

CONSUMER BEHAVIOUR ANALYSIS OF HOSPITALITY STUDENTS' EVALUATION AND SATISFACTION WITH THEIR UNIVERSITIES

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Abstract

Purpose – The research aims to study the students' pre and post evaluation of their hospitality education institutions considering a set of measures, in a consumer-decision making model.

Methodology – Applying a survey method within a quantitative approach, the focus is to decide the most important factors in the student selection and experience. In order to analyze the students' evaluation, selection and satisfaction, a set of measures have been decided through a literature review; those are the university's location, educational environment, name and reputation, future career prospects, university's relationships, internal culture, reliability and communication, as well as its effect on students' satisfaction.

Findings – The results revealed that students consider mainly the future career prospects, educational environment and name and reputation as the major selection criteria. Hence, hospitality education institutions should promote themselves based on these factors. This research focuses on a widely used decision making model, in the consumer behaviour, in evaluating alternatives based on specific factors. In addition, the study highlights the importance of university's internal culture in students' satisfaction.

Originality – Given the importance of theoretical and practical learning, the strong links with industry and the reputation of the hospitality institution within the context of educational accreditation and industry recognition, hospitality students' evaluation and hospitality institutions' marketing to attract students is a topic of great value.

Keywords consumer behaviour, decision making; choice criteria: customer satisfaction; hospitality education

INTRODUCTION

Hospitality education institutions are considered the key provider of educated and qualified human resources to the hotel industry; contribute significantly to the industry's operations and growth. Moreover, the hospitality education field is rendered more competitive due to the large number of hospitality education institutions worldwide, and, hence, considering marketing principles and strategies for these institutions is of much concern. On the other hand, many previous studies have discussed issues in education marketing with focus on different strategies and techniques; including students' satisfaction (Jurkowitsch, Vignali & Kaufmann 2006), word of mouth marketing (Wahyuningsih 2011), branding (Gray, Fam and Llanes 2003; Alhelalat, Ineson & Faulk 2009) and relationship marketing (Jurkowitsch et al.

2006). Applying the decision making principles in the consumer behaviour literature is the subject of the current paper.

The American Marketing Association (AMA 2015) defines consumer behaviour as "the dynamic interaction of affect and cognition, behaviour, and the environment by which human beings conduct the exchange aspects of their lives", with direct links to consumers as decision makers. Schiffman and Kanuk (2006, p.3) take a similar approach in defining consumer behavior as "the behaviour that consumers display in searching for, purchasing, using, evaluating, and disposing of products and services that they expect will satisfy their needs". Solomon, Bamossy, Askegaard and Hogg (2006, p.6) state that consumer behaviour is related to "the study of the processes involved when individuals or groups select, purchase, use or dispose products, services, ideas or experiences to satisfy needs and desires".

This paper applies the consumer decision making model, mainly the pre evaluation of alternatives and post evaluation of satisfaction or dissatisfaction with the buying decision on the behaviour of hospitality students while choosing their field and institution for their graduate studies. The importance of this topic stems from the fact that understanding the process of choice and evaluation based on specific measures can help educational institution in the hospitality field to promote their services based on a logical and feasible approach. Considering the special characteristics of hospitality education as the incidence of theoretical and practical learning, the strong links with industry through training and future career prospects, and the reputation of the hospitality education institution in relation to educational accreditation and industry recognition, the topic of hospitality institutions' marketing to attract students and the students' evaluation of the institutions' marketing efforts is the focus of the current paper.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Education marketing literature is rich in discussion of topics concerned mainly with the appeal of universities to students; there is an agreement that education is one of the fields that needs wider application of marketing principles and strategies (Kotler & Fox 1995). Consumer behaviour principles in general (with a specific focus on the decision making process) and its application in marketing higher education in particular is the major part of this literature review. Accordingly, hospitality education consumer (student) is considered primarily.

Consumer behaviour

Marketing in higher education is considered one of the managerial operations that seek to attract students and maximize market benefits (Jurkowitsch et al. 2006). Studying and analysing customer needs and wants is usually the first step of marketing activities; this can be deeply studied through consumer behaviour analysis and understanding.

Consumer behaviour refers to the part of knowledge that is concerned with studying, understating and describing the behaviour of consumers in relation to their choice, decisions and benefits in their lives in relation to marketing actions. Therefore, the processes of studying and describing the whole process of customer needs and wants, choice and satisfaction, cognition, and buying decision are of great importance in this context. Schiffman and Kanuk (2006) stress that studying human behaviour is helpful in marketing through its role in positioning, market segmentation, profitability, and overall, understanding our consumption behaviour.

One of the consumer behaviour definitions (recognised by the AMA and mentioned in Peter & Olson 2009) raise the importance of the interaction of affect and cognition, behaviour, and the environment. This issue explains the elements of consumer behaviour analysis as the psychological factor of the customer (motivation, perception, learning, personality and attitude), firm's marketing efforts, external socio-cultural environment (family, culture and social class) and the human behaviour in relation to selection and satisfaction (Schiffman & Kanuk 2006; Peter & Olson 2009; Hawkins & Mothersbaugh 2010).

A major topic in consumer behaviour is decision making. It represents a model of how customers use and evaluate information about alternatives to make their decision of selecting specific products or brands rather than others. The decision making process consists of five major steps: problem recognition; pre-purchase search; alternative evaluation; purchase; post purchase evaluation (Schiffman & Kanuk 2006).

Traditionally, 'need' is the key concept in marketing; all marketing efforts are directed to "make customers happy" through satisfying their needs (Venkateswaran 2011). From Maslow's hierarchy of needs, that is widely studied in relation to marketing as well as other fields, to what is searched now in relation to consumer behaviour, needs is base for studying human and consumer behaviour. In this context, customer needs are influenced by the internal psychological factors as well as the external environment; personal characteristics as well as the internal stimuli, firms' advertising, reference groups, family influence and culture are the major factors that enhance customer's need recognition (Kotler, Bowen, & Makens 2006; Schiffman & Kanuk 2006; Kotler & Keller 2011).

The sources of information available for customers in the decision making stage are varied: past experience as experiential sources is the key source of information here; then personal sources like friends, family, and neighbours as word of mouth recommendations; and last, commercial sources like advertising, packaging and sales people (Hawkins, Best & Coney 2004; Schiffman & Kanuk 2006; Kotler & Killer 2011).

The aim of the evaluation stage is to build the purchase intention; all alternatives that are decided after the information search process are evaluated based on specific criteria. The process here is to decide and weight the attributes or consequences by consumers to evaluate and be ready to choose from this set of alternatives (Lindquist & Sirgy, 2009).

Customer choice of a specific product or service is made based on the product's brand and its attributes. According to Pearson (1996, p.6), a brand is “a combination of features (what the product is), customer benefits (what needs and wants the product meets), and values (what the customer associates with the product)”. This definition highlights the three main parts of branding as product attributes, consumer choice, and the way of which customers perceive and weight information about the brand (Erdem et al. 1999). In the consumer behaviour literature, there is a focus on selection and satisfaction as key terms in the pre and post purchase evaluation in the decision making process. Selection is summarised as the process of selecting from several choices, products, brands, or ideas. It is also described as the process by which consumers collect information about alternatives and evaluate those alternatives in order to make choices among them (AMA 2015).

AMA defines satisfaction as the degree to which a consumer's expectations are fulfilled or surpassed by a product. Another definition from the AMA (2015) proposes that consumer satisfaction is the post-purchase evaluation of a consumer action by the ultimate consumer or the decision maker. As results of the satisfaction or dissatisfaction, beliefs, attitudes, and future purchase patterns; word-of-mouth communication; and legal and informal complaints are related to the post-purchase satisfaction/dissatisfaction process.

The concept of choice and selection is related to evaluating alternative actions or behaviours and forming a behavioural intention or plan to engage in the selected behaviour. While, the key concept here is choice criteria which focuses on the specific attributes or consequences used by consumers to evaluate and choose from a set of alternatives (AMA 2015).

Consumer decision making in education

In the higher education marketing, customers' (students) search, evaluation, choice and satisfaction is made upon the attributes of the service (university) and the weighting of these attributes in their mindset through past experience or information search. Solomon (1996) stresses that a rational approach to consumer decision-making refers to the careful weighing and evaluation of utilization or functional product attributes to reach a satisfactory decision, especially in the higher education field, where consumer decision making is considered a high-involvement decision as it involves a careful weighting and evaluation, high cost and risk as well as long term effect. Within this context, Moogan, Barron and Harris (1999) report that students take long time to search for information and evaluate alternatives within an extensive problem solving approach. In addition, Cubillo, Sanchez and Cervino (2006) find that consumers of higher education services evaluate the weight of each factor based on the purchase intention, and the relative importance of each element for the factor it belongs to.

Accordingly, the role of consumer decision making process at this point is salient through applying the information search about product attributes and the sources of information, generating a perception towards the available services and brands, evaluating the brand based on its attributes, and post purchase evaluation as

dissatisfaction or satisfaction with these attributes (Moogan et al. 1999; Wahyuningsih 2011).

Students' selection and satisfaction

Recent studies that discussed marketing in education focused mainly on branding attributes in which these institutions believe. Gray et al. (2003) discuss brand attractiveness to students; mainly the features of reputation; academic quality; campus life; and guidance of services. Therefore, the summary of the university's branding aspects considers the dimensions of the university's learning environment, name and reputation, graduates' career prospects, destination image, and cultural integration.

According to Kotler and Fox (1995), the name of the university adds value to the institution. It specifies its position, and is considered an attraction element when it is linked to the university's core and augmented service as well as its field. Melewar and Akel (2005) explain that the university's brand name represents its identity that is directed to its customers as well as stakeholders; plus its strong link with the university's internal culture and communication. Brand positioning is another aspect that is concerned with the selection criteria, relevance to the product/service, and the ability of the brand to offer a distinctive image over competing services (Cambridge 2002).

Another view point discusses selection of a specific product or service from the promise side; it links that to corporate performance and reliability in fulfilling promises, which can be used in evaluating the institution; its image, positioning and reputation (Aaker 1995).

One of the recent studies that considered German students' satisfaction, conducted by Gruber, Fuß, Voss, and Gläser-Zikuda (2010), examine the selection factors of administrative and student services, library and teaching facilities, courses and teaching methods, placement process, reputation of the university and the surrounding city. They found that the quality of courses, reputation of the university and teaching and presentation of information contribute significantly to student satisfaction with their university. In addition, Songsathaphorn, Chen and Ruangkanjanases (2014) concluded that country positive image, safety issues, education and university's image are the most important determinants of students' satisfaction in the Chinese context.

Moreover, there are few strategies that link two or more institutions together in order to affect the customer decision making process; it was concluded, thus, that partnerships and relationships in general have a positive effect on customers' view of an institutions, especially in higher education (Trim 2003; Alhelalat et al. 2009).

Consequently, and based on the above discussion, the aspects that are discussed in relation to students' selection, satisfaction and evaluation of hospitality educational institutions are: location; educational environment; brand name and reputation; career prospects (Gray et al. 2003; Alhelalat et al. 2009); relationships (Trim 2003); internal culture (Melewar & Akel 2005); communication (Kotler & Fox 1995); and reliability (Aaker 1995). Those are discussed as follow:

Location

The location of the university is linked to students' choice through several points, those are the country, the city, infrastructure, safety, and destination image (Gray et al. 2003; Ali-Choudhury, Bennett & Savani 2008; Alhelalat et al. 2009; Spake, Joseph & Weldy 2010). The importance of location from students' viewpoint stems from the need for non-educational activities, such as sport and leisure, safety and stability of the destination, and accommodation availability (Ali-Choudhury et al. 2008, Spake et al. 2010). Crisp (2010) presents a broad view of the role of the location of the educational institution in the students' selection based on the destination reputation in terms of stability and wealth of community, accessibility and transportation links, cost of living, and communication infrastructure.

Educational environment

Students evaluate universities based on the quality of the learning environment, including campus facilities, quality of tutors, and courses offered (Gray et al. 2003; Alhelalat et al. 2009). Spake et al. (2010) discuss the students selection of a university and focus on the academic facilities and environment at this stage, including, accreditation, technology employment, academic programmes offered, quality of faculty members, and in-campus student services. Furthermore, course quality and the international recognition of the degrees conferred by the university are on top in the student selection criteria (Crisp 2010).

Furthermore, one of the important items in evaluating the university's learning environment is its appearance and physical environment (as part of the service marketing mix). It refers to all the tangible items an institution offered to students as building and facilities, condition of the physical location, technologies used, cleanliness of rooms, library, and more (Soedijati & Pratminingsih 2011).

Name and reputation

The reputation of the university is linked directly to the brand name (Kotler & Fox 1995). The major concerns at this point are related to university reputation, relevance of brand name, ease of name recognition and the brand personality or identity of which the university seek to deliver to current and future students (Spake et al. 2010). Moreover, destination reputation and academic reputation reflect positively or negatively on the brand name, and hence, students perceived image.

Recent studies in different fields support the view that brand name, image, identity and reputation are important at the stage of evaluating products and services in the buying decision. Crisp (2010) confirms that the university's academic reputation and history, as well as strength of its communication and information availability are among the important branding aspects.

One of the important branding concepts is positioning; it represents the way customers perceive and rank the brand, its image, benefits and attributes in their mindset (Alhelalat et al. 2009). In educational branding, brand positioning is seen from different

angles; examples from positioning statements of universities focus on being meaningful, memorable, relevant and believable. Others assume their brand to represent their field, promises, differentiation and target market. Cultural diversity, social responsibility and educational values are other brand values of another educational institution.

Brand relevance is considered to be one of the major items of positioning; it is a measure of how the brand is associated with the name, product category, memorability, and differentiation in the customer mindset (Nedeljković-Pravdić 2010). Previous research found that brand relevance to product category, association with brand image, brand appeal and ease of recognition were the related aspects to brand relevance context (Cambridge 2002).

Career prospects

What the university can offer to students by way of a link to the industry and future career is one of the major points in students' selection of a course and a university. Universities' partnerships with the industry for the purpose of creating future career opportunities as well as training and internship programmes can create a positive attitude towards the university and a remarkable competitive advantage (Waryszak 1999). Easy guidance to business, as a practical path to future career for students, can benefit students through broadening their knowledge and increasing their opportunities in getting into the industry through training (Alhelalat et al. 2009; Spowart, Taylor & van der Westhuizen 2010). Accordingly, and based on recent results from student selection surveys, future career prospects, universities' links with the industry, and the strength of training programmes rank high in the students selection and satisfaction (Alhelalat et al. 2009; Crisp 2010).

University relationships

One of the major evaluation aspects of a university is its relationships. This aspect represents the ability of the university to form positive relationships with its stakeholders in order to maximize customer benefits (Alhelalat et al. 2009). Customer relationships, business relationships, governmental relationships and internal relationships are the most desired types here (Trim 2003). The concept of consumer-brand relationship is used in explaining the relationships with customers as the main target of all marketing activities; it is mentioned as the base of the customer equity in the branding literature (Morris & Martin 2000; Rust, Zeithaml & Lemon 2004). In the marketing field, no service or corporate can stand alone; a collaboration with others is important to guarantee the flow of inputs as well as the marketing of outputs (Gummesson 2002).

In the higher education marketing, relationships with business industries, other educational institutions, governmental institutions and customers (alumni, current and future students) are seen valuable in the business to business, business to customer and customer to customer relationships (Trim 2003). Hess and Mullen (1995) focus on the value of practice-education partnerships in building knowledge for students and researchers. Baker, Homan, Schonhoff and Kreuter (1999) discuss a broader view of

partnerships that considers academic-practice-community partnerships. They call for building and maintaining relationships that are based on mutual trust and benefits.

Internal culture

Internal culture is seen as the joint point between corporate culture and corporate brand. It refers to the internal demonstration of a brand; it is concerned with internal and corporate culture (Ma, Ding & Zhang 2010). The concepts of brand-development, identity-development and the importance of customer-employee interaction are valuable in highlighting effective internal culture (Whisman 2009).

The items that were studied as internal corporate culture determinants were linked mainly to the internal aspect of the corporate and its branding process. Ma et al. (2010) focus on leadership, corporate social responsibility, internal marketing processing, slogan, culture of brand origin and the employees' role in building effective corporate culture.

University communication

Marketing communication in general can affect customers' mindset in terms of creating the awareness, persuasion, and giving information about the service to customers (Lewis & Chambers 2000). According to Berkebile (2010) and Nedeljković-Pravdić (2010), communication that is directed to customers and stakeholders can affect positioning and image; it is done through advertising, direct marketing, public relations, events marketing, electronic means and media usage. Besides, in the universities marketing, alumni relations, university's website and word of mouth are effective communication tools (Colombatto 2008).

Reliability

Reliability is based on the concepts of trust, credibility and keeping and fulfilling promises (Alwi & Kitchen 2008; Nedeljković-Pravdić 2010). It is also linked directly to reputation, clarity and relationship intentions. Credibility is also connected to customer expectations and risk reduction when the corporate fulfills its promises of quality and value delivery (Dopico, Blázquez & Tudoran 2009).

In a different context, Tsiligiris (2001) links education quality, service quality, culture and value to the students' perception of their higher education institutions in relation to value achievement and promise fulfillment. Hence, credibility, promise fulfillment and trust are the indicators of university's reliability.

Customer satisfaction

In the marketing literature, the customer is the target of many marketing activities; needs analysis, customer value and loyalty, and customer satisfaction are of much concern in this context. Links between customers and decision making are found in the consumer behaviour literature under the customer selection, satisfaction and post-

purchase evaluation processes. Hence, corporate image from the customer point of view is evaluated through corporate reputation, customer satisfaction and service quality (Alwi & Kitchen 2008). Moreover, customer satisfaction and retention is based on what is called "customer commitment" as the following stage (Guzman 2008). Furthermore, the "total customer experience" concept considers customer expectations, the quality of services as a series, and recommendations through word of mouth to other customers as a result of satisfaction (Meyer & Schwager 2007). Moreover, Nedeljković-Pravdić (2010) discusses satisfaction through its connection with customers' functional needs, emotional needs, perception, interaction, and further experience.

Within this paper, customer satisfaction is the dependent factor in order to study the students' pre and post evaluation of the university in terms of its location, educational environment, name and reputation, students' career prospects, university's relationships, internal culture, reliability and communication. Accordingly, the hypotheses were formed as following:

- H₁: the university's location has a significant statistical contribution to students' satisfaction.
- H₂: the university's educational environment has a significant statistical contribution to students' satisfaction.
- H₃: the university's brand name and reputation has a significant statistical contribution to students' satisfaction.
- H₄: students' career prospects have a significant statistical contribution to students' satisfaction.
- H₅: the university's relationships have a significant statistical contribution to students' satisfaction.
- H₆: the university's internal culture has a significant statistical contribution to students' satisfaction.
- H₇: the university's communication has a significant statistical contribution to students' satisfaction.
- H₈: the university's reliability has a significant statistical contribution to students' satisfaction.

METHODS

The study employed a quantitative approach through a survey research strategy. For the data collection purpose, the questionnaire design considers the nine evaluation factors mentioned earlier (eight independent and one dependent) in fifty-five statements. Within the questionnaire, five-point Likert scale was used to allow respondents to express the most accurate opinion within the scale (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2007). The variables that have been used in the formulation of questionnaire statements are explained in Table 1.

Table 1: **Students' evaluation factors and their measures**

Factors	Measuring items
Location	Safety, leisure facilities, accessibility, cost of living, infrastructure, reputation of tourism and hospitality services
Educational Environment	Educational facilities, faculty members, courses offered, quality of teaching, degree recognition, university's academic reputation
Name and Reputation	University's name, slogan, reputation, differentiation, name Memorability, meaningful name, university's ranking, brand relevance, links between needs and offerings
Career Prospects	Future career links, training programs, relationships with industry, degree recognition in the industry
Relationships	Community relationships, industry relationships, educational relationships, customer-brand relationships
Internal Culture	Staff behaviour, university's values, leadership values, internal culture, social responsibility
Communication	Information availability, usable website, public relations, alumni relations, students' recommendations
Reliability	Credibility, promise fulfilment, risk reduction, trust.
Satisfaction	Degree of satisfaction about the university's location, educational environment, name and reputation, career prospects, relationships, internal culture, communication, and reliability.

In relation to data collection, 200 questionnaires were sent out to hotel management and tourism management students in four universities in Jordan, administrated by the author and well-trained assistants. A stratified sampling method was used to ensure the response from students in the four universities. Consequently, 127 usable questionnaires were used in the analysis stage, with a response rate of 63.5%; details about the sample are shown in Table 2.

Table 2: **Questionnaire stratified sample and response rates**

	University A	University B	University C	University D	Total
Sent	50	50	50	50	200
Received	29	39	33	26	127
Response rate	58%	78%	66%	52%	63.5%

Quantitative methods of data collection and analysis, through SPSS, were used due to the large number of sample and the need for accurate information regarding the students' selection of, satisfaction with and evaluation of their institutions. For the purpose of data analysis, descriptive statistics were used to allocate the respondents' demographics and to generate means and standard deviations. As well, multiple (linear) regression was used to measure the contribution of the university's location, educational environment, name and reputation, students' career prospects, relationships, culture, reliability and communication as the independent factors to the students' satisfaction as the dependent factor. Linear regression is one of the popular methods of measuring interrelationships among variables; it is concerned with predicting the change in the dependent variable as a result of the change in the independent variables and more appropriate with a set of independent variables and one dependent variable in the analysis (Hair et al. 1998). It can benefit the research aim in understanding the

degree of change in the dependent variable (satisfaction) as a result of the independent variables.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results of the data analysis shows that the majority of respondents were males, aged between 18-25 years, studying hotel management, tourism management or hotel and tourism management as one specialisation in some universities, and distributed in different year levels. Table 3 shows the results of the demographic analysis of respondents.

Table 3: Demographic distribution of sample

Demographics		N	%
Gender	Male	102	80.3
	Female	25	19.7
	Total	127	100
Age	18-25	109	85.8
	26-35	17	13.4
	35+	1	0.8
	Total	127	100.0
Specialisation	Hotel Management	41	32.3
	Tourism Management	63	49.6
	Hotel and Tourism Management	23	18.1
	Total	127	100.0
Level	Year 1	19	15
	Year 2	45	35.4
	Year 3	29	22.8
	Year 4	34	26.8
	Total	127	94.8

In relation to the internal consistency of the data, reliability test was used through the SPSS software to generate Cronbach's Alpha values of the nine variables of the study; eight independent variables and one dependent variable. Hair et al. (1998) stated that Cronbach's Alpha is the most and commonly used method to test reliability, through measuring internal consistency. Saunders et al. (2007) considered .70 (or above) value of Alpha is an acceptable level of reliability, with higher level of reliability as the value goes higher. All Cronbach's Alpha values here were in the high level. Table 4 shows the results of reliability test.

Table 4: The results of data reliability test (Cronbach's Alpha)

Evaluation item	No. of items	Alpha
Location	5	.854
Educational Environment	7	.874
Name and Reputation	9	.886
Career Prospects	6	.834
Relationships	4	.847
Internal Culture	5	.844
Communication	7	.894
Reliability	5	.839
Satisfaction	7	.848

Table 5 shows the means and standard deviations of the research variables. It shows that career prospects was the first reason behind students' choice (mean 3.56) and the most important evaluation item, then educational environment (mean 3.55), and name and reputation (mean 3.52). This result is consistent with previous studies (for example Alhelalat et al. 2003; Crisp 2010) that career prospects is the first factor when it comes to a university and field selection, and the main piece of information students look for when evaluating alternatives for their future studies.

Table 5: Descriptive Statistics of the variables

Evaluation item	Mean	Std. Deviation
Career Prospects	3.5570	.5995
Education Environment	3.5515	.5619
Name and reputation	3.5239	.8254
Relationships	3.5141	.6489
Communication	3.4865	.6021
Location	3.4097	.6663
Internal Culture	3.1185	.7129
Reliability	3.0929	.8779
Satisfaction	3.4078	.89445

In relation to the linear regression, model fit results show that R square value demonstrates high significant value ($p=0.001$) and the independent variables explain .885 of the change in the dependent variable. As linear regression is a method of estimating the expected value of the dependent variable when given the values of the independent variable, the results here indicate that university's location, internal culture and relationships have the most significant effect on the students' satisfaction. In more numerical details, the regression results show that university's location ($\beta= .217$; $p=0.009$), educational environment ($\beta= .142$; $p=0.008$), name and reputation ($\beta= .134$; $p=0.015$), career prospects ($\beta= .149$; $p=0.013$), relationships ($\beta= .193$; $p=0.021$), internal culture ($\beta= .212$; $p=0.004$), and communication ($\beta= .112$; $p=0.026$)

demonstrate significant contribution to the estimation of the dependent variable (student satisfaction), while reliability did not prove any significant contribution to the dependent variable, as shown in Table 6.

Table 6: **Multiple regression results**

	R	R Square	β	p
Model fit	.941	.885		.001
Location			.217	.009
Internal Culture			.212	.004
University Relationships			.193	.021
Career prospects			.149	.013
Educational environment			.142	.008
Name and reputation			.134	.015
Communication			.112	.026
Reliability			-.034	.712

Accordingly, the hypotheses testing results support that H₁, H₂, H₃, H₄, H₅, H₆ and H₇ are accepted with significant values, while H₈ was rejected as p value was above the .05 level.

These results support the hypothesis that students' selection of their hospitality education institutions is based on the evaluation of the university in terms of its location, safety, accessibility, destination reputation, quality of courses, quality of teaching, university's reputation, information availability about the university in the stage of decision making, university's links with the industry, training programs, degree recognition, academic relationships, community relationships, and the student's evaluation of what the university offers compared to what they expect. Less effect was evident in respect of trust and risk reduction on the students' selection and satisfaction.

In the students' satisfaction literature, the factors of location, relationships, career prospects, educational environment and name and reputation ranked high in the results of similar satisfaction surveys. Alhelalat et al. (2009) found that university's career prospects and easy guidance to the industry through the university's relationships, were the most important students' satisfaction factors, while Gruber et al. (2010) concluded that quality of courses and university's image and reputation rank high in the students' satisfaction with their university. Songsathaphorn et al. (2014) determined the factors of education facilities and campus and country safety as the most significant factors in students' satisfaction.

It should be noted that regarding a university's internal culture; the results indicate that students search for and evaluate the university's social responsibility, internal marketing, and the customer-employee interaction. These factors were traditionally evaluated as less important, while this study concludes that students value their university's social role as well as the employees' moral and communication process.

Accordingly, the results of the empirical study support the literature in relation to the factors that affect students' satisfaction with their university and the course of their graduate studies. Yet, the current study put an emphasis on the university's internal culture as an important satisfaction determinant.

CONCLUSION

The importance of marketing and differentiation is salient in the principles and strategies in different commercial as well as non-profit sectors. Educational institutions are considered one of the sectors that have to consider marketing in order to convince their target stakeholders (including student and their families and social groups, partners and industries) of the benefits of their services and, therefore, to attract and perform more volume of business.

It is concluded that hospitality students select and evaluate their education institution based on different attributes. Recent studies showed that these items are summarised as the university's location (including destination reputation, safety, accessibility, infrastructure, hospitality services), educational environment (including facilities, faculty members, education quality, course quality, university recognition, and academic reputation), name and reputation (including brand name, slogan, differentiation and information availability), students' future career guidance (including industry links, training programs, and degree recognition by the industry), university's relationships (including community relationships, educational relationships and industry relationships), internal culture (including university's social responsibility, internal culture, staff behaviour, values and leadership guidance), (including memorability, being meaningful, relevance to courses, and university's rank in the students' mindset), communication (including usability of university's website, information availability in different media tools, public relations, alumni relations and students' word of mouth recommendations), and reliability (including trust, credibility, risk reduction and promise fulfilment).

The quantitative analysis revealed that hospitality students build their selection, satisfaction and evaluation of their universities on the educational environment and the academic facilities, university's academic and industry relationships that benefits both students' theoretical and practical learning, the benefits of the location of the university, the way they perceive and position the university's brand in their minds, their thoughts about their future career and opportunities in the industry, and the name and reputation of the university and its differentiation.

Finally, in order to promote the university, increasing the volume of its business, improving its image, and increasing student satisfaction and recommendations, it is recommended that more attention has to be given to all choice items that have been studied, mainly the ones with low contribution to the students' satisfaction. Hence, in order to increase reliability, building trust through public relation campaigns that target future students and families are recommended. In addition, considering university's credibility, promise fulfilment and reliable communication content are necessary

through communication strategies that focus on positive and feasible promises as well as persuasive physical environment.

Consequently, as practical implications of the results of the current study to improve students satisfaction, it is recommended that universities should plan for marketing their services based on the most effective factors that enhance selection and increase satisfaction; such as location, links with students' future career and industries, positive educational environment that facilitates theoretical and practical learning, honest communication and effective promotion, increasing the reputation and image of the university among students and their families as well as the reputation and accreditation of the university's degree among the industry, effective public relations to increase the awareness and reputation through social aspects and internal culture.

Further research on the role of internal marketing on students' selection and satisfaction is recommended. Also further research is required to suggest social and relational means to benefit university marketing; and further research to take the research aim regionally and globally outside the current population; Jordanian universities and students. Further research can help to overcome the limitations of the current study as the characteristics of Jordanian universities may differ from those of international universities due to different culture and business values.

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