

FACTORS THAT INFLUENCE THAI STUDENTS TO SELECT NEW ZEALAND AS
THE LOCATION FOR THEIR MASTER'S DEGREE STUDIES

A MASTER'S PROJECT

BY

CHAN NUCHNAWDEESRI

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the
Master of Arts Degree in Business English for International Communication
at Srinakharinwirot University

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AN ABSTARCT

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This study aimed to explore the factors influencing Thai students' decisions to select New Zealand as the location for their Master's Degree studies. The research participants included 20 Thai students who received their Master's Degrees from New Zealand universities. The participants were all registered with the New Zealand Alumni Association. The primary data were collected by means of an online survey.

The results of the study revealed that the factors that most influenced Thai students' decisions to select New Zealand as the location for their Master's Degree studies were; first, New Zealand is an English speaking country and the participants wanted to improve their English communication skills; second, New Zealand is recognized for the quality of its education programmes; third, the participants wanted to increase their global view by communicating with students from other countries who came to study in New Zealand; and fourth, the participants' family's or sponsor's expectations for them to study in New Zealand. The factor that had the least level of influence on the participants' decision making was their unhappiness with the graduate programmes offered in Thailand. Most of the respondents thought this factor did not influence their decisions to study in New Zealand.

ปัจจัยที่ส่งผลกระทบ ต่อการตัดสินใจเลือกประเทศนิวซีแลนด์ เพื่อศึกษาต่อระดับปริญญาโท
ของนักศึกษาไทย

บทคัดย่อ

ของ

ชาญ นุชแนวศิรี

เสนอต่อบัณฑิตวิทยาลัย มหาวิทยาลัยศรีนครินทรวิโรฒ เพื่อเป็นส่วนหนึ่งของการศึกษา
ตามหลักสูตรปริญญาศิลปศาสตรมหาบัณฑิต สาขาภาษาอังกฤษเพื่อการสื่อสารนานาชาติ

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สารนิพนธ์ฉบับนี้มีจุดประสงค์เพื่อสำรวจปัจจัยที่ส่งผลกระทบต่อการตัดสินใจเลือกประเทศนิวซีแลนด์ ในเรียนต่อระดับปริญญาโทของนักศึกษาไทย กลุ่มตัวอย่างเพื่อการวิจัยคือ นักเรียนไทย 20 คน ที่สำเร็จการศึกษาระดับปริญญาโทจากมหาวิทยาลัยทุกแห่งในนิวซีแลนด์ และได้ลงทะเบียนประวัติไว้กับสมาคมศิษย์เก่านิวซีแลนด์ โดยแจ้งข้อมูลการติดต่อในรูปแบบจดหมายอิเล็กทรอนิกส์ไว้ เครื่องมือที่ใช้ในการวิจัยคือแบบสอบถามผ่านอินเทอร์เน็ต

ผลการวิจัย พบว่า ปัจจัยที่ส่งผลกระทบมากที่สุด ต่อการตัดสินใจเลือกประเทศนิวซีแลนด์เพื่อศึกษาต่อระดับปริญญาโทของกลุ่มตัวอย่างคือ ปัจจัยที่นิวซีแลนด์เป็นประเทศหนึ่งที่ใช้ภาษาอังกฤษเป็นภาษาแม่ และกลุ่มตัวอย่างประสงค์จะพัฒนาภาษาอังกฤษเพื่อการสื่อสาร ปัจจัยอันดับสองคือประเทศ นิวซีแลนด์มีชื่อเสียงระดับนานาชาติด้านคุณภาพการศึกษา ปัจจัยอันดับสาม คือ กลุ่มตัวอย่างประสงค์จะเพิ่มพูนความรู้เกี่ยวกับความเป็นไปของโลกหรือของประเทศอื่นๆ โดยการสื่อสารกับนักศึกษาจากประเทศต่างๆ ที่มาเรียนที่ประเทศนิวซีแลนด์ และปัจจัยอันดับสี่คือ ครอบครัวหรือผู้ออกค่าใช้จ่ายในการศึกษาต่อของกลุ่มตัวอย่าง ประสงค์หรือคาดหวังให้กลุ่มตัวอย่างมาเรียนต่อที่ประเทศนิวซีแลนด์ ส่วนปัจจัยที่ส่งผลกระทบในการตัดสินใจของนักศึกษาไทยดังกล่าวข้างต้นน้อยที่สุด คือ ปัจจัยที่เกี่ยวกับความไม่พอใจเรื่องโปรแกรมการศึกษาที่มีอยู่ ของสถาบันอุดมศึกษาทั่วไปในประเทศไทย กลุ่มตัวอย่างส่วนใหญ่ไม่เห็นว่าการวิจัยครั้งนี้ มีผลกระทบต่อการตัดสินใจเดินทางมาศึกษาต่อที่ ประเทศนิวซีแลนด์แต่อย่างใด

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Background

According to the Office of Education Council (2005), the demand for higher education in Thailand rose over the years because of an increasing demand for qualified manpower required to contribute to modern economic development. Nearly three million Thai students enrolled in higher education in Thailand in 2004, a 66.5% increase over the year 2000. The Office of Education Council statistics revealed that undergraduate enrolments doubled during the same time period to 2.4 million students, and enrolments in Master's programmes increased by 60% to 143,000.

In addition, the increasing number of Thai students who furthered their study abroad has been reported by various organizations; for example, the Office of Civil Service Commission (2004) noted that 1,863 Thai students on government scholarships studied in postgraduate programmes abroad. In 2006, between 12,000 and 14,000 students studied in the United States ("Thailand-Education Services," 2007).

The British Council (2007) observed that studying abroad has been a tradition for upper and middle-income groups in Thailand. In 2006, the total number of Thai student visas issued for the five leading English speaking countries (the United States, the United Kingdom, Australia, New Zealand, and Canada) was 18,010. This was an increase of 7.3% over the previous year. The number of United Kingdom student visas issued grew by 9.14% in the same period.

An Australian Education International report (AEI, 2007) showed that 9,525 Thai students enrolled in higher education in Australia in 2006 and 2007. The growth in Thai student's enrolments in Australia between the years 2006 and 2007 was 11.9%.

The above reports indicate the continued growth of Thai student's interest in pursuing higher education abroad. Although Thailand has numerous postgraduate institutions and universities to support the increasing number of Thai students who seek higher education programmes, studying abroad is still an attractive choice for Thai students.

Pimpa (2004) conducted a study to investigate the factors that influenced the decision making of Thai students in selecting countries for pursuing their studies at the higher level. The study found that the expectations of their families and the fact that Thai students often compare themselves with others in terms of academic achievements and educational status were strong influences on Thai students' decisions to study abroad. Thai students often compare themselves with the others in terms of the country from which they graduated. They believe that graduating from overseas is more prestigious than graduating from an institution in their home country.

The weaknesses in Thai postgraduate institutions may be another factor influencing Thai students' decisions to study for Master's Degrees abroad. Liefner and Schiller (2008) stated, "Though Thailand has been quite successful in terms of quantitative economic development, its progress in technological upgrading is still behind the levels reached by the first generation of Newly Industrializing Countries at a similar stage of economic development. Knowledge input into the Thai economy is mainly obtained from Multinational Corporation subsidiaries rather than from universities. The analysis of academic capabilities provides clear evidence for the weak contribution of local

knowledge providers to qualitative growth in Thailand. The academic capabilities required for functions and organizational tasks are still low in most cases” (p. 291).

The above quotation underlines the weaknesses of Thai postgraduate institutions in terms of technology upgrading, budgets, and knowledge contribution. These weaknesses may contribute to the rise in demand for study abroad among Thai students.

The American Universities International Programmes noted that, in the business sector, companies are currently seeking to employ people with cross-cultural communication skills, global views, and problem-solving skills. Studying abroad encourages the development of life-long learning skills that help students compete for positions in an increasingly diverse and international workplace (“Why study abroad with AUIP,” 2006). These factors may also contribute to the rising demand for postgraduate study by Thai students.

The characteristics of the location chosen for study abroad may also influence Thai students’ decisions. According to Vandermensbrughe (2004), “Overall, students favour English speaking countries as places to study. Many international students recognize the importance of a degree from an English speaking country as a passport to the world” (p.418). His study found an increasing demand for study in English speaking countries worldwide because the English language has become an international language. International students want to obtain more ability in language and cultural knowledge for better future lives, in the global context.

Bashir (2007) added that, international trade in higher education services has grown rapidly in recent years in a variety of forms, mostly in English speaking countries. The most common form of this trade is the movement of students to study in foreign universities, which has been supplemented by the delivery of foreign higher education programmes and institutions. Bashir further stated that, “In 2005, annual exports from the

five leading exporters of higher education (the United States, the United Kingdom, Australia, New Zealand, and Canada), exceeded by 10 times the annual commitments of multilateral and bilateral aid for higher education. Simultaneously, in importing countries, the annual value of higher education import was largely relative to their domestic public expenditure on higher education” (p. 4). Bashir added that, “In 2005, the total value of education exports was over US\$ 28 billion” (p.18). Simply stated, more money is invested in higher education by the five leading education exporter countries than by the education importing countries. This imbalance in investment in higher education may contribute further to the attractiveness of higher education in the leading exporting countries.

New Zealand is listed as one of the five leading exporters of higher education, and according to Education New Zealand (2008), Thailand was New Zealand’s fifth largest source of international students in 2007. Table 1, below, shows the total number of international students (primary through doctoral levels) from the top ten countries sending students to New Zealand in 2006 and 2007.

Table 1: Top ten international student enrolments in New Zealand in 2006 and 2007

COUNTRIES	YEAR 2006	YEAR 2007
China (includes Hong Kong)	22,265	16,192
South Korea	8,237	10,045
Japan	6,796	5,925
India	1,405	1,841
Thailand	1,701	1,769
Malaysia	1,369	1,582
USA	1,457	1,555
Germany	1,267	1,360
Taiwan	1,098	1,273
Brazil	807	1,051

Source: Education New Zealand. (2008)

Table 1 shows that Thailand was ranked as the fifth largest student provider with an increase of 68 students, or 3.9%, in 2007 from 2006. Table 2, below, from the New Zealand Ministry of Education and Tertiary Commission (2007), focuses on the number of Thai students studying at the tertiary level in New Zealand from 2000 to 2007.

Table 2: Number of students from Thailand in New Zealand universities by level of study from 2000 to 2007

LEVELS OF STUDY	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007
Level 1-3 Certificate	84	71	39	34	25	26	19	15
Level 4 Certificate	12	34	38	38	34	32	23	28
Level 5-7 Diploma	34	34	21	22	20	12	14	25
Level 7 Bachelors	164	175	168	170	169	208	212	183
Level 8 Honours/Postgraduate	24	37	34	25	26	12	25	27
Level 9 Masters	46	51	51	54	37	23	22	23
Level 10 Doctorates	14	14	13	19	29	36	55	72
Total	351	381	335	337	312	327	348	347

Source: New Zealand Ministry of Education and Tertiary Commission (2007)

The above table reveals that the total number of Thai students enrolled in higher education in New Zealand remained relatively constant over the period. However, the number of Master's Degree students dropped in 2004 and 2005 at the same time the number of Thai students at the doctoral level increased. No information is available to determine whether the Master's Degree students continued their studies at the doctoral level or completed their Master's Degrees, left New Zealand, and new Doctoral Degree students begin their studies. In any case, the statistics show that 307 Thai students

studied at the Master's Degree level in New Zealand between 2000 and 2007 if the yearly totals are summed.

Ward and Masgoret (2004) conducted a national survey and reported that 62% of international students studying in New Zealand considered New Zealand their first choice as a study destination. The most important factors that influenced the students to select New Zealand as their study destination were: the English-speaking environment, safety, international recognition of New Zealand qualifications, the quality of education and costs.

In summary, New Zealand is generally listed as one of the five leading providers of higher education to international students, even though it is a small country located far from most international education markets. Thailand was ranked as New Zealand's fifth largest source of international students in 2007 with 1,769 Thai students enrolled: an important source of international relations and revenue for New Zealand. However, of the 347 Thai students enrolled in New Zealand universities in 2007, only 23 (6.6%) were enrolled in Master's Degree programmes.

The researcher, as the manager of a Thai education consulting agency, has advised and assisted Thai students and their families, to study abroad for 14 years. Students have been assisted with enrolments in study programmes in some of the leading education providing countries in both undergraduate and postgraduate programmes.

Thai students returning home after study in New Zealand have generally reported satisfaction with their educational experience. It is then of some concern, why more Thai students do not choose New Zealand as the location for their overseas studies, and especially, at the Master's Degree level.

This study focuses on Thai students who earned their Master's Degrees in New Zealand without limitation of the year of graduation.

Research Question

This research answers the following question:

What factors influenced Thai students to select New Zealand as the location for their Master's Degree studies?

Significance of the Study

The findings of this study benefit state and private postgraduate education providers both in Thailand and New Zealand, who may gain insights on how to improve their educational programmes to better meet the needs of their students. A better understanding of these factors might also lead to a better understanding of why more Thai students do not opt for Master's Degree study in New Zealand.

The findings also assist Thai students, their parents, families and other individuals considering studying for a Master's Degree in New Zealand. Their better understanding of the factors revealed in this study may aide them in deciding in which location they should pursue their Master's Degree studies.

Research Instrument

A questionnaire was used as the research instrument to collect the data on-line.

Scope of the study

The participants for the study were Master's Degree students who graduated from universities in New Zealand and were registered with the New Zealand Alumni Association (NZAA). Only the alumni with the email addresses were considered as participants for this study. The New Zealand Alumni Association Directory (2007) was used as the source to contact the participants. The total population found in the directory was 1,174. Out of that population, 470 had listed email addresses. The questionnaire was emailed to all 470 individuals in April 2009. Sixty participants responded to the online questionnaire. Twenty of the sixty respondents had received Master's Degrees in New Zealand and were included in the study group. The other 40 respondents did not study for Master's Degrees and were therefore excluded from the study group.

In sum, Thai students continue to study abroad and the records indicate the increasing number of Thai students furthering their educations abroad. New Zealand is one of the countries that exports its education. Approximately 350 Thai students studied in New Zealand each year from 2000 to 2007. This study aimed to find the factors that influenced Thai students to select New Zealand as the location for their Master's Degree studies.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF THE RELATED LITERATURE

This chapter explores related literature outlining concepts and theories as guidelines for this study. This chapter is divided into four sections: the importance of studying abroad, the importance of Master's Degree studies, Master's Degrees in New Zealand, and previous related research

The Importance of Studying Abroad

Studying abroad is about discovering worlds beyond those the student already knows. It is about learning new languages, culture, and ways of life (Rust, Furuto & Kheiltash, 2007).

Arambewella and Hall (2006) stated that the driving force of globalization is competition and the international education market has become fiercely competitive with different marketing strategies being implemented by educational institutions to attract a growing number of students seeking higher education. A study by the International Development Programme (IDP, 2008) estimated that the global demand for international higher education will grow fourfold to approximately 7.2 million students by 2025, representing a 5.8% compound growth rate between 2000 and 2025. It also predicted that a significant increase in foreign student enrolments from new sources of origin such as Turkey, Morocco and Iran will contribute to expanding the international education market not only in terms of absolute numbers but also in terms of student diversity.

As indicated, demand for study abroad continues to increase. It appears that the expanding demand for study abroad is becoming more cross-border intensive.

Vandermensbrugge (2004) indicated that students who study abroad, in general, hope to acquire internationally recognized linguistic and cultural competencies, which can be very useful in a global context. The benefits of studying abroad do not end when students return to their home countries. Study abroad is an experience that students will draw on for the rest of their lives, to help get them going and explore their goals. Fox (1994) explained similarly that, one of the keys to cognitive development is development in language. The development of students' language is at the very heart of the development of thinking for students. The limits of their language are also the limits of their world. The ability to communicate is important, not only in a student's native language, but a foreign language is also a must.

Bashir (2007) explained that the demand for foreign higher education can be divided into two components, one arising from domestic excess demand for higher education in general, and the other arising from the need of higher skills, for example, English language proficiency and different culture knowledge, which students believe will give more opportunities for future employment. Bashir further noted that the salaries of higher skilled workers who work with multinational organizations in developing countries are much higher than the higher skilled workers who work with domestic firms.

Student demand for higher education is increasingly shaped by the knowledge and skill requirements of global firms. These foreign organizations require higher skilled employees with up-to-date technical knowledge, information technology skills, foreign language skills, and knowledge of modern business practices. Most of the students who have graduated from domestic higher education institutions do not qualify to work with these foreign organizations compared to the students who have graduated from foreign

universities which offer qualifications that are recognized in the job market (Bashir, 2007).

In sum, the increasing number of students who study abroad is influenced by the global employment context. To qualify to work with foreign organizations, study abroad is an important choice.

The Importance of Master's Degree Studies

In Australia, individuals choose to undertake their postgraduate studies at different stages of their lives, not necessarily directly following an undergraduate degree. In fact, when the number of people involved in postgraduate study was examined, the results revealed that the majority were in the age group of 25-34 (43.6%) but 39.0% were over 35 (McAlpine, 2008).

The increasing number of Thai students enrolling in Master's degree programmes in Thailand, as reported by the Office of Education Council (OEC), was 143,000 in 2004, which was a 60% increase from the year 2000 (Office of Education Council, 2005). The number excludes Thai students who studied for Master's Degrees abroad during the same period. The number focuses on government scholarships only.

In the United Kingdom, the British Council reported that, from 2006 to 2008, there were 4,915 Thai students studying for Master's Degrees throughout the country ("British Council," 2009). The Australian Education International (AEI) indicated that, 9,525 Thai students enrolled in higher education in Australia in the years 2006 and 2007 ("AEI," 2007). In the United States, Thai students were the 9th largest source of international students in the country. Statistics showed that there were almost 9,000 Thai students at U.S. institutions of higher education in 2007 ("Bangkok.usembassy," 2008).

Liefner and Schiller (2008) studied academic capabilities in developing countries using Thailand as an empirical case. They interviewed 72 universities professors and studied 136 outreach projects in five Thai leading universities: Chulalongkorn University, Kasetsart University, King Mongkut's University of Technology Thonburi, Chiang Mai University and Khon Kaen University, during 2004, and did follow-ups in 2005 and 2006. According to the researchers, higher education development in Thailand, as assessed by qualitative figures on teaching, research and funding, was low when compared to other newly industrialized countries (NICs) in Asia. For example, Thailand's expenditures for higher education were lower than other NICs in Asia. They explained, "The main problem in Thai higher education seems to be qualitative." (p.284). The ratio of student/staff was the highest among Asian NICs because higher education was expanded by open universities and distance learning institutions. In term of research activities, research and development as well as personnel expenditures were also low. Liefner and Schiller compared the weak performance of Thai higher education as well as research and development to the "period between the mid-1960s and mid-1970s in [Korea, Taiwan, and Singapore]" (Bell cited in Liefner & Schiller, 2007, p.285).

Master's Degrees in New Zealand

Master's degree programmes in New Zealand generally involve both coursework and a research component although some may be done by research only. New Zealand universities are research-based institutions. Research-based teaching is an important characteristic that makes New Zealand universities reputable and raises the quality of New Zealand education (New Zealand University Directory, 2007).

All of the students from non-English speaking countries who apply for Master's Degree programmes at universities in New Zealand must be fluent in the English language. Many English courses are available at the universities themselves and at public and private institutions in New Zealand to help students to reach the required level of English language for their admission. Students who came from non-English speaking countries normally have to provide a formal result in either TOEFL (min. 600 with TWE: test of writing English, not less than 5) or IELTS (min. 6.5 with no individual band less than 6.0). Some universities may require less or higher test scores; this depends on each university's policy (Study in New Zealand, 2006).

Butcher and McGrath (2004) stated that international students in New Zealand are on a temporary visit and in transit. They arrived in New Zealand with a variety of expectations from a variety of sources. Their initial period of contact will significantly affect their perceptions of New Zealand and New Zealanders thereafter; New Zealand friendship and hospitality that have been offered to international students will engender positive experiences, perceptions and memories. Their study showed that New Zealand understood their international students' perceptions, and New Zealand's hospitality had influenced Thai students to select New Zealand for their Master's Degree studies.

Ward and Masgoret (2004) conducted a national survey which showed that, 62% of the foreign students said, New Zealand was their first choice as a study destination. The most important factors in selecting New Zealand were; the English-speaking environment, safety, the international recognition of New Zealand qualifications, the quality of education and costs. Students from Asian countries appeared relatively more concerned with education, getting good value for money, and the high quality of New Zealand education.

Campbell and Li (2008) found that over 85% of the international students studying in New Zealand were Asian, and the satisfaction levels of Asian students with their learning experiences in New Zealand were enormously involved with the New Zealand export education industry. Their Empirical Study of Asian Student's Learning Experiences at a New Zealand University found that, educational quality, programme offerings, and learning support were the factors that satisfied all Asian students.

Further, Asian respondents described writing assignments, essays and reports, as most difficult because they had no prior knowledge of academic conventions practiced in New Zealand before their arrival. However, they all reported having acquired adequate research and writing skills in their study, in spite of all the difficulties and hardships that they had been through (Campbell & Li, 2008). It was also found that most Asian students were happy with the programmes for their relevance, practicality, and currency. They described these programmes as practical, useful, flexible, and work-related. The skills acquired from these programmes could be easily transferred to workplaces and real businesses.

The New Zealand Ministry of Education studied the economic contribution of the New Zealand international education sector to the New Zealand economy based on 2004 data from the Export Education Levy. The study estimated that the overall economic benefit, including tuition fees paid, living costs for students, and multiple factors for the wider economy amounted to NZ\$ 2.21 billion in 2004 (New Zealand International Division, 2007).

In summary, various Master's Degree programmes are offered by New Zealand universities. Most international students are Asian, and New Zealand researchers studied students' requirements and satisfactions in order to increase the number of international

students. The results of the studies created new student care policies and marketing plans which increased international students contributes to the New Zealand economy.

Previous Related Research

A summary of some research that has been reported by researchers on related topics is presented below.

Pimpa (2004) studied the relationship between Thai students' choices of international education and their families. His study focused on push and pull factors which influenced students' choices of international education, using interviewing as the research tool. The research findings revealed that there were five basic choices to be made prior to studying abroad: the decision to study abroad (instead of studying at home), the choice of the country, city, academic course, and university. The Thai family was the most important influence on Thai students considering study abroad, especially, recommendations from family members who had studied abroad.

Ward and Masgoret (2004) studied the experiences of international students in New Zealand. The study aimed to identify the general characteristics of international students in New Zealand, and assess their self-reported academic performance or success in order to determine the satisfaction of international students with educational, pastoral, and support services, living conditions and social circumstances in New Zealand. The research used the survey method. The target sample was 3,000 international students from New Zealand schools, universities, and private language schools. The results found that 62% of the students said New Zealand was their first choice as a study destination. The most important factors in selecting New Zealand were the English-speaking environment, safety, the international recognition of New Zealand qualifications, the

quality of education and costs. Moderately important were, factors relating to the “Kiwi” experience, national beauty and scenery, New Zealand lifestyle and culture including travel and adventure. The most important of the findings in terms of recommendations for study in New Zealand were that students’ peers influenced their decisions over the influence of teachers or agents. The Internet was seen as more influential than advertisements or the direct approach.

Jarubenja (2007), a Thai researcher, studied the behaviour of Thai people who decided to study for Master’s Degrees in Australia using EdNet Co. Ltd. A questionnaire was used as the research tool. The research revealed that the factors that made the participants decide to study in Australia were its proximity, affordable expenses, and the reputation of particular Australian universities which offered programmes that best satisfied their interests. Her research also found that the gender, age, education background, work experience, and income of the sponsors of the participants had significant correlations with the behavioural pattern of choosing to study Master’s Degrees in Australia.

Hellsten and Prescott (2004) conducted research in Australia exploring the internationalization of a university’s curriculum offerings and how the curriculum affected international students. The research aimed to highlight some of the students’ commentaries on communication between teachers and students explaining the way it affected the quality of student learning. The researchers used interviewing as the research instrument. Forty-eight undergraduate and postgraduate students participated in the study. Their research found that the opportunities for university staff to communicate and reflect upon their practices in teaching international students were necessary. The study revealed that a large number of international students had not reflected on the capacities of learning institutions in terms of the provision of quality and expertise. In addition, it

was found that the awareness of cultural open-mindedness and responsibility toward international students was an issue that could be explored.

Ruby (2007) examined the factors that influenced US college choices among international graduate students. An online research survey was conducted that reached 581 participants from 25 US universities. The research found that age and gender of the international students did not affect the perception of any of the characteristic categories. Meanwhile, the characteristics of the campus such as campus location, facilities, and other items were rated as less important factors for doctoral students in science programmes. Recruitment and other influences were less important factors to doctoral students in arts and sciences, but other influences were important including input from parents, other family members, and friends. The reports from undergraduate students revealed that they rated other influences as important factors. Doctoral students rated financial and reputation characteristics as more important factors than did lower level students.

In sum, the studies of the factors that influenced students to select a country for their postgraduate studies were various and produced different findings. Students who studied at different levels of education were influenced by different factors. However, the studies found that the factors that most influenced students' decisions for their further studies were their families, parents, peer, and friends. Some studies found that student's age, gender, education background, work experience and income had significant correlations with students' choices of study locations.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

This chapter presents the methodology employed in the study as well as the procedures in collecting and analyzing the data.

Participants

The study population was 1,174 Thai individuals who had graduated from various New Zealand educational institutions at various levels of education and registered with the New Zealand Alumni Association (NZAA). Their names were published in the New Zealand Alumni Association Directory (2007). Out of 1,174, 470 individuals had email addresses published in the directory. Emails with attached questionnaires were addressed to all 470 individuals in April 2009. Sixty persons responded to the email questionnaires. Twenty respondents had studied Master's Degrees in New Zealand and were included in the study group. The other 40 respondents had studied at other educational levels in New Zealand and were, therefore, not retained in the study group.

Research Instrument

The research instrument was a questionnaire. The questionnaire was based on the previous studies of Ward and Masgoret (2004), Pimpa (2004), Vandermensbrugge (2004) and Liefnert and Schiller (2008). The questionnaire was developed and checked

for validity by the researcher's master's project advisor and the proposal committee. It consisted of three parts. Part one identified the demographic information of the participants. The information included gender, age, year of completion of the Master's degree programmes in New Zealand, and the name of the New Zealand university, from which each participant earned his or her Master's Degree. Part two identified the factors that influenced the participants' decisions to select New Zealand as the location for their Master's Degree studies. Part three was an open-ended question, asking about other factors that influenced the participants' decisions to study for their Master's Degrees in New Zealand, but were not included in the items in the part two.

Data Collection

The study was conducted in April 2009. The questionnaires were sent via email to 470 participants whose names and email addresses were found in the New Zealand Alumni Association Directory (2007). Sixty of the questionnaires were returned. Twenty questionnaires were valid for this study. The other 40 questionnaires were from New Zealand alumni who had studied at other levels of education, not in Master's Degree programmes.

Data Analysis

The completed questionnaires were analyzed by means of percentages and means. The findings are reported in tables, followed by explanations in Chapter 4. Conclusions, discussion, limitations of the study and recommendations for further study are presented in Chapter 5.

CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS

In this chapter, the findings of the study are presented. The findings are divided into three parts as in the questionnaire. The first part describes the demographic data of the participants; the second part identifies the factors that influenced the participants' decisions to select New Zealand as the location for their Master's Degree studies; the third part is the additional factors that influenced the participants' decisions to study in New Zealand.

The first part comprising the information about the gender, age, and education background of the participants is presented in the Table 3 below.

Table 3: Gender and age

Description	Number	Percentage
Gender		
Female	15	75
Male	5	25
Total	20	100
Age		
More than 30 years old	20	100
Total	20	100

Table 3 reveals that the majority of the participants of the study was females (75%). Only five males (25%) returned questionnaires. All participants in the study were over 30 years old. The participants' education backgrounds are shown in the Table 4 below.

Table 4: Undergraduate studies

Description	Number	Percentage
The participants graduated with a Bachelor's Degree		
in Thailand	15	75
from other countries	5	25
Total	20	100
Year of completion of the Bachelor's Degree		
From 1967 to 1986	8	40
From 1987 to 1996	8	40
From 1997 to 2000	3	15
Not specified	1	5
Total	20	100

Table 4 shows that 15 (75%) of the participants completed their Bachelor's Degrees in Thailand, and five (25%) of the participants completed their first degree in other countries. Table 4 also shows that from 1967 to 1986 and from 1987 to 1996, eight of 20 participants (40%) graduated with Bachelor's Degrees in each period. Only three participants (15%) graduated from 1997 to 2006.

Table 5: Dates of completion of Master's Degrees in New Zealand

Description	Number	Percentage
From 1969 to 1978	4	20
From 1979 to 1988	0	0
From 1989 to 1998	3	15
From 1999 to 2008	11	55
Not specified	2	10
Total	20	100

Table 5 reveals that most of the participants, 11 (55%), earned their Master's Degrees from New Zealand from 1999 to 2008 followed by those who finished their studies from 1969 to 1978, 4 (20%), and from 1989 to 1998, 3 (15%) respectively. No participants earned their Master's Degree from 1979 to 1988.

Table 6: Name of New Zealand universities that the participants earned their Master's Degrees

Description	Number	Percentage
University of Auckland	4	20
University of Canterbury	3	15
Auckland University of Technology	0	0
Lincoln University	4	20
Massey University	3	15
University of Otago	1	5
University of Waikato	4	20
Victoria University of Wellington	0	0
Not specified	1	5
Total	20	100

Table 6 shows that the University of Auckland, Lincoln University, and the University of Waikato, were the universities in New Zealand that graduated the largest numbers of the participants, 4 (20%) each. Auckland University of Technology and Victoria University of Wellington were the two universities in which none of the participants in this study pursued their Master's Degree studies.

In sum, the demographic data reveal that most of the participants were female over 30 years of age. The majority of the participants finished their Bachelor's Degrees in Thailand between 1967 and 1996. The University of Auckland, Lincoln University and the University of Waikato were the universities in which most of the participants earned their Master's Degrees.

Part Two: Factors that most influenced participants to select New Zealand as the location for their Master's Degree studies

Table 7 shows the findings of the second part in the questionnaire; levels of influence of the eleven factors under study.

Table 7: Levels of influence of the factors rated by the participants

Factors	Level of influence				Mean score
	Very Strongly	Some-what Strongly	Slightly	Not at all	
1. It was my family's or my sponsor's expectations for me to study in New Zealand (one participant did not rate this factor)	3	2	1	0	
2. I wanted to graduate from a well known international university to be able to compare myself favourably with my fellow Thai Master's Degree holders.	10	5	0	4	2.10
3. I was not happy with the graduate programmes in higher education institutions in Thailand.	7	5	7	1	1.90
4. I thought that I could learn cultures that might be different than my own and this would help me in my future career.	2	2	7	9	0.85
5. I wanted to increase my global view by communicating with students from other countries who came to New Zealand for their studies.	8	7	3	2	2.05
6. I wanted to increase my problem-solving skills.	8	9	2	1	2.20
7. I decided to study a Master's programme in New Zealand because I wanted to acquire internationally recognized linguistic and cultural competencies.	6	5	7	2	1.75
8. New Zealand is one of the English speaking countries, so I would be exposed to the use of English in actual situations and my English communication skills would be improved.	7	8	2	3	1.95
9. I selected New Zealand as my location of study because the country is safe.	11	6	2	1	2.35
10. New Zealand has been internationally recognized for the quality of its education programmes, so I decided to select New Zealand for my Master's Degree study.	8	6	5	1	2.05
11. The tuition fees and living costs in New Zealand were less expensive than other English speaking countries, so I decided to select New Zealand for my Master's Degree study.	10	7	3	0	2.35
Total	3	8	7	2	1.60
	80	68	45	26	1.92

Table 7 reveals that the factor that most influenced the participants' decisions was factor number eight; New Zealand is an English speaking country. The factor received a level of influence mean score of 2.35. Eleven participants ranked it as having a very strong level of influence on their decisions to study for their Master's Degrees in New Zealand; 5 reported it having a somewhat strong level of influence; 2 reported a slight level of influence and 1 participant reported the factor as having no influence on his/her decision to study in New Zealand.

The second factor that influenced participants' decisions was factor number ten; New Zealand has been internationally recognized for the quality of its education programmes. This factor also received a level of influence mean score of 2.35, but only ten participants ranked it as having a very strong level of influence on their decisions to study for their Master's Degrees in New Zealand; 7 reported it having a somewhat strong level of influence; 3 reported a slight level of influence.

The third factor that influenced participants' decisions to study for their Master's Degrees in New Zealand was factor number five; the participants wanted to increase their global views. This factor received a level of influence mean score of 2.20. Eight participants ranked it as having a very strong level of influence on their decisions to study in New Zealand; 7 reported it having a somewhat strong level of influence; 2 reported a slight level of influence and 1 participant reported the factor as having no influence on his/her decision to study for a Master's Degree in New Zealand.

The final factor that influenced participants' decisions was factor number one; the participants' families' or sponsors' expectations that the participants study in New Zealand. This factor received a level of influence mean score of 2.10. Ten participants ranked it as having a very strong level of influence on their decisions to study Master's

Degree in New Zealand; 5 reported it having a somewhat strong level of influence; 4 reported the factor as having no influence on their decisions to study in New Zealand.

The factor that least influenced participants' decisions to study Master's Degrees in New Zealand was factor number three; unhappiness with the graduate programmes provided by higher education institutions in Thailand. This factor received a level of influence mean score of only 0.85. Nine participants ranked it as having no influence on his/her decision to study in New Zealand; 7 reported a slight level of influence; 2 reported it having a somewhat strong level of influence; 2 reported the factor as having a very strong level of influence.

Part Three: Additional factors that influenced the participants' decisions to select New Zealand as the location for their Master's Degree studies, but not listed in Part Two of the questionnaire.

Ten participants (50%) gave information about additional factors that influenced their decisions to study for Master's Degrees in New Zealand. Seven out of ten participants revealed that they decided to further their studies in New Zealand because of the availability of scholarships. Three participants said that other factors convinced them to study in New Zealand. They listed the country's beautiful scenery, recommendations from members of the New Zealand Alumni Association, and/or their familiarity with New Zealand since they had finished their secondary school and/or undergraduate education in New Zealand.

Conclusions with regard to the findings will be discussed in Chapter 5 followed by discussion, notes on the limitations of the study and recommendations for further study.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSIONS AND DISCUSSION

This chapter presents the conclusions, discussion, limitations of the study and recommendations for further study.

Conclusions

The purpose of this study was to identify the factors that influenced students to select New Zealand as the location for their Master's Degree studies.

The findings showed that the four factors that most influenced the participants in making a decision to further their Master's Degree studies in New Zealand were first New Zealand was an English speaking country and the participants wished to excel in their English proficiency, and closely followed by New Zealand's internationally recognised quality of education programmes. These two factors received the same level of influence mean score of 2.35. The third factor was that the participants wanted to increase their global view by communicating with students from other countries who came to New Zealand for their studies. The fourth factor was the participants' families' or sponsors' expectations for them to study in New Zealand.

The results of the study also showed that other factors influenced the participants to study for their Master's Degrees in New Zealand: 35% of the participants said they decided to study for their Master's Degree in New Zealand because they were granted scholarships, another 15% of the participants declared that the beauty of the country's scenery, recommendations and their own educational experiences in New Zealand convinced them to study in New Zealand.

Discussion

The results of the study revealed that the two factors (English speaking country and quality of New Zealand Education programmes) that most influenced Thai students to select New Zealand for their Master's Degrees, as ranked by the respondents in the study, supported the studies of Vandermensbrugge (2004) and Ward and Masgoret (2004). The Vandermensbrugge study indicated that students who studied abroad, in general, hoped to acquire internationally recognized linguistic and cultural competencies, which could be very useful in a global context. Ward and Masgoret (2004) indicated that the most important factors for international students who decided to study in New Zealand were: the English speaking environment, safety and the international recognition of New Zealand qualifications.

The third most influential factor in helping the participants choose to study for the Master's Degrees in New Zealand was their desire to broaden their global views. This supported the research reported in the AUIP study (2006) that noted the importance of developing cross-cultural communication skills, global views and problem solving skills.

The fourth most influential factor identified in this study was the families or sponsors of the participants expected them to study in New Zealand. This supported the study of

Pimpa (2004) that revealed that the Thai family was the most important influence on Thai students considering study abroad, especially, recommendations from family members who had studied abroad before.

On the other hand, the weakness of the respondents support for factor 3, discontent with graduate programmes in Thailand, ran contrary to the arguments of Liefner & Schiller (2008). Their study put forward that various obstacles in terms of progress of Thai higher education institutions might create a rise in demand for Thai students to study abroad. The majority of the participants in this study did not find this an influential factor on their decisions to study for their Master's Degrees in New Zealand.

In summary, this research has revealed the four factors that most influenced Thai students to select New Zealand as the location for their Master's Degree studies, all of which supported previous completed research. Further, the participants rejected the notion put forward by Liefner & Schiller (2008) that weaknesses in Thai graduate education were a factor influencing Thais students to study abroad.

Limitations of the Study

The list of the New Zealand alumni could be obtained only from the New Zealand Alumni Association, and the list did not provide complete information about the alumni's levels of study or years of study in New Zealand. Also, alumni addresses, telephone numbers and email addresses were often incorrect or non-existent. This resulted in a limited scope of study.

Applications

The findings of the study can be applied as follows:

1. The results may be useful to students, families and sponsors who are interested in furthering their studies in New Zealand. The factors identified in this study that influenced the decisions to study in New Zealand might help them rethink the most appropriate location for their study.

2. Education providers and agencies that operate in the international education Field may take the results of this study into account in order to adjust their existing operations or plans for the future.

3. New Zealand Alumni Association may benefit from the findings and realize what the students thought about the findings. They may inform the related personnel at the Embassy of New Zealand since the findings are directly about New Zealand.

4. Researchers who are interested in similar topics may use this study as a useful source of information.

Suggestions for Further Studies

1. This study was focused only on Thai students who studied for their Master's Degrees in New Zealand. The findings might be different for Thai students who studied at other levels of education in New Zealand. Comparative research on other levels of education in New Zealand should be conducted.

2. This study focused only on Thai students who studied for their Master's

Degrees in New Zealand. Further studies should be undertaken on Thai students who are interested to study for their Master's Degree in countries other than New Zealand. It also would be interesting to study the students' decisions to study in non-English speaking countries such as Japan or China. The findings might increase the number of alternatives for Thai students who plan to study abroad in the future.

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APPENDIX

QUESTIONNAIRE

This questionnaire is part of a Master's Degree research project at Srinakharinwirot University. Your cooperation in completing this questionnaire and returning it promptly is greatly appreciated.

Part One: Demographic information

Please mark X in the box that matches your personal information.

1. Gender

Male

Female

2. Age

Less than 25 years old

25-30 years old

Over 30 years old

3. Did you complete your undergraduate studies in Thailand?

Yes

No

4. In which year did you complete your undergraduate studies?

.....

5. In which year did you complete your Master's Degree in New Zealand?

.....

6. From which New Zealand university did you earn your Master's Degree?

University of Auckland

University of Canterbury

Auckland University of Technology

Lincoln University

Massey University

University of Otago

University of Waikato

Victoria University of Wellington

Part Two: Factors that most influenced your decision to select New Zealand as the location for your Master's Degree study

Please indicate how strongly each of the following factors influenced your decision to study for your Master's Degree in New Zealand by marking X in the appropriate box following each statement.

Factors	Level of influence			
	Very Strongly 3	Some-what Strongly 2	Slightly 1	Not at all 0
1. It was my family's or my sponsor's expectations for me to study in New Zealand.				
2. I wanted to graduate from a well known international university to be able to compare myself favourably with my fellow Thai Master's Degree holders.				
3. I was not happy with the graduate programmes in higher education institutions in Thailand.				
4. I thought that I could learn cultures that might be different than my own and this would help me in my future career.				
5. I wanted to increase my global view by communicating with students from other countries who came to New Zealand for their studies.				
6. I wanted to increase my problem-solving skills.				
7. I decided to study a Master's programme in New Zealand because I wanted to acquire internationally recognized linguistic and cultural competencies.				
8. New Zealand is one of the English speaking countries, so I wanted to expose to the use of English in actual situations and my English communication skills would be improved.				
9. I selected New Zealand as my location of study because the country is safe.				
10. New Zealand has been internationally recognized for the quality of its education programmes, so I decided to select New Zealand for my Master's Degree study.				
11. The tuition fees and living costs in New Zealand were less expensive than other English speaking countries, so I decided to select New Zealand for my Master's Degree study.				

Part Three: There might be some other factors that are not shown in Part Two, and they might have influenced your decision to select New Zealand as the location for your Master's Degree study. If so, please indicate them below:

.....
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....

Thank you very much for your time and cooperation
in completing this questionnaire and returning it promptly.

VITAE

VITAE

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