

**UNIVERSITI TEKNOLOGI MARA**

**EXAMINING THE ANTECEDENTS  
OF RAPPORT FOR DETERMINING  
CUSTOMER RETENTION AND  
WORD-OF-MOUTH IN MALAYSIA  
PRIVATE INSTITUTIONS OF  
HIGHER EDUCATION**

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**PhD**

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## AUTHOR'S DECLARATION

I declare that the work in this thesis was carried out in accordance with the regulations of Universiti Teknologi MARA. It is original and is the results of my own work, unless otherwise indicated or acknowledged as referenced work. This thesis has not been submitted to any other academic institution or non-academic institution for any degree or qualification.

I, hereby, acknowledge that I have been supplied with the Academic Rules and Regulations for Post Graduate, Universiti Teknologi MARA, regulating the conduct of my study and research.


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## **ABSTRACT**

The aim of this thesis is to examine the impact of rapport on customer retention and word-of-mouth in Private IHEs in Malaysia. The literature has profoundly neglected to account for the role of rapport in determining customer retention and word-of-mouth, a shortcoming this thesis addresses. The analyses began with assessing the effect of trust, commitment, communication and conflict handling ability on customer retention and word-of-mouth. Then the mediating effects of rapport was conducted on the four independent variables namely trust, commitment, communication and conflict handling and the two independent variables namely word-of-mouth and client retention. We do so to enable policy makers and academics to understand the influence of rapport with customer retention and word-of-mouth. Using simple random sample, we select 210 private IHEs from a population of 458 in Malaysia. The questionnaires were distributed in Kuala Lumpur and Kuching from January to June, 2015. SPSS and SEM using PLS were employed to analyse the research data. The results show that stronger trust, commitment and communication are positively related to customer retention and word-of-mouth. Also, stronger conflict handling ability is not positively related to customer retention and word-of-mouth. The results further show that rapport intervenes the relationship between trust, communication, conflict handling ability and word-of-mouth. Further, rapport intervenes the relationship between commitment, and conflict handling ability and customer retention. The significance of the study is that it may help the Private IHEs formulate appropriate strategies to develop and foster rapport between their employees and customers.

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