education context, thus the findings should be applied with caution to public higher education institutions in Malaysia. Due to cultural differences, the findings from this study should also not be construed to be representative of students from other countries. As this study was conducted as a quantitative cross sectional study, this approach limits the ability to infer causal relationships among the variables of this study.

Based on the limitations of the study, this study suggests a few recommendations for future research. Future research should look at other variables not included in this study, as the results indicate that 42 percent of variance in students' loyalty is accounted for by the three independent variables. The remaining variance could be explained by other variables not included in this study. Previous studies have revealed significant influence of image and shared values, thus, these variables could be incorporated into future student loyalty models for the Malaysian private higher education context. As this study was conducted using the quantitative approach, future research could consider combining both the quantitative and qualitative research approach. This would provide more accurate information on the why and how of the complex loyalty formation process. Future research could also be

conducted as a longitudinal study so that relationships between student loyalty and their predictors can then be more accurately revealed.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that the loyalty levels of students' in Malaysian private higher education institutions are moderate. This highlights the importance and relevance of this study to managers of private higher education institutions on identifying factors that would be helpful for them in increasing and improving their students' loyalty levels. The three independent variables of this study had significant effects on student loyalty at different degrees, and were ranked as follows: reputation, relationship benefits and service quality. The level of competition amongst Private HEIs in Malaysia is expected to increase in the future and it is critical for management of Private HEIs to determine suitable strategies to overcome this problem. Their institution's success or failure will be dependent on its ability to improve their students' loyalty levels.

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APPENDIX 1: RESEARCH INSTRUMENT

Items for student loyalty

1   I would recommend the education institution that I am currently studying in to others
2   I say positive things about the education institution that I am currently studying in to other people
3   I have encouraged others to study at the education institution that I am currently studying in
4   I will continue to study with my current education institution even if other education institution's offers are better
5   If I still needed to find an education institution to study or start afresh, the education institution that I am currently studying in would be my first choice
6   Should I plan to continue my studies to postgraduate level, the education institution that I am currently studying in would be my first choice

Source: Nguyen & LeBlanc (2001)

Items for service quality

1   The education institution that I am currently studying in has sufficient academic facilities like well-equipped classrooms, up to date computer labs, library with a wide range of resources and clean and safe accommodation
2   The education institution that I am currently studying in provides caring and individualized attention
3   The education institution that I am currently studying in provides efficient/prompt service when dealing with complaints and shows a sincere interest in solving problems
4   The education institution that I am currently studying in provides administrative services within a reasonable time frame
5   The education institution that I am currently studying in keeps its promises
6   The education institution that I am currently studying in has academic staffs that are knowledgeable in course content
7   The education institution that I am currently studying in has academic staffs that have good communication skills
8   The education institution that I am currently studying in has academic staffs that are caring and courteous
9   The education institution that I am currently studying in has academic staffs that are sincere in solving student's academic problems
10   The education institution that I am currently studying in has academic staffs that are readily available for academic consultation
11   The education institution that I am currently studying in is easily contactable by telephone and email
12   The education institution that I am currently studying in has a system for feedback for improvement on services offered and clear and simple service delivery procedures which are easily accessible to students
13   The education institution that I am currently studying in offers flexible syllabus and program structure
14   The education institution that I am currently studying in offers a wide variety of programs and specializations
15   The education institution that I am currently studying in offers counseling services, health services and a student union

Source: Abdullah (2006)

Items for reputation

1   I admire and respect the education institution that I am currently studying in
2   My choice to study at the education institution that I am currently studying in was a wise one
3   The education institution that I am currently studying in is well managed
4   The education institution that I am currently studying in always fulfills the promises it makes to its students
5   I believe that the education institution in which I am currently studying in has excellent leadership
6   I believe that the program that I am currently studying in is superior compared to other programs offered by other education institutions
7   I believe that the program that I am currently studying in has a better reputation than its competitors
8   The education institution that I am currently studying in has a good reputation with the media
9   The education institution that I am currently studying in receives favourable and positive news reports from the media

Source: Sung & Yang (2009)

Items for relationship benefits

1	The location of the education institution that I am currently studying in makes this the ideal place to attend
2	The education institution that I am currently studying in provides several beneficial opportunities for its students such as company visits, internship placement, exchange programmes and professional seminars
3	I believe the education institution that I am currently studying in offers the best value for money compared to its competitors
4	The monetary cost spent to study in my current education institution is worth it
5	When I graduate, I am confident that the degree that I obtain from my current education institution will be able to get me a job
6	The education institution that I am currently studying in provides high quality education for its students

Source: Wong & Wong (2012)