


**TO STAY OR RELOCATE? INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL MARKET RESEARCH POST PANDEMIC**

Saidatul Nurul Hidayah Jannatun Naim Nor-Ahmad<sup>A</sup>, Nor Atikah Shafai<sup>B</sup>, Rusniza Abdul Rahman<sup>C</sup>



ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT
<p><b>Article history:</b></p> <p>Received 21 November 2022</p> <p>Accepted 30 January 2023</p>	<p><b>Purpose:</b> This study aims to investigate the viability of relocating Universiti Utara Malaysia International School (UUMIS) from its current location in Sintok to a nearby town in Jitra, Kedah in its effort of increasing student's enrolment.</p>
<p><b>Keywords:</b></p> <p>Market Research; International School; Sub-urban International Education.</p> <div data-bbox="172 1025 480 1267" style="text-align: center;">  </div>	<p><b>Theoretical Framework:</b> The study uses the four p's of marketing mix and Ansoff marketing matrix in evaluating the market demand for international school in Jitra if the school were to be relocated from its current location.</p> <p><b>Design/methodology/approach:</b> The study conducted interview sessions with UUMIS staffs, existing parents, and potential parents. Following to the input derived, a survey was formulated and distributed to the communities in Kedah and Perlis.</p> <p><b>Findings:</b> Most existing parents and teachers are willing to send their children to UUMIS should it is relocated to Jitra with a transportation and transit service assistant. This result is supported with the survey distributed, whereby the percentage of willingness are more than half of the existing parents (60.5%). However, despite the willingness, these parents (39.6%) also found this proposal to be burdensome. As such, they suggested UUMIS to provide transportation and transit service with reasonable fees charged instead.</p> <p><b>Implication:</b> The study has direct implication of policy for UUM and UUMIS in steering the international school development. The study also evidenced that market research prior to investments are needed not only to ascertain the demand in the new location but serving as reflective medium for an organization to improvise existing governance especially when there is an expansion/relocation plan in the pipeline.</p> <p><b>Originality/value:</b> The study has direct implication of policy for UUM and UUMIS in steering the international school development.</p> <p>Doi: <a href="https://doi.org/10.26668/businessreview/2023.v8i1.1087">https://doi.org/10.26668/businessreview/2023.v8i1.1087</a></p>

**PARA FICAR OU SE MUDAR? PESQUISA DE MERCADO ESCOLAR INTERNACIONAL PÓS-PANDEMIC**

**RESUMO**

**Objetivo:** Este estudo visa investigar a viabilidade da transferência da Escola Internacional Universiti Utara Malaysia (UUMIS) de sua atual localização em Sintok para uma cidade próxima em Jitra, Kedah, em seu esforço de aumentar o número de matrículas de estudantes.

**Estrutura teórica:** O estudo utiliza os quatro p's de marketing mix e a matriz de marketing da Ansoff na avaliação da demanda de mercado para a escola internacional em Jitra se a escola fosse realocada de sua localização atual.

<sup>A</sup> PhD, Senior Lecturer, Tunku Puteri Intan Safinaz School of Accountancy, Universiti Utara Malaysia, Sintok, Kedah, Malaysia. E-mail: [saidatul@uum.edu.my](mailto:saidatul@uum.edu.my) Orcid: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-0492-9787>

<sup>B</sup> PhD, Senior Lecturer, Tunku Puteri Intan Safinaz School of Accountancy, Universiti Utara Malaysia, Sintok, Kedah, Malaysia. E-mail: [noratikah@uum.edu.my](mailto:noratikah@uum.edu.my) Orcid: <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-8723-1191>

<sup>C</sup> PhD, Senior Lecturer, Tunku Puteri Intan Safinaz School of Accountancy, Universiti Utara Malaysia, Sintok, Kedah, Malaysia. E-mail: [rusniza@uum.edu.my](mailto:rusniza@uum.edu.my) Orcid: <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-3085-9791>

**Design/metodologia/abordagem:** O estudo conduziu sessões de entrevista com funcionários da UUMIS, pais existentes e pais potenciais. Após as informações obtidas, uma pesquisa foi formulada e distribuída para as comunidades de Kedah e Perlis.

**Descobertas:** A maioria dos pais e professores existentes estão dispostos a enviar seus filhos à UUMIS caso ela seja transferida para Jitra com um assistente de serviço de transporte e trânsito. Este resultado é apoiado com a pesquisa distribuída, onde a porcentagem de disposição é mais da metade dos pais existentes (60,5%). Entretanto, apesar da disposição, estes pais (39,6%) também acharam que esta proposta era onerosa. Como tal, eles sugeriram a UUMIS a fornecer serviços de transporte e trânsito com taxas razoáveis cobradas em seu lugar.

**Implicação:** O estudo tem uma implicação direta da política da UUM e da UUMIS na direção do desenvolvimento escolar internacional. O estudo também evidenciou que a pesquisa de mercado antes dos investimentos é necessária não apenas para determinar a demanda no novo local, mas servindo como meio refletivo para uma organização improvisar a governança existente, especialmente quando há um plano de expansão/relocamento no pipeline.

**Originalidade/valor:** O estudo tem implicação direta da política para UUM e UUMIS em orientando o desenvolvimento escolar internacional.

**Palavras-chave:** Pesquisa de Mercado, Escola Internacional, Educação Internacional Suburbana.

## ¿QUEDARSE O TRASLADARSE? INVESTIGACIÓN DEL MERCADO ESCOLAR INTERNACIONAL TRAS LA PANDEMIA

### RESUMEN

**Propósito:** Este estudio tiene como objetivo investigar la viabilidad de la reubicación de Universiti Utara Malaysia International School (UUMIS) desde su ubicación actual en Sintok a una ciudad cercana en Jitra, Kedah en su esfuerzo por aumentar la matrícula de estudiantes.

**Marco teórico:** El estudio utiliza las cuatro p de la combinación de marketing y la matriz de marketing de Ansoff para evaluar la demanda del mercado de la escuela internacional en Jitra si la escuela se trasladara de su ubicación actual.

**Diseño/metodología/enfoque:** El estudio llevó a cabo sesiones de entrevistas con el personal de UUMIS, padres actuales y padres potenciales. A partir de la información obtenida, se elaboró una encuesta que se distribuyó a las comunidades de Kedah y Perlis.

**Resultados:** La mayoría de los padres y profesores actuales están dispuestos a enviar a sus hijos a UUMIS si se traslada a Jitra con un asistente de transporte y servicio de tránsito. Este resultado se corrobora con la encuesta distribuida, según la cual el porcentaje de disposición es superior a la mitad de los padres existentes (60,5%). Sin embargo, a pesar de la buena disposición, estos padres (39,6%) también consideraron que esta propuesta era onerosa. Por ello, sugirieron a UUMIS que, en su lugar, ofreciera un servicio de transporte y tránsito con tarifas razonables.

**Implicaciones:** El estudio tiene implicaciones políticas directas para la UUM y la UUMIS a la hora de dirigir el desarrollo de las escuelas internacionales. El estudio también puso de manifiesto que los estudios de mercado previos a las inversiones son necesarios no sólo para determinar la demanda en la nueva ubicación, sino también como medio de reflexión para que una organización improvise la gobernanza existente, especialmente cuando existe un plan de expansión o reubicación en proyecto.

**Originalidad/valor:** El estudio tiene implicaciones políticas directas para la UUM y la UUMIS a la hora de dirigir el desarrollo de las escuelas internacionales. en la dirección del desarrollo de las escuelas internacionales.

**Palabras clave:** Estudio de Mercado, Escuela Internacional, Educación Internacional Suburbana.

### INTRODUCTION

Socio-economic development of a country is highly dependent on educational sector (Astakhova et al., 2016). A well-designed educational system could equip the graduates with knowledge, skills advancement and human capabilities that are important for their employment readiness and character development (Serafim-Silva et al., 2022; Shrivastava, 2022). As such,

selecting the best educational institutions and curriculum is essential for parents to their children. Globalisation has seen a significant and ongoing trend of growth within the international education sector (McKeering et al., 2021), as this form of education proves increasingly attractive not only to the globally mobile expatriates for whom such schools were originally founded, but also to those seeking a competitive edge for their child in a globalised market (Hayden, 2011). Of late, Malaysia is seeing an increase in demand for English-speaking education as English is classified as one of the languages that are widely spoken and commonly used around the world. In addition, a Parent Action Group for Education (PAGE) president Datin Noor Azimah Abdul Rahim, said that the number of class periods for the English language under the current school timetable, especially the public schools, is far from adequate to produce proficient speakers. As such, proposing for sending to private schools to those who could afford (Ali, 2022). Serve as one of the educational institutions that use English as the medium of instruction, the total number of students attending international schools in Malaysia has increased by 80%, and the majority are local Malaysian children. Likewise, these children's parents emphasized the importance of international and private schools' syllabus, environment and facilities (Yaacob et al., 2014).

UUM International School (UUMIS) is one of the three schools offering the Cambridge syllabus in the state of Kedah, Malaysia. Centred in the Universiti Utara Malaysia (UUM), this school seems to be the fittest educational institution among the children of UUM staff and international students that focus on the respective type of curriculum and refer to the degree of affordability and convenience. Besides, UUMIS has the potential to be a profitable business considering the niche service it offers. Concerning to affordability, Giovanis et al. (2013) stated that price is one of the most important variables in the process of customers' purchase decision. Implying to the school fees, the future growth of the international schools market is very much dependent on how many people can afford to pay (Keeling, 2015a). Operated with higher fees compared to other types of school, UUMIS is committed to capture customers' demand level for the survival of the producer and expending long-term relationship. However, UUMIS bottom line has been severely affected as the COVID-19 pandemic hits the country.

This plague has brought unprecedented challenges including to the educational institutions. UNESCO (2020) reported that over 1.5 billion students in 191 countries have been affected by this outbreak due to the school closure. Unfortunately, as for international and private school like UUMIS, the degree of sustaining and staying afloat are in dire need. UUMIS losses its customer as international students have to return to their home country, bringing their children along resulting to quitting from UUMIS. Currently, only local parents mainly among

staff of UUM are still sending their children to the school. The school is currently operating at a loss, shortage of 30 students to breakeven in particular. Following to these urgency, the management of UUMIS prompt to take action on increasing the student enrolment.

The background of the UUM International School (UUMIS) is listed below: It is the first international schools in the whole state of Kedah. Differ from other international schools in Kedah, UUMIS offers both a Primary and Lower Secondary IGCSE based curriculum. UUMIS was established in 2014 and is a Cambridge accredited school. Situated at the heart of Universiti Utara Malaysia (UUM), this respective international school is surrounded with green nature and magnificent panoramic view.

UUMIS holds on to the vision of providing its students with the best elements of international education in eastern cultural environment. Likewise, UUMIS's five (5) missions are engender enthusiasm for learning, nurture mind, body and spirit, practice and propagate compassion and inclusivity, strive for individual and collective excellence and celebrate success and accomplishments. The market research found that there is a strong demand for degree program in electrical engineering technology, hence justifying the investment in forming a new course for the university.

The main objective of this work is to investigate the viability of relocating Universiti Utara Malaysia International School (UUMIS) from its current location in Sintok to a nearby town in Jitra, Kedah in its effort of increasing student's enrolment. We propose that UUMIS is moved to the nearby satellite town-Jitra, as it has a bigger market and prospects that could increase enrolment to the school and hence, increase profitability of UUMIS and UUM. However, a market research has not been done to examine the demand for international school in Jitra, considering many factors including competition from other international school, demand and demography of Jitra, affordability and familiarity of parents with the international school syllabus in the suburban area. Hence, this study aims to administer a market research to investigate parents behaviour and reaction towards the relocation. In particular, we intend to ascertain whether parents who could afford a private education for their children would want to register their children at UUMIS if it was moved to Jitra, the existing parents perceptions and also recommending the suitable business strategy in terms of pricing and service offered if the market demand in Jitra is strong. The findings of this study would help UUM make a better informed decision if they wished to move UUMIS to Jitra in the near future.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

Market research is defined as the systematic collection, analysis and interpretation of information relevant to marketing decisions (Hague et al., 2013). Market research provides relevant data to help solve marketing challenges that a business will most likely face--an integral part of the business planning process. In fact, strategies such as market segmentation (identifying specific groups within a market) and product differentiation (creating an identity for a product or service that separates it from those of the competitors) are impossible to develop without market research. The process of assessing the viability of a new product or service through techniques such as surveys, product testing and focus groups is fundamental part of market research (Ali Al-Shatanawi et al., 2014). Moreover, market research is not only useful to understand market demand but also important in understanding how much people are prepared to pay for a service or product.

Almost all the frameworks that aim to understand businesses and markets require data. Market research is therefore a vital component in many of the marketing paradigms. In Igor Ansoff's products' and markets' matrix, there are four business situations depending on whether the market, product, or services to be addressed is new or existing, market research has a role in all four situations. For an existing product or services such as UUMIS, market research can find new territories for the services. In Theodore Levitt's life cycle, market research plays an important role at each of the stages. The four Ps (product, price, place and promotion) which are the pillar of marketing requires market research in each pillar to help understand how these subjects work together in producing the most effective business and marketing strategy (Hague et al., 2013). It is also proved that with the help of marketing researches and modern approaches it is possible to get a clear idea of qualitative and quantitative criteria of demand, the real situation in the market; identify problems of interaction between different market participants; determine trends and directions of demand development; evaluate the effectiveness of information channels (Stebliuk & Kuzmenko, 2021).

Market research is not uncommon in the Malaysian education industry. For instance, (Mat Dahan et al., 2016) conducted a market survey on Universiti Malaysia Pahang (UMP) to measure students' perception on the level of the university's library service quality and results showed high satisfaction from most students on the service offered. Likewise, previous local research also conducted market survey in understanding consumer demand for a university degree program. (Yahaya et al., 2012) administered a market survey for Universiti Teknikal Malaysia Melaka (UTeM) in developing electrical engineering program and designing its

curriculum structure by examining the perception and requirement from the industry perspective.

Adding to this, even a well-established international education such as the British colleges and universities did market research when they found there is a decreasing market penetration as competitors are emerging with quality education. (Binsardi & Ekwulugo, 2003) administered market research to investigate international students' perception about the UK education as well as researching UK performance in the world market for international education. The survey serves as an intelligence input for the UK Governments, the British Council and the academic marketing planners in their marketing opportunities-threat audit to better design and market the program offered based on the need of their international clients.

The market demand for international schools in Malaysia is indeed encouraging. From the world's university perspective, an English-medium international schools are increasingly valued. In Canada, 70% of all international undergraduate students come from international schools. The students were described as meeting all of the Canadian University requirements; well prepared to mix and participate, have very good facility of English language, and have been exposed to internationally recognized curricula (Keeling, 2015b). Parents looking at opportunities to send their children for tertiary education abroad are seriously weighing in international school as one of the best options.

Market intelligence and data on Malaysia's international schools collected and evaluated by The International School Consultancy Group (ISC), a UK-based organization which has been researching the worldwide international school market for over 25 years shows in their latest report that currently there are 122 English-medium international schools in Malaysia teaching a total of 46,130 students and employing over 4,500 full time staff. Kuala Lumpur has the largest number of international schools; 27 are located in the city educating over 15,000 students. Other major centers for international schools are Penang and Iskandar (Keeling, 2015b).

International school hence has been a staple in major cities in Malaysia and are an educational option for many economically privileged families. In just six years, the number of international schools has increased by 43 percent in Malaysia. New international schools are mostly being built in the urban areas like Klang Valley and Putrajaya (Ignatius, 2022). However, for the suburban area like Kedah, international school has been rarely offered. In addition, there are 250,500 citizens living in Kubang Pasu and 412,300 citizens living in Kota Setar as at 2018 data. The two cities combined is a market full of potential. However, even though the demand for international school is increasing in Malaysia, every state is unique, and

making assumptions that an international school opened in Jitra is a guaranteed success can be an expensive mistake. Caffyn (2010) emphasizes on the importance of location as it significantly influences the reactions to physical environment, local culture and clientele. Moreover, location enclave affects individual's experience and interaction in the locality which indirectly influences their behaviour, satisfaction, morale and interest. International schools should be located in a strategic area and within convenient distance (Yaacob et al., 2014). Likewise, (Cissé et al., 2020) stated that local characteristics influenced the location decision of new individual establishments for most of the economic sectors. Implying to UUMIS, the factor of location isolation and distance presumably discouraged parents from enrolling their children. Hence, a comprehensive study should be done to minimize risk and also maximize the chances of success. Even if it is already clear that the school will go ahead in Jitra, this research will influence many decisions in the set-up process including Vision and Mission, Financial Planning, Curriculum, Admissions and the overall business strategy.

## **MATERIAL AND METHODOLOGY**

In a research project which explores a subject for the first time such that will be explored in this study, researchers need a qualitative stage to build understanding. A small number of in-depth interviews will give a feel for the subject, the terminology which is used, constructs that need testing, and understand how the audience sees the world (Hague et al., 2013). This is vital information for designing a questionnaire in a subsequent quantitative stage.

So, the data collection for this study started with interview sessions with UUMIS staff, existing parents, and potential parents in Jitra. During the interview, open ended questions were asked to deeply understand the perception, readiness, willingness and affordability of parents and other factors that they are considering in making decision to send their children to international school. Nine existing parents, one potential parent, and six teachers and former principal of the school was interviewed via Webex.

To ascertain the demand for international schools in Jitra, the study then proceed to formulate the survey instrument from the interview findings. The survey was distributed to communities through telephone, face to face and online means, to assess their willingness in sending their children to UUMIS in Jitra and the annual school fees that they are willing to pay. This offers a better match between what UUMIS has to offer and the parents' willingness in registering their children to UUMIS. The population of this research is parents living in Jitra, Alor Setar and Changlun. Pilot test for the survey instrument was distributed to 30 respondents and reliability statistic from the pilot survey showed a Cronbach's Alpha of 0.856. After the

pilot testing, the survey was improvised from expert review before it was finally blast to the community identified through convenient sampling where researcher contacted managers of private kindergarten in the identified areas, as well as blasting the survey in parents and teachers' groups and local community groups. 187 respondents answered the survey and most of them are residing in Jitra, Kedah.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Readiness

From the interviews, parents are comfortable with the UUMIS fees as long as it commensurate with their perceived quality of teaching and facilities. This is evidenced from the survey result that show 97.4% is ready to pay between RM500 to RM1500 monthly for the school fees. For instances, about 85% is ready to pay more than RM1,000 though 70% of the parents perceived that the fees are expensive.

However, the acceptance by the parents in term fees bracket could be extended if UUMIS makes the fees payment system more flexible because currently UUMIS offers instalment scheme for UUM staff only. This is supported by the survey results as 86% of the parents prefer flexible fees scheme. In addition, parents expect a clear fees policy especially in case of unexpected circumstances i.e. pandemic COVID-19.

*“Yes. Mode of payment. Because the fees are quite high, it worsens when parents have to pay lonesome, felt more expensive”*  
(Parent 5, Existing Parents)

Besides the readiness of the parents to pay the fees, teachers also express their readiness to move to Jitra if their salary or allowances is taken into consideration, especially teachers who stay in Perlis.

### Willingness

All interviewed parents who live in Jitra welcome the idea of relocating UUMIS to Jitra and willing to continue sending their children to UUMIS. The primary factor is the proposed location, which is Taman Siswa, is in proximity with the Jitra town. Hence, they could enjoy the privilege of short traveling which they have not encountered before as said by one of the parents:



*“In that case you check...first of all, you check with students at the school. Maybe I am okay, because I live in Jitra”*  
Parent 2 (Existing Parent)

Specifically, UUM staff and lecturers who live in Jitra that send their children to UUMIS also did not find the current location as a major issue because they have to commute to UUM daily. However, parents that are not working in UUM and live far from Sintok and Changlun may feel discourage and reluctant to send their children to UUMIS. As such, relocate UUMIS to Jitra could attract potential parents not only from Jitra itself but also from Alor Star since Jitra is situated between Alor Star and Sintok, Changlun, as said by two of the parents and teacher:

*“Yes, we are currently staying in Jitra. So, to send them to Changlun, that would be very far. Especially those who are not lecturers, most of them are working in the hospital”*  
Parent 5 (Existing Parents)

*“Even though they know there is UUM, but it is too far away. I think Jitra would be a good location because it is between Changlun and Alor Star. Jitra is really not that far, less than 1 hour away from Alor Star”*  
Parent 9 (Existing Parents)

*“There are parents who could not fetch their kids after school early as they work is Alor Star”*  
Teacher 2 (Local Teacher)

Nonetheless, several existing parents especially staying in Changlun feel hesitant with the proposal as they need to commute to Jitra. With that being said, UUMIS has to provide transportation service from Changlun to Jitra and transit service. The issue of commuting has been prevalent ever since, particularly to the parents staying away from Changlun. Teachers also raised the same concern as they are staying inside UUM. The transportation service is suggested by two of the parents and teacher:

*“But, if that is the case, I think I am okay. But with one condition, transportation provided from Changlun. That’s all, importantly”*  
Parent 3 (Existing Parents)

*“Umm, if that’s the case, I think I am okay rather than no transportation provided. It would be better if there is transit service provide too. This problem has been persistent since then. We want to send them to school, but nobody can send them”*  
Parent 5 (Existing Parents)

*“It is a huge transformation, if you are moving to Jitra. Definitely would, I think based from my experience, it will lose some parents. But, I think this bus idea would solve some issues, you know. But, of course, this would increase the fee, I guess?”*  
Teacher 5 (International Teacher)

*“Offer transportation, and it would be okay. The transportation for those who are coming from UUM campus, and maybe neighbouring. And maybe we can have bus stop. Like Perlis, like Kangar, that they don’t want drive straight to Jitra, we can have somewhere to”*

Teacher 6 (International Teacher)

Concerning to the transportation service, this matter was raised by parents to the former principal. However, this matter was not implemented and continued when it is coupled with service fees, as said by Parent 1:

*“I am not sure about transportation. Mr Andre did ask and I was interested actually. But it just stopped there”*

Parent 1 (existing parent)

*“About the transport thing, the previous guy I used, ohh no...the previous principal I used to know,. I talk a bit lah with him. They said that they are open to having transportation from Jitra to Alor Star, but they are no takers. No one would come. They said everybody want to go, but when they provide transportation with fees, they don’t want because the transportation fees is not cheap also. I mean it is quite a long way.”*

PARENT 6 (EXISTING PARENT)

Therefore, service fees significantly influence the parents’ decision and thoughts. Most parents that suggested transportation service stressed on the importance of having the right and fittest service fees. With this pressing time, parents are concern with their spending by which the service fees should be charge reasonably to avoid from losing more existing parents. These parents believe that the fees would be high as UUMIS need to either rent or buy the transportation (i.e van or school bus), which is costly to the UUMIS. Hence, this cost would reflect to the service fees as said by two of the parents:

*“That really makes me wanting to send them! [chuckles]. The thing is my few Jitra friends will send their kids too. The thing is issue with transportation. Even if there is transportation provided, it is going to be expensive, and costly. You know, if UUMIS is in Jitra, a few of my Alor Star friends will send their children there”*

Parent 9 (existing parent)

Additionally, service fees should be carefully tailored as the existing parents are from diverse background and therefore, different range of income. UUMIS need to come up with the most suitable service fees and be transparent with the parents as said by Parent 9:

*“So they need to well-planned. Let’s say to the UUM staff and lecturer, how much will it cost? It needs to be clarified clearly”*

Parent 9 (existing parent)

Further, some parents are also from UUM international students, by which international school is crucial for their children education. Likewise, these parents are either self-funded or awarded with scholarship from their home country and even do not have their own transport to send their children to UUMIS in Jitra. Thus, they do not have any choice but to opt for the service fees. Unfortunately, by charging additional fees, they might face difficulty and negatively affect their financial stability which would also resulting to quitting the UUMIS should it being relocated to Jitra. Parent, teacher and former principal also added that the transportation fees should be optional and flexible for the parents should they wanted to opt for other way of commuting.

*“But at the same time, we look at the international student, they may transportation problem unlike the locals”*  
 Parent 7 (existing parent)

*“Please make the transportation fees optional”*  
 Parent 2 (existing parent)

*“It wouldn’t be much of an issue for them to go to Jitra. They would form sort of car pool and this family will fetch the kids and other parents will”*  
 (Former Principal)

It is also worth to note that one of the teachers find the relocation could lose the segment and exclusivity of UUMIS because Jitra has other private schools. Hence, he suggested that should UUMIS stay in current location and provide transportation service from Jitra to Changlun so that potential parents from Alor Star could drop their children to the Jitra stop.

*“This is the idea you know. I guess, if the school think to relocate to Jitra, by making a bus, from Changlun to Jitra, and backward, it would be the same thing. And at that time, you would not interfere with many segment. You just bring student from Jitra, and because Jitra has a lot of private school. Very much, and if you want to go there, I am not sure...but they are in the middle. Maybe by having some bus to Jitra, and focusing some marketing in Jitra in attracting the students, would be very good.”*  
 Teacher 5 (International Teacher)

<b>BAHAGIAN 1 / SECTION 1 PERSEPSI IBU-BAPA TERHADAP SEKOLAH ANTARABANGSA DAN UUMIS/ PARENT'S PERCEPTION ON INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL AND UUMIS</b>				
No.	Perkara/ Items	MIN	MAX	MEAN
1.	Sekolah Antarabangsa menyediakan kualiti pendidikan yang lebih baik / The International School provides better quality education	1	5	4.19
2.	Pendidikan sama sahaja di mana-mana sekolah / Education is similar in any school	1	5	2.96
3.	Sekolah Antarabangsa mempunyai komuniti yang pelbagai latar belakang / The International School have diversity in its community	3	5	4.63
4.	Sekolah Antarabangsa menyediakan fasiliti yang lebih baik / The International School provides better facilities	1	5	4.17

5.	Sekolah Antarabangsa mempunyai pendidik yang berkualiti tinggi / The International School have high quality educators	1	5	4.12
6.	Saya menganggap semua guru di UUMIS adalah dari luar negara / I expect all teachers at UUMIS are from international	1	5	3.32
7.	Saya bimbang jika guru-guru di UUMIS adalah warga tempatan dari Malaysia / I am concerned if the teachers at UUMIS are from local i.e. Malaysian	1	5	2.78
8.	Saya menganggap semua guru di UUMIS sentiasa menjalani latihan yang relevan dengan tugas mereka / I expect all teachers at UUMIS are regularly sent for relevant training	1	5	4.56
9.	Saya menganggap UUMIS menggunakan silibus dan piawaian antarabangsa / I expect UUMIS uses international syllabus and standard	3	5	4.6
10.	Saya menganggap UUMIS menyediakan laluan pendidikan yang berpotensi kepada pelajarinya / I expect UUMIS to prepare potential educational pathway for its students	1	5	4.66
11.	Saya mempunyai laluan pendidikan yang jelas untuk anak-anak saya (contohnya ICGSE/O-level/SPM dan sebagainya) / I have a clear education pathway for my children (i.e. ICGSE/O-level/SPM and etc.)	2	5	4.38
12.	Adalah baik untuk UUMIS mengadunkan silibus tempatan bersama silibus sedia ada (contohnya KAFA/Tahfiz) / It would be beneficial for UUMIS to blend in relevant local syllabus into theirs (i.e. religious study KAFA/Tahfiz alike)	1	5	4.61
13.	Saya mengharapkan kerjasama yang erat di antara guru-guru dan pihak ibu bapa di UUMIS / I expect a supportive relationship between teachers and parents at UUMIS	3	5	4.75
14.	Saya mengharapkan maklumat yang telus dari pengurusan UUMIS kepada pihak ibubapa / I expect a transparent information from the UUMIS management to parents.	3	5	4.82
15.	Saya mengharapkan UUMIS menerima sokongan padu dari pihak pengurusan tertinggi UUM / I expect UUMIS receives special support from UUM top management	1	5	4.75
<b>BAHAGIAN 2 / SECTION 2 KEMAMPUAN IBU-BAPA DALAM MENGHANTAR ANAK KE SEKOLAH ANTARABANGSA/ PARENTS' AFFORDABILITY IN SENDING CHILDREN TO INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL</b>				
1.	Saya sanggup berbelanja lebih untuk pendidikan anak-anak saya / I am willing to spend more for my children education	1	5	4.18
2.	Yuran Sekolah Antarabangsa mahal / The International School fee is expensive	1	5	4.09
3.	Yuran yang dikenakan oleh Sekolah Antarabangsa bersesuaian dengan perkhidmatan yang ditawarkan / International School fees commensurate with the service provided	1	5	3.93
4.	Saya berharap golongan bukan staf UUM juga dapat membuat bayaran yuran secara bulanan (seperti staf UUM) / I expect non-UUM staff could also make monthly fees payment (as per UUM staff)	1	5	4.45
<b>BAHAGIAN 3/ SECTION34 KESEDIAAN IBU-BAPA TERHADAP PEMINDAHAN UUMIS KE JITRA/ PARENTS' READINESS FOR UUMIS RELOCATION TO JITRA</b>				
1.	Saya bersedia untuk ke Jitra bagi menghantar anak-anak saya di UUMIS / I am willing to travel to Jitra to send my children to UUMIS	1	5	3.6
2.	Ia akan menyukarkan saya jika UUMIS berpindah ke Jitra / If UUMIS is relocated to Jitra, it will be inconvenient to me	1	5	2.63
3.	Saya bersedia menghantar anak-anak saya ke UUMIS jika ia berpindah ke Jitra dengan syarat ada kemudahan pengangkutan disediakan (dengan tambahan yuran) / I am ready to send my	1	5	3.61

	children if UUMIS is relocated to Jitra with the condition of transportation support (with additional fee)			
4.	Saya bersedia menghantar anak-anak saya ke UUMIS jika ia berpindah ke Jitra dengan syarat ada kemudahan "transit selepas sekolah" (dengan tambahan yuran) / I am ready to send my children if UUMIS is relocated to Jitra with "after school transit" (with additional fee)	1	5	3.67
5.	Saya bercadang untuk menghantar anak-anak saya ke UUMIS sehingga ke peringkat tertinggi yang ditawarkan / I plan to send my children to UUMIS until the highest year UUMIS may offer	1	5	4.17
<b>BAHAGIAN 4 / SECTION 4 IBU BAPA PELAJAR UUMIS/PARENTS OF CHILDREN IN UUMIS</b>				
1.	UUMIS memberi perkhidmatan yang berkualiti sehingga kini / Currently, UUMIS is serving at its best quality	1	5	4
2.	Saya yakin anak-anak saya boleh menjalani kehidupan sosial dengan mudah selepas menamatkan pengajian di sekolah antarabangsa / I believe my children will socially survived after graduating from international school	2	5	4.31
3.	Saya akan berhenti menghantar anak-anak saya ke UUMIS selepas habis peringkat rendah / I will stop sending my children to the UUMIS after primary level	1	5	2.83
4.	Saya akan berhenti menghantar anak-anak saya ke UUMIS selepas tahun-tahun tertentu / I will stop sending my children to the UUMIS after certain year	1	5	2.85
<b>BAHAGIAN 5 / SECTION 5 IBU-BAPA YANG BERCADANG MENGHANTAR ANAK KE UUMIS/ PARENTS WHO ARE PLANNING TO SEND CHILDREN TO UUMIS</b>				
1.	Saya bercadang untuk menghantar anak saya ke UUMIS dalam masa terdekat / I plan to send my children to UUMIS in the near future	1	5	3.7
2.	Saya akan menghantar anak-anak saya ke UUMIS jika mereka sudah layak bersekolah / I plan to send my children to UUMS if they are already arrived at schooling age	1	5	3.94
3.	Saya bercadang untuk menukar anak-anak saya dari sekolah sekarang ke UUMIS / I plan to switch my children from existing school to UUMIS.	1	5	3.48

Source: Prepared by the authors (2022)

All in all, based on the interview findings, most existing parents and teachers are willing to send their children to UUMIS should it is relocated to Jitra with a transportation and transit service assistant. This result is supported with the survey distributed, whereby the percentage of willingness are more than half of the existing parents (60.5%). However, despite the willingness, these parents (39.6%) also found this proposal to be burdensome. As such, they suggested UUMIS to provide transportation and transit service with reasonable fees charged.

## CONCLUSION

Referring to our research objectives and findings, we offer several business strategy suggestions for UUMIS to increase profitability. In terms of viability, from the external factors, survey and interview data, we can see there is a strong demand for an international school in Jitra. However, moving to Jitra will require a heavy investment which is the minor limitation

of this work. So, depending on the financial resources of UUM, we recommend two possible routes in increasing the admission and profitability of UUMIS: stay in UUM but enlarge the area of the school or move to existing bigger building in UUM to accommodate more students, or move the school to Jitra by renovating the existing facilities in Taman Siswa to suit the requirement of an international school.

Other than the location aspect we mentioned above, we would like to recommend some improvements to the school's facilities, teachers and teaching quality, fees structure, curriculum, transportation, governance, school system, management, and branding, to increase UUMIS admission and profitability post pandemic. These aspects were gathered from our interview with the parents, teachers and our interview and observation with the benchmark international school in this study: Brainy Bunch International School (BBIS) in Cyberjaya.

Furthermore, in terms of fee structure, we recommend UUMIS to maintain the fees at the current price point regardless of whether UUM decides that the school will stay in the campus or move to Jitra, because as per our findings, the current price point is already at par with other international schools, who also charge the parents there around RM800 to RM1,300 a month per children, and we do not recommend the fees to be increased further than this ceiling as it will demotivate parents to send their children when the cost is too high and does not match their household income. We would also recommend that the flexible payment of the fees (monthly payment) is extended to non-UUM staff as well, as paying upfront the whole amount for a semester is actually quite burdensome to a lot of parents out there.

Overall, the location of the school is not the only variable that could drive its success and profitability, but a host of other aspects mentioned above should also be considered, no matter if the school stayed on campus or was moved to Jitra. The findings of this study would help UUM make a better informed decision if they wished to move UUMIS to Jitra in the near future.

## REFERENCES

Ali Al-Shatanawi, H., Osman, A., & Suberi Ab Halim, M. (2014). The Importance of Market Research in Implementing Marketing Programs. *International Journal of Academic Research in Economics and Management Sciences*, 3(2).

Ali, S. (2022). *Concerned over poor command of English among Malaysians, social activists call for reset*. The Sun Daily. <https://www.thesundaily.my/local/concerned-over-poor-command-of-english-among-malaysians-social-activists-call-for-reset-DI9208104>

- Astakhova, K. V., Korobeev, A. I., Prokhorova, V. V., Kolupaev, A. A., Vorotnoy, M. V., & Kucheryavaya, E. R. (2016). The role of education in economic and social development of the country. *International Review of Management and Marketing*, 6(1), 53–58.
- Binsardi, A., & Ekwulugo, F. (2003). International marketing of British education: Research on the students' perception and the UK market penetration. *Marketing Intelligence & Planning*, 21(5), 318–327. <https://doi.org/10.1108/02634500310490265>
- Caffyn, R. (2010). We Are in Transylvania, and Transylvania Is Not England': Location as a Significant Factor in International School Micropolitics. *Educational Management Administration & Leadership*, 38(3), 321–340.
- Cissé, I., Dubé, J., & Brunelle, C. (2020). New business location: how local characteristics influence individual location decision? *The Annals of Regional Science*, 64, 185–214.
- Hague, P., Cupman, J., Harrison, M., & Truman, O. (2013). Market research in Practice. In *How to Get Greater Insight From Your Market* (3rd ed.). Kogan Page Limited.
- Hayden, M. (2011). Transnational spaces of education: The growth of the international school sector. *Globalisation, Societies and Education*, 9(2). <https://doi.org/10.1080/14767724.2011.577203>
- Ignatius, C. (2022). *A Parent's Perspective: Why Are International Curriculums Getting More Relevant*. Business Today. <https://www.businesstoday.com.my/2022/02/05/a-parents-perspective-why-are-international-curriculums-getting-more-relevant/>
- Keeling, A. (2015a). *Expert Analysis: Increasing Demand from Malaysian Families Driving the Growth of the International School Industry*. ISC Research.
- Mat Dahan, S., Taib, M. Y., Mohd Zainudin, N., & Ismail, F. (2016). Surveying Users' Perception of Academic Library Services Quality: A Case Study in Universiti Malaysia Pahang (UMP) Library. *The Journal of Academic Librarianship*, 42(1), 38–43.
- McKeering, P., Hwang, Y. S., & Ng, C. (2021). A study into wellbeing, student engagement and resilience in early-adolescent international school students. *Journal of Research in International Education*, 20(1). <https://doi.org/10.1177/14752409211006650>
- Stebliuk, N., & Kuzmenko, N. (2021). Research of consumer demand in the market of educational services of Dnipropetrovsk region. *Economies' Horizons*, 3(14). [https://doi.org/10.31499/2616-5236.3\(14\).2020.234989](https://doi.org/10.31499/2616-5236.3(14).2020.234989)
- Serafim-Silva, S., Spers, R. G., Vázquez-Suárez, L., & Peña Ramírez, C. (2022). Evolution of Blended Learning and its Prospects in Management Education. *International Journal of Professional Business Review*, 7(1), e0291. <https://doi.org/10.26668/businessreview/2022.v7i1.291>
- Shrivastava, R. (2022). Talent Management and Effectiveness of Recruitment Process: A Study of Higher Education Institutions in Central India. *International Journal of Professional Business Review*, 7(6), e0841. <https://doi.org/10.26668/businessreview/2022.v7i6.841>

Yahaya, M. S., Noordin, A., Ahmad, S., & Sapiee, M. R. M. (2012). Engineering Technology Program in Malaysia: A Market Survey. *Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 56, 448–453. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.sbspro.2012.09.675>