Revealing the Unspoken:

Malaysian students' intrinsic influences in selecting the UK for Higher Education migration.

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Abstract

The UK has been amongst the leaders in providing higher education for both home and international students, especially from developing countries such as Malaysia. The recent budget cuts on the UK higher education sector implemented in the academic year 2012/13 have increased the competition for UK Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) to secure home [UK and EU] students as the opportunity cost is greater compared to starting a career. Therefore, it is almost imperative for UK HEIs to attract more international students to fill the gap left by home students to remain financially sustainable.

Previous researches on the decision making process for higher education destinations looked extensively at rational factors such as financial viability, size of institutions and availability of programmes as well as reputation related factors, such as university ranking and league tables. The question is: Are these the factors - rational factors - that influence the decision making of prospective international students' evaluation and selection of the UK as a possible host country for higher education migration?

This research aims to elicit and understand the non-rational factors that may intrinsically influence the decision making behaviour of Malaysian students when selecting the UK as the destination for HE migration. Interpretive phenomenology was utilized as the research approach and the Ethnographic principle of cultural interpretation was enhanced by the researcher's reflexive stances. Data was analysed using Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis. Six emergent constructs were revealed which then led to the emergence of three core themes reflecting the intrinsic influences hidden within Malaysian students' HE migration decision behaviour. Twelve ZMET interviews and two focus group conversations with participants whom were recruited using the stratified random sampling method - covering three geographical regions of the UK, eleven UK universities within four main university groups. ZMET, short for Zaltman Metaphor Elicitation Technique, is an eleven-step in-depth interview technique that elicits both conscious and unconscious thoughts by exploring metaphoric expressions. Findings from previous researches employing ZMET as data collection method showed that data saturation is achievable with just four to five interviews, providing 90% validity. Focus group conversations functioned as methodology triangulation to validate findings. Both of these data collection methods were guided by two overarching questions: (1) why do you choose a UK university? and (2) what and how does being a UK university student make you feel?

The six emergent constructs: (1) Egotism; (2) Self-concept; (3) Current security; (4) Future security; (5) Freedom and independence; and (6) Future opportunities, were then interpreted through the researcher's reflexive stances - personal and epistemic - to signify the insights of the three emergent themes: (1) Fulfilling their emotional needs for acceptance; (2) Satisfying their spiritual pleas for freedom and independence; and (3) Providing a promise for a greater self-worth.

These six emergent constructs were embedded into the conceptual framework of this research - Consumer Decision Making model underpinned by Push/Pull Theory of Migration - resulting in a revised conceptual framework depicting Malaysian students' HE migration behaviour. This research contributes to academic knowledge, research methodology, practitioners and policy makers of HEIs - both in Malaysia and the UK. Suggestions for further research are longitudinal study, geographical extension study, comparison study and a study using this research's revised conceptual framework as the research model.

Declaration of Authorship

I, Alex LEE Khim Kian, declare that this thesis entitled 'Revealing the Unspoken: Malaysian students' intrinsic influences in selecting the UK for Higher Education migration' and the work presented in it are my own, as the result of my own original research.

I confirm that:

1) This work was done wholly or mainly while in candidature for a research degree at the University of Hertfordshire, United Kingdom;

2) Where any part of this thesis has previously been submitted for a degree or any other qualification at this University or any other institution, this has been clearly stated;

3) Where I have consulted the published work of others, this is always clearly attributed;

4) Where I have quoted from the work of others, the source is always given. With the exception of such quotations, this thesis is entirely my own work;

5) I have acknowledged all main sources of help; and

6) Where the thesis is based on work done by myself jointly with others, I have made clear exactly what was done by others and what I have contributed myself.

Signed: _____

      Alex LEE Khim Kian

Date: 15th May, 2015.

<u>Dedication</u>

I dedicate this thesis to Mr. Lee Siong Peck: my father, my teacher and my role model. Even though you are no longer with us, your guidance, your teachings and your principles live on within us. The knowledge and wisdom you shared with us have been the main foundation in all our accomplishments to date - including this. I know you are looking upon us - full of pride and joy, as I, looking up to you, daily, with the greatest respect and immense pride that you are my Dad. Thanks Daddy. You are much loved!

Acknowledgement

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Lay Choo, Chin Teck, Lay Chin, Kim Long, Lay Yim and Michael: my sisters and brothers-in-law whom I have had the privilege to learn from their experiences and taken many advices - simple yet fundamental. I am really blessed.

William, Christian and Grace: my nephews and niece whom I gladly use as an excuse to put this research aside just to relax and spend some times together. I really needed the break and they were great times, indeed!

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Thank you all from the bottom of my heart. My best wishes to every one of you. God bless!

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List of Abbreviations and Terms

AIDA   Attention, Interest, Desire, Action model

CDM   Consumer Decision Making

EM   Education Malaysia

EMGS   Education Malaysia Global Services

HE   Higher Education

HEIs   Higher Education Institutions

HEFCE   Higher Education Funding Council for England

HESA   Higher Education Statistics Agency

HoE   Hierarchy of Effect

IPA   Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis

'Lah'   Malaysian expression of re-emphasising a word or expression

'Mien-Tzu' A Chinese origin notion of 'Face'; metaphorically represents one's pride, prestige, honour and reputation viewed by the society (Hu, 1944).

OECD   Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development

PPToM   Push/Pull Theory of Migration

UK   United Kingdom

UKCISA   UK Council for International Students Affairs

WoW   Word-of-Mouth

'Xiao Jing' A Chinese concept of parent-child relationship in a Confucian society on how to behave towards a senior such as parents (Zeng, 505-435 B.C.E, translated by Feng in May 2008).

Conference Presentations

June 2011   5th SSAHRI Research Student Conference, University of Hertfordshire, UK.

May 2012   2011/2012 Research Seminar Programme, University of Hertfordshire, UK.

August 2013   2nd Business Management International Conference, Burapha University, Thailand.

September 2013   British Academy of Management (BAM): Doctoral Symposium, University of Liverpool, UK.

July 2014   Academy of Marketing (AM) Conference, Bournemouth University, UK.

Chapter 1: Introduction: Setting the Research Scene

Synopsis, Research Gap, Design and Structure, Thesis Statement and Overview of Research Process.

1.1.   Chapter Outline: Introduction: Setting the Research Scene

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This research

| Scope, Aim, Questions, and Objectives. | → | Intended Outcomes | → | Contributions Academia, Methodology, International Marketing Practitioners [of HEIs], and Policy Makers [for HE] |

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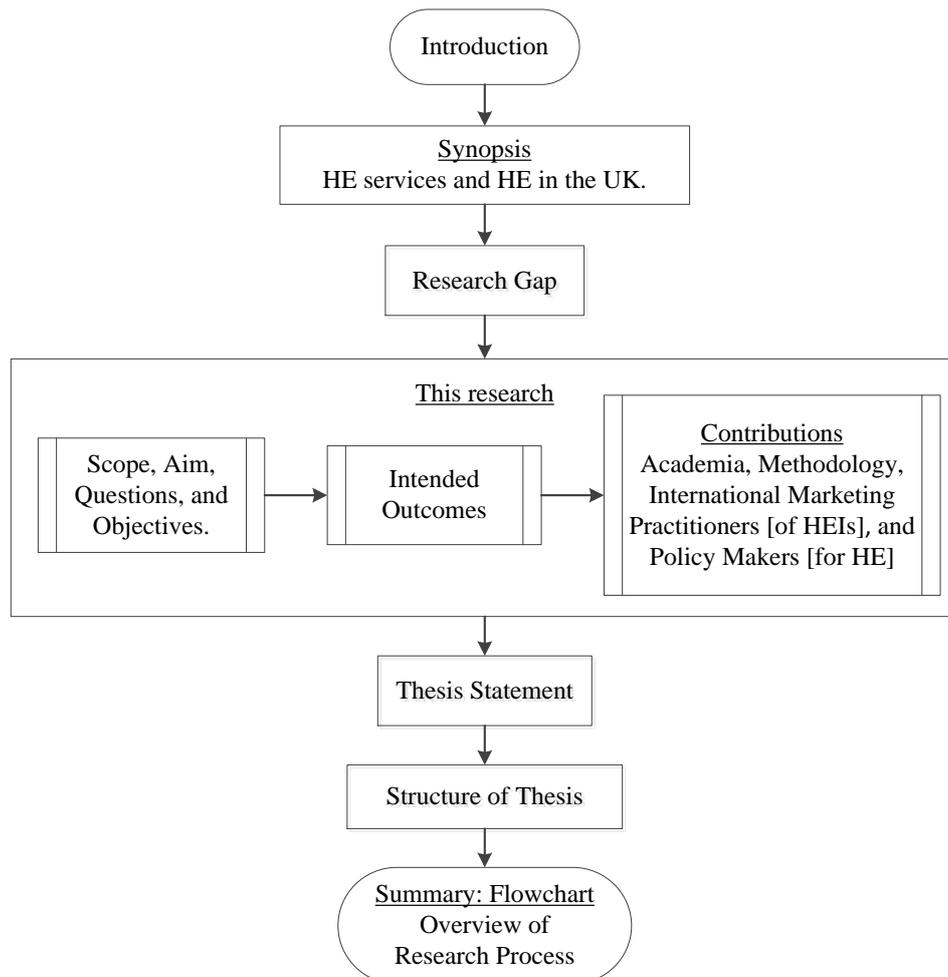
1.2.   Introduction

This chapter aims to set the research scene by providing a synopsis of the Higher Education (HE) services in general and then focusing on the issues affecting the HE sector in the UK. This will then be followed by this research's scope and aim. Research questions and objectives will then be addressed in order to achieve the research's intended outcomes and its original contributions from this research to knowledge concerning four areas and stakeholders. A flowchart showing the overview of this research process summarises this chapter.

1.3. Synopsis

As the world becomes more global and borderless, travelling abroad has become easier. This has also made pursuing a higher education outside one's home country more accessible. Developed countries like the United Kingdom (UK), America and Australia have, for many years, been the leaders in providing higher education for both home and international students (Mazzarol and Hosie (1996); Mazzarol (1998); Binsardi and Ekwulugo (2003); Pyvis and Chapman (2006); Maringe and Carter (2007); Priporas and Kamenidou (2010). Therefore, many prospective students from developing countries such as Malaysia look to these countries for their Higher Education (HE) migration.

The Higher Education Statistics Agency Limited (HESA) is the official agency for the collection, analysis and dissemination of quantitative information about HE for the British Council UK. Data released from the 2012-13 HESA Report (British Council, 2014) listed Malaysia as fifth in the top 10 non-EU countries of students studying in the UK behind China, India, Nigeria and America. Malaysian students ranked top amongst ASEAN countries with 16,635 students in the 2013/14 academic year; of which, 55% (9,070 students) are enrolled as First Year Undergraduate students. The report also revealed that over 50% (about 8,320) of Malaysian students pay their fees without having recourse to any financial awards, scholarships, or outside financial backing. They are privately funded; either by their family or out of personal savings despite the high exchange rate between Ringgit Malaysia (Malaysian currency) and Pound Sterling (British currency). HESA also reported that Malaysian families are generally more willing to make the financial sacrifice required to ensure a quality HE for their children even if it creates a dent in their savings and having their children leave for another country. This reflects the high esteem in which HE is held in Malaysia.

In March 2010, the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) announced the reduction of £449 million funding cut for universities and colleges in England from the previously planned 2010-11 financial year (Hilli, 2010). Although this cut may be seen as affecting local or EU students, the consequential effect for UK universities has been an increase in the need for international student recruitment to remain financially sustainable (Hilli, 2010). This cut has made it imperative for UK HEIs to improve their marketing and international students' recruitment activities and strategies.

1.4.   Research Rationale

With limited findings and theoretical underpinnings of non-rational factors in the current field of literatures, this highlights the research gap and provides a valid reason supporting the undertaking of this research. The first-half of this research's title, *Revealing the unspoken:*, suggests that there is something amiss when potential students had to rely on their 'gut feeling' as their final influential factor in selecting a host country to pursue their HE abroad. This is made even more sceptical despite them [potential students] evaluating countless rational factors and several theoretical models explaining the flow of decision making process to be used as guidance. As a former international student in a foreign country, the researcher also relied on his 'gut feeling' after evaluating several relevant rational factors, such as the types of programmes and financial viability, to reach a final decision on selecting America as it was perceived as a 'cool' country to be associated with at the period of decision making back in 1991. Therefore, the suspicion of this scepticism triggered the interest for the researcher to pursue this research. As a Malaysian who is currently living and working in the UK, and had experienced the phenomenon of selecting a host country for higher education (HE) migration whilst in Malaysia as a potential international student, this lived experienced strengthens the researcher's understanding of Malaysian students' HE migration decision making behaviour. Hence, the second-half of this research's title, *Malaysian students' intrinsic influences in selecting the UK for Higher Education migration*.

1.5.   Research Gap

Given the phenomena of prospective international students' migration for HE and the budget cuts imposed by the UK Government on the HE sector which started in academic year 2012/13, considerable changes have been made over the years in the UK HE sector to improve on areas such as the facilities to aid learning, teaching and research experience; and the level of service deliverables to attract prospective students globally. The question, however, is: Are these the areas that could influence the decision making of prospective international students; and specifically for this research - Malaysian students - when they evaluate and select another country to pursue their HE? This question posed a research gap for this research to investigate further.

Pursuing HE is an expensive process and a major milestone for a student. Therefore, it is not surprising that findings from a pilot test conducted in December 2010 by the researcher

revealed that students perform an extensive information search such as consulting university-appointed agents, marketing counsellors, searching through university websites and visiting education exhibitions. Even after these extensive information search exercises, their knowledge level of each country and university may have increased, but their uncertainty level did not improve to aid their final decision. This then led to another question: Are there any other factors, besides these rational factors, that could influence their final decision making behaviour?

As a former international student, the researcher can attest that the decision to study abroad is one of the most significant and expensive initiatives an international student may have to undertake. There are various external factors involved in this decision: [high] costs; leaving their 'comfort zone'; the high expectations from their friends; and the pressure that is put on them by their family - making it a complex decision. This complex decision coupled with the opportunity costs and risks associated with it has added extra pressure onto the student to make a 'better' decision. Whilst the definition of a 'better' decision remains unknown, this decision is more likely to involve deeper decision making deliberation (Assael, 1998, cited in Nicholls et al., 1995). This has increased the complexity of the selection process of studying abroad. When prospective students choose to study abroad, their selection process is not based only on selecting a country and a HEI; they are also acquiring a set of 'labels' that will be tagged to them. This set of labels is accompanied with expectations for themselves and from external parties such as their parents and family, and the society.

A service such as higher education portrays special characteristics which distinguishes it from a product. It requires additional elements in the application of marketing strategy (Kotler and Fox, 1995). By its very nature, a service cannot be touched, tested, or possessed (Edgett and Parkinson, 1993). In marketing terms, a service is intangible, heterogeneous, perishable and requires simultaneous production and consumption (Ahmed et al., 2002). With these characteristics, consumers usually associate intangibility with high level of risk thus, hinders the communication of a service to the consumers (Rathmell, 1966).

Higher education is a pure service and is characterised by a greater amount of interpersonal contact, complexity, divergence and customisation than other services (Patterson et al., 1998). This brings additional difficulties to the evaluation of the programme offered in a university

and the higher education institution itself. With higher education being a pure service bound with complex evaluation factors to consider, prospective students will seek to analyse additional aspects such as the image of the country, the perception from the relevant public, cultural aspects and their personal values to provide clearer decision making in selecting a host country and eventually a HEI within the host country. The reliance on one's perception and image of a country based solely on the cultural aspects and personal values is known as a country's halo effect or country-of-origin (COO) (Verlegh and Steenkamp, 1999). This phenomenon - the reliance of country's halo effect - is commonly utilised to infer the quality of foreign-brand products mainly due to the fact that consumers are unable to detect the products' true quality prior to purchase or usage (Shapiro, 1982). This is further supported by Howard and Sheth (1969) suggesting that consumers may use country image as a halo in reducing the set of alternatives for the purchase decision.

In international higher education, there are several elements of secondary services. Through experience, the prospective student will consider various components related to living in a new environment such as safety, security, cultural diversity, university's environment, quality of life and ease of visa application. Some of these will create a stronger emotional connection between the prospective student and the host country than others. Therefore, the country's image may have an impact in influencing the final decision. Having said that, however, the probability of a prospective international student visiting several host countries and universities prior to decision making may be low, especially if the distance is great and the travel cost is high. Thus, the perception of, and emotional connection to, a host country may have to step into the decision making process as the 'next best option' to act as the pulling factor to influence and assist the decision flow from pre-purchase selection to a final decision of purchase or enrolment in this context.

In support of the complexity caused by the nature of services' intangibility, Punj and Staelin (1978:494) stated that "little is known about the underlying student buying behaviour and how they select a tertiary institution." Kotler (1997) also commented on the time spent by the prospective international students and the complexity and variety of choices involved; one would classify such decision making as extensive problem solving. A research study by Moogan et al. (1999) concluded that selections of six HEIs are normally done ten months prior to the possible entry by the majority of prospective students at undergraduate level.

These six HEIs will then be narrowed down to two - five months after the initial selection. All these are stages prior to obtaining their entry level findings. These selection stages are based on the assumption that their findings meet the entry requirements.

Whilst they are making these decisions about what to study and where to go, they will not be able to experience the tertiary education life until they obtain a definite place and then enrol at that particular institution. Once at their chosen institution, the consumption (purchase and post-purchase) process may last for three or four years. Therefore, there is evidence pointing at a research gap in the current field of literatures that the 'pre-purchase' information acquisition stages in higher education decision making are being carried out with greater involvement by the prospective students – involving and influenced by non-rational factors which are intrinsically emotional and symbolic in value.

1.6. Research Scope

With the research gap, this research therefore, intends to investigate the non-rational factors at the pre-purchase evaluation stages in the decision making process of Malaysian students when selecting a UK HEI. These factors will be discussed and analysed qualitatively. Malaysian students are the focus of this research due to the researcher's familiarity of the country, the understanding of its cultural nuances, the accessibility of participants as research samples and the researcher being a Malaysian. The main justification is the importance (or lack of) put in to investigate non-rational [emotional and symbolic] factors which are intrinsic and influential in this select sample's HE migration decision making behaviour. Hence, the development of this research's aim, questions and objectives.

1.7. Research Aim

The aim of this research is to elicit and understand the non-rational factors which may intrinsically influence the decision making behaviour of Malaysian students when selecting the UK as the destination for HE migration.

To achieve this aim, this research will relook at the pre-purchase stages of a proposed theoretical model: Consumer Decision Making (CDM) model – a model that illustrates the behavioural flow of consumers with regard to a potential purchase transaction for a product

or service (Schiffman and Kanuk, 2000), to investigate the existence (or non-existence) of intrinsic elements which may be influencing international students' migration; in particular, Malaysian students who are currently pursuing their higher education in the UK. Therefore, various dimensions of the decision making process in some relevant previous researches will be reviewed to expose the factors which determine various international students' choice and their relationships underlying the process at the moment of selecting a host country. This research reviews relevant literatures which have been published over the last thirty years.

1.8.   Research Questions

To address the research aim, this research is intended to answer the following questions:

1.8.1. *Question 1: Source of information*

When searching for information, what (where or who) do Malaysian students look for to facilitate their pre-purchase evaluation and decision making process?

1.8.2. *Question 2: Source of external influences*

What (or who) are the external influencing factors which influence Malaysian students' pre-purchase evaluation and decision making process?

1.8.3. *Question 3: Nature of emergent external influences*

Are these emergent external influences intrinsic [emotional and symbolic] in value?

1.8.4. *Question 4: Influences of external factors*

1.8.4.1.   How do these external influencing factors affect Malaysian students' pre-purchase evaluation and decision making behaviour?

1.8.4.2.   Why are these external influencing factors influential in their pre-purchase evaluation and decision making behaviour?

1.8.5. *Question 5: External influences and 'Push/Pull' effect*

Do these emergent external factors resonate with the elements in the Push/Pull Theory of Migration?

1.9. Research Objectives

With the research aim and questions, the overall objective is to relook at the pre-purchase behaviours of Malaysian students' decision making to possibly uncover the intrinsic elements within the non-rational factors which may influence Malaysian students' HE migration to the UK. This research is thus, led by these research objectives:

1.9.1. *Objective 1: Previous Research – Migration patterns and influencing factors*

In order to elicit the factors affecting international students' decision making behaviour for HE migration, previous researches need to be reviewed to unveil any migration patterns and influencing factors - both rational and non-rational factors.

1.9.2. *Objective 2: Emotional factors and Symbolic Values – What, How and Why?*

Knowing that emotions are a contributing factor in decision making (Damasio, 1994; Clark, 2001; Tancredi, 2005; Glannon, 2007), the researcher intends to identify the non-rational factors and their intrinsic influences [emotional elements and symbolic values] in this context; and to analyse 'how' and 'why' these non-rational factors affect and influence Malaysian students' pre-purchase evaluation and decision making behaviour.

1.9.3. *Objective 3: Contribution – Apply emergent constructs within the conceptual framework*

There may be an opportunity to embed the emergent constructs within the elements of the environmental influences in this research's conceptual framework: CDM model which is adapted from Blackwell et al. (2006). The emergent constructs will be analysed within the CDM model underpinned by the Push/Pull Theory of Migration (PPToM) - a theoretical model which has been employed to analyse international students' higher education migration (Mazzarol and Soutar, 2002).

1.9.4. *Objective 4: Recommendations – Application of the Consumer Decision Making (CDM) model*

To propose a CDM model which better represents the pre-purchase evaluation and decision making behaviour of Malaysian students' HE migration to the UK.

1.10. Intended Research Outcomes

In addition to applying insights within the current CDM model to cater specifically for Malaysian students as theoretical knowledge enhancement, another important intended outcome is to provide UK HEIs with a better understanding of Malaysian students' pre-purchase evaluation and decision making behaviour. It is imperative to understand the significant role that non-rational factors play in their HE migration decisions. Equally important is the acknowledgement of the roles non-rational factors' intrinsic influences such as emotional elements and symbolic values have to contribute towards decision making; and perhaps as the role of a tie-breaker amongst alternatives. On a practical level the intention is to support the development of a more effective international marketing strategy and informed tactical applications for both HEIs' marketing practitioners and policy makers alike.

1.11. Research Contributions

1.11.1. *Academic Knowledge*

To propose a CDM model which represents the pre-purchase evaluation and decision making behaviours of Malaysian students when selecting a UK HEI by embedding the emotional elements and symbolic values within the environmental influences which are possibly underpinned by the PPToM.

1.11.2. *Research Methodology*

By introducing the use of ZMET (Zaltman Metaphor Elicitation Technique), this research intends to elicit both conscious and unconscious thoughts by exploring metaphoric expressions (Zaltman, 1997). These thoughts shall then lead to the discovery of both rational and non-rational factors influencing the behaviour of Malaysia students' HE migration decision to the UK. ZMET is a commercially patented market research tool. To the best of the researcher's knowledge, ZMET has not been used in a context similar to this research.

1.11.3. *Practical applications for HEI Practitioners and International Recruiters*

The proposed CDM model will assist international marketing practitioners in UK HEIs in their development of a more informed and effective strategic marketing and recruitment tactics of Malaysian students' migration into the UK as their host country of choice.

1.11.4. *Practical implications for Policy Makers of HE*

Insights gained from this research may guide policy makers - both Malaysian and British - with an 'insider' view of Malaysian students' HE migration behaviour and decisions.

1.12. Thesis Statement

The theoretical flow of the Consumer Decision Making (CDM) model represents the rational selection behaviour of products and services, including that of Higher Education (HE) migration among international students. With more than 16,000 Malaysian students pursuing HE in the UK in academic year 2013/14, it is believed that their decision is guided by the rational approach of the CDM model. Contrary to popular believes the reliance of 'gut feeling' dominates their decisions even after rational factors have been evaluated. This research intends to investigate and understand the non-rational factors that are influential in their decision in selecting the UK as the HE migration destination.

1.13. Structure of this thesis

Each chapter is briefly introduced to provide a preview of the main content of the six chapters that follow; starting with Chapter 2: Literature Review, which immediately follows this chapter.

Chapter 2: Literature Review. This chapter presents the background of the decision making behaviour for products and services in general. Focus will then be directed at previous researches on subject area of Consumer Behaviour, while critically reviewing literatures employing the theoretical models of Consumer Decision Making (CDM) and Push/Pull Theory of Migration (PPToM) as frameworks after theorising international student migration. Emotions in the context of CDM behaviour will be presented to substantiate the use of a conceptualised model that is deemed suitable for this research.

Chapter 3: Research Methodology. This chapter starts by critically reviewing the research design components - Methodologies, philosophies and approaches. Concentration is then directed at the chosen approach of Interpretive Phenomenology and Retroduction process. ZMET, an in-depth interview technique is introduced as the primary data collection method;

to be supported by focus group conversations. Data collected through these methods will then be analysed using Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) to explore in detail how participants are making sense of their personal and social world (Smith and Eatough, 2006). The analysis is informed by the Ethnographic Principle of Cultural Interpretation through the researcher's reflexive stances. Triangulation, reliability and validity are explained before this chapter highlights the ethical compliance met for this research.

Chapter 4: Findings and Discussion (Emergent Constructs). This chapter presents the design, findings and emerging patterns of the pilot test in totality. Findings from ZMET interviews and focus group conversations are presented to show the development of six emergent constructs supported by a Consensus Mental Map. This will then lead to the application of the six emergent constructs in the development of a revised conceptual framework.

Chapter 5: Findings and Discussion (Emergent Themes). This chapter shows the correlation between the six emergent constructs explained in Chapter 5 and the cultural interpretation through the researcher's reflexive stances to arrive at three core emergent themes.

Chapter 6: Contributions and Recommendations. This chapter addresses the two areas of original contribution to knowledge: Academic knowledge and Research methodology. Findings from this research also provide two areas of recommendations for practical applications and policy making implications affecting HEI marketing and international students' recruitment practitioners and HE policy makers.

Chapter 7: Conclusion. This chapter concludes this research journey by first providing a brief synopsis of this research, to be followed by its aim and objectives. It then reiterates the areas of contributions through the transition of existing theoretical models to a revised conceptual framework which is deemed representative of Malaysian students' HE migration decision making behaviour. Correlation between the emergent constructs and the major emergent themes is discussed to show the significance and strengths of this research. Limitations and future research are next to be highlighted. Finally, a summary of this

research research's journey, knowledge gained and original contributions concludes this chapter and this thesis.

1.14. Summary

This thesis communicates the active voice - both as an insider and outsider - of the researcher to reveal the unspoken intentions that are commonly unconscious to the decision makers, and even more so to the stakeholders within the HE sectors in Malaysia and the UK. The researcher's active voice provides the reflexive stance that is based on cultural, political and social origins of the researcher's background through his similar lived experience and phenomenon of that with the select sample of Malaysia students who are currently pursuing their higher education in the UK. The overview of this research's process is depicted in Figure 1.1 (p. 13) in the form of a flowchart.

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Figure 1.1: Flowchart: Overview of the research process

Research Title	Revealing the Unspoken: Malaysian students' intrinsic influences in selecting the UK for Higher Education migration.

Researcher's Background	
Lived Experience	A former international student: America and Australia; and now reading PhD in the UK.
Previous Work Experience	Acting Dean, Head of Programme, Senior Lecturer in a Malaysian HEI responsible for students' recruitment and retention – local and international students.
Current Work Experience	Programme Tutor (similar to Head of Programme), Senior Lecturer in a UK HEI responsible for students' academic performance – local and international students.
Curiosity	With most western countries offering similar [rational] attractions, for instance: state-of-the-art facilities, good ranking, affordable and variety of programmes such as BA (Hons) in Marketing (from UK, Australia, New Zealand, or America); or BSc in Engineering (from UK, Australia, New Zealand, or America); or BA (Hons) in Accounting and Finance (from UK, Australia, New Zealand, or America), etc., what then could be the tie-breaking factors in their decision making process?

Essential Stages	Research Proposal and Ethics Approval

Philosophy	Interpretivism

Approach	Interpretive Phenomenology	Ethnographic Principle of Cultural Interpretation

Methodology	Qualitative To elicit deep, rich insights into this phenomenon to reveal intrinsic influences.

Pilot Test	Semi-Structured Interview: n=10 Findings: 1) Uncertainty in their selection process despite an overload of rational information; 2) Reliance on 'gut feeling' once [rational] factors have been evaluated; and 3) Decision made to 'save face' - benefiting the students and their families. Knowledge gained and changes made: 1) The need to incorporate an in-depth interview method which could probe the participants to reveal their [intrinsic] intentions beyond rational factors; and 2) The need to validate between findings (data collection methods);

This Research	*How* and *why* do Malaysian students finally decide on their host country of choice? *What* are the *other* [*non-rational*] factors that could have intrinsic influences in their decision behaviour especially when rational factors have been considered?

…continuation of **Figure 1.1: Overview of the research process**

Conceptual Framework	Consumer Decision Making (CDM) Model (adapted from Blackwell et al., 2006) underpinned by Push/Pull Theory of Migration (PPToM) (adapted from Mazzarol and Soutar, 2002) Rationale: 1) Pre-purchase stages of CDM model are influences by the environmental factors (culture, social class, personal influences, family and situation). These are underpinned by the second theoretical model used for this research: PPToM. 2) PPToM has two sections: Push and Pull – which explain the reasoning behind influential factors that emerged through this research study.

Questions: Key Areas	Nature of emergent factors: Are they intrinsic – emotional and symbolic in value? Effects of intrinsic influences: How and why they influence decision making process?

Data Collection Methods	In-depth Interviews (ZMET): n=12	Focus Groups: n=16 (8 x 2)
	Guiding questions: 1) Why do you choose a UK university? and 2) What and how does being a UK university student make you feel?	

Emergent Constructs	Egotism	Self-Concept	Current Security	Future Security	Freedom and Independence	Future Opportunities

Emergent Themes	(1) Fulfilling their emotional needs for acceptance; (2) Fulfilling their spiritual needs for freedom and independence; and (3) Realising the promise for a greater self-value.

Contributions and Recommendations, and Implications	Contributions and Recommendations	Implications
	1) Academic Knowledge 2) Research Methodology 3) International Marketing Practitioners [of HEIs] 4) Policy Makers [for HE]	Intrinsic non-rational factors are commonly unspoken; however, they are commonly the tie-breaker for decision making process.

Future Research	(1) Longitudinal study; (2) Geographical extension study; (3) Comparison study; and (4) Revised conceptual framework study.

Conclusion and Reflecting on the research.

Concluding words

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Background, Critical Review and Conceptual Framework.

2.1. Chapter Outline: Literature Review

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                        │  Introduction   │
                        └────────┬────────┘
                                 │
                    ┌────────────▼────────────┐
                    │        Background        │
                    │ Consumer Decision Making │
                    │          (CDM)           │
                    │   for Products and       │
                    │        Services          │
                    └────────────┬────────────┘
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Critical Review

Theorising International Student Migration

| Literatures and findings related to CDM models | → | Emotions in the context of CDM behaviour | → | Push/Pull Theory of Migration (PPToM) |

Conceptual Framework
CDM model underpinned by PPToM

Summary

2.2. Introduction

This chapter first presents the background of the decision making behaviour for products and services in general. Focus will be directed at previous researches on Consumer Behaviour, while critically reviewing literatures using Consumer Decision Making (CDM) and Push/Pull Theory of Migration (PPToM) as frameworks upon having various international mobility theories being analysed. Emotions in the context of CDM behaviour will be presented to substantiate the use of a conceptualised model that is deemed suitable for this research.

2.3. Background of Decision Making for Products and Services

There are three ways of analysing decision making for a product or a service; namely through: (1) the *Economic models;* (2) the *Psychological models;* and (3) the *Consumer Behaviour models* (Volkema and Gorman, 1998).

The *Economic models*, such as the Economic Rationality model, derived from the classical economist model suggest the decision is made in a 'perfectly and completely rational' mode in every way. These models are principally quantitative and are based on the assumptions of rationality and that the decision maker has a clear and well defined goal prior to purchase decision. An example to illustrate this decision making behaviour would be: diabetic patients who have been advised by their medical doctor to consume food that is low in Glycaemic Index (GI). Thus, their purchase decision process is steered strictly by a definitive goal - low GI food.

The *Psychological models*, such as the Social model, are often at the other end of the spectrum from the Economic models as they concentrate mainly on psychological and cognitive processes. These models are largely qualitative rather than quantitative and draw upon factors like cultural and family influences. One of the examples for this decision making phenomenon is the purchasing behaviour of most Chinese descendants in the Asian region such as (but not limited to) Taiwan, Singapore, Indonesia, Thailand, Hong Kong, China and Malaysia. During the Chinese Lunar New Year festival, purchase behaviours amongst these Chinese descendants are skewed towards the colours Red, Yellow, Orange and Gold. These colours are symbolic and they represent the elements of luck, prosperity and abundance. Therefore, purchase decisions for home decorations and household items such as curtains, plates and bowls, and even gift bags and gift wrappers are of these symbolic colours; solely influenced by their symbolic representations and the values that they carry with them.

The third model, *Consumer Behaviour models*, such as the CDM model, are predominantly practical models used by marketers to predict the decision making flow by incorporating the intellectual, emotional and physical involvement of the decision makers. These models typically blend elements from both the *Economic* and *Psychological* models. This model can be exemplified by the decision making process when one is purchasing a car. The

prospective car buyer will be tested at an intellectual level as to whether there is a need to purchase a car or the need for a particular type of car. This intellectual level continues to trigger this buyer to evaluate their need amongst the various elements which fall under their financial ability and emotional preferences. This will then smoothly lead to the economic feasibility of this buyer against their choice of alternatives. Once the physical attributes amongst the alternatives are met and satisfied, emotional preferences emerge to take the lead. This level deals with perceptions, image, value and sometimes, symbolic representations or labels that the purchased goods (in this example - the car), may provide for this buyer. The process in the CDM model illustrates the behavioural flow of consumers with regard to a potential purchase transaction for a product or service. This behavioural flow is commonly recognised as a cognitive process - a process of selecting a series of actions from a choice of probable alternatives (Schiffman and Kanuk, 2000).

Herbert A. Simon, a 1978 Nobel Laureate, views *Economic* decision making models as a futile attempt to be rational. Simon (in 1947 and 1957, in Lakomski and Evers, 2010) claims that if a decision is being analysed completely, that particular decision will be immensely complex. He continues to say that people's information processing ability is very limited by discrediting the notion of a perfect rationality; and that a perfectly rational economic decision is unrealistic and impossible. It is only logical [and human] that decision is influenced by emotional and non-rational considerations. This claim is further emphasised by Damasio in 1994, positing that decision making might not even be possible without emotional involvement – or at least far from optimal. Bechara and Damasio (2005) also assert that evidence is accumulating and contesting the claim that emotional influences can interrupt or impede the process of achieving an optimal decision – calling it a fallacy.

It is essential at this stage to define 'rational' factors and 'non-rational' factors in the context of the consumer decision making process. A decision that is influenced by rational factors is a choice made based on the evaluation of the functionality and utility of a product's (or service's) attributes to attain a satisfactory decision (Engel et al., 1995; Soloman, 1996). On the other hand, a decision made based on non-rational factors is influenced by the eventual implications that a decision may generate due to the emotional elements and/or symbolic values associated with the decision. It is equally essential not to confuse 'non-rational' influenced decision making with 'irrational' decision making. While non-rational decisions

are supported by emotional elements and symbolic values, irrational decisions are described as actions or decisions which are taken with inadequate use of reason, during one's emotional distress condition, or in a cognitive deficiency state (Simon, 1993). This research focuses on decisions made by Malaysian students which are influenced by non-rational [emotional elements and symbolic values] factors in their selection of a host country for higher education migration; and not irrational behaviour of decision making.

The CDM model and its parent concept, Consumer Behaviour, have become prominent research topics in the fields of consumer science for many years. Due to its many external factors such as culture, social class, personal and family influences and situational circumstances (Blackwell et al., 2006), consumer decision making has become a complex process for both products and services. In the midst of this complex process, the core principle for services marketing is still the importance of meeting consumers' requirements in the terms of their needs and wants (Schiffman and Kanuk, 2000). If these requirements are not satisfactorily met, then it is deemed that the marketing process has failed.

The majority of the consumer behaviour textbooks used the consumer behaviour models for academic and research purposes, referring to the fundamentals of the consumer decision process as the six-step classification of stages - generally in sequential order - *need recognition; information search; pre-purchase evaluation of alternatives; purchase; consumption; post-consumption evaluation* (Du Plessis et al., 1991:27; Schiffman and Kanuk, 1994:566-580; Soloman, 1996:268). Some researchers would add one or more stages of classification to place the importance of certain phenomena such as *blocking mechanisms, disposal of unconsumed products* and *post consumption reaction* (Engel et al., 1995:142-143; Du Plessis and Rousseau, 1999:83). Similarly, Blackwell et al. (2001) added two stages from their original model in 1973; termed as *divestment*, which leads to a dissatisfied purchase called *dissatisfaction*, thus resulting in a new external search process.

The classification of these stages of consumer decision making has been - and still is - a typical representation of the rational approach to consumer decision making (d'Astous et al., 1989:433; Punj and Srinivasan, 1992:493-495). Rational approaches to consumer decision making refer to the "careful weighing and evaluation of functionality and the utilisation of a product's attributes to attain a satisfactory decision" (Soloman, 1996:268). Rational goals in

decision making are based on economic or objective criteria such as price, size, volume, features and capacity (Schiffman and Kanuk, 2000).

2.4.   Criticism of the Consumer Decision Making Models

Being a prominent field of study, the traditional CDM models have theirs share of criticism too; and they can broadly be categorised in terms of: an assumption of rational consumer decision making behaviour (Soloman, 1996); a generalisation of the decision making process (d'Astous et al., 1989); a concern about the [lack of] details included in the CDM models such as their external forces (Engel et al., 1995); heavily skewed positivistic approach in the development of CDM models (Punj and Srinivasan, 1992).

Bozinoff and Robert (1981), based on the research done by Lachman et al. (1979), suggests that consumers spend very little (or none) engagement in the activities which were suggested as important during consumer decision making. Therefore, questions the theories which support the merits of rational approach in consumer decision making. On the contrary, consumers were frequently engaged in unconscious behaviour during their pre-purchase evaluation process. This implies that consumer decision models were attempting to explain and fit unconscious matters into a consciously-oriented paradigm in the form of information flowchart. This implication is further supported by Soloman (1996) and d'Astous et al. (1989) indicating that many consumers undertake little or no pre-purchase information search and undertake limited planning prior to the consumption of products or services. Some researchers (Hayes-Roth, 1982; Soloman, 1996) added that consumers do not comply to rational decision behaviours to optimising decisions, but rely on experience leading to a satisfying decision that is based on perceived value instead; such as an 'acceptable' price, a 'trusted' brand name, a 'safe' choice and a 'good enough' value.

Since the 1980s rational consumer decision making models have been considered as deficient because they do not exhibit the consumers' cognitive and emotional engagement in information processing prior to a purchase (Schiffman and Kanuk, 2000; Zajonc and Markus in Lofman, 1991; d'Astous et al., 1989). Cognitive information processing refers to active planning and reasoning involving knowledge-facilitated actions towards a desired result; while emotional engagement refers to the evaluation of non-rational factors resulting from the

actual decision. Schiffman and Kanuk (2000) summarised it by saying that rational consumer behaviour dismisses the fact that consumers decision making process are influenced by countless external influences; and that these influences might potentially govern their decisions in a given phenomenon. Thus, rational CDM models seem too idealistic and simplistic. Despite the commonly used rational decision making models, Walters (Erasmus et al., 2001, in Walters, 1978:42) questioned the usage of these rational models by saying that "these models provide broad, organised structures that reflect the basic process of the consumer decision making from certain viewpoints and within certain contexts." He continued to say that when a researcher implements a specific decision making model, the researcher has to address relevant assumptions within the phenomenon under study to coincide with the chosen rational model.

Taylor (2012) in *Emotional Marketing: Speak to the Heart* quoted Ahern (2011:1) in his article entitled *People Buy Based on Emotion and Justify with Logic,* saying "feelings are incredibly powerful. No matter how much we'd like to believe we're rational creatures who occasionally act emotionally, the truth is, we're actually emotional beings who occasionally act rationally."

By studying the progress of consumer behaviour research, Sirgy (1983) criticised the predominance of rational interpretation of consumer behaviour and thus, proposed a level of analysis dimension, namely, micro level, which is based purely on the sensation of the purchase process and the perception from the general surrounding and of the purchaser [self]; and some at the micro-macro level, which includes the five stages of decision making – *problem recognition, information search, alternative evaluation, purchase* and *consumption*.

Sirgy (1983) boldly suggested categorising consumer decisions for discussion and research purposes rather than a generalisation of the decision making process over the spectrum. And speaking of categorisation, Sheth (1982) also had the similar idea that consumer science researchers should aim to formulate concepts and theories within the research discipline, rather than merely adopting a generalised discipline. This viewpoint is also supported by Olson (1982) and Harrell (1990). With this perspective, the researcher's intention is to research and recommend a category of decision making process by adapting and perhaps modifying the existing CDM model to specifically aim at international students being the

'consumer' and overseas higher education institutions as the 'service'. This new discipline shall deviate from looking solely at the rational/positivist approach by adding the interpretive evaluation of non-rational factors which involve emotional environmental influences into the model since the 'consumers' of this research are human beings [Malaysian students].

In the past, the marketing of goods (including services) has taken a product-centred approach, where organisations concentrate on the products' attributes rather than the needs of the customers (Kotler and Anderson, 1987). Levitt (2004) argued against the product-centred view adopted by organisations; instead, he supported a more marketing-centred view, suggesting that the process of satisfying customers must be the view taken by businesses whereby knowing what the customers are looking for in a potential purchase is key for businesses to sustain and succeed. This includes both rational elements such as the product's attributes and the non-rational elements such as their image, value and symbolic representations.

2.5.   Conceptual Framework: Consumer Decision Making (CDM) model

Many researchers have written on the issue of students' higher education migration: both local and international migration. For international students' migration, a large number of these researches were led by prominent researchers in the field; and they can be grouped into a handful of around thirty researchers over the past thirty years: amongst them are Dorigo and Tobler (1983), Portes and Borocz (1989), Menon and Carspecken (1990), Altbach (1991; 1998), McMahon (1992), Mazzarol et al. (1996; 2001; 2002), Joseph and Joseph (2000), Binsardi and Ekwulugo (2003), Pimpa (2003; 2005), Pyvis and Chapman (2006), Maringe and Carter (2007), Sahasrabudhe (2008), Bodycott (2009), Lu et al. (2009), Priporas and Kamenidou (2010) and Wilkins and Huisman (2011). These literatures tend to focus on factors related to the higher education institution itself, such as the cost of programmes and the availability of financial aids (Joseph and Joseph, 2000); comparisons of syllabus and programmes resources (Pyvis and Chapman, 2006); straight forwardness and ease of application process (Maringe and Carter, 2007); attractive brochures and convincing education counsellors (Gatfield and Larmar, 2008); university ranking (Lu et al., 2009); and strong university brand reputation resulting from the spill over effect of successful alumni in the corporate sectors (Priporas and Kamenidou, 2010; McCarthy et al., 2012).

Although the findings of these researches are moving from rational factors such as cost of programme to non-rational factors like branding and image supported by theoretical (Srikatanyoo and Gnoth, 2002) and empirical (Mazzarol and Hosie, 1996; Peng et al., 2000; Binsardi and Ekwulugo, 2003) data, there is still very limited research which looks at the interpretations of emotional elements and symbolic values as factors influencing international students' decision making when selecting an overseas host country for higher education migration. To the best of the researcher's knowledge, there is scarce literature (if any) analysing the pre-purchase decision making process of Malaysian students and their correlation with intrinsic influences [emotional and symbolic] as the 'pull' and 'push' factors for higher education migration.

The CDM model is widely used as discussion topics in consumer behaviour research. During these discussions, Du Plessis et al. (1991) described the model as merely a flowchart of behavioural process. This statement was supported by Engle et al. (1995:143) stating that "a model is nothing more than a replica of the phenomena it is designed to present. It specifies the building blocks (variables or factors) and the ways in which they are interrelated." Models however, do offer the researcher [and readers] a visual of process flow to grasp the formation of variables, factors and circumstances. They also provide the possibility of understanding various consumer decision making processes and marketing strategies through the development of theories (Engle et al., 1995; Du Plessis et al., 1991). This proposition is also supported by the Consumer Decision Process (CDP) framework developed by Blackwell et al. (2006) where the Hierarchy of Effects (HoE) model is linked to the CDM model (Figure 2.1: p. 23). Information gathered in the various stages of the HoE model eventually contribute to the consumer's final decision making process. The HoE model charts the marketing communications process which serves as an information bank of marketing communication messages that the prospective buyers have been exposed to.

[The remaining blank page is intentional]

Figure 2.1: Consumer Decision Process (CDP) Model: (Hierarchy of Effect (HoE) Model and Consumer Decision Making (CDM) Model)
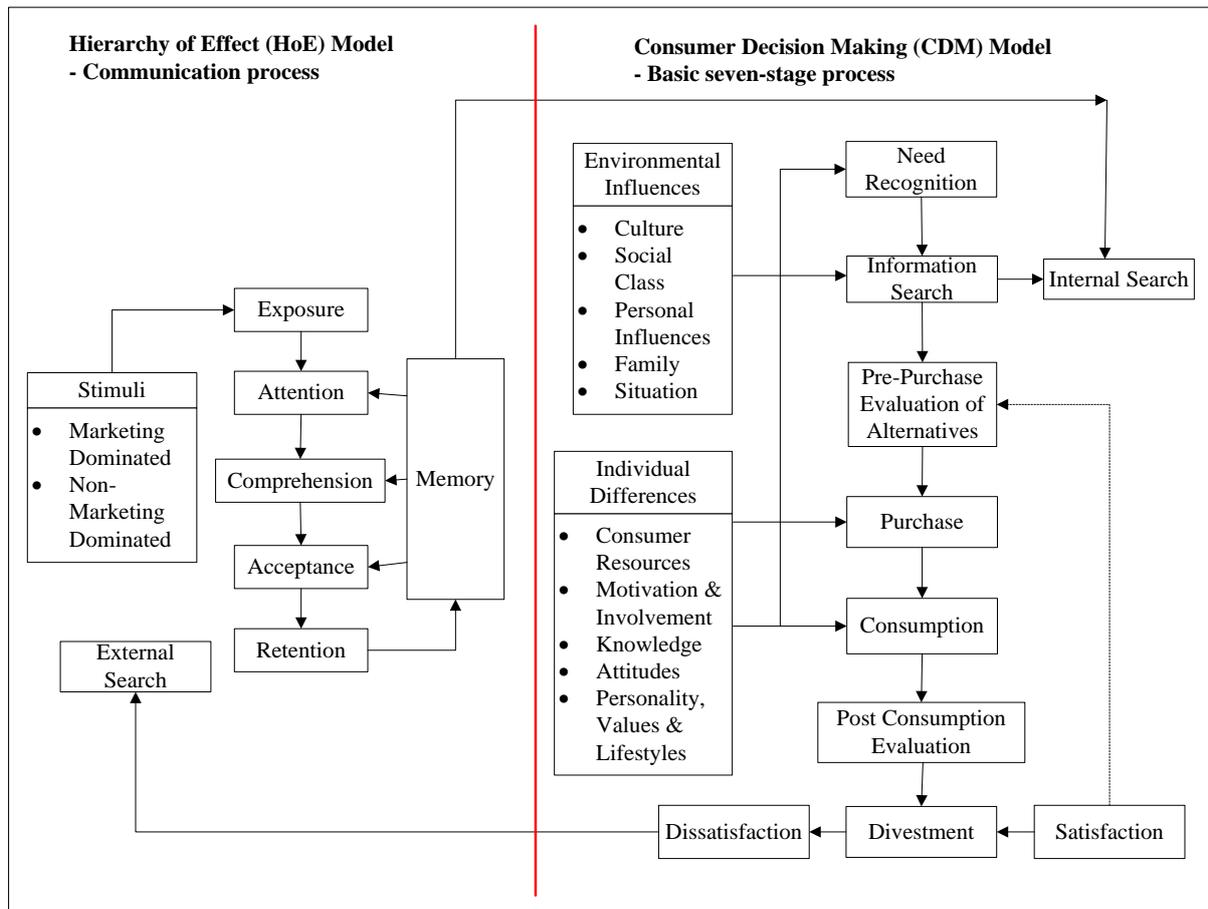
Source: Blackwell et al., (2006:83)

Moogan et al. (1999:226) also revealed that when a service is purchased, unlike a product, any direct experience or evaluation of the service is limited due to its intangibility. They continued to posit that "…students do not have the opportunity to 'test drive' their future higher education course…However, by gaining more knowledge in the relevant areas and increasing the amount of searching, they can feel more confident about making a decision." This statement supports the complex element of simultaneous production and consumption characteristic of a service (Ahmed et al., 2002).

Does this still remain true with various researchers (Pyvis and Chapman, 2006; Maringe and Carter, 2007; Gatfield and Larmar, 2008; Lu et al., 2009; Priparas and Kamenidou, 2010) concluding that university-funded educational counsellors and agents are the top few sources of information gathering contacts?

With the aforesaid context and Moogan et al.'s (1999) clarification that knowledgeable friends could share quality experiences, thus act as an influencing factor for the prospective students, the intent of this research is to elicit, interpret and discuss the possible non-rational [intrinsic] factors influencing Malaysian students by looking at their pre-purchase decision making behaviour using Blackwell et al. (2006) CDM model. With this intention, the CDM model will be reduced to the first three [pre-purchase] stages: *Need recognition; Information search;* and *Pre-purchase evaluation of alternatives* (Figure 2.2).

Figure 2.2: Consumer Decision Making model (Pre-purchase stages)
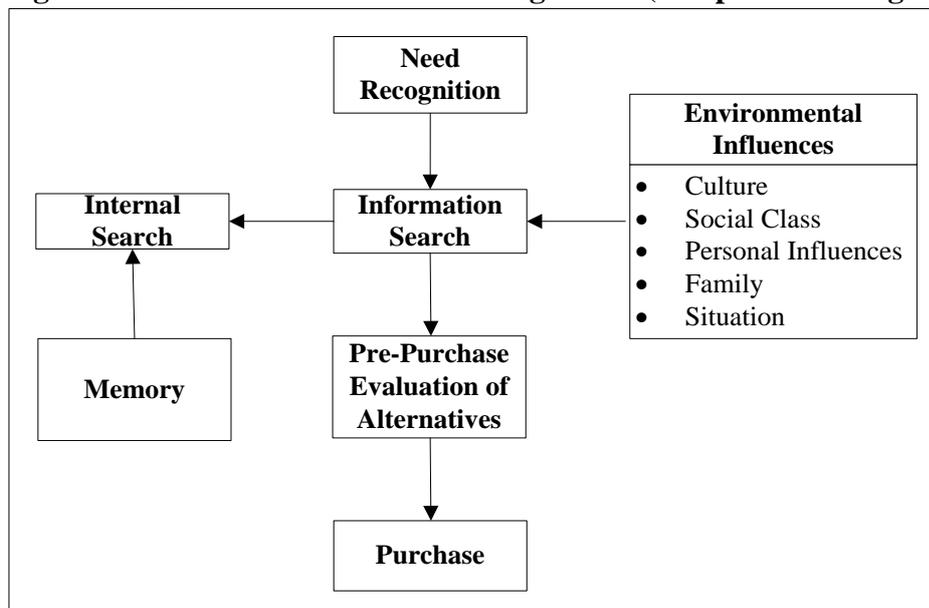
Source: Adapted from Blackwell et al., (2006:83)

It needs to be noted that although the chosen model (Blackwell et al., 2006) is generic, it allows complex behaviour to be reviewed into meaningful parts, thus allowing for the accommodation of individual target population [prospective Malaysian students] and market variation [UK as host country of higher education migration] in the analysis.

2.5.1. Stage One - *Need recognition*

The first stage in the CDM model is *need recognition*. This stage will present itself and appear relevant when consumers acknowledge a significant difference between what is perceived as the desired state and what is perceived as the actual state (Kardes et al., 2011). In short, a discrepancy exists between what a consumer wants the situation to be and what the situation really is. Linking back to this research, the discrepancy exists when a current pre-

university (high school or college) student realises that the next chapter in their life is to pursue and acquire a tertiary education by becoming a university student.

The need recognition stage may sound like a logical progression for many pre-university students and it can be assumed to be a natural progression. However, Sanders (1986) argues that students will only participate in this stage if it appears attractive to them and that their choices are available and within reasonable reach. Some of the main reasons for continuing their education can be to obtain a decent salary by having greater opportunities to choose a variety of more dynamic careers (Hossler et al., 1989). This will only be achieved if the students perceive that the benefits of extending their education outweigh the costs of doing so (Lui, 1998; Davis, 2001) as there are opportunity costs involved (Volkwein and Szelest, 1995). As the costs of gaining a degree increase (Cowie, 2001), the rewards must also follow suit. Today the cost of pursuing higher education can be very high and pre-university students are increasingly aware of the expenses associated with studying for a tertiary degree; more so if it is a university abroad. Financial concerns are often the most important reason for students not enrolling in to a university in the first place (Cowie, 2001). If parents are able to support [financially], they will encourage their children to continue studying (Bird, 1994); this is especially true if they are paying for it (Clarke and Brown, 1998) as they may be more likely to be affluent and influential in determining their children's future (Stringer, 1998).

2.5.2. Stage Two - *Information search*

Once a need is recognised, consumers [prospective students] often search for information to inform their purchase decision. Researchers (Schiffman and Kanuk, 2000; Blackwell et al., 2001; Kardes et al., 2011) refer to this activity as *Information Search*. Information search follows the linear pattern of decision making outlined by the traditional decision making model, where consumers first recognise the discrepancy of existing and potential situations. During the information search efforts, consumers may access information from their long-term memory to recall past exposure and experience with brands, potential options and relevant evaluating criteria. This act of retrieval of information, known as internal search, is common amongst low involvement decisions categorised under daily activities. When internal search fails to provide sufficient problem-solving information, consumers seek external sources of information; an act known as external search. This thoughtful act may

involve engaging personal sources such as friends, relatives and market sources such as marketing communication messages.

The extent of information search and information processing is determined by consumer involvement, the marketing environment, social situation, emotional influences and individual differences (Kardes et al., 2011). Linking back to this research, previous researches have shown that university-produced materials such as websites, brochures and prospectuses are crucial starting points for many students (Keen and Higgins, 1990; Rosen et al., 1998) as these materials seemed colourful and interesting; thus may increase the chances of them being picked up or viewed. From personal observation, most (if not all) universities' recruitment materials are colourful and informative. Therefore, is there a differentiating factor to ease the students' decision making process?

At this stage [Information Search] of the decision making process, consumers may look for various information providers such as their own knowledge which is stored in their memory or to acquire information from the environment to potentially (and hopefully) satisfy their need (Blackwell, 2006). Within this process flow, information search can be assisted either through internal sources or external influences.

2.5.2.1. Within Stage Two of Information Search: *Internal Search and Memory*

The method of seeking information through internal search involves scanning and retrieving decision-relevant knowledge stored in one's memory (Blackwell, 2006). This form of knowledge can be a past solution to an exact or similar experience, or from marketing communication messages delivered by the relevant companies. Should this past experience be a positive outcome, undertaking an external search is highly unlikely. And if marketing messages were cleverly delivered and effectively instilled in the consumers' mind, external search, again, may be left unexplored. Biehal's (1983) research on consumers for automotive parts suggests that more than half of the research participants rely solely on their existing knowledge when choosing an automotive repair service.

2.5.2.2. Within Stage Two of Information Search: *Environmental (External) Influences*

When internal search proves inadequate, additional information from an external source is required to aid the decision making process. External search motivated by an upcoming

purchase decision is known as pre-purchase search (Blackwell et al., 2006). Pre-purchase search differs from on-going search, in which the latter's information acquisition takes place on a relatively regular basis regardless of irregular purchase needs (Bloch et al., 1986). The primary motive behind a pre-purchase search is to make a better choice. The decision to undertake pre-purchase search requires consumers to make a number of additional decisions in executing their search behaviours. Environmental influences, as listed in Blackwell et al. (2006:87) are categorised under five broad variables: *Cultures*; *Social class*; *Family*; *Personal influences*; and *Situational behaviours*.

2.5.2.2.1. *Cultures (within Environmental (External) Influences)*

In the context of consumer behaviour, Blackwell et al. (2006:87) refer to culture as "…values, ideas, artefacts and other meaningful symbols that help individuals communicate, interpret and evaluate as members of society." They continued to say that culture is also a set of socially acquired behavioural patterns transmitted symbolically through language and other means to the members of a particular society; and that it is influenced by factors such as ethnicity, race, religion and national or regional identity. Some of the more important characteristics influenced by culture are sense of self, communication and language, relationships with family and peers, values and norms, beliefs and attitudes and mental processes and learning antics.

2.5.2.2.2. *Social class (within Environmental (External) Influences)*

Social classes are divisions within society that are composed of individuals sharing similar values, interests and behaviours. These divisions can be classified under various forms of social categories such as social stratification – perceived hierarchies in which individuals rate others as higher or lower in social status; gained through work or education level as achieved status; or were born wealthy or beautiful as ascribed status (Blackwell, 2006:471).

2.5.2.2.3. *Personal influences (within Environmental (External) Influences)*

Consumers' behaviours are often affected by individuals with whom they are closely associated. This unconscious behaviour is referred to as personal influence. This action often occurs with individuals responding to perceived pressure to conform to the norms and expectations provided by others. Amongst the types of pressures to conform, as listed by Blackwell et al. (2006) are *Self-concept*, *Social comparison* and *Conformity*. *Self-concept*

refers to the self-perception of oneself in their social interactions with others whose values they share or respect. This may be the products or services that they choose, such as clothes, cars, careers and university, which make statements about them and their self-image that these decision making behaviours represent. *Social comparison* is the need to evaluate and compare to others in various aspects, such as success, wealth and health. *Conformity* occurs when the individual feels the desire to fit in with a select reference group based on either real or perceived group pressure.

2.5.2.2.4. *Family (within Environmental (External) Influences)*

An individual with two or more people related by blood, marriage, or through adoption and are living together, is considered as family (Oxford English Dictionary, 2012). The two categories of family which are relevant to the context of consumer behaviour are the nuclear family and extended family. The former refers to the immediate group of father, mother and child(ren) living together. The latter extends further from the nuclear family with other relatives, such as grandparents, uncles and aunts, cousins and parents-in-law (Blackwell et al., 2006). As a factor under environmental influences, it is important to note that the role of family affects the individuals [as consumers] through *Instrumental* and *Expressive* roles. *Instrumental* role, known also as functional or economic roles, involves financial, performance and other functions performed by the family group members. The *Expressive* role, on the other hand, involves supporting the individuals in the decision making process and expressing the family's aesthetic or emotional needs, including upholding family norms and beliefs.

2.5.2.2.5. *Situational behaviours (within Environmental (External) Influences)*

Situational behaviours are triggered by changes in the individual's current state, such as medical conditions, a predicted future situation such as the birth of a child in the next two weeks, or a festival or event such as Christmas or a wedding. These situations often take priority in one's decision making behaviour.

2.5.3. Stage Three - *Pre-purchase evaluation of alternatives*

With the information and alternatives at hand, it is time to evaluate them. However, do consumers know exactly what information they need? Kardes et al. (2011) lists three pieces of information necessary to conduct pre-purchase and on-going search: (1) the number of

available brands; (2) the determinant attributes for the product/service category; and (3) how the consumers react to a brand after it is purchased. However, he clarifies that in practice, consumers are most likely to be unaware of these three pieces of information; and continues to support the fact that consumers are not able to know all the available brands of a certain product/service, all of their attributes, and then be able to experience the consumption of all the brands. Thus, the consumers' inability to perfectly predict their preference may lead to a sense of uncertainty.

Heap (2001) suggests that to eliminate the sense of uncertainty, it is crucial for prospective students to visit the university (hence country) where they are planning to spend the next three or four years. This is also mentioned by Redwood (2000) saying that if the students are left with a positive experience from the visit, they are more likely to keep it as their main choice. This may hold truth for students who are able to travel abroad and visit the universities if they are blessed with additional financial resources and the abundance of time. This, however, may not apply to the majority of students choosing to pursue their higher education abroad.

Linking back to this research, with sufficient resources and search effort, students could, potentially acquire all the information necessary to make a rational purchase decision. The term 'rational' means that with the so-called 'complete' information, the students would make a decision that maximises their satisfaction. However, the cost of acquiring information often exceeds the benefits of making the best decision (Davis and Cline, 2005). Given this incomplete information to support decision making, Davis and Cline (2005) suggest that consumers will settle for a 'good' decision although not the 'best'.

2.6. Previous researches: Phases of international students' higher education migration

Over the last thirty years, the growth of internationalising the higher education industry has been rapid and globally, the rate is still in the upward trend (Bodycott, 2009). In the 1980's and 1990's, the rapid growth of this phenomenon emerged as one of the more significant service industries; resulting in many HEIs in the developed countries jumping onto this band wagon (Mazzarol, 1998). The two main incentives, referred to by Gomes and Murphy

(2003), are the prospects of charging higher tuition fees and capitalising on global initiatives. Mazzarol continued to study this phenomenon with Sim and Soutar in 2003 to reveal the three phases of international students' migration pattern in the international education industry.

Phase one started off in the earlier periods of the twentieth century when students mostly travelled out of their home countries to a host county of the selected HEI. This still holds true and is common until today. In the mid period of the twentieth century when higher education gradually became more of a requirement to be more employable, phase two emerged.

Phase two emerged when foreign HEIs started to establish alliances or coalitions with local (home) HEIs as the anchor providing 'twinning' or 'dual awards' programmes in order to have a presence in the international market to either expand market share, increase brand equity, or both. This phase was termed as 'forward integration' in the international higher education industry. Forward integration became a common strategic practice even until today amongst Asian HEIs where students can pursue a foreign degree at their home countries hosted by local HEIs. With the existence of phase one and phase two, students could choose to either migrate overseas or stay at home respectively while pursuing their degree full time.

The next [third] phase was developed mainly to cater for another niche yet large market: students who choose to pursue online degrees. During the later period of the twentieth century and crossing over to the twenty-first century where information and communications technology (ICT) started becoming a part of people's life, HEIs started a new wave of knowledge acquisition where new branch campuses were formed in foreign markets to deliver online programmes ranging from short courses to full degrees (Mazzarol et al., 2001b). This phase is currently popular as well. Whist three phases are currently popular since their inception, this research resonates with phase one directly - international students migrating out of their home countries into a foreign [host] country in pursuit of higher education for three to four years.

There are various factors driving the demand for international education amongst students. Traditionally, one's expectation to raise their economic and social status upon graduation has been the main aim (Mazzarol and Soutar, 2002). Mazzarol and Soutar (2002) continued to posit that a lack of access into local (home) HEIs in many Asian countries has been a key driver for international students' migration over the later period of the twentieth century. They also suggested that historical or colonial links between home and host countries have played an influencing role in students' choice of destination countries. In addition, there are various migration theories explaining this phenomenal surge in international student migration.

2.7.   Theorising International Student Migration

Moving across borders to acquire knowledge from renowned scholars, enhancing a specific discipline or becoming an expert in a knowledge base, or simply experiencing different multicultural environments are some of the few main reasons for international student migration (Roberts et al., 2010). In the current global and borderless climate, the motivation for international students' migration is not simply determined by the cost of a three- or four-year programme but a combination of factors that include the reputation of the HEIs and the host countries, the suitability of programmes offered and their recognition - both locally [home country] and globally, the ease of obtaining [or being restricted] to the opportunities for HE entrance in home countries, future job opportunities and possible migration options (Hatakenaka, 2004); amongst many other factors. Hatakenaka (2004) continued to posit that many countries, both developed and developing countries, have strategically used international education as an opportunity to attract students with skills and qualifications that they need; or to enhance their social and political stand by providing permanent immigrant status. The inflow of high skilled, intelligent international students has been viewed as a potential pool of immigrants to the receiving host countries (Chen, 2008).

The movement of international students has been, over the years, largely from developing countries to developed or industrialised countries; and this trend will continue (Chen and Barnett, 2000). Traditionally, more than 90% of international students globally chose countries which are members of the OECD (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development) such as America, the UK, Australia, Canada and Germany; which cover 70%

of the these statistics (Verbik and Lasanowski, 2007). The British Council predicted once, in 2004, that the population of international students in these five main host countries will reach to 2.6 million in 2020 with students mainly from Asia (British Council, 2004). However, the overall influx has not been as high as anticipated over the previous years. This is due to the significant changes in the cross-border market with Germany and France stepping in as contenders by reinforcing their marketing efforts and moving towards English-language provision in their HE offerings to attract students from Asia and Africa (Verbik and Lasanowski, 2007). In addition, Asian countries such as Malaysia, Singapore, China and India, who used to be major exporters of international students, are emerging quickly as HE destinations themselves by providing both a promise of friendly environment and quality education in English language.

As international student migration becomes more complex with globalisation and borderless boundaries, this research seeks to gain clarity within a few theories which may contribute to the motivations of international students' migration in the global context, namely, Global Capitalism and Neoliberalism, and the Human Capital Theory. Consequently, as borders are crossed, differences in social norms and cultural nuances may also contribute to the uncertainty in international students' migration decisions.

2.7.1. Global Capitalism and Neoliberalism

Robinson (2014), in The World Financial Review, describes global capitalism as "a qualitatively new stage in the open ended evolution of capitalism characterised by the rise of transnational capital, a transnational capitalist class and a transnational state" (p. 1). He continued to clarify that the issue of global capitalism and the effects that this phenomenon has on cross-borders and transnational exchanges during his roundtable series. Relevance of this global capitalist theory to international students mobility in this research cross path with two points that were highlighted: "the rise of truly transnational capital" and "the appearance of novel relations of power and inequality in global society" (Robinson, 2008:2). Before elaborating the two points from Robinson, it is relevant to revisit Hatakenaka's (2004) point and the OECD (2004) reflecting Robinson's description of global capitalism. Hatakenaka posits that the factors driving international and transnational education, as seen by OECD as well, are of instrumental and economical terms with the individual's [students] decision making based on the opportunity the students have in converting their overseas qualifications

into advantages by enhancing their personal value. This in turn, contributes to their elevated values and demands when competing for jobs – either in their home country or in the global employment market. The rationale supporting the selection of Robinson's two points during his roundtable series was mainly due to their relevance to this research and the effects of global- and trans-national capitalism have on international students' migration patterns.

The first point - the rise of truly transnational capital - has been apparent in the integration of production and financial system, globally. However, this new phenomenon sees the different driver in this organised production by trans-nationalised capital. Linking back to this research, increasingly the integration of production [and manufacturing of goods and services] is led by fast-growing developing countries compared to developed countries as previously evidenced. The switch in power has increased the health and wealth of the countries being the main drivers in this switch, thus, triggering and accelerating the attractiveness of these [developing] countries. Consequently, motivating the influx of both corporate collaborations and international student mobility into this knowledge-rich economy.

The second point - the appearance of novel relations of power and inequality in global society - refers to the existence of social inequality gap which is evident between developing and developed countries. Only recently within the past decade where the change of social inequality is evident with the new configurations of global power and transnational collaborations. Similar to the first point in the aforesaid paragraph, this change has also impacted the global flow of international students and the directions of their migration patterns - from previously developing countries to developed countries, to the opposite direction.

The globalisation of HE is often interpreted as a phenomenon on neoliberalism (Shields, 2013), which according to the World Trade Organisation (WTO), is the increased in global competition through the removal of protective policies and their implementations, globally and regionally, without interference from trade regimes – also known as *laissez-faire* (QECD, 2008; UK Department for Business Innovation and Skills, 2009). The scope of the labour market of this knowledge-rich economy is global. With the enhancement in information technology and its access globally, cost-effective labour can be sourced through borders, thus

increasing competition for employment and, in many cases, increased in opportunities for potential university graduates (Shields 2013). These newly created opportunities are prevalent in many fast-growing, developing countries. This is further supported by a report from the International Organisation for Migration (IOM), which states that "the choice of a host establishment [country and institution] by foreign students and their families may be viewed as the outcome of an assessment of the monetary and non-monetary costs of studying abroad…and the benefits they hope to reap from it" (2008:112).

2.7.2. The Human Capital Theory

Human capital is viewed as the market value of one's abilities and skills acquired at cost which reflects the skills that influence one's ability to perform labour and produce economic value (Hartog, 2000). A trained labour force is viewed as an investment in a nation's human capital stock (Blundell et al., 1999). In addition, obtaining a sort-after international HE, especially in desirable countries, is considered an intermediary for migration. Through this theory, the decision in selecting to migrate for HE to enhance one's human capital value may suggest that destinations [countries] of HE education adopted is one of the main criteria assessed by employers since qualifications reflect the mark of knowledge, abilities and a set of valued traits acquired during the pursuance of HE (Kroch and Sjoblom, 1994). It is also suggested that skilled, highly qualified candidates put themselves in an advantaged position when entering the labour market, and subsequently lowering their cost of displacement (Swaim and Podgursky, 1989).

Rosenzweig (2006) proposed two models explaining international students' mobility to developed countries, namely, the school-constrained model and migration model. The first, school-constrained model, posits that a lack of educational facilities in the home country prompts the flow of migration to a host country to acquire the desired human capital values; and then return [home country] to reap the benefits of their acquired enhanced human capital at home. The second, migration model, takes advantage of the student visa as an entry point to stay in a foreign country to escape the perceived low returns of human capital acquired through education. Similar to Rosenzweig's models, Haupt et al. (2010) portray international student migration from the perspectives of 'brain gain' and 'brain drain'. The need for host countries to compete for, and retain international students, in turn leads to them increasing the quality and attractiveness of their education system in order to benefit from the externalities

of human capital accumulation. Thus, enhancing the rate of return of their [home] students, hence, leading to brain gain. With the increase of education system, this in turn causes brain drain for countries with large number of out-going students.

Global capitalism and neoliberalism, and the human capital theory are some of the migration theories which may explain the current trends of international student migration patterns. As suggested by Robinson (2014), Hatakenaka (2004) and the OECD (2004), the switch in power from the previously developed [Western] countries to the currently developing [Eastern] countries has triggered and accelerated the attractiveness of these [developing] countries, and thus, impacted the change in the global flow of international students and the directions of their migration patterns. Despite this current global trend, the number of Malaysian students deciding on the UK as their HE migration destination is still in the rise with 16,635 students in the 2013/14 academic year (British Council, 2014) - a reversal from the global mobility trend. Therefore, the researcher views this occurrence as an important phenomenon to be researched, understood and interpreted. The question therefore is, which theoretical model is deemed suitable for a phenomenon that differs [in opposite direction] the current global mobility trend? A trend that seemed to mirror previous migration flow – from the Eastern regions (developing countries) to the Western regions (developed countries); and specifically for this research, the migration flow from Malaysia into the UK to pursue their HE.

The researcher considers the Push/Pull Theory of Migration (PPToM) as most suitable theory - although not the most current - to be used to underpin the findings of this research as this theory [PPToM] is able to simplify a complicated, unspoken real world phenomenon to aid understanding by representing migration behaviour and its influences in a simplistic approach. The PPToM can also remove obscuring details so that general principles can be seen (Lee, 1966), and this will aid in the building of policies and make decisions sensible by having a holistic and undisturbed view of migration patterns and trends (Lee, 1966; Portes and Rumbaut, 1990; Cinel, 1991). Another substantive strength suggested of the PPToM is its ability to transform the structural 'push' and 'pull' factors into the individual's [students'] 'costs' and 'benefits'. It suggests that an individual's migration behaviour results from a calculation of a perception of costs and benefits, and it is aimed at maximising gains – both economic and symbolic gains. The PPToM has been identified by Lee (1966) to provide the

flexibility of identifying four types of factors affecting the process of migration: (1) factors associated with the area of home country [origin]; (2) factors associated with the area of host country [destination]; (3) influential or obstructive factors between home and host countries; and (4) personal factors. All four types of factors may carry elements consisting either economic gains, symbolic gains, or both simultaneously.

The researcher conducted a pilot test with 15 participants at the beginning of this research in order to test the sample population with the aim of attaining a feel of whether a western country and the perception of a western-linked university has an influence in Malaysian students' decision making behaviour. In this pilot test, one of the objectives was to classify the influencing factors that determined their final decisions. The [pilot] findings showed predominantly non-rational factors [symbolic gains] rather than rational factors [economic gains] as being influential. The emerging patters ranges from decisions made 'to satisfy their peers and family's pressure'; to having 'the right image of association in terms of country and university'; to a reason as symbolic as 'saving face' in order to create a good reputation or to protect the family's current dignity. These are just some of the [non-rationale] factors which are symbolic and pertinent to Malaysian students living in a culture that is classified as both 'Collectivist' and 'Hierarchical' by Hofstede (2011). Living in a society with a culture that is bounded by the pressures of being 'collectivists' and 'hierarchical, the researcher, also a Malaysian who has lived in this environment, is sensitive to the decisions that many Malaysians made; and most of them are made to please the unspoken pressures that surround them. With this lived experience and understandings of the nature of decisions, and how they are made, the PPToM is, in the researcher's opinion, the most suitable theoretical model to be utilised in this research to underpin the CDM model in order to simplify subjective behavioural patterns, and to classify them into comprehensible format that are befitting the conceptual framework [CDM model] used for this research; thus, contributing to academic knowledge.

With the array of advantages, the PPToM has been widely used by previous international students mobility researches (Mazzarol and Soutar, 2002; Binsardi and Ekwulugo, 2003; Maringe, 2006; Engelke, 2008; Petruzzellis and Romanazzi, 2010; King and Raghuram, 2013; Zheng, 2014) to similarly classify their findings under the 'push' or 'pull' factors to express clarity. While the aforementioned theories of Global Capitalism and Neoliberalism,

and the Human Capital Theory are more current due to the changes in the current global climate, the PPToM is able to be utilised to classify findings which emerged from these current theories. For example, the 'lack of educational facilities' in the school-constrained model suggested by Rosenzweig (2006) in the Human Capital Theory, is a 'push' factor and the 'student visa as entrance opportunity' in the migration model represents a 'pull' factor. This suggests that there are diverse forms of factors that are influential, and therefore, the importance of adopting the PPToM to underpin the theoretical framework to clarify and simplify their rationales is deemed suitable and justified. Lastly and equally important, the PPToM is also deemed to be adaptable and can be applied to a variety of different migration studies (Lee, 1966). Hence, the suitability of it being adopted for this research to underpin the CDM model.

2.8.   Use of Push/Pull Theory of Migration to underpin CDM model

With the rapid increase in tuition fees for home students within the higher education sector and the demand for international education, the importance of understanding the influencing factors, both rational and non-rational [emotional and symbolic], has become imperative among UK HEI practitioners such as marketers and international recruiters - to reduce the financial burden from the financial cut announced by HEFCE and the increased in local tuition fees - to remain sustainable operationally. Many researchers have categorised factors through the use of the CDM model as the theoretical platform (Joseph and Joseph, 2000; Pimpa, 2005; Pyvis and Chapman, 2006; Maringe and Carter, 2007; Gatfield and Lamar, 2008; Lu et al., 2009; Priporas and Kamenidou, 2010); and with the PPToM as the underpinning reasons (Menon and Carspecken, 1990; Altbach, 1991; 1998; McMahon, 1992; Mazzarol, 1998; Mazzarol and Soutar, 2002; Binsardi and Ekwulugo, 2003; Pimpa, 2003; 2005; Maringe and Carter, 2007; Sahasrabudhe, 2008; Bodycott, 2009; and Wilkins and Huisman, 2011). Their researches and outcome were reviewed and are analysed later in this chapter.

When the categorised factors from the CDM-based researches were placed next to factors derived from researches linked to the Push/Pull Theory of Migration (Mazzarol and Soutar, 2002; Binsardi and Ekwulugo, 2003; Maringe, 2006; Engelke, 2008; Petruzzellis and Romanazzi, 2010; King and Raghuram, 2013; Zheng, 2014), fairly similar findings were

presented. Collectively the 'push' factors include: (1) a lack of access to local HEIs; (2) limited variety of programmes/courses offered; and (3) perception of a lower quality/image of home country's HEIs. The 'pull' factors cover: (1) the commonality of language used and the opportunity to improve one's foreign language skills - English - in the case of this research; (2) the geographical proximity of host country; (3) the wide range of programmes/courses in the host country; (4) higher level of respect for academic staffs' qualification and credentials; and (5) better perception of host country and/or HEIs.

In 1885, Ernst Ravenstein published a paper entitled "*The Law of Migration*" in the Journal of the Statistical Society, where he suggested that migration is governed by a 'push/pull' process. 'Push' factors are defined as adverse conditions in one place which cause an individual to be dissatisfied with their current place, which then pushes them to relocate to a new place. In tandem with the 'push' factors the 'pull' factors, which normally consist of conditions and attributes that are appealing and more favourable, thus pull the individual towards relocating to the new place (Dorigo and Tobler, 1983). In other words, the 'push/pull' factors are causal variables that determine the size and direction of migration flows (Portes and Borocz, 1989).

In more recent years, PPToM has also been used as an explanatory research model for international student mobility due to its migratory nature, coupled with its push/pull factors as variables that influence students to pursue higher education abroad, aiding them with their selection of study destinations. These factors function, in combination, as a demand creator for international education and an explanation of the degree and directions of the global flow of international students (Altbach, 1991; Mazzarol and Soutar, 2002). Altbach (1991) also claims that since the majority of international students are self-funded, understanding the interplay of push/pull factors on international students' choices is vital to understanding their migration flow and behaviour. Mazzarol et al. (1996) view the interplay of both the demand for and the supply of opportunities for education in a student's home country as a major force in determining whether students are likely to be pushed and pulled into the international education market.

The PPToM generally addresses students' migration patterns from their home country to a host country. There are however, researchers like Mazzarol and Soutar (2002) and Maringe

and Carter (2007) who attempted to expand the PPToM by suggesting each host institution has its own set of 'pull' factors which may differentiate them from their competitors. They list the institutional 'pull' factors as: (1) rankings in the league tables; (2) quality and reputation; (3) variety of courses offered; and (4) state-of-the-art facilities for learning and research. Linking back to this research, while HEIs' 'pull' factors may be important to students' decisions, this research will not discuss them as the main area of research focuses on the 'pull' factors of a country of destination - United Kingdom. This research aims to seek the understanding of Malaysian students' information search and pre-purchase evaluation of environmental influences, which is underpins by the PPToM by focusing on the five fundamental research questions set in Chapter 1 (p. 7). The five research questions are intended to elicit intrinsic, emotional elements and symbolic values in the participants' [Malaysian students] responses covering the 'what', 'how' and 'why' these factors are influential.

2.9. Emotions in the context of CDM behaviour

The rational coordination of beliefs and desires has long been identified to correspond with decision making - both in its non-technical and psychological expressions - in maximising a sort-after utility (Bechara et al., 2000). The study of emotional behaviour in the context of decision making began over twenty five years ago (Bell, 1982; Frank, 1988; Pfister and Bohm, 1992; Toda, 1980) and has been increasing over the past decade (Loewenstein and Lerner, 2003; Mellers, 2000; Peters, 2006). Given that the predominant general opinion appears to be that decision making is linear and thus should be quantitatively measured to achieve a final outcome based purely on functionality and utility, limited consensus is reported in the literature about what is actually meant by emotional behaviour or symbolic representations impacting the decision making behaviour of foreign-labelled products and services.

More recently, Loewenstein and Lerner (2003) cited in Pfister and Bohm (2008), construed emotions according to their place along the time course of a decision process, beginning with a deliberation phase leading to a choice, then implementing a choice, and eventually, experiencing the outcomes. This process has similar traits and stages in the CDM model adapted by Blackwell et al. (2001). In their work, they distinguished two aspects of emotions – *anticipated* and *immediate*.

Anticipated emotions are beliefs about one's future emotional state that might follow when the outcomes are obtained. *Immediate emotions* are actual experience when making a decision, thereby employing an effect on the mental processes involved in making a choice. These emotions, as suggested by Loewenstein and Lerner (2003) frequently influence the judgements and choices in a decision making process. Three years later, Peters (2006) implied that the affective behaviour of emotions in decision making operates as a motivator, thus influencing efforts to process and evaluate information. This implication also holds true in various decision making researches involving emotional behaviour (Frijda, 1986; Zeelenberg and Pieters, 2006).

With the rational decision making process without emotion being perceived as a conventional practice and the notion that emotions may disrupt or even jeopardise the rational process, an alternative to understanding the decision making process is necessary. This is particularly vital as the decision making process is understood as a formal and consistent process which conforms to the laws of probability depicting the concept of utility theory; a theoretical concept that supports the possibility of ranking the alternatives in their order of preference according to the consumers' marginal utility (Caplin and Leahy, 2001). This concept however, is being contested with increasing evidence that this analogy is false (Damasio, 1994; Bechara et al., 1997; Bechara and Damasio, 2005). The contention is that decision making without emotional involvement might not be possible or be far from optimal. This is further supported by evidence from neuropsychological studies suggesting that at the level of brain structure and functionality, a definite distinction between cognition and emotion might not be feasible (Phelps, 2006). In fact, various research findings from the behavioural and neuroscience data revealed that cognition and rational decision making are not exclusively dependant solely on the product's attributes, but require the support of emotional influences derived from external factors (Damasio, 1994; Clark, 2001). More specifically, the neuroscientific evidence points to the necessity of emotional influences in the process of reasoning and decision making, and when emotion is absent, rationality has been shown to break down (Tancredi, 2005; Glannon, 2007).

The most poignant insight of the neurological study is when Damasio (1994; 2003) claims that ordinary practical decision making is governed by emotional factors of which there is no awareness by the decision maker during the decision making phenomenon. This claim was

further supported by several of his subsequent joint researches (Damasio et al., 1991; Bechara and Damasio, 2005). This outcome has challenged the rationally led methodology and understanding of consumer behaviour and decision making of both simple and complex situations, including the selection of host country for higher education migration.

Damasio (2003) also continues to posit that the expression 'emotions' in the context of emotional factors in decision making is not a theory where decisions are made when the decision makers are in a state of emotional high or low. Rather, it indicates the proper place of emotional factors or environmental elements which may influence the evaluation flow during the process of decision making.

2.9.1. The emotional function of providing information in the CDM process

Emotions which are either linked to, or as a consequence of, emotional factors have been acknowledged by many researchers; although under different frameworks (Clore et al., 2001; Peters, 2006; Slovic et al., 2002). The common premise is that emotionally linked information is useful in the facilitation of the pre-purchase evaluation and preference construction process during decision making.

Sharma et al. (1995) and Lantz and Loeb's (1996) researches suggest that one's beliefs regarding the appropriateness (or not) of purchasing foreign-labelled goods is reinforced by emotional influences. Their notion is supported by various researchers (Pfisher and Bohm (2008); Bechara and Damasio (2005); Bechara et al. (1997); Barnes and Thagard (1996); Damasio (1994)) claiming that emotional factors are integral agents in the consumers' decision making process. With these empirical evidences, this research will be using the CDM model as the principal theoretical model in the elicitation of Malaysian students' emotional factors influencing their HE migration decision making behaviour. The theoretical concept of the 'push' and 'pull' factors underpinning the CDM model is the Push/Pull Theory of Migration.

2.10. Meta-analysis: Push/Pull Theory of Migration (PPToM)

The PPToM has been used as research framework several times over in the past to study the mobility flow of international students' migration. This research will analyse previous researches in order to trace knowledge gaps and pave the research direction for this investigation.

2.10.1. *Altbach (1991; 1998)*

Both literatures from Altbach (1991; 1998) state that students' decision to migrate abroad for their higher education stems from the student's personal reflection of themselves, the home country and the host country; naturally.

Covering a spectrum of the then developing countries, personal reflections influenced by the push/pull factors include poor quality education, enhanced value of foreign qualifications and discrimination against minorities. Having these factors to heighten their inferiority complex, the home country's factors further encourage the 'push' effects which include a decrease in state-funded international exchanges which affect the minority ethnic groups, economic growth resulting in the increase of demand for higher skills and training and changes in political affinity. Pertinent factors within which host countries offer the 'pull' effect include changes in foreign policy to either restrict or encourage student mobility, and changes in education policy that positively emphasise international students.

Altbach (1998) highlights that whilst 'push' factors are important variables for students' migration, it is the host countries' 'pull' factors that act as directional catalysts for migration decision. While the strength of these two literatures are the three aspects of 'push/pull' factors - personal reflection, home and host countries' variables - the lack of data presented to substantiate their list of push/pull factors revealed a gap for further research.

2.10.2. *Menon and Carspecken (1990)*

The PPToM used by Menon and Carspecken (1990) to understand the triggers behind students' mobility of Indian students was mainly because they felt that this theory of migration is practical – emphasising the importance of the process of rational choice, action and social structure of opportunities available to the individual student.

With a sample population of Indian postgraduate students who have graduated from three American universities, they felt that knowing the life histories of students such as socio-cultural setting, from their early years through to university, was important to understand their choice and behaviour. They continue to suggest that data collected via life histories can be put into three stages: Stage one: home experiences and the external catalytic process; Stage two: migration; and Stage three: resettlement and psychic readjustment. Cultural

factors dominated this research, with following factors such as global, economic and political conditions within their home and host countries respectively.

Linking back to this research, stage one directly affects the pre-purchase decision making stages in the CDM model, while stage two and three overlap the actual purchase stage and post-purchase stages respectively. Stage one covers four elements: *preparatory forces*, *agent*, *status* and *perception*. The first two elements - *preparatory forces* and *agent* - stress the importance of the student's early schooling experiences, cultural and family influence and expectations. These elements also stress the perceived opportunities (or lack of) within the home country. The third element, *status*, is perceived as a 'push' factor in the way the student's socio-economic status is, in relation to being in a developing country, which was attempting to modernise. Hence, the importance of keeping up with the developing need of the host country. The fourth element - *perception* - is perceived as the 'pull' factors in the host country, including the perceived promise of a higher income and professional career status, the prestige of a Western degree, the desire to experience Western culture and the migration policies which permit students to stay for work after graduation.

The fourth and final element in stage one - perception - resonates with the researcher's research aim and objectives; while the other two stages cover a research spectrum which deviates from the focus of this research.

2.10.3. *McMahon (1992)*

McMahan's research covered a period spanning from 1960s to 1970s looking at patterns and reasons for student flows from developing countries such as Brazil, Cameroon, Chile, Colombia, Ethiopia, Ghana, India, Indonesia, Iran, Kenya, the Republic of Korea, Malaysia, Mexico, Nigeria, Pakistan, Thailand, Venezuela and the Republic of Vietnam, to a developed country: America.

Coming from a developing (almost third world countries back in 1991) country, it would be expected that the 'push' factors were the weak economic strength of home countries, thus the dominant stimulus for migration. The lack of resources apportioned to education and the limited availability of educational opportunities offered were the other prevailing factors pushing migration abroad.

Given that the American government has bilateral economic ties with most of these developing countries, it was not a big surprise that the 'pull' factors were the familiarity of their home countries' economic and trade ties, and the political interests in providing students with financial aid or scholarships.

With 18 countries involved in McMahan's research, the value of this research is the large-scale research which can offer a snapshot of international students' migration in a researched period. With a large data set, this research has been cited in later researches of international students' mobility using the push/pull typology (Mazzarol et al., 1996; Sahasrabudhe, 2008). With 18 countries, this research was strictly quantitative in research design. Although the PPToM was explored, the knowledge gap for the individual student was not surveyed, and thus, did not account for the personal level of variables affecting students' migration - an area which the researcher deemed as important for this research focusing on the phenomenon of international students' migration and their intrinsic influences.

2.10.4. *Mazzarol et al. (1996) and Mazzarol et al. (2001a)*

Mazzarol has been one of the leading researchers who has created and widened the research path for many researchers studying particularly the PPToM. Given the many researches led by Mazzarol, they have covered a spectrum of international students from various home countries and different educational levels. Survey was the main data collection method and factor analysis was used to measure the variables. The findings for the 'pull' factors were: clear knowledge and awareness of the host country, higher quality and more reputable education, ease of programmes' information gathering and the perceived need to understand or having lived the Western culture. The 'push' factors mainly concentrated on the concerns with the home countries' education quality and the (in)ability to meet the capacity of home students' demand for higher education; and finally, the (un)availability of certain courses/programmes offered in their home countries.

Mazzarol et al. (1996) suggested that the 'push' and 'pull' factors seem to be fairly general and generic for international students' overseas migration. This suggestion reinforces the importance of this research's aim of eliciting intrinsic factors which convey emotional elements and symbolic values associated in the 'push' and 'pull' sectors of the said theory of migration. These intrinsic factors are uncommonly expressed by participants. They are

usually unseen, unspoken and unnoticed, but they are important influential decision making catalysts.

2.10.5. *Mazzarol et al. (2001b); and Mazzarol and Soutar (2002)*

With a fairly similar data collection method and findings from the afore mentioned researches (Mazzarol et al. (2001a), Mazzarol et al.'s (2001b), differentiation in these researches was that they concentrated on Chinese students in both undergraduate and postgraduate levels; looking at the reasons Chinese students chose not to pursue their higher education in Australia. With almost similar 'pull' and 'push' factors as previous Mazzarol-led researches, the revelation was that Chinese students see Australia as an undergraduate level destination while America, Canada and the UK are more favourable when pursuing their postgraduate level education.

With similar findings undertaken in four countries: Indonesia, Taiwan, China and India, covering both undergraduate and postgraduate levels, Mazzarol and Soutar (2002) identified six factors which were considered to be of importance in bridging the stages between pre-purchase and purchase. They are: Knowledge and awareness, personal recommendation, cost-related issues, environmental issues, social links and geographical proximity.

Knowledge and awareness: This factor deals with the ease of obtaining information which links to the increase of knowledge about the host countries; thus the increase of awareness about their education standards, reputation and the quality of their education services. Recognition of the host countries and their degree by their local (home) Education Board of Ministry served as important factors mainly to be recognised as a 'valid' graduate when they return to their home country.

Personal recommendation: This covers the recommendations from both friends and relatives. As with the previous factor - Knowledge and awareness - the reputation a host country and its institutions enjoy is hugely influenced by the number of people who are willing to refer it to others. This form of reference is termed Word-of-Mouth (WoM). WoM is one of the most effective forms of promotional tool for any marketing effort (Kotler and Fox, 1995) and higher education is no exception. Friends, parents, relatives and even agents for HEIs, who are overseas alumni make great advocates for that particular host country.

Cost-related issues: Being able to fund themselves while studying overseas can be a factor which makes or breaks the decision to migrate. Therefore, a strong 'pull' factor is the ability and ease of securing a part-time job. The importance of part-time work exceeded tuition fees, travel costs and living expenses, as these expenses can be covered with a part-time job. Cost-related issues in their research does not cover only financial issues, but the social issues as well; referred to in their research as 'social cost'. Issues such as crime and safety and perceived racial discrimination. While social cost was not as influential as the financial cost in their decision making, nevertheless, it was highly rated in this category posing as a weakness, thus diluting the strength of the 'pull' factors.

Environmental issues: An issue that was considered important, however, came in as the lowest amongst the six factors identified. Sub-factors identified in this issue were comfortable climate, exciting place to live and quiet-studious environment. It was also identified that although these sub-factors may be less important, they are influential elements which host countries and their HEIs should pick up when developing their [international] marketing strategies.

Social links and geographical proximity: These two factors were viewed in tandem. Having the presence of family, relatives, or friends in a particular host country was deemed comforting and important. Having a known person studying [students] in the host country rated higher than a known person living but not studying [non-students] there. This may be due to the smaller age gap between students and thus able to relate to one another better. Geographical proximity was the least important in this category, except for Indonesian students where Australia was their favoured host country.

2.10.6. *Binsardi and Ekwulugo (2003)*

This research employs both quantitative and qualitative methodologies to investigate international students' perceptions of the UK education system linking mainly the Marketing Mix's controllable variables of price, product, place and promotion. Variables collected through surveys were analysed quantitatively using the ranking-independence analysis of Chi-square statistics. With a large selection of respondents comprising from both developing and developed countries covering both undergraduate and postgraduates students including doctoral level, findings showed that the lowering of tuition fees was ranked highest in terms

of attractiveness to migrate; followed by the provision of scholarships, providing better quality care and services such as facilities, computers and alumni networks.

Qualitative insights gathered through this research also revealed that respondents' decision to study in the UK were mainly influenced by the educational standard and its recognised qualifications worldwide. Ease of university admission and immigration procedure come in second, while ease of finding employment during and after their study was third. Costs of living, safety and culture, collectively, were ranked fourth. Whilst the researcher's research resonates with Binsardi and Ekwulugo's research done in 2003, this research aims to focus on the intrinsic factors to implicate the importance of emotional elements and symbolic values of each emergent construct when Malaysian students go through the decision making process - a process whereby rational factors may have been evaluated together with intrinsic factors - however, when rational factors are evaluated, the implications of intrinsic factors become the deciding factors.

2.10.7. *Pimpa (2003 and 2005)*

While Pimpa's researches (2003 and 2005) were heavily guided by the PPToM, the differentiation lied in his focus of looking in-depth into one of the major 'push' factors: family - how this particular factor influences a student's choice in studying abroad. He believed that the complexity of family influence goes beyond being just a financial supporter or making simple recommendations. He suggested that the complexity of family influence and its impact underpinned five key decisions when selecting international education: the decision to study abroad, the selection of host country, the selection of host country's city, the academic courses or programmes and the university. The glaring insight of selecting a host country being ranked higher than the academic courses and the university has given more concrete reason for the need to elicit the obvious [rational] or intrinsic [non-rational] factors which will first influence the students' preference in selecting a host country before large marketing expenses are put into a university's international marketing budget.

With 803 international students from Thailand at both undergraduate and postgraduate levels, Pimpa (2003 and 2005) also gathered that family influence has a strong effect in impacting the following five aspects in a student's family: finance, information, expectation, competition and persuasion. While financial support from the family had the greatest

influence, information provided from family members amongst Thai people was important when selecting a host country. Expectations put onto Thai students' (and many Asian students going abroad) shoulders ranged from the necessity to complete the overseas degree, to become fluent in a foreign language and to acquire international experience that will give them the added edge among their peers. In addition to such a heavy load of expectation to carry and deliver, competition among the students' family members, including and particularly extended families such as cousins, nephews and nieces, are also expressed as factors for overseas migration. With a large power distance between the student and their family members in Asia, older family members including parents, uncles and aunts, have the power of persuasion. They can steer the decision to either study abroad or locally and, if the decision is taken to study abroad, they can influence the choice of host country and HEI. Overall, Pimpa revealed that expectations from the family had a greater impact on the students' higher education migration than other key aspects like competition and persuasion, since expectations were mainly from the parents who were the 'respected' ones and the financiers as well.

The significance of Pimpa's research (2003 and 2005) was that while most researches on international students higher education migration provided lists of factors affecting students' decision making process from various countries, education levels and situations, it is equally (if not more) imperative to understand the influential reasoning that sits within each factor. These insights can be elicited to reveal rich implications pertaining to each context of study. Hence, this research's aim and overarching objective of discovering the influencing intrinsic factors.

2.10.8. *Maringe and Carter (2007)*

Maringe and Carter (2007) studied the factors affecting African postgraduate students' selection and decision of a host country for higher education migration. They sampled 28 students as focus groups who were studying at two UK universities at that time; coupled with two individual interviews with students and two individual interviews with staff from a recruitment agency. Data showed six influencing factors related to the 'push' effect of home country's economic state and 'experiential dissatisfiers'; and the 'pull' effect of host country's institutions and courses offered, together with the implication of being a UK graduate.

With similar findings from other researches (Pyvis and Chapman, 2006; Lu et al., 2009) on the 'push' factors even though the research contexts were different in terms of the students and their countries, economic and political circumstances in Africa was the main factor pushing the search for a host country. Lack of economic growth was the main concern with the home country, and the positive attitude shown among local employers toward a UK graduate was a strong catalyst compared to a local graduate. Other key influencers were family, friends and co-workers who had either studied or lived in the UK since the participants were mostly postgraduate students. The interesting and poignant factor under the next factor called 'pull' factor was the opportunity to obtain a valuable international experience. While the claim of a 'valuable international experience' sounded fairly generic, Maringe and Carter revealed that this claim contains the following meanings: higher education qualifications from the UK carry a connotation of quality and international recognition; and a UK education is an investment in providing the stepping stone for greater career opportunities. These were further infused with the perception that the UK offered a safe and secure place to study. The reason this is termed as interesting and poignant by the researcher is because anecdotally, these are the little points or factors that most students from developed western countries take for granted when selecting a HEI because there are plenty to choose from at home. However, for most developing Asian and African countries, these minor issues are of great importance. This is of no exception to Malaysian students when deciding to pursue higher education abroad. Finally, information inadequacies throughout their decision making process, financial uncertainties and post-registration marketing deficiencies at home were factors affecting the decision making flow categorised under the factor entitled 'experiential dissatisfiers'.

2.10.9. *Sahasrabudhe (2008)*

Sahasrabudhe's (2008) research utilised the PPToM to uncover the factors affecting postgraduate students from India studying Engineering and their choice of selecting America as the host country. With a sample of ten respondents conducted via semi-structured interviews, the main reason in pushing them out of India was the view that undergraduate level engineering faculties in India were inadequate in terms of experience and insufficient in terms of subject knowledge; hence, the students' dissatisfaction with the quality of their undergraduate education and the need to pursue a postgraduate education abroad. The advantage of a smaller respondent research is the rich, in-depth insight obtained as shown in

Sahasrabudhe's (2008) research. The dissatisfaction shown by the respondents was narrowed down to the fact that their undergraduate coursework relied heavily on the need to memorise instead of understanding the theoretical and practical implications; thus, the need for critical analysis is optional. This led to another insight noting that quality postgraduate engineering programmes are limited in India to which admission is highly competitive. All ten participants showed dissatisfaction toward the limited number of programmes in India, hence, the extra push in search of a suitable option abroad.

2.10.10. *Bodycott (2009)*

Bodycott's (2009) research is similar to Pimpa's (2003 and 2005) in terms of the selected factor used as variable: Family/Parents. While Pimpa explored the views from the students with regards to their family/parents being a factor in their decision making process, Bodycott went a step further by involving both students and parents as participants to reveal the comparative views on the same subject matter.

While the contexts between Bodycott (2009) and Pimpa (2003 and 2005) differed where Chinese and Thai students were researched respectively, the researched variable - Family/Parents - revealed similar insights. Both suggested that their parents carried a high influencing effect on their decision making when it comes to overseas higher education migration. Bodycott claimed that students from China, based on their strong Confucian beliefs about the role and status of parents, implied that parents will provide to the best of their ability to ensure the 'best' education which will lead to a better future for their child(ren). However, the expectation was that they will, in return, repay their parents by respecting their wishes, views and advice about their international education. This is similar to Pimpa's (2003 and 2005) research insights which the researcher linked this under 'power distance' between the parents and their child(ren). Bodycott (2009) linked this under filial piety or '*xiao jing*'; a concept of parent-child relationship in a Confucian society on how to behave towards a senior such as parents (Zeng, 505-435 B.C.E, translated by Feng in May, 2008). This concept can sometimes be stretched to include senior members of the immediate and extended family members - a concept that is still practiced by many in most Asian countries, including Malaysia.

With both students and parents as participants, Bodycott (2009) revealed factors that were deemed important and influential between these two groups. However, their factors differ between the students and their parents. For example, parents pointed the reasons for the need of international education migration were the lack of higher education capacity in the mainland [China - home country] and the opportunities garnered post overseas education such as improving immigration prospect through higher chances of overseas employment. This further extends to the possibility of the student being the 'gate of opportunity' opener for the rest of their siblings or even relatives into the host country. Reflectively, this almost seemed like an investment with calculated risks and potential family gains. On the other hand, the students considered higher quality education abroad, variety of courses and facilities, an English-speaking environment and the opportunity to experience a new lifestyle overseas to gain experience, to be important factors.

2.10.11. *Lu et al. (2009)*

Lu et al. (2009) studied Chinese students' reasons for their choice of an overseas education by spreading their search to seven countries: America, UK, Australia, Canada, Germany, France and Japan. The findings were generalised to fit all seven countries in relation to work opportunities - with little consideration for each country's cultural differences, and how each culture impacts on Chinese students. They also suggested that increasing the network of friends as a factor, while the availability of sponsorship, higher level of service and facilities at the host universities were considered as well. Overall, the finding suggests that the overall expenses to obtain a degree should reflect the ranking of the university, and the impressive web advertising displayed by the universities is the main considerations for Chinese students.

2.10.12. *Priporas and Kamenidou (2010)*

Priporas and Kamenidou (2010) studied the connection between the perception one has towards university brand and its reputation. Using Greek students and UK universities, they sampled potential postgraduate business students. Decision making were mostly based on elements which supported university brand and reputation such as accreditation and educational standards. They also suggested that UK universities were perceived as reputable and respectable, thus leading to good value for money. This was mainly due to the perceived high quality students in UK universities which elevated the level of education as a whole;

strong association with corporate sectors and high achieving alumni leading to the reputation of high standard of achievements in education.

2.10.13. *Wilkins and Huisman (2011)*

Using a survey as the primary data collection method, Wilkins and Huisman (2011) surveyed 160 international students from various countries consisting mostly of Asians who were studying at the same research-intensive university in western England. With data gathered from students from only one university, the findings revealed fairly generic factors such as experiencing other cultures, quality overseas education, in particular, UK education and the higher ranking of UK HEIs, better employment prospects and the best place to improve their English-language skills.

The significance of Wilkins and Huisman's (2011) research was their findings suggested that 'pull' factors have become more influential on students' decisions to study abroad than 'push' factors. This claim was linked to the recent improvement in social, political and economic conditions in many Asian countries which have resulted in fewer 'push' factors driving students abroad for higher education.

2.11. Summary of previous researches on key factors influencing HE migration

Being a prominent research topic in the field of consumer science for many years, the CDM model and its parent concept, Consumer Behaviour, have been used as the conceptual framework investigating students' choices in higher education migration - producing layers of [overlapping] findings and generating opportunities for future researches. These findings are presented as factors influencing their migration patterns as summarised in Table 2.1 (p. 53). The influential factors are alphabetically sorted and researchers chronologically arranged to reflect their research context.

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Table 2.1: Previous researches on key factors influencing HE migration

Summary		
Influential Factors	Researchers	Country of research context
Career prospects	Soutar & Turner, 2002; Chen & Zimitat, 2006; Maringe & Carter, 2007; Eder, Smith & Pitts, 2010.	Australia; Australia; UK and Africa; America.
Cost of Education	Pimpa, 2003; Maringe, 2006; Bodycott, 2009; Eder, Smith & Pitts, 2010; Petruzzellis & Romanazzi, 2010.	Thailand; UK; China; America; Italy.
Culture	Mazzarol & Soutar, 2002; Chen, 2007; Sahasrabudhe, 2008; Bodycott, 2009; Lee & Morrish, 2011.	Australia; Canada; India; China; New Zealand.
Family and Friends	Mazzarol & Soutar, 2002; Pimpa, 2003; Maringe, 2006; Chen, 2007; Maringe & Carter, 2007; Bodycott, 2009; Eder, Smith & Pitts, 2010; Lee & Morrish, 2011.	Australia; Thailand; UK; Canada; UK and Africa; China; America; New Zealand.
Home country: Lack of access into local HEIs	McMahon, 1992; Mazzarol & Soutar, 2002; Maringe & Carter, 2007; Bodycott, 2009.	America; Australia; UK and Africa; China.
Home country: Lack of social, political and economic stability	Maringe and Carter, 2007; Sahasrabudhe, 2008.	UK and Africa; India.
Host country: English language (opportunity to learn a second language or a common language as home country)	Chen & Zimitat, 2006; Engelke, 2008; Bodycott, 2009; Eder, Smith & Pitts, 2010;	Australia; Sweden; China; America.
Host country: Environment	Chen, 2007.	Canada.
Host country: Immigration prospects	Mazzarol & Soutar, 2002; Bodycott, 2009.	Australia; China.

|		
Host country: Proximity	Mazzarol & Soutar, 2002; Soo & Elliott, 2008; Bodycott, 2009; Eder, Smith & Pitts, 2010.	Australia; UK; China; America.
Host country: Safety	Chen & Zimitat, 2006; Maringe & Carter, 2007; Chen, 2007; Bodycott, 2009.	Australia; UK and Africa; Canada; China.
Host country: Visa application	Maringe & Carter, 2007; Eder, Smith & Pitts, 2010.	UK and Africa; America.
Host HEI: Facilities	Pimpa, 2003; Bodycott, 2009.	Thailand; China.
Host HEI: Location and environment	Maringe & Carter, 2007; Bodycott, 2009.	UK and Africa; China.
Host HEI: Marketing and promotional efforts	Mazzarol & Soutar, 2002; Pimpa, 2003; Priporas and Kamenidou, 2010.	Australia; Thailand; Greece.
Host HEI: Marketing and promotional efforts	Mazzarol & Soutar, 2002; Pimpa, 2003; Priporas and Kamenidou, 2010.	Australia; Thailand; Greece.
Host HEI: Staff's qualification and credential	Mazzarol & Soutar, 2002; Pimpa, 2003; Priporas and Kamenidou, 2010.	Australia; Thailand; Greece.
Host HEI: Programmes and courses offered	Mazzarol & Soutar, 2002; Pimpa, 2003; Maringe, 2006; Bodycott, 2009; Eder, Smith & Pitts, 2010; Petruzzellis & Romanazzi, 2010.	Australia; Thailand; UK; China; America; Italy.
Host HEI: Reputation (of quality)	Mazzarol & Soutar, 2002; Maringe, 2006; Bodycott, 2009; Eder, Smith & Pitts, 2010; Petruzzellis & Romanazzi, 2010.	Australia; UK; China; America; Italy.

Although extensive researches have covered the remit of higher education migration choice and the underpinnings of the PPToM, there is still limited literature analysing their decision making process where the influence of their decision was measured by intrinsic factors consisting of emotional elements and symbolic values.

Having addressed this research's first objective of 'reviewing previous researches to unveil international students' HE migration patterns and influencing factors' - both rational and non-rational factors, this research proposes the Consumer Decision Making (CDM) model (Blackwell et al., 2006) and the Push/Pull Theory of Migration (PPToM) (Mazzarol and Soutar, 2002) as the conceptual framework.

2.12. Conceptualising this research

With empirical evidence supporting the PPToM underpinning the environmental influences affecting the pre-purchase stages in the CDM model, this research aims to investigate the five environmental elements with the objective to uncover the intrinsic significance in the emotional elements and symbolic values underpinning these elements. The proposed conceptual framework for this research focuses on the pre-purchase stages of the CDM model (Blackwell et al., 2006:83) and the theoretical underpinnings of the PPToM (Mazzarol and Soutar, 2002:85) as shown in Figure 2.3.

Figure 2.3: **Conceptual Framework: Pre-purchase stages of Consumer Decision Making Model and Push/Pull Theory of Migration**
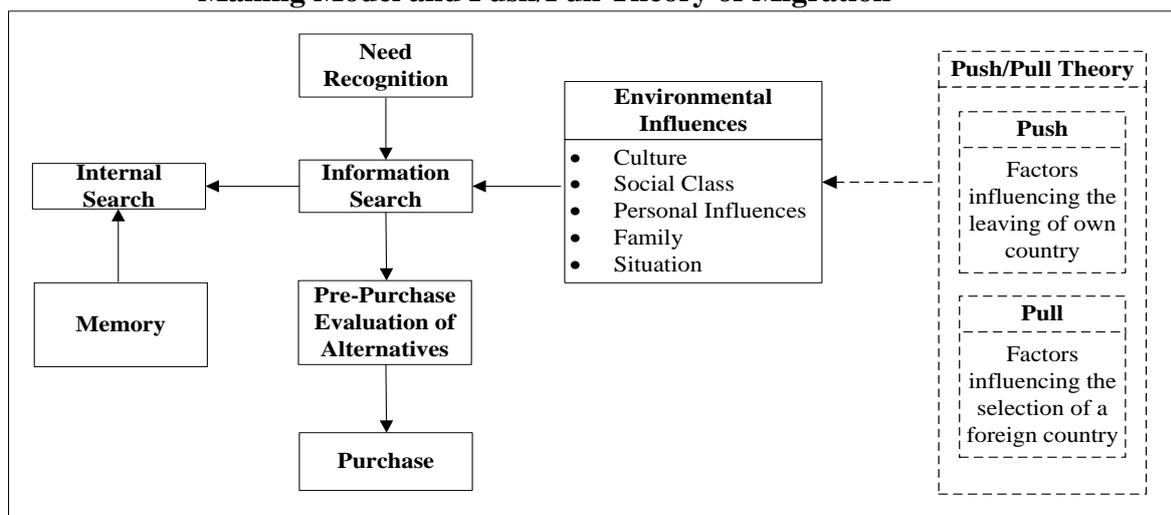
Sources:
Consumer Decision Making Model (Adapted from Blackwell et al., 2006:83)
Push/Pull Theory of Migration (Adapted from Mazzarol and Soutar, 2002:85)

## 2.13. Summary

With strong criticisms of the 'one-size-fit-all' model developed with the general assumption that CDM behaviour is linear and rational, this research supports the criticism. It therefore proposes the conceptual framework of the CDM model underpinned by the PPToM to investigate the non-rational factors in the context of Malaysian students' HE migration decision making behaviour.

Chapter 3:   Research Methodology

Research Design, Analysis, Reflexivity and Ethical Compliance.

3.1.   Chapter Outline: Research Methodology

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│  │ Quantitative │  │ Interpretivism   │  │ Deduction      │ │
│  │              │  │ • Ontology       │  │ • Abduction    │ │
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3.2.   Introduction

As described in the Literature Review chapter, the phenomenon of making an education migration decision for an international student is a complex decision involving many facets such as external environmental influencers and internal personal desires. In order to gain a

deeper understanding of these complex decisions, this research adopts a qualitative, interpretive approach of a phenomenological paradigm informed by ethnographic principle of cultural interpretation by utilising semi-structured in-depth interviews and focus groups as data collection methods. Data was thematically analysed to elicit the non-rational reasoning of the sample population's intentions in deciding their higher education migration to the UK.

3.3.   Research Methods

There are two broad categories of methods: *quantitative* and *qualitative*. While a distinction will be made between these two methods in this chapter, it is important to note that one is not more superior to the other. They are also not necessarily separate from each other, and can be used to complement one another (Wellington and Szczerbinski, 2007). However, the decision to single out their usage in a research does not suggest any inferior outcome either as they are merely designed to serve different aims, objectives and research contexts.

For researchers preferring a quantitative approach, the aim of their research is usually to achieve complete objectivity in the attempt to explain, predict and control the phenomenon being studied – with the aim to produce generalizable knowledge (Wellington and Szczerbinski, 2007). Quantitative research normally starts with the development of a generalised, universal belief that contributes to the explanation and the prediction of a phenomenon – known as a hypothesis (Fairbrother, 2007).

Qualitatively skewed researchers, on the other spectrum, view reality as a subjective notion which is socially or individually constructed. Whilst explanation is also an aim and a concern, they do not attempt to predict. Instead, the emphases are on the importance of the researcher as being part of the research process, and the value of the researcher reflecting the phenomena (Bryman, 2004; Fairbrother, 2007; Wellington and Szczerbinski, 2007). Differing from quantitative research, qualitative research does not normally aim to produce generalizable knowledge, but rather deeper insights and knowledge, highlighting the relevance and transferability among varying contexts.

Wellington and Szczerbinski (2007) continue to suggest that when a researcher's intention is to study the natural world of humans and society, a qualitative methodology is generally

more appropriate as it takes into account the importance of the social phenomenal context; whereas a strictly quantitative methodology can be too restrictive to provide true understanding and interpretation of phenomena that are often subjectively constructed (Bryman, 2004; Fairbrother 2007).

This research attempts to provide an understanding and an intrinsic insight of a social phenomenon through the use of various methods and approaches to interpret and analyse the collected data. The aim of this research is not to generalise the findings to fit all international students, but to form a deep understanding and insight into why Malaysian students select the UK as their education migration destination. Hence, this contextual phenomenon's enquiry requires the researcher to consider the sample population's behaviour resulting from cultural, social and environmental elements that may influence their decision. Therefore, the methodological approach that is deemed most appropriate for this research skewed towards qualitative approach.

3.4. Research Philosophies

The two major philosophical views that social researchers adopt are *Positivism* and *Interpretivism* (Datta, 1994). These two research paradigms are distinct in respect to their assumptions in terms of *ontology* (the conceptualisation of reality), *epistemology* (how one comes to know that reality) and *methodology* (how one can systematically access what can be known about that reality) (Guba and Lincoln, 1994).

Ontologically, the *positivists* assert that there is only one universal truth and that the only aim of research is to discover the objective reality. Epistemologically, they believe that this can be done with a quantifiable degree of certainty using objectively correct scientific methods such as structured questionnaires (Denzin, 2010). Therefore, the outcome of such research is knowledge that is generalizable to the wider population. This also means that the findings of these researches can be replicated with various samples and still maintain its validity. Positivists hold that all phenomena are only considered to fit under this paradigm if they [the phenomena under study] are understood through the utilisation of a scientific method (Collins, 2010) – to test theory in the effort to increase the predictive understanding of phenomena (Myers, 1997). To fit into this paradigm, research methods are considered to be

most ideal if they have minimal (none if possible) influence of the researcher and the element of subjectivity. Thus, quantitative methods are considered most appropriate for the positivist ideologies.

On the other end of the spectrum are the *interpretivists*. Ontologically, this group of researchers disregard the notion of a single objective reality and posit that there are individual realities. Therefore, these realities can be epistemologically measured using subjective research measurements. They emphasise that research is based on one's understanding of a particular (or several) viewpoint(s). Interpretivists also believe that the study of social phenomena requires an understanding of the social world where people have constructed and continue replicating the constructed behaviour in their activities (Blaikie, 2007). Thus, research methods are chosen where researchers can immerse themselves in the research subject (Klein and Myers, 1999). Qualitative methods fall under the parameters of interpretivist ideologies.

Linking back to this research, the pre-purchase evaluation and selection process are the focus of the observation. The emergent constructs from this particular phenomenon resonate with the ontological stance which disregards the notion of a single objective reality, and supports the existence of individual realities; thus, the epistemological view of interpretive philosophy is deemed most suitable for this research.

3.5.   Research Approaches

Inductive and *Deductive* are the two main (most commonly adopted) research approaches within the research philosophy universe. *Inductive* reasoning works in the order of moving from a specific observation of a case or a phenomenon to a broader generalisation; thus building a theory replicating the empirical findings that emerged from the observation. The induction process commences with an experience as the intended phenomena of study with comprehensive review of relevant literature leading to gathering data from those experiencing the phenomenon using subjective measures. This is then proceeded with rigorous interpretation of the phenomenon to detect common patterns and regularities linked to the hypotheses (or more common in the interpretive philosophy, research questions) being

explored; and finally ending up with developing conclusions or theories (Babbie, 2013). The ultimate goal of inductive research is theory building.

In opposition, *deductive* reasoning works by using an existing theory as the general foundation for the development of a testable hypothesis towards a more specific confirmation. Leaning heavily towards the positivist research philosophy, the assumption is that the deduction process starts (after using an existing theory as the foundation) with a comprehensive review of relevant literature in order to develop assumptions on the causal relationship between variables. The relationships are either confirmed or rejected on the basis of the findings of the statistical analysis of quantitative data (Babbie, 2013). The definitive goal of deductive research is theory testing. Figure 3.1 illustrates both the approaches.

**Figure 3.1: Inductive and Deductive approaches**
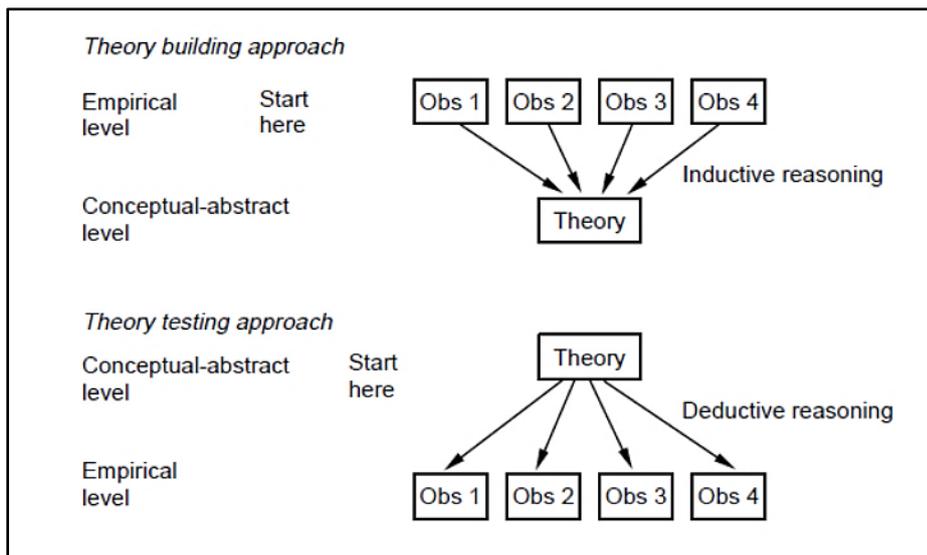
Source: undisclosed.

There are, however, two more ideologies which are seldom discussed (or adopted) by researchers; namely, *Abduction* and *Retroduction*. These two ideologies carry characteristics of both the approaches [inductive and deductive] mentioned above. Within the premise of induction and deduction, both abduction and retroduction refer to ways of generating research questions and/or hypotheses either from observations or theory extraction respectively.

3.5.1. *Abduction*

Proposed by philosopher Charles Peirce (1957) as "…guessing to abduct a hypothetical explanation", abduction is a related process that also refers to the generation of hypotheses. It refers to the moment of creative inspiration during which the researcher conceives of a hypothetical explanation for some empirical fact (Miller and Brewer, 2003). Figure 3.2 illustrates the Abduction process.

Figure 3.2: The Abduction process
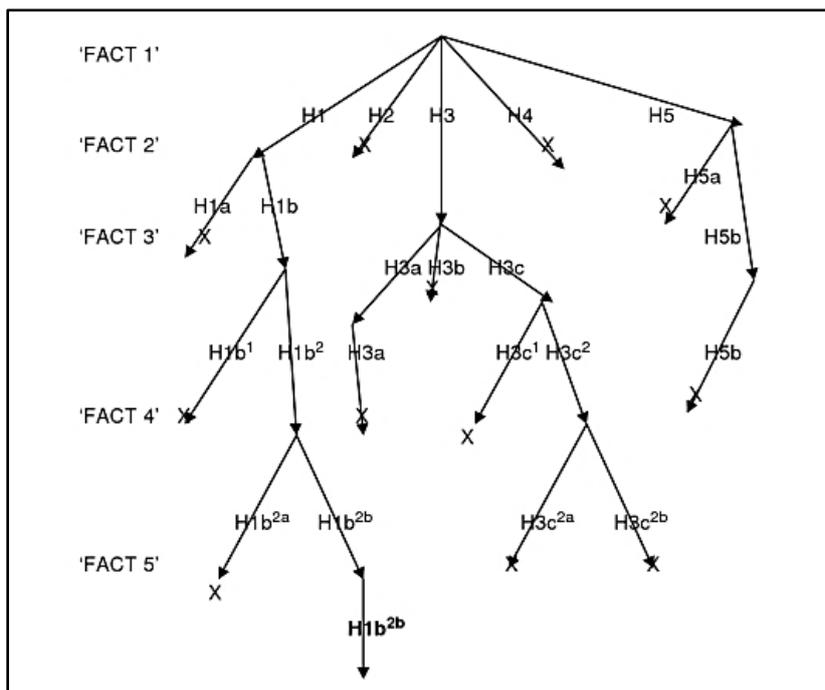
Source: Miller and Brewer (2003).

Based on Figure 3.2, a researcher can hypothetically explain any single set of empirical observations by a number of alternate explanations starting from '**FACT 1**' branching out to '**H1, H2, H3, H4, H5**'. As more evidence becomes available, some of these potential explanations will be ruled out, simplifying the range of choices for a single correct explanation – the remaining explanations will have gained credibility due to their survival. However, at the same time, the additional information also may generate new hypothetical explanations – complicating the search for a single correct explanation that fits all the available information. Parked under the deductive approach, the progression taken in Abduction is through the abductive process – if implemented correctly, gradually, each additional piece of information eliminates more hypothetical explanations than it generates; so this will eventually lead to only one single remaining hypothesis that fits all available information (Miller and Brewer, 2003) as shown in the final deduction of '$H1b^{2b}$'.

3.5.2. *Retroduction*

A pure inductive and a pure deductive research have been taught to be positioned in the two opposing ends of a research paradigm. Sayer (1992) argued that these opposing approaches can work together in the form of *retroduction*. Retroduction is designed to enable researchers to link empirical evidence (induction) and social theory (deduction) in a continually evolving, dynamic process. Therefore, retroduction endeavours to combine both induction and deduction to represent the essence of social life.

Sayer (1992:107) said that retroduction is "…a mode of inference in which events are explained by postulating and identifying mechanisms which are capable of producing them…" It is a process which is seen as a 'real world' combination of the two main research approaches of induction and deduction. In reality, the logical process of the generation and elimination of hypothetical explanations hardly progresses as smoothly as the diagrams and research steps depicted in the texts. The positivist cycle of a hypothesis being deduced solely from pre-existing theory, being tested against empirical observation and then, depending on whether it has been accepted or rejected by the data collected, used to confirm or disconfirm the theory, is a flawless, clean version of events. Similarly, the practice of pure interpretivists of inducing their conceptual abstractions solely from observations without any prior expectations is also an ideal state of an outcome (Sayer, 1992). Retroduction is similar to (and a subset of) the inductive approach, but it is predicated on known or assumed relationary theory which is adopted from the philosophy of the deductive approach, and observations that contain either at least one of the findings or the interpretation of the theory or theoretical model in question.

The process of logical interpretation in real research is in fact not quite so logical and straight-forward. There will be constant reference to previous stages and fast-forwarding to the present stage; thus, linking it to a catchphrase – "two steps forward, one step back." Ideas for research will come partially from the researcher's conceptual knowledge, partially from their personal experience and perhaps partially from their intuition. There will be a starting point which is usually chosen based on it being the most suitable at that moment, and there will be several back-trackings. Proposed hypothetical explanations will be modified in the light of preliminary findings or discussions, perhaps leading to the collection of further data. Research is not pure with distinct stages of deduction, induction, or abduction, but a

combination of all these three 'ductions' approaches, and fairly often, they occur simultaneously. Thus, retroduction recognises this phenomenon of backtracking, also known as 'retro', hence, the term *Retroduction* (Miller and Brewer, 2003).

The retroduction approach is deemed fit to achieve this research's aim and objectives based on the following rationales: the researcher's experience as a former international student who has personally experienced the phenomenon of selecting a host country for HE migration; the researcher was previously responsible for the marketing and recruiting of students for a British full-franchised undergraduate programmes based in a Malaysian HEI; and currently, the researcher is holding a position as an academic in a UK HEI, who is also a researcher - equipped with the conceptual knowledge of the chosen conceptual framework for this research. The research process of this [retroduction] approach links the evidence (induction) and social theory (deduction) in a continually evolving (abduction), dynamic process (retroduction).

As a researcher, the question is not whether to use theory in one's research or not, but whether to explicitly recognise the connections back to the theory used. Given the necessity for theory in one's research, the question should be of "how to understand theory: as an '*ordering framework*' or as a '*conceptualisation*'?" (Sayer, 1992). Theory as an *ordering framework* is where observational data is used to predict and explain empirical events. Theory as *conceptualisation* denotes a particular way of prescribing the formation of ideas and beliefs about the phenomenon being studied. Sayer continued to posit that while theory as an ordering framework is more popular within the field of economics, it is of less importance in the study of phenomena where conformist behaviour is almost inexistence. More importantly, theory as conceptualisation makes it possible to access and redevelop theory in a close relationship with empirical information. Linking back to this research, understanding theory as conceptualisation represents this research's aim and objectives where a retroduction approach is used with the attempt to combine the best of deductive and inductive processes to make valid representations of a phenomena within a social life – the phenomenon in which Malaysian students rely on intrinsic [non-rational factors] influences as tie-breakers when selecting a host country to pursue their higher education.

Ragin (1994) developed a retroductive process specifically for social research illustrating the evaluation of both deductive and inductive processes resulting to a representation of a social life or a phenomena depicted in the form of a retroduction model; as shown in Figure 3.3. The connection between Ragin's (1994) retroduction model and this research is illustrated by the insertion of relevant features in each process (in red).

Figure 3.3: The Retroduction Model (application from this research's features**)**
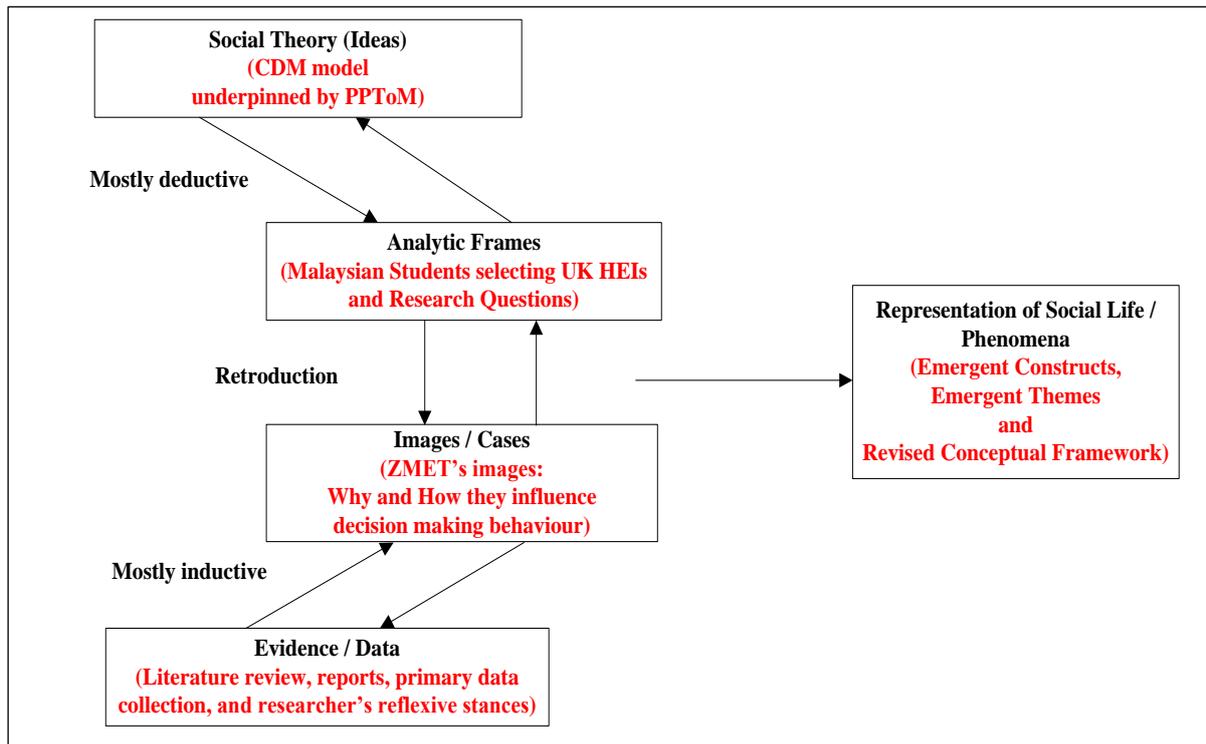
Sources:
Ragin (1994)
Researcher's research features (2015)

Ragin (1994) claimed that *social theory* is a primary source of ideas – a source that is drawn as the platform when conducting research, in particular, social research. *Evidence* is the 'data', but is not merely data collected from surveys. Evidence encompasses all components and features of social life which potentially contribute to a clearer understanding of 'data' for social research. The next level in Ragin's model introduces the retroductive feature which combines both deductive and inductive processing of the *analytic frames* and *images*, respectively. The findings gathered from this process are the deep, rich insightful knowledge for the phenomenon being studied.

Social theory or *idea* is a theory or a theoretical model which sets the research platform for the researcher to either test their validity through hypotheses (deductive) or to further build on their precision in a different context through research questions (inductive). This research uses the CDM model, specifically, the pre-purchase stages of the CDM model, and the PPToM to underpin the environmental influences affecting the CDM model.

Evidence or *data* is the amalgamation of previous empirical findings and the researcher's data collected through primary enquiry and secondary search, which feed into the phenomena being studied. The researcher's background and experiences, findings from pilot test, primary and secondary data, serve as the basis for eliciting the intrinsic factors which influence their [Malaysian students] decision making process.

Analytic frames are the specific research question(s) in the researcher's mind before approaching for a social theory to link with. Linking back to the pilot test of this research where the select sample has expressed confusion with the overload of information from rational factors when selecting an overseas HEI, the researcher's questions are "Why do Malaysian students choose a UK university?" and leading to "What and how does being a UK university student make them feel?" The belief that non-rational [intrinsic] factors play an influencing role that could possibly be the tie-breaking factor that leads to a different focus and a different outcome. An analytic frame outlines a category of phenomena and provides conceptual tools for differentiating phenomena within the category by articulating ideas and then classifying and characterising the phenomena. Deductively for this research, classifying means focusing on Malaysian students as a sample in which their phenomena is the [short but important] period of their lives when they are selecting a host country. And characterising in this study means to investigate the emotional influencing factors of this phenomenon through the 'testing' – a deductively skewed term - of the CDM model underpinned by the PPToM.

Images are the idealised cases, through the construction of abstraction, that generate specific grounding in evidence. Ragin (1994) also suggested that through this process of abstraction (also known as idealisation), it is possible to link cases to theoretical ideas expressed in analytical terms. According to Ragin, most images imply or embody explanations and by emphasising connections between phenomena, these explanations are often causal in nature. Elster (1983) had a similar belief that it is possible to combine an intentional explanation of

individual action together with a causal explanation of interactions between individuals. For this research, the intentional explanation is necessary to understand why they [Malaysian students] behave as they do, while causal explanations is able to explain how they bring about their decisions.

The two-way retroductive interaction of analytic frames and images are meant to produce a progressively refined picture or emergent construct(s) and eventually emergent theme(s) becomes the representation and the explanations of the phenomena under study.

Linking the above explanation of retroduction approach to this research, by the virtue of having a pre-existing theory [CDM model] in mind without performing any conceptual abstractions from any initial field observation leans towards the deductive approach. However, this research aims to understand and interpret the pre-purchase behaviour of a select sample; thus, leaning towards conceptual abstractions from observations without any prior expectations; which is the ethos of most (if not all) inductive research. Retroduction also supports the idea of going back-and-forth between the pre-existing theory and preliminary findings emerging from observations in order to either induce or deduce any theory which are relevant (or not) for the progress of revealing the outcome (Sayer, 1992). With previous researchers suggesting the incorporation of emotional influences in the study of the CDM model (Clore et al., 2001; Bechara and Damasio, 2005; Peters, 2006; and Slovic et al., 2002), the inclusion of the PPToM into the initial framework of the CDM model mainly investigate the non-rational [emotional and symbolic] factors which may be embedded in the 'push' and 'pull' sections reinforcing the *Environmental Influences* which underpin the *Information Search* stage of the CDM model as depicted in Figure 2.2 (p. 24).

3.6.   Philosophy and Approach for this research

Based on the ontological reality that this research revolves around the investigation of a phenomenon among the sample population of Malaysian students' pre-purchase decision making behaviour, the overriding interpretivist paradigm is deemed most appropriate. Given the research aim and objectives are to detect patterns and regularities of emotional factors through rigorous subjective measures, this study will adopt the retroductive approach. To validate the findings, two data collection methods will be adopted: in-depth interviews and focus group conversations.

3.7. Research Methodological Approaches within the Interpretivist Philosophy

The absence of linkage between the method used and a clear statement of the philosophical underpinnings that should guide the method in many qualitative studies in the interpretivist philosophy has posed a problem (Stubblefield and Murray, 2002). It is said that implementation of a method with the absence of an examination of its philosophical basis can lead to a research that is ambiguous in its purpose, structure and findings. Therefore, interpretive researchers should be mindful in accessing, interacting and engaging with the sample population in order to effectively lead to the revelation of their [hidden] intentions; which most of the time, are not identified and explicitly acknowledged. Mann (1992:273) suggests that "the text is never a record of what happened, only an expression in interpretation and re-interpretation."

3.8. Methodological approaches within interpretive philosophy: *Ethnography* and *Phenomenology*

There are several methodological approaches within the interpretive philosophy; namely ethnography, phenomenology, case study and grounded theory (van et al., 2007). Amongst these approaches, e*thnography* and p*henomenology* are the most similar in their methodological approaches within the interpretivism paradigm. They have various aspects in common such as both being exploratory in practice. Researchers in both of these approaches function as data collectors and they both emphasise the need to take a self-conscious approach to research (Maggs-Rapport, 2000). In terms of research methods, they both use interviews in a combination of either open-ended and/or structured questioning methods, and both interpret and analyse the narratives for meanings and emergent constructs which may lead to emergent themes. The difference, however, is that *ethnography* studies the individual's views and the shared values of a particular culture and aims to describe the cultural knowledge of the participants.

The ethnographic researcher normally 'lives with and lives like' their sample population, usually for a year or more (van Maanen, 1996); and the research may be extended as a longitudinal study. van Maanen also referred to the term "ethnography" as a study of the selected sample's behaviour in their everyday context rather than in a particular period of their lives where a phenomenon may occur, such as a student's university-going age (period).

Phenomenology, on the other hand, tries to uncover concealed meaning in a particular phenomenon, embedded in the words of the participants (Sorrell and Redmond, 1995). Phenomenology seeks to explain basic lived experience. As a research method, phenomenology is the study of essences. In 1990, van Manen (a different researcher to van Maanen), described phenomenology by saying "…the essence of phenomenon is universal which can be described through a study of the structure that governs the instances or particular manifestations of the essence of that phenomenon" (p. 10); and "…is both the description of the lived-through quality of lived experience and the description of meaning of the expressions of lived experience" (p. 25). van Manen (1990) continued to describe phenomenological text as "…descriptive; in that it names something. And in the naming, it points to something and it aims at letting something show itself" (p. 26). In phenomenology, personal experience is the starting point. The source of personal experience is the description of the lived experience (van Manen, 1990) and the basic purpose is to reduce individual experiences with a phenomenon to a description of a universal essence - "a 'grasp' of the very nature of thing" (p. 177) - the phenomenon under study.

Ultimately, every phenomenological research endeavours a conversation with deep questioning session of an experience described by the participants; resulting to rich, insightful emergent theme(s). Maggs-Rapport (2000) summarised the characteristics of these two interpretive approaches in Table 3.1.

Table 3.1: The distinguishing features between *Ethnography* and *Phenomenology*

Research approaches	Definitions	Distinguishing features
Ethnography	This study concentrates on the descriptions given by the participants, enabling the researcher to explore a number of views at the same time.	The researcher is seen as the observer. Meaning is cultural.
Phenomenology	This study concentrates on the phenomenon under review through the discovery and interpretation by the researcher of concealed meaning embedded in the words of the participants' narrative.	The researcher is seen as the data interpreter who is empowered by their understanding of participant experience. Meaning is what the researcher interprets it to be.

Source: Maggs-Rapport (2000).

Either approach being adopted, the process in gathering data is equally important. Descriptions gathered during data collection can be through writing or conversations with the participants. Conversation is a process of coming to an understanding. It is through conversations that the participants open themselves to the researcher; truly accepting their point of views as valid and thus, the researcher transposes oneself into the other to such an extent that the researcher understands not the particular individual but what they say in the context of the lived experience or phenomenon (Gadamer, 1994). Gadamer continues to suggest that during a conversation, both the participant and the researcher are led by the conversation. It requires that one [the researcher] does not try to argue with the other [participants] but to question and probe the participants in order to open them up and really consider the weight of the participants' opinions, descriptions and expressions. And it is "…through this process of opening up that I understand your experience." (Gadamer, 1994: 367). And for van Manen (1990), conversations provide an avenue to collect personal stories expressed in specific phenomenon as well as an opportunity to form a relationship with the participants about the meaning of the experience.

3.9. Chosen Research Approach: Interpretive Phenomenology informed by Ethnographic Principle of Cultural Interpretation

The phenomenological method examines the subjective aspects concerning human experience, and is commonly used in answering questions that are foundational. It is often referred to as the philosophical movement (Cohen et al., 2007). This indicates that seminal ideas do not remain static, but rather, have been researched and modified by subsequent researchers.

3.9.1. *Interpretive Phenomenology*

The main focus of Interpretive Phenomenology revolves around the study of human consciousness and the world in which they subjectively experience (Maggs-Rapport, 2000). That way, hidden insights into human nature and behaviour may be gained. Morrison (1992) suggests that there are three distinctive stages in this process: fore-understanding, interrogation and reflection. Fore-understanding starts with the researcher and the interested phenomenon of research. The initial understanding of the phenomenon does not have to be highly developed but some knowledge about the area of inquiry is essential. Interrogation

follows once the interested phenomenon is identified by exploring, texting, narrating and analysing emergent constructs within and across groups to discover common patterns and regularities; which shall then lead to the themes which emerged through the reflection of empirical and cultural interpretations.

The main argument, mostly from positivist researchers and amongst some social researchers, is their disagreement of putting aside preconceived ideas about the phenomena being studied. Benner (1994), however, explains that the researcher cannot avoid their own social and cultural background influencing their judgement when it comes to interpreting data. This is supported by Mitchell (1993) saying that there is no understanding without pre-understanding; and that preconceptions lead to new ideas. Mitchell (1993:61) had the same opinion as Heidegger (1962) and Gadamer (1994) that "…it is precisely one's preconceptions or understanding that channels new ideas and guides interpretation…the interpretation can build upon that pre-knowledge base to form new ideas."

An important concept of inquiry within interpretive phenomenology is that of its freedom. Leonard (1999) calls this concept of freedom as 'situated freedom', where the extent of subjective experience is intricately linked with political, social and cultural contexts. This concept means that individuals are free to make choices, but their freedom is not unconditional, however, it is bounded by the specific conditions of their daily lives. The concept of situated freedom focuses on the participants describing the meanings of the world they are living and how these meanings influence the choices they make. In interpretive phenomenology, it is the interpretation of the narratives provided by participants in relation to various contexts that is foundational. Another philosophical assumption underlined by Leonard (1999) is that interpretive phenomenological approach states that participants' presumptions or expert knowledge are valuable guides to inquiry and, in fact, make the inquiry a meaningful undertaking.

With loose pieces of puzzles fitting into a complete picture, the methodological approach which aligns with the researcher's aim, participants' situated freedom and data eliciting objectives is interpretive phenomenology. This approach befits this research in eliciting the non-rational factors that influence Malaysian students' lived experience of the phenomenon in deciding their HE migration destination.

3.9.2. *Ethnographic Principle of Cultural Interpretation*

While the overarching research approach leans towards interpretive phenomenology, it is undeniable that the researcher - also a Malaysian - will naturally use his reflexive perspectives to connect with the shared experiences provided by the participants to uncover their reality as they are experienced; and hence, interpret subjective views participants expressed verbally (or have difficulty articulating). This allows the researcher a pedagogical stance to explicitly develop patterns of lived experienced to provide a richer, deeper and a more logical interpretation in a sub-cultural context (Klein and Myers, 1999). To capitalise on the researcher's position as a Malaysian and a former international student who has been immersed in this culture for more than three decades, the ethnographic principal of cultural interpretation provides the avenue for the researcher to be sensitive to social cues and cultural nuances expressed by the participants; as defined by Agar (1986:19): "Ethnography is neither subjective nor objective but interpretive, mediating two worlds through a third." Within the ethnographic principal of cultural interpretation, researchers are able to study communities as natives (insiders) or as strangers (outsiders) (Geertz, 1973); hence, another advantage for this research as the researcher was previously in the HE industry in Malaysia, and is now in the HE industry in the UK.

As this research aims to uncover the unconscious intentions hidden in the select sample of Malaysian students, with the objectives to reveal the concealed emotional factors influencing the pre-purchase evaluation behaviour in a particular phenomenon, the approach of interpretive phenomenology has been adopted based on its relevance and appropriateness to this research's aim and objectives. This approach will be supported by the ethnographic principle of cultural interpretation in the form of the researcher's reflexive stances informed by the researcher's lived experience in a similar cultural nuances (insider) as the participants [Malaysian students] and as a researcher living and working in the UK (outsider) – the host country for this research's phenomenon under study. Data collected with this joint research approach will then be analysed through *Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis.*

3.10. Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis

With this research adopting interpretive phenomenology as the research approach informed by ethnographic principle of cultural interpretation as the underpinning means of interpretation, the method of analysis deemed most suitable and apparent is the *Interpretative*

Phenomenological Analysis (IPA). The aim of IPA is to explore in detail how participants are making sense of their personal and social world (Smith and Eatough, 2006). The main focus in IPA is the interpretation of meanings expressed by the participants in a particular experience or event. As an approach to analysing qualitative research relating to interpreting psychological behaviour, IPA has an idiographic focus which aims to offer insights into how a given person, in a given context, makes sense of a given phenomenon (Smith, 2007). It is also mentioned that researchers using IPA as the analytical method are usually conducted on small sample sizes – a detailed analysis of individual transcripts with the aim of eliciting detailed essence about the perceptions and understandings of a particular sample group rather than prematurely making general claims. Smith (2007) continues to justify that this does not mean that IPA is opposed to general claims for larger populations.

3.11. Triangulation

Triangulation is described by Rothbauer (2008:892) as "…the concept that is borrowed from navigational and land surveying techniques that determine a single point in space with the convergence of measurements taken from two other distinct points." It is often used to indicate two (or more) methods used in a study in order to check the findings. The idea is that one [researcher] can be more confident with the final outcome if different methods lead to the same findings. In particular, it refers to the application and combination of several research methodologies in the study of the same phenomenon (Bogdan and Biklen, 2006). It is also viewed as "a method of cross-checking data from multiple sources to search for regularities or similarities in the research data" (O'Donoghue and Punch, 2003:78). This multiple sources of data-checking can be categorised into four diverse types of triangulations (Denzin, 2006); namely, *theory* triangulation, *data* triangulation, *methodology* triangulation and *investigator* triangulation.

3.11.1. *Theory triangulation*

This form of triangulation involves using more than one theoretical scheme to interpret the phenomenon under study. Denzin (2006) continues by saying that when this [multiple theoretical scheme] is implemented, the biasness associated with using only one theoretical lens is reduced. This is further supported by Denscombe (2007) stating different theories shape different data being collected, and the way in which the data is being interpreted.

This research utilises this form of triangulation in which the main theoretical model is the CDM model, in particular, the pre-purchase stages of the CDM model. The other theoretical model that is used in this research to underpin the CDM model is the Push/Pull Theory of Migration (PPToM). The intention of using these two theoretical models is to ensure the achievement of a diverse perspective and principles to examine the influences and the decision making behaviours.

3.11.2. *Data Triangulation*

This form of triangulation is achieved through the collection of data at various times and in different locations; coupled with a range of participants (Tones et al., 1990). Data triangulation has three sub-triangulation sets: *Time, Space and Person*. *Time* triangulation involves collecting data at varying times, i.e. day, month, year, on the same phenomenon or with the same participants during the course of the same research. *Space* triangulation relates to the collection of data at multiple sites with the intention to achieve cross-site consistency, again on the same phenomenon, however, may be with different participants. *Person* triangulation refers to data collected from different types [race, religion, ethnicity, etc.] or levels [job position, income level, etc.] of participants, on the same phenomenon and may be at the same time.

This research adopts all three sub-triangulation sets of the Data triangulation. With 30 participants (18 ZMET interviewees and 12 for focus groups) from the three regions of the UK (North, Central, South) having different semester dates, term breaks and personal agendas, all the three sub-triangulation sets of data triangulation happened naturally. Data collection had to be designed and scheduled at different time scales – in 2011, 2012 and 2013 - to suit their availability. With the participants selected using the stratified random sampling method, data collection was conducted in various parts of the UK. In addition to data collected locally, most of the participants also choose to return to Malaysia during their summer term break; therefore, this was accommodated where the researcher made a few trips to Malaysia to conduct interviews and focus groups as well. Finally, Malaysia being a multi-ethinic country, the researcher's intention was to have a sample group that could represent the three major races as much as possible. Therefore, a fairly balanced mix of race and gender among the three major races – Chinese, Indian and Malay – were randomly selected.

3.11.3. *Methodology Triangulation*

Methodology Triangulation, also known as Multi-methodology, includes the use of more than one method of data collection in a research study; more specifically, the mixing of qualitative and quantitative data collection methods and tools for analysis, methodologies and/or paradigms in a research study (Johnson and Christensen, 2014). Denscombe (2007) posits two forms of multi-methodology: *between-methods* and *within-methods*. *Between-methods* simply mean that data are collected both qualitatively and quantitatively, and subsequently they [data] are analysed against each other to triangulate regularities. Alternatively, *within-methods* are practiced when data collected from similar methods are compared among one another to provide a check on their similarities. This research adopts a single methodology approach in its data collection and analysis – qualitative. Therefore, the researcher chose the *within-methods* form of methodology triangulation for this research using in-depth interviews and focus groups.

3.11.4. *Investigator Triangulation*

This form of triangulation is achieved when more than one researcher from diverse research areas of expertise working as a team in a particular research. Streubert and Carpenter (1999) continue to suggest that these group [of diverse researchers] need to be involved throughout the entire study by comparing and questioning each other's biases. As this is an academic research, the researcher is supervised by two highly qualified researchers who act as supervisors. The principal supervisor's current research looks at the 'fuzzy boundaries' of online and in-store consumers' experience journeys among Tier 1 (large) and Tier 2 (small) retailers. Fuzzy boundaries depict the starting point of consumers' shopping journey and the final point of their purchasing action. The second supervisor's current research addresses themes around promotion and new media, individuals and networks. More recently this explores the analysis of both historical and contemporary narratives by creatives and practitioners in the elite arts. Both supervisors were actively involved throughout the entire study as suggested by Streubert and Carpenter (1999). Therefore, this research also adhered to this form of cross-checking process called Investigator triangulation.

3.12.   Reliability and Validity

Reliability in a research is achieved when a consistent approach of measurement is implemented throughout the research displaying a quality of measurement in terms of replicability by other researchers on a similar phenomenon, or to be replicated by the same researcher on another phenomenon (Creswell, 2009; Merriam, 2002; Trochim and Donnelly, 2006). In simpler terms, a researcher who wants to ensure reliability in their research should follow a structured process of data collection and analysis throughout the whole research.

Validity, in partnership with reliability, is the relevance of data collected for a particular research purpose [research aim, objectives and/or questions] (Rudestam and Newton, 2007). Data validation in qualitative research is further described as "an attempt to assess the accuracy of the findings, as best described by the researcher and the participants" (Creswell, 2007:207). In simpler terms, a researcher should ensure that data collected is represented to reflect the communicated intentions of the participants as much as possible (if not verbatim).

The benefits of methodology triangulation have been supported by many researchers as providing the additional confidence in the validity of research findings (Gilgun, 1992; Sandelowski et al., 1992; Strauss and Corbin, 1990). For social science research, findings emerging from multiple sources of data collection methods are judged to be more valid than single source findings (Denzin, 1978; Rubin and Babbie, 1989). For this research, two data collection methods are used to achieve the additional confidence in the validity in its research findings – in-depth interviews using ZMET and focus groups.

This research's data collection methods – ZMET in-depth interviews and focus groups – were carefully selected to meet the suitability of achieving the research aim, questions and objectives (Rudestam and Newton, 2007). For one, ZMET is a semi-structured interview process with eleven steps of to guide the researcher in eliciting the hidden, unspoken intentions and behaviour towards a phenomenon. For this research, the phenomenon is the intrinsic intentions of selecting UK as the host country for HE migration. Secondly, participants were given two guiding questions in their preparation for the eleven-step interviews. These two guiding questions were also used for the focus group sessions. With these pre-data collection guiding questions and eleven-step process in ZMET interviews and guided focus groups, the data collection design of this research is reasonably replicable and thus, deemed to have achieved reliability.

Data collected from this research was transcribed manually by the researcher, and it is verbatim to increase the researcher's understanding of what has been expressed by the participants. While 'bracketing' – a process where researcher attempts to restrain from being bias and allow the collected data to speak for itself - was recommended by Husserl (1964), the researcher agrees with Merleau-Ponty (1962:5) stating that "…we are caught up in the world and we do not succeed in extricating ourselves from it in order to achieve consciousness of it." This is also supported by Koch (1995), Kvale (1996) and van Manen (1990) suggesting that the data collection process is used to explore and gather participants' experiential viewpoints as their statements are illuminated from within based on details of what is said, what is silence and what is inferred between the lines. As the researcher is familiar with the cultural background lived by the participants, and have experienced the phenomenon of having to select a host country for HE migration as a former international students, transcribing the data manually has provided the researcher a deeper understanding of the cultural nuances and unspoken, intrinsic, between the line meanings when certain words, sighs and expressions were made by the participants (Koch, 1995; van Manen, 1990), aiding the development of six emergent constructs and three emergent themes. To enhance the reliability and validity of this research's findings, the researcher emailed the three emergent themes to all participants as a process of verification. Seven participants replied with agreement. The rest have either graduated or continued their postgraduate studies elsewhere, thus, the email may not have reached them. The seven who replied have met the data saturation number required for ZMET interviews, which is four to five, providing 90% validity (Zaltman and Coulter, 1995; Christensen and Olson, 2002; Lee et al., 2003; Vorell et al., 2003; Sease, 2005; Khoo-Lattimore et al., 2009). With this in place, this research is also deemed to have fulfilled the criteria for a research to attain validity.

3.13. Data Collection Methods

Due to the potential complexity and sensitivity of this research where participants will be questioned and probed further following their responses, and thus, making it potentially difficult for them to articulate responses, the researcher chose an in-depth interview method called 'ZMET', short for Zaltman Metaphor of Elicitation Technique. ZMET interviews will then be validated by focus group conversations. ZMET was deemed the most suitable for this

research after evaluating two other comparable data collection methods, namely Discourse Analysis and Projective Techniques.

3.13.1. *Discourse Analysis*

Discourse Analysis (DA) first came into general use and publication in 1952 by Zellig Harris when it was used to report on the work which Harris developed for the discovery of transformational structure in language in the late 1930s (Corcoran, 1972). Harris published a paper entitled *'Discourse Analysis: A sample text'* with the interest to look into the distribution of linguistic elements in extended texts, and the links between texts and its social situation (Harris, 1952). Described generally as an umbrella term for the various methods by which discourse may be analysed, DA has its principle rooted in analysing the multiple versions of reality and the multiple 'truths' through the construction of texts supplied by the participants; and therefore correspondingly there are multiple versions of analyses (Morgan, 2010). Its method explores power relations from a critical standpoint in an attempt to make sense of the social world by providing new critical insight – contributing to both theory and research. Morgan (2010) continued to reveal the six traditions of DA (Carabin, 2001 In Wetherell et al., 2001), namely, conversation analysis, interactional sociolinguistics, critical discourse analysis, Bakhtinian research, Foucauldian research and discursive psychology. While these six traditions [of DA] share similar focus on talk and texts as social practices, and on the data that are drawn on from the participants to enable their practice of analysis, they each serves their role albeit some of them having overlapping criteria and roles. Some may even have significant differences, as presented in the following paragraphs reflecting from Morgan's work (2010).

Conversation analysis is seen as being objective and holds a realist view. The goal within it is to find patterns within the language used (the texts) and to solely but absolutely describe what is articulated either in texts or spoken. Therefore, the analysis is value-neutral (non-value based), not interpreted and not constructed. Examples of this method used were to research conversations from telephone calls to a psychiatric hospital (Sacks, 1992) and membership categorisation in men's talk about violence towards women (Stokoe, 2010).

Interaction sociolinguistics, the second method within DA, analyses the existence of 'power' within the linguistic texts for patterns. Different from conversation analysis, this method

allows interpretations of the language used to form patterns of dominance rather than describing the textual usage in isolation. Examples are researches on inter-ethnic communications by Gumpertz (1982) and culture, gender and power by Tannen (1993).

The third method, critical discourse analysis, is concerned with theorising and researching social processes and social change. As the name [critical] suggests, it is deeply political in its analysis of societal policies and practices. This discourse illustrates an attention for positive political change and its place in the relevant societal context. Examples of researches were the comparison of national pandemic influenza preparedness plans and the World Health Organisation's (WHO) guidance documents on pandemic (Garoon and Duggan, 2005).

The Bakhtinian research - the fourth method – is named after the Russian philosopher Mikhail Bakhtin, looks at aesthetics revolving around interpreting socially constituted lived realities. This is achieved through the analysis of everyday speech that is patterned into speech genres – themes, constructions and styles incorporating social conflicts in evaluating accents or judgements which are conveyed by words. This concept explores and explains the 'other voice' that is implicit in any utterance within the textual frame. Example of this research method was evident in the analysis mother-child identity and their socialisation in Wertsch's research (1990).

The Foucauldian research – the fifth method – is named after the French philosopher Michel Faucault, looks at the production of power/knowledge through the use of language. Initially developed to analyse and distinguish between sovereign power and disciplinary power. Faucault's posits that there is no absolute truth, rather multiple versions of socially constructed meanings to be interpreted through linguistic structures. Examples of Foucauldian researches were the construction of a learning disabled student (Mehan, 1996) and the government documents on depression and mental health (Teghtsoonian, 2009).

The sixth [final] method within DA is discursive psychology. A hybrid of discourse analysis, Bakhtinian and Foucauldian principles, this method shift to study the talk and texts in itself – challenging psychological phenomena and entities such as the identity, memory, personality and attitude of the participants, asserting that these entities are constituted through language. This method was used to study the crying on a child protection helpline by Potter and Hepburn in 2005.

The various methods within DA may be used for various reasons. The advantages, as pointed out by Morgan (2010:4), are that these methods "can reveal often unspoken and unacknowledged aspects of human behaviour, making salient either hidden or dominant discourses that maintain marginalised positions in the society…and the most vulnerable individuals." DA is also believed to have relevance and practical application "at any given time, in any given place, and for any given people;" (Morgan, 2010:4) and that it is also context specific. There are however, limitations to DA. The array of [methods] options available posed a methodological issue as being problematic as each method has its own epistemological position, concepts, procedures and a particular understanding of discourse and discourse analysis. Similarities and differences between methods also posed as limitation as it caused confusion for new and experienced researchers alike – conversation analysis is alleged to be too narrow while Foucauldian research is considered as too broad. The lack of explicit technique for researchers to follow is acknowledged as a hindrance.

3.13.2. *Projective Techniques*

The underlying principle of Projective Techniques (PT) is based on the uncovering of the innermost thoughts – unconscious desires and feelings – from participants' responses by presenting them with various situations and/or stimuli (Kline, 1983). As the responses are neither right nor wrong, the participants are free to interpret and respond to these situations and stimuli based on their particular frame of reference, with the hope that the participants will project their unconscious feelings within their responses (Churchill, 1991; Loudon et al., 1993; Solomon, 1994). Stimuli ranges from structured, clear and defined visuals, objects, or situations, to highly ambiguous and unstructured at the other polar. Churchill (1991:332) and Gordon and Langmaid (1998:95) suggested that consumer and marketing researches using PT should utilise relatively ambiguous stimuli "to permit subjects to interpret the stimuli in terms of their own perceptions and in their own words." They continue to suggest that the stimuli should however "offer enough direction to evoke some association with the concept of interest." The researcher however, feels that the term 'relatively ambiguous' denotes a large degree of variation between researchers, thus, making this suggestion a limitation, especially when the stimuli are brought to the study by the researchers and not by the participants. Subsequently, the term 'offer enough direction' yet again implies ambiguity amongst researchers, and contradicts to the first criterion of stimuli being 'relatively ambiguous'.

Similar to Discourse Analysis, PT also has a few methods which are generally used in researchers looking for participants to project their subjective or deep-seated beliefs onto other people, objects or situations (Gordon and Longmaid, 1998; Morrison et al., 2002; Boddy, 2007). The five methods are: (1) association; (2) completion; (3) construction; (4) choice ordering; and (5) expression. The first method, termed as 'association' is where the researcher tries to connect the research stimuli with words, images or thoughts in order for participants to associate the stimuli with their subconscious level by responding and indicating the first word, image or thought (Burns and Lennon, 1993). The second method is called 'completion', where participants are given an incomplete sentence, story, argument or conversation, and are asked to complete it. This method is considered useful when time is limited, but depth of feeling still has to be elicited (Gordon and Longmaid, 1988). The third method, labelled as 'construction' requires participants to answer questions relating to their feelings, beliefs or behaviours of other people by constructing a story or drawing a picture from a given stimulus (Burns and Lennon, 1993). 'Choice ordering' is the fourth method that requires participants to rank the product's (or research object) benefits in the order of choice – either preference or indifference - to disclose participants' inner feelings of the research object under study. The fifth [final] method, 'expression' requires participants to be creative - either role-playing, storytelling, drawing or any other creative activities – to express a specific concept of the study (Hofstede et al. 2007).

Richness in addressing subjectivity has been the most frequently reported as the advantage for using PT (Burns and Lennon, 1993; Wagner, 1995) in making significant contribution in researchers concerning beliefs, values, motivation and personality (Webb, 1992). It is also reported that PT provides a view of the overall functioning of individuals (Thorndike in Berkman and Gilson, 1986). Whilst there were advantages in using PT, three limitations within this data collection method side-lined the adoption of this technique for this research; namely, the complexity of data and corresponding skills required of the researcher (Churchill, 1991), the difficulty in getting participants to assume certain positions such as role-playing (Webb, 1992), and from the researcher's perspective, the limited (if not none) initial contribution from the participants in the collection of stimuli, especially when these stimuli were used to elicit participants' subconscious feelings and thoughts. With these limitations, the risk of non-reliable results was too high.

3.13.3. *ZMET (Zaltman Metaphor of Elicitation Technique)*

ZMET (Zaltman Metaphor of Elicitation Technique) is an in-depth interview technique that elicits both conscious and unconscious thoughts by exploring metaphoric expressions (Zaltman, 1997). Developed by the former Harvard Business School Emeritus Professor Gerald Zaltman, ZMET is the first commercially patented marketing research technique in American history (US Patent 5,436,830; filed 2-1-93; issue 7-25-95). As the founder and co-owner of the consulting firm Olson Zaltman Associates, Zaltman has worked with various corporations such as Procter & Gamble, Coca-Cola and Motorola in eliciting consumers' insights using the ZMET technique.

For decades, marketing research has been based on the notion that consumer behaviour is deeply embedded in a linear notion of marketing activities. This notion has been expressed in various forms, including steps in the selling process (Strong, 1925); adoption of innovation (Rogers, 1961); the hierarchy of effects (Lavidge and Steiner, 1961) and the consumer decision making process (Blackwell et al., 2001). However, it is believed that approximately 95% of thought, emotion and learning occur in the unconscious mind without one's awareness, while only the remaining 5% are available through one's conscious, rational thought (Zaltman and Zaltman, 2008).

Cognitive researchers acknowledge that people think in images, not words; however, many of today's marketing research techniques rely on verbal-centric communications as a data collection method (Woodside, 2004; Catchings-Castello, 2000). Woodside (2004) cited several literature streams supporting the claim that such highly cognitive methods exclude data collection of most thoughts. This suggests that concepts behind the massive investment in market research concerning human insights may be, or are perhaps, flawed?

ZMET is a hybrid methodology grounded in various domains, including verbal and no-verbal communication, visual sociology, visual anthropology, semiotics and mental imagery (Christensen and Olson, 2002; Zaltman and Coulter, 1995). This method involves semi-structured, in-depth personal interviews centered on visual images that the participants bring to the interview. There are eleven sequential steps in which each step is designed to elicit the participants' hidden thoughts, emotions and intrinsic values. Each step also acts as a

validation tool against every other previous step by eliminating redundancies, reinforcing repetitions, rethinking specifics responses and recapping decisions.

The emergent of ZMET was based upon the premise that (1) close to 95% of thoughts occur at the unconscious level, (2) as much as 80% of communication is non-verbal, (3) thoughts are shaped through lived experience, (4) reasoning, emotions and experiences are linked, (5) thoughts occur as images and (6) thoughts are formed and expressed through the use of metaphors (Christensen and Olson, 2002; Zaltman, 1997; Zaltman and Coulter, 1995).

Apart from being used as a marketing research tool, ZMET has been successfully modified and used in studies representing a variety of disciplines (Plummer et al., 2012). ZMET has been modified to suit varying studies (and not limited to) as shown in Appendix 1 (p. 237). The list starts from year 2000 until 2014 to show the currency of this research.

Although there have been various researches adopting ZMET as the core data collection method, the eleven basic steps within ZMET remain as the essence of this semi-structured in-depth interview tool which were used for this research:

Step 1: Pre-interview: A broad, open-ended assignment is given to the participants to get eight to twelve visuals (i.e. pictures, photos, posters, paintings, etc.) which describe and express their feelings and thoughts on the phenomenon being studied. For this research: selection of host country for HE migration. Participants were given two guiding questions: (1) "Why did you choose a UK university?" followed by (2) "What and how does being a UK university student make you feel?" to base their selection of visuals on. This step is normally done a week or two before the interview day, which starts with the next step – *Storytelling*.

Step 2: Storytelling: This step allows the participants to describe the content of each visual, one at a time. Each visual is used to express the representation of the colours (or black and white), objects, etc. within it. The research will then gather descriptions (i.e. words, phrases, or sentences) which may strike the emotional cords to probe further into the intrinsic, hidden values that may emerge. This process is repeated for all eight to twelve visuals. With these descriptors, the next step called *Missed images*, follows.

Step 3: Missed images: This step allows the participants the opportunity to verbally describe a visual (or more) which they had thought of but could not find a suitable visual to present. Therefore, this step provides the participants to express their thoughts in the similar fashion as step two – storytelling – without a physical visual. This step attempts to minimize any thoughts being missed out or not represented. Once the participants have expressed all their missed images (or none at all), step four takes its turn – *Sorting task*.

Step 4: Sorting task: This step starts to validate the responses given in the previous steps by asking participants to sort their visuals into similar groups, i.e. putting visuals into categories of similarities. This task 'forces' the participants to re-think their thoughts and expressions for each category of visuals that they have grouped them into. Again, more (or similar) descriptors are recorded for each category/group of visuals. Once all categories/groups are expressed, the participants are tasked to construct their descriptors in the next step – *Construct elicitation*.

Step 5: Construct elicitation: With the descriptors collected in the previous steps, the researcher starts to elicit deeper by probing and questioning the meaning of the descriptors. For this research, the laddering questions, amongst many others, are:

- You mentioned about the importance of having X. What does X means?
- Why is having the sense of X important to you? (this may lead to another descriptor: Y)
- How would X lead to Y by selecting a UK university?
- Why is Y important enough to leave your country, family, friends and your comfort zone?
- What causes X? What causes Y?
- Why is Y important to you?
- Is Y important to your family?
- Why is it important or necessary to suit your family when it is your decision/future?

After the constructing process through laddering questions, associations between descriptors are developed through the participants reasoning. At this stage of ZMET, more in depth elicitation is necessitated by proceeding to the next step – *Most representative image*.

Step 6: Most representative image: Participants are asked to select one image that most represents the two guiding questions: (1) Why did you choose a UK university? and (2) What

and how does being a UK university student make you feel? With this image, the participants are given the opportunity to describe and express their thoughts about this particular image. When descriptors are mentioned, the researcher will probe further to elicit associations from this visual – repeating steps 2 and 5, *storytelling* and *construct elicitation*, respectively. Once this step is completed, it is time to eliminate the 'outliers', an observation point that is distant from other observations (Grubbs, 1969). Hence, the next step: *Opposite image*.

Step 7: Opposite image: Similar to the immediate step before, this task asked for the participants to select an image that least represents the two guiding questions as the step above. To eliminate as many 'outliers' as possible, the descriptors and associations gathered from this step will also eliminate the descriptors and associations that were previously gathered in the first five steps. Once the 'outliers' are put aside, the next step attempts to explore the sensory attributes of the participants' thoughts towards the phenomena under study – *Sensory images*.

Step 8: Sensory images: Participants are asked to put aside all the images and just concentrate on the following six senses – touch, taste, smell, sound, colour and emotional feelings. Again using the two guiding questions, participants are asked to think of words or objects that best represent each of these senses relating to the two guiding questions. Examples are silky (touch), bittersweet (taste), lemon (smell), classical (sound), orange (colour) and victorious (emotional feelings). These words are used again to elicit deeper into their thoughts through the use of laddering question technique (in step 5 - construct elicitation). With the descriptors and associations gathered from visual images and sensory images, it is now time to put them into *mental maps*.

Step 9: Mental map: The researcher and the participants review all the emergent constructs in the form of descriptors and associations making sure they are accurate and satisfactorily represent the participants' thoughts. These emergent constructs are now drawn into a map (mind map's format) to link the descriptors to associations. As suggested by Plummer et al. (2012), ZMET could be modified to suit the phenomenon under study, thus, the researcher choose to provide a template for the participants to create their mental map. A piece of A4 sized paper as a template with three stages: (1) Before selecting the UK; (2) While in the UK;

and (3) After being a UK graduate. The purpose of this template is to observe and analyse the changes in the behaviour of the participants when progressing from stage 1 to stage 2 and eventually to stage 3. This is to ascertain whether there is a possibility of emotional factors and symbolic values influencing their selection behaviour. Moving forward from the completion of mental map, the participants are asked to summarise their images in the next step – *Summary image.*

Step 10: Summary image: Participants create an image or montage using any of the image(s) to summarise their thoughts about the two guiding questions and the mental map's thought process. The summarized image or montage is once again given a description and association expressing important, emotional thoughts. This summarized image is put aside for the final step – *Vignette.*

Step 11: Vignette: This final step was used to ask the participants to create a storyline, just like a movie director would, about their transition about themselves – starting from being in Malaysia to the UK and into the future where the storyline ends. This step was essential to extract any emotional links or symbolic values that are either intrinsic or unspoken.

Validation studies using ZMET indicate that from a sample size of eight to twelve participants, four to five in-depth interviews that are focused on identifying and understanding core themes can provide 90% of the information available from a large data set, hence, providing data saturation (Zaltman and Coulter, 1995; Christensen and Olson, 2002; Lee et al., 2003; Vorell et al., 2003; Sease, 2005; Khoo-Lattimore et al., 2009). The findings of these previous researches support the merits of this elicitation method despite its complexity and labour intensity.

While ZMET is apt to elicit elicits both conscious and unconscious thoughts by exploring metaphoric expressions and providing data saturation with four to five participants providing 90% of information from a large data set, the limitation lies in the fact that ZMET is mainly used for researchers that do not require their findings to be generalised. Another limitation relating to this research is that since the revelation of influential non-rational factors among Malaysian students' HE decision making behaviour is the main aim, participants [Malaysian students] who chose to study in the UK purely due to practical reasons, such as lower tuition

fees, availability of financial scholarships and shorter course completion duration, amongst other quantifiable factors, will be deemed as outliers or invalid.

Small sample size also rules out population projectability; however, as with most qualitative researches, the main focus is to gain rich, insightful representation of the select sample population rather than being concerned with generalisation (Zaltman and Coulter, 1995) to represent other populations. Population projectability is defined by the Market Research Association (MRA) as "the ability for researchers to take the findings from their sample and be able to apply those to the entire population thereby assuming that the sample was a true representative of the population" (2015:n.p). The contexts of ruling out population projectability and generalisation in this research refer to students from other countries who are in the stage of selecting a host country to pursue their higher education. Findings from this research portray another dimension of influencing factors which are important for practitioners and policy makers alike, and the enhancement of academic knowledge in the form of in the form of generating new insights and theories. These findings solely represent the consensus of the participants [Malaysian students] who have selected the UK as their HE migration destination as the cultural nuances and implications may be different from that of other countries.

As a marketer and social researcher himself, Zaltman believes that the voice of the customer [participants] must be understood in more depth (Zaltman and Higie, 1993), a sentiment that is shared by many qualitative social researchers. In order to assist the articulation of participants' cognitions on a research topic, ZMET is used to elicit participants' hidden thoughts to capture the underlying mental configurations that led the select sample group to feel and act the way they do (Zaltman and Coulter, 1995).

Linking back to this research, the aim and objectives are to reveal the non-rational [emotional element and symbolic value] factors influencing Malaysian students' pre-purchase behaviour when selecting a host country [UK] for their further education migration. Hence, the suitability of using ZMET as the main data collection method.

The process of this research's in-depth interview using ZMET elicitation technique for one participant ends here. This eleven-step process was repeated on all 18 interviewees.

However, only twelve were considered valid as six participants either did not bring appropriate pictures or were not responsive when asked to express their thoughts. This research is further methodologically validated with two sessions of focus group conversations.

3.13.2. *Focus Group*

Strauss and Corbin (1990) stress the importance of theoretical sensitivity in qualitative research. Theoretical sensitivity in qualitative research can be achieved when the researchers immerse themselves into the research area under study – both before and during the study. This can be in the forms of conducting preliminary or exploratory [pilot] research, attending events or taking part in activities that increase exposure to the phenomenon under study, familiarising with the literature, discussing with people who have experienced the phenomenon, and reflecting the responses upon one's [researcher's] personal experience (if relevant). Taking the final two points – discussing and reflecting the responses of the lived phenomenon – the researcher decided that focus group conversations will provide the theoretical sensitivity in this qualitative research.

The Collins English Dictionary (2012) defines a focus group as "a group of people brought together to give their opinions on a particular issue or product, often for the purpose of market research." Its American counterpart, the American Heritage Dictionary (2011), defines it as "a small group selected from a wider population and sampled, as by open conversation, for its members' opinions about or emotional response to a particular subject or area, used especially in market research or political analysis." With various definitions available, they tend to point focus groups towards features such as organised conversation (Kitzinger, 1994), collective activity (Powell et al., 1996), social events (Goss and Leinbach, 1996) and interaction (Kitzinger, 1995) identifying the contributions that focus groups make to social research. Powell et al. (1996:499) aptly put it as "a group of individuals selected and assembled by researchers to converse and comment on, from personal experience, the topic that is the subject of the research."

Based on these definitions and the intention of achieving theoretical sensitivity, two focus group conversations were conducted. Each group consisted of eight participants, again collected from a stratified random sampling method, to achieve a good array of profile. Both

focus group conversations were conducted in Malaysia as there were more students who went back to Malaysia during the summer break, than there were remaining in the UK. Conversations were conducted in Subang Jaya, a city which is only 20 kilometres (25 minutes' drive as calculated by Google Map application) from the capital city of Kuala Lumpur. The guiding questions were used as the overarching guide for each conversation. They are identical to the ones used for the ZMET in-depth interviews; they are (1) Why do you choose a UK university? and (2) What and how does being a UK university student make you feel?

Similar to the ZMET interviews, the focus group sessions started with the researcher's introduction of himself, the title and purpose of the focus group conversation, the appropriate protocols such as ethics approval and the acknowledgement that participation is strictly voluntary and that they could withdraw at any time of the conversation. Whilst a focus group conversation is less structured compared to an interview where participants are given the opportunity to express their opinions and emotions, the researcher conducted the conversations with a list of guided questions: (Appendix 2: p. 240). This was to ensure a certain degree of structure - avoiding the phenomenon under study becoming astray - and consistency in data elicitation process.

3.14. Sampling Method

3.14.1. *Population, sampling frames and sample selection*

A *population* is defined by David and Sutton (2011) as simply every possible case or individual that could be included in the study. For this research, Malaysian students who have selected the UK as their host country to further their higher education are the represented population.

When a population is too large to undertake a census such as this research context - a total of 16,635 Malaysian students studying in the UK in the 2013/14 academic year (2013-14 HESA Report, British Council, 2014) - a representative group called a sample needs to be selected. David and Sutton (2011) continued to suggest that surveying only a fraction of the sample representing the population can still yield findings that would, on the whole, be found if the

entire population was surveyed. However, in order to achieve this, a sampling frame is required.

A *sampling frame* contains every unit in the population and the subsequent sample is drawn from it. One of the key requirements of sampling, according to David and Sutton (2011), is that the selected sample is not biased by either over- or under-representing different sections of the population. Therefore, to avoid this biasness, this research shall adopt the *Stratified Random Sampling* method. Stratified Random Sampling requires dividing the considered population into homogeneous subgroups, and then taking a simple random sample from each subgroup (Trochim and Donnelly, 2006). For this research, the UK is the host country for Malaysian students. The researcher has divided the UK into three main regions (subgroups) as the destinations for the sample population: Northern, Central and Southern regions. The Northern region stretches from Scotland to Yorkshire and the Humber; the Central region covers East and West Midlands, East of England and Wales; while the Southern region encompasses South West and South East of England, plus London. Therefore, upon the division of regions to represent stratified random sampling, the selection of simple random sampling are selected without any bias from each of these three regions where Malaysian students have chosen to further their education. These Malaysian students are members of the Malaysian Students Societies in their respective universities in the UK. These societies have Facebook pages showcasing their activities and they are societies within their universities' Student Union. The researcher therefore used these Facebook pages and their Student Union to link with the members [Malaysian students] of these societies as the source for participation invitations.

A total of 18 participants were selected for the in-depth interviews - nine male and nine female students; of which, seven are of Chinese decent, six Indians and five Malays. However, only twelve interviews were valid, the remaining six interviews were invalid due to various reasons such as unsuitable pictures, contradictory comments and the inadequacy in expressing their thoughts due to feeling shy. The twelve valid interviews consist of seven male and five female students; of which, five being Chinese, three Indians and four Malays – a fairly equal distribution.

As for focus groups, another sixteen participants were selected using the same selection method – stratified random sampling – for two focus groups with eight participants each – four male and four female students; with fairly equal distribution of racial representation – three Chinese, three Indians and two Malays for the first focus group; and three Chinese, two Indians and three Malays for the second focus group.

Initially, the researcher was concerned about the [small] number of participants; especially for the interviews, however, data saturation to achieve validity for ZMET interview is four to five participants (Zaltman and Coulter, 1995; Christensen and Olson, 2002; Lee et al., 2003; Vorell et al., 2003; Sease, 2005; Khoo-Lattimore et al., 2009). With twelve valid participants for the ZMET in-depth interviews, this research has achieved triple the data saturation number. The validity from the ZMET interviews was further validated with two focus groups of eight students each – operating as methodology triangulation (Denzin, 2006) to increase the reliability of this research.

Ultimately, eleven universities were selected. Four universities were located in the Northern region, four were centrally located and three were from the South. The selection of these universities were also based on the equal distribution of the types of university groups - Russell Group, 1994 Group, Million+ Group and Alliance Group - to further increase the reliability of sample collection (Bogdan and Biklen, 2006). Figure 3.4 (p. 92) illustrates the distribution of universities and their university groups. Table 3.2 (p. 92) shows the participant's demographic details. The researcher could have selected the university which the researcher is currently reading his doctoral research degree, however decided against it. The main reason being the researcher is a full time member of academic staff whilst being a part time doctoral candidate. Therefore, participants [Malaysian students] from his doctoral reading university may have known the researcher or were past, current, or future students. This may contribute to a less honest, less expressive and less reliable discussion during the interview and focus group sessions. The researcher did, however conduct a simplified version of the ZMET interviews - in addition to the 18 ZMET interviews - with six participants from his doctoral reading university. For anecdotal records, the findings and emerging themes were similar.

Figure 3.4: Demographics: Participants' Regions and University Groups
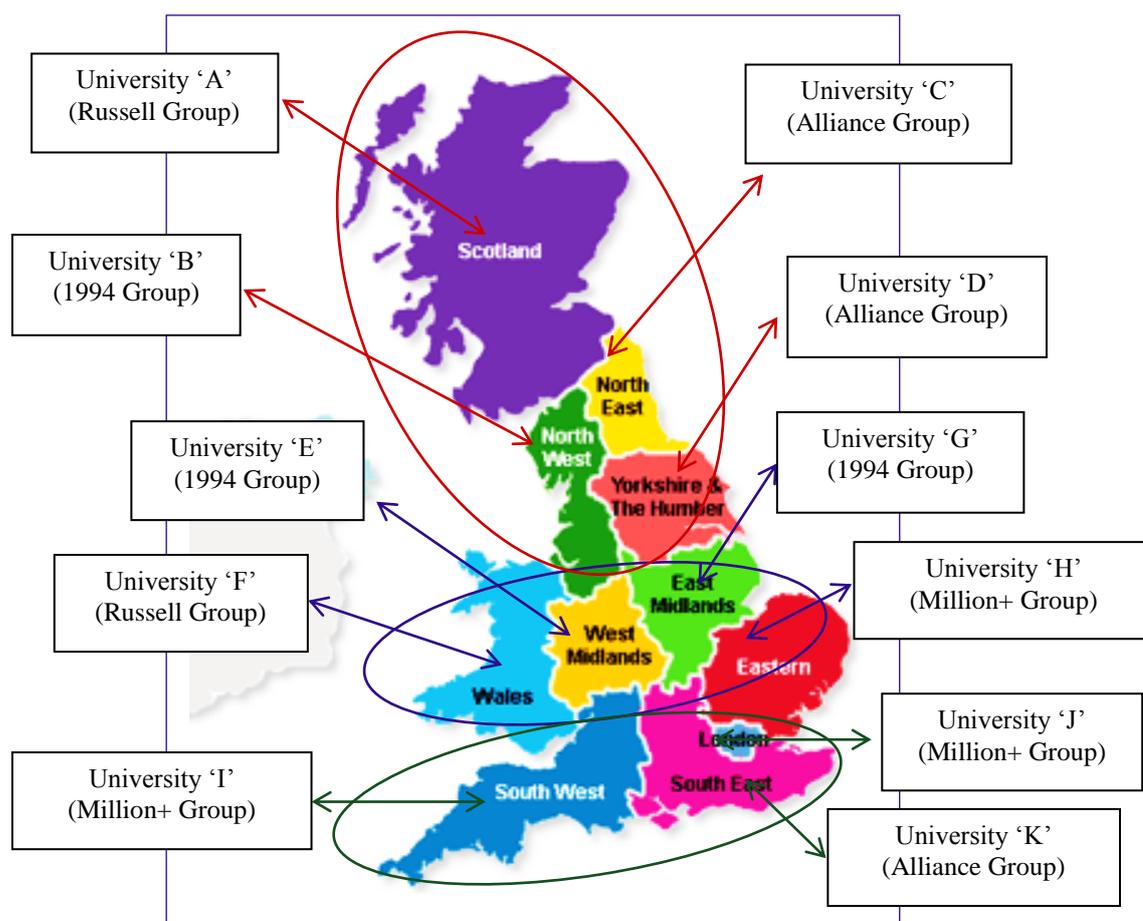
Sources:
UK Map: European Parliament/Information Office in the United Kingdom (n.d.)
University Groups: Universities UK: The voice of UK universities (n.d.)

Table 3.2: Demographics: Participants' Profile, University and Participation

Northern Region						
Participant Number	**Gender**	**Ethnicity**	**UG Level**	**University Name**	**University Group**	**Participation**
1	M	Chinese	5	A	Russell	ZMET
2	F	Chinese	5	B	1994	ZMET
3	F	Malay	6	C	Alliance	ZMET
4	M	Indian	5	C	Alliance	ZMET
5	M	Indian	5	D	Alliance	ZMET
F1	M	Malay	6	A	Russell	FG 1
F2	M	Chinese	5	C	Alliance	FG 1
F3	F	Malay	5	B	1994	FG 1
F4	M	Indian	5	B	1994	FG 2
F5	F	Chinese	6	D	Alliance	FG 2
F6	M	Malay	6	D	Alliance	FG 2

Central Region						
Participant Number	Gender	Ethnicity	UG Level	University Name	University Group	Participation
6	M	Indian	5	E	1994	ZMET
7	F	Chinese	5	E	1994	ZMET
8	F	Indian	6	F	Russell	ZMET
9	M	Malay	5	F	Russell	ZMET
10	M	Chinese	5	G	1994	ZMET
11	F	Indian	5	G	1994	ZMET
12	F	Chinese	6	H	Million+	ZMET
13	F	Malay	6	H	Million+	ZMET
F7	M	Chinese	6	E	1994	FG 1
F8	F	Indian	6	F	Russell	FG 1
F9	F	Malay	5	F	Russell	FG 2
F10	F	Chinese	5	G	1994	FG 2
F11	M	Indian	6	H	Million+	FG 2
Southern Region						
Participant Number	Gender	Ethnicity	UG Level	University Name	University Group	Participation
14	M	Malay	5	I	Million+	ZMET
15	M	Chinese	5	K	Alliance	ZMET
16	F	Indian	6	K	Alliance	ZMET
17	F	Indian	6	J	Million+	ZMET
18	M	Malay	6	J	Million+	ZMET
F12	M	Indian	5	I	Million+	FG 1
F13	F	Indian	6	K	Alliance	FG 1
F14	F	Chinese	6	J	Million+	FG 1
F15	M	Chinese	6	J	Million+	FG 2
F16	F	Malay	5	I	Million+	FG 2

3.15. Data Transcription, Coding and Analysis

All interviews and focus group conversations were manually transcribed by the researcher. This action is intentional so as to provide the researcher the opportunity to be more familiar with the data and to examine in more detail into understanding the experienced phenomenon under study. The practice of self-transcribing is also viewed as a way to build additional theoretical sensitivity (Strauss and Corbin, 1990) in identifying key themes or constructs. A construct is an abstraction created by the researcher to capture common ideas, concepts, or narratives expressed by the participants experienced in the phenomenon under study. These constructs are the representation of the feelings (sometimes unspoken) visualised in the participants' mind and then expressed in the form of a diagram known as mental maps.

These mental maps consist of concepts, ideas, emotions, values, thoughts and feelings experienced during the period the phenomenon took place.

For this research, the analytical methods used were *open coding*, *axial coding* and *selective coding* (Boeije, 2002; Rafuls and Moon, 1996; Krippendorf, 1980; Strauss and Corbin, 1990) to determine constructs and themes within the collected data. *Open coding*, in short, means the initial organisation of data in order to make sense of it. Collected data are divided into segments and then they are scrutinised for common constructs. They are then examined for properties that characterise each theme through these constructs. To achieve this in this research, the researcher examines and identifies common constructs by asking and probing questions, making comparisons, looking for similarities and differences between participants' expressions. By doing this, similar expressions or comments are grouped together to form emergent constructs.

Upon completion of open coding, *axial coding* takes place. *Axial coding* simply means the interconnections between constructs (sometimes referred to as sub-themes). This is achieved by exploring the context within the phenomenon, the action (or decision) taken during the phenomenon, the consequence(s) which arise(s) when action (or decision) is taken which influence the phenomenon under study. In this research, the eleven-step ZMET in-depth interviews are structured to axial code by asking the participants to categorise the collected visuals, constructs, and putting them in mental maps. The researcher could also achieve this by moving back and forth during the data collection to continually refine the constructs and their interconnections.

The next, final step is *selective coding* - the development of a story that connects the constructs. *Selective coding* is the process of selecting constructs and then systematically relating it to the other constructs in order for main theme(s) to emerge. During this process of selective coding, constructs and their interrelationships are combined to form a 'storyline' that describes 'what happens' and 'why did it happen' in the phenomenon that is being studied. These emergent constructs from the first and second steps - *open* and *axial* coding - were then analysed further to surface the emergent themes; hence, the process of reducing the data to a small set of core themes that appear to describe the phenomenon that is under investigation.

This research uses two steps within ZMET in-depth interviews - mental maps and vignette - to elicit the storylines that describe the [unspoken] influences and reflect the [unrevealed] emergent core themes in Malaysian students' decision in selecting the UK as their choice for HE migration.

Data Analysis is defined by Shamoo and Resnik (2003) as the process of systematically applying statistical and/or logical techniques to describe and illustrate, condense and recap, and evaluate data. They describe this process as providing "a way of drawing inductive inferences from data and distinguishing the signal (the phenomenon of interest) from the noise (statistical fluctuations) present in the data." While data analysis in qualitative research can include statistical procedures, an ongoing iterative process of data analysis is common and where analysis is performed almost simultaneously. Therefore, social researchers generally analyse for patterns in observations through the entire data collection phase.

The research approach of interpretive phenomenology and ethnographic principle of cultural interpretation that informed this research recognised that data collection and analysis are intertwined (Agar, 1986; van Manen, 1990; Guba and Lincoln, 1994; Merriam, 1998). The semi-structured, in-depth interviews using ZMET in this research are used to delve into the experiences of Malaysian students who have experienced the phenomenon of selecting UK as their HE migration. Similarly, focus groups are used as conversation platforms to express their feelings in their journey [before, during and future] of being a UK HE student/graduate. Expressions shared in the focus groups for this research very often validate the feelings amongst the participants with gestures of agreement such as nodding of their heads and facial expressions that suggest concurrence.

3.16. From analysis to interpretation

By definition, the process of analysing and interpretation is when sense and meaning are made of the data gathered in a qualitative research, and by which the emergent knowledge [theme] is applied back into the research's phenomenon under study (The Association for Quality Research, 2013).

3.16.1. The process of interpretation

For this research, the chosen research approach of interpretive phenomenology which is informed by the ethnographic principle of cultural interpretation was used to interpret the participants' descriptions into research text. The combined research approach, together with the researcher's insights, knowledge and theories from literatures, enables the researcher to thoroughly select excerpts to form emerging constructs and eventually the emergent of core themes. This combination allowed the researcher to reveal the unseen, unspoken and unknown [hidden] aspects of symbolic value from the analysed data.

The researcher also put into practice Krueger and Casey's (2000) suggestion of revisiting the aim of the research, the design or approach and the implementation to ensure congruence between research objectives, research question, literature, question formulation for data collection, recruitment, data collection strategies and data analysis. The retroductive process adopted for this research allowed the researcher to move back and forth between the experiences expressed by the participants and returning to any particular participant to look for patterns, repeated or shared experiences and make sense of it. This process was also greatly eased by the fact that transcriptions were completely done manually by the researcher.

Excerpts from experiences were used to reveal the emergent constructs, and the collections of excerpts were used to illustrate mental maps - step 9 of ZMET - to add credibility to the process of thematic interpretation. The researcher also included the use of a relevant reflexive account to further validate the interpretations with the objective to build credibility for this research.

3.17.   Reflexivity

Reflexivity, according to van Maanen (1998) and Herz (1997), is a practice where researchers should actively involve the construction of interpretations of experiences in the field and a questioning of how these interpretations arise. With this, a social researcher's reflexive knowledge provides and contributes towards insights into the workings of the world and insights on how that knowledge came about (Berg, 2007). Richardson (1994) posits that it is also imperative and central to maintaining reflexivity that researchers need to constantly move themselves back [locate] and forth [re-locate] as a researcher and into the dialog with

research practice, the participants and the methodologies. In using reflexivity, the researcher does more than simply telling or writing of oneself in a research text (Skeggs, 2002). Reflexive writing, as Skeggs (2002) explains, is to assume that by adding a piece of interpretation about the self [researcher], the problems of power, perspective and privilege are dissolved as a researcher as one has located into the lived experience of the phenomenon under study. In reality, "selfing" (Skeggs, 2002:230) or "what counts as evidence" (Skeggs, 2002:249) is to critically reflect on one's identity and beliefs within social, cultural and political origins and lived experiences embedded in communities, languages and relationships within that community to maintain a distinction – either to penetrate and reshape or to attempt to share experiences. These opinions resonate with Wenger's (1998) in that, speaking and writing about familiar lived experiences provide opportunities to rethink and validate the sentiments expressed by the research's participants.

There are two strands of reflexive stance the researcher is able to contribute his insights given his position; namely, *Personal reflexivity* and *Epistemological reflexivity*.

3.17.1. *Personal reflexivity*

Personal reflexivity requires the researcher to be aware and acknowledge that it is impossible to remain 'outside of' his subject matter while conducting research. It urges the researcher "to explore the ways in which a researcher's involvement with a particular study influences, acts upon, and informs such the research" (Cromby and Nightingale, 1999:28). As Denscombe (2007:333) puts it: "…reflecting on one's values, norms and concepts that have been assimilated during a lifetime; …to provide a public account of the self which explores the role of the researcher self" (2007:69). This is further substantiated by Willig (2001) positing that personal reflexivity involves thinking about how the research may have affected and possibly changed [us], as people and as researchers. During the process of data collection, both in-depth interviews and focus group conversations, the researcher consciously and constantly move back and forth as a researcher and a former and current international student who is able to relate and connect himself between his past and present self, to authorise and shape the research study. The researcher continues to use his positions to provide insights gathered from the research data during data analysis. Having said that, the researcher is also aware of the importance of bracketing himself to allow the participants to express their experiences and only to 'enter' into their experience when the researcher

resonates with a similar experience. Bracketing is a method used in qualitative research such as this to mitigate the potentially deleterious effects of preconceptions that may flaw the research process (Tufford and Newman, 2012).

3.17.1.1. *Influential personal reflexive stance*

The concept of personal reflexive stance is deeply embedded in both one's [researcher's] perceptions of self and one's perspectives of the world, which ultimately is connected to one's personal stance. It is the position, as mentioned by Salmon (1989:231) "…in which each of us takes up in life and our experiences that reflects its relational and social aspect."

For this research, the researcher's personal reflexive stance is rooted in him being a Malaysian, his experience living in the Malaysian culture, and a former and current international student, to elicit intrinsic intentions to capture emergent constructs and emergent themes in order to present a more insightful representation revealing the unspoken influences affecting the decision making of Malaysian students and the UK as their choice for HE migration.

The following two paragraphs portray the influential role of the researcher's *personal reflexive stance*. Thus, they will be narrated in the format of first person.

<u>Personal reflexive stance: May 1991</u>

> *It was 24 years ago in 1991, when I was in Form Five (equivalent to GCSE Level in the UK) in Malaysia, when most of all Form Five students were preparing for the dreaded governmental examination known as SPM – short for 'Sijil Pelajaran Malaysia' – translated to Malaysian Examination Certificate. The results obtained in this examination will determine whether we continue our education locally at Sixth Form if our results are good enough, or for some who were not top-scorer calibre, the other two options were to either start working or continue our education in a private college locally or overseas where there are programmes to suit our educational proficiencies – certificate, diploma, or foundation – before progressing to year one of a bachelor's degree. Admittedly knowing that I am not the top-scorer calibre of a student (at that stage of my life), I knew even before taking the SPM that Sixth Form is beyond my reach. Therefore, there were*

only two other options – start working or continue studying in a private higher education institution. Not wanting to start work so quickly, I started to look at the other option. While searching for information, I quickly realised that studying in a college locally and studying in an overseas university both require the same number of years; four to be exact. I told myself then that I might as well take this opportunity to travel overseas to another country. The thought of traveling and exploring other country was overwhelmingly positive. Then came the thought of being free - escaping from the constant surveillance of my parents, siblings and relatives - was even more encouraging. At this stage, I still have no clue which country was a 'better' choice.

Malaysia gained its independence from the British in 1957. Therefore, the few generations before me, including my parents, were educated by British teachers who were flown into Malaysia, and some were nuns, sisters and clerics from the Catholic or Anglican denomination churches. Knowing and learning only the British education, and the power distance between them and the British authorities created the perception of superiority complex for my parents, uncles and aunties. They were (and still are) believers of the British education. However, my generation were influence by the 'coolness' of American movies and musical influences that flooded our television set – the likes of Tom Cruise in Top Gun and Michael Jackson's 'moonwalk' – the most awesome dance move ever! Predictably, my bachelor's degree was awarded by an American university.

The above phenomenon happened 24 years ago; and even then, the researcher was [intrinsically] influenced by the extensive American [external/environmental] influences which dominated the Malaysia media. And since the rational factors such as a suitable programme [Business Administration and Computer Information Systems] and a range of financial implications were evaluated, leaving only the final selection process of the offering country amongst the four Western countries - America, the UK, Australia and Canada. America was the chosen HE destination purely based on the non-rational factors which carried an intrinsic value in the form of a label called 'coolness'.

3.17.2. *Epistemological reflexivity*

Willig (2001:32) suggests that "[epistemological reflexivity] encourages us to reflect upon the assumption (about the world, about knowledge) that we have made in the course of the research, and it helps us to think about the implications of such assumptions for the research and its findings." Epistemological reflexivity also encourages constant thought of the "interpretations of both our experience and the phenomena being studied so as to move beyond the partiality of our previous understandings" (Finlay, 2003:108). Within this context, a researcher is seen as either an *insider* (emic) or an *outside*r (etic) within the qualitative research domain, to facilitate questioning to occur at each stage of the research process. This in turn, resulting to signposting and formulating transparent conclusions. The position of an 'insider' can be assumed only when the researcher's biography resonates with the participants' lived experience and is familiar with the intrinsic cultural aspects affecting the participants to enable a valid emic description. The opposite holds for researchers who do not have the shared lived experience and knowledge with the participants, the community and the cultural environment that may influence their expressions. Thus, only relying on extrinsic theoretical concepts prior to engaging in their research, resulting in the formulation of etic findings. Concisely, insiders "cannot escape their past" whilst outsiders are "without a history" of the research setting (Schutz, 1964:34).

As a Malaysian residing, working and reading for his doctorate in the UK, the researcher is considered an insider, and thus, this emic position enables the shaping of his knowledge, questions and personal experiences to understand and interpret the participants' experiences. This similarity with the participants also helps the participants to be more at ease, more willing to open and share their personal experiences; and interestingly, more curious to find out about their own revelations as well.

3.17.2.1. *Influential epistemological reflexive stance*

Finlay's (2003) doctrine of a researcher being an insider and an outsider circling around the researcher's understanding of the participants and the cultural similarity of the researcher and the participants underpin this research's approach of interpretive phenomenology informed by ethnographic principle of cultural interpretation. Hence the suitability of the researcher's influential stance of epistemological reflexivity. The insider stance is based on the researcher's claim to the hidden knowledge of the research's context and cultural

underpinnings, and to enable privileged access to the participants. The outsider stance provides the researcher the experiences of the setting under study as a visitor who then creates an objective picture of the research setting. As a Malaysian residing and researching in the UK, the researcher is positioned is such a way where both emic and etic positions from two differing cultural backgrounds and research status contributes to inform the research process and experiences faced through this research journey; and to shape the emergent constructs and themes.

The following paragraph depicts the influential role of the researcher's *epistemological reflexive stance*. Similarly, it will be narrated in the format of first person.

<u>Epistemological reflexive stance: May 2006</u>

After close to a decade as a marketing practitioner in the corporate sector, I joined academia in Malaysia. In addition to being an academic, I was also responsible for the business school faculty. Naturally, being responsible for the number of student enrolments for all programmes in my faculty was one of the many targets set for me. Therefore, putting my marketing practitioner's hat on, I had to understand the selection and decision making behaviour of potential students. And since Malaysians are considered by Hofstede (2011) as Collectivists where they have high concern for others and how others think of them; and Hierarchical where they are identified as having the highest power distance [respect for parents and positions of authority]. This also meant that Malaysians would respect their elders such as siblings, parents and relatives. Their authority is often unquestioned as doing so would be considered as rude and improper on their part. Therefore, understanding the behaviour of potential students is only half the battle won as the other half is to understand the other influential parties.

With both personal and epistemological reflexive stances as the authorising enhancers in the interpretation process, the researcher is able to interpret the subjective, social world experiences that are understood from the cultural stances of the participants (Guba and Lincoln, 1994; Denzin and Lincoln, 2005). The use of the interpretive phenomenological approach informed by the ethnographic principle of cultural interpretation to decipher subjective viewpoints and apply self-reflexivity. This combination of research approaches

aided by the two stances of reflexivity enable the researcher to relate and understand the varying cultural and social nuances that illuminate the emergent themes underpinning Malaysian students' intrinsic [unspoken] influences in selecting the UK as their host country for HE migration.

The researcher is befittingly positioned for the practice of reflexivity to add insightful acumen into this research on how certain descriptions, expressions and knowledge came about. The researcher is able to implement both stances – personal and epistemology - through his position as a Malaysian, a former international student of tertiary [America] and Masters [Australia] level education, a current international student reading a doctoral research degree in the UK, a former HE academic and employee in Malaysia, a current HE academic and employee in the UK, a Malaysian citizen and a UK resident.

3.18. Ethical Compliance

Ethical considerations pertaining to methods employed in data collection and to the participants have been upheld as priority throughout the whole journey of this research starting from the onset. Cohen et al. (2011) state the importance of moral and intellectual responsibilities to ensure the validity and reliability of a research. These ethical responsibilities are support by van Maanen (2011) indicating that for research to be sound and trustworthy, it is imperative to consider all stages of the research process impacting the investigation of the phenomenon under study within the sub-culture of that research context.

The University of Hertfordshire's (UH) Ethical Policy and Regulations (UPR) require any research project involving humans to have Ethical Approval and a Protocol Number before starting any data collection – either by students or staff (University of Hertfordshire UPR AS/A/2, 2010-2011). For this research, a formal written notification of UH Ethics Approval was granted by the ECDA Humanities, Law and Education, and Business School on 16th November, 2010 - bearing Protocol Number BS/R/011-10 (Appendix 3: p. 241).

The UH UPR requires the participants to voluntarily agree and to participate in the research once they have been fully informed of what it entails and its purpose. The researcher made sure that the participants of this research understood this requirement when it was read to

them, and that they are still willing to participate knowing that the interview or the focus group conversation will be video recorded and will take approximately 90 minutes or 60 minutes respectively. They were assured of their anonymity and informed that they can withdraw at any time during the process of the data collection. The researcher reassured the participants by giving them the assurance that all video recordings would be used only for transcription and then be deleted completely upon the completion and checking of the transcription required for this research. To abide by this assurance and ethical compliance, only images and expressions extracted from ZMET interviews and focus group conversations will be used and presented in this thesis. Therefore, expressions transcribed from interviews and conversations, the development of ZMET mental maps and participants' email replies verifying the emergent themes, will not be appended in the 'Appendices' section of this thesis to maintain the participants' anonymity. However, printed hardcopies of transcripts, mental maps and email replies, will be made available during the final viva (Oral Examination); and be destroyed thereafter.

Creswell (2007) suggests another consideration in protecting the anonymity of participants by ensuring the presentation of data is only recognisable by the participants themselves, and not in any way or form gives any indication and identification of the participants. Following Creswell's suggestion, all participants' names mentioned throughout this research are fictional and universities are labled with letters 'A' to 'K'. The three regions within the UK, gender and ethnic background remain true to portray the validity and reliability of participants' profile distribution in a sample group. Nevertheless, the universities' names are 'blacked-out' in the transcripts as the researcher feels that it may lose the anonymity of the participants if they were remain revealed.

3.19. Summary

The researcher's background has a similar lived experience in the same cultural environment with the select sample for this research: Malaysian students. Therefore, trying to assume a 'zero knowledge' stance by using a purely inductive research approach is no longer an option. The retroduction research approach offers greater dynamics in terms of data collection, analysis and interpretation. With these dynamics, the chosen research approach of interpretive phenomenology enables the researcher to examine the subjective aspects

concerning human experience of the phenomenon under study. It also provides the flexibility of injecting a secondary approach to inform the interpretation of the [cultural] phenomenon. Hence the use of ethnographic principle of cultural interpretation in the form of the researcher's reflexive stance. To support this dynamic approach, ZMET interviews and focus group conversations are the two data collection methods deemed most suitable.

Chapter 4:   Findings and Discussion: Emergent Constructs

Pilot Test, ZMET and Focus Group: Reflexive Insights.

4.1.   Chapter Outline: Findings and Discussion: Emergent Constructs

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              │  and Focus Group discussions │
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              │  Six (6) Emergent Constructs │
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              │ Application of the six (6)    │
              │ Emergent Constructs to        │
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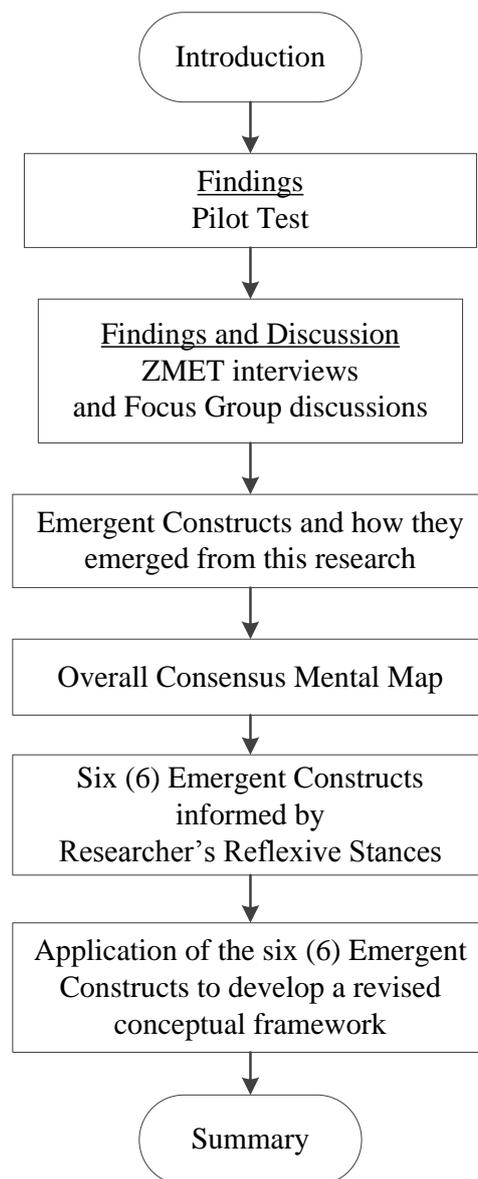
4.2.   Introduction

This chapter illustrates the designs of the pilot test and its findings; to be followed by ZMET in-depth interviews and focus group conversations. The designs of each data collection method: ZMET and Focus Group will be presented individually. However their findings are presented as overarching emergent constructs. The rational supporting the joint-presentation

of these [ZMET and focus group] findings resulted from the similar, overlapping insights emerging between these two data collection methods as shown in Table 4.1.; except for one: *Sense of being an elite*, where participants in ZMET interviews expressed more boldly.

Table 4.1: ZMET and Focus Groups: Findings and Insights

ZMET Interviews	Focus Group Conversations
Egotism	Egotism
Self-assurance	Self-assurance
Feeling more capable	Feeling more capable
Future security	Future security
Higher employability	Higher employability
Current security	Current security
Safer place to study	Safer place to study
Freedom and independence	Freedom and independence
Melting pot of future opportunities	Melting pot of future opportunities
Sense of being an elite	

4.3. Pilot Testing: Design and Findings

4.3.1. *Time Frame*

The pilot testing conducted at the preliminary phase of this research took place in December 2010. It took a total of nine hours to cover 15 participants who were selected in an education exhibition in Malaysia.

4.3.2. *Demographics*

Malaysia is a multi-ethnic country with three main racial groups: Malay, Chinese and Indian. To enable a more representative set of sample, stratified random sampling method was adopted to start off the pilot test. This sampling method - stratified random sampling - "…is designed to produce more representative samples…by characterising variables…for example, sex or social class, age group or ethnicity" (David and Sutton, 2011:230). By adopting this sampling method, a total of 15 university students who were studying either in a British-, Australian- or American-linked university were randomly selected as participants. Comprising of seven male and eight female Malaysian citizens, six were of Chinese ethnic background, five Indians and four Malays. All were at their second year or above in their degree programme; which makes them all above 18 years of age. Out of the 15 surveyed, only ten were valid as there were errors and unanswered questions in five surveys. The

remaining ten valid surveys gave a balanced distribution in terms of gender and race: four male and six female; of which, four were Chinese, three Indians and three Malays. This balanced distribution also matches with the ethos of stratified random sampling (David and Sutton, 2011).

4.3.3. *Aim and Objectives*

The aim was to have a feel of whether a foreign university, particularly western-linked university, has an influence in Malaysian students' decision making behaviour. With this aim, the objectives of this pilot test were:

1) To identify the source of information search when selecting a university;
2) To classify the important factors which determine their final decision;
3) To learn whether a local [Malaysian] or a foreign [Western] university is perceived as preferred choice;
4) To discover and justify the reasons behind their preference for a certain country – local or Western; and
5) To rank the reasons of their chosen Western country in terms of preference for higher education migration.

In order to achieve the aim and objectives, the pilot testing rested on a chosen theoretical model as the platform for the question design. The chosen theoretical model is the CDM model (Blackwell et al., 2006). Since the selection process of a higher education institution is a decision making process that occurs before the actual enrolment [purchase], the stages in the CDM model used to inform the question design for this pilot testing were the pre-purchase stages of the CDM; namely *Need Recognition* stage to identify the trigger points of a search; *Information Search* stage to classify selection criteria; and *Pre-purchase Evaluation of Alternative* stage to justify their decision making.

4.3.4. *Sampling design and Data collection method*

The location of this pilot test took place at one of the largest education exhibitions (organiser's name, location and date are intentionally anonymized) in Malaysia. Participants were picked using the stratified random sampling method proposed by David and Sutton (2011) when they entered or exited the exhibition entrance or exit doors. The researcher intentionally chose to select participants who are already a university student mainly to adhere to the ethics' regulation of not selecting anyone below the age of 18, who is

categorised as 'minor'. Therefore, these participants were at the exhibition mainly to accompany their siblings, relatives or friends who were at their pre-university age searching for information.

Once a participant was selected and had agreed to participate in this pilot test, the researcher read them their participation rights, the ethics approval protocol number and the research design comprising title, aim and objectives. Upon acknowledgement of the items read to them, the researcher handed them a form with the semi-structured, open ended questions to complete. The researcher was on site to provide clarification on any doubt pertaining to the questions. This process was repeated 15 times in order to achieve 15 participants even though the targeted number was ten – just to compensate for 33% possible error. A total of 15 questions were designed to address all five objectives. Within these 15 questions, six were based on the *Need Recognition* stage to address the first and third objectives. Three questions were designed for the *Information Search* stage to address the second and third objectives; another three questions were mainly addressing the second objective, while the remaining three questions which were expanded to more sub-questions to address the final two objectives - objectives four and five - informed by the *Pre-purchase Evaluation of Alternative* stage.

The targeted number of participants was ten, however, a total of 15 surveys were conducted. The average time taken for each participant was 16 minutes. By simple arithmetic calculation, this should tabulate to 240 minutes (15 participants x 16 minutes each = 4 hours) of pilot testing; however, it took nine hours of the researcher's time that day because the nature of an education exhibition in Malaysia is such that the whole exhibition hall is crowded with university staff, education counsellors, recruitment agents, current and prospective students with their family members and friends; talking loudly over the sound systems, walking along the crowded walkways from one university booth to another hoping to cover as many as possible in one visit. The atmosphere is filled with assertive, hard selling education counsellors and agents trying to sign prospective students into their universities, beautifully designed and decorated booths with assortment of premium gifts just by filling up the 'student information form' to be collected as prospective students database. With such a frenzy atmosphere, the probability of any participant partaking in a survey upon arrival at the exhibition hall is low – as demonstrated in this pilot testing experience. Thus, the researcher

arriving at the opening time of the exhibition was a lesson learnt. The researcher managed to recruit two willing participants 20 minutes following the opening of the entrance door in the morning (10.20am); however, the remaining thirteen surveys were conducted at various times throughout the day with the final participant at 6.30pm. The exhibition remained open until 8.00pm; however, the researcher did not stay on as the intended 15 participants were achieved. Before leaving, the researcher made sure there were ten valid surveys as targeted were achieved before leaving the exhibition hall. As it turned out, five out of the 15 surveys (33%) were invalid due to various reasons such as missed questions and incomplete answers.

4.3.5. *Pilot Test Findings: Emerging Patterns*

The pilot testing supported the conceptual validity and integrity of the pre-purchase stages of the CDM model (Blackwell et al., 2006) which was used to inform the design of the survey questions to address the objectives. The results for each stage is presented in accordance to the pre-purchase stages addressing this pilot's objectives:

4.3.5.1. *Stage 1: Need Recognition*

Emerging pattern: Satisfying peer' and family's pressure

To address objectives one and three in identifying the source of information search and the difference in perception between local and western-linked universities, participants were asked to list the factors that triggered the need to start looking for a 'suitable' university. Collectively, the constructs were (1) natural process after high school (n=8); (2) parents' request (n=7); and (3) family and peer pressure (n=7). Participants were also asked to provide the reason why they selected the [foreign] country that they are currently studying in. The two apparent constructs were (1) a better salary by getting a good job (n=8) and (2) parents' high expectation due to their peer pressure (n=7). With these constructs, the emerging patterns are satisfying peer' and family's pressure leading to participants having to start looking for the 'right' HEI.

With peer and family pressure summing up the emergent patterns to look for the 'right' HEI underlying the *Need Recognition* stage of the CDM process model, the overriding intention of fulfilling the emotional need for acceptance by their peers, parents and their parents' peers resonate with the theory of family buying decisions (Sheth, 1974). This specifically linked to family orientation and childhood upbringing to explain the interactive processes and

development of roles amongst family members. The pressure is not just simply looking for the 'right' HEI, but extends to selecting the 'better' country which hosts the 'right' HEI.

4.3.5.2. *Stage 2: Information Search*

Emerging pattern: The chosen HEI and its host country must have the 'right' image

Objective number two: to classify the important factors which determine their final decision, was addressed by asking participants to list the selection criteria of an appropriate HEI; the expected experience while being an international student; and factors influencing the selection of their current HEI and the country of their HEI. The general consensus was the reputation of the HEI (n=8) and the recognition it garnered (n=8) played important roles in their selection criteria. While league tables were also mentioned (n=7), they continued to say that rankings from different league tables proved to be confusing and thus, reduced their significance. Education counsellors and agents (n=6) were initially mentioned as a good source of information provider, the participants also said that every single education counsellor and agent spoke positively about their HEI, thus, every single university seems like a good choice. As a result, this was not helpful in aiding their selection process. With these constructs, the emergent patterns lead towards the need of having the chosen HEI and its country to have the 'right' image; and the volume of persuasive material causing an overload of information which resulted in a non-decisive state.

4.3.5.3. *Stage 3: Pre-Purchase Evaluation of Alternatives*

Emerging pattern: 'Saving Face': to create and protect the family's dignity

With the final two objectives of discovering, justifying and ranking the reasons for their [participants] preference of their chosen country for HEI migration, good reputation linked to image (n=7) appeared first as the emergent construct. Sharing equal importance with good reputation is the need to have a 'great sounding' programme name and a familiar (well known) university name (n=7). The perception of high quality education with rigorous academic process (n=5) was a close third. League table ranking (n=5) was also mentioned, however, it was not as a decision making tool, but as an assurance tool after a decision is made. These constructs suggest that a choice based on popularity amongst their peers and family members, having the 'right' image and a 'good' history of graduate [alumni] and gaining recognition were the preferred emergent patterns during the evaluation of their pre-purchase decision making process. These elements suggest the need to create a good

reputation or to protect the dignity which the family, specifically the patriarch of the family, places high importance on – also known as 'Saving Face' – a Chinese notion of pride and prestige – which will be discussed in 4.7.1. (Emergent Construct 1: p. 124).

As a social researcher using the interpretive stance in this phenomenon and simultaneously informed by the ethnographic principle of cultural interpretation, the researcher could sense the participants' honesty in their responses. A sense of pride was apparent during the survey and conversations. The honesty and sense of pride came mainly from the fact that they have selected a foreign university, in particular, a Western-linked university. The perception of being an international student and a soon-to-be a Western graduate appears to be the main reason for their apparent sense of satisfaction and pride - in making the 'right' decision.

These findings highlight the innate sense of satisfaction and pride by making the 'right' choice without (or with limited) influence of rational factors such as variety of programmes being offered, affordable fees and state-of-the-art facilities, suggests that non-rational factors which contain emotional elements and symbolic values will have the influential tie-breaking role in their decision making process of HE migration.

Progressing forward from the pilot test's findings where emerging patterns suggest the need to investigate the influential roles of non-rational factors, this research looked at the elicitation of intrinsic influences within non-rational factors by employing two data collection methods: ZMET in-depth interviews and focus group conversations.

4.4.   ZMET In-depth Interviews Design

Following the constructs which arose from the pilot test findings demonstrating the existence of intrinsic influences in Malaysian students' HE migration, ZMET in-depth interviews were conducted to investigate the reality within this phenomenon.

The eleven-step in-depth semi-structured interview called ZMET was used as the model to structure questions which elicit the participants' hidden, unconscious responses gravitating towards the research objectives in answering the elements of "Why do you choose a UK-linked university?" leading to "What and how does being a UK-linked university student

makes you feel?". Questions for the focus groups were also intentionally written around these questions.

Mason's (2010) review in his study entitled *Sample Size and Saturation in PhD Studies Using Qualitative Interviews* reveals that many researchers "shy away from suggesting what constitutes a sufficient sample size" (n.p.). However, his study provides guidelines for an appropriate sample sizes for three specific types of qualitative research designs: Grounded Theory, Ethnography and Phenomenology.

- Grounded Theory: Creswell (1998) indicates 20 to 30 participants as sample size, while Morse (1994) suggests 30 to 50 interviews.

- Ethnography: Morse (1994) suggests 30 to 50 interviews; while Bernard (2000) states that most studies are based on samples between 30 and 60 interviews.

- Phenomenology: Creswell (1998) recommends five to 25 as sufficient to achieve data saturation, while Morse (1994) proposes at least six without stating a maximum number.

This research's design adopts the interpretive phenomenology as the main approach in data collection. With the optimum number of participants suggested by Creswell (1998) (n=5 to 25) and Morse (1994) (n=6 or more); this research has twelve participants for the in-depth interviews. To add reliability to this research's sample size, ZMET in-depth interview was selected as it has been reported to achieve data saturation validity with four to five participants (Zaltman and Coulter, 1995; Christensen and Olson, 2002; Lee et al., 2003; Vorell et al., 2003; Sease, 2005; Khoo-Lattimore et al., 2009). This research conducted 18 in-depth interviews with twelve being valid - three times more than the reliable sample size.

4.4.1. *Time Frame*

With a total of 18 participants studying at various regions in the UK, the in-depth interviews were scheduled and conducted at various time scales - 2011, 2012 and 2013. With the researcher as a full-time member of academic staff and the participants being full-time international [Malaysian] students in the UK, interview sessions could only take place during the holidays such as Easter break, summer holidays and the 5-day window between Christmas and New Year. Whilst all 18 participants and the researcher reside in the UK, ironically, twelve out of the 18 interviews were conducted in Malaysia - with only six

interviews conducted in the UK. The reason being it is more expensive for the participants to stay in the UK during the summer holiday period of three months compared to returning to their home country of Malaysia – having to pay for food and lodging in Pound Sterling compared to living at home with their parents for free.

4.4.2. *Demographics*

As Malaysia is a multi-ethnic country, the researcher's intention was to have a sample group that represents the three major races as much as possible. Therefore, a fairly balanced mix of race and gender among the three major races – Chinese, Indian and Malay – were randomly selected. Similar sampling method used throughout this research - stratified random sampling - guided the selection process of participants. Table 4.2 outlines the profiles of all 18 participants, of which, twelve are valid and six are void. The rejected participants were numbers 4, 8, 11, 15, 16 and 18.

Table 4.2: ZMET: Participants' Profile

Northern Region					
Participant Number	Gender	Ethnicity	UG Level	University Name	University Group
1	M	Chinese	5	A	Russell
2	F	Chinese	5	B	1994
3	F	Malay	6	C	Alliance
4	M	Indian	5	C	Alliance
5	M	Indian	5	D	Alliance
Central Region					
Participant Number	Gender	Ethnicity	UG Level	University Name	University Group
6	M	Indian	5	E	1994
7	F	Chinese	5	E	1994
8	F	Indian	6	F	Russell
9	M	Malay	5	F	Russell
10	M	Chinese	5	G	1994
11	F	Indian	5	G	1994
12	F	Chinese	6	H	Million+
13	F	Malay	6	H	Million+

Southern Region					
Participant Number	Gender	Ethnicity	UG Level	University Name	University Group
14	M	Malay	5	I	Million+
15	M	Chinese	5	K	Alliance
16	F	Indian	6	K	Alliance
17	F	Indian	6	J	Million+
18	M	Malay	6	J	Million+

4.4.3. *Aim and Objectives*

Progressing from the pilot test's aim which was achieved at the preliminary phase of this research, the subsequent aim of this research was to investigate the existence (or non-existence) of intrinsic elements which may influence the participants' HE migration into the UK. This aim calls for the researcher to relook at the pre-purchase stages of a proposed theoretical CDM model. Given the essence of this research - migration flow – the PPToM will be used as the underpinning model to classify the emergent [intrinsic] themes.

The objectives developed specifically to address this aim through in-depth interviews are:

1) To elicit non-rational factors [emotional elements and symbolic values] as intrinsic influencers;

2) To understand the 'what', 'how' and 'why' these non-rational factors are influential; and

3) To apply the constructs within the elements of the environmental influences in the CDM model underpinned by the PPToM model to represent the decision making behaviour of this research's sample population.

4.4.4. *Sampling design and Data collection method*

Previous researches that utilised ZMET as data collection method such as Khoo et al. (2009), Kalargyrou and Woods (2011) and Marie (2014), adopted convenience, random and convenience, and purposive sampling methods respectively, to investigate consumer home choice, training challenges and the effects of financial literacy. These sampling methods are categorised under non-probalility sampling, except for random sampling, which were deemed suitable for these researches. For this research, the researcher's intention was to have a sample group which closely represents the demographics of Malaysian students who have selected the UK as their HE migration destination. With over 16,000 Malaysian students spread throughout the whole of the UK, the researcher therefore divided the UK into three

regions and included the four university types within the UK, and purposively selecting a fair representation of the three main races [Malay, Chinese and Indian] of Malaysian students in the UK, and gender [male/female]. Hence, stratified random sampling is deemed most suitable as its characteristics allow the researcher to divide a large population into a more representative sample group (Fienberg, 2003; David and Sutton, 2011).

Whilst the pilot test's aim was to select a sample group which included all three main races in Malaysia, this aim was extended for the sampling selection of participants for the ZMET interviews. The researcher extended the aim to cover - in addition to the three main races of Malay, Chinese and Indian - the three main regions of the UK, namely, Northern, Central and Southern regions, and the inclusion of the four types of university groups: Russell Group, 1994 Group, Million+ Group and Alliance Group. With this [extended] aim, stratified random sampling method was adopted as the guiding principle for the selection process as it was deemed most suitable (David and Sutton, 2011). Stratified random sampling is a probability sampling method where the researcher divides the select population into different subpopulation, also known as 'strata' (Fienberg, 2003), then final participants are selected from the different strata. For this research, two levels of strata were created: the three regions within the UK and the four types of university groups. Once these strata were created, participants were purposively selected to achieve the balanced representation of race and gender. The rationale in adopting purposive sampling method within each stratum instead of random sampling method was to achieve a fair representation of the three main races of Malaysian students in the UK and their gender. This form of division strategy reflects the definitions of stratified random sampling by Fienberg (2003) and David and Sutton (2011). The final selection of sample is presented in Table 4.2 (p. 113).

A total of 18 participants were shortlisted. The initial recruitment process was to select a few universities - sectioned by the three regions in the UK. Four universities were selected from the Northern region, four from Central and three from the South. To enhance the reliability of sample collection as suggested by Bogdan and Biklen (2006), the selection of these universities was also based on the equal distribution of the four types of university groups. Once the universities were identified based on regions and university groups, an online invitation was sent through the Malaysian Students Society via their universities' websites and Facebook group pages respectively. A total of 38 students from eleven selected

universities responded, however, with equal distribution requirement in mind, the researcher shortlisted 18 - nine male, nine female; eight Chinese, six Indians and four Malays. The remaining 20 were shortlisted down to 16 for focus group conversations.

With 18 students residing in three different regions of the UK and having varying semester term dates, semester term breaks, assignment deadlines and personal schedules, deciding on one common date and time was a challenge; let alone a few common dates. Therefore, the researcher decided to conduct the interviews and focus groups during summer breaks when most of them were in their home country of Malaysia. Although the participants were also staying in different parts of Malaysia, most of them were in Kuala Lumpur or in major cities within close proximity to Kuala Lumpur - Petaling Jaya, Subang Jaya and Shah Alam – a driving distance of 10, 15 and 21 minutes respectively. Other participants who were staying a distance from these major cities were in Penang (3 hours 30 minutes' driving distance), Sarawak and Sabah, having to fly 1.5 and 2.5 hours respectively.

Participants who stayed within the vicinity of Kuala Lumpur were willing to drive to Subang Jaya to be interviewed or to participate in the focus group conversations. The reasons cited were "a chance to see how difficult a PhD is" and "want to see and learn how a Lecturer does it." As the researcher was an employee at a university in Subang Jaya, access to conduct interviews and focus group conversations in the group meeting room in the library was granted. The researcher made a few trips to Penang, Sarawak and Sabah in order to conduct the interviews. These interview sessions were conducted at the branch campuses of the university which the researcher was an employer previously. Permission was also granted to conduct interviews in these campuses.

Each ZMET interview lasted an average of 1 hour 48 minutes; which meant that realistically only a maximum of three interviews were conducted to maintain the rigor that is expected of the researcher. Therefore, a total of 18 ZMET interviews were scheduled during the summer of 2011, 2012 and 2013. The six simplified ZMET interviews with participants from the researcher's doctoral reading university were conducted in the UK in 2011 and 2012.

The utilisation of stratified random sampling and purposive sampling methods justified the sample of this size. This is further validated by previous ZMET-led researches which

showed data saturation was achievable with just four to five interviews, providing 90% validity (Zaltman and Coulter, 1995; Christensen and Olson, 2002; Lee et al., 2003; Vorell et al., 2003; Sease, 2005; Khoo-Lattimore et al., 2009). This combined sampling design permitted the researcher with lengthy interview sessions with each participant. Purposive sampling and ZMET interviews encourage the collection of data rich in detail pertaining to the substantive research aim, questions and objectives. Consequently, the criteria used to assess the findings generated differ from those applied when using probabilistic sampling (Lincoln and Guba, 1986; Yin, 1994). While probabilistic sampling is valued by the degree to which it can be generalised to the wider population, the value of the understanding which emerges from the detailed research of a purposive sample of Malaysian students in the UK is properly determined by the degree to which it 'fits and works' with the perspectives and lived experiences of the participants (Glaser and Strauss, 1967). Particular to this research, findings from ZMET interviews from this combined sampling design in the form of emergent constructs were classified as either 'push' or 'pull' influences within the PPToM informing the CDM model to illustrate the pre-purchase behaviour of Malaysian students in their selection of the UK as HE migration destination.

4.5. Focus Groups Design

With ZMET interviews taking the lead role in data collection to elicit the intrinsic values hidden within the non-rational factors influencing Malaysian students' decision making of HE migration to the UK, it is also imperative to triangulate the findings between data collection methods (Johnson and Christensen, 2014) to enhance the validity of emergent constructs and emergent themes. To enhance data validity through methodology triangulation, two focus group conversations were conducted in addition to the twelve ZMET interviews. They consist of eight participants in each group respectively.

4.5.1. *Time Frame*

A total of 16 participants were recruited to form two eight-participant groups. With 16 Malaysian students residing and studying in three regions of the UK (Northern, Central and Southern), the only feasible period to conduct the focus group conversations was during the summer term breaks. Each focus group conversation was conducted in the summer of 2012

and 2013 respectively in Malaysia with the exact reason being cost of living as the motivation for returning to Malaysia during the summer holidays.

4.5.2. *Demographics*

As with the ZMET participants' demographics, the focus group participants were also carefully selected using the stratified random sampling method to ensure equal distribution between gender, ethnicities, regions in the UK and the university groups. Table 4.3 summaries the profile of the 16 participants.

Table 4.3: Focus Group: Participants' Profile

Northern Region						
Participant Number	Gender	Ethnicity	UG Level	University Name	University Group	Focus Group (1 or 2)
F1	M	Malay	6	A	Russell	FG 1
F2	M	Chinese	5	C	Alliance	FG 1
F3	F	Malay	5	B	1994	FG 1
F4	M	Indian	5	B	1994	FG 2
F5	F	Chinese	6	D	Alliance	FG 2
F6	M	Malay	6	D	Alliance	FG 2
Central Region						
Participant Number	Gender	Ethnicity	UG Level	University Name	University Group	Focus Group (1 or 2)
F7	M	Chinese	6	E	1994	FG 1
F8	F	Indian	6	F	Russell	FG 1
F9	F	Malay	5	F	Russell	FG 2
F10	F	Chinese	5	G	1994	FG 2
F11	M	Indian	6	H	Million+	FG 2
Southern Region						
Participant Number	Gender	Ethnicity	UG Level	University Name	University Group	Focus Group (1 or 2)
F12	M	Indian	5	I	Million+	FG 1
F13	F	Indian	6	K	Alliance	FG 1
F14	F	Chinese	6	J	Million+	FG 1
F15	M	Chinese	6	J	Million+	FG 2
F16	F	Malay	5	I	Million+	FG 2

4.5.3. *Aim and Objectives*

With focus group conversations being the validation tool for ZMET interviews, the main aim for the two focus group conversations, in addition to reinforcing those of ZMET, was to test

the empirical statistics suggested by Fern (1982); stating that each focus group participant will only express 60% to 70% of the total idea that they would in an interview.

The main objective of these two focus group conversations was to function as a triangulation tool to 'check and compare' the attributes expressed by the participants from the ZMET interviews to highlight the reasons and associations given for each attributes which lead to the revelation of intrinsic values within the emergent constructs (Denzin, 2010).

4.5.4. *Sampling design and Data collection method*

The methodology employed in the design of sample collection is similar to the one of ZMET. In fact, participants for focus groups were recruited at the same time as the ones selected for ZMET. The duration of the two focus group conversations were 33 minutes and 28 minutes respectively. The final selection of sample is presented in Table 4.3 (p. 118).

4.6.   ZMET and Focus Group Findings: Emergent Constructs and Emergent Themes

Progressing from the pilot test, the aim was to elicit the intrinsic factors influencing the sample population's decision making process. To achieve this research aim, ZMET interviews - an eleven-step semi-structured instructional elicitation technique – and focus group conversations were the two chosen data collection tools. The overarching guiding questions during the process of interviews and conversations were "why do you choose a UK university?" leading to "what and how does being a UK university student make you feel?"

With ZMET, each step (of the eleven steps) requires the participants to perform a task and subsequently explain the reasons of their decisions. Each step acts as a 'check and compare' against the previous steps by validating their responses and thus, triangulating their results which lead to the emergent of constructs and themes. Focus group conversations adopted similar guide lines where participants were probed in a laddering technique when an attribute is mentioned in order to elicit the reason and the association that is intrinsically linked to the emergent construct.

This links to this research's aim to elicit and understand the non-rational factors which may intrinsically influence the decision making behaviour of Malaysian students when selecting

the UK as the destination for HE migration. In order to elicit the intrinsic values which underpin the non-rational factors, the participants were asked to provide a descriptive word or an attribute depicting UK HEIs in general. Subsequently, they were asked to expand the reasons associated to the depicted attribute with regards to their feelings about UK HEIs. Finally, the researcher linked these associated reasons felt by the participants to extract the emergent constructs (Attributes→Associations→Emergent Constructs).

In the subsequent sections within this chapter, participants' quotes will be presented to support the emergent constructs and the development of core themes as insights. These insights will be validated by the various relevant roles the researcher have lived and experienced through the reflexive stances of cultural interpretations – both personal and epistemological stances.

4.7. Emergent Constructs

Constructs are concepts emerging from empirical research outcomes which researchers use to build theories, develop models, evaluate results and measure impact of the phenomenon being studied (Rosenberg, 1974); hence the term 'construct' which has been used interchangeably between pilot testing phase ('construct') and post-pilot testing [ZMET and focus group] phase ('emergent constructs') of this research. At Lund Research Ltd (2012), constructs are defined as "mental abstractions that we use to express the ideas, people, organisations, events and/or objects/things that we are interested in…a way of bringing theory down to earth, helping to explain the different components of theories, as well as measure/observe their behaviour" (n.p.). Lund Research Ltd also suggests that a construct captures what the empirical findings mean about something through the use of just a few words; very often only one or two words.

The questions developed for this pilot test were based on the four pre-purchase stages of the CDM model in order to gather informative information which may show traces of emotional tendencies in the participants' decision making behaviour. Hence, the researcher decided to term the findings as merely 'constructs'. Conversely, the questions used for ZMET interviews and focus group conversations were informed by the existing environmental influences of the theoretical CDM model underpinned by the PPToM. The semi-structured,

laddering technique within the eleven steps of ZMET interviews and the focus group conversations also served as a validation mechanism between the emerging constructs from each step to rationalise the use of the term 'emergent constructs'.

For this research, six emergent constructs were drawn as the intrinsic values which subsequently lead to the emergent of three core themes depicted from the descriptions, expressions and the mental maps attained from the participants. The six emergent constructs are: (1) *Egotism*; (2) *Self-concept*; (3) *Current security*; (4) *Future security*; (5) *Freedom and independence*; and (6) *Future opportunities*, as depicted in a Consensus Mental Map in Figure 4.1 (p. 123). These emergent constructs were then interpreted through the reflexive stances - personal and epistemic - of cultural interpretations to signify the insight of the three emergent themes: (1) *Fulfilling their emotional needs for acceptance*; (2) *Satisfying their spiritual pleas for freedom and independence*; and (3) *Providing a promise for a greater self-worth*.

The term 'emotional needs' in the first emergent theme depicts the participants' yearn for acceptance. Similarly, the 'spiritual pleas' in the second theme signifies their longing to get away from their current situation. Lastly, the term 'self-worth' in the third theme portrays the sense of a favourable opinion of oneself. These emergent themes are discussed in the following chapter entitled 'Findings and Discussion: Emergent Themes'.

These emergent constructs have also addressed this research's second objective in identifying the non-rational factors and their intrinsic influences [emotional elements and symbolic values] influencing Malaysian students' pre-purchase evaluation and decision making behaviour of HE migration. In addition to addressing the second research objective, these constructs have also resonated with advantages of using the PPToM and benefitted from it being able to classify them into the types of factors.

One of the advantages of using the PPToM to underpin this research's conceptual framework [CDM model] was to enable the categorisation of influential factors that emerge from this research's findings. For example, the first emergent construct, *Egotism*, is a factor that can be categorised as the first type [category] of factors under the PPToM which indicates 'factors associated with the area of home country [origin]'. Egotism (Kowalski, 1997) is a

self-inflated opinion of one's personal features, qualities and importance. Egotism is the equivalent to the Eastern concept of 'Mien-Tzu' by Hu (1994), which metaphorically represents one's pride, prestige, honour and reputation as viewed by the society. Both Kowalski (1997) and Hu (1994) posit that these inflation of opinion are influenced by the culture of the home country. The link between emergent constructs 2, 3, 4, 5 and 6, and the categorisation enabled by the PPToM as presented in Chapter 2 (Literature Review) are listed in bullet points as follows. All six emergent constructs, their relevance and links to theories are discussed within each construct presented in sections 4.7.1, 4.7.2, 4.7.3, 4.7.4, 4.7.5 and 4.7.6, respectively.

Emergent Construct 2: *Self-concept / Self-worth*.
- Categorised under 'factor associated with the areas of home country' in the PPToM.

Emergent Construct 3: *Current Security*
- Categorised under 'factors associated with the areas of host country' in the PPToM.

Emergent Construct 4: *Future Security*
- Categorised under 'influential or obstructive factors between home and host countries' in the PPToM.

Emergent Construct 5: *Freedom and Independence*
- Categorised under 'personal factors' in the PPToM.

Emergent Construct 6: *Future Opportunities*
- Categorised under 'influential or obstructive factors between home and host countries' in the PPToM.

These factors have implications which are symbolic that can be categorised and simplified to provide clearer understanding of their essence which are intrinsically influential in their decision making behaviour when deciding and selecting the UK as their HE migration destination.

Participants' comments and expressions are presented verbatim throughout this thesis. Therefore, spelling and grammatical errors, together with colloquial expressions, are intentionally left unedited to maintain their thought process and authenticity of their expressions.

Figure 4.1: Consensus Mental Map

Consensus Mental Map: Theoretical Constructs - Intrinsic Values (Emotional and Symbolic)
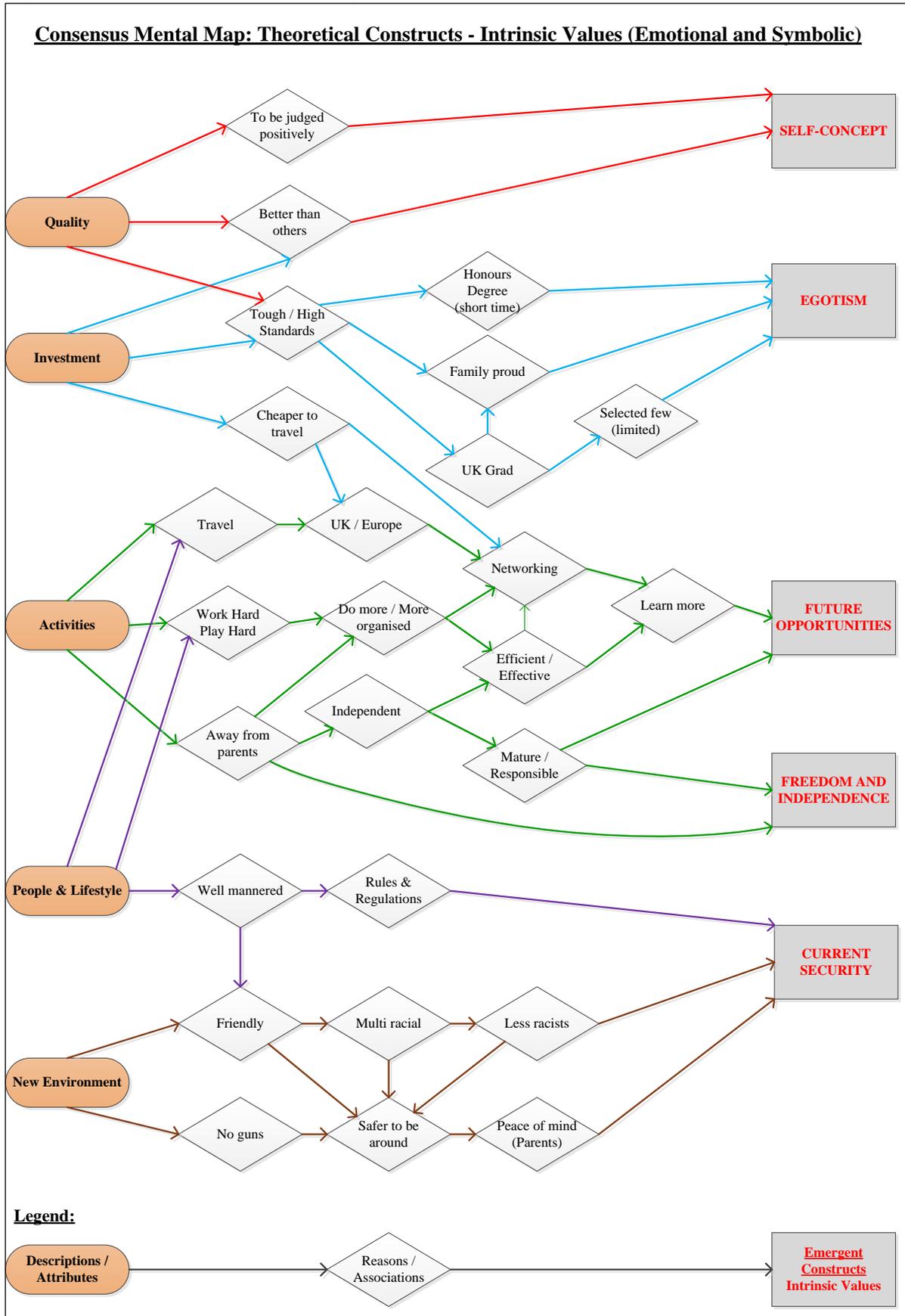
Source: Researcher's findings (2015)

4.7.1. Emergent Construct 1: *Egotism / 'Mien-Tzu'*

Egotism is defined as the drive to maintain and enhance favourable views of oneself and generally features an inflated opinion of one's personal features, qualities and importance (Kowalski, 1997). This is further supported by Atkinson (2010) positing that a person possessing the essence of egotism - known as Egotist - commonly has an overwhelming sense of the centrality of the 'Me' in their personal quality. Kowalski (1997) continues to suggest that egotists tend to have characteristics such as superiority and pride, and thus commonly self-promote their own perceived 'elevated' importance.

ZMET Participant 5's image: School prefects.

When asked to describe the image of 'School prefects':

> **ZMET Participant 5**: "*When I was in high school, students are chosen to be prefects when they reach Form 3. So when I was in Form 2, I really look up to my seniors who are in Form 3, 4, or 5, who are prefects. Not everyone can be a prefect. You have to be selected based on your grades, then interviews, and sometimes, I think, also a little bit of your popularity, like if you represent your high school in sports, debate team, active in clubs and so on. And usually, these are the students that every other student admired and also the teachers somehow like them better than others…Well, like UK universities, is something that many people admire if you can study there. Also, once you studying there, you are like this group of prefects – a group of people, like a society, that is better than others. Or at least that is what I think; and many of my friends think also…So now, this is kinda like a replacement of something that I couldn't achieve last time.*"

ZMET Participant 9's image: Big fish in small bowl.
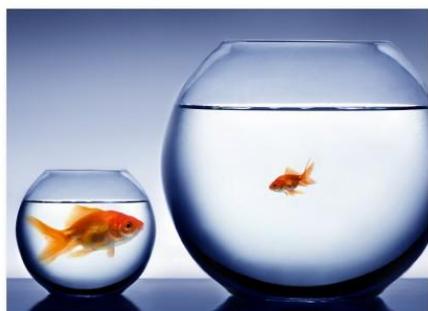
When asked "how does this link to you selecting the UK to study?":

> **ZMET Participant 9:** "*When I graduate, the image that I will have is that I am a UK grad. Higher quality, more capable. So, I feel like I am higher in value, so I am like the big fish in the small bowl. I am no longer like the person that I used to be where people looked down on me, or even think that I am invisible, like the small fish in a big bowl.*"

While Kowalski (1997) and Atkinson (2010) have their definitions of 'Egotism' and being an egotist viewed from the Western lens, Hu (1944) provides a similar concept from the Eastern perspective called 'Mien-Tzu' – directly translated to 'Face'. Hu's Chinese origin notion of 'Face' metaphorically represents one's pride, prestige, honour and reputation viewed by the society. Therefore, 'saving face' literally means the effort which one puts into elevating the current state of their pride, prestige, honour and reputation; or at the very least maintaining them at the current level just to 'save face'.

ZMET Participant 1's image: Better economy.

When probed to elaborate on "feeling successful in achieving 'something'":

> **ZMET Participant 1:** "*Like my father will always talk to his friends, and they have kids going overseas too. So, by going to UK, my father can save his face when he talks to his friends. This is like saving face for me and my*

family. My father can talk proudly about me to his friends. (The researcher pointed out that other Western countries may provide this perception as well) Can but different already…because UK has higher standards. So, he will be more proud."

ZMET Participant 9's images: (1) Key for hope; (2) Antique; (3) Fresh graduates; (4) Big fish in small bowl.
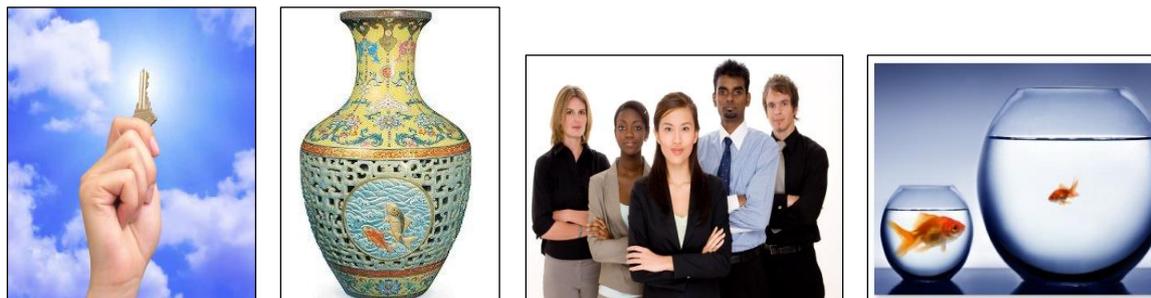
When probed to reveal the reason being a UK graduate would provide a good reputation and image:

> **ZMET Participant 9:** "*I was only in my first year and my family already started to proudly talk about me to my relatives. So I must work hard and I cannot fail…When I am a UK grad, I will be more valuable. People will respect me more, and my parents will also be proud of me.*"

4.7.1.1.　　Reflexive stance: Researcher's cultural interpretations
　　　　　　(on the first emergent construct: Egotism / 'Mien-Tzu')

In the Malaysian secondary school system, which is equivalent to the UK's Year Six and above until the completion of GCSE level, students were placed in class of around 30 students each, in the order of academic merits. For example, starting from secondary one, there are usually three classes for each secondary year from the highest academic merits to the lowest: classes 1-1, 1-2 and 1-3. I was placed in secondary class 1-3, secondary class 2-3 and secondary class 3-3 for the first three years of secondary school. Living in a close-knitted neighbourhood where my friends' mothers are also friends with my mother, they [my friends' mothers] would, without fail, appear in front of my house to ask my mother about my academic progress knowing very well that their child(ren) are in the higher academic

merit classes. Whilst my mother would normally smile when asked and continues to compliment their child(ren) for performing better than me academically, she would just gently tells me to study harder for the next final exams. In my third year of secondary school, my grades improved and I was placed in higher class in my fourth year: class 4-2 instead of class 4-3. I was in the same class as my friend whose mother never fails to appear in front of our house after the release of final year results. During my fourth year's final exam, I put in the extra effort just to make sure that I perform better than my friend [mother's friend's son] – just to redeem my ego and my mother's 'face' and pride. At the end of the academic year, results were released and I did perform better than my friend in the overall position – me being at third place in a class of 30, and him at sixth place. That year, miraculously, my mother's friend did not appear in front of our house. They certainly have not moved out of the neighbourhood as well. I remembered telling my mother: "Let's walk over to your friend's house and ask her the same question that she has been asking you [my mother] over the past three years." Of course my mother said: "You don't have to tell other people about your achievements. They will know about it. That's why she [mother's friend] did not turn up this year." And then she smiled – her smile was filled with pride.

These little acknowledgements may look and sound trivial in other cultures, however, in a culture where pride, honour and reputation are measured by materialism and the achievement of their child(ren) add extra pressures onto the person being in that given situation.

The emergent construct of 'Egotism' from the Western perspective and Eastern notion of 'Face' or 'Mien-Tzu' derived from a descriptive attribute which branched to varying reasons and associations, linking to the intrinsic values which made up the emergent construct.

Based on the 'Attributes→Associations→Emergent Constructs' thematic flowchart, the emergent construct of Egotism / 'Mien-Tzu' derived from the attribute and associations listed in Table 4.4 (p. 128). Ultimately, the conviction in acquiring the sense of pride, prestige, honour and reputation lead to preserving 'face' and elevating innate sense of 'egotism';

which in turn, leads to the eventual emergent theme of 'fulfilling their emotional needs for acceptance.'

Table 4.4: Thematic Flowchart: *Egotism / 'Mien-Tzu'*

Attribute	Reasons / Associations	Emergent Construct (Intrinsic Values)
Investment	Tough / High standards Honours degree in a short time; Family proud UK Grad; Selected few / Limited	Egotism / 'Mien-Tzu'

4.7.2. Emergent Construct 2: *Self-concept / Self-worth*

Pastorino and Doyle-Portillo (2006) define Self-concept as one's perception or image of one's abilities and uniqueness. They continue to suggest that one's self-concept is very general and changeable, and as one grows older, these self-perceptions become much more organised, detailed and specific. Another perspective in viewing self-concept is through the collection of beliefs about one's own nature, unique qualities and typical behaviour (Weiten, et al., 2012). They believe that self-concept represents one's mental representations of themselves - a collection of self-perceptions.

Within this collection of self-perceptions and the mental representations of one's self-concept, there is yet another branch of 'self-theories' that resonates closely with this research's second emergent construct: Self-worth.

Self-worth is a theory within self-concept that postulates that humans naturally strive to maintain a sense of self-worth, or an appraisal of one's own value as a person (Covington and Beery, 1976; Covington, 1998). This is subsequently supported by the claim that humans are motivated to protect their self-worth by maintaining a belief that they are competent (Ames and Ames, 1984; Covington, 1992).

[The remaining blank page is intentional]

ZMET Participant 12's image: Branded Handbag.

When asked to describe the feeling of this [Branded Handbag] picture:

> **ZMET Participant 12:** "*Branded Handbag. Very proud…the university standard, the academic, the quality standard very high thats why I feel very proud. Feel I am the best one… feel I am the best one…High quality, trusted, I know I am above average, people will look up to me and will listen to my opinions. I will be highly demanded.*"

When probed about how does this make [participant] feeling and why is it important?:

> **ZMET Participant 12:** "*I feel like I am respected. Highly demanded. I feel like I can walk confidently not only at work in the future, but even now as a student and normal everyday life. Important because it makes me feel like I am worth it! I am a capable person. My opinions are valuable and I make a statement and not just a suggestion.*"

ZMET Participant 9's Vignette (Step 10 of ZMET's process).

There is no image for this step, however, the participant was asked to narrate a storyline of their experience as a HE student in the UK:

> **ZMET Participant 9:** "*A touching story, emotional story. But at the beginning, it's very sad because an innocent boy being bullied and looked down just because he cannot play sports well, and was not good in his studies. But slowly, the story changes when this boy was given a chance to study abroad, and he chose UK. Everything starts to change, and slowly, he became a better person, from a boy to a young confident man. Something like the Bruce Lee movie by Jason Scott Lee. Have you seen it?* (Researcher shocked his head gesturing a 'No'). *You should. It's very good. Anyway, he also enjoyed his time in the US, but mine is UK, made*

lots of friends, became quite popular in uni, and get to travel and just overall, very positive experience. Then, he graduate. His parents are so proud of him."

4.7.2.1. Reflexive stance: Researcher's cultural interpretations
(on the second emergent construct: Self-concept / Self-worth)

During my working life in Malaysia at a private HEI, I had, on many occasions, consulted potential students and their parents in my role which included marketing and recruiting students into the British full-franchise programmes. During these consultations, both students and parents would fondly ask: "What makes your programme better than [another private HEI's]?" After explaining the strengths of the programme, quite a few of them will ask the next question in a cynical manner: "Are you sure? Really that good ah? I don't belief." I would ask them back: "Why did you come over to enquire about this [British] programme if you didn't think it was good in the first place?" Then, they would suddenly switch their tone and manner and reply by saying: "Actually, I know already. I just want to hear from you. I know UK degree is better for my son's (or daughter's) future. Easier to get a job. Better reputation, higher quality and standard." I would add on by saying that "they [their child(ren)] can also do their second or final year in the UK." And they would reply: "Wah, even better oh! Better than just study here [Malaysia] for all three years."

With the majority of parents being the financier of their child(ren) higher education and the competition in the job market is intense, any opportunity to add value into enhancing their perceived self-worth is welcomed.

Based on the 'Attributes→Associations→Emergent Constructs' thematic flowchart, the emergent construct of Self-concept / Self-worth arose from the attribute and associations listed in Table 4.5 (p. 131). The importance of feeling praiseworthy of oneself in their decision in choosing the UK as host country for HE migration provides the sense of self-worth. This in turn leads to the eventual emergent theme of 'providing a promise for a greater self-worth.'

Table 4.5: Thematic Flowchart: *Self-concept / Self-worth*

Attribute	Reasons / Associations	Emergent Construct (Intrinsic Values)
Quality	To be judged positively [by others] [Be] Better than other; Tough / High standards	Self-concept / Self-worth

4.7.3. Emergent Construct 3: *Current Security*

Security in this context is two-tier: current and future security. Current security such as having a safer place to live and to study epitomise the 'Safety needs' level in Maslow's (1943) hierarchy of needs pyramid. The expanded version by McLeod (2014) published in *Simply Psychology* suggests that 'safety needs' encompass the desire for protection from elements, security, order, law, stability and to attain freedom from fear.

ZMET Participant 5's image: Well suited and good manners.

When asked to relate this picture to selecting a UK university:

> **ZMET Participant 5:** "*Oh yes, before I came to the UK, I always hear people say British people have good manners, proper, they sit down and have tea. You know you picture a group women sitting down having tea or coffee, talking softly, holding their lady handkerchief. Just very polite. So if this is the culture, then I think that UK, in general, people also quite polite and good manners, so if I study here, it should be quite safe…Yeah I think so. Even now, I still think it's safe. Of course, there are a few who are the not so polite, but everywhere also got. But overall, I am very happy here and I feel safe here, walking home late at night from the library to my flat is also safe.*"

ZMET Participant 7's image: Multi-cultural group of students.

When asked to reveal their feelings and how it relates to UK universities:

> **ZMET Participant 7:** "*Because we do have foreign students. I think that's also a good opportunity for us to mix around, expand our horizons. Because it's quite important I mean you are mixing with Malaysians all the time, you don't consider other things. So I think yes, it's good to mix with other people I also feel that it's a safe for students…foreign students to study in the UK because they have so many foreign students there, so they are used to it and so not much discrimination unlike Australia and America. If you see the news, the Americans are always fighting because of racial issues. And my friends who went to Australia just want to come back quickly because they are being treated like second or third level there.*"

4.7.3.1.   Reflexive stance: Researcher's cultural interpretations
(on the third emergent construct: Current security)

With the same role in the private HEI in Malaysia, parents would ask about the security of their child(ren) when they do decide to pursue their second or third year in the UK. Since I was not working in the UK then, I would tell them that it would be the same whether it's the UK, Australia, or America, as they are all Western countries. Surprisingly, many of them would say: "Not really lah…just watch the news. There are so many crimes in America and they can buy guns so easily. They would continue to say that their friends' children were being treated badly due to racism in Australia." I would just smile and remained silence as these are merely opinions and perceptions. They would continue to say: "I think the UK is better. The people there have good manners and I think my son/daughter will be safer there. I will also have peace of mind when they are there."

These are some of the worries which prompt parents in influencing their child(ren)'s selection of a host country to pursue their HE. The encouragements and influences from parents in a Hierarchical family setting (Hofstede, 2011) are heavily considered in decision making behaviours – even more so when the parents are the financier of their HE.

4.7.4. Emergent Construct 4: *Future Security*

Future security, on the other hand, signifies having a greater employability rate in the future amongst the select sample population of this research. This echoes the 'Esteem needs' level in the higher end of Maslow's (1943) pyramid which suggests that human desire to be accepted and be valued by others. McLeod (2014) lists 'esteem needs' with descriptions akin to achievement, mastery, independence, status, dominance, prestige, self-respect and respect from others.

ZMET Participant 1's image: Historical places.

When probed to express the feeling of "a country that is long established with long history of education institution":

> **ZMET Participant 1:** "*I feel like I've a good…I've a right choice. That I will not be afraid that I will not get a job because potential employers will know that my [UK] education has higher standard.*"

[The remaining blank page is intentional]

ZMET Participant 7's image: Coffee.
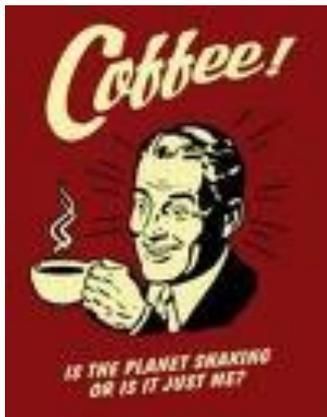
When probed to express the feeling of "a UK Degree has got high expectation":

> **ZMET Participant 7:** "*I feel even better that I actually choose this. I choose that I guess because the fact that they have high expectations or demands it reflects, I guess like I said, established education system. To me it reflects how good the outcome is gonna be, what you actually come away with at the end of my degree. So I guess, the harder you work, the better. I think people also wants to hire graduates who are hardworking, and we all know that UK education system is not easy to pass. You have to work hard for it.*"

4.7.4.1.   Reflexive stance: Researcher's cultural interpretations
            (on the fourth emergent construct: Future security)

> *I started living and working in the UK about five years ago. Prior to this, I was in the corporate sector and the academia in Malaysia. I still kept in touch with my former colleagues in Malaysia. Each time I meet up with them when I am in Malaysia for work or holiday, my former colleagues would tell me how privilege I am that I working in the UK. When I ask them for the rationale, they would say: "If or when you come back to Malaysia, your salary will surely be very high." Some of them would also testify that their cousins or relatives, who used to work in the UK and are now working in Malaysia, are earning much higher salaries than their colleagues of the same positions. And some would also say that they would do the same because of the experience and high standards met by those who used to study or work in the UK."*

While these statements are testimonies from the researcher's friends and former colleagues, they are also working adults who are in the position to interview and hire candidates into their organisations.

Based on the 'Attributes→Associations→Emergent Constructs' thematic flowchart, the emergent constructs of Current security and Future security emerged from the attributes and associations listed in Table 4.6 and Table 4.7 respectively. The importance of having a sense of security, firstly in a foreign [host] country is natural. Having time and money invested in their HE migration decision, holding onto a perceived sense of future security is justified. These emergent constructs in turn lead to the eventual emergent theme of 'fulfilling their emotional needs for acceptance.'

Table 4.6: Thematic Flowchart: *Current security*

Attributes	Reasons / Associations	Emergent Construct (Intrinsic Values)
New Environment	Friendly; Multi-racial; Less racists No guns; Safer to be around; [Parents having] Peace of mind	Current Security
People & Lifestyle	Well mannered Rules & regulations	

Table 4.7: Thematic Flowchart: *Future security*

Attribute	Reasons / Associations	Emergent Construct (Intrinsic Values)
Investment	Tough / High standards; UK Grad; Selected few (limited); Cheaper to travel [in the UK and Europe]; Networking [opportunities]	Future Security

4.7.5. Emergent Construct 5: *Freedom and Independence*

Subtly supporting the economic theory of Consumer Surplus (Marshall, 1996), this economic theory defines the difference between the maximum price one is willing to pay and the actual price that one does pay. It also a measure of the welfare that one gained from acquiring the goods: in this context, UK as host country for HE. In this context, the additional cost of travelling around the UK and the European countries while pursuing their HE in the UK is

reduced significantly just by being in the European Union (EU) region; compared to having flown from Malaysia to the UK or the EU countries.

Having one's own freedom and independence also resonate with Maslow's (1943) 'Self-actualisation needs' level, where one seeks the need to be a unique individual by exploring and realising their personal potential, seek self-fulfilment, personal growth and expand their experiences (McLeod, 2014).

ZMET Participant 5's image: Fly and be free.

When asked "what is this picture?":

> **ZMET Participant 5:** "*Ok, this picture is…about me now feeling very free. Like I can fly from the bottle or my parents' house. Don't get me wrong, I love my parents and my sister, but I just feel like I need to be away for a while and just be as independent as possible, as far away as possible. I will still go back to my parents' house when I finish [graduate]. I select UK because it further than Australia, so they [parents] cannot come and visit me so often, and also during uni holidays, like Easter, I don't have to go back to Malaysia only because it's expensive. So I can go other places that are cheaper.* (Researcher probed by saying that America is also a distance away) *Yes, true, but [America] is still just one country only…[UK] is a combination of far away and many places to go and explore [Europe].*"

[The remaining blank page is intentional]

ZMET Participant 13's image: Freedom.

When asked "what is this picture?":

> **ZMET Participant 13:** "*It's the feeling of freedom from where I am now. Freedom to do anything, go anywhere. Just feel very free in the UK. I stay with my father and mother and my sister. Everything I do, they will know, they want to know. I feel very tied up. Everything also no freedom. I can't do a lot of things by myself. How to learn to be independent if everything also must follow only.*"

4.7.5.1.   Reflexive stance: Researcher's cultural interpretations
            (on the fifth emergent construct: Freedom and Independence)

All of my four years of undergraduate [Bachelor's degree] were pursued completely in America when I was 17 to 21 years of age. My postgraduate [Master's degree] was a full-franchised degree from Australia where most - except for a few weeks - of the lectures were conducted in Malaysia with 'flying faculties' flying in to Malaysia from Australia for their respective modules for a few weeks each. Comparing these two HE experiences, I enjoyed my American experience thoroughly as I was physically located in America. As with my experience during my Master's degree, I was still confined to the same environment and surroundings in Malaysia even though the awarding country was Australia. The feeling of being away from my family and having the freedom to do anything while being in America was very liberating - especially for a young adult at the ages of 17 to 21. There were many activities that I would not have the chance to do if I were to remain in Malaysia even though they were legal activities. The sudden sense of independence is overwhelming, and was welcomed with open arms. At the end of the day, the sense of achievement and responsibility in this new

found land were excellent. Now that I am working in a HEI in the UK, I frequently ask the Malaysian students who are studying in my HEI about them selecting the UK as their country of HE destination although they are not in my list of participants – to avoid any bias responses, and amongst the many reasons replied, having the freedom by being away from their family for a while and the independence to travel around the UK and Europe, are regularly mentioned.

Having lived in the same cultural environment with the participants in this research, the 'reachable' sense of freedom and the feeling of independence are just some of the few influencing [non-rational] factors which 'pull' them in making their decisions.

Based on the 'Attributes→Associations→Emergent Constructs' thematic flowchart, the emergent construct of Freedom and Independence derived from the attributes and associations listed in Table 4.8. The value of having their [Malaysian students] freedom and independence fulfils their spiritual plea. The plea of 'breaking free' from the common 'collectivist' and 'hierarchical' behaviour (Hofstede, 2011) practiced by family members - both immediate and extended - among Malaysians. This emergent construct leads to the eventual emergent theme of 'satisfying their spiritual pleas for freedom and independence.'

Table 4.8: Thematic Flowchart: *Freedom and Independence*

Attribute	Reasons / Associations	Emergent Construct (Intrinsic Values)
New Environment	Away from parents	Freedom and Independence
Activities; People & Lifestyle	Work hard, Play hard; Travel [frequently]; Do more / More organised; Independent; Mature / Responsible	

4.7.6. Emergent Construct 6: *Future Opportunities*

Sheth et al.'s (1991) five consumption values under the main theory of added-value are: functional, social, emotional, epistemic and conditional values. These consumption values are posited to be influential in consumers' decision behaviour. In the context of Malaysian students, these consumption values embody the emergent construct of 'future opportunities'

for being a student in the UK. These five values resonate with Malaysian students' decision in pursuing HE in the UK in their respective behaviours:

4.7.6.1. *Functional value*

Defined as the barometer of economic valuations of the performance or quality of the service [UK HEIs] and the perception of value-for-money returns (Sánchez et al., 2006). Malaysian students have to invest the time and money in tertiary education; the final outcome being a bachelor degree student who has successfully met the rigor and high standards that is demanded of a UK HEI. This accolade is believed to be able to yield a higher economic value in terms of return on investment in the future.

ZMET Participant 1's image: More branded stuff to purchase.

When probed on "why is it 'lucky' to be in this situation [being a student in the UK]?"

> **ZMET Participant 1:** "*Yeah. Lucky because I get to be free and buy the things that I want. Cheaper than back home. Also, I get to go to other countries that are near to UK. It's cheaper to go from the UK than flying all the way from Malaysia. So choosing UK is like getting more countries than just one…like Australia and America. So I feel very lucky to have this freedom.*"

ZMET Participant 5's image: Time management.

When asked "how is this related to selecting a UK university?":

> **ZMET Participant 5:** "*I will be away from my family, YES!, but know I have do everything by myself – cook, wash clothes, buy foodstuff, then have to find time to study as well. I feel like I now must have good time management, so that I have time to relax and play a little bit like go travel and so on.* [The researcher probed by saying that this can be achieved in, let's say, Australia as well?] *In UK, I can travel to Europe, it's so near. So, it's like buy one, get one free. Actually, get many free, can go to Paris, Rome, Milan, so many.*"

4.7.6.2. *Social value*

This value relates to the acceptability of and adaptability to, other people or a need to belong to specific groups and have a good reputation (Sánchez et al., 2006). Being away from their family and being independent in the UK is perceived as a positive trait for many Malaysians especially when they are seen as being adaptable to the diverse cultural differences in the UK and countries in EU.

ZMET Participant 2's image: Antique. Historical country.
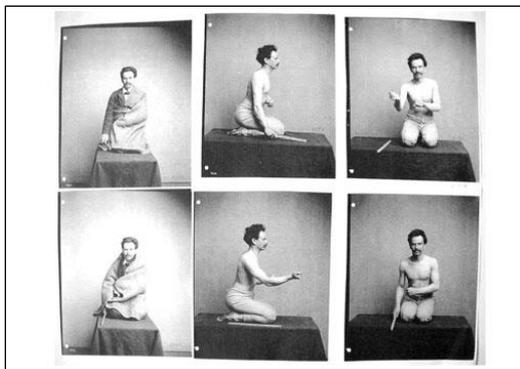
When asked "how is this related to selecting a UK university?":

> **ZMET Participant 2:** "*Because UK is a very antique and historic country, I come here, then I can learn a lot of culture, different culture from this country, I can see a lot of things in this country where I couldn't find it in my home country…Because I am staying here for 3 years, then I can communicate with different of people from UK or from others, then it makes me feel different from others.*"

ZMET Participant 7's image: Study Abroad Programmes.

When asked "how is this related to selecting a UK university?":

> **ZMET Participant 7:** "…*I guess not just you know seeing the place or exposing yourself to new culture but meeting new people as well. And I think that's what these programmes are going to be like because you are taken out of your comfort zone and what happens when you are studying here [Malaysia] for your program and you are with the same people, they tend to you know, stay within the same group of people, you talk to the same people. And you get comfortable with that. That's why meeting new people is good, not just, maybe not always. I mean, even if you let's say you're not really gonna have long lasting friendships with people, it's still socializing is a very important skill, I would say; especially when you come out to work*."

4.7.6.3. *Emotional value*

This value relates to the ability of the purchase brand in providing the emotional association between the person (Malaysian students) and the brand (UK HEIs) (Aaker and Joachimsthaler, 2000). Just like any other purchase decisions that are based on emotional affiliation which provide the sense of 'emotional high', studying in a UK HEI and potentially being branded as a 'UK Grad' is an achievement desired by many Malaysians.

[The remaining blank page is intentional]

ZMET Participant 2's image: Chanel.

When asked "how is this related to selecting a UK university?":

> **ZMET Participant 2:** "*Because most UK universities school fees are expensive. But they are worth it. Then I will be worth it too. High value because I am a UK graduate.*"

ZMET Participant 5's image: Branded Drinking Water.

When probed on what will [participant's] brand be?":

> **ZMET Participant 5:** "*My brand is "UK Grad", almost like "Made in the UK." So then, whatever I do, I am looked as more expensive, more value.*"

4.7.6.4. *Epistemic value*

This perceived value arouses curiosity, provides novelty and satisfies the desire to gain knowledge through the capacity of gaining something new or something different (Sheth et al., 1991). Choosing to pursue their HE in the UK as opposed to HEIs in Malaysia opens a few doors of opportunities to explore. This sense of exploration and breaking away from their comfort zone feeds their curious minds in search of recognition and opportunities.

ZMET Participant 1's image: More people from around the world, more cultures.

When asked "how does this picture link to UK universities?":

> **ZMET Participant 1:** "*UK has many different types of people, so you will meet many of them. They may be your good friends and then, they may be able to help you next time…in business, may be can visit their country and they can take you around. My uncle got a friend that he knew from university and they now do business together. Got good opportunity like that.*"

ZMET Participant 17's image: Underground.

When probed on "what has getting things done faster got to do with selecting a UK university?":

> **ZMET Participant 17:** "*…for me the perception of UK is like oh things, everybody just walk, walk, walk and things get done very fast. Yeah and then you get to learn like...keep learning, keep learning, keep learning. When things are done faster, I get to do more things. I get to do many other things beside just my studies. I get to meet more people when I do other things. Then I can network more, and hopefully, have more links for the future. You never know when you need these links for your future such as business or just travelling to their countries.*"

4.7.6.5. *Conditional value*

Arises from extrinsic circumstances such as festivals, climate, the availability of time, money and the number of occurrences (Sheth et al., 1991), special events in a country (Williams and Soutar, 2000), proximity or accessibility to another country, and the relatively low cost of travel (Tapachai and Waryszak, 2000). Pursuing tertiary education, a Bachelor's degree in particular, is hoped to be a one-time occurrence before venturing into the corporate sector. Therefore, the willingness to put in the extra effort and money to obtain the 'best' possible outcome is one that many parents are willing to sacrifice for their children. From the students' point of view, the proximity of other countries and the relatively low cost of travel as posited by Tapachai and Waryszak (2000) is an added-value (bonus) in choosing UK which is neighbouring the EU.

ZMET Participant 2's images: (1) Chanel; (2) BMW; (3) Better future, better days; (4) Study is hard. Lecturer is strict; (5) Well-structured education; (6) High ranking.
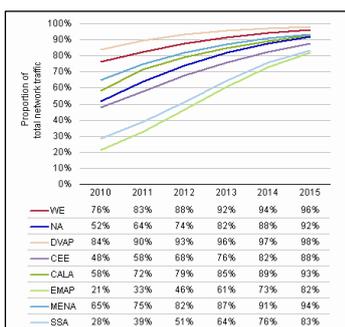
When asked "what does this group of images mean?":

> **ZMET Participant 2:** "*Expensive but it's worth it. The study is hard, the lecturer is strict, high ranking university in the world, high class, well-structured education and a better future and better days.*"

ZMET Participant 5's image: Superman.

When asked "superman, superboy?":

> **ZMET Participant 5:** "*Yes, it's like I have super power. I am branded, I am expensive, I can have all these experience in other countries when I travel, I met so many different types of people. I learn so many different things. All these are like the different types of power that I have after I graduate…Other countries I don't think I can get so many of these...opportunities, like near to Europe, can study there for one year, so on. People also see you as a better graduate compared to other graduates.*"

4.7.6.1.   Reflexive stance: Researcher's cultural interpretations
           (on the sixth emergent construct: Future Opportunities)

During my tenure in the private HEI in Malaysia, one of the roles was to liaise with the collaborative partners in the UK for the British full-franchise programmes which were offered in Malaysia. After a few years of long-distance liaising, a few of us were invited to visit the partner's HEI for a meeting, and to meet with fellow colleagues and the senior management team. It was during this trip and conversations with a few senior management colleagues that started the opportunity for me to work in the partner's HEI, provided that I am also keen with the idea. The idea was kept in view for a few years. I am currently a full time employee in the partner HEI given the chances in circumstances. Being in the UK, apart from the responsibility of being a full time academic, I am also exposed to other opportunities such as attending conferences, meeting with guest speakers and travelling to other partners' HEI in various countries. These are some of the opportunities which were not available while being in my

> *previous role in Malaysia. Some of these opportunities are also opened to students currently in HEIs in the UK. Therefore, reflecting on the many opportunities that I have gained valuable contacts from, many of these opportunities are assessable for the students in the UK, and they are equally promising.*

Many Malaysia students have studied in the UK and have returned to Malaysia over the years. These are some of the testaments which are shared among their family, relatives and peers. These testimonies are some of the few intrinsic factors which are desired by potential students looking to pursue their HE abroad.

Based on the 'Attributes→Associations→Emergent Constructs' thematic flowchart, Table 4.9 shows the emergent construct of Future Opportunities derived from the attributes and associations.

Table 4.9: Thematic Flowchart: *Future Opportunities*

| Attribute	Reasons / Associations	Emergent Construct (Intrinsic Values)
Activities	Travel [frequently]; [Build] Network; Learn more; Work hard, Play hard; Do more/More organised; Efficient/Effective; Away from parents; Independent; Mature/Responsible	Future Opportunities

The innate desires to add value to their decision and credential in hopes to increase their prospects, leads to the eventual emergent theme of 'providing a promise for a greater self-worth.'

4.8. Application of Emergent Constructs into Conceptual Framework

Rosenberg (1974) states that constructs serve as the structure for organising knowledge and perceptions. DePoy and Gitlin (1998) proposed that a construct is not directly observable but rather is made up of parts or components that can be observed or submitted to measurement. Kuhlthau (1988) affirms that emergent constructs are simple knowledge structures that enable one to anticipate the phenomena and predict outcomes in specific contexts. Lund Research Ltd (2012) puts 'constructs' succinctly as "the building blocks of theories, helping to explain how and why certain phenomena behave the way that they do" (n.p.).

The development of data collection questions used to elicit the intrinsic values was informed by the environmental influences of the CDM model underpinned by the PPToM. Therefore, these intrinsic values hidden within the emergent constructs emerged to fit back into this research's conceptual framework. Figure 4.2 reveals the revised conceptual framework by applying the emergent constructs (in red italics) within the CDM model underpinned by the PPToM to classify each construct into either a 'push' or a 'pull' factor in influencing Malaysian students' pre-purchase decision behaviour when selecting the UK as their HE destination.

Figure 4.2: Revised Conceptual Framework: Application of Emergent Constructs
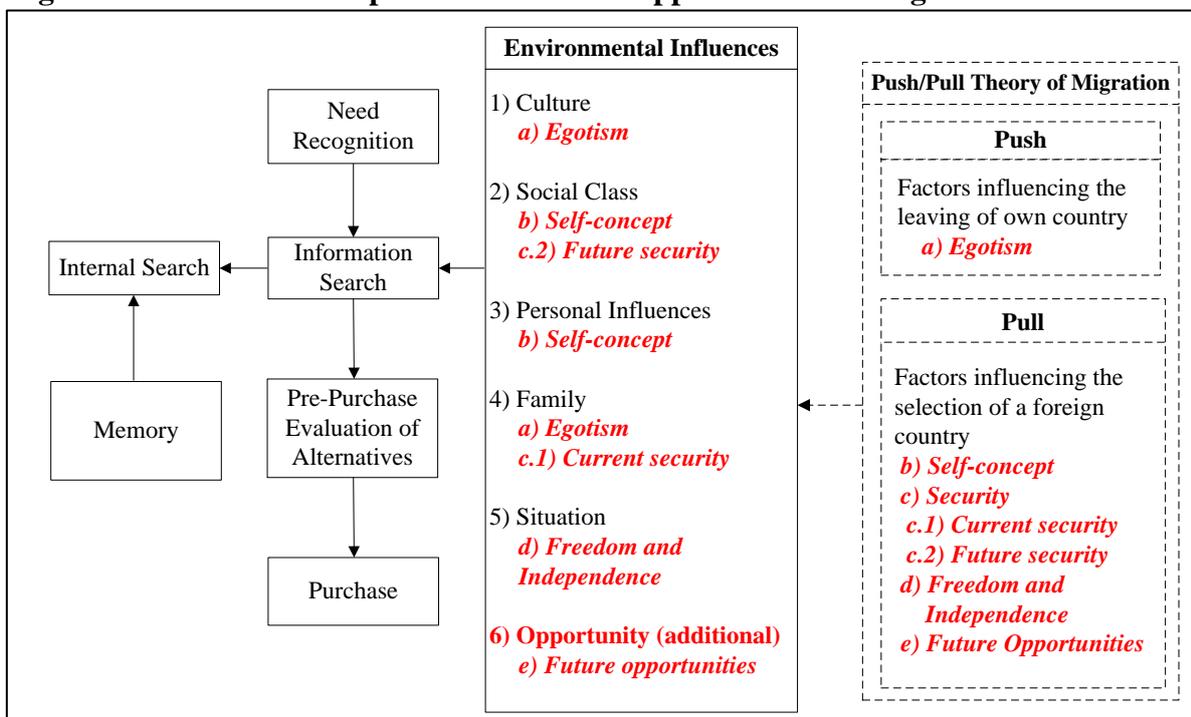
Sources:
Consumer Decision Making Model (Adapted from Blackwell et al., 2006:83)
Push/Pull Theory of Migration (Adapted from Mazzarol and Soutar, 2002:85)
Researcher's findings: Emergent constructs (2015)

4.8.1. *Application of Emergent Constructs within the Conceptual Framework*

The existing CDM model (Blackwell et al., 2006) suggests five factors from the 'Environmental Influences' influencing the 'Information Search' stage within the pre-purchase decision making behaviour process: Culture; Social Class; Personal Influences; Family; and Situation. This research reveals six emergent constructs which were elicited using the CDM model and the PPToM (Figure 4.2) to inform the data collection process. Of the six emergent constructs, *egotism* fits within the ethos of 'push' while the rest – self-

concept, current security, future security, freedom and independence, and future opportunities – resonate with the 'pull' principle of the PPToM as discussed in Chapter 3 [Literature Review] supported by the inaugural research on 'push/pull' principle by Ravenstein (1885) and subsequently reinforced by Dorigo and Tobler (1983) and Portes and Borocz (1989).

With the PPToM underpinning the CDM model, the six emergent constructs which sit within it are then embedded into the 'Environmental Influences' based on the reasons and associations expressed by the participants as illustrated in the Consensus Mental Map (Figure 4.1: p. 123). The existing five factors from the 'Environmental Influences' of the CDM model are underpinned by the *emergent constructs* which are embedded with intrinsic values.

1) Culture is being influenced by *Egotism*;
2) Social Class is reinforced by *Self-concept* and *Future Security*;
3) Personal Influences is enhanced by *Self-concept*;
4) Family is revolved around *Egotism* and *Current Security*; and
5) Situation is bound by *Freedom and Independence.*

In addition, this research is introducing a sixth factor to be incorporated into the existing CDM model. The sixth factor is termed as Opportunity, which relates to *Future Opportunities*. Therefore, the intrinsic value is:

6) Opportunity is perceived as building *Future Opportunities*.

The implicational purpose of these six emergent constructs applied within the conceptual framework's 'Environmental Influences' that is underpinned by the PPToM is to provide a clearer, richer indication of the intrinsic values influencing the pre-purchase decision making behaviour of Malaysian students' HE migration. This application has addressed this research's third objective by introducing a revised version of the CDM model. The implication of these emergent constructs and the consequential emergent themes will be presented in the following chapter entitled 'Findings and Discussion: Emergent Themes.'

4.9. Summary

Findings from the ZMET interviews and focus group conversations are almost a mirror image with only one construct that was not regularly mentioned in the focus group conversations, being the '*sense of being an elite.*' This does not come as a surprise as participants were

shown to be less bold with their expressions in a group setting as opposed to being interviewed individually. Fern (1982) claims that each focus group participant produced only 60% to 70% as many ideas as they would have in an individual interview. He continued to suggest the equivalent of focus group conversations and individual interviews as two eight-participant focus groups is equivalent to ten individual interviews. Following Fern's empirical suggestion (1982), this research increased the number of individual interviews to twelve (instead of ten) coupled with two focus groups consisting of eight participants each.

With these six emergent constructs, the next chapter entitled 'Findings and Discussion: Emergent Themes' will discuss the emergent of core themes informed by the ethnographic principle of cultural interpretation from the researcher's reflexive stance.

The fourth [final] research objective of applying the contributions and recommendations from the empirical findings towards academic knowledge, research methodology, practitioners and policy makers in the HE industry, will be discussed in Chapter 6 entitled 'Contributions and Recommendations'. Chapter 6 also addresses this research's intended outcomes and its original contributions.

Chapter 5:   Findings and Discussion: Emergent Themes

ZMET and Focus Group: Reflexive Insights.

5.1.   Chapter Outline: Findings and Discussion: Emergent Themes

Introduction

From Emergent Constructs to Emergent Themes

Themes
Meaning, Relevance, and Importance

Three (3) Emergent Themes
informed by
Researcher's Reflexive Stances

Summary
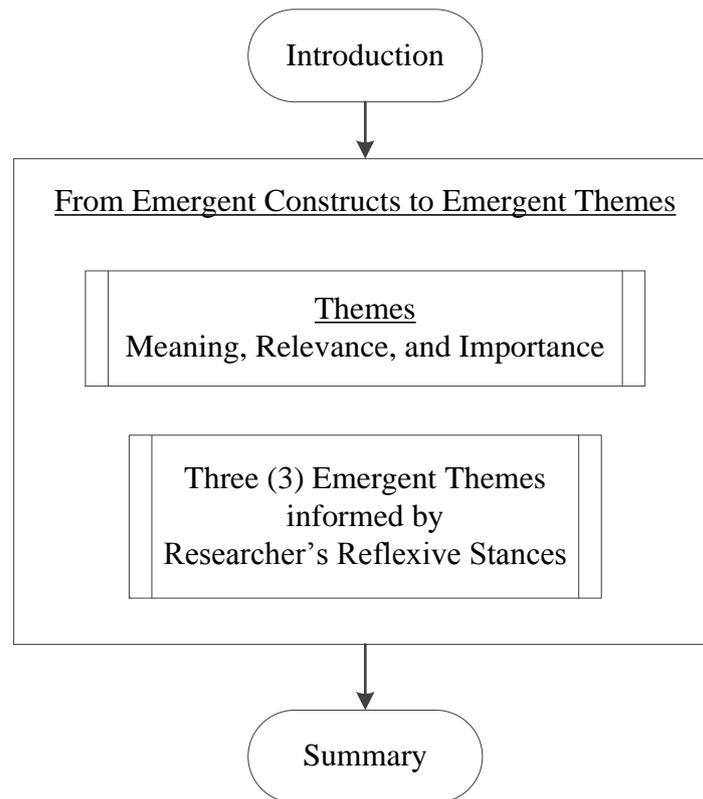
5.2.   Introduction

The British Dictionary at Dictionary.com (2014) defines 'theme' as "an idea or topic expanded in a discourse, discussion, etc…a unifying idea, image, or motif, repeated or developed throughout a work [research]." It all started through a series of indexes of folktale motifs stretching over six volumes by Thompson during 1932 to 1936. The creation of the term 'theme', however, was by Opler in 1945 when he identified the occurring patterns within Thompson's work. These repetitive patterns were identified as a form of theme as a key step in analysing culture - "in every culture" (p. 199). Opler (1945) posits that themes are only visible and discoverable through the manifestation of expressions in data. And conversely, expressions are meaningless without some reference to themes (Ryan and Bernard, 2003). It is also noted by Opler (1945) that some expressions of a theme are

obvious and culturally agreed on, while others are subtler, more symbolic, and may even be idiosyncratic. Strauss and Corbin (1990) support this ideology by suggesting that links between expressions and themes are conceptual labels placed on discrete happenings, events and other instances of phenomena. They continue to claim that in order to achieve theoretical sensitivity, emergent themes need to be developed with the research's data and from the researcher's values and personal experiences (Bulmer, 1979; Strauss, 1987; Maxwell, 1996) and prior theoretical understanding of the phenomenon under study.

The emergent themes of this research are the result of the combinations of data collected from the expressions, visual representations and consensus mental map from the participants, together with the researcher's prior theoretical understanding of the phenomenon, lived cultural values, personal experiences of the phenomenon and its cultural implications using the reflexive stance.

5.3. From Emergent Constructs to Emergent Themes

5.3.1. *Major Findings*

This research's findings suggest that non-rational factors with intrinsic values – emotional elements and symbolic values – are compelling influences on Malaysian students' HE migration decision making behaviours. These non-rational factors consist of six emergent constructs (explained in Chapter 4: p. 124) which then led to the emergent of the following three themes: (1) Fulfilling their emotional needs for acceptance; (2) Satisfying their spiritual pleas for freedom and independence; and (3) Providing a promise for a greater self-worth.

5.3.2. *Meaning, Relevance and Importance of Findings*

Accepting the fact that theoretical sensitivity is achieved only when the researcher's prior theoretical understanding of the phenomenon under study contributes as an important factor, the outcome of this research's findings in the form of emergent themes resonates with Bechara and Damasio's (2005) claim of 'evidence is accumulating and it is a fallacy that emotional influences can only interrupt or hinder the achievement of an optimal decision.' These themes also support the claims of Clore et al. (2001), Slovic et al. (2002) and Peters (2006) where the common premise is that emotionally linked information is useful in the

facilitation of the pre-purchase evaluation and preference construction process during decision making.

Phenomenological themes are described by van Manen (1990:79) as "the structures of experience…the experience of focus, of meaning, of point;…formulation is at best a simplification;…is the form of capturing the phenomenon one tries to understand." van Manen suggests three processes for isolating thematic statements: (1) the wholistic approach; (2) the selective approach; and (3) the line-by-line approach. The first approach is more comprehensive, seeking overall meaning of the text. The second focuses on phrases or sentences that stand out in the text; while the third, a close examination of the text sentence by sentence. This research's data collection methods - ZMET interviews and focus group conversations - use the selective approach as the primary thematic isolation approach, supported by the wholistic approach.

5.3.2.1. Emergent Theme 1: *Fulfilling their emotional needs for acceptance.*

Malaysians are considered by Hofstede (2011) as *Collectivists* where they have high concern for others and how others think of them – including their decision making in most matters, and certainly in the selection HE migration destination. Therefore, the high expectations being put onto the participants [Malaysian students in UK HEIs] are frequently expressed in all ZMET interviews and focus group conversations. They are mentioned in various forms as depicted in their expressions:

ZMET Participant 1's image: Speak good English.

When probed on the importance of being able to "speak [English] better than others":

> **ZMET Participant 1:** "*It's important to be better than others. Especially now that I am in the UK. To be in the UK, I feel like I am better than others when I graduate. But I don't go around telling people that. But, people will*

think that I am better. So, I must be able to show them that I am better…Like my father will always talk to his friends, and they have kids going overseas too. So, by going to UK, my father can save his 'face' when he talks to his friends. This is like saving 'face' for me and my family. My father can talk proudly about me to his friends…So they will see you [me] higher than others. So you [I] will have better opportunity to show your[my]self. Even my parents can be proud of me more than my cousins, neighbours."

ZMET Participant 2's image: A luxury BMW.

When probed on the implication of "being high class":

> **ZMET Participant 2:** "*People like to judge by the first impression. I know we are not supposed to judge, but at the end of the day, everybody judges. If they do, I want to be judged positively.*"

ZMET Participant 3's image: Life's goal. To achieve a better living standard.

When probed to elaborate on "life's goal and achieve a better living standard":

> **ZMET Participant 3:** "*[Parents] Proud of me because I graduate …as in one step closer. Very important because I want my family to know what I*

am doing and get their support and understand. Then they can also be proud that their daughter is a UK graduate. Their friends will also know and then my parents will be happy and satisfied."

ZMET Participant 6's image: Traditional Architecture.

When asked to explain the descriptions of "classic historical building and the architecture":

> **ZMET Participant 6:** "…*maybe we were more attached to British history rather than we compare to US or other country like western history. Maybe we can see more from UK. The British used to be in our country. Our education system is similar to the UK. My parents used to study in English only, just like the British. So, this history means that my parents trust UK degree more; they say it's better quality. I also think so.*"

Expressions from focus groups' conversations when asked about their feelings when they hear the word 'UK University', both groups' had similar viewpoints (fictional names are used to maintain anonymity):

Participants from Focus Group 1:

Aaron:	*So if you go to a UK university, you just pay a bit [more], then you come out, you've graduated, then you can get better jobs.*
Researcher:	How about you, Susheela?
Susheela:	*I think that like the prestige I guess.*
Joseph	*Because I think they've always…when you say that you come from a university from UK, they definitely, you know, it carries more, higher value.*
Aini:	*People's perception.*
Researcher:	Okay. Swee Mei?
Swee Mei:	*I agree with Joseph. It just sounds good.*
Researcher:	It just sounds good? What type of good?

Swee Mei:	*Well, like one…one that you managed to get a spot there means that your grades qualify that you can get a spot there, and second that you can afford it.*
Researcher:	Okay. Does it sound better than the other Western university? Like Australia, US, Canada, New Zealand?
Swee Mei:	*I think UK…but, this might be just my personal opinion…*
Anitha:	*…but people…for me like people go to UK to study, people go to US because they have more money, people go to Australia because they want to have fun.*
Researcher:	Oh, okay. Alright. Now, again when…when your friends talk, you can also come in and continue what your friends have said or you can also oppose. It's fine. There's no right or wrong answer. It's just all about opinions, yeah? Aaron?
Aaron:	*I would say the…the certificate, the qualification, when you are out of this…what you call?...UK university, it's a much more…what you call?...better compared to any other countries. So when you get in terms of job or people look at you, your qualification, it sounds cool.*
Joseph:	*Okay, when you say UK universities…first thing comes to my mind is traditional lah. Because like US and Australia, they try too hard to modernise the university in a way they kind of jeopardise the values of education in some parts, some point lah. That's what I think.*

Participants from Focus Group 2:

Hasnizah:	*Quality education*
Jason:	*High standards.*
Researcher:	Siew Ting?
Siew Ting:	*Kind of, but I feel that if our [in UK] 70% is like so hard to get compared to other countries. Like my friends in the US gets 70s, 80s, and some in Australia get 70s, 80s, so easily. But we have to work so hard to just get a 70!*
Badrul:	*I agree with Jason. Its higher standard. I compared my assignment and required readings with my friends in Australia. I have to read so many articles, journals, and my assignment question is like so tough compared to theirs.*
Krishnan:	*High class and people give more respect.*
Noor:	*I feel the same as well. Like when I am in Malaysia, my friends always say that I will get a job easier because employers respect our UK degree more.*
Ravi:	*For me is prestige, heritage, traditional. Because UK education has a long history, and in Malaysia, our parents, uncles, all also went through the British education system. So, it's like we are continuing the heritage that many people in Malaysia trust.*

The following two paragraphs depict the influential role of the researcher's lived experience in the phenomenon under study and the cultural nuances. The cultural interpretations will be viewed from the lens of a *reflexive stance* to summarise the emergent theme of '*fulfilling their emotional needs for acceptance*'. This will be narrated in the form of first person.

5.3.2.1.1.   Reflexive stance: Researcher's cultural interpretations
(on the first emergent theme: *Fulfilling their emotional needs for acceptance*)

Born and raised in the same cultural settings, I too experience the daily expectations that are put onto me (and my siblings) by the surroundings, such as relatives, uncles and aunties, and sometimes even neighbours. This is not unique to my family but for many families, especially of those who have children of the same ages as their cousins and neighbours' kids. These expectations come in various forms, starting from how clean and neat our school uniforms are; what grades do we achieve in school; what position are we in our class at the end of the school year; to more adolescence aspects like how well we behave in public; who are our 'dates'; and where are we going to study our tertiary education. [By the way] It does not end there. It continues on to what job and position do we hold, to as personal as, how much do we earn. Like it or not, in this cultural-laden situation, we are plagued with expectations from a young age until becoming an adult when we start to adopt a 'care less' attitude - even that attitude will be judged.

Growing up with many cousins around my age, and having neighbours who also have children with similar ages, we often play together since the age of five. As we become adolescent and started to have different activities. My cousins and neighbours' kids started to learn ballet, some played the piano; some the violin. I was an 'unpolished' kid, thus I just played in the park and came back sweaty and dirty [covered with mud] most days. With no 'special' musical skills and not a single dancing bone in my body, I was the one 'they' picked on. 'They' - I meant the adults; the parents of the children whom I played with when we were kids. Although my parents did not, for once, pressure me to acquire any 'special, polished' skills, I knew that any parents would not feel good when other parents were bragging about their

children in front of mine; and to make matters worse, 'they' would ask: "so
when is your son going to learn to play piano?"

These seemingly subtle remarks are just 'tip of the iceberg' of what many Malaysians face when making a decision; and HE migration is a major decision that may be their key to *fulfilling their emotional needs for acceptance* as interpreted in the first emergent theme.

5.3.2.2. Emergent Theme 2: *Satisfying their spiritual pleas for freedom and independence.*
The spill-over effect of being judged with expectations as depicted in the first emergent theme, coupled with the fact that the Malaysian are considered by Hofstede (2011) as *Hierarchical.* Briefly, as it was reflected in Chapter 4, cultural nuances of a hierarchical community commonly practices 'power distance' - respect for parents and positions of authority. This also meant that Malaysians would respect their elders such as siblings, parents and relatives. Their authority is often unquestioned as doing so would be considered as rude and improper on their part. Therefore, having the opportunity to 'break free' are common sentiments expressed in various forms during data collection process as depicted in the following quotes:

ZMET Participant 7's image: World map with connection lines.

When asked to explain this picture [world map with connection lines] with relations to a UK university:

> **ZMET Participant 7:** "*I can do more things, do whatever I want and don't*
> *have to follow everybody's rules. I can travel to Europe, I can go to night*
> *clubs. I know I have to study as well, and I will because it's important, but I*
> *want to also have a more balanced life. Not just study, study, study.*"

ZMET Participant 9's image: Luggage for travelling.

When asked to explain this picture [luggage for travelling] with relations to a UK university:

> **ZMET Participant 9:** "*Luggage for traveling. Although I know that the education system is tough. But during semester break, I can chill out and recharge by travelling. Europe is so near; and so cheap to just take a flight to Paris, Rome, so many places that I can go in Europe.*"

When probed with the question of "You can also travel if you are in Australia and America, right?", the respond was:

> **ZMET Participant 9:** "*Yes, but so expensive and so few places. Like in Australia, you can go to New Zealand, but it's so expensive. Or I guess I can go back to Malaysia because it's nearer. But, I don't want to go to Malaysia when I am studying. Also, my parents cannot keep asking me to go back if I am in UK because it's further. If I am in Australia, then I have no excuse but have to go home. In America, it's just Canada only. Boring-lah.*"

ZMET Participant 10's image: Many countries' flags.

When asked to explain the descriptions of this picture [many countries' flags]:

> **ZMET Participant 10:** "*Actually, I was looking for Europe flags but I can only find this. I was going to say that with the European countries' flags, I can travel to like France, Milan, Spain, Germany, so many countries that are near. I am so excited.*"

When probed with the question of "…can you not travel there even though you are not studying in the UK?", the respond was:

> **ZMET Participant 10:** "*Yes, but so expensive to just fly from Malaysia to Europe. Also, it takes so long, like 15 hours. If I am in the UK, just 1, 2 or maximum 3 hours I can reach Paris, Rome, Berlin, so on and so forth…and also I have the freedom to travel when I want to. Since I am already in the UK, I don't have to keep telling my parents where I go, I just plan with my friends and go. Amazing!*"

ZMET Participant 17's image: M&M chocolate store in London.

When asked to explain this picture [M&M chocolate store in London]:

> **ZMET Participant 17:** "*Ok. It's got nothing to do [with M&M chocolates]. I just like candy and like most of the nice candies are from UK…When I'm there, I'll get like a variety of choices.*"

When probed to explain the expression of "a variety of choices", the respond was:

> **ZMET Participant 17:** "*Well, I get to try different things like all the time. Like not stick to one thing…if you stick at one thing like follow like one way it's gonna be so boring. I feel like when I am in the UK, I can do so many things, so many varieties of activities, travelling, cakes, sweets, just so many things. And I don't have to just pick one and follow what people want to do. I can do whatever I want.*"

Moving on to focus groups, during Focus Group 1's conversation, a participant mentioned about life as a UK university student by saying "…this university is close to pubs and stuff, so more drinking, a bit less shopping." This triggered an opportunity for the researcher to probe the next question pertaining to factors that would influence their decision making behaviour.

Expressions from Focus Group 1's participants when asked "if that [pubs and stuff, drinking and shopping] would be a factor in them selecting a university in the UK?" they responded with the followings statements:

Participants from Focus Group 1:

Nathan:	*But I think UK most of the universities are near to clubs, what you call sports and everything. So it's not a big difference.*
Susheela:	*Yes. We study hard, we also need to play hard. Not hard, but relax and travel a bit maybe? You can't just study only.*
Researcher:	Go ahead [Swee Mei].
Swee Mei:	*If they have like a more involved student body like the clubs and the…yeah, the clubs and their clubs is active then I think I might be more partial to it.*
Joseph:	*For me is to be able to be independent and be away from my parents for a while. Not that I don't like them, I do. But I just want to be independent, you know what I mean?*
Ahmad:	*Yes. I do. I feel the same too. I just want to be able to do the things that I want, at any time I want, and don't have to get permission all the time.*

When the participants from Focus Group 2 were asked about the 'extra competitive edge' that they have over other graduates, their responses were:

Participants from Focus Group 2:

Krishnan:	*For me, in UK, I can travel to other countries like in Europe. They are so near, take a flight in one hour or less you are in Paris already. Some more so cheap. This also, I mean travelling, can give us more experience, bigger picture of what the world is, how they live, how they do business. Good also because I can learn and maybe make new friends, new people that maybe I can do business together next time, we never know. And I think employers like that too. That we are independent, travel a lot with different experience.*
Ravi:	*I think so too. We can be just travel by ourselves. I went back-packing. So nice. No one to follow or wait for, I just go. So much freedom, do what I want, when I want, whatever I want.*
Jason:	*Eh…what you do there ah? Naughty ah?!*
Ravi:	*Even if I naughty also my parents won't know. But, I am very good one. Hahaha.*

Badrul:	*Yeah, right! I think we all are sometime very happy that we don't have to tell our parents where we go all the time. What time we are coming home. They are so far away, they can't just call us every day and ask us what we do, right?*
Noor:	*Eh, one of my friends in my uni, her parents call her every day to see if she is ok or not.*
Badrul:	*Crazy ah!!*
Hasnizah:	*Ya man. Crazy.*

With both ZMET interviews and focus group conversations frequently expressing to 'break free', the following paragraph interprets the *reflexive stance* on Malaysian students' desire to *satisfying their spiritual pleas for freedom and independence* informed by the researcher's cultural ethnographical experience – in the form of first person.

5.3.2.2.1. Reflexive stance: Researcher's cultural interpretations
(on the second emergent theme: *Satisfying their spiritual pleas for freedom and independence*)

I was raised in a close-knitted family and was (and still) very happy with the way I was raised. As categorised by Hofstede (2011) as Hierarchical, 'power distance' - respect for parents and positions of authority – is a common cultural practice. The practice of 'respect' also included staying with your grandparents, parents, siblings and sometimes the extended family such as uncles, aunties and their children – all under the same roof. This will go on until one gets married or have to relocate due to work or pursuing higher education. Leaving the family 'nest' without a 'suitable reason' is considered as non-filial and thus, being shun upon. So, for a teenager to have the opportunity to use higher education as a valid excuse to 'leave the nest' is empowering. As a former employee in Malaysia who dealt with many students and parents, I had, on many occasions, heard pleas from many students to 'convince' their parents that completing their final undergraduate year in an overseas-affiliated university is better than completing all three or four years in Malaysia. When I confronted the students after speaking to their parents as I wanted to know the reasons of them wanting [so desperately] to go to the UK, the reasons ranges from "just want to get away from my parents for a while" to "just want to travel

and do things by myself" to "I can't take it anymore...I have to report to them every day!" Coming from a close-knitted family, I can empathise with them even though I did not reach the level of intense as they have.

These pleas, either in secret or expressed to a third party (as reflected in the researcher's reflexive account above), shout out the need of Malaysian students to *satisfy their spiritual pleas for freedom and independence* - even if it is for just for one year at the very least.

5.3.2.3. Emergent Theme 3: *Providing a promise for a greater self-worth.*

Self-worth, a subset of Self-concept theories, is a theory that postulates humans to be naturally striving to maintain a sense of self-worth, or an appraisal of one's own value as a person (Covington and Beery, 1976; Covington, 1998). This is further supported by the claim that humans are motivated to protect their self-worth by maintaining a belief that they are competent (Ames and Ames, 1984; Covington, 1992). The third emergent theme - *providing a promise for a greater self-worth* – resonates with Sheth et al.'s (1991) five consumption values, where each value adds to the enhancement of Malaysian students' self-worth. Statements from ZMET interviews and focus group conversations express their determination and willingness to explore and gain pieces of puzzles to complete their picture in the form of Sheth et al.'s (1991) five consumption values: Functional; Social; Emotional; Epistemic; and Conditional (as elaborated in Chapter 5).

ZMET Participant 2's image: Better future, better days.

When asked "what does feeling more secure mean?":

> **ZMET Participant 2:** "*Means like I can get a job any time when I go back to my home country. I know that employers will look at me at a higher level, higher standard, better quality and able to perform better. So, it's*

worth it now to work harder, but the future will be easier. I know other countries' students also work hard, but if I have to work hard in other countries as well, then, it is better to work harder here [in the UK] because the future result is much better."

ZMET Participant 5's image: Branded drinking water.

When asked to explain the meaning of this visual:

ZMET Participant 5: "*A branded drinking water, BMW…Yes. BMW is a brand for a car, expensive, high class car. And the brand, the sign, can be put on anything like a bottle of water also the water becomes expensive.*"

When probed on how does this influence your [participant 5's] selection of a UK university:

ZMET Participant 5: "*I also want to be like this brand. Expensive, high class. And when I graduate, I have a brand also. My brand is "UK Grad", almost like "Made in the UK." So then, whatever I do, I am looked as more expensive, more value.*"

ZMET Participant 12's image: More valuable with UK honours degree.

When asked "what does it mean by 'more valuable?'":

> **ZMET Participant 12:** "*Because if I choose a UK university, their certificate is an honours degree that is why I feel more valuable to study here. And I can do it in three years. Other countries you have to do an extra year, four years. Why do more when the outcome is the same. Then, it's not efficient anymore. I know they will learn more, but I can also use that extra year to learn when I am working and also get salary.*"

ZMET Participant 13's image: Ready to take the world.

When asked to explain the meaning of "ready to take the world":

> **ZMET Participant 13:** "*A tiger that is ready to attack. When I graduate I will feel that I am a UK grad, and I am ready to take on the challenge. People will also think that I am confident. And I think I will be confident when I finish and have the qualifications...It feels good because I am thinking ahead and positive. Other people also think that I am that good; that confident. I feel good because I am better than other…feels better than others…Very important. Because then people will trust me, thinking that I can deliver the best for them, and I will deliver the best for them because I don't want to let them and myself down.*"

Participants from the focus group conversations expressed the same sentiments with the following statements:

When asked to compare amongst Western universities [Australia, America, Canada, New Zealand and UK], which one sounds 'better'?:

Participants from Focus Group 1:

Swee Mei:	*I think UK…but, this might be just my personal opinion…*
Anitha:	*…but people…for me like people go to UK to study , people go to US because they have more money , people go to Australia because they want to have fun .*
Swee Mei:	*I would say the…the certificate, the qualification, when you are out of this…what you call?…UK university, it's a much more…what you call?…better compared to any other countries . So when you get in terms of job or people look at you, your qualification, it sounds cool.*
Ahmad:	*Okay, when you say UK universities…first thing comes to my mind is traditional lah. Because like US and Australia, they try too hard to modernise the university in a way they kind of jeopardise the values of education in some parts, some point lah. That's what I think.*
Susheela:	*…if you talk to all of them, you know, and they're really probably in their fifties and all that, and they're just sitting there and they're talking, they would say that oh yeah, the Australian system is very, you know, laid back , you know, or sometimes when they see the style of studying in the US and all these things, when my cousins come and tell them, you know, they're like, okay, this was not like what we do, you know . It's more like their classes are very different and my parents still believe that, like he said, tradition, you know, you go and you study properly. Yes, I think students would love the fun doing video recordings to learn and all these kind of things, but at the same time I think they…that this graduation, this cert that we're going to get is like, you know, they want it to be of value, you know. So you study…*

When probed to describe their 'competitive edge' being UK university students:

Aaron:	*Yeah, when employers, whenever you say, "I'm from UK," I've been studying, the people like "Wow! Really ah?"*
Joseph:	*Well, it's our qualifications. If you compare to a public university, they most of the time…what do you call it?…don't have any other…what you call?…overseas university partners or the standard all, but we have a certain standard that our program is different compared to them that the program is very suitable for our future, which is our corporate world…compared to most of theirs. I'm not saying they are not well prepared, they are, but the thing is that it's still not enough in terms of in English or technology, special skills.*
Aaron:	*That quality.*
Joseph:	*Yeah, the quality is different.*
Ahmad:	*I don't have a good answer for this and I'm just generalising. Okay,*

	let's put it this way lah. My friend in Australia, the lifestyle is they go clubbing every week, so barbeque every week, you know. I'm serious. I just…I skype with him. "Hey, what are you doing?" "Oh sorry, I cannot talk with you. I have to go clubbing. Bye bye." And then, I look at my lifestyle in UK. Hey, I rush for coursework almost every single day in UK in my room lah. I stay in the library how many hours a day I also don't know. I can't remember. So basically…Like you say you come out and graduate, right, it's more like I'm more ready to work hard compared to them lah…

Participants from Focus Group 2:

Alice:	*For me just being there, studying there. There are some universities here who have UK degree that they do all three years here. But it's just not the same because it's still all done in Malaysia. All your classmates are still all Malaysians, lecturers are also Malaysians, just less exposure.*
Hanizah:	*Yeah.*
Researcher:	Wouldn't this be the same with other western universities?
Siew Ting:	*I think other western countries like US, if you go to US and study there, then it's better than doing a US degree in Malaysia. But, compare US and UK, UK is still better, better reputation compared to US.*
Badrul:	*I agree.*
Ravi:	*Me too.*
Jason	*Kesian [pitiful] for those who are studying here, but I also agree.*

When asked to describe their thought on 'why they choose to study in the UK' with just one word:

Participants from Focus Group 2:

Jason:	*Status*
Krishnan:	*Self-Improvement*
Noor:	*To be the best*
Hanizah:	*To be amongst the best.*
Alice:	*Respect, trust.*

When most participants nodded their heads in agreement, the researcher asked them to elaborate the meaning for these words stated above. Their responses were:

Participants from Focus Group 2:

Siew Ting:	*For me it's the status because I can study International Business anywhere. But if I go to the UK, at least it has the reputation of high quality. Also, I can go to other countries in Europe to study one semester or one year, then my degree will be even better with international exposure.*
Krishnan:	*Self-improvement for means that I can learn from the best. When I say the best I do not mean that other countries are not good. But, because the quality and standard is higher in UK, so I have to read more to get like A's, so I will learn more and improve a lot more.*
Badrul:	*For me is like Krishnan, to be the best because I have to push myself very hard to get good grades. I cannot fail or else I don't know how to face my parents and friends. So, I will push myself to be the best.*
Ravi:	*Same here. If everyone is trying to be the best, that means I am surrounded by people who are trying to be the best. So, that is like a motivating factor for me to be the best as well.*
Jason:	*Respect, trust. I already said before, I think people will trust and respect me and my degree more.*

Commonality amongst both ZMET and focus groups participants were the sheer determination to yield as much value as possible during their time spent in the UK. These yields were expected to add value to their journey in pursuing HE in the UK in order to create a label or a brand for themselves; in return of *a promise for a greater self-worth*.

5.3.2.3.1.   Reflexive stance: Researcher's cultural interpretations
                   (on the third emergent theme: *Providing a promise for a greater self-worth*)

I was working as a Senior Lecturer in a private HEI in Malaysia before coming over to the UK. During my tenure at this private HEI in Malaysia, I was, in addition to being a Senior Lecturer, a Head of Programme managing two programmes and an Acting Dean. With these multiple roles, I had the opportunity to meet with many parents and students, especially when students and parents are gathering information as to which [private Malaysian] university is 'better' for their children. Parents have asked about the reputation of the university and also the possibility of their children completing the final year in the UK since my former university does provide such pathways. Being curious, I will always ask the parents the reasons for wanting their children to continue their final year in the UK

instead of in Malaysia even though the degree is identical as it was a full-franchised programme. The answers are commonly in the realm of the UK being better for their children, and that if it's not for the cost [of exchange rate], they would have wanted their children to pursue all three years in the UK. Statements such as: "UK is better lah, at least spend one year there. All three year too expensive ah!"; "...at least do one year, better than other students who didn't. Then at least they can say they studied in the UK. Employers also will want to employ them."

In retrospect, now that I am living and working in the UK, with the same job title – Senior Lecturer and Programme Tutor (similar to Head of Programme in Malaysia), minus the Acting Dean position, I am being perceived at a 'higher' level compared to my previous identical roles in Malaysia. When I speak to students and parents now, I will introduce myself, naturally, and the moment I mention that I am representing a UK university, they would be astounded with remarks such as "Wah, you are a Senior Lecturer in UK!"; "How did you get the job?"; "So good ah…next time when you come back to Malaysia, you can earn very high salary." Although I am not too sure about the final statement regarding a high salary when I return to Malaysia, these are the common sentiments which hover their perceptions and thoughts about the UK, and the association many Malaysians have with HE in the UK.

Resonating with this research's participants who are pursuing a Bachelor's degree in the UK, just like me working in the UK and reading my PhD, provides them [and me] the label that is attached with it – a UK branded label.

After three or four years of hard work, one who was once a student gets to improve their status to a 'Bachelor's degree graduate'. However, with positive perceptions and connotation tagged to a Bachelor's degree graduate from the UK, this country-branded label, termed as Country-of-origin (COO), is certainly welcomed with open arms. It was argued by Verlegh and Steenkamp (1999:538) that "…the COO effect can be classified as a substantial factor in product [service or potential employee] evaluations." This is further supported by Tsai

(2005:278) stating that "the exploration of consumer purchase behaviour is assumed to be mainly through the view of socio-cultural symbolism that focuses on symbolic meanings of products…and in the post-modern society and a socio-cultural phenomenon, consumer behaviour revolves around the notion of individuals engaging in consumption not to fulfil basic needs but much more in a pursuit of identities of self", a fulfilment that may *provide a promise for a greater self-worth*.

5.4. Summary

The paramount importance in understanding consumer decision making behaviour of a complex service such as the selection of a host country by international students to pursue their HE is the emotional attachments that resonate with their final decision. This is especially true when relevant rational factors have been evaluated and exhausted. This research's findings suggest that non-rational factors with hidden intrinsic values such as emotional elements and symbolic values are strong influences in Malaysian students' pre-purchase HE migration decision making behaviour. Therefore, the emergence of these three core themes were informed by the six emergent constructs: these undiscovered desires were revealed through this research to provide a voice for the unspoken, unseen and unheard non-rational factors which hold strong influential role amongst Malaysian students who have experienced (and potentially will experience) the phenomenon of host-country and HEIs selection for their HE migration.

Chapter 6:   Contributions and Recommendations

Academic Knowledge, Research Methodology, HEI Practitioners and International Students Recruiters, and Policy Makers of HE.

6.1.   Chapter Outline: Recommendations
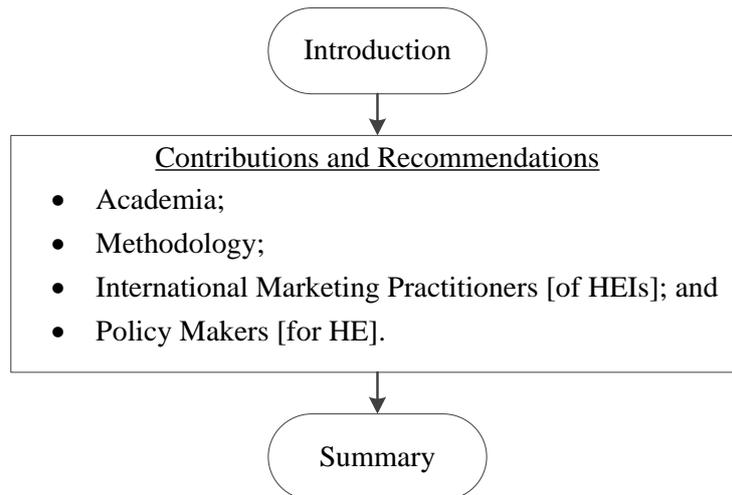
6.2.   Introduction

At this stage, this thesis has covered the following objectives in chapters 2 (Literature Review), 3 (Research Methodology), 4 (Findings and Discussion: Emergent Constructs) and 5 (Findings and Discussion: Emergent Themes):

1) Objective 1: Previous Research – Migration patterns and influencing factors;

2) Objective 2: Emotional factors and symbolic values – What, How and Why?; and

3) Objective 3: Contribution – Apply emergent constructs within the conceptual framework.

The fourth [and final remaining] objective of this research is 'to propose a CDM model which better represents the pre-purchase evaluation and decision making behaviour of Malaysian students' HE migration to the UK'. In order to achieve this final objective, this research has additionally identified three further research outcomes: (1) to provide UK HEIs with a better understanding of Malaysian students' pre-purchase evaluation and decision making behaviour; (2) to acknowledge the roles non-rational factors' intrinsic influences such as emotional elements and symbolic values in contributing towards decision making; and (3)

to support the development of a more effective international marketing strategy and informed tactical applications for both HEIs' marketing practitioners and policy makers alike.

The following contributions were based on the emergent constructs which were analysed through the participants' expressions, feelings and thoughts; coupled with the core themes emerging from the researcher's reflexive stance informing the cultural interpretation of the phenomenon under study. To address the research's outcomes in the aforesaid paragraph, these recommendations focused mainly on four research contributions stated in Chapter 1, namely: Academia, Methodology, International Marketing Practitioners [of HEIs] and Policy Makers [for HE].

6.3. Contributions and Recommendations

6.3.1. Contributions: *Academic Knowledge*

The first of the two intended research contributions is to link knowledge back to the academic conceptual framework by proposing a revised CDM model which fits with the pre-purchase evaluation and decision making behaviours of Malaysian students when selecting a UK HEI by embedding the emotional elements and symbolic values within the environmental influences which are possibly underpinned by the PPToM.

The existing CDM model (adapted from Blackwell et al., 2006) suggests five environmental influences affecting the 'Information Search' stage; namely, Cultural; Social Class; Personal Influences; Family; and Situation. These influences, whilst relevant, are, in the researcher's opinion, too generic and this opinion is supported by various researchers (Damasio, 1994; Clark, 2001; Bechara and Damasio, 2005; Tancredi, 2005; Glannon, 2007). They have been challenged on their rationally led methodologies in interpreting the decision making process (Damasio, 1994; Bechara et al., 1997; Bechara and Damasio, 2005); who claim that emotional factors are integral agents in the consumers' decision making process.

The six emergent constructs elicited from this research - *Egotism, Self-concept, Current Security, Future Security, Freedom and Independence,* and *Future Opportunities* - will now be embedded into the existing environmental influences of the CDM model, to be used as the revised conceptual framework for this research to depict the intrinsic influences within non-

rational factors affecting the decision making behaviour of Malaysian students during the phenomenon of HE migration decision; as depicted in Figure 6.1. The embedded emergent constructs from this research are in red italics.

Figure 6.1: Revised Conceptual Framework: Application of Emergent Constructs
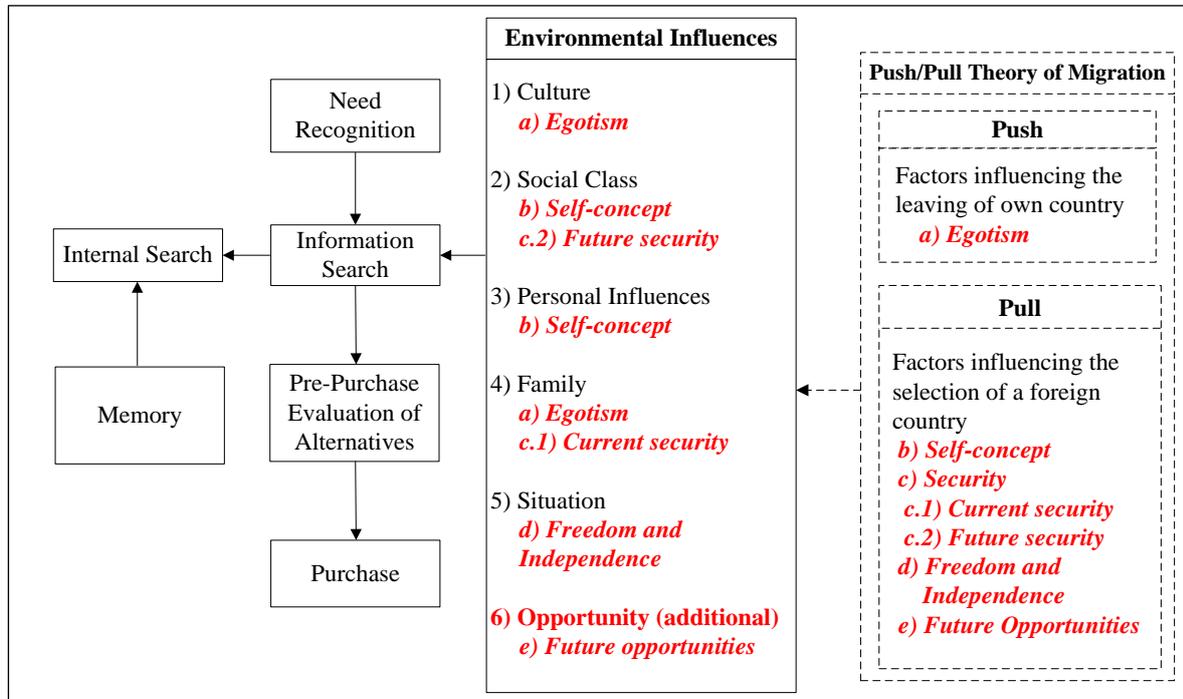
Sources:
Consumer Decision Making Model (Adapted from Blackwell et al., 2006:83)
Push/Pull Theory of Migration (Adapted from Mazzarol and Soutar, 2002:85)
Researcher's findings: Emergent constructs (2015)

Each emergent construct has been discussed in detail (Chapter 4: p. 124). The contribution to academic knowledge is the integral understanding of non-rational factors with emotional elements and symbolic values embedded within them are strong influencers in a phenomenon of HE migration decision making behaviour. These factors also hold the 'push' and 'pull' elements in assisting the behavioural process flow in decision making as depicted above (in red italics). The Push/Pull Theory of Migration (PPToM) was the model used to simplify a complicated, unspoken real world phenomenon to aid understanding by representing migration behaviour and influences in a simplistic approach. This was achieved by categorising these six emergent constructs within the types of factors in migration decision behaviour as presented in Chapter 2 (Literature Review) and Chapter 4 (Findings and Discussion: Emergent Constructs), respectively.

6.3.2. Contribution: *Research Methodology*

By introducing the use of ZMET (Zaltman Metaphor Elicitation Technique), this research intends to elicit unconscious thoughts by exploring metaphoric expressions (Zaltman, 1997). These thoughts lead to the discovery of non-rational factors influencing the behaviour of Malaysia students' HE migration decision to the UK. ZMET is the first commercially patented market research tool (Patent Code: US Patent 5,436,830; filed 2-1-93; issue 7-25-95) in America.

Zaltman (1997) believes that close to 95% of thoughts occur at the unconscious level, and as much as 80% of communication is non-verbal. These thoughts are shaped through lived experience, reasoning, emotions, and that they [experiences] are linked. These thoughts occur as images, and are formed and expressed through the use of metaphors (Zaltman and Coulter, 1995; Zaltman, 1997; Christensen and Olson, 2002). Several cognitive researchers also acknowledge that people think in images, not words; however, many of today's marketing research techniques rely on verbal-centric communications as a data collection method (Catchings-Castello, 2000; Woodside, 2004). Woodside (2004) cited several literature streams supporting the claim that such highly cognitive methods exclude data collection of most thoughts. This therefore suggests that concepts behind the massive investment in market research concerning human insights may only cover the remaining 5% of the conscious thoughts in decision making behaviour.

To the best of the researcher's knowledge, ZMET has not been used in a context similar to this research. The use of ZMET as data collection method is highly recommended as it has proven effective in the elicitation of six emergent constructs and three emergent themes in a complex decision making phenomenon surrounding the implications of cultural nuances amongst the sample group of Malaysian students. As an eleven-step semi-structured instructional elicitation technique, each step acts as a validation tool against every other previous step by eliminating redundancies, reinforcing repetitions, rethinking specifics responses and recapping decisions. The researcher also recommends the use of ethnographic principle of cultural interpretation in the form of reflexive account to connect - in deeper level - with the shared experiences provided by the participants to uncover their reality as they are experienced; and hence, interpret subjective views participants expressed verbally (or have difficulty articulating). This allows the researcher a pedagogical stance to explicitly

develop patterns of lived experienced to provide a richer, deeper and a more logical interpretation in a sub-cultural context (Klein and Myers, 1999).

6.3.3. Recommendation: *Practical applications for HEI Practitioners and International Students Recruiters*

The revised conceptual framework of the CDM model underpinned by the PPToM will assist marketing practitioners in UK HEIs in their development of a more informed and effective strategic marketing and recruitment strategies of Malaysian students' migration into the UK as their host country of choice. While the researcher is not suggesting that rational factors such as the cost of pursuing a HE overseas, learning resources and facilities such as libraries, access to subscription-based journals, variety of programmes available, are not important, these rational factors can be easily evaluated, equated against other host countries and HEIs, and finally exhausted; and yet a decision is not made as to which migration destination is preferred.

When looking at marketing communication collateral such as a brochure or the web content, the name of similar programmes regardless of host countries and HEIs - as the word suggests - sounds similar; for example, BA (Hons) Marketing [from Australia], BA (Hons) Marketing [from America], BA (Hons) Marketing [from New Zealand], BA (Hons) Marketing [from Canada] and BA (Hons) Marketing [from the UK]. And within these similarly named programmes, there are also similarly named modules within them: Principles of Marketing, Consumer Behaviour, Advertising and Promotions, and the list goes on. This was proven true when this research's pilot test sample group revealed that whilst information gathering during the 'Information Search' stage of the CDM model has given them considerable amount of information, it did not provide them with a clearer sense of decision making as all information sounded positive and similar – a case of [rational] information overload.

One of the first few basic marketing models is the AIDA model which was authored by Elias St. Elmo Lewis in 1898 (Strong, 1925). This basic model was formulated to suggest the flow of acquiring consumers through the use of marketing communication collaterals by firstly attracting the consumers' *attention*, secondly maintaining their *interest*, thirdly creating a sense of *desire,* and finally converting the potential customer into the *action* of purchasing the goods. Hence the AIDA model.

With this basic [AIDA] model as guide, the first two stages - *attention* and *interest* – may be achieved with rational factors featured in the marketing communication collaterals. However, to proceed to the third and final stages of *desire* and *action* respectively, the role of non-rational elements function as catalysts in selecting a particular HEI; a decision that is likely to be influenced by emotional elements and symbolic values which are intrinsically hidden within their unconscious thoughts. The four stages of the AIDA model are parallel to the four pre-purchase stages in the CDM model (Blackwell et al., 2006) - Need recognition, Information search, Pre-purchase evaluation of alternatives and Purchase - used as the conceptual framework for this research.

6.3.4. Recommendation: *Practical implications for Policy Makers of HE*

Policy makers for HE in the UK and in Malaysia are tasked to ensure the well-being, safety and value for international students pursuing HE in the UK. Therefore, insights from this research may provide them with an 'insider' view of Malaysian students' HE migration behaviour and decisions. Relevant policy makers for HE in the UK and in Malaysia are identified as follows:

6.3.4.1. *Education Malaysia (UK & Eire)*

Education Malaysia (UK & Eire) is a UK representative unit registered as Education Malaysia Global Services (EMGS): wholly owned subsidiary of the Ministry of Education of Malaysia. The main role that is relevant to this research that the EMGS play is to assist the Malaysian Ministry of Education in the implementation of policies relating to Malaysian students, both locally and abroad. One of the many tasks in this role is to develop a healthy flow of student mobility exchanges among HEI partners across continental borders. In order for EMGS to provide effective assistance to the Ministry, personnel in the EMGS will have to collaborate with overseas partners in their effort to promote Malaysia as the preferred education destination for foreign students (Education Malaysia, 2015). EMGS also has representative units collaborating with overseas host countries such as America, Australia, New Zealand and the UK to promote their countries as the preferred HE destination for Malaysians to pursue HE - both undergraduate and postgraduate studies.

A video clip taken from The Higher Education Leaders and Policy Makers, Institute of International Education (Education Malaysia, 2015) shows the challenges experienced by

EMGS in attracting Malaysian students to pursue their graduate studies in America. This challenge is expressed by Posiah Mohd Isa, Director of Education Malaysia at the Embassy of Malaysia in America. She mentioned that the "target is 60,000 [Malaysian with American] graduates by 2020, at the moment now we are not even half way…as for US, we have a hard time actually to convince most of our scholars to choose US to do their graduate studies. I am really hoping for American universities to really promote their graduate programmes to the Malaysian students because scholarships are so available given by the government…the allocation of 2.26 billion Ringgit is already allocated, but the numbers taking up is small, and much smaller choosing to come to US." This is one typical case where this policy maker could apply the findings from this research to tackle their challenging issue. Although this example is one that is located in America, Education Malaysia (UK & Eire) has similar roles and objectives as they follow a global decree.

6.3.4.2. *British Council*

The British Council acts as the UK's cultural relations agency in countries which have educational links with the UK. Similar to Education Malaysia, the main role that the British Council plays is to create and provide international education opportunities for the people of the UK and other countries: by building trust between them worldwide. In their role pertaining to HE, they promote and support the exchange and mobility of students, scholars and academics around the world. In doing so, they will have to promote and support higher education partnerships between UK and international universities, industries and governments to shape and drive international collaboration of higher education through policy dialogues and research (British Council, 2015).

While HEIs in the UK have their individual marketing strategies and tactical selling points to entice potential Malaysian students to register at their institutions, the British Council could collaborate with Education Malaysia to market and portray the UK and British Education as one that encompasses the emergent themes from this research as the empirical evidence shows that Malaysia students are particular with the label which will be carried with them once they enrolled in a UK HEI. It is particularly important for the policy maker governing the label of British Education to uphold the standards, prestige, image and perceptions that this label carries. This research's findings reveal the important emotional elements and

symbolic values that carry weight and authority in Malaysian students' view and feeling in their search for HE migration to the UK.

6.3.4.3. *UK Council for International Students Affairs (UKCISA)*

The UK Council for International Students Affairs (UKCISA) is a relatively small organisation with only 17 employees; however they have over 500 education members comprising all UK universities, internationally active public sector colleges of higher and further education, private colleges and independent schools. The UKCISA works together with their members in supporting international students, among other roles. In February 2015, the UKCISA issued a manifesto for international students declaring ten key principles and recommendations (UKCISA President, Baroness Usha Prashar CBE and Chair, UKCISA Board of Trustees, Professor Paul Webley, 2015) (Appendix 4: p. 242). All ten principles in the manifesto resonate directly with the emergent constructs and the emergent themes from this research as listed in the following points.

1) *The whole of government needs to recognise and celebrate the financial, cultural and intellectual value of international students to the UK.*

Emergent constructs: Self-concept and Current security.
Emergent theme 1: Fulfilling their emotional needs for acceptance.

2) *After a period of reform, international students should now be excluded from all further policy and debate on reducing net migration.*
Emergent constructs: Current security and Future opportunities
Emergent theme 3: Providing a promise for a greater self-worth.

3) *The rules and procedures governing international students have become so complex that they now require fundamental review.*

Emergent construct: Freedom and independence
Emergent theme 2: Satisfying their spiritual pleas for freedom and independence.

4) *Further measures being introduced by the Immigration Act need to be carefully monitored and if found to be counter-productive, urgently withdrawn.*

Emergent construct: Current security.
Emergent theme 2: Satisfying their spiritual pleas for freedom and independence.

5) Part-time work entitlements for international students need to be standardized.

Emergent constructs: Self-concept, Current security and Future security
Emergent theme 1: Fulfilling their emotional needs for acceptance.
Emergent theme 2: Satisfying their spiritual pleas for freedom and independence.
Emergent theme 3: Providing a promise for a greater self-worth.

6) All students at graduate or postgraduate level should be entitled to a limited period of post study work in the UK (and/or longer on their current visas to find Tier 2 jobs).

Emergent constructs: Self-concept, Current security, Future security, Future opportunities,
                and Freedom and independence.
Emergent theme 1: Fulfilling their emotional needs for acceptance.
Emergent theme 2: Satisfying their spiritual pleas for freedom and independence.
Emergent theme 3: Providing a promise for a greater self-worth.

7) No student who has not been found to be at fault should have their visa curtailed merely because their sponsor has lost their licence.

Emergent construct: Current security.
Emergent theme 1: Fulfilling their emotional needs for acceptance.

8) All students should have access to some form of student protection scheme and independent arbitration when disputes cannot be resolved internally.

Emergent construct: Current security.
Emergent theme 1: Fulfilling their emotional needs for acceptance.

9) All students to be eligible for visa concessions and special support at times of national crisis or when faced with particular difficulties.

Emergent construct: Current security.
Emergent theme 1: Fulfilling their emotional needs for acceptance.

10) Government should develop and implement a global communications campaign and clear strategy to re-assure international students that they are welcome in the UK.

Emergent constructs: Self-concept, Current security, Future security, Future opportunities,
                and Freedom and independence.
Emergent theme 1: Fulfilling their emotional needs for acceptance.
Emergent theme 2: Satisfying their spiritual pleas for freedom and independence.
Emergent theme 3: Providing a promise for a greater self-worth.

Prashar and Webley (2015:1) also reports that "recruitment to many universities has also been affected with, for instance, 'numbers of overseas entrants to higher education in England declining in 2012-13 for the first time in 29 years' - and only a marginal increase in overall numbers throughout the UK in 2013-14."

6.4.   Summary

The findings from this research reveal six emergent constructs and three emergent themes. These revelations have directly impacted on the contribution of knowledge for academic understandings. The data collection method in the form of ZMET is introduced to investigate the intrinsic values underpinned in this phenomenon under study, in order to provide an 'insider' intelligence of the unspoken insights to assist the implementation of strategic and tactical approaches in the recruitment of Malaysian students. Lastly, these relevant insights are deemed useful to policy makers in their setting of policies and mandates for Malaysian and international students alike.

The bottom line as suggested by UKCISA (2015) is the collaboration between policy makers, UK HEIs and UK Government to make the UK a far more attractive and welcoming destination for well qualified international students by re-establishing trust in the UK and her position and reputation worldwide. The final outcome of the increase in interest and desire to select the UK as the HE migration destination will increase the income generated from incoming international [and Malaysian] students and subsequently contributing to the economic growth and prosperity for UK HEIs, local communities and the UK's standing and influence in the world.

Chapter 7:   Conclusion

Synopsis, Contribution to Knowledge, Strengths, Limitations, Significance, Future Research, Conclusion and Reflecting on the research.

7.1.   Chapter Outline: Conclusion

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                │ Correlation            │
                │ Six (6) Emergent       │
                │ Constructs             │
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                │ Three (3) Emergent     │
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7.2.   Introduction

This concluding chapter starts with the synopsis of this research before proceeding to review the four areas of contribution this research has to offer. It will then highlight the significance and the strength of this research before acknowledging the limitations. It will also suggest the possibilities for future research before concluding with the researcher's reflection on the research.

7.3.   Synopsis

The title of this research is 'Revealing the Unspoken: Malaysian students' intrinsic influences in selecting the UK for Higher Education migration.' Therefore, the researcher's aim is to elicit the intrinsic influences hidden in non-rational factors which are influential in the pre-purchase decision making behaviour of Malaysian students in the phenomenon of HE migration decision.

Four research objectives were set at the start of this research, and were achieved as follow:

Objective 1: Previous Research – Migration patterns and influencing factors

The aim of this research was to elicit and understand the non-rational factors which may intrinsically influence the decision making behaviour of Malaysian students when selecting the UK as the destination for HE migration. In order to achieve this research aim, previous researches have been critically reviewed. Relevant researchers that employed either a CDM-based or a PPToM-based model as framework such as Mazzarol and Soutar (2002), Binsardi and Ekwulugo (2003), Maringe (2006), Engelke (2008), Petruzzellis and Romanazzi (2010), King and Raghuram (2013), and Zheng (2014), indicated fairly similar findings. Collectively the 'push' factors include: (1) a lack of access to local HEIs; (2) limited variety of programmes/courses offered; and (3) perception of a lower quality/image of home country's HEIs. The 'pull' factors cover: (1) the commonality of language used and the opportunity to improve one's foreign language skills; (2) the geographical proximity of host country; (3) the wide range of programmes/courses in the host country; (4) higher level of respect for academic staffs' qualification and credentials; and (5) better perception of host country and/or HEIs.

Objective 2: Emotional factors and Symbolic Values – What, How and Why?

The conceptual framework which was deemed fit for this research was the CDM model adapted from Blackwell et al. (2006:83). To elicit the intrinsic influences which inform the nature of the non-rational factors, the PPToM (adapted from Mazzarol and Soutar, 2002:85) was used to underpinned the CDM model's 'Environmental Influences' to provide the rigor and platform to place the non-rational factors as depicted in Figure 2.3 (p. 55). Data elicitation technique called ZMET - short for Zaltman Metaphor Elicitation Technique - was used for interview sessions, and this was methodologically triangulated by focus group

conversations. ZMET has been posited to elicit both conscious and unconscious thoughts by exploring metaphoric expressions (Zaltman, 1997). These thoughts shall then lead to the discovery of both rational and non-rational factors influencing the behaviour of Malaysia students' HE migration decision to the UK.

Objective 3: Contribution – Apply emergent constructs within the conceptual framework

The researcher examines and identifies common constructs by asking and probing questions, making comparisons, looking for similarities and differences between participants' expressions. By doing this, similar expressions or comments were grouped together to uncover six emergent constructs: *Egotism*, *Self-concept*, *Current security*, *Future security*, *Freedom and independence*, and *Future opportunities*, as depicted in a Consensus Mental Map in Figure 4.1 (p. 123). These emergent constructs were then interpreted through the reflexive stances - personal and epistemic - of cultural interpretations to signify the insight of the three emergent themes: (1) *Fulfilling their emotional needs for acceptance*; (2) *Satisfying their spiritual pleas for freedom and independence*; and (3) *Providing a promise for a greater self-worth*.

Objective 4: Recommendations – Application of the Consumer Decision Making model

The final objective was set with the intention to transfer the knowledge gained from this research's findings in the form of original contributions through the application of the revised CDM model. Sections within 7.4 which follow cover the contributions and recommendations for the four relevant areas and stakeholders.

7.4. Research contributions and recommendations

Throughout this thesis, the researcher has argued that there is a gap in the knowledge about Malaysian students' decision making behaviour because of the limited number of empirical findings indicating the influences of intrinsic values within non-rational factors. This research has elicited six emergent constructs and three emergent themes through the analytical process of interpretative phenomenological analysis of this phenomenon informed by the ethnographic principle of cultural interpretation reflected through the researcher's reflexive lens. Four areas of contributions as a result of this research's findings are: (1)

Academic knowledge; (2) Research Methodology; (3) International Marketing Practitioners [of HEIs]; and (4) Policy Makers [for HE].

7.4.1. Contribution: *Academic Knowledge*

Contribution in the form of academic knowledge is reflected in the application of the six emergent constructs within the conceptual framework of CDM model, underpinned by the PPToM to classify each of the six emergent construct into the 'push' or 'pull' section, respectively (Figure 7.1 in red italics).

Figure 7.1: Revised Conceptual Framework: Application of Emergent Constructs
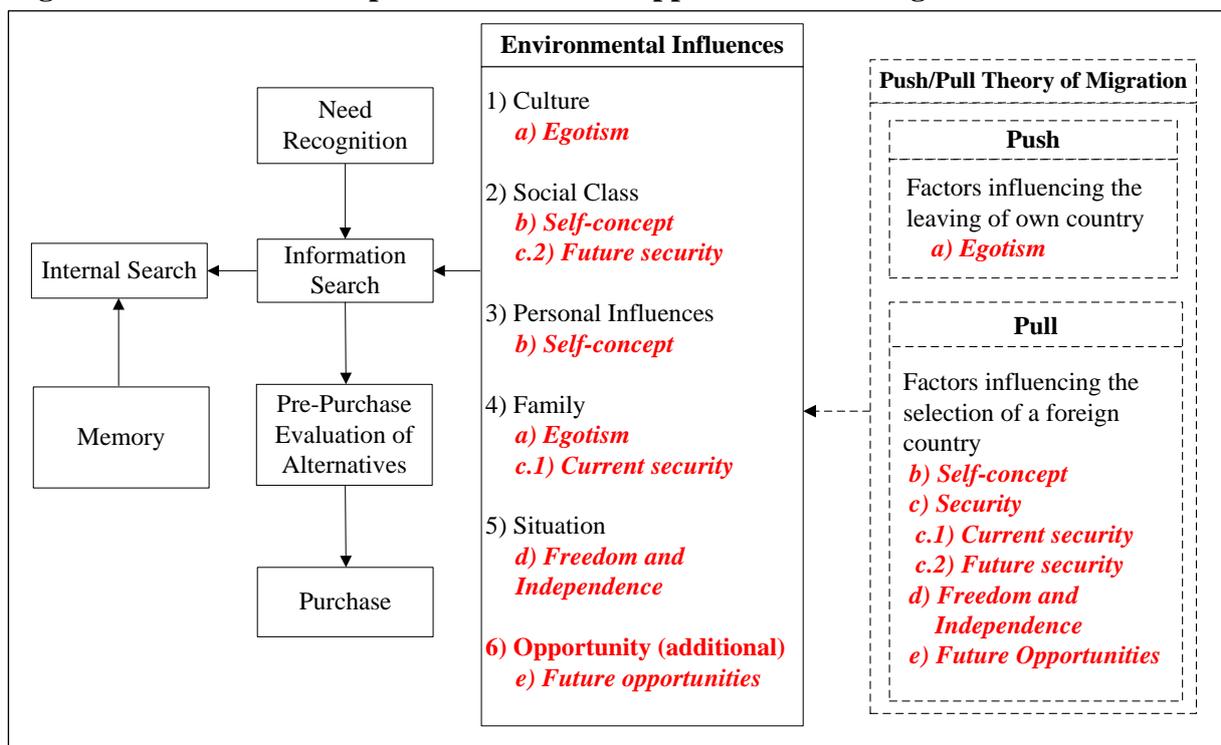
Sources:
Consumer Decision Making Model (Adapted from Blackwell et al., 2006:83)
Push/Pull Theory of Migration (Adapted from Mazzarol and Soutar, 2002:85)
Researcher's findings: Emergent constructs (2015)

The PPToM is able to simplify a complicated, unspoken real world phenomenon to aid understanding by representing migration behaviour and influences in a simplistic approach. The PPToM can also remove obscuring details so that general principles can be seen (Lee, 1966), and this will aid in the building of policies and make decisions sensible by having a holistic and undisturbed view of migration patterns and trends (Lee, 1966; Portes and Rumbaut, 1990; Cinel, 1991) as represented in Figure 7.1. By utilising the PPToM model to

underpin the CDM model, the six emergent constructs which sit within it, are then embedded into the 'Environmental Influences' based on the reasons and associations expressed by the participants as illustrated in the Consensus Mental Map (Figure 4.1: p. 123). The existing five factors from the 'Environmental Influences' of the CDM model are underpinned by the *emergent constructs* which are emotional and symbolic in values.

1) Culture is being influenced by *Egotism*;

2) Social Class is reinforced by *Self-concept* and *Future Security*;

3) Personal Influences is enhanced by *Self-concept*;

4) Family is revolved around *Egotism* and *Current Security*; and

5) Situation is bound by *Freedom and Independence.*

In addition, this research is introducing a sixth factor to be incorporated into the existing CDM model. The sixth factor is termed as Opportunity, which relates to *Future Opportunities*. Therefore, the intrinsic value is:

6) Opportunity is perceived as building *Future Opportunities*.

7.4.2. Contribution: *Research Methodology*

To facilitate the investigation of non-rational factors with intrinsic influences, a data collection method encompassing a thorough process of eleven steps in-depth semi-structured interview technique called ZMET is deemed most suitable to elicit hidden, unspoken feelings reflecting the phenomenon under study. ZMET stands for Zaltman Metaphor of Elicitation Technique; developed and used by the former Harvard Business School Emeritus Professor Gerald Zaltman to explore metaphoric expressions (Zaltman, 1997). As the first commercially patented marketing research technique in the American history (US Patent 5,436,830; filed 2-1-93; issue 7-25-95), Gerald Zaltman, the founder and co-owner of the consulting firm Olson Zaltman Associates, has consulted various corporations such as Procter & Gamble, Coca-Cola and Motorola in eliciting their consumers' insights using the ZMET technique. ZMET is allowed and has been used by various academic researchers as depicted in Appendix 1 (p. 237); however, to the best of the researcher's knowledge, ZMET has not been used in the context similar to this research. Hence, the methodological contribution to knowledge in the context of HE services for this research.

7.4.3. Recommendation: *Practical applications for HEI Practitioners and International Students Recruiters*

Practitioners in HEIs could benefit from this research by acknowledging and understanding that whilst rational factors are commonly used in marketing communications collaterals, non-rational factors with intrinsic influences such as emotional elements and symbolic values, have been expressed by the select sample group as the influential factors and even tie-breakers in their pre-purchase evaluation and decision behaviour for selecting the UK as their HE migration destination. These six emergent constructs reflected in the revised conceptual framework and the three emergent themes are strong empirical findings to be used as an 'insider' intelligence of the unspoken insights to assist the implementation of strategic and tactical approaches in the recruitment of Malaysian students.

7.4.4. Recommendation: *Practical implications for Policy Makers of HE*

This research also provides an 'insider' view of Malaysian students' HE migration behaviour and decisions to policy makers of HE in Malaysia and UK. Policy makers identified as potential benefactors from this research are Education Malaysia (UK & Eire), British Council and UK Council for International Students Affairs (UKCISA).

UKCISA (2015:1) posits that "recruitment to many [UK] universities has also been affected with, for instance, 'numbers of overseas entrants to higher education in England declining in 2012-13 for the first time in 29 years' - and only a marginal increase in overall numbers throughout the UK in 2013-14." All three policy makers identified work closely with the Ministry of Education in their respective countries and cross borders to ensure the well-being, safety and value for international students pursuing HE in the UK. With the consistent drop in student numbers over the last 29 years, a change in approaching this issue with an 'insider' perspective gained from this research may be one of the many solutions to overcome the problem.

7.5. Significance

The UKCISA (2015:1) expressed concerns for the status and well-being of international students in the UK saying that [international students] "have been caught up in the complex and contentious rhetoric of 'cutting down on abuse' and 'reducing net migration' and a range of increasingly restrictive rules and procedures have been imposed on institutions, both

public and private, throughout the education sector." To add to these negative publicities are the revoking of international students visa licence in London Metropolitan University, which resulted in many international students being deported to their home countries, and the abolition of the two-year Post-Study Work (PSW) visa upon completion of HE in the UK, have fuelled negative publicity even further. However, before the negative publicity bubble burst, small but effective steps need to be implemented to salvage the pristine, high quality and caring image - the halo effect - of 'British Education' still carries as evident in this research's findings. However, this halo effect and perception may be easily tarnished by negative publicity. Therefore, it will be a shame to ignore the concept of 'prevention is better than cure' (Erasmus, n.d.) to strengthen this [UK's] halo effect and its perceptions.

Findings from this research has provided the 'insider' information, desire, influential factors and decision making behaviours, which are some of the many components needed in strengthening the halo effect of 'British Education' when implemented by HEIs, policy makers and the Ministry of Education.

7.6.   Strengths

There are three main strengths that enhanced this research: Research scope, ZMET as data collection method and the researcher's background.

7.6.1. *Research Scope*

The first strength is the research scope where focus is emphasised on the phenomenon of HE migration destination selection and decision behaviour of Malaysian students. This emphasis provides the researcher the avenue to concentrate on the research aim, which is to elicit deeper, richer insights of the phenomenon being studied in order to understand the intrinsic influences within influential non-rational factors.

With this focus, the *first* and *second research questions* of 'what', 'where' or 'who' are the source of information and the source of external influences that the select sample relied on were answered throughout in Chapter 4 highlighting the findings. The *third* and *fourth research questions* of whether the non-rational factors are of intrinsic value, and how these factors influence Malaysian students' pre-purchase evaluation and decision making behaviour

were also answered in Chapter 4 (pp. 124, 128, 131, 133, 135, 138) in the form of emergent constructs and Chapter 5 (pp. 152, 157, 162) in the form of emergent themes - with the assistance of the researcher's reflexive stances. The *fifth* [final] *research question* is 'to evaluate whether these non-rational factors [emergent constructs] resonates with the PPToM', which also answers this research's final objective to embed these non-rational factors back into the existing theoretical framework as shown in the revised conceptual framework depicted in Chapter 4 (p. 147). Four *research objectives*: (1) previous researches' findings; (2) investigation of intrinsic influences within non-rational factors; (3) application of findings into theoretical framework; and (4) recommendation of a revised conceptual framework suitable for this research's context, have been addressed and depicted throughout this thesis; and a written synopsis about them in this chapter (Section 7.3: p. 181).

7.6.2. *ZMET as data collection method*

The second strength is the use of ZMET as the elicitation method during interviews and to be supported and validated by focus group conversations. ZMET is a hybrid methodology grounded in various domains, including verbal and no-verbal communication, visual sociology, visual anthropology, semiotics and mental imagery (Christensen and Olson, 2002; Zaltman and Coulter, 1995). It is designed with eleven steps of laddering semi-structured techniques to elicit the participants' hidden thoughts, emotions and intrinsic values. For this research, each step within ZMET was purposeful and also acts as a validation tool against every other previous step by eliminating redundancies, reinforcing repetitions, rethinking specifics responses and recapping decisions.

7.6.3. *Researcher's Background*

Finally, the researcher's background provides the relevant insights to undertake this research. With similar lived experience and cultural understandings as the participants' lived experience during the phenomenon under study, the researcher is able to provide reflexive stances of the participants' expressions from both personal and epistemic stances in the form of ethnographic principle of cultural interpretation. These reflexive accounts provide deeper understanding of the cultural nuances surrounding the multi-ethnic community that the participants lived on a daily basis affecting the choices of their decision making.

7.7.   Limitations

There are three limitations surrounding this research: Participants recruitment process, ZMET's recommendation and process, and ZMET's recommended sample size and its generalisability.

7.7.1. *Participants recruitment process*

Recruiting Malaysian students for this research from the whole of the UK was a challenging task. This is complicated by the multi-racial make-up of Malaysian students. An additional complication in this recruitment process is the four different university groups within the UK's HE system spreading over more than 300 universities. With such a spectrum of possibilities, the researcher divided the UK into three regions: North, Central and South. Within each region, three to four universities were selected covering all four university groups. The selection process followed the stratified random sampling method suggested by David and Sutton (2011:230) "…to produce more representative samples…by characterising variables…for example, sex or social class, age group or ethnicity." With this sampling method, only eleven universities were covered. This however, achieved a fairly equal distribution of university groups, gender and racial mix representing Malaysian students.

7.7.2. *ZMET's recommendation and process*

The second limitation is the rigorous process of ZMET. While the benefits outweigh the limitations for ZMET, the main drawback is the number of images that was asked by the researcher of the participants. Zaltman (1997) recommended eight to twelve images. However, the researcher thought it would be a good idea to request the participants to bring with them ten to twelve images – just to be safe. While collecting ten to twelve images may not be an issue, however, having each image being questioned with the laddering technique embedded in ZMET is exhausting for both the researcher and the participants. Based on this context, the researcher feels that eight images as recommended by Zaltman (1997) were adequate for this research to elicit the hidden unspoken reasons behind the participants' HE migration decision as there were eleven steps in this data elicitation technique which lasts an average of one to one-and-half hours each. While many positivist-skewed researches assume the doctrine of "the larger the sample size, the smaller the chance of a sampling error" (Marshall, 1996:522) to arrive at a generalisation and conclusion, this research is interpretive-led, which seeks to elicit deeper, richer insights of a focused phenomenon. Therefore, the

researcher feels that as long as data saturation is achieved, the "less-is-better" effect proposed by Hsee (1998) is more suitable in the gathering of data for a phenomenological interpretative means of analysis. This was evident in this research when consistent, similar feelings were expressed in the first eight images for each participant. The remaining four images' expressions depicted similar constructs.

7.7.3. *ZMET's recommended sample size and its generalisability.*

Validation studies using ZMET indicate that from a sample size of eight to twelve participants, four to five in-depth interviews that are focused on identifying and understanding core themes can provide 90% of the information available from a large data set, hence, providing data saturation (Zaltman and Coulter, 1995; Christensen and Olson, 2002; Lee et al., 2003; Vorell et al., 2003; Sease, 2005; Khoo-Lattimore et al., 2009). The findings of these previous researches support the merits of this elicitation method despite its complexity and labour intensity. While ZMET is apt to elicit elicits both conscious and unconscious thoughts by exploring metaphoric expressions and providing data saturation with four to five participants providing 90% of information from a large data set, the limitation lies in the fact that ZMET is mainly used for researchers that do not require their findings to be generalized. Small sample size also rules out population projectability; however, as with most qualitative researches, the main focus is to gain rich, insightful representation of the select sample population rather than being concerned with generalisation (Zaltman and Coulter, 1995) to represent other populations. Findings from this research portray another dimension of influencing factors which are important for practitioners and policy makers alike, and the enhancement of academic knowledge in the form of generating new insights and theories. These findings solely represent the consensus of the participants [Malaysian students] who have selected the UK as their HE migration destination as the cultural nuances and implications may be different from that of other countries.

7.8. Future Research

There is [almost] no end to doing research. As depicted in this research, the review of the many literatures and findings on the CDM model and the PPToM specifically focused on international students' HE migration patterns and behaviours, but there was still a research gap to sanction this research. Amongst the many options for future research, the pertinent

four, according to the researcher, are a longitudinal study, a geographical extension study, a comparison study and a revised conceptual framework study.

7.8.1. *Longitudinal study*

This research performed an interview on each participant. While it was appropriate for this research, it would be a possible future research project to investigate the difference in responses by the same participants given the changes in their lived experienced before entering the UK and during their time spent in the UK, or after they have completed their HE in the UK and have returned to Malaysia.

7.8.2. *Geographical extension study*

Malaysia is located in the regions of ASEAN and Asia. Therefore there are plenty of cultural similarities between Malaysia and the other countries within these regions. This research's aim and methodology can be extended geographically to investigate the influential non-rational factors affecting the HE migration behaviours in the ASEAN countries such as Thailand, Brunei, Singapore, Indonesia, Philippines, Vietnam, Laos, Myanmar and Cambodia. There are also cultural similarities in China, India, South Korea, Sri Lanka and Japan, which are in the Asian region.

7.8.3. *Comparison study*

This research focused on Malaysian students. The recommended geographical extension future research can focus on two or more countries within a research with its aim to compare the phenomenological based insights. This will be an interesting study especially when two countries with similar cultural nuances which may portray a divergent in their results.

7.8.4. *Revised conceptual framework study*

This research has delivered four original contributions with six emergent constructs and three emergent themes elicited from a pilot test, twelve ZMET interviews, two focus group conversations and the researcher's personal reflexive stances based on the ethnographic principle of cultural interpretation. With the revised conceptual framework of the CDM model underpinned by the PPToM, the possibility of using this revised conceptual framework for future research raises opportunities to investigate a wider variety of participants and host countries as an option by using this research's revised conceptual framework as the research model.

The four recommended future research directions are, in one way or another, linked to or an extension of, the methodology used within or the findings generated from, this research. It is equally important to note that there is an array of migration theories that could be adopted for future researches linked to [international students] migration, which measure the effects of current global phenomena such as global capitalism, as well as theories linked to cultural and social capital.

7.9.   Conclusion

This research has revealed Malaysian students' hidden intentions, which are unconscious, in their HE migration decisions. They consist of emotional elements which have intrinsic links to the participants' aspirations and symbolic values which are secretly desired to enhance their current status. These unspoken feelings are embedded within the non-rational factors which have been revealed and presented in the form of six emergent constructs: (1) *egotism*; (2) *self-concept*; (3) *current security*; (4) *future security*; (5) *freedom and independence*; and (6) *future opportunities*, as depicted in a Consensus Mental Map in Figure 4.1 (p. 123). These emergent constructs then led to the emergence of three core themes: (1) *Fulfilling their emotional needs for acceptance*; (2) *Satisfying their spiritual pleas for freedom and independence*; and (3) *Providing a promise for a greater self-worth*. The emergence of both constructs and themes was the result guided by the interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) in analysing the data collected from ZMET's eleven-step in-depth interviews and focus group conversations. These were then validated and informed by the researcher's reflexive stances through the ethnographic principle of cultural interpretations.

The limited findings and theoretical underpinnings of non-rational factors in the current field of literatures were highlighted as the research gap provided a valid reason supporting the undertaking of this research. The participants' perspectives of their experiences during the phenomenon of selecting a host country for their HE migration addressed the research gap by providing a clearer understanding of their intrinsic intentions and decision making behaviours.

The originality of this research was the use of ZMET interview techniques in the context of eliciting hidden, unconscious intentions among participants in the HE sector. This combination, ZMET and HE sector, to the best of the researcher's knowledge, is a first

attempt. This is then validated with the ethnographic principle of cultural interpretations by the researcher's reflexive stances to validate the findings.

Finally, with the PPToM underpinning the CDM model, the six emergent constructs which sit within it, are then embedded into the 'Environmental Influences' based on the reasons and associations expressed by the participants as illustrated in the Consensus Mental Map (Figure 4.1: p. 123). The existing five factors from the 'Environmental Influences' of the CDM model are underpinned by the *emergent constructs* which are emotional and symbolic in values.

1) Culture is being influenced by *Egotism*;

2) Social Class is reinforced by *Self-concept* and *Future Security*;

3) Personal Influences is enhanced by *Self-concept*;

4) Family is revolved around *Egotism* and *Current Security*; and

5) Situation is bound by *Freedom and Independence*.

In addition, this research is introducing a sixth factor to be incorporated into the existing CDM model. The sixth factor is termed as Opportunity, which relates to *Future Opportunities*. Therefore, the intrinsic value is:

6) Opportunity is perceived as building *Future Opportunities*.

7.10. Reflecting on the research

The first section of this research title "Revealing the unspoken" suggests that there is 'something' amiss when potential students relied on their 'gut feeling' as their final influential factor in selecting a host country to pursue their HE abroad. This is made even more sceptical despite them [potential students] evaluating countless rational factors and several theoretical models explaining the flow of decision making process to be used as guidance. As a former international student in a foreign country, the researcher also relied on 'gut feeling' after evaluating several relevant rational factors, such as the types of programmes and financial viability, to reach a final decision on selecting America as it was perceived as 'cool' at the period of decision making back in 1991. Therefore, the suspicion of this sceptical thought triggered the interest in the researcher to pursue this research topic. This research's scope covers Malaysia students and the UK as the HE migration destination [host country] as the researcher too, is a Malaysian, a former international student who has a similar lived experience - culturally, socially and politically - and the phenomenon of having

to decide on a host country surrounding these nuances. While being a Malaysian, the researcher has been living and working in the UK for more than five years, which provided the researcher with the added perspectives of being an insider (emic) and an outsider (etic) at analysing the intrinsic influences affecting their decision making behaviour in selecting the UK as their HE migration destination choice. Hence the second section of this research title "Malaysian students' intrinsic influences in selecting the UK for Higher Education migration."

Methodologically, interpretive phenomenology and interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) provided the researcher the avenue to extract verbatim expressions from the participants which are unique voices; voices that are unspoken, unseen and unheard of before this research. They are voices and expressions which imply non-rational factors that are of great influential strength. The researcher followed Skeggs' (2002) advice by using reflexivity to relate and validate the sentiments expressed through the participants' lived experiences. The researcher integrated meaningful personal and epistemic views of the 'self', knowledge and experiences to empower and create meaning for each extracted expression. The ethnographic principle of cultural interpretation provided the researcher with both emic and etic positions from two differing cultural backgrounds and research status contributes to inform the research process and experiences faced through this research journey; and to shape the emergent constructs and themes.

Malaysians are generally categorised by Hofstede (2011) as being Hierarchical, where highest power distance [respect for parents and positions of authority] are usually expected and commonly practiced. Initially, the researcher felt that the participants were reserved with their responses and this was due to the position of the researcher – an academic – which carries the position of authority. This was quickly dissolved by the researcher's emic [insider] role which blended comfortably with the participants when the researcher assured them of his role as being non-threatening, non-authoritative and having commonalities with them in terms of a being a Malaysian and a former international students. This was further strengthen when the researcher incorporated some Bahasa Malaysia (Malaysian national language) mixed with the English language and some Mandarin language mixed with Chinese dialects. Colloquial words, expressions and humour were also incorporated into the interviews and conversations. This combination of revealing my emic position eased the

participants into providing their honest opinions and expressions which were more confidential and detailed (Merleau-Ponty, 1962).

Whilst the setting of a one-to-one interview or a group of participants [all Malaysian students in the UK] may have provided the sense of security to reveal their private and hidden thoughts, the researcher believes that the role as an insider within the researcher is a major reason for their willingness to provide these private sentiments, which the researcher also believe that it would not have been the same if the researcher did not possess the insider role. In addition, being an insider, a Malaysian and a non-British in particular, the participants did not feel the pressure to have to be politically correct in providing their opinions – in fear of insulting a British or anything Britain; and they are also not required to provide opinions merely to impress as the researcher was viewed as equal – a Malaysian in the UK.

Finally, the researcher discovered that he was in the same shoes as the participants even though they were students and the researcher was a professional academic. It gave light to the researcher that having changed only one variable in his career move, which is the location from Malaysia to the UK, the perception that his fellow Malaysians, the participants and acquaintances from other countries has also changed from "a Senior Lecturer" to "a Senior Lecturer from the UK!" The researcher does admit that it was a good feeling when the latter was perceived of the researcher. The same feeling was expressed by the participants on several occasions on being labelled as a graduate from the UK. However, with all honesty, the researcher still have the utmost respect for his colleagues from the Malaysian academia as their capabilities and great work ethics are at par with the ones in the UK - the only difference is the location which provided the symbolic label that is attached to it.

7.11. Concluding words

Overall, this doctoral research journey has provided many 'lesson learnt' moments, and even more 'knowledge gained' moments coupled with enlightening discoveries. A challenging journey as the researcher was determined to complete it at a full-time pace even though he was registered as a part-time candidate given his full-time job at the university. However, it was a worthwhile decision to persevere and complete it in just over four years - an effort greatly contributed by many; and in particular, the guidance from both his supervisors: Dr. Christopher Brown and Dr. Peter Fraser. Thank you Chris and Peter for your patience and guidance throughout this rewarding journey.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Previous researches using ZMET: From 2000 to 2014

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Appendix 2: List of guiding questions for focus group conversations

1) What do you feel when you hear the word UK university? and What is the first thing that comes to your mind?

2) In one word, what is your first thought on why you choose to study in a UK university?

3) What were the sources of information that you guys look for when selecting universities?

4) Among all these sources that you get your information from, which one do you think is the most reliable?

5) Amongst the sources of information that you have used, were they mostly positive, negative or neutral?

6) What is the ranking of the university that you have chosen?

7) Which league table did you see you ranking from?

8) In terms of reputation and education quality: UK education versus local, what are your views and why?

9) Do you think employers prefer UK graduates compared to other Western university graduates?

10) Does a UK graduate have more competitive edge than other non-UK graduates? What is your competitive edge?

11) What do you think that extra competitive edge that you have above other graduates?

12) Final question: Complete this sentence. "I am a UK university student. Therefore, I feel…"

Appendix 3: Ethics Approval: Protocol Number

UNIVERSITY OF HERTFORDSHIRE
SOCIAL SCIENCES, ARTS AND HUMANITIES

ETHICS APPROVAL NOTIFICATION

TO   Mr Alex Lee

CC   Dr C Brown & Dr P Fraser

FROM   Dr Tim Parke, Social Sciences, Arts and Humanities ECDA Chairman

DATE   20/3/15

Protocol number: **BS/R/011-10**

Title of study: Understanding The Influencing Factors and Decision Making Process of Malaysia Students in Selecting UK Higher Education Institutions.

The study named above was granted UH Ethics Approval by the ECDA Humanities, Law and Education, and Business School on the 16 November 2010.

Please note:

Approval applies specifically to the research study/methodology and timings as detailed in your ethics paperwork. Should you amend any aspect of your research, or wish to apply for an extension to your study, you will need your supervisor's approval and must complete and submit form EC2. In cases where the amendments to the original study are deemed to be substantial, a new Form EC1 may need to be completed prior to the study being undertaken.

Should adverse circumstances arise during this study such as physical reaction/harm, mental/emotional harm, intrusion of privacy or breach of confidentiality this must be reported to the approving Committee immediately. Failure to report adverse circumstance/s would be considered misconduct.

Ensure you quote the UH protocol number and the name of the approving Committee on all paperwork, including recruitment advertisements/online requests, for this study.

Students may be required to include this Approval Notification with their submission.

Appendix 4: UKCISA: A Manifesto for International Students

UK Council for International Student Affairs

February 2015

UKCISA President: Baroness Usha Prashar CBE

A manifesto for international students

Over the last 2-3 years, international students (and especially those from outside the EU) have been caught up in the complex and contentious rhetoric of 'cutting down on abuse' and 'reducing net migration' and a range of increasingly restrictive rules and procedures have been imposed on institutions, both public and private, throughout the education sector.

- Many **private colleges** have been forced to close – some for inadequate controls but many others who have found it impossible to operate or to attract students under the current regime. It is estimated that recruitment and earnings to this sector have reduced by some 70%.
- Recruitment to **publicly funded further education colleges**, which was often a pathway into higher education for many, has also been reduced very significantly with numbers dropping from c 90,000 to c 30,000 – substantially reducing college income and resources.
- Recruitment to many **universities** has also been affected with, for instance, 'numbers of overseas entrants to higher education in England declining in 2012-13 for the first time in 29 years' – and only a marginal increase in overall numbers throughout the UK in 2013-14.

There is therefore now widespread concern throughout the education sector (and more widely) that the UK is not taking advantage of what is a rapidly expanding global market of strategic importance to the UK and will not be able to do so unless there are changes to our visa policies and the complex way in which the rules are currently administered.

As we move towards and then beyond an election this year, we are therefore putting forward the following principles and recommendations for changes to rules and procedures which we believe would

- make the UK a far more attractive and welcoming destination for well qualified international students
- help to re-establish trust in the UK and our position and reputation worldwide
- increase very significantly student numbers and income contributing to economic growth and prosperity for our institutions and local communities and
- advance the UK's standing and influence in the world.

Prof Paul Webley

Director of SOAS, University of London, and Chair, UKCISA Board of Trustees

UKCISA

1. The whole of government needs to recognise and celebrate the financial, cultural and intellectual value of international students to the UK.

In financial terms alone, international students are worth some £14bn annually to the UK economy. They add resources to our institutions and intellectual capital to our academic and research base. They help to sustain courses in high priority subject areas and expand the horizons and perspectives of our UK students many of whom will work in international companies. They bring jobs to our universities and colleges and income to local communities and they enhance our links and reputation globally. In an expanding international 'market', there is considerable potential for growth which needs to be recognised, supported and encouraged by all parts of government.

2. After a period of reform, international students should now be excluded from all further policy and debate on reducing net migration.

There is now clear evidence that recent rule changes and rhetoric, largely driven by policies on reducing net migration, have directly led to a slowdown in recruitment and a loss of trust in the UK. Research shows however that the British public do not see international students as 'migrants' and six Parliamentary Committees have now recommended that students be excluded from net migration targets. This now needs to be accepted by government, as a matter or principle, as any further visa related restrictions in pursuit of migration targets would cause lasting damage to one of the UK's most successful assets and export (and potentially growth) industries.

3. The rules and procedures governing international students have become so complex that they now require fundamental review.

The current system was originally designed as a 'transparent and objective points-based system' but has been undermined by the introduction of subjective 'credibility tests' - even for those who have successfully completed one course and wish to do further study. There is a duplication of roles and processes by multiple agencies leading to poor service, unnecessary costs and inconvenience. Many postgraduate students need ATAS clearance from the Foreign Office, all (non-EU) students need to supply biometrics and apply for visas (from the Home Office), all then have to collect Biometric Information Documents (from a Post Office) and nationals of over 40 countries have to additionally register with the Police. Institutions then have to keep duplicate records

of all these authorisations. The Tier 4 Sponsor and Policy Guidance runs to some 250 pages (with multiple versions each year) and according to the Higher Education Better Regulation Group (HEBRG) UK universities, albeit 'Highly Trusted', are now having to spend some £67m annually on compliance systems – even where there is minimal or no evidence of risk or abuse. Given the complexity, duplication, unnecessary barriers, cost and inconvenience, the current system now requires radical review in consultation with key stakeholders.

4. Further measures being introduced by the Immigration Act need to be carefully monitored and if found to be counter-productive, urgently withdrawn.

There are extensive concerns that the new requirement for landlords to check the immigration status of tenants (including international students), could result in either overt discrimination or at the very least yet one more barrier to students arriving in the UK. The imposition of a health service levy on, amongst others, international students who make comparatively light use of health services and in any case bring so much income into the UK also appears to be unwise and unwelcoming and if it leads to a reduction in numbers, financially damaging to the UK. The withdrawal of appeal rights and their replacement by administrative review also needs careful, independent monitoring to ensure the new system is both fair and effective. Any proposals to introduce additional restrictions should be opposed robustly as there is already evidence of disenchantment and some loss of trust in the UK and could well result in possibly large numbers of well qualified students opting to study elsewhere.

5. Part-time work entitlements for international students need to be standardized.

The current system of differential entitlements to work part-time during studies for those in either further or higher education and a total ban on work for students at private colleges even if they are studying at degree level or above is unnecessarily complex (for students and for employers), divisive and indefensible. It is also the subject of considerable confusion and mistakes by Home Office staff attempting to interpret unnecessarily complex distinctions, leading again to increased costs and confusion. In terms of equality and natural justice all students on Tier 4 visas at 'Highly Trusted Sponsor' institutions, at whatever level of study and whether in the public or private sector, should be subject to the same rules and entitled to work for up to 20 hours in term time and full time in vacation.

A manifesto for international students

6. All students at graduate or postgraduate level should be entitled to a limited period of post study work in the UK (and/or longer on their current visas to find Tier 2 jobs).

There is also widespread evidence of the damaging impact of the abolition of the Post-Study Work scheme and loss of graduate talent from the UK. Enabling well qualified international students to gain work experience is increasingly important to them and to UK companies who need their skills and knowledge of the export markets from which they come. Many leading figures in business and industry have recently called for the introduction of new measures to encourage and enable talented international students to move into employment categories, albeit for a temporary period, and with economy expanding and international competition increasing, these need to be introduced as soon as possible. (Requiring students to return home to re-apply for re-entry under a different scheme would clearly be one more disincentive and result in a further loss of skills and talent).

7. No student who has not been found to be at fault should have their visa curtailed merely because their sponsor has lost their licence.

It is indefensible for innocent students – including some 6,000 in 2014 – to be penalised in this way when their studies have already been disrupted and when many have already lost course fees and the current system of merely allowing them 60 days to find a new course or leave the UK is entirely inadequate. Students have relied on the Home Office's designation of the institution as 'Highly Trusted' and the Home Office therefore has, at the very least, a duty to allow current students to complete their courses at those institutions or to agree concessions to help them find places elsewhere.

8. All students should have access to some form of student protection scheme and independent arbitration when disputes cannot be resolved internally.

All students coming to the UK need to be assured – and especially after so many colleges have closed over the last 12 months leaving students with no refunds or compensation - that if their institution cannot meet its obligations for whatever reasons, then alternative measures will guarantee them the support they need and government needs to take urgent steps to ensure suitable procedures are in place as they are in leading competitor countries such as Australia, New Zealand and Ireland.

9. All students to be eligible for visa concessions and special support at times of national crisis or when faced with particular difficulties.

Sadly but increasingly students can find that it is difficult or impossible to continue their studies in the UK when a crisis, war or some natural disaster occurs at home. They often cannot transfer funds or obtain documents, may need to take time off or extend their studies rather than return to what is essentially a disaster or war zone. Recently only Syrians have been assisted with visa concessions and more needs to be done to support others in similar circumstances from a much wider range of countries. In addition, those granted 'discretionary leave' by the Home Office, often as the result of an asylum application, should be eligible for both Student Support and 'home' fee status, in any part of the UK. And those who have sought asylum but not had their claims determined within the Government's six-month service standard, should be given appropriate assistance to enable them to access higher education. Given the huge numbers of students who come to and place their trust in the UK, it is only right that government – and indeed institutions – should support those in particular times of need.

10. Government should develop and implement a global communications campaign and clear strategy to re-assure international students that they are welcome in the UK.

Given the restrictions which have been introduced in recent years (to work, to dependants, to levels of study, to language competence, to 'progression', to maximum years of study) it is perhaps remarkable that the UK has continued to attract so many international students. There is however now clear evidence that these have led to a loss of trust in some major markets and for possibly large numbers of well qualified students deciding to study elsewhere.

This trust now needs to be re-built through

- A clear message from the government as a whole that the UK welcomes every single well qualified student who wishes to come and looks to increase quite substantially the numbers choosing the UK in the future for either further or higher education.
- Visa rule changes and improved processes which make the UK more rather than less attractive to well qualified applicants and
- Funds to support projects across the country to improve and strengthen aspects of the UK welcome and experience, and which demonstrate that the UK is indeed once again the leading destination for international students from any part of the world.

Revealing the Unspoken: Malaysian Students; Intrinsic Influences; HE Migration Decision to the UK.

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Key principles and recommendations

1 The whole of government needs to recognise and celebrate the financial, cultural and intellectual value of international students to the UK.

2 After a period of reform, international students should now be excluded from all further policy and debate on reducing net migration.

3 The rules and procedures governing international students have become so complex that they now require fundamental review.

4 Further measures being introduced by the Immigration Act need to be carefully monitored and if found to be counter-productive, urgently withdrawn.

5 Part-time work entitlements for international students need to be standardized.

6 All students at graduate or postgraduate level should be entitled to a limited period of post study work in the UK (and/or longer on their current visas to find Tier 2 jobs).

7 No student who has not been found to be at fault should have their visa curtailed merely because their sponsor has lost their licence.

8 All students should have access to some form of student protection scheme and independent arbitration when disputes cannot be resolved internally.

9 All students to be eligible for visa concessions and special support at times of national crisis or when faced with particular difficulties.

10 Government should develop and implement a global communications campaign and clear strategy to re-assure international students that they are welcome in the UK.

The **UK Council for International Student Affairs** is the UK's national advisory body serving the interests of international students and those who work with them.

UKCISA's membership includes:
- every university in the UK
- the majority of publicly funded higher and further education colleges which are active internationally
- a number of independent schools and private colleges and
- a range of specialist and representative bodies

Further copies of this Manifesto are available from publications@ukcisa.org.uk
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