

Chapter 11

Motivational Factors Influencing Students to Study Abroad: A Case Study of Korean Students Studying in Malaysia

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ABSTRACT

Education tourism, despite being existed for several hundred years, has only recently been recognised as an independent sector worth studying. In today's globalisation era, knowledge is increasingly a commodity that moves between countries. Korean society adapts the globalization era, which is gradually narrowing the interval between countries around the world. The current study was aimed to explore factors that attracts students from Korea to Malaysian universities. Data were obtained from nine private educational institutions in March-August 2019. In the current study, 300 questionnaires were distributed by applying the unbiased sample and the non-probability convenience sampling technique. The results of the study confirm that higher quality education program, affordable tuition fees, and a higher standard environment are the key motivational factors attracting Korean students to study in Malaysia. This study proposes important implications for policymakers, institutional staffs, and other relevant stakeholders in prioritising action to position themselves in the market effectively.

DOI: 10.4018/978-1-7998-4489-1.ch011

INTRODUCTION

In today's globalisation era, knowledge is increasingly a commodity that moves between countries. The growth of the knowledge-based economy has led not only to competition among employers worldwide for the best brains but also among the institutions that train the best minds. Globalisation is seen here as the root cause of changes taking place in higher education and defined as "the flow of technology, economy, knowledge, people, values, ideas across borders" (Knight, 1999). The traditional form of cross-border flows in higher education has been for students to migrate from one country to another to advance their studies. Several economic and social factors encourage international student mobility and competition between nations for international students (Clark and Sedgwick, 2005; OECD, 2004). Thus, it affects the overall society, including the job market. Nowadays, majority of the organisation required higher quality of human capital as this is one key indicator that students look forward to studying abroad so that they can equip themselves with better foreign language skills, various certificates and degrees which are considered as an essential requirement for employment. As the emerging globalisation on the rise, demand for English language usage became a requirement and international jobs recruitment. Korean firms are in the process of transforming their human resource management (HRM) systems to compete effectively in the global market (Kim et al., 2008).

Respond to these social changes, one of the drastic changes in Korean universities is the development and establishment of language schools and institutions. However, despite these increased levels of domestic institutions, the number of students travelling for education purpose for long-term is rapidly increasing. Travelling for educational purposes is on the rise, a trend in Korea society and very well adopts by many parents who willing and who can afford to fund their children.

Countries such as the USA, UK and Australia have been targeted as a preferred choice for education. For example, South Korean students account for as much as 18.7% of the entire international student body at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas (University of Nevada - Las Vegas International Student Report, n.d.). Nowadays, many international students have laid their eyes on a different location for education. Perpetually, countries in Asia are gaining popularity as an education hub for international students to pursue. As for today, Malaysia is one of the countries which have recently become a popular education tourism destination. Students around the world have recognised Malaysia as the preferred choice for college and tertiary education (Arokiasamy and Nagappan, 2012). According to UNESCO (2014), Malaysia has been ranked the world's ninth most preferred study destination (EasyUni Staff, 2017a). An estimate of 151,979 international students enrolled in the year 2016, where approximately 80% of them were studying in Higher Education Institutes in Malaysia to benefit from its world-class teaching techniques and even avail of its specially tailored programs for international students (Easy Uni Staff, 2017b). With the realisation of the positive impact this industry has on the economy's growth, Malaysia also aims to increase its GDP through education services. It was highlighted in the Malaysia Education Blueprint 2015-2025 (Higher Education) by setting a target of 250,000 international students by the year 2025.

Many Korean students choose Malaysia for education tourism and have a significant increase each year. From primary school students to university student's level, they are coming to Malaysia for education purposes. According to the Korean school of Malaysia, initially, many Koreans were drawn to Malaysia for work but, in recent years, education has become one of the main attractions for many Koreans to study here. According to the Korean Society of Malaysia (KSM), the Korean school of Malaysia ranked top 10 for the most Korean students in the world from the statistic report (Education in Malaysia, 2020).

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