

An Inquiry into International Students' Motivation
to Study at Burapha University, Thailand
การศึกษาแรงจูงใจของนักเรียนนานาชาติในการศึกษา
ที่มหาวิทยาลัยบูรพา ประเทศไทย

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Abstract

The purposes of this study were to investigate factors influencing international students' motivation to enroll in international programs in Thailand and to examine the differences in students' motivation by nationality. The participants were randomly selected from five nationalities, studying at Burapha University. This study employed a mixed-method research approach. A four-point Likert scale rating questionnaire and the photo-elicitation interviews were used to collect the data. The findings show that the first five factors influencing the international students' decisions were: (1) geographic proximity of host country; (2) recognition of qualifications by home country; (3) lifestyle in host country; (4) historical or economic links between host country and home country and safety; (5) climate in host country and visa cost. On the other hand, the study motivation factors discovered differences between Chinese and Cambodian; Chinese and Korean; and Cambodian and Vietnam.

Keywords: Motivation, international students

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บทคัดย่อ

วัตถุประสงค์ของงานวิจัยนี้คือเพื่อสำรวจปัจจัยที่มีอิทธิพลต่อแรงจูงใจของนักเรียนนานาชาติที่เลือกมาเรียนหลักสูตรของประเทศไทย และเพื่อทดสอบแรงจูงใจของนักเรียนต่างชาติที่มีความแตกต่างระหว่างสัญชาติหรือไม่ ผู้เข้าร่วมเลือกมาห้าสัญชาติ โดยใช้วิธีการสุ่มผู้เข้าร่วมทั้งหมดกำลังศึกษาที่มหาวิทยาลัยบูรพา งานวิจัยนี้ใช้แนวคิดการวิจัยแบบผสมผสาน การเก็บรวบรวมข้อมูลโดยใช้การแบบสอบถามและการสัมภาษณ์โดยใช้รูปภาพประกอบ ผลที่ได้พบแสดงให้เห็นว่าปัจจัยที่มีอิทธิพลมากที่สุดห้าข้อแรกคือ (1) ความใกล้ชิดเชิงภูมิศาสตร์ของประเทศเจ้าภาพ (2) การยอมรับใบจบที่ประเทศตัวเอง (3) วิธีการดำเนินชีวิตที่ประเทศเจ้าภาพ (4) การเชื่อมต่อประวัติและเศรษฐกิจระหว่างประเทศตัวเองและประเทศเจ้าภาพและความปลอดภัย (5) ภูมิอากาศที่ประเทศเจ้าภาพและค่าใช้จ่ายของวีซ่า และอีกอย่างหนึ่ง ในผลพบว่าแรงจูงใจมีความแตกต่างระหว่างนักเรียนประเทศจีนและนักเรียนประเทศกัมพูชา นักเรียนประเทศจีนและนักเรียนประเทศเกาหลี นักเรียนประเทศกัมพูชาและนักเรียนประเทศเวียดนาม

คำสำคัญ: แรงจูงใจ นักเรียนนานาชาติ

Introduction

In today's world situation, internationalization and globalization of economies has brought about the commercialization of higher education around the world. As a result of this global expansion, educational institutions around the world have become a key point in the development of knowledge societies. Worldwide educational institutions have attempted to find ways to attract international students, because international students play an important role in their societies, bringing academic, cultural, and economic benefits to the learning environment and society.

Many students are thinking about studying abroad to gain higher education. Several years ago, this idea was difficult to achieve, but now, it is easily available. Previous studies have shown that studying abroad has multiple benefits for students; for example, an appreciation for other country's cultures (Kaufmann, Martin, Weaver &

Weaver, 1992), learning a second language (Vera, Howard, & Lemee, 2009), international interest or "world-mindedness" (Sutton & Rubin, 2004); and personal growth (Dwyer & Norris, 2005).

In 2007, over 2.8 million students enrolled in educational institutions outside of their country of origin. This represented 123,400 more students than in 2006, an increase of 4.6%. The global number of international students has grown by 53% since 1999 (UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2009). By 2025, the expected number of international students from Asian countries, especially China and India, will increase continuously (Bohm, Davis, Meares, & Pearce, 2002).

In Thailand, the number of international programs in 2002 has grown from 387 to 844 in 2006 (Study in Thailand, 2009). The statistics show that international higher education program in Thailand has visibly increased. Office of Education Council (2004) reported that international programs in Thailand supply various

courses and cover almost all fields of studies, such as Business Administration, Information Technology, Medical Science, and International Business. According to the Office of the Higher Education Commission of Thailand (2011), there were 19,052 international students from 124 countries, studying in more than 100 higher education institutions. In 2010, the number of international students was about 20,155 (5.7% increasing). By the end of 2011, there were approximately 20,309 international students in more than 100 Thai higher education institutions; the number of foreign students has increased by 0.74% from the year 2010.

Statement of Problems

A large number of international students prefer to choose western countries as their study destination; therefore, many studies researched motivation of the international students in the western context. The statistics of Ministry of Education in Thailand shows an increasing number of international students choosing Thailand as their study destination. However, only a few studies in the Thai context have investigated the motivation of international students. Therefore, the question of what attracts international students to choose Thailand as their study destination warrants the need to do further research.

Significance of the study

The findings in this study will add to the knowledge base in the field of studying program's abroad. The present study will also be beneficial for educational institutions in Thailand because an understanding of why international students choose to study in Thailand may help them make informed decisions about their policies. Additionally, the results in this study will be helpful for the Thai teachers and professors to gain a deeper understanding about their international students' expectations so that they can adjust their teaching methods tailored to the students' needs. Lastly, this study will be valuable to curriculum developers because they can use the findings to revise the curriculum so that they can better attract international students to come to Thailand.

Literature Review

This section presents main theories: Push-Pull Theory. In the Push-pull theory, the push factors push students to go in quest of higher education in other countries. The pull factor is a stimulus that pulls students to study abroad. Figure 1 shows the basic Push-Pull Theory in relation to student mobility (Rounsacille, 2011).

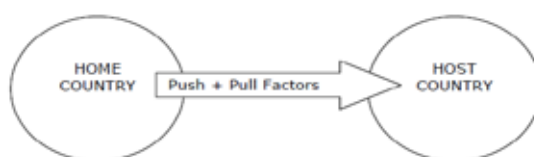


Figure 1 The Push-Pull model (Rounsacille, 2011)

Additionally, Mazzarol, Kemp and Savery (1996) pointed out 15 factors for student's choice of study abroad: 1). Reputation of the host country, 2). Reputation of the host institution(s), 3). Safety, 4). Cost or fees, 5). Visa cost, 6). Historical or economic links between host country and home country, 7). Availability of specific teaching programs, 8). Geographic proximity of host country, 9). Lifestyle in host country, 10). Climate in host country, 11). Recognition of qualifications by home country, 12). Family and friends in host country, 13). Plans for immigration, 14). Value for money, 15). Availability of scholarships or work.

Therefore, this study is depend on the theoretical framework taken from Mazzarol, Kemp and Savery (1996) who categorized 15 factors for student's choice of stud abroad.

Research questions:

1. What factors influence international students' motivation to enroll in international programs in Thailand?
2. Are there any differences in students' motivation by nationality?

Research Method

Research Design

This study employed a mixed-method research approach to investigate factors influencing international students' motivation to study in Thailand. According to Creswell (2012), a mixed-method research approach is a

procedure for collecting and analyzing the data by combining both quantitative and qualitative methods in a study to better understand a research problem.

Population and Participants

The population in this study was all international students at Burapha University, Thailand. In this study, there were two types of participants: survey participants and photo-elicitation interview participants. For the survey participants, the number selected based on the Table Krejcie & Morgan (1970), the number of returned the questionnaires was 231 students. All these students included undergraduate and graduate students and total have five nationalities: Chinese, Laotians, Cambodian, Vietnamese and Korean. The number of interview participants is five students from each nationality. The participants who I chose, they provided a rich understanding of the phenomenon. (Stake. 1995)

Research instruments

In this study, I used the questionnaire for my quantitative data collection and the photo-elicitation interview for my qualitative data collection.

Questionnaire

To ensure a high level of content validity of the questionnaire, the expert evaluated the Item Objective Congruence (IOC) used the ratings good and not good. For the contents, which were not good, the experts provided written comments, and I revised it accrding to the experts' suggestions.

As all participants were from five nationalities, I designed the questionnaire in English and later translated or asked the experts to translate the questionnaire into the native language of the participants.

The questionnaire consisted of two parts: first part was the background information, such as gender, nationality and major, second part was motivation to study in Thailand.

To validate the questionnaire, I asked three experts to check the validity, and then I revised the research instruments and tried them out with a group of students who have similar characteristics to the participants.

Photo-elicitation Interview

In this study, after the participants completed the questionnaire, I chose five students (one from each nationality) to study in-depth about the reasons why the decisions were made. The criteria to select participants were as follows: willingness to participant, and volunteer to be a participant (Stake, 1995). These criteria were used because they maximize an understanding of this study.

To conduct the photo-elicitation interview, I first loaned a camera to the participants or let them use their own camera, and told them to take pictures that represented their reasons for coming to Thailand. I also accompanied the participants to clarify any directions if they needed me to. Finally, after

the participants finished taking pictures, we went to find a quiet place to talk about the pictures.

Data collection and analysis

The questionnaire was distributed face to face to the participants, for the questionnaire of Vietnam students and Korean students I sought the help of a teacher in the nursing faculty and international college. After the completing the questionnaire, I employed the photo-elicitation interview in order to get in-depth information. Before I interviewed participants, I asked them to go outside to take pictures together, but most participants had pictures about Thailand already. Therefore, I asked them to send me an email before the interview, and saved it in my Ipad, and then went to meet my participant to carry out an interview.

The data of questionnaire was analyzed by using a computer software program. Descriptive Statistics (frequency, percentage, and graphs) were used to analyze and represent the data. To analyze the differences among nationalities, one-way ANOVA was employed. The qualitative data analysis in this study was from the photo-elicitation interview. To analyze the data, I transcribed the interviews first. Then, I code the data. The codes were grouped into themes. While coding, I wrote my reflections and hunches to generate themes.

Results

What factors influence international students' motivation to enroll in international programs in Thailand?

To answer this research question, the data from the questionnaire and the photo-elicitation interview were used. Table 1 below presents average scores and standard deviations of the factors reported by the participants.

Table 1. Mean and standard deviation of the factors determining the decision to study in Thailand

Factors	\bar{X}	SD	Rank
1.Reputation of the host country	2.69	0.64	8
2.Reputation of the host institution(s)	2.71	0.62	7
3. Safety	2.76	0.81	4
4. Cost or fees	2.52	0.55	9
5. Visa cost	2.73	0.66	5
6. Historical or economic links between host country and home country	2.76	0.63	4
7. Availability of specific teaching programs	2.72	0.48	6
8. Geographic proximity of host country	3.10	0.69	1
9. Lifestyle in host country	2.82	0.53	3
10. Climate in host country	2.73	0.57	5
11. Recognition of qualifications by home country	3.00	0.78	2
12. Family and friends in host country	2.21	0.50	12
13. Plans for immigration	2.24	0.96	11
14. Value for money	2.38	1.07	10
15. Availability of scholarships or work	2.17	0.55	13

Table 1 presents the ranking of 15 factors influencing international students to study in Thailand. As shown in the Table, the first five ranks are: geographic proximity of host country, recognition of qualifications by home country, lifestyle in host country, historical or economic links between host country and home country& safety, climate in host country& visa cost.

For the results from the photo-elicitation interview shows: the analysis found six themes: *culture, life style, environment, education and working, economy and technology, and recommended from friend*. Each theme will be presented below:

1. Culture

All participants mentioned that culture was the reason that they decided to choose Thailand as their study destination. That is incontrovertible fact that when international students came to stay in a second country, everyone wants to know the culture about this country even when it is not relevant to his or her major.

For example, in an interview, a participant from China chose the photo of the sculpture artwork to explain his first motivation. In this point, he mentioned about three things: traditional handcraft culture, Buddhist culture, and manifestation of Buddhist architecture. Figure 2 below illustrates the detail of point.



Figure2 Thailand sculpture art work

P3: I came to Thailand about one year ago. I felt a strong sense of culture and heavy cultural foundation. This point affected me to choose to study in Thailand. This picture I took this picture when I traveled in Chiang Mai. It gave me deep feelings that Thai people spend their own time to do these things. In other words, they try to keep the traditional civilian arts in memory, For me this thing is not about

making money, or the value and price are very low, and the practical price of these handicrafts are embodied in decoration, so market of handicrafts is not very good. But Thai people still spend their own time to do these things, so I personally admire them. In my hometown, it is different from here. In my country, most people only follow the money or they just do the things which can make much more money and faster. In my opinion, I think most Thai people they like to do the thing what they really love. And another reason that my major is design, so I want to learn more about handicraft, or some stories, everything about handicraft I also want to know more, and I think the Thai handicraft is wonderful.

The next example was from a participant from Korea. She chose the photo of a graduation ceremony of the first-year students, majoring in product design at Fine Art faculty to explain her reason.



Figure 3 Graduation of the first students in major product design at Fine art faculty

P2: I think I chose here because of an important reason. When I saw the Thai students,

it made me miss my school days in Korea. At that time, teachers taught you, encourage you...the students have to be polite, in this atmosphere. You were felt warm, but as the rapid development of Korea becomes more competitive for students, they didn't have so much time to take care about them by parents, most of them were focused on developing themselves, so that makes everyone feel tired. Even now, when I go back to my country to visit my study place, this traditional culture had faded away. However, Thailand still keeps this good traditional culture, students are politely. No matter how far of Thailand will develop in the future, but I hope this traditional culture could still keep and it be passed down.

The next example was from a Cambodian participant. He chose a picture, which was a similar culture between Thailand and Cambodia to share his opinion as shown in Figure 4.



Figure 4 The similar culture between Thailand and Cambodia

P1: Thailand has similar culture with my home country, so I am not worried about the problem of the culture.

The last example was from a Lao participant. He chose a picture, which was taken in a high school of Thailand and shares his opinion



Figure 5 An activity in high school

P4: I chose to study in Thailand because I wanted to know about the culture of Thailand. Even though the culture of Thailand was similar to my country, I still want to know about it. I want to see it through my eyes. I want to know what they do, and what they think

2. Life style

This point has strong support from all of the participants. Every participant talked about their study abroad life in Thailand. This point included cost of living, friendly people, travel, and less stress. The details are as follow:

2.1 Cost of living

The cost of living in Thailand is cheaper than western country. The example below was from a participant. He said that if comparing with their country, the cost of living is also cheaper.



Figure6 A shopping mall in Thailand

P3: *If compared with my country, the cost of living in Thailand is cheaper, in here you can taste many kinds of foods for much less money*

2.2 Friendly people

Thai people made a friendly impression on international students. They think most Thai friends are kind and pleasant to be around. The next example comes from the participant sharing his opinions.



Figure7 At Bangsaen

P4: *In this photo, they were all of my Thai friends. I chose it because even though I came here alone, but I never felt lonely. My Thai friends they're friendly and kind to me, we can chat together, and we can be good friends. I have lots of Thai friends now, and they did many kind things for me, for example, I can't understand some knowledge points in the class, they helped me to translate it or explain it in easy words, whatever I have any questions, I can talk with them any time*

2.3 Travel

Studying abroad also provides an opportunity to travel. This point is a convenient attraction for international students. They can study in a second country, and also can travel around in this country. They think that's a good experience as well. The example below was from a Cambodian participant



Figure 8 Go to travel with my friends

P1: Study in second country has opportunity to travel. When you travel to the place which is outside your country, you can learn more experience and widen your horizon

2.4 Less stress

Every participant they thinks that the life in Thailand is slow and relaxed, competition is not strong like in their home country, and the next example was explained by a participant who comes from China:



Figure 9 A glass of drink

P3: I think Thai people, whatever they did, most of them were like “zhaiyanyan”, they like to take their time, so, the pace of life here is slow, and less stressful here, including the low competition between people, therefore, the life here is easier and more comfortable

3. Environment

Whether you chose which country to be your study abroad place, the environment is a requirement which the international students must consider. For the environment of Thailand, most of participants think here is good for study, good for work, and have a good natural environment. The example below was sharing by a Chinese participant



Figure10 Coffee shop at Bangsaen

P3: I think Thailand have a good environment for work. When you stay alone outside your home country, you have your own time to do anything you want. When I study in Thailand, I can stay at a coffee shop all afternoon, order a cup of coffee, open my laptop, I can do anything I want, I like it and enjoy this work time, because the quite

environment could help me to eliminate all distractions and it's easy to concentrate on the things what I do

4. Education and Working

Based on the answers from the participants, five sub themes were found: *teaching method, academic exchange opportunity, scholarship, benefit to find a job in home and easy to find a job in Thailand.* The details are as follow:

4.1 Teaching Method

Every country has different teaching methods and the focus of instruction is also different. In this research, some students reported that the teaching method of Thailand is different to their home countries. For example, some participants mentioned that Thai teacher let the students try many methods in their own projects to explore the right way, but the teachers of his or her home country told the students directly which is the right way. Some participants said that the teaching method in Thailand was learning by doing. In other words, in the class not only learning knowledge, but also have practice. Students could use the knowledge from the class and apply it in real situations. And Thailand also has better technology. Figure10 presents example of the teaching method that the participant reported:



Figure 11 Class time

P4: I prefer the teaching method of Thailand. Because the method here is learning by doing, in other words, in the class not only learning knowledge, but also you have the opportunity to practice

4.2 Academic Exchange Opportunity

When I interviewed the participants, I heard an interesting point that Thailand has a better academic exchange program. Some faculties in the University have invited professors from other countries to communicate with the students. The next example were explained by a participant, this picture was taken in Singapore when the participants went here for academic exchange with the faculty; he shares his opinion as blew:



Figure 12 A building in Singapore

P3: Before I came here, I heard Thailand has better academic exchange. This program is better than my University where I studied before. We have the opportunity to learn more in other countries and that was what I wanted. So after I arrived here, in my faculty we have a chance to go to Korean, Japan, Italy, and Singapore... this is really good news for us. In my class, we chose Singapore as this country. This country pays attention to art, there we can see many different art works.

4.3 Scholarship

No matter in which country, scholarship undoubtedly is the best motivation for international students. In this research, the students who got the scholarship they mostly come from Lao, Cambodia, and Vietnam. The examples below were shared by a Cambodian participant



Figure 13 The students who got the scholarship take a photo with the Thai Princess

P1: When I came to study in Thailand it has an important reason in that I got the scholarship from the Thai Princess.

4.4 Benefit to find a job in home

In general, most people think the students who study abroad that he/she has lots of experience. Therefore, most international students they think if they study in a second country and find some part-time job as well, these experiences will be helpful for them finding a job back in their home country.

The example below was shared by a Cambodian participant. It's a general idea in Cambodia. If you could study abroad, you must be an outstanding person



Figure 14 Thai alphabet

P1: In my hometown, the person who graduated from outside the country, they were able to have more opportunity to find a job. Because they think that overseas returnees were equipped with rich experience and extensive knowledge

4.5 Easy to find a part-time job in Thailand

For some international students, they think that it is easy to find a part time job in Thailand, so they decided to come to Thailand. Most jobs they do are teacher, waiter, singer at small pub, and so on.



Figure 15 Part-time job

P4: It's easy to find a part-time job in Thailand. I have been working in a restaurant at Bangsaen, and sometimes I'm singer at small pub. I don't want stay at only one place, I want to know new friends, I want to study how to make Thai food, it's interesting, I think do something is better than staying in my room

5. Economy and Technology

For the Lao and Korean students, they think Thai has a good economic links with their home country, and Lao student said that

Thailand has better technology than his home country.



Figure 16 In the class

P4: Thailand has better technology than my hometown, most of my hometown's school, they didn't have computers to support students studying. Moreover, I can learn the professional knowledge which I never learned it before in my hometown. So I decided to study in Thailand

6. Recommendation from friend

In recent years, along with the growth of a high number of foreign students, especial there are a number of students' who come from Asia countries. Therefore, some international students come to Thailand receiving a recommendation from their friends. The next example was explained by a participant who comes from Cambodia, he said that he remembers when his senior recommended this university to him, the senior shows this photo:



Figure 17 Burapha University

P1: I came here have a reason, it was my senior recommended here to me. At first, she told me about two universities, one is Chulalongkorn, and the other one is Burapha. I

considered that to get into Chulalongkorn was so difficult, and another reason is Burapha has a major which I am interested in. And my senior told me this major was very famous in Burapha

Are there any differences in students' motivation by nationality?

To answer this research question, the data from the questionnaire was presented in the table 2 and 3 as below; the data was also analyzed by using a computer software program. We can see the detailed data as below:

Table 2 The result of ANOVA analysis

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	2.65	4	0.66	6.35	0.00
Within Groups	23.56	226	0.10		
Total	26.21	230			

An analysis of variance showed that the effect of nationality on students' motivation was significant, $F(4,226) = 6.35, p = 0.00$, which is

below 0.05. For the specific groups differences, we can find this out in the multiple comparisons table, which is Table 3 as below:

Table 3 Mean difference and significance of each nationalities students

(I)Nation	(J) Nation	Mean difference (I-J)	Sig.
Chinese	Cambodian	0.22*	0.00
	Lao	0.22	0.63
	Vietnam	0.034	1.00
	Korean	0.29*	0.04
Cambodian	Chinese	-0.22*	0.00
	Lao	0.01	1.00
	Vietnam	-0.19*	0.03
	Korean	0.07	0.95

(I)Nation	(J) Nation	Mean difference (I-J)	Sig.
Lao	Chinese	-0.22	0.63
	Cambodian	-0.01	1.00
	Vietnam	-0.19	0.83
	Korean	0.068	1.00
Vietnam	Chinese	-0.03	1.00
	Cambodian	0.19*	0.03
	Lao	0.19	0.83
	Korean	0.26	0.08
Korean	Chinese	-0.29*	0.04
	Cambodian	-0.07	0.95
	Lao	-0.07	1.00
	Vietnam	-0.26	0.08

From the results, we know that there are significant differences between the groups as a whole. We can see from the table 3 which shows that there is significant difference in time to complete the problem between the group that took the Chinese and Cambodian ($p= 0.00$), Chinese and Korean ($p= 0.15$), as well as between the Cambodian and Vietnam ($p= 0.03$). However, there were no differences between the groups which the $p > 0.05$

Recommendations

From the results of the study analysis and the conclusion, there are some recommendations for further study, different nationalities of

international students should be added; the finding would be more interesting. For the photo-elicitation interview method, it may not be well known in Asia countries, therefore, before using it with your participant, you should explain more about this method to your participant. Student number of each nationality in interviews should include more than one person that would be better for your analysis.

Note:

1. This paper is part of a Master's Thesis, entitled *An Inquiry into International Students' Motivation to Study at Burapha University, Thailand*

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