

**STUDENTS' CHOICE INTENTION OF A HIGHER LEARNING INSTITUTION:
AN APPLICATION OF THEORY OF REASONED ACTION (TRA)**

by

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DEDICATION

Praised to **ALLAH** the Almighty for endowing me with perseverance to endure all the challenges to reach this far. Gratitude to my father, **Haji Hassan Mohamud**, and my mother, **Hajjah Samsiah Ismail**. An appreciation to my humble and caring wife, **Solehah Md Yusof** for her love and understanding. A dedication to my brothers and sisters for their assistance. Last but not the least, thanks to others whom directly or indirectly become part of this endeavor.

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ABSTRAK

Kajian yang telah dijalankan ini adalah bertujuan bagi mengenalpasti penentu-penentu bagi niat pelajar-pelajar menengah atas sama ada untuk memilih institusi pengajian tinggi swasta atau pun awam. Teori Tindakan Beralasan oleh Fishbein dan Ajzen telah digunakan sebagai asas kepada kajian ini. Teori ini mencadangkan bahawa penentu paling hampir kepada perlakuan adalah niat. Niat ditentukan oleh sikap terhadap perlakuan dan norma subjektif yang dipertimbangkan. Sikap terhadap perlakuan dan norma subjektif ditentukan oleh gabungan kepercayaan, penilaian, dan motivasi untuk menyetujui. Intisari kepercayaan utama sikap dan norma subjektif terhadap institusi pengajian tinggi swasta dan awam telah dikenal pasti. Seramai 146 orang pelajar dari lingkungan umur 16 tahun sehingga 24 tahun telah mengambil bahagian dalam satu soal-selidik yang dijalankan bagi tujuan pengumpulan data yang berkaitan. Hipotesis yang dihasilkan berdasarkan teori ini telah berjaya disahkan. Hipotesis tambahan yang merangkumi pemboleh ubah demografi sosial telah juga diuji. Daripada data yang telah dianalisis, hanya latar belakang etnik pelajar telah memberikan keputusan ujian yang signifikan. Berdasarkan kajian, dapat disimpulkan bahawa sikap dan norma subjektif terhadap perlakuan dapat menjelaskan dengan signifikan sejumlah variasi di dalam niat perlakuan bagi kedua-dua institusi pengajian tinggi swasta dan awam. Sikap terhadap perlakuan secara relatifnya mempunyai pengaruh yang lebih berbanding dengan norma subjektif bagi kedua-dua institusi pengajian tinggi swasta dan awam.

ABSTRACT

The purpose of the conducted study is to identify the determinants of upper secondary level students' intention whether to choose a private or a public higher learning institution. Fishbein and Ajzen's Theory of Reasoned Action was used as a basis for this study. The theory posits that the immediate determinant of behavior is intention. Intention is determined by the weighted attitude toward the behavior and the weighted subjective norm. Combinations of beliefs, evaluations, and motivation to comply determine attitude and subjective norm toward behavior. Cores of salient beliefs related to attitude toward private higher learning institution and public higher learning institution and cores of salient beliefs related to subjective norm for private higher learning institution and public higher learning institution were identified. A total of 146 students from the age of 16 years to 24 years took part in a survey conducted to collect relevant data. Hypotheses generated from the theory were confirmed. Additional hypotheses that incorporated socio-demographic factors were also tested. The finding from the analysis of data collected showed that only the student ethnic background gave a significant result. The finding also showed that attitude toward behavior and subjective norm explained significantly amounts of variance in behavioral intention for both private and public higher learning institutions. Attitude toward behavior had a greater relative weight than subjective norm for both private and public higher learning institutions.

Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

Consumers are constantly faced with choosing among different product and services, models and brands, among different available styles and size, among the different stores or outlets, and so on. The issue of choice and the process through which individuals make their choices are a prime concern for consumer researchers. Recognition of the importance of consumer behavior has led researchers to analyze the factors that influence consumer choice more closely. Numerous studies conducted by researchers within this field have pointed out that a combination of a cognitive, motivational, and affective processes underlie every single consumer decisions (Schiffman & Kanuk, 1994). In turn, these processes are greatly influenced by the interplay of three factors. The first factor is the individual consumer (internal factor), the consumer's needs, perceptions, and attitudes. In addition, the consumer's demographic, life-style and personality characteristics may also influence the decision. The two other factors (external factors) are environmental influences and marketing strategies (Assael, 1992). Culture, social class, face-to-face groups, and situational determinants represent environmental influence. Marketing strategy, represents variables within the control of the marketer namely product, price, promotion, and distribution.

Changes in demographic, economic, and public policy have transformed the local higher educational marketplace. With greater number of players offering the educational products, competition for buyers have increased significantly. What we are observing in the educational marketplace now is the initial stage of transition from

a seller's market to a new buyer's market in which buyers will have more bargaining power and can afford to become very demanding in choosing the educational products. This is an era of rising student consumerism, where students are designated as principal consumers of the market-oriented education system. As competition has increased, so has the application of marketing in the field of higher education (Kotler, 1994, 1991, 1985).

Educational marketers must attempt to answer a fundamental question: How do students choose a particular higher learning institution from the enormous number of alternatives? This question parallels a common marketing question in business: How do consumers choose a particular product or service? The role of attracting consumers to a product and having those consumers make a purchase is the most important function of marketing. With regards to overt purchasing response, it is a matter of utmost importance to understand how students choose the best higher learning institution, the kind of information that will influence the decision, and their attitude towards this behavior.

Since the original investigation of factors used by potential students in selecting a higher learning institution (Holland, 1958), a large body of education research has sought to learn why students select a particular higher learning institution. Most of these researchers have agreed that the fundamental idea is that students will select those institution that match their selection criteria academically, socially, and financially (Brown, 1991; Wilbur, 1988).

The theme of choosing the alternatives between service rendered by public and private institutions is nothing new in the field of consumer research. With reference to Malaysia, there are numerous studies that used the premise of public versus private services as the point of departure for their researches, particularly for

those public services that have been privatized or corporatized. The study of factors influencing consumers preference for maternity clinics (Feroz Ahmad, 1996) for instance, utilized this theme to find out about the important factors in the services provided by both public and private maternity clinics that determine consumers final preference.

The current research can be considered as another extension of public versus private theme. In this research the services provided by higher learning institutions will be the subject of interest. For the reasons of simplicity and convenience, the higher learning institutions will only comprise all the universities and colleges in Malaysia which have been grouped either under **Public Higher Learning Institution** or under **Private Higher Learning Institutions**. In the education industry especially in higher learning education, the public institutions have been the dominant players in the marketplace for all these years with the blessing of government. It had taken years for these Public universities and community colleges to establish and build reputation for themselves. The private higher learning institutions on the other hand, only emerged and started to make an impact in the education marketplace toward the later end of the 1990s. Even when they can still be considered at the infant stage, the private higher learning institutions have much to offer and will definitely be a strong competitor to the public institutions in term of providing avenues for students to pursue higher education in the near future. With regard to this study, the public higher learning institutions in many aspects will still be the yardstick for the private higher learning institutions.

The question being posed here is about students as principal decision-makers in the position of having to choose between the public and the private higher learning institutions. It is important to acknowledge that the extent of choice available

incorporate the academic factors (quality of education, excellent lecturers, academic reputation), financial factors (study fees, lodging & transportation cost) and social factors (social environment, co-curriculum and sport activities). The focus of this study is to investigate the factors that lead students to form intention to select one higher learning institution rather the other.

1.2 Education and Marketing

The practical applications of understanding higher learning institution/college choice behavior can be communicated more clearly with the aid of the helpful concepts and terminology of academic marketing. The "marketing concept" for educational institutions means that higher learning institution will be able to achieve its goals most effectively by considering the preferences of potential students (Litten, Sullivan, and Brodigan 1983). It is necessary for higher learning institutions to adapt its programs and course offering to become more in touch with the need of its changing market. A clear and thorough understanding of a marketing concept is crucial for these institutions before they can start to embrace it. According to Kotler and Fox (1985) "Marketing is the analysis, planning, implementation, and control of carefully formulated programs designed to bring about voluntary exchanges of values with target markets to achieve institutional objectives". Therefore, the primary "task of the institution is to determine the needs and wants of target markets, and to satisfy them through...appropriate and competitively viable programs and services" (Kotler and Fox p.10). When these practices are applied in higher education, Litten (1980, p.4) refers to the process as "academic marketing".

According to Kotler (1985) higher learning institutions are learning to apply the marketing concept effectively by proceeding through the following steps:

Identify the competition. Identify the institutions with which they most often compete.

Determine their image and market position. Determine what image potential students have of their institution, and how this compares to the images students hold of their closest competitor.

Market segmentation. Divide potential students into groups according to student's characteristics, which may differentiate among them in terms of the relative attractiveness of their image and that of their competitors.

Once the higher learning institutions have already grasped the marketing concepts and are able to identify their desired marketing goals, the next step call for an appropriate formulation of a marketing strategy. Kotler and Fox (1985) define a marketing strategy as "the selection of a target market, the choice of competitive position, and the development of an effective marketing mix". The marketing mix in higher education is a combination of colleges attributes arranged in the following categories: programs, prices, promotion, and places of delivery.

The effective higher learning institution must develop and promote its attributes so that they generate the most effective match between the preferences of students with the desired characteristics and the institution mission. This means identifying target markets where students have desired characteristics and where enrollment could be increased through mission-consistent adjustments and improvements in program offerings, prices, the places where they are offered, and the effectiveness with which these attributes are accurately communicated and promoted.

1.3 Scope and Significant of Study

The study of higher learning institution choice behavior covers a very wide area and very complex in nature. Educational researchers with disciplinary backgrounds from sociology (Sewell & Shaw, 1968), economics (Fuller, Manski & Wise, 1982), and psychology (Chickering, 1969) have conducted much of research on college choice. Each study of the higher education choice behavior can be classified in one of the two primary categories: **macro-level** and **micro-level** studies. Further discussion with regard to the differences between these two categories of study will be included in the next chapter. In order to accommodate with the time frame given, this project will only focus at the micro-level study and only the influence of institution characteristics will be considered.

This study is conducted in an attempt to find out about the relative importance of attitude and subjective norm considerations that invariably lead students into making decision about their higher learning institution of choice. In this study all higher learning institutions have been categorized into two general groups. The two groups in consideration are the public and the private higher learning institutions.

1.4 Design of Investigation

For the purpose of gathering data for this study, questionnaires will be devised and used. Based on the result from previous studies conducted in the related area, list of important characteristics that consumers normally look for when choosing a higher learning institution as well as sources of references that may influence their decision have been identified. In this study the subject chosen as respondents are the public upper secondary students whom is between the age of 16 years to 24 years. A set of questionnaire that consist questions which reflect the theoretical framework of the

study then will be devised and distributed to the selected groups of respondents. The questionnaire consists of three parts. Part A of the questionnaire is made up of eight questions that covered the socio-demographic information of the respondents for classification purposes. (Refer Appendix A)

The second part of the questionnaire, part B consist of seventy questions that reflects the theoretical framework of the study that is: choice intention, intention, attitude toward behavior, subjective norm, behavioral beliefs, and motivation to comply. Given the complexity of indicating a long list of items a Likert scale restricted to five points will be used to measure the components to adapt to the statistic technique used.

The last part of the questionnaire, part C is an open ended questions asking for additional information especially for other characteristics that may influence respondents' selection of higher learning institution. This is important because the list of characteristics utilized in this study is by no mean exhaustive. Additional information gather might give a better input for a related study in the future.

1.5 Objectives of the Study

The aims of this study are to predict and understand customer (student) decision-making behavior. It is intended to investigate specifically the effect of:

1. Attitude (behavioral beliefs, social class, information, educational system) towards intention to choose between public and private higher learning institution.
2. Subjective norms (reference group, family, normative belief, motivation to comply) towards intention to choose between public and private higher learning institution.

3. Attitude and subjective norm towards intention to choose between public and private higher learning institution.

An attempt to investigate any types of relationship between the socio-demographic characteristics and the choice decision will also be included.

1.6 Research Question (Problem Statement)

The research questions are:

1. What are the factors that lead students to form intention?
2. Are local students greatly influenced by the socio environment or their personal nature when making a choice of a higher learning institution to pursue their study?
3. Do students value the diversity and utilize the information available for them in the education marketplace?
4. What are the socio-demographic factors that can be used to identify consumer segments?

1.7 Summary

The focus of this study is to investigate the factors that lead students to form an intention to choose one of higher learning institution rather than the other. Students may base their choices on private or public higher learning institution. In doing so, there are underlying factors involved such as attitude, and subjective social norms that will influence student choice intentions. This will be explained further in the next chapter.

Chapter 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Malaysia Education Industry

The education industry in Malaysia in recent years has gone through an interesting state of metamorphosis. Tremendous changes have taken place, transforming the once dormant and predictable industry into a lively and highly competitive industry. Traditionally, the education industry has been guarded and monitored under the watchful eyes of the Education Ministry. It is a known fact that in the past the demand for academic products is greater than what the industry can supply. During this period, the existing route to acquire a higher academic qualification is somehow limited. In line with the aspiration of having a nation with a knowledgeable society, the Malaysian government has acknowledged the urgent need to check this state of imbalance. The move to liberalize the education industry has been regarded by many as a strategic move to address the critical issue. This development is boosted further by the government's decision to establish Malaysia as a center for academic excellence within this region.

The liberalization in the government policy with regard to education industry has led to a significant increase in the number of players providing education services in the marketplace. While educationists welcome the establishment of more institutions, and the wider choices available to the student as a result, they are also concerned about the challenges that these new institutions are facing. One of the most pressing issues is the number of student enrolled with each institution. Last year there were 224,738 student enrolled in local private institutions. Among them, 215,850 were at private colleges, 8,185 at private universities and 703 at branch campuses of

foreign universities (The Sun, 16 Jan. 2000). Although the total enrollment appears to be large, this does not mean that the existing private colleges and universities are bursting at the seams. The fact is that most private colleges are not operating at their full capacity. In other words, there are not enough students to fill the current number of private higher learning institutions. As far as the public higher learning institutions are concerned, the enrollment of students into these institutions is not something of concern at least for the time being. Eventually in a very near future if the public higher learning institutions do not undertake the necessary steps and actions in responding to changes in education marketplace, the decline in enrollment will become a major concern.

2.2 Public Higher Learning Institutions

According to Sharom Ahmad (1980) "As an integral part of society the public higher education institutions are influenced and shaped by the economic, socio-cultural and political realities that surround them". The government expects public higher education institutions to play a key role in the economic and social development of the country, in other words contributing toward the nation building process. In the need for close relationship between education and national development, the main objectives of public higher education institutions can be identified as follow:

1. Assisting in the promotion of national integration and unity through their teaching as well as non-curricular programs, and through the use of national language-**Malay**-as the principal medium of instruction.
2. Meeting the manpower needs of the nation with a greater emphasis on science and technology.

3. Rectifying existing imbalances in educational opportunities among racial and income groups, rural and urban areas, and between developed and less developed region.
4. Studying and finding solutions to serious national problems through research and development function. Among the problematic areas include food and nutrition, health and environment, employment and human resources development, housing, urban in-migration and the like.

All these higher education institutions are publicly funded, in full or in part, and administered by the Federal Government through its various ministries, especially the Ministry of Education.

With special incentives provided by the government there is no sign that the number of students enrolling into public institutions will become a major concern, at least not in the immediate future. The year 1998 saw the expansion of most local public universities by way of the offer of more new programs both at the undergraduate and post graduate levels, owing to increased demand (Nalliah, Thiyagarajah, 1998). For example, the International Islamic University announced new engineering programs such as Material Engineering, Aerospace Engineering, Automotive Engineering, Biotechnology Engineering, Telecommunication Engineering and Biomedicine Engineering. Universiti Sains Malaysia announced the addition of its dentistry program and three new Master's degree courses in Screen Studies, Corporate Communication and Advertising (New Straits Times, 29 Nov 1998).

2.3 Private Higher Learning Institutions

One of the immediate results of the liberalization in education sector is the springing up of private higher education facilities at the rate that clearly indicates the enormous demand in this industry. The desire for education and the uncertainty of access into local tertiary institutions continues to fuel this development. By the end of 1999, there are already 600 local private institutions that comprise private colleges, private universities, and branch campuses of foreign universities (The Sun, 16 Jan 2000). This number is expected to rise further in the years ahead. The establishment of more academic institutions has provided a wider choice available to students. It should be noticed that most of the local private institution especially private colleges are offering foreign universities' programs through franchising agreement. Another significant development in private higher learning education that took place in 1998 is the setting up of offshore campuses of foreign universities in Malaysia. The first branch campus of foreign university-the Monash University Sunway campus opened its door to its pioneer batch of 450 students on 20 July 1998 (News Straits Times, 21 Jul 1998).

The role of private higher learning institutions is to complement the public institutions in providing education opportunities for all Malaysian students and in establishing Malaysia as a center for education excellence. Unlike the public institutions, the private higher learning institutions receive hardly any incentives and definitely no financial aid from government. These institutions also lack national direction. At present time there is no national long-term master plan for private education. This has made it difficult for private institutions to chart course and carrying out their plans with certainty. Anyway it should be noted that in ensuring the quality of service rendered, all private higher learning institutions are required by the

government to get the endorsement of **National Accreditation Board (LAN)**. LAN is a body that among others assesses the institution's credibility in term of its courses, facilities and the quality of its academic staff (The Sun, 16 Jan 2000). Any new college or university aspiring to be part of the excellence league would seek to obtain the relevant accreditation.

2.4 Higher Learning Institution Choice Behavior

The study of higher learning institution/college choice behavior is of great practical importance for administrators in promoting greater effectiveness in the planning and forecasting of students enrollment into their institutions and in influencing the college-going decision-making process of desired student. In general the study of higher learning institution/college choice behavior can be classified into two levels, the macro-level and the micro-level. The study of enrollment behavior of student's in-groups (**macro-level**) indicates how changes in environmental and institutional characteristics affect an institution's total enrollment. The study of the college/higher learning institution choice behavior of individual students (**micro-level**) indicates the way in which environmental, institutional, and student characteristic affect a student's choices about whether or not to attend college and which college or higher learning institution to attend. According to Hossler (1984) it is the result of these studies, which provide the fundamental knowledge bases for enhancing the effectiveness of enrollment planning activities and student marketing and recruitment activities.

The greatest contribution of the micro-level studies of higher learning institution choice behavior is their ability to estimate the effects of institutional and student characteristics on the probability that a particular consumer will choose a

particular institution. Understanding the enrollment effects of such characteristics can help enrollment managers tailor and target their institution's marketing mix of programs, prices, and places to those who most often end up at their institutional.

The increasingly competitive and complex nature of higher learning institution/college choice and expansion of the marketing approach to student recruitment enhance the desire to better understand and more effectively influence the college choice process. This has led both researchers and practitioners to develop more detailed specifications, or models, of the higher learning institution choice process. Many researchers have relied on some variation of the three-phase model of the college choice process (Jackson, 1982). The college aspiration formation stage is the one in which fundamental educational aspirations are formed and may last from early childhood through high school and beyond. The college/higher learning institution search and application phase includes acquiring and examining information about institutions to identify a limited number of institutions to which to apply. The higher learning institution/college selection and attendance phase involves the evaluation of the alternatives to make a final institution selection. Individual institutions engaged in academic market research usually study student enrollment behavior in this final phase (Litten et al. 1983).

2.4.1 Choice Process of Higher Education Institutions

A number of models have been developed to explain the college/higher education institution choice process. These models evolved from econometric and status attainment theories. Models may be grouped according to the three categories based on the factors each model emphasizes (Hossler, Braxton, & Coopersmith, 1989): econometric (Fuller, Manski & Wise, 1982), sociological (Sewell & Shaw,

1968), and combined (Hossler & Gallagher, 1987; Litten, 1982). For the purpose of this study we will only focus on the combined models, specifically the **Hossler and Gallagher model**.

2.4.2 Three-Phase Model of College Choice

There are three stages of student higher education institution choice (Hossler & Gallagher, 1987), the first stage is identified as “predisposition”, “a developmental phase in which students determine whether or not they would like to continue their education beyond high school”. Stage two, “search”, is the time when students seek more information about higher education institutions in general. In stage three, “choice”, students evaluate institutions of interest and select a specific college or university of interest to attend. Sociological factors dominate the predisposition stage, while the last stages emphasize econometric variables. A critical input to this study, that is the important selective factors of higher learning institution will heavily dependent on the finding from the various studies that focus on the third stage of this model.

2.4.3. Important Characteristics of Higher Education Institution

There are several characteristics of the higher education institutions which student value which affect the choice stage. This is in line with Hossler and Gallagher (1987) suggestion that institutional variables have an impact on student higher education institution choice. Probably the most comprehensive and generalizable study in this area is the major survey of 3 000 high school seniors in six large metropolitan area conducted by Litten and Brodigan (1982). They asked students to examine a list of 25 institutional characteristics and required them to rate according to

their importance, in deciding which college or universities to apply. By drawing the students' attention to the application process, the researchers focused the question and the responses on those particular institutional characteristics considered important during the search and application phase of the choice process. Students responding gave highest ranking to **financial, field of study, general academic reputation, location, social atmosphere, faculty teaching reputation, academic standards, and careers prospect** (Litten and Brodigan, 1982). This finding is quite consistent with those of earlier studies. For example Lewis and Morrison (1975) found six characteristics most frequently utilized to evaluate institutions of higher education: **special academic programs, cost, location, size, general reputation, distance from home.**

Another researcher found that the most important college attributes throughout all of the phases of the college choice process were **cost, location, programs, and quality** (Gilmour et al. 1978). Based on a more recent survey conducted by Canale et. al. (1996) on high school seniors and juniors to investigate the relative importance of certain college characteristics in their choosing a prospective college the result indicated that **teacher attributes, area of study offered, cost and academic reputation** were ranked the highest in term of importance among the list of college characteristics investigated. The other characteristics include **student population, sports and extracurricular programs, and within commuting distance.**

Absher et. al. (1993) conducted a study of university students at the University of North Alabama whereby twenty-nine college image components were identified based on focus group interviews and review of literatures. These components were later investigated by measuring the importance of each in predicting a student's selection of a higher learning institution. These selection variables were ranked from

most important to least important based on mean. The highest possible mean was 5, and the lowest possible mean was 1. The result of this investigation indicated that the highest importance rating for the 29 selection variables were as follow:

- (1) **overall quality of education** (4.52);
- (2) **types of academic programs** (4.35);
- (3) **tuition and fees** (4.26);
- (4) **overall reputation of institution** (4.15); and
- (5) **faculty qualification** (4.14)

In another study conducted to look for some of the factors that influence the institutional preferences (Stanley & Reynolds, 1994), **value of qualification, recognition, broad range of courses, and proximity to home** have been expressed by students as important factors. Although the suggestion of the list of the characteristics from these studies is not inclusive of all the characteristics of higher education institution, it is believed that it encompassed a number of important and relevant characteristics.

2.5 Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA)

The Theory of Reasoned Action (**TRA**) proposes that behavior can be predicted from behavioral intentions, attitudes, and subjective social norm influences. These three variables mediate all external influences such as demographic variables, attitudes toward the target behavior, and personality traits. The immediate precursor to predicting behavior is behavioral intentions. Attitudes and subjective social norm influences, in turn, affect the formation of behavioral intentions. Subjective social norm measures the impact that significant referents have upon the study participant's intention. Equation 1 below illustrates this relationship, where **B**, **BI**, **A**, and **SSN**

represent behavior, behavior intentions, attitudes, and subjective social norms, respectively. The value w_1 and w_2 indicate the relative weights of attitude and normative influences.

$$B-BI = (W_1 \times A) + (W_2 \times SSN) \dots\dots\dots(1)$$

Another key feature of the TRA is its explanatory role. The TRA attempts to account for the underlying beliefs that comprise the attitudes and subjective social norm scores. Correlating the direct measure of attitude and subjective social norm with their corresponding estimated measures test the explanatory role of TRA. The estimated measure for the attitude variable, behavioral belief, measures how respondents feel about specific beliefs related to the behavior. Respondents indicate the outcome they expect from each belief and give a positive or negative evaluation of each belief. Equation 2 shows an algebraic representation for the behavioral belief score.

$$BB = \sum b_i \times e_i \dots\dots\dots(2)$$

The BB represents the behavior belief score, b_i indicates the expected outcome from participating in the behavior, and e_i denotes the respondent's evaluation of that outcome. The belief score is calculated by summing the products of the expected outcome and evaluation scores from all beliefs.

The normative belief score serves as an estimate for the subjective social norm variable. Equation 3 summarizes the normative belief measure.

$$NB = \sum n_i \times mc_i \dots\dots\dots(3)$$

The **NB** indicates the normative belief score, where n_i represents how study participants feel significant referents would want them to behave while mc_i is the participant's motivation to comply with each referent. The summed products of referent beliefs and motivation to comply scores form the normative belief measure.

The estimated measures (beliefs) of attitudes and subjective social norm explain the basis for respondent decision. Generally speaking, individuals will intend to perform a behavior when they evaluate it positively and when they believe that people important to them think they should perform it (Siti Sarimah, 1998)

2.5.1 Attitude toward a Behavior

The Theory of Reasoned Action proposes that in order to predict behavior better, it is more important to determine the person's attitude to that behavior than to the object of behavior. The attitudinal component refers to the person's attitude toward performing the behavior under investigation. Under this refined model, Fishbein & Ajzen (1980) view an attitude toward any concept is simply a person's general feeling of favorable or unfavorable for that concept.

This modification to the basic model defines beliefs as the perceived consequences of an action rather than the perceived attributes of a product/service. According to the theory, attitudes are a function of beliefs. A person who believes that performing a given behavior will lead to mostly positive outcomes will hold a favorable attitudes toward performing the behavior, while a person who believes that performing the behavior will lead to mostly negative outcomes will hold an unfavorable attitude (Siti Sarimah, 1998).

2.5.2 Subjective Social Norm

Fishbein (1967) developed a third modification in his model because of the mixed results in relating beliefs and evaluation to behavior. He concluded that other elements must also influence behavior. Since family and peer group norms are so important in shaping attitudes, he introduced social influences into his model. Two social elements were introduced: normative beliefs and the motivation to comply.

According to the theory, the more the person perceives that others who are important to him think he should perform a behavior, the more he will intend to do so. That is, people are viewed as intending to perform those behaviors they believe important others think they should perform.

2.5.3 The Mediating Role of Intention

Indeed, the viability of patronage intention as a surrogate measure of future behavior is well established in the literature (Darden and Lush, 1983). Furthermore, the Theory of Reasoned Action suggests that consumer behavior is influenced by intention to engage in the given behavior. Intention, in turn, is influenced by consumer attitudes toward the stimulus (Adzen and Fishbein, 1980). The results of the study by Bagozzi (1982) suggest that attitudes influence behavior but through intention. Bagozzi (1992) and Korgaonkar, Lund, and Price (1985) provide additional support for this direction of linkage.

2.5.4 TRA Extended into the Choice Domain

As originally developed and typically used, the Fishbein and Ajzen model focuses on the determinants and performance of a single behavior. Ajzen and Fishbein (1980b) have argued that not considering the possibility of choosing among

alternative behaviors represents a serious omission in the model. The presence of choice can be expected to diminish the ability of accurately predicting behavior using a measure of intention to perform a single behavior as was originally proposed in the model and as has been done frequently in research using this model.

Hardwick (1983) suggested that there are two possibilities how and where this attenuation of prediction due to choice might occur. The first possibility involves **an intention comparison process** whereby individual form an intention toward each alternative based on their attitudes and subjective norm toward the alternative. They then compare the strength of their intention toward each of the alternative, choosing and performing the alternative with the strongest intention. Thus, choice is seen as a process of comparing and selecting among intention associated with each alternative in the choice set. This is the process essentially adopted by Fishbein and Ajzen as they extended their model into the choice domain.

The other possibility involves **an attitude comparison process**, whereby individuals assess their attitude and subjective norms toward each alternative and select the one with the most positive attitude and subjective norm. Based on this choice, they form an intention to perform that one alternative and subsequently perform the behavior. Thus choice is seen as a process of comparing and selecting among the attitudes and subjective norms associated with each of the alternative in the choice set.

Although it is not conclusive, it is interesting to note that the results obtained from the meta-analysis conducted by Sheppard, Hartwick, and Warshaw (1983) show that neither of the suggested extensions to the model fared inferior to the original Fishbein and Ajzen model. They found that the presence of a choice among alternative did not weaken the predictive utility of the model. Rather, quite the opposite occurred –overall, the model perform better when used to study activities

involving choice. Thus it would seem that the Fishbein and Ajzen model has strong predictive utility, even when utilized to investigate situations and activities that do not fall within the boundary conditions originally specified for the model. Clearly, further modifications and refinements are still necessary when it is still not clear why the model better predicted activities involving choice. However, for the moment, it would appear that the original Fishbein and Ajzen model works adequately in choice situations.

2.6 Previous Related Studies Utilizing TRA

Several related studies utilizing Theory of Reasoned Action will be highlighted next as evidence to the predictability and utility of this model. These studies are as follows:

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| 1. Title: Students' Intention to Engage in Science Activities: Public, Private and Home School | Author : Ray, -Brian-D (1990) |
| Abstract: <p>The Theory of Reasoned Action was used to ascertain students' salient beliefs, correlations between constructs in the theory, relative weights of determinants of intention, and the effect of type of school, gender, and grade level on the determinants of intention. This exploratory study generated baseline information and used correlational analyses. The study's three stages included elucidation interviews with a subsample of students and construction of the instruments, a pilot study and refinement of the instruments, and final collection of data and analysis. It was found that students' "attitude toward" and "their subjective norm" with respect to science learning behaviors explained a significant amount of variance in intention to do laboratory and non-laboratory activities. Home school students had beliefs that comprised a more positive attitude toward doing laboratory science than did public and private school students. There were significant relationships between grade level and beliefs for both laboratory and non-laboratory science, and between gender and laboratory science.</p> | |

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| 2. Title: The Exploratory study of Process-Product Dimension of Parent Choices of School | Author : Siti Sarimah (1998) |
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Abstract:
 The study is concerned with the prediction and understanding of human behavior. Specifically this study addresses the effect of the underlying factors that lead parents to form choice intention. Parent's choice of schools was based on the process-product dimensions. To match the theoretical framework, structured questionnaire were used, which covered all the factors underlying choice intentions. The finding of this study showed that parent's decision to choose a process or product oriented school is based primarily on their personal judgements concerning the pros and cons of the alternative orientations. The perceived prescriptions of important others seem to play a relatively minor role.

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| 3. Title: Dropping Out of School: An Application of The Theory of Reasoned Action | Author: Pretholdt, -Perry H.; Fisher, Jack L (1983) |
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Abstract:
 To develop and test a theoretical model, based on the Theory of Reasoned Action for understanding and predicting the decision to stay in or drop out of school, to identify the specific beliefs that are the basis of that decision, and to evaluate the use of moderator variable (sex, race) to individualize the model, 1,732 tenth grade students completed a questionnaire. An analysis of the data from 712 subjects (356 persisters, 356 potential dropouts) showed the feasibility of applying the Theory of Reasoned Action to the dropout problem. Social influences and attitudes were found to be the two immediate determinants of students' intention. Students' decision were determined more by their own attitudes toward dropping out or staying in school than by their perceptions of what other people wanted them to do. These attitudes were based on the students' beliefs about the consequences of their behavior. Generally, the student who was likely to stay in school perceived immediate social benefits and societal rewards for his/her actions, while the potential dropout had negative feeling about unavoidable school experience and was less likely to perceive any good reasons for staying in school. The findings suggest that effective intervention programs must seek to change beliefs in order to change behaviors.

2.7 Summary

The Theory of Reasoned Action (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1980) will help in predicting and understanding student choice of higher education institutions and determining the factors underlying choice intention. The theory of reasoned action

shows that there is a causal chain linking beliefs to behavior and these beliefs in turn determine attitude and subjective norms, which then determine intention.