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What Drives Students' Intention to Take Marketing Majoring? An Empirical Investigation of The Critical Factors

(Faktor Kritikal Mendorong Niat Pelajar Mengambil Jurusan Pemasaran: Suatu Kajian Empirical)

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ABSTRACT

The objective of the research is to examine the relationship among intrinsic motivation, variety of career, introductory unit of marketing course and intention to adopt marketing majoring among first-year undergraduate business students in Malaysia. A total 184 questionnaires were collected via convenience sampling from undergraduate students from public and private universities located in Klang valley and Selangor in Malaysia. Regression analysis was applied to access the relationship between the proposed variables. The findings revealed that all three factors namely, intrinsic motivation, variety of career and introductory unit of marketing course were found to have a statistically significant influence on intention to adopt marketing majoring.

Keywords: Intrinsic motivation; variety of career; introductory unit of marketing course; intention to adopt; undergraduate students

ABSTRAK

Kajian ini bertujuan untuk mengkaji hubungan di antara motivasi intrinsik, kepelbagaian kerjaya, pengenalan kursus pemasaran dan niat untuk mengambil jurusan pemasaran di kalangan pelajar perniagaan mahasiswa tahun pertama di Malaysia. Sebanyak 184 soal selidik telah dikumpulkan melalui persampelan mudah dari mahasiswa di universiti awam dan swasta yang terletak di Lembah Klang dan Selangor di Malaysia. Analisis regresi telah digunakan untuk mengkaji hubungan di antara pemboleh ubah yang dicadangkan. Dapatan kajian menunjukkan bahawa ketiga-tiga faktor iaitu, motivasi intrinsik, kepelbagaian kerjaya dan pengenalan kursus pemasaran mempunyai pengaruh yang signifikan terhadap hasrat pelajar untuk mengambil jurusan pemasaran.

Kata kunci: motivasi intrinsik, kepelbagaian kerjaya, pengenalan kursus pemasaran, kecenderungan menggunakan, pelajar ijazah

INTRODUCTION

Generally, business schools in Malaysia are facing an increasingly challenging marketing atmosphere. Internal departments within business schools were competing for the same student pool (Hugstad 1997). It is found that marketing departments within many undergraduate business schools are experiencing a decline in the market share of business majors (Hugstad 1997). At the same time, there has been a decline in the quality and quantity of students attracted to marketing major (Hugstad 1997; Newell, Titus and West 1996). Past study found that, students might be selecting marketing as a second choice or fall back major when they are not successful in gaining entry to more preferred disciplines such as accounting or finance (LaBarbera and Simonoff 1999). Thus, the quality of students opting for marketing major may be declining when many top-skilled business students are “tapped off” by other business disciplines (Hugstad 1997).

Floyd and Gordon (1998) argued that marketing educators need to identify the students’ requirements to develop a customer orientation (Stafford 1994), and to adopt effective marketing strategies (Hugstad 1997) in view of strong competition among universities and colleges. Schmidt, Debevec and Comm (1987) argued that “suppliers of educational services need to know what criteria will influence their students’ choices”. Stafford (1994) reasoned that “educators should be more concerned with factors affecting choice of and satisfaction with services offered in marketing education”. Furthermore, understanding the reasons behind students’ choice of marketing major becomes important because “a student’s major often becomes an important part of his or her self-definition or role identity (Kleine 2002).

Hence, understanding the reasons why students choose marketing major can be a first step for educators to understand their expectations from marketing schools and consequently work toward enhancing their identity. Earlier Research Earlier research has examined issues such as how to market a marketing major (Hugstad 1997), reasons behind students’ choice of marketing electives (Stafford 1994), why students change their major (Kohli 1995), the criteria marketing majors consider when selecting a college (Schmidt, Debevec and Comm 1987), and the reasons why business students enrol in an introductory marketing course (Juric, Todd and Henry 1997). With respect to student decisions to pursue a marketing major, O’Brien and Deans (1995) found that advice of a student adviser, flexibility offered by marketing major, good career prospects, and prior knowledge of the subject

were the main reasons that influenced the U.K. 1st-year marketing students’ choice of marketing major. Several researchers found that employment potential (Yusof et al. 2013) and public perception of the program were some of the criteria students use when deciding to adopt marketing major (Tom, O’Grady and Swanson 1995). LaBarbera and Simonoff (1999) investigated the reasons behind marketing students’ selection of marketing major and found that, career prospects and course work were largely involved.

To the best of the author’s knowledge, there have no studies been carried out in Malaysian students contexts to find out the factors influencing intention to adopt marketing as major. There are few studies on factor influencing Malaysia students’ intention to study at Higher education institute. Most of the studies investigating students’ choice of marketing major have been conducted in North America (LaBarbera and Simonoff 1999) and Europe (O’Brien and Deans 1995). There are research, on key factor influencing students’ choice of business major and found that those with better quantitative skills tended to major in accounting and finance and those with weaker quantitative skills tended to major in marketing or management (Pritchard, Potter and Saccussi 2003). Due to limited studies, the extant literature does not explain whether the same set of reasons holds for students in Asian countries. It is also not clear from the literature whether the reasons influencing students ‘choice of major will be parallel for students in all regions. Based on the gap mentioned above, this study aims to investigate the factors that influence year one business students intention in adopting marketing as major and to identify the most influential factor.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Variety of Career Prospect

Many studies indicated that students’ choice of business major is influenced by higher earnings, prestige and career advancement (Kim and Markham 2002). Montmarquette (2002) examined the previous studies on the determinants of the major choice, which linked it to the expected earnings. Lowe (1994) discovered that compensation, career opportunities, and prestige are significant factors that influence students’ choice of accounting as their major, whereas students who choose business major are more influenced by personal and normative factors. There should be a general awareness among students on the career opportunities available in Malaysia and overseas. With the amount of news

publicity given to a particular profession, it would be interesting to find out if these job-related factors are the key factors influencing students' choice of accountancy as a major.

In addition, past research investigated five factors that may influence the choice of major among the students, i.e., qualification policies to enter the major field of study, employment opportunities, university or college reputation, past academic experiences, and the characteristics of the courses (Galotti and Kozberg 1987). It was found that the job prospect or job opportunity is the most significant factor influencing the choice of major among students. The students were aware of the growing salaries and potential in the related field, which led them to enrol in the related field, i.e., finance. Other than that, other research discovered factors such as future job opportunity, income potential, type of profession, earning perks, bonuses and so on, play the most important role in determining the major of the students (Francisco et al. 2003; Simons et al. 2003). Tan and Laswad (2006) also inferred that the choice of students' major is significantly influenced by income prospects, prestige and job advancements due to earning potential and marketability or scope of opportunities.

Intrinsic Motivation

Intrinsic motivation refers to motivation that comes from inside an individual rather than from any external or outside rewards, such as money or grades. The motivation comes from the pleasure that a person gets from the task itself or from the sense of satisfaction in completing or working on a task. Many studies showed that student's interest in the subject is one of the significant factors that influence their choice of major. Past studies identified the importance of interest and perceptions of the profession as the factor determining the choice of economics major (Dyan and Rouse 1997; Lewis and Norris 1997), while preferences were identified as the key factor that influence student decision to switch to business studies (Easterlin 1995). Fortin and Amernic (1994) conclude that "...interest and aptitude for the subject matter appear to be the driving forces behind the students' choice of accounting as a major... intrinsic values such as independence in action and solving challenging problems (intellectual stimulation) are also the key factors motivating students' choice of concentration." Other studies confirmed that personality plays a key role in the choice of a major. It was found that students with sensing, thinking and judging personality types were more likely to select accounting as major (Lawrence and Taylor 2000).

Introductory To Marketing Subject

Introductory units extended the work of earlier researchers (Keillor, Bush and Bush 1995; LaBarbera and Simonoff 1999; Newell, Titus and West 1996) and showed that such units in the curriculum played a role in influencing students' decision to choose marketing as a major (Pappu 2004).

Based on the discussion, we posit that variety of career prospect, intrinsic motivation and introductory to marketing subject are related to intention to adopt marketing major. Therefore, the following hypotheses are proposed:

H1: There is a highly positive relationship between variety of career prospect and intention to adopt marketing major.

H2: There is a positive relationship between intrinsic motivation and intention to adopt marketing major

H3: There is a positive relationship between introductory to marketing subject and intention to adopt marketing major

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Sampling Design, Subjects and Procedures

This study focuses upon the first year undergraduate students located within Klang Valley, Malaysia who have not decided their majoring. Klang Valley is where Kuala Lumpur, the capital of Malaysia is situated. Most of the modern establishments in Malaysia are located in the Klang Valley (Euromonitor 2001). A convenience sampling method was used in this study as it is one of the most common forms of sampling design in social science research (Mohr 1990). The data for this study was collected by using self-administered questionnaires distributed. Of the 250 questionnaires that were distributed to students, 184 of them completed the questionnaires, representing a response rate of 74 per cent.

Measures

All of the constructs used in the proposed model were measured using multi-item scales, adapted from previous studies that reported high statistical reliability and validity. All the items for the variety of career prospect, intrinsic motivation and introductory to marketing subject were measured using scales developed by Pappu (2004). The other construct;

intention to adopt marketing majoring was adapted from Hong and Cho (2011) and Wu et al. (2011). All items in this study were measured on a five-point Likert-type scale ranging from “strongly disagree” (1) to “strongly agree” (5).

DATA ANALYSIS, AND RESULTS

Sample Characteristics

Demographic analysis was performed where the information of the respondents is demonstrated in Table 1. Among the samples collected, female respondents (61 per cent) were the majority. In terms of ethnicity, 59 per cent of the respondents are Malay, 34 per cent are Chinese and 5 per cent are Indian. A total 100 respondents (54%) were from public universities, while 84 respondents (46%) from private universities. Several university students were involved in this study.

TABLE 1: Respondents' Profile

Demographic variables		Research samples (n=184)	
		Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	72	39
	Female	112	61
Ethnicity	Malay	108	59
	Indian	10	5
	Chinese	62	34
	Others	4	2
University	Public	100	54
	Private	84	46

Reliability

The internal reliability of the items was verified by assessing the Cronbach's alpha (see Table 2). The Cronbach's alpha for intrinsic motivation was 0.775, variety of career was 0.740, introductory unit of marketing course was 0.722 and intention to adopt marketing majoring was 0.917. Reliability statistics for all the factors passed the benchmark of 0.7 as suggested by Nunnally (1978).

Multiple Regression Analysis

Table 3 presents the results of a multiple regression analysis used to evaluate the relationship and its strength of the proposed constructs. Three hypotheses were formulated and all the variables were retained after testing their reliability and validity. Multiple regression analysis follows the guidelines by Hair et al. (2010) to test the impact of variety of career prospect (VC), introductory to marketing units (IU), intrinsic motivation (IM) on intention to adopt marketing majoring.

Table 3 shows that all the three hypotheses

(H1-H3) were found to be significant. The supported hypotheses are the relationship between variety of career prospect ($\beta = .288$; $p < 0.05$), introductory to marketing units ($\beta = .307$; $p < 0.05$) and intrinsic motivation ($\beta = .362$; $p < 0.05$) towards intention to adopt marketing majoring

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

According to the results, intrinsic motivation has the strong and significant positive relationship with intention to adopt marketing majoring. As most students are given the option to choose only one majoring from the available disciplines, the selection of majoring is a critical decision that students need to make. The finding is consistent with the past studies where the selection of the major is a dynamic process (Astin and Panos 1969; Levine 1976) thus, deciding on which majoring to concentrate among university students is an important part of a student's self-definition or role identity (Kleine 2002) and personal interest (Juric, Todd and Henry 1997). Students choose to be major in marketing evolve

TABLE 2: Construct reliability

Variables	Cronbach's Alpha Value	Number of Items	Source
Variety of career prospect (VC)	0.740	4	Pappu (2004)
- Good chance getting good paid job			
- Get jobs in wide range of industries			
- Get interesting jobs			
- Eligible for a variety of jobs			
Introductory to marketing units (IU)	0.722	3	Pappu (2004)
- impressed by the introductory course			
- impressed by the lecturing style in the introductory marketing course			
- the introductory marketing course generated interest in me			
Intrinsic Motivation (IM)	0.775	3	Pappu (2004)
- like the subject			
- my favourite subject			
- interesting area			
Intention to adopt marketing majoring	0.917	4	Hong and Cho (2011); Wu et al. (2011)
- Intend to adopt			
- Expect to adopt			
- Willing to take			
- Would consider			

TABLE 3: Multiple Regression Analysis

Factors/determinants	Standardized Beta Coefficients	t	Sig.
(Constant)		1.993	.043
VC	.288	2.938	.004
IU	.307	3.023	.003
IM	.362	3.611	.000

$F_{(3,180)}=32.595, R^2 = 0.425, Adj. R^2=0.409$
Dependent Variable: Intention to adopt marketing majoring

an identity around being marketing major and are more committed to enact behaviors as a marketing student (Kleine 2002).

This study also shows that introductory to marketing units and variety of career prospects as the second and third important factor respectively in influencing undergraduate intention to adopt marketing majoring. Our results suggest that an introductory marketing unit is a vital factor influencing marketing students' decision to major in marketing. In many Malaysia institutions, introductory marketing is a core subject that all business majors have to complete as part of their undergraduate degree. This provides an opportunity for marketing educators to influence non-

marketing students through introductory marketing units. Academic staff involved in teaching and designing introductory marketing units may need to make marketing subject more attractive and interesting to students, perhaps embedding information relative to some of the factors identified in this study. Marketing educators could also highlight to students that marketing concepts are practical and applicable in any functional job roles as well as in management positions.

Furthermore, variety of career prospects is also consistent with the findings of previous researchers (Keillor, Bush and Bush 1995; Newell, Titus and West 1996). Tom, O'Grady and Swanson (1995) also found that employment potential was a

reason behind marketing students' decision to major in marketing. Since variety of career prospects becomes a relevant factor in choosing major, it would be useful to provide information to students, preferably in the introductory marketing class, on the wide range of careers opportunities in the marketing discipline and to carefully consider the breadth of the portfolio of marketing units offered in their school. Many studies suggested that lack of understanding of what marketing profession entails is also another hurdle that prevents students from taking marketing major (Ferrell and Gonzalez 2004; Van Doren and Corringan 2008). Thus, it is importance for students to see and understand marketing in the real world before they can make a decision in selecting a career path (Tomkovick 2004).

Limitations and Future Directions

The sample was only derived from the urbanized Kuala Lumpur and Selangor; may limit the generalizability of the results as it might not give a thorough picture of view reflecting the whole Malaysia business school students' population. Future research needs to focus on a larger and more diversified random sample to verify the findings of the study. To further clarity of the factors influence on intention to adopt marketing majoring, other factors such as family, academic reputation and mode of teaching could also be investigated.

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