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TABLE OF CONTENT

ACADEMIC LIBRARIES: SERVICE PERFORMANCE MODEL AT RESEARCH UNIVERSITY (RUs) IN MALAYSIA <i>Aishah Musa, Junaida Ismail, Etty Harniza Harun, Sharunizam Shaari, & Mahadir Ladisma@Awis</i>	1
MIGRANT WORKERS IN THE SPECIAL ECONOMIC ZONE TOWARDS ECONOMIC AND ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT USING ECONOMETRIC MODELLING <i>Azyyati binti Anuar, Nur Fakhzan binti Marwan, Sirinya Siriyanun, & John S.F. Smith</i>	3
UNDERSTANDING THE SIGNIFICANCE ROLES OF ALTRUISM AND SOCIODEMOGRAPHIC FACTORS ON VOLUNTEERING COMMITMENT <i>Mohd Nazir Rabun & Makmor Tumin</i>	5
DIVERSITY OF BOARD OF DIRECTORS AND ENVIRONMENTAL SOCIAL GOVERNANCE: EVIDENCE FROM MALAYSIAN LISTED COMPANIES <i>Roshidah Safeei, Salina Mad, Muhamad Ashaari Sukar, Syed Khusairi Tuan Azam, & Muhammad Iqbal Mohamed Azhari</i>	8
DETERMINANTS OF HALAL FOOD PURCHASE INTENTION: APPLYING THE THEORY OF PLANNED BEHAVIOR(TPB) IN PREDICTING HALAL FOOD CONSUMPTION AMONG MILLENNIAL GENERATION IN MALAYSIA <i>Musdiana Mohamad Salleh, Etty Harniza Harun & Siti Meriam Ali</i>	11
COLLABORATIVE PLANNING FORECASTING AND REPLENISHMENT IN ORCHID SUPPLY CHAIN <i>Chattrarat Hotrawaisaya, Supamit Srisawat, Mohd Rizaimy Shaharudin, & Nik Ramli Nik Abdul Rashid</i>	15
THE CONCEPT OF CIRCULAR SUPPLY CHAIN MANAGEMENT (CSCM) <i>Mohd Rizaimy Shaharudin, Siti Fairuza Hassam, Nur Diyana Nazihah Zainal, Ahmad Rais Mohamad Mokhtar, Preecha Wararatchai, Wissawa Aunyawong, & Suwat Nuanklao</i>	17

DETERMINANTS OF CONSUMERS' PURCHASING INTENTION FOR NAKHOM PATHOM COMMUNITY PRODUCTS <i>Nur Zainie Abd Hamid & Mohamed Samsudeen Sajahan</i>	19
NAKHON PATHOM COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIES: IMPLICATION ON BUILDING COMMUNITY CAPABILITY FOR PRODUCT DEVELOPMENT AMONG SMALL AND MICRO COMMUNITY ENTERPRISE <i>Mohamed Samsudeen Sajahan & Nur Zainie Abd Hamid</i>	22
THE COMMUNITY CAPABILITY IN PRODUCT DEVELOPMENT FOR THE EXPORT OF NAKHON PATHOM PROVINCE TO MALAYSIA <i>Hathaipun Soonthornpipit, Chattrarat Hotrawaisaya, Salisa Hemapan, & Peeranthon Saensook</i>	30
ANALYZING THE COALITION FACTOR AMONG ACTORS IN NWRP FORMULATION ROCESS <i>Junaida Ismail & Siti Zuliha Razali</i>	32
INLAND CROSS BORDER TRADE & LOGISTICS <i>Noor Zahirah Mohd Sidek</i>	35
SUPPLY CHAIN MANAGEMENT SUSTAINABILITY INDEX (SCMSI): A COMPARATIVE STUDY BETWEEN MALAYSIAN AND THAILAND COMPANIES <i>Roshima Said, Corina Joseph, Mariam Rahmat, Wan Nailah Abdullah, Leily Adja Radjeman, & Phuttiwat Chattrarat</i>	37

ACADEMIC LIBRARIES: SERVICE PERFORMANCE MODEL AT RESEARCH UNIVERSITY (RUs) IN MALAYSIA

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INTRODUCTION

There are four (4) research universities in Malaysia namely, Universiti Sains Malaysia (USM), Universiti Putra Malaysia (UPM), Universiti Malaya (UM) and Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia (UKM). As part of the entity of a Research University the academic library should play an utmost role to achieve the goals in providing and sharing the up-to-date knowledge to the community of the Research University. An academic library should play the greatest role and performs its task as the centre of knowledge and parallel its performance with the research university status. With that it can encourage the researchers in the world wide to come and get the services from the academic libraries at the RUs.

The performance of an academic library can be measured based on several elements i.e. the number of books on the shelf, the treatment given by their staff, the library collection is up-to-date, accurate information that can be shared by their staff, accessibility to internet access, or access to an online database. Previous researches exposed that the performance and worth of an academic library in meeting the user's needs were conventionally measured using several instruments like the size of collection, budget, expenditure and staff (Nitecki & Franklin, 1999). According to Kasmarini Baharuddin (2015), the basic idea for the academic library is it should have an organised collection of books and other materials used to study, journal collections to help in doing a research and a recreation place in a building that houses such a collection. The main purpose of having a library is to provide information to its users (Rowley, 1996). Besides that, satisfying users' needs in academic libraries has been the primary objective of the libraries and librarians (Norliya, 2009).

PURPOSE/AIM & BACKGROUND

This study is conducted to examine the service quality performance of the academic library at the four (4) research universities using five (5) dimensions of SERVQUAL such as the library as a place, its collection, its access to information, reliability and empathy. The purpose of this study is to examine the relationship between the SERVQUAL dimensions and the performance of academic library at RUs in Malaysia.

METHODOLOGY

This research was conducted in four (4) Research Universities (UM, UKM, USM & UPM) and using stratified random sampling, 385 library users of the academic library at the four (4) research universities in Malaysia were involved in this study. Out of 385 respondents chosen, only 246 completed and returned the questionnaires. The data used in this study are primary data where the participants answered a series of questions regarding the data needed to describe research libraries in today's environment. The SERVQUAL instrument is the questionnaire that was distributed to the four RUs in Malaysia. It consists of 48 of statements. In addition, a set of demographic questions are included. Statistical analysis such as descriptive analysis, cross-tabulation and correlation are applied in the analysis in order to test the hypotheses developed for the research.

FINDINGS/RESULTS

The five SERVQUAL dimensions (as the library as a place, its collection, its access to information, reliability and empathy) used in this study showed the significant positive relationship with the performance of academic library and these results are in line with the previous research done by Collen & Fred (2001), Junaida, Aishah, Mahadir, & Sharunizam (2009), Tammasat (2000) & Asok Kumar (2007).

CONCLUSION

It is hoped that by highlighting these five (5) dimensions the academic libraries in Malaysia are able to maintain their performance and retain the users to come and visit the academic library anytime and every day without any doubt. Besides that, the academic libraries at the RUs also are able to maintain their performance in giving the best service as the centre of knowledge for the community of Research Universities. The utmost thing that all academic libraries in Malaysia can learn from this study is the academic libraries should be encouraged to adapt the five dimensions of SERVQUAL in their daily services to enhance their performance, to gain loyalty of users and thus increase the satisfactions of their users.

Keywords: Academic Library, Malaysia, Performance, Research University, SERVQUAL

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