
Researching the Malaysian Student Market for Future Projects

**A Market Research Project
For**

Gainey School of Business, Spring Arbor University

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Executive Summary

Research Objectives

The purpose of this market research report was to help the Gainey School of Business of Spring Arbor University understand what the current mind set for potential candidates from Malaysia to study in Spring Arbor University. A goal for Spring Arbor University is to increase market penetration in the international market; this report will provide Spring Arbor the necessary information. Various recommendations are included in the report to strategize and respond to the information.

Concise Statement of Reports

The research was done over the period of 3 weeks, beginning in the first week of April and ending on the 3rd week of April. The research was done through an online survey which was only targeted to Malaysians citizens with a sample size of 100 participants. The results were then compiled into either several pie charts or several spread sheets for analysis.

Summary of Key Findings

Out of 100 participants,

- 63 males and 37 females.
- 87 participants out of 100 are Chinese citizens with 6 Malays citizens, 5 Indians citizens and 2 others in terms of race demographics.
- 85 participants are age between 19-24 with 8 participants at 31-49, 5 participants at

25-30 and 2 participants who are 13-18 in age demographics.

- 65 participants were either done or currently doing their Bachelor of Art degree while 24 were still doing their foundation or pre-university level (or general education, first years), 9 participants have either finished or pursuing their Master or Doctorate level and 2 participants were still in high school.

26 participants of the sample size chose an American university. 34 participants choose either United Kingdom or Australia universities. This shows that out of the sampling size, most Malaysians are interested to pursue their studies in the United States over Australia or United Kingdom. A huge portion has yet to decide on which university and has no definite answer to which university to go to. However, this is a great opportunity to encourage them to pursue a study in United States. Most participants simply stated that they will attend any university if it's known to be prestige.

33 participants out of the survey responded that they will attend a university based upon recommendations from friends, family, alumni or recruiters. This shows that Spring Arbor needs to penetrate in the Malaysian market that the school has a good reputation and has produced great alumnus. Also the use of word-of mouth is far useful than the use of social media websites at all. One participant responded by informing that, "Websites have zero influence, as well as brochures or any sort of PR material."

31 participants out of the survey responded that the rank of the university does factor into their decision-making. This is important for Spring Arbor as it is now ranked 64 out of 110 universities in the Midwest region according to U.S. News Education. This is an important factor because parents are more likely send their children to a well-known school even though it cost more to make sure that the degree they are getting will help increase their

chances of getting a job.

39 participants out of the 100 participants are currently done or pursuing a course in Business studies. This is a good sign for the Gainey School of Business as Malaysians are generally interested in pursuing a degree in business studies. 38 other participants were pursuing their education in a science related field. 15 participants were in a communication field while the remaining 8 participants were equally tied with education and arts.

Conclusion & Recommendations

Because Spring Arbor University is a liberal arts Christian college, it is not recommended to promote the college to the Malay population. This is because the mentality of the Malay population is mostly closed minded and because of their religion. Thus it is not recommended to pursue them. The Malays are further sponsored by the government in the form of scholarship to attend state-funded university. The other races are not given any form of state-funded scholarship and must search other scholarships and are forced to attend private universities & colleges.

It is recommended instead to focus on the Chinese & Indian citizens. The reason is pure and simple; most Chinese parents have started an education fund for their children as early as 2 or 3 years old. It is more likely that the Chinese population are exposed to an American style of learning at an early age because of private home-schooling centres that uses American syllabus. This will definitely help the flow of transaction into an American university.

Seeing that recruiters & recommendations do play a heavy role in recruiting a student into the school, the researcher suggest bringing Malaysian students from Spring Arbor along

during visits to Malaysia. Allowing potential candidates to speak to someone who is familiar to both the school and has experience living abroad will definitely boost confidence in the Spring Arbor. Having a familiar face when arriving at Spring Arbor will ease the parent's worry.

In regards to the school, ranking is important when deciding a school, it is imperative that the school improves on their rankings as much as they can. The researcher has heard a lot of complains from both international and local students regarding Spring Arbor. It is important that Spring Arbor address these problems internally. It is demoralizing to hear that Spring Arbor is in debt \$3 million and several restrictions placed since the beginning of last school year. In this researchers' opinion, the school has not been living up to expectations over the course of 3 years. Most of the participants stated that recommendations from family, friends or alumni does affect their decision-making, Spring Arbor must understand that current international students will complain out to friends and family from back home.

Introduction

Malaysia is a multi-ethnic and multi-cultural which plays heavily on politics. The constitution declares Islam as their state religion while maintaining religious freedom. Malaysia holds a population of 28 million people. It is comprised of 13 states and three federal states. The country is divided between the Peninsular Malaysia and the two other and one federal state in East Malaysia. The country is divided among 4 dominant races; the Malay, the Chinese, the Indigenous and the Indians. 50.4% of total population are Malays, while 23.7% are the Chinese, 11% are the indigenous population and 7.1% are the Indians. The remaining percentages are the make-ups of various other races.

Malaysia's education system consists of a five year non-compulsory kindergarten, which is then followed by six years of elementary school education starting at the age of 6 or 7 and then five years of optional secondary education. In the final year of secondary education, students are required to take a Malaysian Certificate of Education examination. This is commonly named as SPM or (Sijil Pelajaran Malaysia). A matriculation programme is optional after five years in secondary education which serves as an entrance exam into local colleges.

Research Method and Procedures

The research method that was chosen was a descriptive design. Since the project was to describe the market potential for the Malaysian market, this method allows to explore the potential consumer's mind set about studying in the United States and potentially Spring Arbor University. There were no secondary data that used in this research. Everything was collected through primary data research via the survey and interactive personally.

Primary data was collected through a survey created on an online survey website: Kwiksurvey. A survey was created on the website and the questionnaire was designed and planned while working closely with Troy Peterson who is the director of international student services. Surveys were then dispersed throughout social circles and local forums. The sampling population was decided to be 100 people. The only requirement was that they had to be a Malaysian. The sample size was determined to be 100 due to limitations that the researcher is not in Malaysia to do an actual face to face survey. A sampling size of 100 was deemed to be the right amount given the constrictions that the researcher faced.

Data Analysis and Findings

Out of 100 participants, there were 63 males and 37 females.

87 participants out of 100 are Chinese with 6 Malays, 5 Indians and 2 others in terms of race demographics.

85 participants are age between 19-24 with 8 participants at 31-49, 5 participants at 25-30 and 2 participants who are 13-18 in age demographics.

65 participants were either done or currently doing their Bachelor Art degree while 24 were still doing their foundation or pre-university level (or general education, first years), 9 participants have either finished or pursuing their Master or Doctorate level and 2 participants were still in high school.

26 of the sample size chose an American university over both United Kingdom and Australia universities. This shows that out of the sampling size, most Malaysians are interested to pursue their studies in the United States over Australia or United Kingdom. A huge portion has yet to decide on which university and has no definite answer to which university to go to. However, this is a great opportunity to encourage them to pursue a study in United States. Majority of the answers from this sampling size was that to simply go to a university that is known and prestige.

31 participants out of the survey responded that the rank of the university does factor into their decision-making. This is important for Spring Arbor as it is now ranked 64 out of 110 universities in the Midwest region according to U.S. News Education. This is an important factor because parents are more likely send their children to a well-known school even though it cost more to make sure that the degree they are getting will help increase their chances of getting a job.

39 participants out of the 100 participants are currently done or pursuing a course in Business studies. This is a good sign for the Gainey School of Business as Malaysians are generally interested in pursuing a degree in business studies. 38 other participants were pursuing their education in a science related field. 15 participants were in a communication field while the remaining 8 participants were equally tied with education and arts.

Question 5

1. It is important for me to get a degree from an accredited university.
2. The cost of tuition fees matters to me.
3. A two-plus-two (2+2) education program has better value than a four year overseas education program.
4. The student-teacher ratio important to my learning.
5. It is important to me that my teacher pays attention to me.
6. I believe a student recruiter plays a role in my decision to attend college.

Question 5	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1)	49	35	9	7	0
2)	43	50	7	0	0
3)	7	25	44	18	6
4)	31	50	16	3	0
5)	37	41	17	4	1
6)	11	37	34	15	3

84 participants strongly agree or agree that getting their degree in an accredited university is important to them.

93 participants strongly agree or agree that the tuition fees effect their decision making when choosing a university

While 44 participants remain neutral regarding doing a 2+2 program, 32 participants agree that doing a 2+2 program has a better value when compare to only 24 who disagree.

81 participants agree that the student-teacher ratio is very important to their learning.

78 participants agree that it is important that their professors or lecturers pay attention to

them. Recognizing and acknowledging is important as this will increase a student's morale.

48 participants agree that a student recruiter will affect their decision about which school they do go to. While 34 remain neutral, but results in a pie graph below suggest that a student recruiter is definitely important.

Question 6

1. Do you think a small class is a better learning environment than a large class?
2. Does the distance of a university from your home matter?
3. Would the cost of living be important when choosing an overseas education?
4. Do you think you will receive the same quality of education from a local university versus an overseas university?
5. Are you satisfied with your current level of education?
6. Does having a sibling in the same school matters to you?

Question 6	Yes	No
1)	95	5
2)	70	30
3)	99	1
4)	16	84
5)	64	36
6)	20	80

Conclusion & Recommendations

Because Spring Arbor University is a liberal arts Christian college, it is not recommended to promote the college to the Malay population. This is because the mentality of the Malay population is mostly closed minded and because of their religion. Thus it is not recommended to pursue them. The Malays are further sponsored by the government in the form of scholarship to attend state-funded university. The other races are not given any form of state-funded scholarship and must search other scholarships and are forced to attend private universities & colleges.

It is recommended instead to focus on the Chinese & Indian population. The reason is pure and simple; most Chinese parents have started an education fund for their children as early as 2 or 3 years old. This is the result of filial piety which many of the Chinese population teaching their children as they were taught by their parents. Also it is more likely that the Chinese population are more exposed to an American style of learning because of private home-schooling centres that uses American syllabus. This will definitely help the flow of transaction into an American university.

Seeing that recruiters & recommendations do play a heavy role in recruiting a student into the school, the researcher suggest bringing students from Spring Arbor along during visits to the country. Allowing potential candidates to speak to someone who is familiar to both the school and has experience living abroad will definitely boost confidence in the Spring Arbor. This will help potential students feel comfortable when having questions regarding the school from a local native's experience.

In regards to the school, ranking is important when deciding a school, it is imperative that the school improves on their rankings as much as they can. The researcher has heard a lot of complains from both international and local students regarding Spring Arbor. It is

important that Spring Arbor address these problems internally. It is demoralizing to hear that Spring Arbor is in debt \$3 million and several restrictions placed since the beginning of last school year. In this researchers' opinion, the school has not been living up to expectations over the course of 3 years. Most of the participants stated that recommendations from family, friends or alumni does affect their decision-making, this is truth as current international students has complain out to friends and family from back home going as far as informing to not attend Spring Arbor.

Partnership with several local universities and high schools should be approach. Preparing their mental aptitude at high school the idea of pursuing their degree internationally, will give them the necessary training and maturation they would need. While parents generally prefer students to remain close to home before allowing them to pursue a degree internationally once they are fundamentally sound, it is advisable to prepare them early. Partnering with several well-known universities such as Taylors University College, Sunway University College or HELP University College, Spring Arbor has a chance of better market penetration and being recognized. There are several homeschooling centers and its now officially recognized by several local universities, it is important to network with them and prepare high school students if they wish to attend an American university.

While recommendations carry some weight, a success story is what is needed. Parents are always concerned whether a university will guarantee the student a job. It is important then, to follow up on alumni to see what has happen to them after graduation and how successful the alumni are now. It is also a great networking opportunity for both alumni and student to understand what awaits them after graduation.

Limitations

Every project has its own limitations. One such was not being physically to conduct the survey. The researcher believes that personal interaction with participants would have given them a clearer understanding of the survey itself. Since one researcher was only doing it, the researcher believes it lack the depth and balance when conducting a survey. The research would benefit if one or two

One of the original ideas was to have a conference call setup with potential students and parents. This conference call was to help address any questions or issues directly and receive feedback instantly. While communicating by email does bridge the time gap, but a personal call to the student and family will give them assurance about the school. However, due to time constraints and the lack of communication with target market, this idea prove to unsuccessful.

Appendixes

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