

Factors affecting the decision of Undergraduate Chinese students in Bangkok, Thailand

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ABSTRACT

The aim of the study is to know about the factors affecting the decisions of undergraduate Chinese students who study in Bangkok, Thailand by identifying the effects of demographic factors, marketing mix and student services on customer satisfaction. The data set is collected through a self-administered questionnaire and employs a convenience sampling method. A total of 104 samples were collected from Chinese students at three universities in Bangkok, which are Dhurakij Pundit University, Bangkok University and Kasem Bundit University.

The research findings revealed that Chinese students with different demographic profiles are likely to be different in terms of student satisfaction. There are also effects of the marketing mix (4P's) and student services on the satisfaction of Chinese students when they study in Thailand.

The findings of this study can provide baseline information to education institutions in Thailand. Student satisfaction is an important means to measure the quality of higher education. Students can be offered better education services by understanding Chinese students' satisfaction.

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Introduction and Investigated Constructs

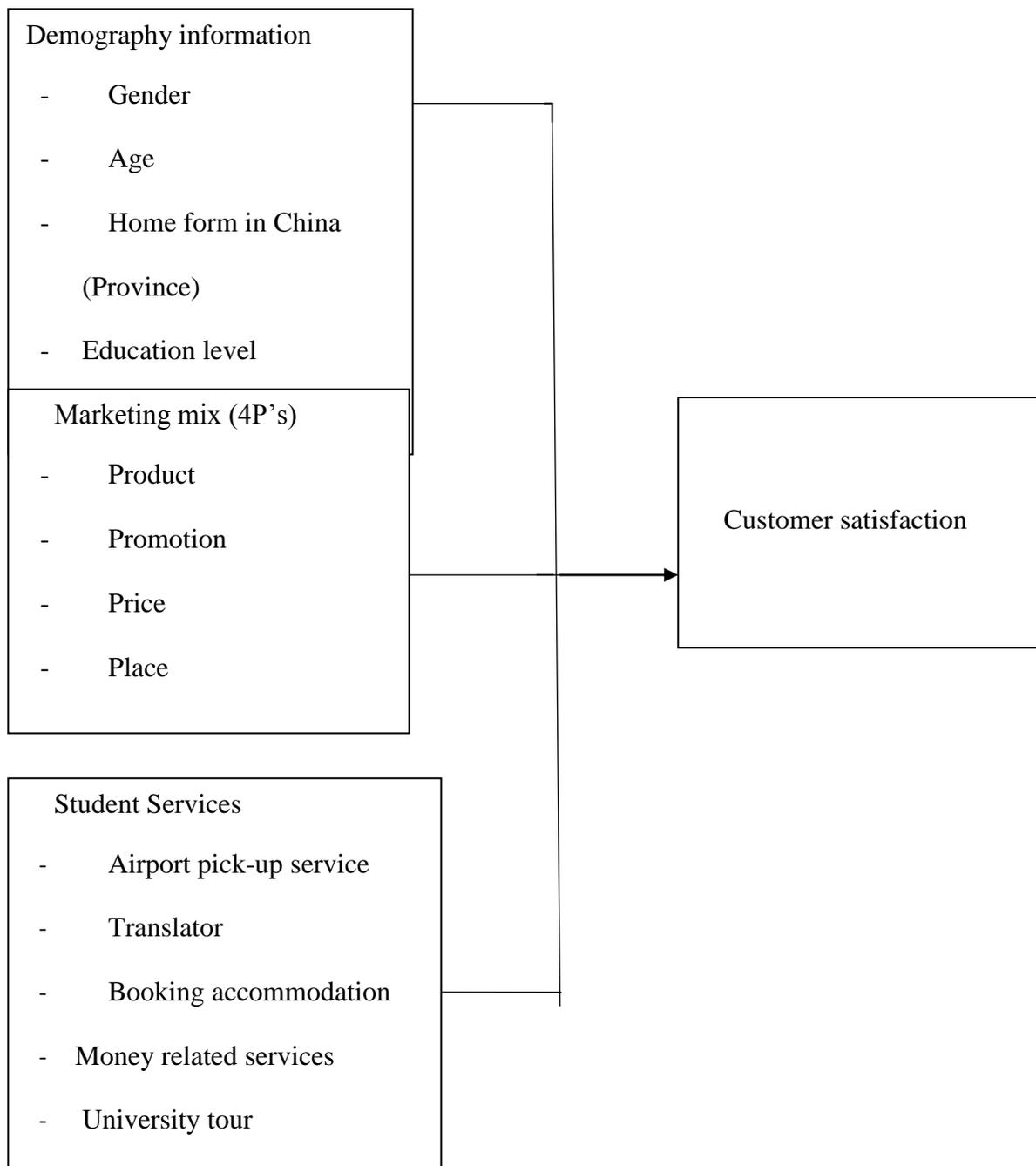
With the development of the economy and the influence of globalization, more and more students choose to study in other countries, such as the United States, the United Kingdom, France, Japan, South Korea, Thailand, etc. In China, with reform and opening-up, China's economy is gradually improving. Many families have good economic conditions so that they can afford to send their children to study abroad, and make their children's dream of studying abroad come true. Culture is becoming more and more globalized now, and many students think that foreign education is better than domestic education, so they go abroad to receive higher education, hoping to gain better insights and knowledge. In 2014, the number of Chinese students enrolled in college entrance examinations reached 9,390,000 people, and the number of undergraduate university students reached 7,270,000, which is a record high (www.eol.cn, 13 Nov 2015). The competition is becoming increasingly fierce now because the popularity of education in China leads to Chinese college students going everywhere. Many people choose to go abroad to study and think that studying abroad can make them more competitive and help them to get a better job in the future.

Thailand has always been a friendly partner of China. In recent years, the economic and cultural exchanges between China and Thailand have become very close. In China, people through movies, news and Internet can watch, listen, read about and understand Thailand, especially Thailand's education. More and more Chinese students choose to study in Thailand. Its low prices, efficiency and quality attract more and more Chinese people's attention, especially working-class parents. Studying abroad in Thailand makes more Chinese people's dream of international education come true.

As more and more Chinese people choose to study abroad, international education institutions are becoming more and more fiercely competitive. So, why do Chinese people choose to study in Thailand? It is important to study the factors that affect Chinese people's final decision to study in Thailand. This study aims to determine the factors affecting Chinese students who study in Thailand and provide Chinese students with suggestions.

Therefore, this research aims to investigate the satisfaction of undergraduate Chinese students who study in Bangkok, Thailand and the possible influencing factors such as demographic profiles, marketing mix (4P's) and student services. A conceptual framework of this study is depicted in Figure 1.

Figure 1: Conceptual Framework



Based on the above research questions and conceptual framework, the hypotheses of the study are as follows:

H1: Demographic factors will have effects on the customer satisfaction of undergraduate Chinese students who study in Bangkok, Thailand.

H2: The marketing mix will have effects on the customer satisfaction of undergraduate Chinese students who study in Bangkok, Thailand.

H3: The student services of Thai universities will have effects on the customer satisfaction of undergraduate Chinese students who study in Bangkok, Thailand.

Research Methodology

This study addresses the relationship between the demographics, the marketing mix, student services and customer satisfaction of undergraduate Chinese students who study in Bangkok, Thailand using the following constructs:

1. Demographics: gender, age, hometown in China (province), education level, field of study
2. Marketing Mix: product, price, promotion, place
3. Student Services: airport pick-up service, translator, booking accommodation, Money related services, university tour
4. Customer Satisfaction: university activities, teachers, campus environment, dormitory, curriculum arrangement and student administration

In this study, researchers will collect a reasonable number of respondents as data for calculations and analysis. The researcher needed to collect at least 100 respondents' data as a sample.

Convenient sampling was used for this study because the respondents can be controlled for certain characteristics (Malhotra 2007). The research adopted a convenient sampling method by distributing questionnaires to undergraduate Chinese students from Dhurakij Pundit University, Bangkok University and Kasem Bundit University.

Table 1: Convenience Sampling

School name	Dhurakij Pundit University	Bangkok University	Kasem Bundit University
Number of students	54	25	25
Total	104		

In order to measure the constructs of the study, the research uses the following items in each questionnaire section; Part I: respondents demographic profile including Gender, Age, Hometown in China (Province), Education level and Field of study; Part II: Marketing Mix consists of four items which are Product, Promotion, Place, Price; Part III: Students' services consist of five items which are Pick-up service, Translator, Booking accommodation, Money related services, University tour; Part IV: Customer satisfaction of undergraduate Chinese students who study in Bangkok, Thailand such as University

activities, Teacher, Campus environment, Dormitory, Curriculum arrangement and Student administration.

Data were screened to assume a normal distribution. 6 sets of questionnaires were found to be outliers and were then deleted from the analysis. The remaining 104 sets of questionnaires tended to perform normal distribution within the $-1 \leq \text{skewness} \leq +1$ and $-2 \leq \text{kurtosis} \leq +2$ (Tabadinick & Fidell 2001).

Data Analysis

Each construct was analyzed by using descriptive statistical methods such as frequency, percentage, mean and standard deviation to find the descriptive results. The hypothesis tests were conducted by using the chi-square test (X^2 test).

Research Findings

Results of Demographic Profile

Gender– The majority of respondents were male (58.65%) followed by female (41.35%). **Age** – The majority of respondents were 19–28 years old (62.5%) followed by 29 – 38 years old (22.12%), under the age of 18 (12.5%), over 39 years old (2.88%). **Province (Hometown in China)** – The majority of respondents were from Guangxi (40.38%) followed by Yunnan (18.27%), other province (17.31%), Shandong (16.35%), Hunan (7.69%). **Education level** – The majority of respondents had a Bachelor Degree (44.23%) followed by Master Degree (42.31%), Doctor Degree (7.69%), other (5.77%). **Field of study** – The majority of respondents study international trade (29.81%) followed by marketing (23.08%), Thai language majors (20.19%), other fields of study (14.42%), tourism management (12.5%).

Results of Marketing Mix (4P's)

A “Likert Scale” was used to quantify the level of agreement on items related IMC tools. The scale descriptions are as follows:

“5” = Strongly agree with the statement

“4” = Agree with the statement

“3” = Feel neutral with the statement

“2” = Disagree with the statement

“1” = Strongly disagree with the statement

It was found that the mean of the product was 3.89; the level of agreement for the product is at an agree level. The mean of promotion was 3.91; the level of agreement for promotion is at an agree level. The mean of price was 4.02; the level of agreement for price is at an agree level. The mean of place was 3.97; the level of agreement for place is at an agree level.

Results of Students' services

The majority of respondents use the booking accommodation service (25%), followed by Airport pick-up service (21.8%), Translator service (21.4%), Money related services (20.2%) and University tour (11.5%).

Results of the Customer Satisfaction of undergraduate Chinese students

The mean of customer satisfaction was 4.07; the level of agreement for customer satisfaction is at an agree level. The mean of the question I'm happy with the university activities was 3.95; the level of agreement for this question is at an agree level. The mean of the question I'm happy with the teacher was 4.08; the level of agreement for this question is at an agree level. The mean of the question I'm happy with the campus environment was 4.07; the level of agreement for this question is at an agree level. The mean of the question I'm happy with the dormitory was 3.95; the level of agreement for this question is at an agree level. The mean of the question I'm happy with the curriculum arrangement was 4.03; the level of agreement for this question is at an agree level. The mean of the question I'm happy with the student administration was 4.00; the level of agreement for this question is at an agree level.

Result of Hypothesis Tests

H1: Demographic factors have effects on the customer satisfaction of undergraduate Chinese students who study in Bangkok, Thailand.

The study found that there was partial support for the relationship between demographic profiles and the satisfaction of undergraduate Chinese students who study in Bangkok, Thailand. Chinese students with different demographic profiles tend to show different levels of customer satisfaction for student administration, dormitory and teacher. However, the study shows that province (hometown in China) and field of study has no effect on the student satisfaction.

H2: The marketing mix has effects on the customer satisfaction of undergraduate Chinese students who study in Bangkok, Thailand.

The study found that there was support for the relationship between marketing mix and the satisfaction of undergraduate Chinese students who study in Bangkok, Thailand. The most important factors of the marketing mix focused on by Chinese students is that Thailand's degrees are internationally recognized; it is not hard to apply for a scholarship in Thailand, Thai universities have much international cooperation, studying in Thailand has good employment prospects, the cost of living is lower than China, the price of air tickets from Thailand to China is low, it is convenient to go home and Bangkok has convenient transportation.

H3: The student services have effects on the customer satisfaction of undergraduate Chinese students who study in Bangkok, Thailand.

The study found that there was support for the relationship between student services and the satisfaction of undergraduate Chinese students who study in Bangkok, Thailand. Most Chinese students use the booking accommodation service, followed by airport pick-up service and translator service. Student services have effects on the customer satisfaction about the teachers.

Conclusion and Recommendations

This study aims to identify the factors affecting the satisfaction of undergraduate Chinese students who study in Bangkok, Thailand and to determine the relationships between different demographic profiles, marketing mix (4P's) and student services on the satisfaction of undergraduate Chinese students who study in Bangkok.

The study has found a significant relationship between the demographic profiles of undergraduate Chinese students who study in Bangkok, Thailand, such as gender, age, and education level. The study revealed that Chinese students with different gender, age and education level have different levels of customer satisfaction about student administration, the dormitory and the teachers. Such consistent results imply that Chinese students with different demographic profiles tend to have different levels show different customer satisfaction when they study in Thailand.

In terms of the marketing mix (4P's), the study revealed that the most important factors of the marketing mix focused on by the Chinese students are that Thailand's degrees are internationally recognized, it is not hard to apply for a scholarship in Thailand, Thai universities have much international cooperation, studying in Thailand has good

employment prospects, the cost of living is lower than China, the price of air tickets from Thailand to China is low, and it is convenient to go home and Bangkok has convenient transportation. Such consistent results imply that the marketing mix has effects on the customer satisfaction of undergraduate Chinese students who study in Bangkok, Thailand.

Lastly, in term of student services, from the questionnaire data, most Chinese students use the booking accommodation service, followed by airport pick-up service and translator service. The study revealed that student services is also important .It has effects on customer satisfaction of undergraduate Chinese students who study in Bangkok, Thailand.

Implications of the Study

From the study, the data show that most of the Chinese students who study in Bangkok, Thailand pay more attention to the activities of the university, the dormitory, the teachers and student administration. Thailand's universities should build a humanized service system on the campus, to allow Chinese students to have a pleasant college experience. To improve student satisfaction can improve the retention of students and enhance the university education brand; higher satisfaction can also improve student loyalty. Thailand's universities should pay attention to the implementation of the students' satisfaction evaluation as an important means to measure the quality of higher education.

Recommendations for Future Study

- Future study may replicate this study and increase the sample size to help increase the accuracy and explanatory power of the findings.
- Future study can extend the sampling frame to other districts in different cities, such as Chang-Mai or other areas.

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