



Creativity and Value Creation

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Task 1 – Research Question

For my research, I chose the question “What influences accounting students studying in the undergraduate programme at University Malaya-Wales (UMW) to pursue accounting professional certification?” I chose this question for my research because I believe it is important to understand the influences that affect future career decisions and push accounting undergraduate students to pursue professional certifications. Professional certifications such as the Association of Chartered Certified Accountants (ACCA), Certified Public Accountants (CPA), Institute of Chartered Accountants in England and Wales (ICAEW), etc are exams that students choose to pursue additional to or instead of their master's degree. These qualifications, as part of their course not only concentrate on teaching students advanced accounting subjects but also require them to gain working experience in order to receive the certification.

In this research, out of several factors that may affect a student only a few were focused on to understand which influence affects students’ decisions the most out of the main influences considered in this research. Additionally, a few other influences that are specific to UMW including a few challenges that are general in nature and may affect decisions were also considered. Understanding such influences and challenges would help in getting better clarity of the decision-making process of accounting student when they plan their future and how their current situation affects their decisions.

In this research, the three influences that were focused on are financial rewards, career growth and networking which may lead to students choosing to pursue professional certifications as further studies after their graduation. The variable financial reward refers to the amount of money earned. The hypothesis statement for this variable would be “Possible better financial rewards impact student decision to pursue professional certification” which focuses on whether students consider possible higher earnings in future to be a driving factor in their decision to pursue professional certification. Similarly, the career growth variable and its hypothesis “Better career growth impacts student decision to pursue professional certification” focuses on possible career growth, for example, a better entry-level job, is considered to be a driving factor in decision-making. Lastly networking and its question “Networking and professional recognition impacts student decision to pursue professional certification” focuses on whether a bigger scope for building connections or recognition as a professional accountant plays a significant role in decision-making. Focusing on these questions under the main question would be helpful in getting more specific results and a more specific understanding of how much each impacts the decisions of students. Understanding

these influences can be further developed into what students prioritize for their future careers between the three influences, where they may prioritize their growth more than financial rewards. Data regarding the priorities of a student would in turn help institutions create better curricula or activities that are more suited for student's needs.

As for the research method, the deductive approach was used for this research between the two other types, inductive and abductive. The inductive approach is when the researcher develops a conclusion that is reached through pattern recognition from a general idea or observation, this type of method is suitable for research that modifies and forms new theories or explanations (*Inductive Research: What Is It? (With Benefits and Examples)*, 2022). Deductive research on the other hand is the complete opposite of the inductive method. It is when a hypothesis is created and analysed during the process to reach a specific conclusion, which suits this research as hypotheses for each influence are created and proved as the research progresses. Lastly, the abductive research method is a mixture of both inductive and deductive research methods and is used when the characteristics of both methods are needed.

Additionally, the other types of approach used was out of the three methods, quantitative, qualitative and mixed, the research approach chosen was the quantitative method. The qualitative method focuses on information gathered from sources such as interviews, focus groups, literature reviews, etc. This information acquired can be used to understand patterns or trends which can then be used to form theories (*Research Guides: Organizing Your Social Sciences Research Paper: Qualitative Methods*, n.d.). This type of approach usually works well with inductive research methods due to their similarity in nature. On the other hand, the quantitative method acquires information from surveys polls or questionnaires which later is converted to numerical data that can be analysed to form and prove a hypothesis (*Research Guides: Organizing Your Social Sciences Research Paper: Quantitative Methods*, n.d.). Mixed method like its name is the combination of both qualitative and quantitative methods, this type of method is suitable for research that contains variables that require both analysis of pattern and numerical data (Dovetail Editorial Team, 2023). The quantitative method would be most suitable for this research as the main focus is to compare and analyse data to identify the biggest influence on students. Additionally, the question also roots out into three different hypotheses which would be easier to prove through numerical data. For such type of research literature reviews or interviewing would prove to be ineffective and would make it difficult to reach a conclusion on the research. The deductive approach is usually used along with the quantitative method as both are used to prove the hypotheses.

As for the collection of data for this research, the information was acquired from both secondary and primary sources. However, there was more reliance on primary information than secondary due to the research being location-specific.

Sampling refers to a process when some people from the target population, who are the focus of the research, are used as a sample to test out the research topic. This sampling can be done through various methods, meaning the system people from the population were selected. The multiple types of sampling methods can be divided into two major types, probability, and non-probability sampling methods. The probability method refers to when a researcher may randomly select people from a population regardless of their background or characteristics due to no requirements on the sample (Government of Canada, Statistics Canada, 2021). However, this sampling method may also include different types where people are chosen according to the system. Such sampling method can be useful to research questions that are general for example, research questions regarding opinions of consumers on a business. Non-probability sampling is when the researcher chooses its sample with a specific group in mind due to the research requiring a specific group to choose from. In this research, the people required need to be students studying at the University Malaya-Wales (UMW) and are under the accounting undergraduate programme to be included as a part of the survey (Government of Canada, Statistics Canada, 2021b). Hence, the sampling method suitable for this research would be a non-probability method as random people from the population cannot be selected.

Lastly for this research, the sample size considered was small-scale with 22 accounting students of UMW participating in the survey conducted.

Task 2 – Research Techniques

As earlier stated, primary sources i.e., conducted surveys relied on more compared to secondary sources like literature reviews. The survey distributed didn't include large groups and only consisted of close-ended questions, which was done to make interpretation of the information acquired easier to not only understand but also analyse. The questions in the survey can be divided into different sections, where the first few questions focused on the background of the students such as their year of study and age. Next, the questions asked were regarding their reason for studying accounting and their plans for earning professional certification. The third section of the survey focused on influences that may impact their decision, questions related to the three main influences were asked such as if earning a certification would lead to better career start and growth, financial rewards or professional recognition. In addition to these questions, other influences were also considered like family or environmental influences and subject exemptions provided for ACCA certification through the undergraduate programme at UMW. Lastly, questions regarding the biggest perceived challenge that may negatively impact their decision to pursue certification and the influence that pushes them the most to pursue.

The secondary research conducted was done mainly for three reasons. The first is to develop a better understanding of the question by reading research papers with similar questions. This was also done to further improve the question and the hypotheses under it. The second reason was to introduce and establish possible challenges when it comes to decision-making, this was done by accessing official data of the professional certification institutions. Lastly, the research done was to broaden the perspective, on analysis for each of the influences, to data outside of the information acquired from primary research.

Task 3 – Presentation on Ideas

Presentation Google Drive link: <https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1VQ-dkJzYtWmGOTTY7G8F0pt4nbvVRneK?usp=sharing>

The above-linked pitch was shown to a few students at the University Malaya-Wales (UMW) for their feedback towards the video. Some of the positive feedback conveyed that the presentation was clear and focused on the question. The flow of the pitch was also commented on, stating a good flow and organized format with proper direction for presentation. Explanation of the three main influences was appreciated by some of the audience expressing that it led to a better understanding of the topic. The audience also believes the methods made use of in the research were relevant and suitable according to the topic. The overall opinion highlighted the pitch being simple and easy to understand without complicating any parts of the presentation.

However negative feedback was also shared that even though the simplicity made the pitch easy to understand, the overall information presented lacked detail in information. Additionally, some feedback stated the value of research being overshadowed by other parts of the presentation due to more focus on other sections.

Task 4 – Data Analysis

What influences accounting students studying in the undergraduate programme at University Malaya-Wales (UMW) to pursue accounting professional certification?

Introduction

In this analysis, 3 main influences will be focused on with a few additional influences and possible challenges leading to the conclusion of the research.

H1: "Possible better financial rewards have the most impact on student decision to pursue professional certification"

From the survey conducted, the majority of the participants strongly agreed that professional certification led to higher earnings i.e., financial rewards. Students who are reward-driven may not pursue out of personal interest but solely for rewards (Rauf, 2020).

H2: "Better career growth has the most impact on student decision to pursue professional certification"

Most of the participants strongly agreed that certification has an impact on their career growth. Participants that focus on this aspect would be more focused on their growth which can be due to them feeling higher satisfaction from growth than financial rewards (Binghay, 2022).

H3: "Networking and professional recognition have the most impact on student decision to pursue professional certification"

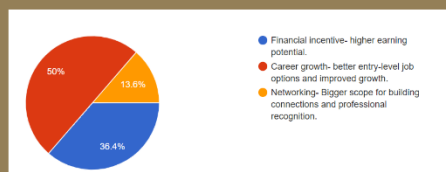
Response to this influence was different compared to the other two where not as many participants believed in professional certification having a strong impact on networking. This can be due to students believing networking not being one of the major factors impacted by certification.

Other influences

Most of the respondents agreed to be affected by environmental influences however some disagreed, which may be due to them studying accounting because of personal interest. This is also supported by secondary research where students were found to be unaffected by environmental influences (Ebaid, 2020). Other than this influence, UMW offers 9 exam exemptions out of 13 for ACCA. All participants agreed to exemptions having been part of their decision to pursue.

Conclusion

Out of three influences, the most chosen influence was career growth. This would mean accounting students from the undergraduate programme at UMW, out of the three influences, would pursue professional certification to boost their career growth. A similar answer can be found through secondary sources where one of the main influences for students to study CPA turned out to be professional opportunities and growth (Ebaid, 2020).



Challenges

Financial costs

The financial costs may be unaffordable for some students and therefore be a challenge for them. It is common for students to have repeat certification exams due to the difficulty which may accumulate costs for the students.

Exam difficulty

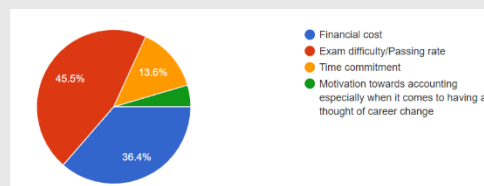
Professional exams can prove to be difficult leading to low passing rates for some of the advanced subjects. For example, in ACCA the passing rate goes as low as around 30%. The same can be said for other certifications such as CPA and ICAEW where the rate goes as low as 40-50%.

Time commitment

Obtaining certification requires a lot of time commitment as applicants would need to dedicate themselves to studying and passing the exams. Other than that, to finish the certification programme working experience like, ACCA requires 36 months of experience.

Biggest challenge faced

An additional point was added by one of the participants i.e., the possibility of career change later on which might make students reconsider their decision to pursue professional certification. Out of the four challenges the most faced is exam difficulty as shown in the graph below.



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