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THE EFFECT OF SERVICE QUALITY AND  
MARKETING STRATEGY ON INTERNATIONAL  
POSTGRADUATE STUDENTS' LOYALTY  
TOWARDS MALAYSIAN PUBLIC  
UNIVERSITIES MEDIATED BY  
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HAYDER ALWAN KADHIM

UNIVERSITI PENDIDIKAN SULTAN IDRIS

2023



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THE EFFECT OF SERVICE QUALITY AND MARKETING STRATEGY ON  
INTERNATIONAL POSTGRADUATES STUDENTS' LOYALTY  
TOWARDS MALAYSIAN PUBLIC UNIVERSITIES

HAYDER ALWAN KADHIM

THESIS SUBMITTED IN FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENT  
FOR THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

FACULTY OF MANAGEMENT AND ECONOMICS  
UNIVERSITI PENDIDIKAN SULTAN IDRIS

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## ABSTRACT

This study aimed to determine the effect of service quality and marketing strategy on international postgraduate students' loyalty towards Malaysian public universities mediated by emotional satisfaction. This study used Social Exchange theory to explain the phenomenon. A quantitative approach was utilised as the primary research design. Data were collected from a random sample of 380 international postgraduate students using a questionnaire. Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) was used to analyse the data. The findings indicated a significant relationship between service quality and customer loyalty ( $\beta = 0.103$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ), the marketing strategy significantly and positively affects the positive emotional satisfaction ( $\beta = 0.509$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ). Service quality affects the positive emotional satisfaction ( $\beta = 0.214$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ). Moreover, the findings showed that positive emotional satisfaction significantly mediated the relationship between service quality and customer loyalty. The negative emotion satisfaction was found to be minimally affected by the service quality. In conclusion, the marketing strategy was found to be a significant dominant factor that affects customer loyalty as mediated by emotional satisfaction. The key implication of this study is that public universities in Malaysia needs to focus on the emotional satisfaction of the students in order to improve their customer loyalty.

**KESAN KUALITI PERKHIDMATAN DAN STRATEGI PEMASARAN  
TERHADAP KESETIAAN PELAJAR LEPASAN IJAZAH  
ANTARABANGSA TERHADAP UNIVERSITI  
AWAM MALAYSIA DITENGAHKAN  
OLEH KEPUASAN EMOSI**

**ABSTRAK**

Kajian ini bertujuan untuk menentukan kesan kualiti perkhidmatan dan strategi pemasaran terhadap kesetiaan pelajar pasca siswazah antarabangsa terhadap universiti awam Malaysia yang dimediasi oleh kepuasan emosi. Kajian ini menggunakan teori Pertukaran Sosial untuk menjelaskan fenomena tersebut. Pendekatan kuantitatif digunakan sebagai reka bentuk penyelidikan utama. Data dikumpul daripada sampel rawak 380 pelajar pasca siswazah antarabangsa menggunakan soal selidik. *Structural Equation Modelling (SEM)* digunakan untuk menganalisis data. Dapatan kajian menunjukkan hubungan yang signifikan antara kualiti perkhidmatan dan kesetiaan pelanggan ( $\beta = 0.103$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ), strategi pemasaran secara signifikan dan positif mempengaruhi kepuasan emosi positif ( $\beta = 0.509$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ). Kualiti perkhidmatan mempengaruhi kepuasan emosi positif ( $\beta = 0.214$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ). Selain itu, dapatan kajian menunjukkan bahawa kepuasan emosi positif secara signifikan menjadi pengantara hubungan antara kualiti perkhidmatan dan kesetiaan pelanggan. Kepuasan emosi negatif didapati terjejas secara minimum oleh kualiti perkhidmatan. Kesimpulannya, strategi pemasaran didapati merupakan faktor dominan yang signifikan yang mempengaruhi kesetiaan pelanggan seperti yang dimediasi oleh kepuasan emosi. Implikasi utama kajian ini ialah universiti awam di Malaysia perlu memberi tumpuan kepada kepuasan emosi pelajar bagi meningkatkan kesetiaan pelanggan mereka.

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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION



Globally, the importance of service marketing commerce is known to dominate the worldwide market by offering more than 70% of employment in the public and private fields(Ingrams & Holzer, 2016). Conceivably, this changes the marketing theory and practice from manufacturing or goods marketing to the marketing of services (Brkanli et al., 2020a). Current studies suggest that in the context of service, the strategies of marketing are crucial as the services are viewed as intangible, fragile, and less consistent (Foroudi et al., 2020a). In addition, the consumption and the service production involve the customers and companies than for manufactured products. (Kotler & Keller, 2009).





The essential features of this service indicate that users cannot affirm the claims made by service providers by merely executing an inspection (Angulo-Ruiz et al., 2016). Therefore, a significant decision-making restriction in the services of production and consumption is needed (Mohammed Manzuma-Ndaaba et al., 2018). In the context of industrial services, the main constituent is given to the education sector as it plays a crucial part in the development states' agenda (UNESCO, 2016). A university is a social institution that has the mandate to register and qualify students in several scientific and educational areas that bring excellence in character and knowledge for the survival and advancement of the community (Chien, 2015). Thus, the university must encourage and support the appearance of marketing strategies as it promotes both social and economic connections between the universities and the students (Pucciarelli & Kaplan, 2016).



private sectors. It is challenging nowadays to attract and retain the students, who are the clients, especially undergoing significant increment in the numbers of universities and colleges around the world. In today's educational context, many tertiary institutions are competing to discover innovative solutions to attain competitive advantage to enhance their efficiency and retain their students in their institutions (Hsiao & Chen, 2013). The loyalty of the customers leads to a significant influence on universities' performances (Badeggi & Muda, 2021). Thus, it is viewed to be a vital aspect in attaining a competitive advantage (Kim & Stepchenkov, 2018). Therefore, educational providers need to have unique offerings to cultivate a long-term connection with the clients to obtain a competitive advantage (Foroudi et al., 2020a).





Effective marketing strategies by the educational institutions will reflect in various aspects, such as the rise in the numbers of students' admission, institutions at the tertiary level, the government expenditure for the education sector, additional government policies to promote the country's education, and constant requirement for human resources (Balaji et al., 2017). However, there has been a global issue of students' loyalty and retention to universities due to the fundamental changes in the higher education sector (HES), such as policy changes in university ownership, scholarship, globalization, and student mobility (Woodall et al., 2014). Globally, developed countries earn the benefit of using marketing approaches in educational services to incorporate key causes that influence student loyalty to a particular destination regardless of the threat of competitive alternatives, such as other tourism services, highly price-sensitive and low competitive international education with the low level of loyalty by the customers (Mohammed Manzuma-Ndaaba et al., 2018). An internalization of higher education can be seen from the worldwide movement of students internationally across borders (Petruzzellis, 2010).

As nations and economies become more interrelated, people are starting to be aware of the chances to study other cultures and people globally, realizing the advantages they gain from studying abroad (Escadas et al., 2019). Government policies have led to the growth in higher education as it was designed to attract students and migrants with skills (S. Z. Ahmad & Hussain, 2017). In Malaysia, universities are becoming financially independent and competitive in the vibrant Malaysian education market (Daud et al., 2020). Their academic withstanding of public universities, and thus, their economic power, depends on their capacity to attract undergraduate and postgraduate students. Nevertheless, more than universities or colleges. This indicates





the competitiveness of these institutions is increasing, and branding is one of the aspects that applicants look into to differentiate each university. In the education sector, the government is committed to carrying out its role in higher education, with an annual expenditure equal to 7.7% of the government's expenditure. Based on the benchmark set by UNESCO, the highest-developed economies are Malaysia's peer-developed Asian economies, such as Hong Kong, Japan, South Korea, and Singapore, while the neighboring countries Thailand, Indonesia, and Singapore are countries with comparable GDP per capita (Chile, Mexico). Malaysia has been expending the largest allocation of RM52.6 billion, which equals 26 percent annually on education in 2022 (MOHE, 2022).

Malaysia is aiming for 250,000 international students by 2025, particularly from transnational from SE Asia + China, India & Gulf Region. Impliedly, universities in Malaysia need to register and sustain sufficient international students to function successfully and attain their order, as it is the critical standing of student loyalty. The concept of marketing has been taken to a great extent in the HES of Britain and the United States, particularly. The UK, Australia, and the US show the highest number of transnational education providers, followed by emerging numbers from Europe, Canada, and New Zealand and even non-traditional international education provider countries, such as China, India, Malaysia, and Singapore. More than 623,000 international students, which accounted for 21.5% of all international students globally. Thus, education is the largest contributor to the USA's net exports, following the royalties and license fees such as business, professional, technical, and financial services. Australia has become a leading exporter of (higher) education, and Australian institutions rely heavily on the income from foreign students".





The number of international students in higher education has increased from just over 100,000 to more than 250,000 between 2000 and 2009. Meanwhile, In Taiwan, the number of international students continuously increased from 111,000 in 2015 to 132,000 in 2019. Indeed, trading in educational services leads to rapid growth of international business. In Canada, the total income earned from international students was \$6.5B, more significant than exporting coal, with \$6.05B in 2008. In the UK, the personal (off-campus) spending of international students attending higher education institutions was £1.5B in 2004, which equals 9% of all earnings from international visitors to the UK that year. The same data for 1999-2005 showed a significant increase of 173% in Australia, 177% in Canada, 48% in the UK, and 47% in the USA.

Despite the issues above, universities and colleges are focusing more on student admissions and enrolment instead of managing admission. In the US, over 40 percent of college students leave tertiary education before earning a degree, and from this number, 75 percent are dropouts in the first year. In Australia, a similar situation occurred when 50 percent of all attributions at the tertiary level occurred to students in the first year, and 30 percent of these students were disappointed with their experience.

In Malaysia, anecdotal evidence discloses a significant rise in the number of international students. Many of those students are pursuing undergraduate or postgraduate. Despite this improvement, international students reported only a moderate level of satisfaction with their former university, which may indicate a degree of shift away from their previous institution. As a direct consequence of the problems discussed previously, it is of the greatest priority to establish a plan to recruit and keep undergraduate and graduate students in the institutions of Malaysia. However, the



transformation required to a student-based model requires the use of marketing plans. After looking at the practical motivations for this study, the next paragraph highlights theoretical motivations. Much empirical evidence highlights the role of student satisfaction with the university's services, reputation, and service quality in promoting student loyalty to the university. Nevertheless, little empirical evidence occurs of the role of critical marketing strategies, such as perceived brand orientation, university brand, and location to the university's loyalty.

## 1.2 Problem Statement

The research is reinforced due to the intense competition and the challenge of delivering education to diverse students in lifelong learning (A & D, 2020). Among the consequences of a rise in reduction rates or lack of loyalty are a reduction in financial results, extra expenditure in recruiting new students, and loss of free word-of-mouth advertising, particularly for the providers of the educational institution using online or combined learning strategies (Daud et al., 2020). Therefore, the loyalty of the students is becoming a significant matter to the providers of lifelong learning (Thoo et al., 2022).

Consequently, the anecdotal and empirical evidence support the strategic importance of customer loyalty in improving organizational efficiency and competitiveness (Susanti, 2019). E-service quality (Daud et al., 2020), customer satisfaction (Uysal, 2021), university image (Sultan, 2018), reputation (Dursun & Gumussoy, 2021), marketing strategies such as location (Al-sadly, 2020), marketing communications (Sultan & Wong, 2012), information sources (Shahijan et al., 2018),





marketing mix (Brkanli et al., 2020a). However, the results of the earlier studies concerning the relation between key quality of service, marketing strategies, and the loyalty of the customer are inconsistent. For example, mainstream studies have reported a negative significance between the dimensions of service quality and customer satisfaction (Anabila et al., 2022). Another study has reported that perceived service quality was positively and significantly associated with student loyalty (Daud et al., 2020). Furthermore, another study showed that students' satisfaction was significantly correlated with university loyalty. Similarly, mainstream study has found a significant positive relationship between location and satisfaction, which also leads to customer loyalty (Farhat et al., 2021a). The inconsistency of these findings recommends that the research should connect between service quality, marketing strategies, and customer loyalty, which is not convincing (Elgarhy et al., 2022). As suggested by Khalid et al., (2021) the HEI should be aware of the reason for the disloyalty of the foreign students. By doing so, the HEI can identify the root of the problem and improve the quality of the service to possibly satisfy the needs of the foreign students and, therefore, retain them (Thoo et al., 2022). Moreover, the loyalty of foreign students can be interpreted based on a complex approach, as it involves emotions, commitment, and word-of-mouth recommendations (Shahijan et al., 2016).

Meanwhile, based on the reviews of literature, it is challenging to determine the quality of service as no framework is general or widely accepted that can be operationalized to make an accurate valuation of service quality (Susanto & Herdinata, 2022). However, the research on the quality of services is still current compared to the commercial sector (Arguello et al., 2020). Furthermore, one of the key challenges encountered by HEIs is to discover and apply the most suitable instrument to measure





the service quality of the HEIs (Susanto & Herdinata, 2022). Nevertheless, universities and colleges are facing new challenges due to globalization and the liberalization of higher education around the world (Tsuruta, 2013). For instance, the number of student enrolment is declining; there is poor planning of strategic marketing and strong competition between other colleges or universities that put forward similar courses and service quality (A. Ahmad et al., 2021). Therefore, future study needs to identify the factors of service quality that can impact student satisfaction to enhance their services (Hashim et al., 2020). Furthermore, based on the literature reviews, most of the research on the quality of services are done in developed countries, such as the UK, Spain, Australia, South Korea and Taiwan, and less in developing countries partially in Malaysia.



There is a lack of studies in public higher education institutions, especially on international postgraduate students (Shafaei & Razak, 2016a). Thus, future studies need to discover more information on service quality in the context of public higher education (Thoo et al., 2022). Over the past two decades, international student enrollment in Malaysian higher education has steadily increased but recently saw a sharp decline of 40,000 students or 30% from 2017 to 2019, potentially hindering the national goal of 250,000 international student enrollment by 2025 (MoHE, 2022). Figure 1 depicts the trend of international student enrollment in various Malaysian higher institutions from 2002 to 2019.



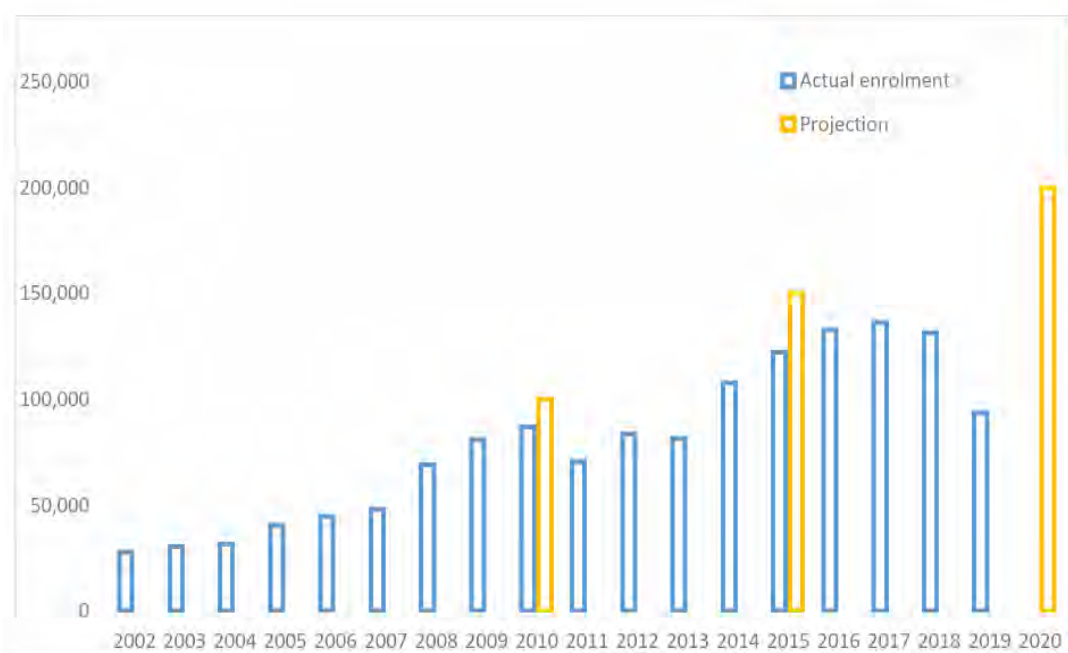


Figure 1.1. International student enrolment from 2002 to 2019. (Source: MOHE 2020)

In addition, the literature reviews reveal that international postgraduate students are less content with the quality of service provided by Malaysian public universities because the performance of educational services needs to live up to the expectations, they have set for themselves (Badeggi & Muda, 2021). For instance, a study measured the perception and expectation of the quality of services in higher education (A. M. Rasli et al., 2014). They found a negative perspective of Iranian postgraduate students on service quality. They confirmed that the case study on 353 international postgraduates showed the outcome of the low service quality dimension: tangible, consistency, assurance, and compassion. Meanwhile, studied on Turkish students to measure the quality of service in Malaysian higher education (A. M. Rasli et al., 2014). The findings uncovered high expectations and low perception value to indicate a negative gap in service quality. This reflects the dissatisfaction of Turkish students studying in Malaysian public universities.



According to (Mustaffa Wan Salmuni et al., 2019) the study to evaluate the service quality, they surveyed 381 international graduate students. According to the results, international students from Africa and the Middle East are less satisfied with the quality of education they receive at Malaysia's public institutions than those from other Asian countries.

Therefore, universities must know how international students experience campus life and what they cherish the most (Hakeem et al., 2021). Moreover, universities should exhibit an excellent image to enhance their image as it can attract and give a positive perception among international students to select their preferred universities (Tin et al., 2015). The universities must also know the students' expectations to offer them an appropriate learning setting (Pucciarelli & Kaplan, 2016).

HEIs can benefit from satisfying international students in several ways, such as fewer dropouts, getting higher grades, engaging positively through word of mouth, and partnering with the institution (Farhat et al., 2021a).

Nevertheless, inadequate studies on the quality of service, emotional satisfaction, and the loyalty of students in the public education industry, particularly in Malaysian universities, recommended future research to confirm this connection and discover the factors that add more to the international postgraduate perception towards the public universities in Malaysia. while paucity of studies on the constructs of reputation, quality of program academic aspects and non-academic, access to the lack of the studies of e-service quality specially on international postgraduate students in Malaysian public universities as suggested by Daud et al., (2020) .





Furthermore, the second part of inconsistent findings is marketing strategies. Several authors have dealt with this topic based on a review of the theoretical literature and a discussion of the results (Camilleri, 2021). There are conflicting views on the impact of specific marketing strategy tools on student loyalty; there needs to be more research that analyses the impact of marketing strategies on emotional satisfaction, and the university brand is evident (Riccomini et al., 2021).

In addition, based on the literature review, the key marketing strategies of the brand, perceived brand orientation, and location were scarcely validated by international postgraduate students in Malaysian public universities (Omar et al., 2022). These issues are expatiated subsequently. On the other hand, many of the previous marketing strategies need to be more cohesive; either they investigate the impact of marketing strategies on customer loyalty separately, or they neglect other related mediating devices that may affect the perceptions and loyalty of the customers (Sharif & Lemine, 2021). As suggested by previous empirical research, the mediating mechanisms were incorporated (Riccomini et al., 2021). This research aims to present a more significant explanation concerning the relationship between marketing strategies and the loyalty of customers.

Based on the review of the literature, it was discovered that the marketing strategies involve location, image, university logo, and promotion to disregard the expected brand orientation and university brand (Foroudi et al., 2020b). The paucity of studies on the construct of expected brand orientation and university brand postulate that adequate measurement and estimation of the effect of perceived brand orientation and university brand are lacking in the literature (Balaji et al., 2016). Therefore, this





study aims to add to the theory and practice by investigating the connective impacts on the perceived brand orientation and university brand along with other marketing strategies on customer loyalty, as recommended by Sharif & Lemine, (2021). The review of literature also revealed that past marketing strategies studies were primarily set up in developed countries such as the UK, Spain, and Latvia to the less of the Malaysian continent in general and international postgraduate students in particular (Lim et al., 2020). Nonetheless, the HES and its strategic importance to the global development plan function to observe customer loyalty in the higher education setting (Foroudi et al., 2020a). The globalization of HIEs affected student retention and loyalty, leading to the decline of public funding of HEs, privatization and commercialization of HEIs, student mobility, and intense competition for student enrolment among HEIs, especially universities (Eresia-Eke et al., 2020). Each of the practical issues highlighted significantly impacts the university's ability to attract and retain students and achieve academic, pedagogical and financial targets through the loyalty of students (Dennis et al., 2016).

The governing body of higher education institutions encourages a 'customer-oriented' approach to ensure quality in service delivery by including student experience as one of the evaluation criteria for quality review. Service quality is a key factor in the commercialization of higher education, not only for the sustainability of an institution but also as a source of national competitive advantage. Therefore, this study fills in the gap by introducing the intervening impact of emotional satisfaction on the relationships between the quality of services, marketing strategies, and the loyalty of the customers. Most previous studies have examined the direct connection between the quality of service and customer loyalty.



While disregarding the significant role of emotional satisfaction, previous studies discussed the concepts of service quality and customer satisfaction to assess the customer experience in the service context. However, this concept only assesses the cognitive angle of customer service, neglecting emotional details. Understanding emotional satisfaction can guide service providers to improve international students' experience. Emotional satisfaction influences future purchases, recommendations, satisfaction, and loyalty intentions.

## 1.2 The Conceptual Framework

In the present study, the first part of the independent variable for this conceptual framework is service quality, which includes academic, non-academic, program issues, access, reputation, and e-service quality. The service quality was hypothesized to be associated with customer satisfaction and loyalty. Concurrently, satisfaction emotion may influence customer loyalty and is a variable that mediates the connection between the quality of service and loyalty of the customer. The focus of this study is on customer loyalty, which is the variable being analysed. Below is the explanation for the association between the independent, mediator, and dependent variables.

The proposed research framework demonstrates that service quality of academic, non-academic, reputation, program issue, access, reputation, and e-service quality have a positive connection with the customer's loyalty through the intervening impact of satisfaction. According to Dropulić et al. (2021), the emotion of satisfaction can reduce the cost of marketing and increase the loyalty of the customers towards

organizations. For example, the influence of academic issues (Yuan et al., 2016; Santos & Ruiz-Esteban, 2020), non-academic (Chong & Ahmed, 2015; McLeay et al., 2017; Moslehpour et al., 2020), program issues (Salmuni et al., 2016; Osman & Ashraf, 2019), access (McLeay et al., 2017), reputation (Salmuni et al., 2016), e-service quality (Um & Ph, 2021; Daud et al., 2020) on the satisfaction of the customer, and eventually, the loyalty of the customer was described by empirically by the previous studies.

Nevertheless, empirical proof can also happen due to the insignificant connection between service quality and the satisfaction of the customer (Narang, 2012; Ushantha & Kumara, 2016; Md et al., 2017) and customer loyalty (Subrahmanyam, 2017; Chandra et al., 2018). However, the second part of the independent variable for this conceptual framework is marketing strategies, which comprise the university's brand, location, and perceived brand orientation. The marketing strategies were hypothesized to be associated with emotional satisfaction and customer loyalty. Concurrently, the emotion of satisfaction may influence customer loyalty and act as a mediator variable that links the marketing strategies- customer loyalty relationship.

The proposed research framework demonstrates that marketing strategies of the university's brand, location, and perceived brand orientation positively connect with customer loyalty via the intervening effects of satisfaction. For example, the fluence of the brand of the university (Daud et al., 2020; Sultan & Wong, 2014c), location (J. et al., 2013; Noaman et al., 2013), and perceived brand orientation (Casidy, 2014b; Susilo, 2016) influence the student satisfaction, which eventually reported the loyalty of the customer by previous empirical research. However, the empirical proof shows the irrelevant connection between marketing strategies and customer satisfaction (Lim et



al., 2018). In other words, satisfaction is not enough to permit the customer's loyalty to a service provider or brand. This scheme spins around the empirical evidence that some satisfied customers will still shift (Wilkins et al., 2017), and customers who rely on the association are often disloyal (A. et al., 2012a). These mixtures of findings recommend examining the viable role of a contingent variable between the predictor and the criterion variables. Thus, customer satisfaction may be sufficient to guarantee customer loyalty in Malaysian public universities as it relies on the emotion of international postgraduate satisfaction, which requires empirical proof (Dropulić et al., 2021). In other words, emotional satisfaction is hypothesized to lessen the impact of marketing strategies and the quality of service on customer loyalty in Malaysian public universities.

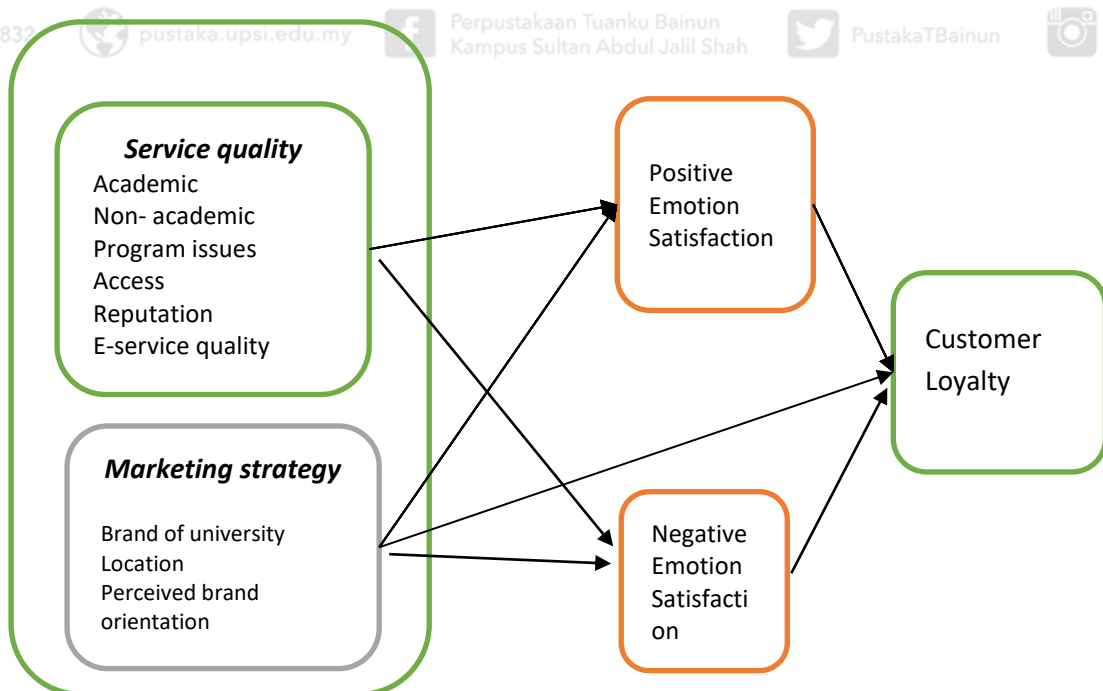


Figure 1.2. Conceptual Framework of study



### 1.3 Research Objectives

- 1- To examine the effect of service quality on positive emotional satisfaction.
- 2- To examine the effect of service quality on negative emotional satisfaction.
- 3- To examine the effect of marketing strategy on positive emotional satisfaction.
- 4- To examine the effect of marketing strategy on negative emotional satisfaction.
- 5- To examine the effect of service quality on customer loyalty.
- 6- To examine the effect of marketing strategy on customer loyalty.
- 7- To examine the effect of positive emotional satisfaction on customer loyalty.
- 8- To examine the effect of negative emotional satisfaction on customer loyalty.
- 9- To examine the effect of positive emotional satisfaction as a mediator between service quality and customer loyalty.
- 10- To examine the effect of positive emotional satisfaction as a mediator between marketing strategy and customer loyalty
- 11- To examine the effect of negative emotional satisfaction as a mediator between service quality and customer loyalty.
- 12- To examine the effect of negative emotional satisfaction as a mediator between marketing strategy and customer loyalty.

### 1.4 Research Questions

- 1- What is the effect of service quality on positive emotional satisfaction?
- 2- What is the effect of service quality on negative emotional satisfaction?





- 3- What is the effect of marketing strategy on positive Emotional satisfaction?
- 4- What is the effect of marketing strategy on negative Emotional satisfaction?
- 5- What is the effect of service quality on customer loyalty?
- 6- What is the effect of marketing strategy on customer loyalty?
- 7- What is the effect of positive emotional satisfaction on customer loyalty?
- 8- What is the effect of negative emotional satisfaction on customer loyalty?
- 9- What is the effect the effect of positive emotional satisfaction as mediator between service quality and customer loyalty?
- 10- What is the effect the effect of positive emotional satisfaction as mediator between marketing strategy and customer loyalty?
- 11- What is the effect of negative emotional satisfaction as mediator between service quality and customer loyalty?
- 12- What is the effect of negative emotional satisfaction as mediator between marketing strategy and customer loyalty?

## 1.5 Hypotheses

- H<sub>1</sub>:** There is a significant connection between service quality and positive emotional satisfaction.
- H<sub>2</sub>:** There is a negative connection between service quality and negative emotional satisfaction.
- H<sub>3</sub>:** There is a positive relationship between marketing strategy and positive emotional satisfaction.





**H<sub>4</sub>:** There is a negative relationship between marketing strategy and negative emotional satisfaction.

**H<sub>5</sub>:** There is a positive relationship between positive emotional satisfaction and customer loyalty.

**H<sub>6</sub>:** There is a negative relationship between negative emotional satisfaction and customer loyalty.

**H<sub>7</sub>:** There is a positive relationship between service quality and customer loyalty.

**H<sub>8</sub>:** There is a positive relationship between marketing strategy and customer loyalty.

**H<sub>9</sub>:** Positive emotional satisfaction mediator the relationship between service quality and customer loyalty.

**H<sub>10</sub>:** Positive emotional satisfaction mediator the relationship between marketing strategy and customer loyalty.

**H<sub>11</sub>:** Negative emotional satisfaction mediator the relationship between service quality and customer loyalty.

**H<sub>12</sub>:** Negative emotional satisfaction mediator the relationship between marketing strategy and customer loyalty.

## 1.6 Significance of the Study

This study hopes to contribute significantly to theory, practice, and methodology knowledge. From a theoretical point of view, the results of this study will provide empirical evidence on the relationship between the quality of service, marketing



strategy, emotional satisfaction, and the loyalty of customers in the context of HEIs by reviewing the existing marketing strategy literature specifically and service quality in general given the lack of studies on the construction of perceived brand orientation even in mainstream marketing strategies in the literature.

### 1.7 Scope of the Study

The proposed conceptual model was used to determine the emotional satisfaction of international postgraduate students in Malaysian public universities. The study revealed a significant correlation between four important variables, including service quality, marketing strategy, emotional satisfaction, and customer loyalty.

In Malaysia, there are 20 public universities which offer diploma, undergraduate, and post-graduate programs in various fields. These universities are fully funded by the federal government and comprise 5 research universities, 4 comprehensive universities, and 11 focused universities. To meet the demand for tertiary education, the number of public HEIs increased in 2008 to provide placement for new admissions.

## 1.7 Operational Definition

This study was conducted to find out the impact of marketing strategies and service quality based on emotional satisfaction and customer loyalty by implementing a model for international post-graduate students in public universities in Malaysia. This quantitative study involves the structure and self-administered questionnaire based on the sampling method of data collection facilities from Public Universities in Malaysia.

**1.7.1 Service Quality:** extending the service concept to five dimensions of service quality; Academic, Non-Academic, Quality of program, physicality, Reputation, and E-service quality. Enhanced investigation of the concept has established other dimensions of service quality (Abdullah, 2006)

**1.7.2 Marketing strategy:** The application of loyalty strategies has proven to multiply the level of customer retention while lessening marketing expenses and for this marketing strategy, the key points are the brand of the university, location, promotion, and marketing communication.

**1.7.3 Emotional satisfaction:** The significance of emotional satisfaction and dissatisfaction linked to the achievement of university success and the occurrence of failure in fulfilling the hopes of both students. Previous research discovered that positive emotions, such as pleasant surprise, interest, and joy, as well as negative emotions, such as hostility, anger, disgust, contempt, shame,

guilt, fear, and sadness, influence a person's satisfaction level during consumption experiences. (Dean, 2001).

**1.7.4 Customer Loyalty:** There are various critical points in customer loyalty, one of which refers to customer-developed behavior, i.e., repurchase behavior. It considers all the experiences customers face when using products and services from suppliers.

## 1.8 Thesis Outlines

This research comprises of four chapters. The followings explain the content of each

**Chapter One:** Provides basic background of study with problem statement, objectives, and scope of study with summary.

**Chapter Two:** Presents the literature review to analyse the measurement of service quality model and specify the problem for the research articles in the area of student Emotional satisfaction.

**Chapter Three:** This chapter presents the research method, and proposed a new model, to measure the service quality in Malaysian universities with the described steps.

**Chapter Four:** In chapter three analysis and results has been interpreted

## 1.9 Chapter summary

This chapter presents the background, problem statement, objectives, and research questions of a study on customer satisfaction, loyalty, emotional satisfaction, and marketing strategy in Malaysian public universities. Chapter Two provides a literature review related to the study's focus on international postgraduates.