

FACTORS AFFECTING CHINESE STUDENTS CHOOSING TO STUDY CHINESE PROGRAMS IN THAILAND: A STUDY OF DPU CHINA- ASEAN INTERNATIONAL COLLEGE

Miss. Chaoqiao Yang¹

Dr. Sayamol Nongbunnak²

Abstract

With study in Thailand becoming increasingly popular in China, rising numbers of Chinese students chose to study undergraduate programs in Thailand. At the same time, a ‘Chinese program’ in Thai universities has become a good choice for Chinese students. This study aims to determine the factors affecting Chinese student satisfaction for those choosing to study on a Chinese program in Thailand. The descriptive analysis method and the regression analysis method were applied to analyze the demographic profiles and marketing mix (7Ps) variables including the relationships between the demographic profiles, the marketing mix (7Ps) and student satisfaction.

The results show that the demographic profile has no significant effect on student satisfaction. However, 3 of the 7Ps Marketing Mix have effects on student satisfaction namely: promotions (sales promotion, advertising, public relation), people, and process. The result of this study shows that the demographic profile had no influence on Chinese student satisfaction (H1). However, the marketing mix (7P’s) showed partial support the H2 hypothesis. The marketing mix had an effect on Chinese student satisfaction when studying a Chinese program in Thailand.

¹ A student of MBA (International Program), Dhurakij Pundit University (DPUIC), Bangkok, Thailand

² A research supervisor

Introduction

With the increasing trend of studying in other countries, international education has become an influential phenomenon. Studying abroad has become another choice for Chinese high school graduates. According to the Blue Book (government report) of the Chinese Ministry of Education, the number of Chinese students studying abroad was 523,700 students in 2015 which was an increase of 13.9% from 2014 (459,800 students). The average duration of study of returnees in 2015 was 22 months. The demand for studying in other countries is still high and foreign degrees are preferred by Chinese employers (ICEF Monitor, 2015). See figure 1.



Figure 1: Number of Chinese outbound students and returnees 2010-2015

Source: as cited in ICEF Monitor (2016)

The choice of destination is varied. The top-four destination choices in 2015 and 2016 were native English speaking countries: the United States, the United Kingdom, Australia, and Canada (See figure 2). Other destination choices were Singapore, Japan, Germany, Hong Kong, New Zealand, and France. In 2016, the preferred majors of study were Business (27%), Engineering (17%), Liberal Arts (16%), and Science (12%). Other majors were Politics and Law, Medicine, and Fine Arts.

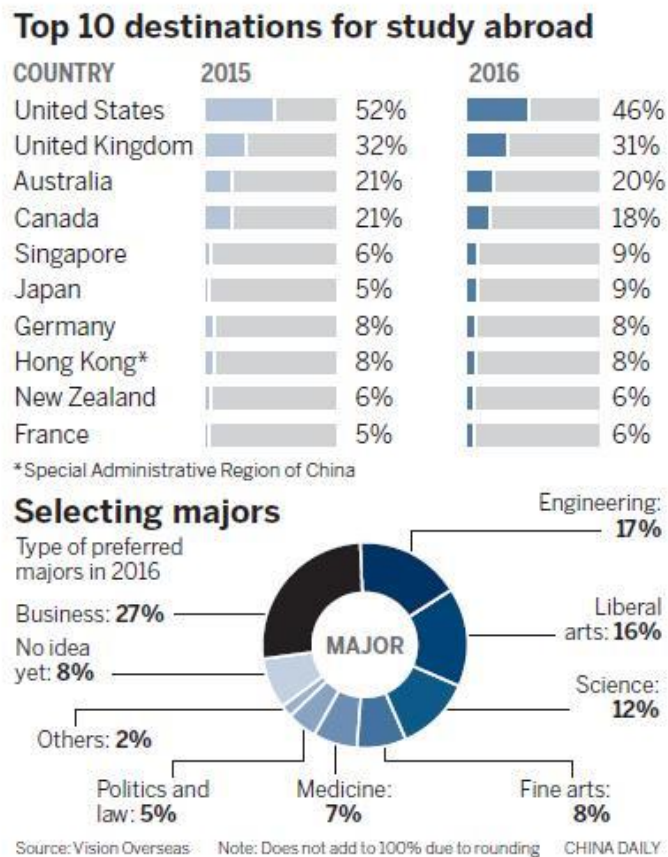


Figure 2: Top 10 study destinations for Chinese students

Source: Zhao (2016, 25 May) China Daily USA

Since the establishment of strategic partnerships between China and ASEAN, China has made efforts to strengthen educational exchange and collaboration with ASEAN countries, and continuously promotes “the integration of China - ASEAN education”. In 2007, the Ministry of Education of China and the Minister of the Thai Ministry of Education signed an agreement on mutual recognition of academic degrees between China and Thailand. The two countries have strongly promoted the recognition scheme to Chinese students studying in Thailand and Thai students studying in China (Ministry of Education of China, 2007).

Although the United States and the United Kingdom are the preferred choices of many Chinese students, Thailand has become a ‘new favorite’ study destination because of the culture, travel distance, and the Thai economy. In 2014, around 32,000 Chinese students were studying in Thailand (Zhang & Ming, 2015). With the upsurge of studying in Thailand, the demand of

Chinese programs is increasingly at the university level. Chinese students tend to choose to study Chinese programs in other countries. It is easier to study and obtain a degree compared to studying in Thai or English programs. Currently, there are many colleges and universities offering Chinese programs in Thailand such as Assumption University, Dhurakij Pundit University, Rangsit University, Siam University, Stamford International University, Panyapinwat Institute of Management, and Rajiamangala University of Technology.

China-ASEAN International College (CAIC) is a college at Dhurakij Pundit University. CAIC offers undergraduate and postgraduate programs in the Chinese language (n.a., n.d.). Students are mainly from China. This study aims to explore the factors affecting Chinese students who chose to study in a Chinese program in Thailand. The conceptual framework of this study is shown in Figure 3.

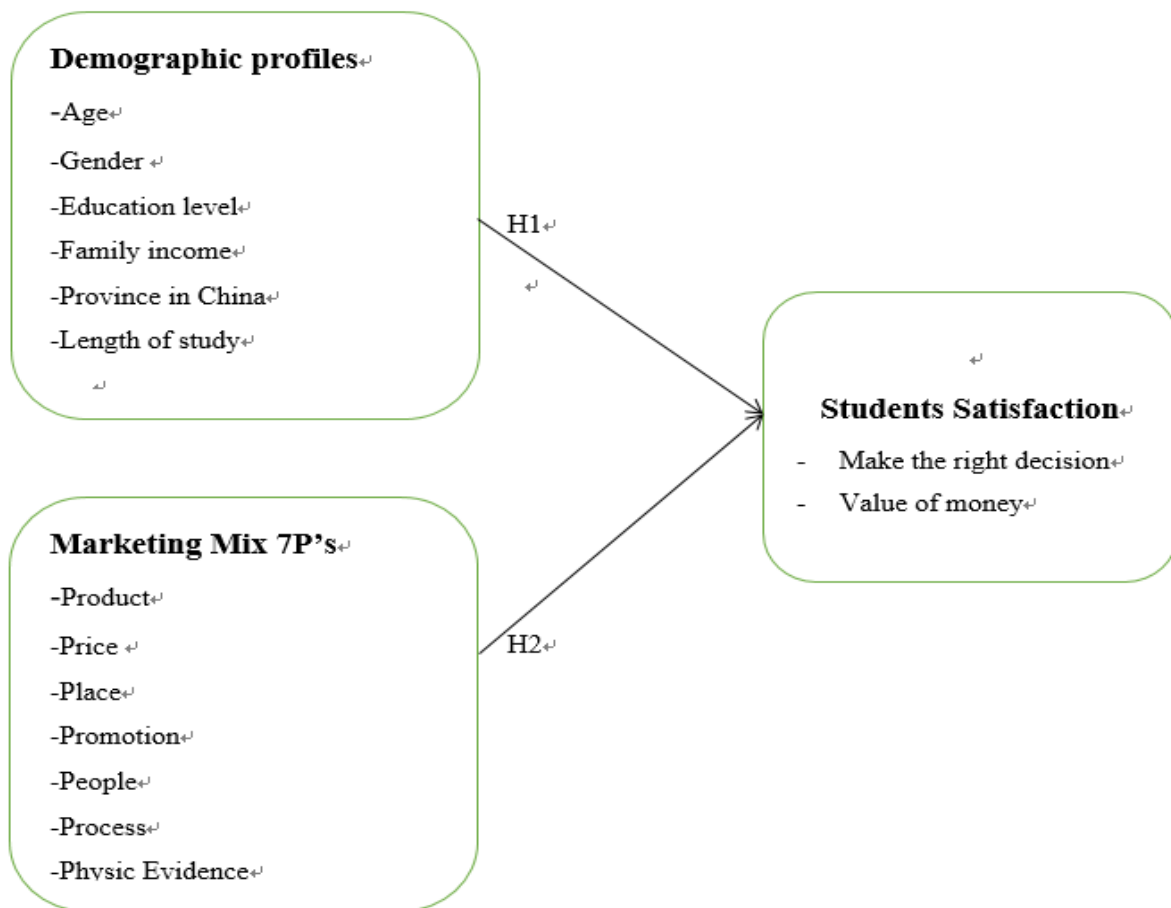


Figure 3: Conceptual Framework of the study

The hypotheses of the study are as follows:

H1: There is an effect of demographic profile on Chinese student satisfaction when studying in a Chinese program in Thailand.

H2: There is an effect of the marketing mix 7Ps on Chinese student satisfaction when studying in a Chinese program in Thailand.

Research Methodology

This study addresses the student satisfaction of Chinese student who study in a Chinese program in Thailand using three constructs: demographic profile, marketing mix (7Ps), and student satisfaction. A questionnaire was employed to collect data from Chinese student studying at CAIC. A convenience sampling method was applied to collect data and the number of the sample was 150 respondents. The questionnaire is divided into 3 parts;

- a) Demographic profile: gender, age, education level, family income, province in China, length of study
- b) Marketing Mix (7Ps): product, price, place, promotion, people, process, physical evidence
- c) Student satisfaction: made the right decision, value for money

A five-point Likert scale is applied to measure the marketing mix and student satisfaction. The scale ranges from 1 (Strongly Disagree with the statement) to 5 (Strongly agree with the statement). The data were collected for a week, from March 20th to March 25th, 2017.

To analyze the data, descriptive statistics were used to evaluate the demographic profiles. Reliability analysis was applied to test the consistency of data. Regression analysis was employed to test the relationships between the demographic profiles, the marketing mix (7Ps) and student satisfaction of Chinese students who study in a Chinese program at DPU-CAIC. The confidence level of 95% or $p < 0.05$ was adopted to test the hypotheses of the study.

Research Findings

The process of data screening showed that it was a symmetrical distribution of collected data. 150 responses were received resulting in a response rate of 100%. The analysis focuses on the factors affecting Chinese student satisfaction for students who study in a Chinese program in Thailand.

Results of Demographic Profile

The majority of respondents' were male (71.3%). And 28.7% was female. The highest percentage of age group was 22-24 years old (54%), followed by 25-30 years old (23.3%), and 16-22 years old (22.7%). Most of them are studying bachelor degree (80%), followed by master degree (17.3%), and 2.7% studying a doctoral degree. The income level was mainly below 25,000 baht (65.3%). Only 1.3% had income above 80,000 Baht. Others had an income level of 25,001-50,000 Baht (26%) and 50,001-80,000 Baht (7.3%). Most respondents are from Yunnan province, which accounted for 64%. Others are from Heilongjiang (16%), Guangxi (12.7%), and Shandong (7.3%). Respondents studying at DPU-CAIC 2 years were the largest group (35.3%), followed by 3 years (32.7%), 1 year (17.3%), less than 1 year (13.3%), and 4 years (1.3%).

Results of Reliability Analysis

The study showed that Cronbach's Alpha (α) was 0.905 for marketing mix items. The cut-off rate is >0.8 . It means these items had internal consistency. For the student satisfaction items, Cronbach's Alpha (α) was 0.812 which is higher than 0.8. It means that these items were reliable and measured the same construct.

Results of Hypothesis Test

This study used the regression analysis method to analyze the relationships between demographics, the marketing mix 7Ps and student satisfaction. Regression analysis is a statistics method studying whether there is a linear or non-linear relationship between one or more independent variables and the dependent variable.

H1: There is an effect of demographic profile on Chinese student satisfaction when studying in a Chinese program in Thailand.

The study found that there was no a significant relationship between demographic profile and student satisfaction. The regression result of demographic profiles with student satisfaction shows that all items in the demographic profile were higher than the significance level ($p < 0.05$). It indicated that the linear relationship of the regression equation was not significant ($t > 1.96$, $p < 0.05$).

From the model summary, R^2 was 0.007. It is means that the demographic profile was able to explain only 0.7% of the student satisfaction. 'F' was 1.089 and Sig was 0.298 which was

greater than 0.05 ($p < 0.05$). The result showed that the demographic profile has no influence on Chinese student satisfaction when studying a Chinese program in Thailand.

H2: There is an effect of demographic profile on Chinese student satisfaction when studying in a Chinese program in Thailand.

The study found that the effect of the marketing mix elements on student satisfaction is that people, process and promotion are statistically significant with significance values of 0.000, 0.000 and 0.001 respectively, which is less than 0.05 ($p < 0.05$). Product, price, place, and physical evidence were not statistically significant with significance values of 0.066, 0.374, 0.067 and 0.352 respectively ($p < 0.05$). See table 1.

Table 1: Regression result of marketing mix 7Ps with student satisfaction

Variable	Unstandardized coefficients		standardized coefficients	t	sig
	B	std. Error	Beta		
Product	0.143	0.077	0.151	1.855	0.066
Price	0.072	0.081	0.073	0.891	0.374
Place	0.140	0.076	0.150	1.848	0.067
Promotion	0.392	0.110	0.280	3.548	0.001
People	0.445	0.081	0.409	5.459	0.000
Process	0.625	0.064	0.626	9.761	0.000
Physical evidence	0.079	0.085	0.076	0.933	0.352

a. Predictor: (Constant) product, price, place, promotion, people, process, physical evidence

b. Dependent Variable: student satisfaction

The results indicate that “process” is the strongest driver with a β -value of 0.626. This means that process makes a strong and unique contribution to explain the dependent variable (student satisfaction), followed by people and promotion with β -values of 0.409 and 0.280 respectively. Other elements of the marketing mix are not influential drivers of Chinese student satisfaction studying in a Chinese program in Thailand.

For people, student satisfaction increases by 0.445 ($\beta=0.445$) when all other variables are held constant. For process, student satisfaction will increase by 0.625 ($\beta=0.625$) when all other variables are held constant. In addition, the analysis revealed that for promotion, student satisfaction increases by 0.392 ($\beta=0.392$) when all other variables are held constant. Promotion,

people, and Process influence Chinese student satisfaction studying in a Chinese program in Thailand.

Table 2: Regression results for promotion with student satisfaction

Variable	Unstandardized coefficients		Standardized coefficients	t	sig
	B	std. Error	Beta		
sales promotion	0.173	0.069	0.203	2.528	0.013
public relations	0.303	0.080	0.298	3.799	0.000
advertising	0.262	0.093	0.226	2.824	0.005
personal selling	0.107	0.078	0.112	1.367	0.174
direct marketing	0.131	0.074	0.144	1.766	0.080

Promotion in this study includes sales promotion, public relations, advertising, personal selling, and direct marketing. The results reveal that sales promotion, public relations, and advertising were statistically significant with values of 0.013, 0.000 and 0.005 respectively, which is less than 0.05 ($p < 0.05$). Personal selling and direct marketing did not have statistical significance with values of 0.177 and 0.080 which were higher than 0.05.

Furthermore, from β -value shows that public relations was the strongest driver with a β -value of 0.298. This means public relations makes a strong and unique contribution to explain student satisfaction, followed by advertising and sales promotion with β -values of 0.226 and 0.203, respectively. Others are not influential drivers of student satisfaction among the promotion elements.

From the model summary, R^2 was 0.072. It means that marketing mix (7Ps) was able to explain only 7.2% of student satisfaction. 'F' was 11.503 and Sig was 0.001 which was lower than 0.05 ($p < 0.05$). The result showed that the marketing mix (7Ps) had an influence on Chinese student satisfaction studying in a Chinese program in Thailand.

In summary, this study found that demographic profile had no influence on Chinese student satisfaction (H1). However, the marketing mix (7Ps) showed partial support for the H2 hypothesis. The marketing mix had an effect on Chinese student satisfaction when studying in a Chinese program in Thailand. See Table 3.

Table 3: Summary of Hypothesis results

	Hypotheses	Support
H1	There is an effect of demographic profile on Chinese student satisfaction when studying in a Chinese program in Thailand.	Not supported
H2	There is an effect of demographic profile on Chinese student satisfaction when studying in a Chinese program in Thailand.	Partial support*

* Significance level at $\alpha=0.05$

Conclusion and Recommendations

This study aimed to identify the factors affecting Chinese student satisfaction for students studying on a Chinese program in Thailand and to determine the relationships between their demographic profiles, the marketing mix (7Ps) and student satisfaction. The research findings revealed that the demographic profiles of Dhurakij Pundit University China-ASEAN International College students had no significant influence on Chinese student satisfaction towards the Chinese Program at CAIC. However, the marketing mix (7Ps) had a significant relationship with Chinese student satisfaction for those who study in a Chinese Program in Thailand.

The study found a significant relationship between promotion, people, process and Chinese student satisfaction. The results confirmed that promotion was a significant factor that influences student satisfaction. For promotion, the elements of sales promotion, public relations, and advertising had significant relationships with student satisfaction.

Process had an effect on Chinese students' satisfaction, which is line with the finding of Al-Eisa and Alhemoud (2009) who also found that process affected customer satisfaction. In this study, the university should provide complete service process, a fast service and actively resolve student problems. The consequences are increasing student satisfaction towards the university.

Moreover, the result showed a significant relationship between people and student satisfaction. The study by DeShields, Kara and Kaynak (2005) confirmed that students who had a positive experience are more likely to be satisfied with the university. The positive experience came from education quality such as staff knowledgeable, staff attitudes, and high quality teachers. These experiences influenced student satisfaction.

Product, however, had no significant relationship with student satisfaction. The result is contrary to the research findings of Alhemoud (2010) which found that product affected

customer satisfaction. Considering price, there was no significant relationship with student satisfaction in this study. The result contradicted the findings of Varki and Colgate (2012) who indicated that price affected customer satisfaction. Place and physical evidence had no significant relationship with student satisfaction in the study. It is in contrast to the finding of Mohammad (2012) which suggested that place and physical evidence influenced customer satisfaction.

Student satisfaction is the first step in improving university services. The results of this study reveal that three elements in the marketing mix (7Ps) influence Chinese satisfaction namely process, promotion, and people. Thai higher education institutions who offered Chinese programs should pay more attention to these aspects in order to gain more student satisfaction. Customer-oriented attitudes are able to support and satisfy Chinese students. For the process, Thailand universities should provide quick and complete service processes to student to meet student needs. In terms of promotion, public relations, advertising, and sales promotion have an effect on student satisfaction. Thai universities should also put effort into promoting Thai higher education in China to increase awareness and inform potential students in China. Moreover, staff training and teacher training is important to improve their ability and profession skills. In addition, Thai universities can set high service process standards and provide better services to satisfy Chinese students.

Limitations and Recommendation for Future Research

In this study, there are limitations to be considered. Firstly, data were collected during mid-term examinations when respondents were busy with preparation. It took more time than planned. Secondly, the independent variables in the conceptual framework might not cover all important aspects. Thirdly, the sample was just Chinese students who study at Dhurakij Pundit University China-ASEAN International College; future study could be extended to other institutions which offer Chinese programs to obtain more diverse information. Lastly, there were no open-ended questions; therefore future research should include other types of research method to collect more data from respondents.

References

- Al-Eisa, S. A. & Alhemoud, A. M. (2009). Using a Multiple-attribute approach for measuring customer satisfaction with retail banking services in Kuwait. *International Journal of Bank Marketing*, 27(4), 294-314.
- Alhemoud, A. N. (2010). Banking in Kuwait: a customer satisfaction case study. *International Business Journal*. 20(4), 333-342
- Varki, S. & Colgate, M. (2001). The role of price perceptions in an integrated model of behavioral intentions. *Journal of Service Research*, 3(2), 232-40.
- China National Tourism Administration. (2017). Retrieved April 7, 2017, from http://en.cnta.gov.cn/News/localnews/201606/t20160614_774181.shtml
- Chinese student employment in Thailand (2015). Retrieved April 7, 2017, from <http://www.weibo.com/ttarticle/p/show?id=2309403982707410520763>
- DeShields Jr, O. W., Kara, A., & Kaynak, E. (2005). Determinants of business student satisfaction and retention in higher education: applying Herzberg's two-factor theory. *International journal of educational management*, 19(2), 128-139.
- ICEF Monitor. (2016). Market Intelligence for International Student Recruitment. Retrieved April 7, 2017, from <http://monitor.icef.com/>
- Kelly, S. (2010, 16 November). Chinese keen on Thai studies, *Bangkok Post*. Retrieved from <http://www.bangkokpost.com/learning/education-features/206591/chinese-keen-on-thai-studies>
- Ministry of Education of China. (2007). The agreement between the ministry of education of China and the ministry of education of Thailand. Retrieved April 7 2017, from http://www.moe.edu.cn/publicfiles/business/htmlfiles/moe/moe_858/201005/87625.html
- n.a. (n.d.). China-ASEAN International College Retrieved 29 June, 2017, from <http://caic.dpu.ac.th/>
- The Chinese program in Thai universities. (2016). Retrieved April 7, 2017, from <http://zt.liuxue360.com/th/TAIGUO/>
- Zhang, C., & Ming, D. (2015, 21 July). Interview: China, Thailand enjoy extensive, frequent, high-quality cultural exchanges, *Xinhuanet*. Retrieved from http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2015-07/21/c_134431728.htm

Zhao, X. (2016, 25 May). Asian Nations Attract More Chinese Students. China Daily USA. Retrieved April, 7, 2017, from http://usa.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2016-05/25/content_25451461.htm