

INTERNATIONAL STUDENT DESTINATION CHOICE: INSTITUTIONAL INFLUENCE

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ABSTRACT

The effort to increase the number of international students in Higher Education Institutions through Malaysia's promotion and marketing program as an international higher education education hub has been emphasized through the National Higher Education Strategic Plan. This is because the entry of international students into the country not only contributes to economic growth but also the skills, research capabilities, innovative ideas and solutions from international students can contribute to the value of an international university. This study aims to identify the motives and institutional factors that influence the decisions of international students in the selection of study destinations abroad. Additionally, university marketing promotion and promotion strategies in realizing the international student improvement efforts are also discussed by looking at their relevance to institutional factors. It is hoped that this study provides ideas and useful information to the university in achieving the status of "world class university" as well as improving the quality of nation's higher education

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Introduction

The size of the market for the international education sector is reflected in the number of international students leaving their home country and migrating to other countries for educational purposes. It is predicted that demand for international education will increase from 1.8 million international students in 2000 to 7.2 million by 2025 (Böhm, Davis, Meares, & Pearce, 2002). The inclusion of international students into institutions in a country is seen as one of the key channels that can increase the country's income and internationalization level in the world. In Asia, such as China is one of the examples of countries that use international education to develop awareness and maintain the spirit of competitiveness in the international arena (China Daily, 2012).

Malaysia has also emphasized the role of higher education institutions through the 5 Rally of PPPM (PT) which is the financial sustainability of which Malaysian IPTs are advised to work and use various alternatives to generate additional revenue sources (UA Budget Allocation, 2017). In this regard, in response to these recommendations, higher education institutions within the country should adopt international educational objectives by developing innovative strategies and plans to increase the influx of international students and contribute to the enhancement of funds and financial resources.

In the National Transformation Program (NTP) report, it is said that the number of international students in Malaysia has increased from 140,420 students admitted, 113,711 are students of higher learning institutions and the rest are private and international students. This increase is a positive indicator that makes Malaysia as an educational center and favored by international students, especially from Asian and West Asian countries (News RTM, 2016). As such, efforts to increase the number of international students in the country should be doubled to achieve world-class university status. Nevertheless, an effective internationalization and promotion strategy is needed to continue the effort, and understanding the factors of international student attendance in the country actually contributes substantially.

Through this concept paper the factors that involve institutions and universities that influence the decision of the selection of an international student to their destination of study abroad will be discussed. The study was conducted to understand the factors involved and to highlight the importance of understanding the factors in order to add ideas in the strategy planning and promotion of a university globally.

In addition, this concept paper is expected to answer questions such as: -

- (a) What is the cause of the arrival and selection of study destinations abroad by international students and their relevance to the influence of the institution.
- (b) How knowledge of institutional factors can be applied by universities in formulating strategies and promotion of international student improvement.

Importance of Research

This study contributes to understanding the factors of the institution / university that influence the country's choice of international students. Explorations in this study provide knowledge on the theoretical aspects of choice of foreign study destinations and practice them at university and in higher education. Among the identified institutional factors include access to university information, co-operation with universities along with agencies, perceptions of quality and higher education systems overseas, the reputation of the institution itself, exciting program and course offerings, conducive and conducive university environments international and the background of instructors who are accredited.

Research Scope

The scope of the study in this concept paper is to inflate international students and factors related to institutions and universities that influence their decision to choose the destination of study abroad, especially Malaysia.

Literature Review

The development of this international education has opened up a lot of space for international students to further their studies abroad. The process of selecting a destination of higher learning requires a reasonable consideration so that students do not feel sorry but gain knowledge and benefit based on the decisions they have made. Furthermore, various universities from various countries offer quality and competitive programs to attract students to further their studies.

One of the main factors that affects student decisions is the influence of the institution itself. The position of a tertiary institution is a driving factor for the choice of place of study. A well-known institution in a field or department will be the choice and focus for most students (Nadzri Mohamad, 2002). According to scholar Mazzarol&Soutar (2002) the reputation and quality of an institution in the host country can attract and influence the student's decision to choose the destination of study. The view is supported by the masters of Gurman and Miaoulis (2003) who say that the positive image of the institution is a strong influence on students in decision-making to participate in programs abroad.

There are several features of service within an institution that cause students to indirectly analyze elements when evaluating the service. The selection of the institution is determined by various factors: academic academic reputation, quality and faculty expertise, attractiveness and campus atmosphere (Krampf and Heinlein, 1981; Lin, 1997; Mazzarol, 1998; Soutar and Turner, 2002). Students' knowledge and perceptions of an institution are mostly derived from word of mouth, past experience and promotional activities of the institution (Ivy, 2001). Therefore, students tend to be more critical and analytical in choosing their study destination (Binsardi&Ekwulugo, 2003). Due to the growing competitiveness of international education, institutions need to maintain and develop their own image to achieve competitive advantage. In this way, the quality of reputation and branding will be two main sources that need to be addressed (Hall, 1993; Qureshi, 1995; Mazzarol, 1998; Bourke, 2000). In addition, recognition of an institution or university has a positive impact on student selection, this is in line with Yuzainee's (2011) scholarship view that students prioritize the quality of a university and recognition by accreditation bodies to ensure their marketability, marketability and future after completion study.

Meanwhile, institutional factors are closely linked to the offering of courses and courses to international students. The versatility and contemporary programs are able to attract international students when choosing their destination (Maringe, 2006; Bodycott, 2009). In

general, having the required courses at a university is the most important factor when a student chooses a destination university. However, the cost to univesiti is very influential in choosing a university that offers the same course (Price et.al, 2003). Interestingly, it is the study of Maringe's scholars (2006) through its findings suggesting that the main reason for international students choosing courses and subjects is no longer related to intrinsic motives or interest in courses in study. They are also no longer passive students but they are beginning to focus on higher education institutions as a career investment. The mistakes in selecting courses and schools can affect the future of students, so students need to take into account all aspects of the selection of their courses and studies (Nurzatil et al. 2015)

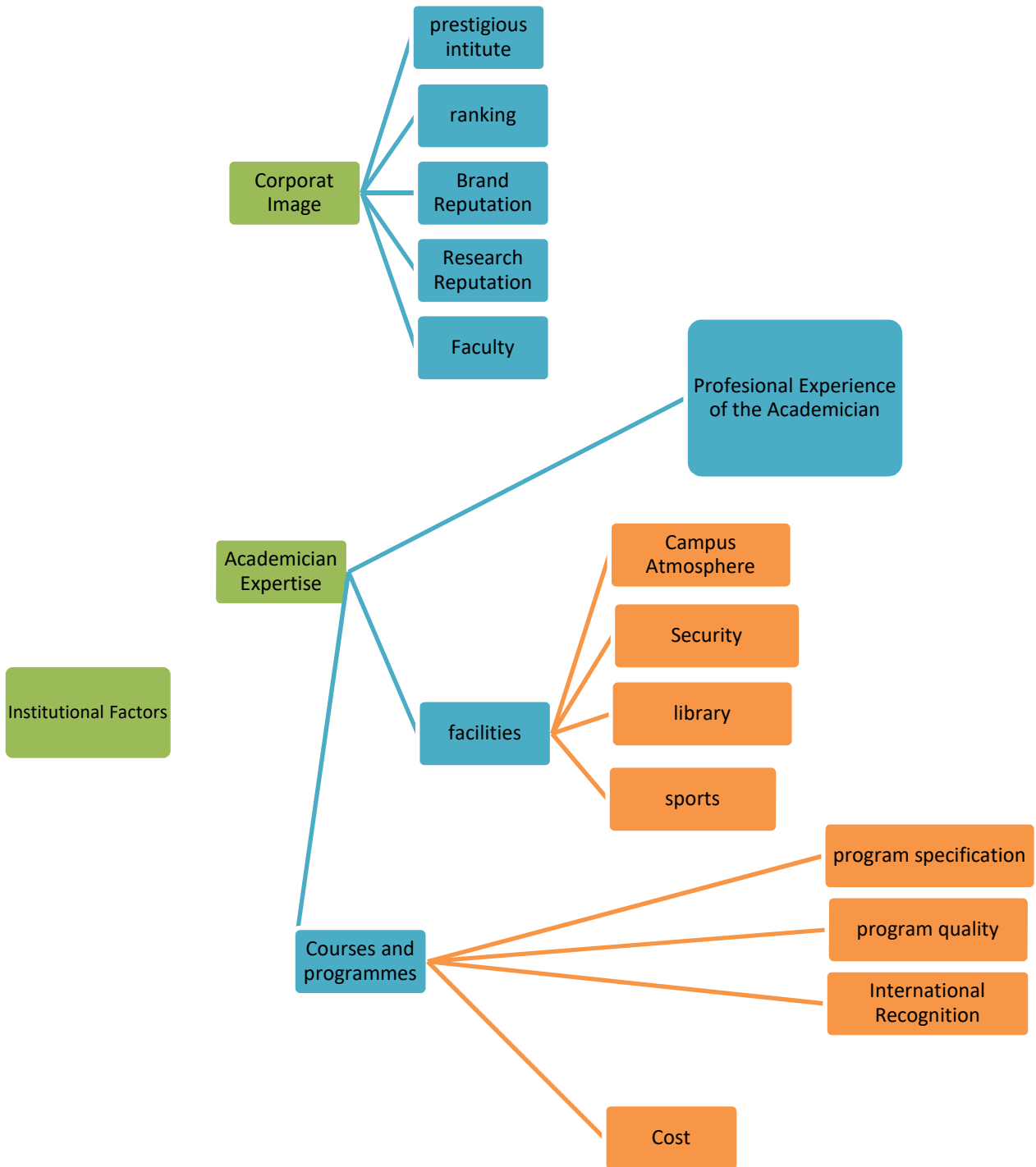
In addition, institutional facility facilities and university environment also play an important role in influencing the decision of choice of study destination for an international student. It is said that student characteristics such as personal goals, abilities, values, should be appropriate to the institution's ability to respond adequately to those characteristics. This is because it ultimately leads to increased student satisfaction, academic achievement and increased enrollment. The characteristics of a university environment that can respond to student characteristics include physical, academic, psychological and social in which the management of this facility has a high impact. The results of the student interaction with these environments and facilities affects students' academic achievement, satisfaction and persistence in study (Price, Matzdorf, Smith &Agahi, 2003).

In line with that, the knowledge and information on an institution itself can influence the student's decision and the exact channel should be used to obtain information about the institution. The reality is that there are still a handful of students with limited knowledge in selecting the courses they want to follow and in accordance with the selected career prospects according to the particular program (Maringe, 2006). There are fewer students with little knowledge of the quality of education abroad. There is therefore a critical need to educate and provide information to students to make informed decisions before they pursue their studies abroad (Mazzarol&Soutar, 2000; Groms& Murphy, 2003; Herlina, Irma, M. Safuan&Hasbullah 2016).

Table 1: Institutional factors identified in the literature that influence student decisions in the choice of study destinations abroad

Institutional Factors	Researcher
Lack of access to information regarding the institution of higher learning	Bodycott (2009); Mazzarol and Soutar (2002); Maringe and Carter (2007); McMahan (1992)
Collaboration with agent	Cheung, Yuen, Yuen and Cheng (2011)
Facilities	Bodycott (2009); Price, Matzdorf, Smith and Agahi (2003)
Perceptions for the quality of the higher education system abroad is better.	Chen and Zimitat (2006); Counsell (2011); Mazzarol and Soutar (2002)
Reputation and quality of host country institutions	Bodycott (2009); Cubillo, Sánchez and Cerviño (2006); Eder, Smith and Pitts (2010); Maringe (2006); Mazzarol and Soutar (2002); Petruzzellis and Romanazzi (2010); Soo and Elliott (2008); Soutar and Turner (2002);
Courses offered	Eder, Smith and Pitts (2010); Maringe (2006); Mazzarol and Soutar (2002); Petruzzellis and Romanazzi (2010); Pimpa (2003)
University Environment	Bodycott (2009); Maringe and Carter (2007); Price, Matzdorf, Smith and Agahi (2003);
Education background and staff recognition	Maringe (2006); Mazzarol and Soutar (2002); Soutar and Turner (2002)

Figure 1: Institutional factors and variables identified in the selection of study destinations abroad.



Research Methodology

In this concept paper, the research methodology designed to be used is to use qualitative methods ie through an interview approach that can further strengthen this study. This qualitative method is an exploratory and open-ended discovery-oriented method that is appropriate to show the trust of respondents (Rubin & Rubin, 2005; Norazah, 2014). Respondents are comprised of 30 international students from various countries who are currently studying in local institutions of higher learning for at least a year. An interview with respondents was conducted for the collection of relevant data in identifying the institutional factors involved. The results of the transcripts of the interviews and the recording of the conversation will be analyzed using thematic analysis to collect inductive data relating to the themes and concepts that have been constructed.

Theoretical Framework

This study uses the "Push-Pull" Factors Theory of Mazzarol and Soutar as the basis of conceptual framework due to its flexibility and overall reflection of the influences in the choice of study destinations for international students. According to this theory, the decision-making process by international students to choose their ultimate destination of study involves three main phases. The first phase is where students decide to pursue their studies abroad rather than staying in the home country. This phase will be influenced by the rejection factor inherent in their home country. Meanwhile, the second phase is the stage where the withdrawal factor becomes an important factor when the destination country has more attractiveness. In the third phase, students will make an institution selection overseas. Mazzarol and Soutar (2002) also found six key factors affecting the choice of countries of study including: knowledge, awareness, personal recommendations, cost issues, environment, social networks and geographical position of the country. All these factors are very important to understand the influences that motivate the selection of a student to the country of their study destination.

Discussion

Referring to Figure 1, the institutional factors and the variables identified in the selection of study destinations abroad, we can see that the influence of institutions is the dominant influence in student decision making. As such, the university should manipulate the variables and apply them in the internationalization strategy and promotion strategies to increase the inclusion of international students into the country.

Institutions should take the initiative to enhance corporate image by taking into account ranking, academic reputation, research, quality and so on. This is because the prestigious image of an institution and nation in higher education is able to trust international students that the higher education sector in the destination country is of high quality (Bourke, 2000). The importance of links between a university and agency also affects the image enhancement and as such, such enhancement should be increased by focusing on its visibility internationally.

At the faculty level, with the expertise of accredited teaching staff and the presence of experienced professional teaching staff can also be manipulated positively to attract international students to pursue tertiary education. The field of university expertise in research is certainly beneficial and able to provide career opportunities when students return to their homeland later. Suggestions from academics consisting of professors and lecturers can also alter the results of student selection as the advice from these groups is seen to have high values, credibility that can create confidence and confidence among students in a university.

Whereas international-class learning environment and facilities provided are indeed critical elements that will be considered by students in the choice of their destination country. A

university that seeks to become an international university should take an alternative to attracting students from various cultural diversities by creating a global, user-friendly and user-friendly system and accessible to and understood by international students. One example is the student information system and lecture scheduling in different languages. Hence, issues such as cultural gaps have transformed into new students to experience the culture of the host country as well as to provide different cultural perspectives in an international standard of higher education and make it an advantage for students to choose their preferred destination country (Lustig and Koester, 2006; Lee and Morrish, 2012).

Through courses and courses offered, institutions can influence the selection of students to further their studies in the destination country. Typically, students refer to a program and course that has critical, comprehensive and fulfilling content in the marketplace and job requirements. Offering unique and unique programs based on the university's niche area can lead to the entry of international students into the country. Additionally, programs involving outside industries such as industrial training and attachment provide added value to a student.

Conclusions

In conclusion, this concept paper identifies the institution's influence in the decision-making of a student to choose the destination of study abroad. The right choice of study destinations to further education is an important thing for a student even critical to educational institutions with vision and mission being "world class university". To respond to the call of the Malaysian government to intensify internationalization in the higher education sector, a more creative marketing marketing and promotion plan should be implemented. Therefore, through this concept paper it is hoped that understanding the relevant institutional factors and variables can provide ideas and knowledge that can be absorbed in the planning.

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