

Factors Influencing International Students' Selection of Universities in China: A Case Study of Selected Universities in China

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Abstract:

The study's purpose is to determine the factors influencing international students' selection of universities in China's higher education institutions. A survey was conducted using questionnaires administered to 485 international students in Sichuan Province. The Partial least square structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM) was used to ascertain the validity of the research variables and their relationship based on the proposed hypotheses. The results showed that all the four-hypothesis had a positive relationship on students' choice to the destination of study with an R^2 value of 77.9%. The results of the t -statistics revealed that three of the proposed hypothesis suggested that the independent variables influenced students' selection of universities in China. From the four independent variables, Cost Related Issues was found to have the highest coefficient path, followed by Government Initiatives, Institutional Reputation, and Cultural Adaptability respectively. The study extended the analysis by carrying

out the importance-performance map analysis to determine the actual performance of; cost-related issues, government initiatives, institutional reputation, and cultural adaptability with regards to the selection of universities. It will provide the opportunity for the managerial actions prioritization towards the selection of universities in China. It concluded that, by improving international students' intake, the school authorities must focus on developing systems and policies that will help alleviate the financial responsibilities of their students.

Key words: Higher education; higher educational institution; international students; selecting factors; China.

1. INTRODUCTION:

The importance of higher education is well known, and as such, considerable effort is required to ensure higher education becomes accessible to all. Higher education which can merely be defined as education beyond the secondary level (especially education provided by a college or university) is of great importance to the development of most countries. This is due to one of the primary requirements for job applications which mostly depend on the academic qualification in some professional field such as teaching, research, medicine, engineering, and many more. As a result, the prioritized effort is required to ensure higher education is accessible to all (even to those who do not have the means to provide it in their country).

One way of accessing higher education by all is through countries offering international exchange programs for which China is no exception. As an essential component of international exchanges and cooperation, international students' education has been given higher priority by the Chinese government.

With substantial determination, which although took several decades, an international students' administration system with distinct Chinese characteristics has been constructed. This has helped to produce many talents in the fields of science, technology, education, diplomacy, management, and many others. The promotion of the exchange of culture, education, and staffs were also not left out during these periods. (Ministry of Education, 2014)[1].

The rapid globalization of business and culture trends has also not restricted education to national boundaries as students seeking for post-secondary education are no longer constrained by national boundaries. Most institutions believe in this idea and work around the world to achieve their goals. Various studies available investigate the philosophy of education choice particularly in the perspective of home country students and clients in the developed world (Mazzarol et al., 2000; Payne, 2001)[2][3].

1.1 International students trend in China

The Ministry of Education (China, 2014)[1] reported that in 1950 China received the first set of 33 international students coming from the East European nations. China has since then been successful in maintaining social and political stability and the rapid growth of the economy, and this in return gives rise to the international students. In 1996, the total of international students reached 41,000, an increase of 30% from 1992. Surprisingly, the enrollment of self-financed students made such a big stride that exceeded that of scholarship students and became the mainstream of the international students[1].

Since 1997, the Chinese Scholarships Council (CSC) sponsored by Chinese Government Scholarships secretariat managed by the Ministry of Education with the enrollment and administration of daily operations concerning international students in China. On February 16, 1998, the Conference on

Study by Foreign Students in China was convened which came up with the policy of deepening reform, improving management and guaranteeing educational quality to achieve dynamic and steady development. The former State Education Commission analyzed the new circumstances faced by the international students' education and subsequently laid down tasks to be fulfilled in current years. This indeed was a milestone in Chinese international students' education [1].

The total number of international students at the end of the year 2000, (from more than 160 different countries) in China had increased to 407,000. Among them, the Chinese Government Scholarship Students numbered 88,000, whereas the self-financed students reached 317,000. According to the agreements or programs signed by the Chinese government and other nation's governments as well as international organizations, China's Ministry of Education offered to 163 countries Government Scholarships in 2003[1].

International students from Asia still top the list of students from the different continents with 63,672 students accounting for 81.93%, 6,462 students from Europe accounting for 8.31%, 1,793 from Africa accounting for 2.31%, 4,703 from America accounting for 6.05%, and 1085 from Oceania accounting for 1.04%. South Korea, Japan, the United States, Vietnam, and Indonesia are the top five countries that have the largest numbers of international students in China, numbering 35,353, 12,765, 3,693, 3,478, and 2,563 respectively. Other countries, which have over 1,000 students in China, are Thailand (1,554), Germany (1,280), Russia (1,224), Nepal (1,199) and Mongolia (1,060)[1].

1.2 Effects of higher education institutions

Students in pursuit of higher education are becoming one of the main priorities of universities worldwide. Most Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) involve internationalization as a

part of their strategies. It contributes to the study programs in English development, guest lecturer involvement, and participation in other activities aimed at attracting foreign staff and students. International students are an asset to HEIs, where they are studying. In today's internationalized era of higher education, many research focused on Higher Education Institution (HEI) quality based on the necessity of gaining a competitive advantage (Roga et al, 2015; Athiyaman, 1997; Moogan et al., 2001; Oldfield et al., 2000)[4][5][6][7]. Brochado (2009)[8] suggests that all services provided by HEI should be managed or develop a distinct image to create a competitive advantage in an increasingly competitive market. Parents who are the primary sponsors of their children's study experience, expect specific changes in their attitude, as well as an acquired ability to find a good job or set up their businesses after graduation.

Owing to the ever-increasing competition amongst HEIs across the globe, HEIs have taken up managerial techniques to improve the quality of study programs and services they are providing (Telford and Masson, 2005; Yeo, 2008)[9][10]. Furthermore, HEIs have taken up an active market approach instead of the previously used passive one (Ivy, 2008)[11]. It is now necessary to not only be aware of the product provided but also of the influential environmental factors and associated impact on potential students[6]. Many of these international students contribute to the rise of the universities by publishing their research findings in reputable journals. The research areas differ from science (example is Big Data)[12][13][14], management science (example is flood disaster analysis)[15], electronics (example physical optics)[16], etc.

Although there have been some works done in elucidating higher education and its advancement, there is still less work done to explore in the context of international students interested in studying abroad (Davey, 2005). This

study, therefore, focuses on the most significant stakeholder related to higher education that is the student because a student is mainly responsible for the choice of a higher education institution in which he/she gains his/her study experience.

Related researches on the international students' destination choices have mainly focused on the students' mobility from non-English-speaking countries to English-speaking countries with limited attention being paid to the investigation of the factors that determine the flow of international students to emerging education countries like China.

This paper's main purpose is to determine the factors influencing international students' selection of higher education institutions in China. The following specific objectives were defined to achieve the research goal:

- To ascertain the effect of cost-related issues on the selection of universities in China.
- To evaluate the impact of the institution's international reputation on the selection of universities in China.
- To explore the impact of government initiatives on students' choice of universities in China.
- To investigate the students' cultural adaptability on the selection of universities in China.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 A Review of higher education and international students

The pursuit of higher education has brought the awareness of the issue of the flow of international students which has assumed greater prominence over the last two decades (Ahmad 2015; Foster 2014)[17][18]. According to statistics by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

(UNESCO), the number of students who chose to study outside their country and move to another country had an increment of 1.3 million in 1990 and 4.3 million in 2011, indicating a new generation of mobile young people eager to learn, and expand their horizons[19]. Baharun et al., (2011)[20] reported that as competition in the education industry increases, many HEIs are increasingly viewing students as consumers. Thus, HEIs are forced to equip themselves with the necessary marketing intelligence and information that would enable them to face the challenge, especially in the international markets.

Hemsley-Brown and Oplatka (2006)[21] suggested that higher education marketing research is still in a pioneer stage saying there is a need for more research to effectively market an institution because, without appropriate marketing strategies, higher education institutions cannot compete effectively. Most of the higher educational players have taken measures to enhance their respective environments and actively market themselves for receiving international students (Knight 2013)[22].

While Western countries have been the major recipients of international students and dominated the market share for overseas higher education, the Middle-East countries, in their attempt to establish themselves as a new emerging higher education hub, have taken considerable action in promoting and designing policies to attract more international students (Wilkins et al, 2012)[23]. Adjei Budu et al. (2018) also discussed the effect of behavioral intention on E-learning systems usage[24].

2.2 Factors that affect international students' selection of higher education

According to Mazzarol and Soutar (2002)[25], there are many factors influencing students to choose international education, such as lack of access to higher education especially in Asia and

Africa, a commonality of languages and availability of technology-based programs. For countries such as Australia, France, the UK and USA, quality management in education is a major focus of attention. Also, recent geopolitical, social and global economic events have contributed to a decline in student enrolment in these traditional destinations and begun to move in new directions. Several factors could then be the determining points or reasons that influence international students to decide on which country and which university to apply for higher education but this paper discussed these four key factors:

- Cost Effective,
- Institutions International Reputation,
- Government Initiatives in the Process of Students' Selection of Higher Education Institution,
- Cultural Adaptability,

In terms of “cost-effective” many researchers have investigated the influence price (cost) plays on university choice (e.g., Domino et al., 2006; Beneke and Human, 2010)[26][27] Moreover, it seems that, if prices are too high, institutions run a risk of pricing themselves out of the market (Quigley et al., 2000)[28]. Karl and Yousefi (2009)[29] also identified several factors which influence the students' intention of choosing a particular higher education institution, and the first one is the cost of education.

Regarding “institutions international reputation” Shah and Brown (2009)[30] reported that factors influencing student choice to study with a higher education institution suggest that the top three reasons in rank order are: quality of teaching staff; quality of courses; and reputation of the college. Tatenda and Olawale (2012)[31] also discovered a series of factors which determine the process of choosing a university and it includes academic reputation.

Tuition fees for non-EU students introduction in Sweden from the autumn term 2011 caused an immediate decrease of international student applications. The newspaper, *The Local*, reported that there were fewer than 1300 international students registered for the 2011 autumn term compared to the previous academic year where over 16,000 applicants were registered (Guibourg, 2011)[32]. These are government initiatives in the process of students' selection of higher education institution.

Finally, with regards to cultural adaptability, (Mazzarol et al., 2001)[2] reported that, in China and India, the two driving factors for international education are the desire to understand western culture and to obtain an education better than that offered locally.

3. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND HYPOTHESIS

3.1 Push and pull models of international student decision-making process

The aforementioned key factors together with others stem from a model used by most authors which are known as the “push-pull” models. The “push-pull” models have been used to understand international student flows (Cummings, 1984)[33], students' motivation to study abroad and international students' choice of university (Mazzarol and Soutar, 2002)[25]. The push factors are factors associated with the home country environment considered by students as being unsatisfactory, thus influencing them to leave their country to look elsewhere to undertake tertiary education. Examples of such push factors include a lack of capacity of, and opportunities provided by the local educational institutions in the home countries, lower quality of education, lack of availability of specialization programmes, limited access to funding and employer preference for overseas qualifications (Ahmad 2015; Lee 2014)[17][34].

The pull factors may also include what potential students may consider being attractive features in the host country, and those most often mentioned in the literature include the reputation of the institution and state, exchange rate, lower cost/fees and cost of living, opportunity to experience a new and different culture. English-speaking environment, the policies of the host country's government concerning the recruitment of international students and the quality of the programme and course (Maringe 2007)[35].

Mazzarol and Soutar (2002)[25] suggested international students use a three-step selection process in which a student first decides to study internationally, then selects a host country (influenced by a country's "pull factors"), and finally, selects an institution within that host country (influenced by the institutions' "pull factors").

Nevertheless, it cannot be assumed that all international students use this process to select a study destination as some International students may by-pass a host country and choose a host institution directly (e.g., selecting a highly ranked university regardless of its country)[36]. In this instance, the country is not a focal consideration, but rather a by-product of the institution. Chen (2007)[36] found choosing a university program was often the first step in the decision-making process, and once determined; students consider institutions in various countries.

The findings of the research by Mazzarol and Soutar (2002)[25] suggested that for host governments and their institutions of higher education to attract a higher number of international students, they need to consider the importance of these 'push-pull' factors that influence students' study destination choice.

3.2 The hypothesis of the study

Base on the discussion above, the studied formulated the following hypothesis for analysis and testing:

H1: Cost-Related Issues (CRI) significantly affect the decision of international students' selection of higher education institutions in China.

H2: Institutions' International Reputation (IR) significantly affects international students' selection of higher education institution in China.

H3: Cultural Adaptability (CA) significantly affects international students' selection of higher education institutions in China.

H4: Government Initiatives (GI) significantly affect international students' selection of higher education institutions in China.

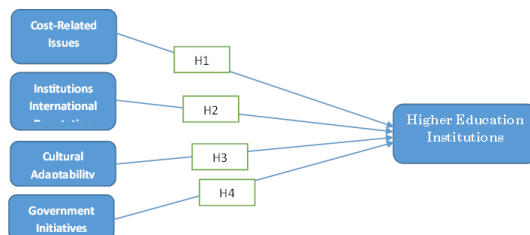


Figure 1 presents the research's model from the hypothesis formulated

4. METHODOLOGY

The study adopted an exploratory research design since the researcher seeks to ascertain the factors influencing international students' selection of universities in China. The research design is used to specify relationship existing among the variables of the research. It defines the structure of any scientific work, giving a systematic approach to the study. The study applied survey research design, which was aimed at highlighting current issues through a process of data collection

for a detailed description of the situation. It also employed a quantitative research design due to its based on assessing numerical data which is quantifiable.

Primary data was utilized for this study. In collecting the appropriate primary data for this research, questionnaires were administered to identify and gain an understanding of the key factors influencing international students' selection of higher education institutions in China through proposed research questions. The first section consists of items of gathered data about respondent's demographic characteristics such as gender, age, education level, the home country of the student. The second section included items to assess respondents' self-report perceptions of their individual and institutional factors influencing international students' selection of higher education institutions. The items anchored on a 7-point Likert scale (1=strongly disagree to 7= strongly agree).

The questionnaires were analyzed using the Partial Least Square Equation Model. The quantitative process of analyzing data was employed using SmartPLS student version 3.0. Charts, figures, and tables were also used to bring out salient points.

4.1 Demographic Information

The research received 485 usable responses sample out of the total of 500 distributed questionnaire; this is a 97% response rate of all respondent. Details of the research's demographic information are presented in table 1 below.

Table 1. Research Respondents' demographic features (N=485)

Variable	Description	Frequency	Percentage %
Gender	Female	213	43.92
	Male	272	56.08
Age	Below 25years	243	50.10
	26 – 35 years	161	33.20
	36 – 45 years	69	14.23

	46 – 50 years	12	2.47
	Above 50 years	-	-
Educational Level	High School Certificate	10	2.06
	1 st Degree	341	70.31
	Master's Degree	134	27.63
Degree Level	Chinese language	15	3.09
	Bachelor degree in English	10	2.06
	Master's degree in English	261	53.81
	Doctorate degree in English	199	41.03
School Department	Management & Business Administration	132	27.22
	Public Administration	13	2.68
	Economics	15	3.09
	Applied Engineering & Mathematics	132	27.22
	Computer Science & Engineering	98	20.21
	Medicine & Health Sciences	95	19.59

5. DATA ANALYSIS

The research applied the two-stage analytical procedure to test the measurement model (validity and reliability of the measures) and structural model (Hypothesis testing) (Hair Jr et al. 2014)[37]. To achieve valid results before the assessment of the structural model, the study evaluated the measurement model of the latent constructs to determine their dimensionality, validity, and reliability. In assessing internal consistency reliability, Composite reliability (CR) was utilized. On the other hand, to establish convergent validity on the construct level, the average variance extracted (AVE) was applied. Finally, in establishing discriminant validity, the Fornell-Larcker criterion was used.

5.1 Internal Consistency Reliability Analysis

Internal consistency reliability can be described as the measurement of consistency between different items of the same construct. Bryman & Cramer (2005)[98] asserts that internal reliability is particularly important when there are multiple measurement items for each construct. In this

research, all the constructs consisted of multiple items. Cost-related issue and Institutional reputation were each measured with five items, Cultural adaptability, and Institutional reputation was each measured with four items while Higher education institution was measured using three items. The conventional criterion for internal consistency is Cronbach's alpha, which provides an estimate of the reliability based on the inter-correlation of the observed indicator variable. Alternatively, there is another measure known as composite reliability which takes into account the different outer loadings of the indicator variables. Hair (2014)[37] states that, specifically, composite reliability values of 0.60 to 0.70 are considered as acceptable in exploratory studies, even though, Nunnally and Bernstein (1994)[38] argues that in situations of advanced stages of research, values that range between 0.70 and 0.90 can be considered satisfactory. This study applies both Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability criteria to evaluate the internal consistency reliability of the measurement items of this study.

The results mentioned in table 2 and figure 2 shows that the highest composite reliability coefficient is the construct, higher education institution (HEI) (0.897), while the other constructs had their composite reliability coefficient values above the criteria strictly recommended 0.7, and above. Also, Cronbach's alpha values shown in table 2, and figure 3 demonstrates that all values fall within the acceptable threshold of > 0.5 . Consequently, the results revealed that both Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability values of the entire constructs were above their respective recommended cut-off points, that is, > 0.5 for Cronbach's alpha, and > 0.7 for composite reliability. This is an indication that internal consistency and adequate reliability of the constructs measures all the items. Besides, all other estimation values were above the recommended cut off point indicating strong reliability and

high internal consistency in measuring relationship in the model.

Table 2 Composite Reliability Values and Average Variance Extracted (AVE) values

Construct	Items	Standardized Loadings	Cronbach's Alpha	AVE	Composite Reliability
Cost Related Issues	CRI1	0.555	0.763	0.530	0.844
	CRI2	0.850			
	CRI3	0.514			
	CRI4	0.814			
	CRI5	0.833			
Institutional Reputation	IR1	0.645	0.761	0.504	0.832
	IR2	0.499			
	IR3	0.816			
	IR4	0.752			
	IR5	0.791			
Cultural Adaptability	CA1	0.682	0.813	0.647	0.878
	CA2	0.905			
	CA3	0.897			
	CA4	0.706			
Government Initiatives	GI1	0.660	0.796	0.624	0.868
	GI2	0.806			
	GI3	0.814			
	GI4	0.865			
Higher Education Institution	HEI1	0.912	0.826	0.745	0.897
	HEI2	0.916			
	HEI3	0.751			

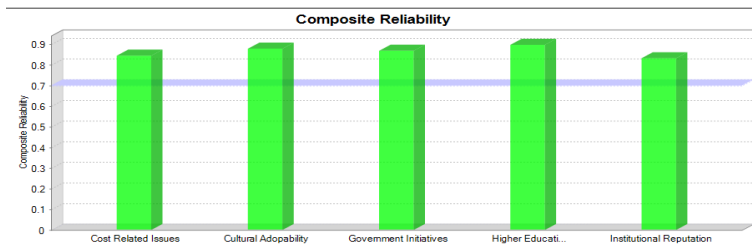


Figure 2 Graphical presentation of Composite Reliability Values for Internal Consistency Reliability Assessment

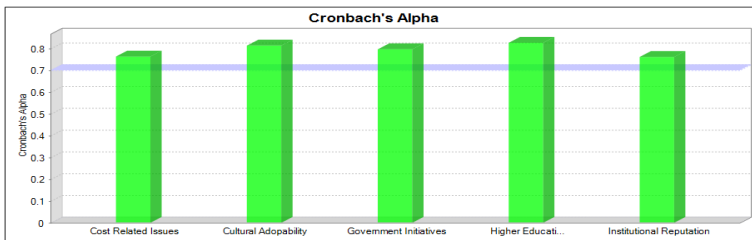


Figure 3 Graphical representation of Cronbach's Alpha Values for Internal Consistency Reliability Assessment

5.2 Convergent and Discriminant Validities

Discriminant validity also known as divergent validity refers to the degree to which a measure does not measure or discriminates from other constructs that are not supposed to regulate. Whiles convergent validity assesses whether a particular item measures the construct it is supposed to measure, discriminant validity test whether the items do not unintentionally measure something else. The uniqueness for assessing discriminant validity is by examining the cross-loadings of the indicators. Specifically, an indicator's outer loading on the associated construct should be higher than all of its loadings on other constructs (cross-loadings).

Also, the validity of the data is examined in conformity with the method proposed by Fornell & Larcker (1981)[39]. They suggested that to have a significant validating value for data set, the square root of the average of each latent variable should be larger than the correlation among the variables tested. Based on this analogy the discriminant validity test was used. In this study, the discriminant validity algorithm found in smartPLS. Table 4 presents the results of discriminant validity tested on Fornell-Larcker criterion.

Table 3. Discriminant validity Measurement by Fornell-Lacker.

	CRI	CA	GI	HEI	IR
Cost Related Issues (CRI)	0.728				
Cultural Adaptability (CA)	0.513	0.804			
Government Initiative (GI)	0.766	0.430	0.790		
Higher Education Institution (HEI)	0.809	0.575	0.815	0.863	
Institutional Reputation (IR)	0.814	0.575	0.913	0.844	0.710

Notes: Diagonal elements are square roots of average variance extracted (AVE), off-diagonal elements are correlations.

5.3 Partial Least Square Estimation Results

In conducting Partial Least Square (PLS) modeling, both the manifest and latent variables were considered as a block without any distribution assumption as compared with the covariance-based structural equation modeling. In PLS modeling, all the manifest variables of particular latent variables should have an acceptable value of 0.2 or higher to enable the researcher to compute for the path coefficient and total effect of the latent variable on the dependent variable[40]. Monecke and Leisch (2012)[40] further suggest that a manifest variable with a value of 0.2 or more contributes to the discriminant validity test by providing grounds to accept the validity test results. From the PLS results of the study, it shows that almost all manifest variables had a value of more than 0.2 suggesting that these variables contributed towards the outcome of the latent variables as shown in figure 10.

This study aimed to examine the influential factors that international students' selection of universities in China (HEI). From the results of the partial least square structural equation model, it revealed that all the latent variables examined to some extent have impact or influence on HEI. The analysis of data resulted in an R² of 0.779 (figure 4) which gives a strong significance that explains the extent to which the latent variables influences HEI. The R² indicates that the latent variables have explained 77.9% of the variation in HEI.

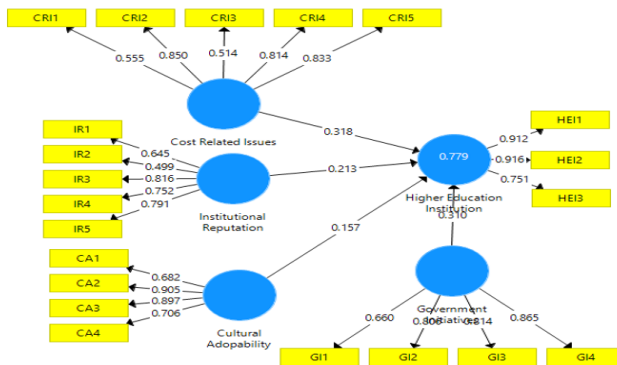


Figure 4 Path estimation results

Out of the four independent variables, CRI was found to have the highest significant influence on HEI. CRI2, CRI4, and CRI5 were great enablers of CRI with standardized loadings of 0.850, 0.814 and 0.833 respectively. CRI2 talks about affordable living standards in China, CRI4 talks about anticipated higher returns on educational investment and CRI5 talks about the availability of scholarship schemes for potential students. Availability of scholarships schemes for prospective students, affordable living standards and higher return on educational investment for studying in China influence international students' selection of universities in China (HEI). This result, therefore, support hypothesis one which states that CRI influences HEI.

Despite GI and IR also having an impact on HEI, their influence is not as high as that of CRI. GI and IR had a correlation coefficient of 0.310 and 0.213 respectively. This supports hypothesis 2 and 4. IR3, IR5, and IR4 are high enablers of HEI with standardized loadings of 0.816, 0.791 and 0.752 respectively. IR3 is about quality learning facilities such as library and classrooms. Also, IR4 is about national and provincial ranking status of the institution. The paths of GI, GI4, GI3, and GI2 are high enablers of HEI with standardized loadings of 0.865, 0.814 and 0.806 respectively. GI2 is about

favorable government policies towards international students, GI4 is about the provision of opportunities for students to gain international career experience whereas GI3 is about flexible immigration laws especially relating to students work and study permit. These findings support hypothesis two and hypothesis four. Also, according to the research analysis results, CA is positively related to HEI. However, relative to other independent variables, CA has a lower positive value to HEI (0.157).

6. Testing of Hypothesis

The testing of the hypothesis enabled the researcher to substantiate and confirm the proposed path relationships as proposed in the conceptual model. In addition to the path estimation, the t-statistics was conducted to test the formulated hypothesis for the study. Hypothesis testing is essential if the researcher can identify which set of variables had a significant influence on international students' selection of universities in China. To accept or reject the stated hypothesis, the t-statistics is used as the unit of measurement. The threshold of 1.96 is adopted. Table 4 shows the t-statistics hypothesis testing. According to the results of the t-statistics, three of the stated hypothesis suggests that these independent variables influence students' selection of universities in China.

Table 4. T - Statistics and hypothesis testing

Hypothesis	Independent Variable		Dependent Variable	Standard Deviation	T-statistics	P-Value	Decision
H1	CRI	→	HEI	0.115	2.753	0.006	Accepted
H2	IR	→	HEI	0.063	2.486	0.013	Accepted
H3	GR	→	HEI	0.143	2.211	0.027	Accepted
H4	CA	→	HEI	0.170	1.254	0.210	Not accepted

T-Stats: $\geq 1.96 \rightarrow$ Accepted. T-Stats: $< 1.96 \rightarrow$ Not Accepted

6.1 Important Performance Map Analysis (IPMA) Results

For a particular dependent latent construct representing a key target construct in the analysis, IPMA contrast the conceptual

model's total effect (performance) and the average values of the latent constructs scores (performance) to bring to the forefront significance for improvement of management activities. In this study, the researcher extends the PLS-SEM analysis by carrying out IPMA to determine the actual performance of; cost-related issues, government initiatives, institutional reputation, and cultural adaptability with regards to the selection of universities in China. This will, therefore, provide the opportunity for the prioritization of managerial actions towards the selection of universities in China.

IPMA focuses on one key construct in the structural model. Hence, in the case of this study, we select the target construct of interest that is Higher Education Institution. Table 6 presents the data utilized for the IPMA on International Students' selection of universities in China, as illustrated in figure 12. The x-axis represents the total effects (Importance) of the exogenous constructs (Cost related issues, Government initiatives, Institutional reputation, and Cultural adaptability) on the target construct (Higher education institution). Whiles, the y-axis depicts the average constructs scores (Performance) of the four exogenous variables. A cut through the arithmetic mean of the available data is performed as depicted in figure 11 and the following portions are obtained: Quadrant I (Keep up the good work), Quadrant II (Possible overkill), Quadrant III (Low priority), and Quadrant IV (Concentrate here). The IPMA as presented in figure 11 shows that cost related issues, government initiatives, and institutional reputation are located in Quadrant I (Keep Up the Good Work) which is characterized by both importance and effectiveness on the selection of universities. Cultural adaptability falls under Quadrant II (Possible Overkill).

The results revealed that cost related issues (with a total effect value of 0.336) is particularly essential in explaining the utilization of the selection of universities in China. Another

direct predecessor of selection of universities; government initiative (0.248) and institutional reputation (0.197) has relatively low importance in explaining international students' selection of universities in China. However, it is also important to note that, cultural adaptability is the least significant variable in explaining the selection of a higher education institution in China as demonstrated in table 6. On the other hand, it is evident from the important performance map analysis that the exogenous construct with the highest performance is a cost related issue (74.4). Likewise, cultural adaptability (72.7) being the second highest had the lowest under importance value (0.151). The lowest performing construct as far as selection of higher education is concerned was government initiatives (60.3).

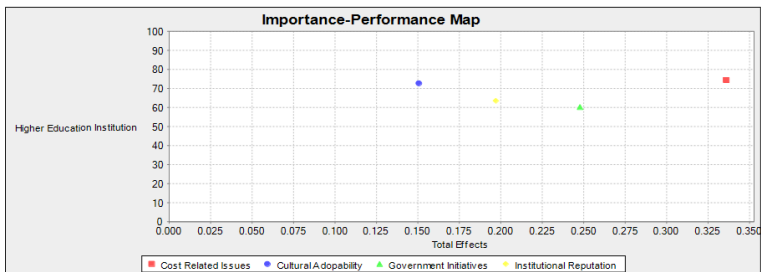


Figure 5. IPMA results of exogenous constructs higher education institution as target construct

Table 5. IPMA of higher education institution

Construct	Importance (Total Effects)	Performance (Index Values)
Cost-Related Issues	0.336	74.386
Cultural Adaptability	0.151	72.692
Government Initiatives	0.248	60.229
Institutional Reputation	0.197	63.477

6.2 Discussion

From the research's proposed model, the study hypothesized that cost related issues would have a positive effect on the selection of universities in (H1). The parameter estimates

results shown in table 4 and figure 4 ($\beta = 0.318$, t-test value = 2.753, $p = 0.006$). The hypothesis was identified to be both positive and statistically significant. Thus, suggesting the existence of a positive effect of cost-related issues on the selection of higher education institution. This result is consistent with the existing literature of Karl and Yousefi (2009)[29] that shows that cost is critical when it comes to issues of selecting international higher education. However, working part-time is one of the ways for an international student to make their higher education abroad possible (Mazzarol & Soutar, 2002)[25]. Therefore, with the result of this study and the supporting literature, it can be confirmed that Cost related issues significantly influence international students' selection of universities in China's higher education institution.

With regards with the 2nd hypothesis: institutions' international reputation (IR) significantly affects international students' selection of higher education institution in China, the parameter estimates results as follows: $\beta = 0.213$, t-test value = 1.254, $p = 0.210$. The result also supports the Broekemier and Seshadri (1999)[41] research which states that the quality of program of study, campus safety, cost, and academic reputation are the top key criteria used by students and parents to choose institutions.

Cultural Adaptability (CA) significantly affects international students' selection of higher education institutions in China (H3). It also had a positive relationship on the selection of higher education institution, but it was relatively low as compared to the other hypotheses which had a higher influence on higher education institution. The parameter estimates results are as shown in table 5 and figure 10 are (That is, H3: CA \rightarrow HEI; $\beta = 0.157$, t-test value = 2.486, $p = 0.013$). This result is consistent with the existing literature which suggests that the major factors attracting students to

undertake international higher education studies in various host countries have been identified.

Government initiatives (GI) was hypothesized to have a positive effect on higher education institution that is, H4. With the parameter estimates results being the following $\beta = 0.310$, t-test value = 2.211, $p = 0.027$, indicated that GI is an influential factor affecting the selection of higher education institution in China. These findings are in line with the proposed hypothesis (H4) in the model which suggest that the Chinese government is performing well in the attraction of more international students into universities in China. On the contrary, for example, the introduction of tuition fees for non-EU students in Sweden from the autumn term 2011 caused an immediate decrease of international student applications.

However, a post-hoc (IPMA) performed by using a selection of higher education institution as target construct also contributes significantly in determining the most relevant drivers of international students' selection of higher education institutions in China by comparing their perceived importance and performance. Managerially and policy-wise, this study has provided useful information and valuable insights into higher education institutions running international programs in China to better understand international students' migration (ISM) or prospective international students' needs.

Therefore, the study signifies potential students' perception of cost-related issues is a primary, influential, and important factor influencing the selection of higher education institutions in China. Thus, managerial actions targeted at improving international students' intake must focus on developing systems and policies that will help alleviate the cost or financial responsibilities of their students. This can be done by instituting scholarship programmes and providing opportunities that will enable students to engage in part-time jobs to support their financial obligations to the institutions

they are affiliated. Again, the institutions should make available internship programmes with companies so that students can practice on the jobs they will do after the completion of their programmes.

However, Government initiative; although is relatively lower compared to cost-related issues regarding its importance for establishing potential international students' selection of higher education institutions in China, efforts must be made to develop and improve the bilateral cooperation and relationship between China and other countries to motivate their students to study in Chinese universities. The Chinese government should create more scholarship schemes to support international students thereby making China an attractive destination for international students. Also, the government can subsidize the tuition fees to attract more international students to the universities in China.

The IPMA demonstrates that Cultural Adaptability has little relevance in the individual's selection of higher education institutions to study in China but still need attention. Therefore, managerial and policy activities must be directed at the creation of cultural clubs which involves the Chinese and the international students, hosting of cultural activities or programmes together, forming students' clubs thereby creating a learning environment for all students.

On institution reputation, school managers should publish names and pictures of international students who excel in their various fields on their website, make flyers with images of international students' activities and show the rank of the universities. By so doing it makes the institution attractive and marketable. Exchange programmes should also be introduced to engage many countries.

7. CONCLUSION

The latent variables (CRI, IR, GI, and CA) examined were shown to influence HEI with R^2 of 0.779. CRI was found to have the highest significant influence on HEI with a correlation coefficient of 0.318. GI showed the second highest influence on HEI with a correlation coefficient of 0.310. This was followed by IR and CA with a correlation coefficient of 0.213 and 0.157 respectively. All though, all four were positively related to HEI, CA showed a lower significant.

These factors indicate that the personal preferences of international students are aligned with the unique features and social philosophy that China has to offer. The findings contribute to a broader and more comprehensive understanding of the higher education market in China. The outcomes of this research will, therefore, be of much interest to all, especially the universities. This will serve as a guide in their policy-making decisions to enable them to attract more international students who would in return sell the name of the university abroad. More so, these outcomes will help the universities in China to adopt new concepts of educational market and organizational structures.

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