



Perception and Satisfaction of International Students on Higher Education Services in Thailand

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Abstract

This research aimed to study international students' perception and satisfaction on Thai higher education services using quantitative research to explore the opinions by collecting 348 questionnaires from 20150 international students who came to study in Thailand in 2018. The major findings of international students' opinions on the reasons why students chose to study in Thai higher education were the opportunity to find a job immediately in Thailand after graduation, the high demand in the labor market, and the quality and educational standard. The education information was communicated through the university's website, a relative or friend's referral, and announcements from the government. Top challenges found were language and communication, different culture, and day-to-day issues. The major satisfaction issues found were the university's environment, education system, facilities, tuition fee, and education standard. However, gender do not affect the satisfaction of the stay, except food as a preference. Age factors affect different preferences in terms of atmosphere, Environment and language used. Lastly, racial factors affect different satisfactions in all aspects, at the statistically significant of .05 level.

Keywords: Perception, Satisfaction in Educational Services, International Students, Thailand

Introduction

Thailand is increasingly keen on accepting more international students. As a result, Thailand's revenue from the education business sector exceeded 2.6 billion baht in 2017. In particular, the international tertiary education business is worth more than 3,000 million baht yearly with average growth of more than 12% per annum (Khaosod Online, 2017). Thailand sees an opportunity to develop the Thai education system as an educational center in Asia in order to counteract the number of Thai students who study abroad each year, a 50% decrease of 50,000 students per year. With this, it's expected to stem the currency outflow from Thailand by more than 1,000 million baht per year. Increasing the international student headcount will also increase revenue from Thailand's higher education services business by approximately 20%, approximately 3,000 million baht per year (Department of International Trade Promotion, Business Development & Promotion Group 3, 2017). Thailand's international student numbers increased by 16% from 11,785 in 2013 to 20,150 in 2017 and decreased from 20,150 in 2017 to 6,292 in 2019 (Department of International Trade Promotion, Business Development & Promotion Group 3, 2017).

International students studying at Thai higher education institutions came from 1) Neighbouring countries including Myanmar, Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia; 2) Asian countries including China, Japan, Korea, Malaysia, and Indonesia; 3) Countries in South Asia including Nepal, Bhutan, Bangladesh, Pakistan, and India; and 4) Other countries including the United States of America, France, and Germany. Among these international students, from 118 countries, Chinese students has the highest number at 2,812 in 2019, which decreased more than two-fold when compared to 8,231 in 2017. Myanmar was second place with 2,550 students in 2017,



an increase from 2013 at 1,340 students and decrease to 605 in 2019. Third place was students from Cambodia (1,055) in 2017, increasing from 642 in 2013 and decreased to 362 in 2019. (Figure 1)

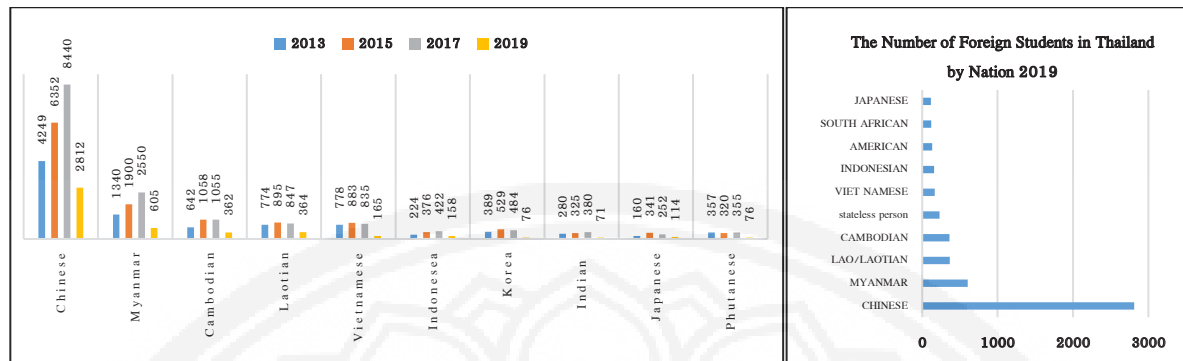


Figure 1 The Number of International Students by Nation

Source: Higher Education Information Center, Office of the Higher Education Commission (n.d.)

Among all foreign students, there were 14,093 students studying at undergraduate level, 4,585 studying at master's degree level, and 1,472 at Ph.D. level (Higher Education Information Center, Office of the Higher Education Commission, n.d.). (Figure 2)

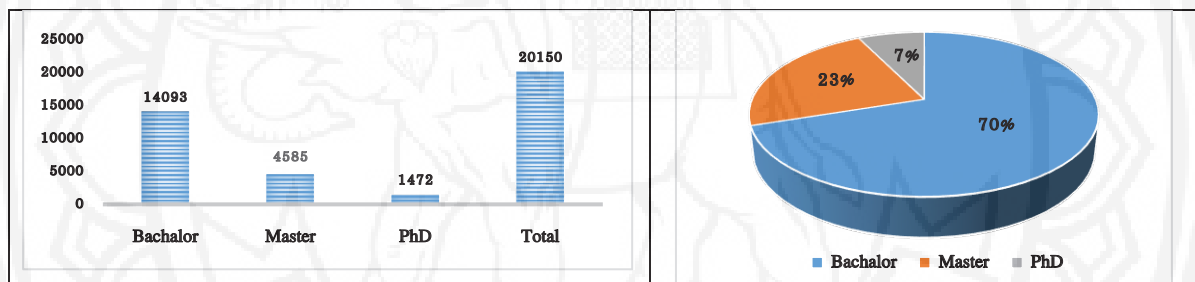


Figure 2 The Number of International Students Studying in Thailand by Education Level, 2017

Source: Higher Education Information Center, Office of the Higher Education Commission (n.d.)

The breakdown for Top-Three of International Students's country found that of all the Chinese students, there were 60% at undergraduate degree level, 29% at master's degree level, and 11% at Ph.D. level. For the Burmese students, there were 71% at undergraduate degree level, 24% at master's degree level, and 5% at Ph.D. level. Lastly, for the Cambodian students, there were 62% at undergraduate degree level, 31% at master's degree level, and 7% at Ph.D. level, respectively (Figure 3).

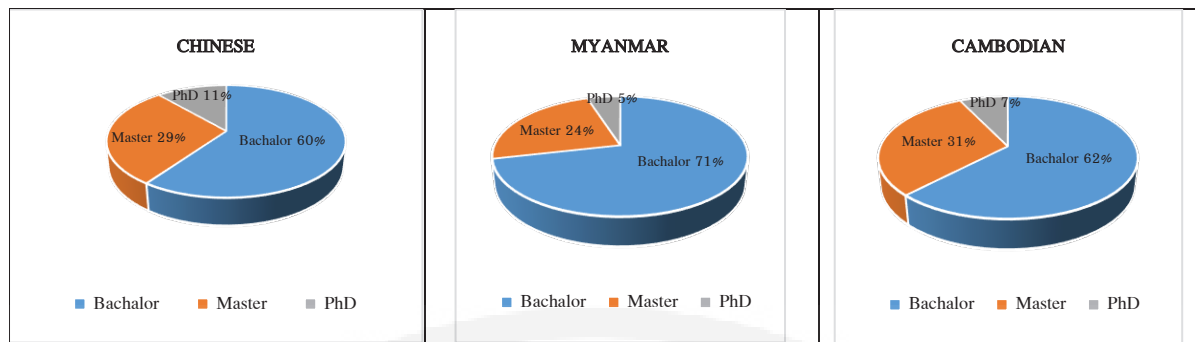


Figure 3 The Number of Top-three of International Students by Education Level, 2017
Source: Higher Education Information Center, Office of the Higher Education Commission (n.d.)

However, there are many factors such as policy, economics, society, and population that will impact how the education system is managed, how to standardize, and how to remove obstacles so that the local education system can compete in the international scene (Knight, 2006; OECD, 2004; OECD, 2005). To figure out the decrease in number of foreign nationals which not enough for education business. As a result, this research focused on the factors involved in the perception and satisfaction of international students who come to Thailand so that the institutes can adapt in order to increase their international student populations.

Key Research Questions

What is the perception and satisfaction of international students for higher education in Thailand?

Objective of the Study

1. To study the perception of international students on higher education in Thailand.
2. To study the satisfaction of international students on higher education in Thailand.

Conceptual Framework of Research

This study was conducted around the perception of international students studying in Thailand—why students chose to study, how they got information, and problems and obstacles to study as well as the satisfaction of the service provider institute in multiple dimensions.

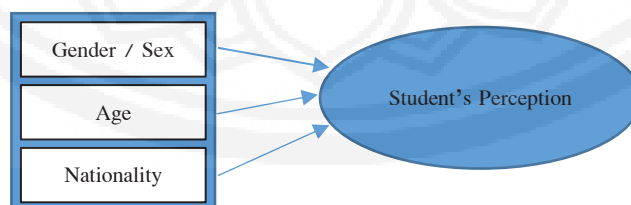


Figure 4 The Conceptual Framework of the Research



Review of Related Documents and Research

Demographic characteristics are important factors that can be used to measure market share and population size to help determine the target market (Sereerat, 2007). Psychological and cultural factors help explain the thoughts and feelings of the target audience. Therefore, demographic variables, such as gender factors are important variables that can affect consumer perception. Age factors (divided into 15–20 years old, 21–25 years old, 26–30 years old, 31–40 years old, and over 40 years old) are indicative of experience and affect consumer perception. Nationality (racial) factors (divided into Chinese students, Japanese students, Korean students, Malaysian students, Singaporean students, United States students, European students, and other countries, such as Bhutan) assume that people of different cultures have different experiences, different attitudes and values, and goals.

The perception is that each person chooses the processing and interpretation of the stimulus to give meaning and get a picture of the world with its content (Schiffman & Kanuk, 2000; Tochinda, 1999). It is the act of interpreting and responding to what happened, of data retrieval, and translation of data into understanding. To make an accurate translation, one must take the context and understanding of the information into account (Chuangchot, 1972). The recognition process includes: 1) Information arriving at the brain through the senses, such as hearing, sight, smell, taste, and touch; 2) Type and characteristic of the stimuli to identify the information with the existing pool of experience, no need to receive the full stimuli before arriving at meaning; 3) Finding meaning in stimuli that has not been experienced before by comparing it to the pool of prior experience; and 4) Recalling the experience required: the existing context being revisited. Perceived quality means a consumer's sense of perception of product quality that is superior to other products, such as reliability, confidence, etc. (Sereerat, 2007). Consumers consider service quality by receiving information cues related to the service. These signals are critical to the perception and may not be considered important factors, such as price, institution's brand, campus' environment, emblem, promotional materials and news. These cues signal the perceived quality of services since they are intangible, not consistent, change constantly, and must be produced and consumed at the same time.

The measurement of customer expectations and perceptions of the quality of service consists of 5 things: 1) Physical characteristics (tangible)—physical comfort in equipment, people, and channel of communication; 2) Reliability—ability to provide accurate services as promised; 3) Responsiveness—willingness to help and provide services quickly; 4) Assurance—ensuring hospitable personnel that can build trust and confidence for the customers; empathy—taking care of and pay attention to each customer, the relationship between price and quality (price/quality relationship). A number of research studies support the view that consumers believe that price is a measure of quality. Consumer products define different quality properties for similar products. Due to the price as a pointer to the quality of certain products, high prices are used to set high quality levels with many businesses often using the relationship between price and quality to determine the product's position.

The key factor of the service business is the ability of the business to respond to customer need, measured by the satisfaction level that can be the controlled variable called a marketing compound in the customer's view (Kotler & Armstrong, 2004). The service marketing mix is a departure from traditional consumer goods as the marketing of the service business needs to consider the market equation in the customer's view which includes 1) Value to customers or consumer value compared to the money paid; 2) Cost to the customer or the money that customers are willing to pay for the service to classify different service levels; 3) Comfort and convenience that the customer receives such as inquiries and access to services; 4) Communication to provide appropriate feedback



or complaints to receive information from customers; 5) Care and caring; 6) Success in meeting needs or completion; and 7) Comfort environment of service such as, buildings, teaching, equipment, etc.

Therefore, education business activities revolve around action between entities that is not tangible and does not result in ownership of the product or the process of producing one (Kotler & Armstrong, 2004). Performance, benefits or satisfaction that meet the physical needs can be measured. These needs include 1) The location is the perfect place, the confidence and convenience of our clients; 2) People must be able to be impressed and satisfied by the customer service, such as the reputation of the teacher, the instructor or the educational personnel; 3) Equipment must be efficient, give fast service, and satisfy customers; 4) Symbols or reputation, institution, university or quality of education must ensure that consumers can receive the service; and 5) Price must be suitable for service levels and easy to classify in different service levels, such as tuition fees, tuition costs, etc. because education services businesses differ from other service businesses, such as banking or insurance. The education services business must be operated through consumer mobility. Therefore, student mobility also shows the performance of the education business, regardless of what form the student mobility may be, through an out-of-location institution or through an individual manufacturer, namely teacher/teacher or through a program movement. Restricting consumer mobility is to enter the country, not restrict the movement of the manufacturer and affects exports, not imports. In addition, the service business is a business that cannot be discriminated against and cannot be stored.

Research Methodology

This research is a quantitative research to explore the opinions of international students on higher education in Thailand with a population of international students studying at higher education at Thailand's top 20 public and private universities in the 2017 academic year with the largest international student population. Yamane's formula was used to calculate the sample size at 95% confidence level, and statistical error at 5%. Purposive sampling was done to the sample group of 389 people, from the total of 6292 international students entering Thailand in 2017. Survey was distributed through the post via the education institute, and QR code online. There were 348 responses, or 89%, which was adequate to eliminate non-responses bias (McGuirk & O'Neill, 2016; van Doorn et al., 2017). The researcher has conducted the Validity and Reliability check on the survey before the research, and received IOC at 0.50 point or above on every item (Srisa-ard, 2017). Internal consistency method was used to check the confidence level of the research tools, by taking the improved survey questions to trial with other businesses at over 30 sets. Within each dimension's question, its Alpha Cronbach's Coefficient is at 0.802–0.938, which is more than 0.70 point. This shows that the survey has internal consistency and can be used to collect data. (Hair et al., 2005)

Part 1 is a question about the respondent's personal information: gender, age, and ethnicity and **Part 2** questions the respondent's perception of studying in Thailand. **Part 3** is a question about the respondent's satisfaction with services, using a Likert scale. The level of perception and satisfaction of students in Thailand was analyzed for the mean, standard deviation (SD), and frequency, percentage, and a comparison was made between students' satisfaction with education in Thailand and their sex, age, and nationality using t-test statistics and one-way ANOVA.



Research Results

According to the study, 64.7 percent of respondents were female, aged 21–25, and 43.1 percent of these international students were from China. The second 20.4 percent were students from Cambodia and 15.5 percent came from Myanmar; 68.7% of international students were studying for an undergraduate degrees: 23.0% for a master's degree, 44 percent attended the faculty of business administration, and 16.1 percent attended programs in the social sciences. In 2014, 37.1% attended private schools, such as Dhurakij Pundit University and Huachiew Chalermprakiet University. In 2014, 47.1 percent of the students used private scholarships and the cost of studying was approximately 1–200,000 baht.

Table 1 showed that the international students had the following reasons to study in Thailand: 28.4% saw it as a good opportunity because when you graduate, you can find a job in Thailand; 24.1% saw that the branches and faculties of education had a high popularity in the labor market, supplying the market's need for workers; 17.8% agreed that the school was of internationally recognized quality and standards; and 10.9 percent agreed that when they graduated, the expected income would be higher when they graduated and higher than in other fields. It was found that 25.3% of the students were informed about the university's educational institutions, 21.6% of their relatives or friends had already attended this school, and 20.7% had seen government announcements in their own countries. Regarding the problems and barriers to study in Thailand of international students, it was found that 50.6% were language and communication problems, 22.1% were other issues, and 13.2 percent were cultural and life-related issues.

Table 1 Number and Percentage of Samples by Reason of Study at the Institution

Opinions	Reasons	Number of	Percentage
1. Factor in deciding to study in the institute / university	1. High demand in the job market	84	24.1
	2. Ability to start working here right away after graduation	99	28.4
	3. Expected high income	38	10.9
	4. Prescribed by the scholarship	32	9.2
	5. Prestige of the university's faculty	15	4.3
	6. Quality of the degree	62	17.8
	7. Others	18	5.2
2. Channel in receiving program / scholarship information	1. Institution's website	88	25.3
	2. Home government's announcement	72	20.7
	3. Education agency	61	17.5
	4. Friends and family	75	21.6
	5. Institution's leaflet / brochure	31	8.9
	6. Others	21	6.0
3. Problems and obstacles that student encountered while studying in Thailand	1. Language barrier in everyday communication	176	50.6
	2. Class materials in Thai	25	7.2
	3. Different culture	46	13.2
	4. Different religion	3	0.9
	5. Political environment	4	1.1
	6. Institutional environment	17	4.9
	7. Other problems	77	22.1



Table 2 showed that the results of opinions on the satisfaction level of international students studying in Thailand showed that 39.9% of international students gave the highest level of satisfaction to the university atmosphere and the location factors. School system, academic standards, fees, registration fees, distance, living environment, visas, language used in classes were at a very pleasant level. Therefore, 50.9% of the students were satisfied with the standard of education, and 47.1% were satisfied with the school system.

Table 2 The Satisfaction Level of International Students in Various Aspects of the Institution

Evaluation Details	Satisfaction Level					Satisfaction Level
	Very Low	Low	Moderate	More	Most	
University's Atmosphere	2 (0.6)	13(3.7)	60(17.2)	134(38.5)	139(39.9)	Most
University's Prestige	1(0.3)	4(1.1)	83(23.9)	160(46.0)	100(28.7)	More
University's System	5(1.4)	8(2.3)	77(22.1)	164(47.1)	94(27.0)	More
Education Standard	0	7(2.0)	61(17.5)	177(50.9)	103(29.6)	More
Administration's Fees	6(1.7)	17(4.9)	111(31.9)	142(40.8)	72(20.7)	More
Tuition's Fees	6(1.7)	22(6.3)	116(33.3)	137(39.4)	67(19.3)	More
Distance	6(1.7)	29(8.3)	105(30.2)	123(35.3)	84(24.1)	More
Living Environment	1(0.3)	9(2.6)	97(27.9)	132(37.9)	109(34.3)	More
Visa Process	9(2.6)	17(4.9)	103(29.6)	133(38.2)	86(24.7)	More
Language Use in Class	4(1.2)	9(2.6)	106(30.5)	152(43.7)	77(22.1)	More
Communication & Thai Culture	4(1.1)	9(2.6)	102(29.3)	159(45.7)	74(21.3)	More
Food	4(1.1)	24(6.9)	120(34.5)	145(41.7)	55(15.8)	More
Cost of Living	1(0.3)	25(7.2)	126(36.2)	131(37.6)	65(18.7)	More
Daily Life	3(0.9)	16(4.6)	94(27)	151(43.4)	84(24.1)	More

When comparing personal factors and satisfaction of international students in various aspects, it was found that gender did not affect the satisfaction of international students studying in Thailand, except for food, as can be seen in Table 3.

Table 3 Group Comparison between Gender and Satisfaction of International Students in Thailand

	Group Statistics						
	Gender	N	Mean	SD	t	df	Sig
University's Atmosphere	Male	123	4.07	.951	.942	345	.347
	Female	224	4.17	.823			
University's Prestige	Male	123	4.06	.782	.605	345	.545
	Female	224	4.00	.766			
University's System	Male	123	3.87	.914	1.56	344	.118
	Female	223	4.02	.800			
Education Standard	Male	123	4.11	.760	.513	345	.608
	Female	224	4.07	.724			
Administration Fees	Male	121	3.83	.901	1.16	342	.247
	Female	223	3.71	.901			
Tuition Fees	Male	121	3.75	.977	.898	342	.370
	Female	223	3.66	.880			

**Table 3** (Cont.)

Group Statistics							
	Gender	N	Mean	SD	t	df	Sig
Distance	Male	123	3.98	.830	.110	345	.912
	Female	224	3.97	.862			
Living Environment	Male	122	3.89	.986	.943	1.55	.122
	Female	224	3.73	.929			
VISA Process	Male	123	3.79	.926	.875	344	.382
	Female	223	3.87	.769			
Language Used in Class	Male	123	3.87	.868	.569	345	.863
	Female	224	3.82	.808			
Communication and Thai Culture	Male	123	3.75	.902	1.773	345	.251
	Female	224	3.58	.844			
Food	Male	123	3.71	.885	.522	345	.050*
	Female	224	3.66	.864			
Daily Life	Male	123	3.85	.915	.165	345	.071
	Female	224	3.86	.844			

* Statistic Significant Level at 0.05

Regarding age factors, the results showed that students of different ages were satisfied with the atmosphere, well-being, and language used in the study with statistically significant differences at .05. Students with different atmosphere satisfactions included students aged 15–20, in their 20s, and with different environmental satisfactions students aged 15–20 and 35–40s. Students who were satisfied with the language used in the study varied: students aged 15–20, in their 20s, and 21–25 years of age differed from students aged 26–30, as can be seen in Table 4.

Table 4 Group Comparison between Ages and Satisfaction of International Students in Thailand

ANOVA							
		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Average Comparison Results
Studying Atmosphere	Between Groups	7.356	4	1.839	2.471	.044*	15-20 & 21-25 15-20 & 26-30
	Within Groups	254.546	342	.744			
	Total	261.902	346				
Reputation of Institute	Between Groups	1.137	4	.284	.475	.754	
	Within Groups	204.679	342	.598			
	Total	205.816	346				
System of Institute	Between Groups	2.309	4	.577	.809	.520	
	Within Groups	243.275	341	.713			
	Total	245.584	345				
Standard of Institute	Between Groups	2.506	4	.627	1.159	.329	
	Within Groups	184.900	342	.541			
	Total	187.406	346				
Fee	Between Groups	5.108	4	1.277	1.583	.178	
	Within Groups	273.392	339	.806			
	Total	278.500	343				

**Table 4** (Cont.)

ANOVA						
		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Register Fee	Between Groups	2.677	4	.669	.797	.528
	Within Groups	284.660	339	.840		
	Total	287.337	343			
Cost of Living	Between Groups	7.898	4	1.974	2.072	.084
	Within Groups	324.032	340	.953		
	Total	331.930	344			
Distance	Between Groups	6.739	4	1.685	2.370	.052
	Within Groups	243.077	342	.711		
	Total	249.816	346			
Living Environment	Between Groups	9.651	4	2.413	2.720	.030*
	Within Groups	302.523	341	.887		
	Total	312.173	345			
VISA Process	Between Groups	5.113	4	1.278	1.886	.112
	Within Groups	231.144	341	.678		
	Total	236.257	345			
Language Used in Class	Between Groups	7.626	4	1.907	2.835	.025*
	Within Groups	230.010	342	.673		
	Total	237.637	346			
Communication & Thai Culture	Between Groups	4.257	4	1.064	1.422	.226
	Within Groups	255.991	342	.749		
	Total	260.248	346			
Food	Between Groups	6.301	4	1.575	2.105	.080
	Within Groups	255.900	342	.748		
	Total	262.202	346			
Daily Life	Between Groups	4.618	4	1.155	1.541	.190
	Within Groups	256.177	342	.749		
	Total	260.795	346			

* Statistic Significant Level at 0.05

Regarding Nationality (racial) factors, we found that students of different nationalities were satisfied with the atmosphere, school locations, school systems, academic standards, fees, enrollment fees, distance, living environment, visa, language used, communication & culture, food and well-being with statistical differences at 0.05. To dig deeper, nationalities are split into five groups for the purposes of average satisfaction pairing tests. Group 1 included Chinese. Group 2 included Japanese and Korean. Group 3 included Malaysian and Singaporean. Group 4 included Buthanese, and Group 5 included American and European. It was found that each group have a significant difference on satisfaction of Studying with atmosphere, school locations school system and academic standards as can be seen detail in Table 5.

**Table 5** Comparison between Nationality and the Satisfaction of Studying in Thailand in Various Areas

ANOVA						
Nationality		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
University's Atmosphere	Between Groups	36.228	4	9.057	13.725	.000*
	Within Groups	225.674	342	.660		
	Total	261.902	346			
University's Prestige	Between Groups	19.279	4	4.820	8.836	.000*
	Within Groups	186.537	342	.545		
	Total	205.816	346			
University's System	Between Groups	17.288	4	4.322	6.456	.000*
	Within Groups	228.296	341	.669		
	Total	245.584	345			
Education Standard	Between Groups	10.806	4	2.701	5.232	.000*
	Within Groups	176.600	342	.516		
	Total	187.406	346			
Administration Fees	Between Groups	12.619	4	3.155	4.022	.003*
	Within Groups	265.881	339	.784		
	Total	278.500	343			
Tuition Fees	Between Groups	9.933	4	2.483	3.035	.018*
	Within Groups	277.404	339	.818		
	Total	287.337	343			
Distance	Between Groups	33.892	4	8.473	13.420	.000*
	Within Groups	215.924	342	.631		
	Total	249.816	346			
Living Environment	Between Groups	15.020	4	3.755	4.309	.002*
	Within Groups	297.154	341	.871		
	Total	312.173	345			


Table 5 (Cont.)

ANOVA							
Nationality		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Average Comparison Results
Visa Process	Between Groups	30.567	4	7.642	12.669	.000*	1. China vs. Japan, Korea 2. China vs. Malaysia, Singapore
	Within Groups	205.690	341	.603			3. China vs. Bhutan 4. Japan, Korea vs. Singapore
	Total	236.257	345				5. Japan, Korea vs. America, Europe 6. Japan, Korea vs. Bhutan
Language Used in Class	Between Groups	26.087	4	6.522	10.543	.000*	1. China vs. Japan, Korea 2. China vs. Malaysia, Singapore
	Within Groups	211.550	342	.619			3. China vs. Bhutan 4. Japan, Korea vs. Singapore
	Total	237.637	346				5. Japan, Korea vs. America, Europe 6. Japanese, Korean vs. Bhutan
Communication & Thai Culture	Between Groups	11.003	4	2.751	3.775	.005*	1. China vs. Japan, Korea 2. China vs. Malaysia, Singapore
	Within Groups	249.244	342	.729			
	Total	260.248	346				
Food	Between Groups	22.008	4	5.502	7.834	.000*	1. China vs. Japan, Korea 2. China vs. Malaysia, Singapore
	Within Groups	240.193	342	.702			3. China vs. Bhutan 4. Japan, Korea vs. America, Europe
	Total	262.202	346				5. Japanese, Korean vs. Bhutan
Daily Life	Between Groups	16.700	4	4.175	5.850	.000*	1. China vs. Japan, Korea 2. China vs. Bhutan
	Within Groups	244.095	342	.714			3. Japan, Korea vs. Malaysia, Singapore
	Total	260.795	346				4. Japan, Korea vs. America, Europe

* Statistic Significant Level at 0.05

Discussion

The results showed that international students were aware of higher education in Thailand in two aspects. The first aspect is the recognition of international students for higher education in Thailand. The reasons students chose to study were the opportunity after they have finished; they could look for a job in Thailand (28.4%). Also the branches of study were highly popular in the labour market (24.1%), and the quality and education standards (17.8) were attractive.

The findings from this research are consistent with Mazzarol & Soutar (2001) in that the acceptance of the labour market affects the likelihood of future employment and consistent with de Dios Jiménez & Salas-Velasco



(2000) in that the opportunity to find a job when graduating in higher education is more likely to have a high degree of employment, resulting in the higher education decision and consistent with the finding of Palifka (2003) that graduates from overseas are more likely to find work and have more opportunities to advance their careers than those who have graduated in their country. These results are also consistent with Chooprayoon & Fuangfoo (1997) that overseas graduates are more likely to find work than domestic graduates and are more likely to advance their careers than those in the country. In the case of Thai students in Australia, Thai students will choose to take courses that offer a better chance to work in the future. Also, the findings of Lee & Tan (1984) showed that the belief that there is a higher chance of having a job and higher income than studying in their own country has a higher influence on studying abroad. Moreover, Palifka (2003) found that in Mexico, foreign graduates earn higher incomes than those who graduate from overseas because they have experience studying abroad, which is beneficial to future work in terms of job opportunities and a network of foreign friends. Agarwal & Winkler (1985) and Mazzarol (1998) point to the graduating expectations as possibilities to pave ways into a high paying job in the home country. This complies with Kinnell's (1989) study that found that the diversity of the country's international higher education institutions as well as the country's educational freedom were factors that led to the choice of international students to study.

This study also found that the international students learned about Thai universities through their websites (25.3), relatives or friends who first attended (21.6), and announcements by the their country's government (20.7). The study of Mazzarol et al. (1996) found out how students know and access information of the destination country. In addition, Mazzarol et al. (1996) found that the influence of experience or word of study abroad as well as institutions or countries abroad should be studied by the family. Relatives, friends, teachers, consultants, and educational representatives are used as information for making final decisions. This is also in line with Mazzarol & Soutar (2001) who reported that parental support plays an important role in deciding to study abroad. Pettibone (2001) also mentioned one of the demands for international courses is to understand other countries' beliefs and culture.

Regarding the most common problems and obstacles of studying in Thailand, this study found they included language and communication (50.6%), different culture (22.1) and life problems (13.2) in line with the findings of the Mahmud & Hushin (2009) as cited in Chanarnupap et al. (2017) which found that the living conditions of Indonesian foreign students who study in Malaysia have an adaptation problem, especially regarding food, language used in communication, teaching language, and class racism. The study also found that the factors that international students are most concerned about while studying included finance and living in Malaysia, such as finding a special job, special working conditions, after-school leisure activities, internet access, food, language, relationships with local Malaysian students.

The second aspect in this research concerned international students' satisfaction in higher education, international students are satisfied with the atmosphere at the university at the highest level. Standard syllabus fees and the living environment had a very high satisfaction level. When comparing students of different genders, there were no satisfaction differences except for food. When comparing different age aspects, there was satisfaction with the atmosphere. Satisfaction with the living environment and language used varied statistically at the .05 level. When comparing different ethnicities, there was general satisfaction with the atmosphere. School locations, school systems, academic standards, fees, enrollment fees, distance, living environment, visa, language used, communication & culture, food, and well-being varied statistically at .05.



Conclusion and Suggestions

It is clear that the top reasons international students come to Thailand is to be able to find work after graduation, join the high-demand job sector, and quality of Thai education. They know about the courses and the institute through the university's website, referral from family and friends, and interestingly government announcement, especially regarding scholarship. However, it is also clear that language and communication is by far the biggest problem for international students once they are in Thailand. Some courses are forcing the international students to take in Thai, which is not a common language in the international scene. Cultural differences is also another major, and very visible problem. There will always be differences, which, in turn impact the satisfaction level of the education. Atmosphere is rated as great, while the rest are good. Interestingly, the three biological factors—age, gender, racial—do not seem to impact the satisfaction at all. These findings will hopefully help the policy maker to better plan and tackle the key problem better, for example, improve non-Thai communication throughout the journey, which hopefully will grow the number of international students in Thailand in the end.

Educational institutions should develop the courses and disciplines that the labor market needs and meet the needs of students of ethnic and cultural diversity, as well as develop courses with international quality and educational standards. Institutions should focus on developing websites to provide content that they want to promote or provide information to learners as much as they know in the target market. It should focus on internationalization using English as a medium. Problems and barriers to language and communication need to be removed, as well as dealing with different cultural and life issues to eliminate problems before school, such as admissions criteria. Policies and regulations affect international students and increase competitive strategies, so more needs to be done on the policy of attracting more foreign students to study, and supporting scholarships or policies for post-graduate work opportunities, such as in Malaysia and Singapore. The university atmosphere should be international.

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