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Exploring Factors Influencing International Student's Decision in Selecting Ca' Foscari University for Higher Education

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to explain the reasons why international students choose an academic institution overseas to pursue higher education, particularly in case of the Ca' Foscari University of Venice. In fact, there are many factors influencing students during the making decision process, and those factors in general vary across cultures and countries. Based on this purpose, a combine model which is developed from previous studies and theoretical frameworks is used to investigate and understand the strengths and relationships between influencing factors. In the methodology, the mix method will be used to investigate students sampled. In other worlds, surveys and interviews are conducted at the same time to investigate students' opinions regarding their choice influences, as well as their evaluations after enrolling. In the results, 110 students from 46 countries participated in the surveys, and other 10 students participated in the interviews. Findings from data analysis indicates that *international culture*, *higher quality in education*, and *job opportunities after graduation* are the three main factors that "pushed" students to study abroad. On the other hand, results from interviews pointed out the importance of 'value of degree' in addition to the other factors. However, after making decision to study abroad, the decision of host country or host institution is strongly influenced by "pull-factors" of each country. In this study, *country image effect* and *cost and scholarship* were placed greatest emphasis when students choosing Italy and especially the Ca' Foscari University, in comparison with other factors. In the last part, students' evaluations and expectations of future improvement in the university have also been explored.

ACKNOWLEGEMENT

I would like to take first rows of this chapter to thank my parents, who have always supported me, not only in my studies but also in my life. I always think that I could not achieve what I have today without their support, especially my mom. I am very thankful for that!

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After that, I would say a few works to thank my friends, who have been together with me when I was studying in Venice. They always gave me advices and support in everything including studying, living, working, etc. I have many friends in Venice, both Italian and Vietnamese. I am very happy to meet them in my life. Thank you all!

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CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the research

The academic year 2018/2019 witnessed a massive increase in number of international students, thanks to the development of internet and the rise of global mobility, especially in OECD countries. According to the OECD's latest Education at a Glance, OECD countries now have more than 5 million international students (in 2016), increasingly 200% only in two decades. Remarkably, international programs offered for graduate students seem more attractive than bachelor's or equivalent degrees, presenting around 26% in doctoral programs and 17% in master's programs. Also from the report, English-speaking countries, such as US, UK, Australia, Canada and Europe countries, are still highly ranked in the list of the most attractive destinations to study abroad; in which US and UK receive around 40% of international students each year. The majority of students are from Asian countries (China, Korea, India, etc.), accounting for around two-thirds in total number of mobile students.

What are the advantages of the growth of international student population and the reasons behind this? It cannot be denied that the influx of mobile students creates a win-win solution for both sending and host countries. While sending countries as well as their students can get benefits from better education, which probably brings a bright future for both individuals and nation's multidimensional development; host countries can tap into global pool of talent, contributing to the development of human capital in future as well as R&D and innovation. This is considered as the biggest motivation allowing countries to give opportunities for students to study abroad through scholarships, financial aids, education exchange funds, etc. (Quinn, 2019).

One of the most considerable issues is how universities in OECD countries can attract talented international students? This seems to be a challenge, as the people in charge have to consider both positive and negative effects brought by the students, specifically in Italy. While countries on top of attractive destinations such as US, UK, Australia are dealing with an excessive amount of students, expensive tuition fees and living cost, high competitiveness; Italy and other European countries are considered as ideal destinations because they offer diverse academic programs, more research opportunities, affordable tuition fees, especially in public universities as well as scholarships from governments and European Commission. Moreover, Italy is increasingly becoming more popular in the map of global study not only because of its multicultural ambience and heritage, but also because it is a paradise for tourists with numerous attractive landscapes, which promises to bring great

experiences for students during periods of study. Definitely, if students consider to study abroad and pursue their higher education in Fashion design, Science, Art and Humanities, Language and Culture, Italy should be on top in the list of their possible destinations (Villani, 2019).

1.2 Problem statement

Take the Ca' Foscari University of Venice as an example, one of the finest universities in Europe since it was established in 1868, providing all programs from bachelor's degree to PhD degree, specializing in subjects such as foreign languages, humanities, economics and management, and science. The university now has more than 1000 foreign students each year and increasingly offering programs not only to Italian students but also to international students who have desires to study Fully-English taught programs. Moreover, being located in the city of Venice, one of the most beautiful and favorite cities in Italy, students are taking a lot of advantages to experience life in the historic city. It is also important to mention the scholarships and financial aids from Veneto region, which is considered as the biggest motivation attracting mobility students from other countries (Ca' Foscari University of Venice, n.d.).

However, it is also necessary to consider the negative side that makes students feel reluctant when they make decisions about future destinations for study. In fact, Venice is really facing some major problems such as booming tourism, effects of global climate change, high living cost, lack of accommodation, and also the difficulty to find part-time jobs. Although the Ca' Foscari University is supporting students very well, if the university wants to mark its name on the map of best global universities, those problems should be taken into account in order to look for suitable solutions (Eaglescliffe, 2020).

Conclusively, Venice is an amazing destination to study by its history and heritage, especially considering the diverse programs offered by the Ca' Foscari university and leading professors in their fields of research. However, it is also essential to think about the above mentioned issues as well as negative effects brought by foreign students, which contribute somehow to the stable development of the institution.

1.3 Research Objectives

a. To identify the factors influencing students when choosing an academic institution for higher education, and the importance rate between the factors.
b. To identify students' evaluation of the current study in the Ca' Foscari University.

c. To identify difficulties faced by students when entering the university and living in the City of Venice.
d. To explore students' expectations and suggestions for improving the university's academic and service activities.

1.4 Research questions

Based on the four mentioned objectives of this study, the research aims to answer the following questions.

a. What are the most important factors when international students consider The Ca' Foscari University?
b. How do current students evaluate the program that they are studying?
c. Beside study conditions, how do they evaluate other factors affecting student life?
d. How can the Ca' Foscari university help them to improve the program in upcoming years? (students' expectations).

1.5 Scope of research

This research will focus mainly on students from Asia and Emerging countries, including graduated students, current students, and incoming students. Besides that, although the surveys will be released to all students in the university, a large number of surveys will be conducted based on students who are studying in Economic campus.

1.6 Structure of research

The research will be conducted by the following parts:

I. Introduction: presenting the background of the research as well as the problem statements. Then, the research objectives, research questions, research scopes will also be identified in this chapter.
II. Literature review: reviewing previous studies that were conducted in the same field and have relevance to the research of this study.
III. Methodology: identifying the research approaches, data collection, and data analysis.
IV. Data analysis and results: analyzing data collected from interviews and surveys. After that, the results from data analysis will be discussed to answer the research questions.
V. Conclusion and recommendation: summarizing and giving recommendations based on students' perspectives and results collected from the previous steps.

CHAPTER II: LITTERATURE REVIEW

The purpose of this chapter is to review the previous studies those have already analyzed the student's choice as well as decision-making process for choosing an academic destination overseas. Those studies not only point out general relevance to the problem which will be discussed in this research but also provide backgrounds to understand better the situation and develop a model for researching. In other words, general perspectives as well as theoretical frameworks involved in the studies will be explained in details and applied partly in this investigation. The mentioned studies include, for example, studies of Chapman, (1981), Cubillio et al. (2006), Marrazol and Soutar (2002), Chen (2007), Bodycott (2009), Alback and Knight (2007), Chatfield and Lee (2012), and Manns and Swift (2016).

No.	Title	Author	Year	Keywords	Category	Methodology
1	A Model of Student College Choice	David W. Chapman	1981	college choice, higher education	Journal	Literature review
2	International students' decision-making process	José María Cubillo, Joaquín Sánchez, Julio Cerviño	2006	decision making, higher education, international business, overseas students	Conceptual paper	Quantitative
3	Push-pull" factors influencing international student destination choice	Tim Marrazol and Geoffrey N. Soutar	2002	students, decision making, learning, country of origin	Journal	Quantitative
4	East-Asian Students 'Choice of Canadian Graduate Schools	Liang-Hsuan Chen	2007	international education , enrollment management , college choice	Journal	Mixed
5	Choosing a higher education study abroad destination: What mainland Chinese parents and students rate as important	Peter Bodycott	2009	mainland China, marketing, student recruitment, study abroad	Journal	Mixed
6	The Internationalization of Higher Education: Motivations and Realities	Philip G. Altbach, Jane Knight	2007	cross-border higher education; internationalization; globalization of higher education; international student flows	Journal	Literature review

7	The analysis of Factors affecting choice of college: A case study of UNLV hotel College students	Hyun Kyung Chatfield, So Jung Lee	2012	college choices, hotel college, higher education	Journal	Case study
8	Chinese postgraduate choices when considering a UK business and management programme	Yihan Manns, Jonathan Swift	2016	student choice, business & management	Journal	Mixed

Table 1: Summary of studies

2.1 Review of period studies

One of the earliest models related to student college choice was introduced by (Chapman, 1981) which was developed from the interactions between student's characteristics and other external influences. In particular, student's characteristics include socio-economic status, student's aptitude, level of educational aspiration, and high school performance. On the other hand, external influences will be divided into three main categories: (1) significant persons, (2) fixed college characteristics, and (3) college efforts to communicate with students. The first group – significant persons – includes three specific elements that are Friends, Parents, and High-school personnel, which has a strong impact on student's making process. The final decision about a particular institution is also influenced by the institution's fixed characteristics such as *Cost* (Financial Aids), *Location*, *Campus environment*, *Designed programs*. Specially, some authors such as (Tillery, D., and T. Kildegaard, 1973) , and (Mundy, 1976) suggested that *Cost* even has a stronger influence on decision whether or not a student goes to a particular university, because of the family social backgrounds and income. However, if *Cost* is considered as an obstacle to going to university, then *Financial Aids* is supposed to be a way to tackle the issue, which helps students to reduce the burden of cost and increase student's college choice. Finally, the *College Efforts to Communicate with Students* are also very necessary to consider, which is demonstrated through marketing principles that universities use to attract and recruit prospective students. In conclusion, all of the above mentioned factors including both student's characteristics and external influences contribute strongly to student's and parent's final decisions about the future university.

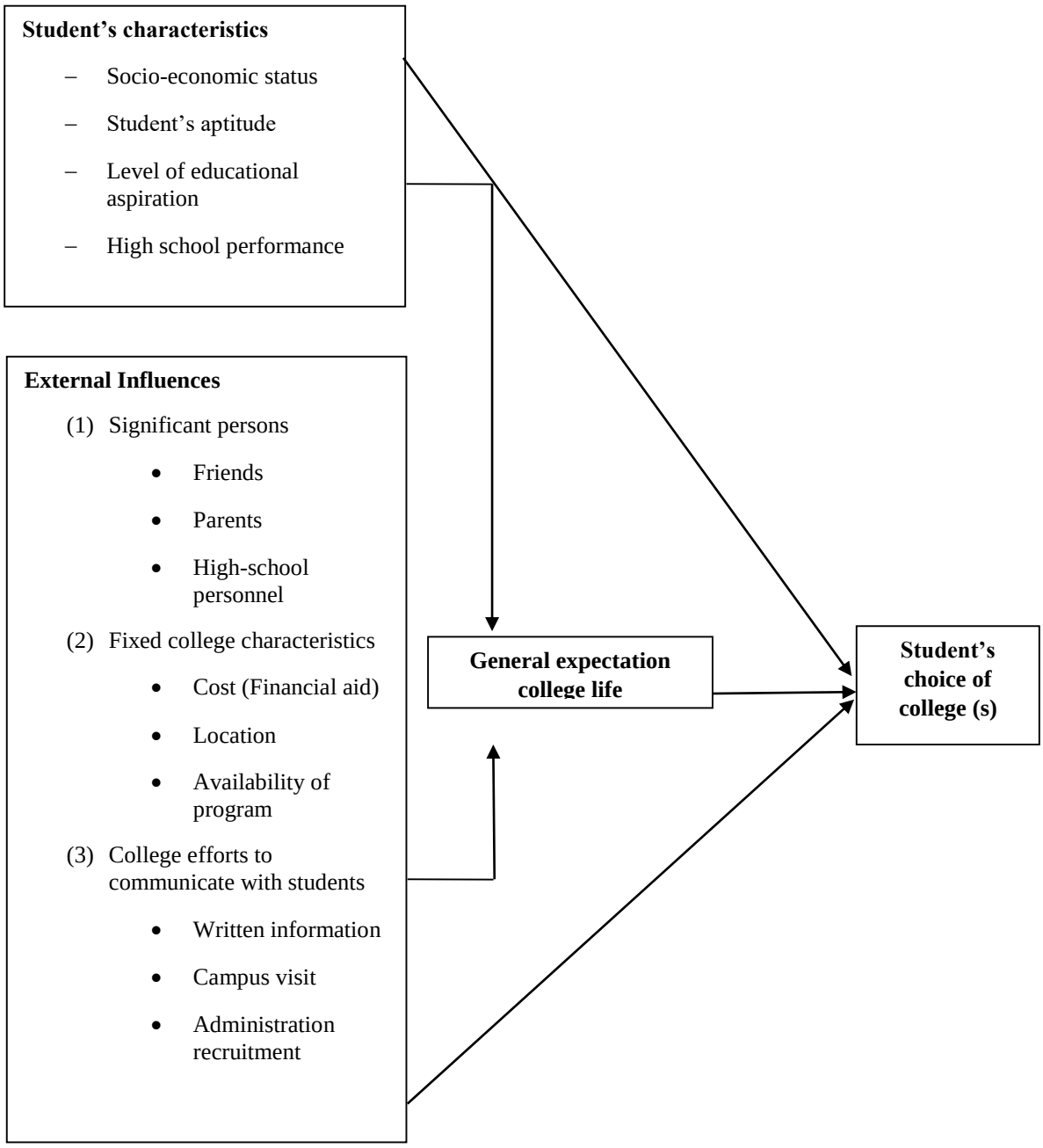


Figure 1: Chapman Model of college student choice (Source: Chapman,1981)

In the more recent studies, for example in Cubillo et al (2006), the purchase intention of international students is influenced by five main factors including personal reasons; the effect of country image, city image; institution image; and the evaluation of the study program.

Personal reasons

First of all, *Personal reasons* are established by three small aspects: advice, personal improvement, and ethnocentrism; in which, personal improvement is considered as having stronger influence than others. According to (Binsardi, A. and Ekwulugo, F. , 2003), when students consider a *core benefit* from pursuing a degree in higher education, especially in another country, they are considering to buy the benefits provided by degree such as enhanced career prospects, higher status, and lifestyle, rather than the degree itself. Besides that, *Advice* also has a great effect if students put into consideration the recommendations of family and friends as well as people who already had experiences. Similarly, *Ethnocentrism* – the attraction of living and experiencing in a new country - is one of the reasons that lead students thinking about a particular institution, especially when students from non-English speaking countries apply for a university in English-speaking countries, according to (Bourke, 2000).

Country image effect

Apart from that, student's decision to select an institution or academic destination, which is called as purchasing decision, is also determined by the *Country Image* (Bilkey, W.J. and Nes, E., 1982; Javalgi, R.G., Cutler, B. and Winans, B., 2001). In other words, when customers consider buying products or services from new (unfamiliar) brands, the country image factor has a strong and powerful effect on the final evaluation (Peterson, R.A. and Jolibert, A.J., 1995). In fact, *Country image effect (Country-of-origin)* is mostly based on the customer's perception or stereotype about products or services from a specific country (Nagashima, 1970), which influences directly on the customer's choice of that products or services, according to (Lawley, 1998), (Peng, Z., Lawley, M. and Perry, C., 2000) , and (Srikatanyoo, N. and Gnoth, J. , 2002). For that reason, international students tend to choose the country first and the institution later, based on their perception and awareness of countries for higher education (Bourke, 2000; Srikatanyoo and Gnoth, 2002).

City image effect

After the country, the city where students intend to live should be the next consideration. According to (MORI, 2001) and (Price et al., 2003), the *City image* refers to all facilities inside a town or city that students will experience besides their studies. In detail, the city image is influenced by other four dimensions, including *city dimension, city image, cost of living, and environment,* and those things together shape student's choice. For example, there are a lot of international students around the world selected to study Spanish Salamanca every summer because the city has developed and created an image of perfect Spanish learning (both language and culture). This is strong evidence showing that

the physical environment inside a town/city creates its own image, which has a strong effect on student's perception and decision process.

Institution image

According to (Kotler and Fox, 1995), institution image was defined as the sum of all ideas, opinions, and impressions that students have about a particular institution; it is created and developed mainly through "*word of mouth, experiences, and the marketing activities*" from the institution (Ivy, 2001). In fact, the decision to choose a university is determined by several factors related to *institution image* such as institution's academic reputation, quality, teaching faculty as well as the student's attraction to the university campus (Krampf and Heinlein, 1981; Mazzarol, 1998). Thus, if an institution has a positive image of high reputation and quality ranking, it not only helps the university itself to attract more students but also contributes to the maintaining of its competitive advantage (Paramewaran, R. and Glowacka, A.E., 1995). Generally, institution image is defined by five main factors: *quality of professors, Institution's prestige, International recognition, communication, facilities on campus*.

Program evaluation

Some authors such as (Hooley, G.J. and Lynch, J.E., 1981) argued that the suitability of program is the main determinant influencing prospective student's decisions regarding academic destination while other factors are less preferred. In other to check whether the offered program is suitable, students often compare it with other promoted programs by other institutions (Krampf and Heinlein, 1981). Some elements were often used to evaluate the particular program such as *wide selection of course* (Qureshi, 1995), *course's quality and degree's international recognition* (Turner, 1998), *entry requirements* (Bourke, 2000), and *cost and financial support* (Qureshi, S.,1995).

In conclusion, all the above mentioned factors together influence the decision towards university for college or higher education, especially in another country.

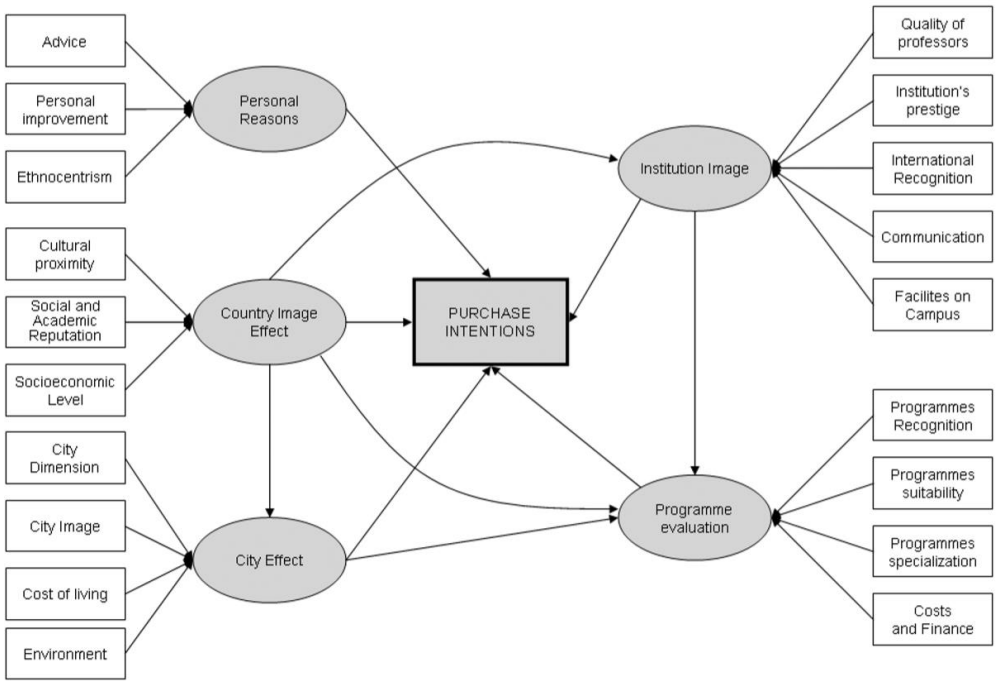


Figure 2: A model of International Students' References (Source: Cubillio,2006)

Many other authors also used other different methods to investigate the demand for international education, one of the popular methods is using "push and pull" factors. In general, "push factors" are those factors related to the conditions of sending countries such as the low-quality education system and school facility condition, the awareness or perspective of enhanced value of obtaining a foreign degree, and the high level of competitiveness of domestic universities. Whilst, the "pull factors" are associated with superior conditions provided by host countries such as high-quality education system, government and institution's support about scholarships and financial aids, advanced research facilities and other factors that make a particular country becomes more attractive than others (Mazzarol and Soutar, 2002). By using this method, the authors undertook an investigation to determine the key motives leading students to study overseas and the factors influencing them to choose an academic destination. From 1996 to 2000, 2,485 prospective students coming from four countries: India, China, Taiwan, and Indonesia were surveyed to determine the reasons behind their choices. Following the research, there are three main stages involved in the process of making decisions. Firstly, students have to identify that they prefer studying abroad to getting a degree inside their home country, how to make the decision is driven by the "push factors" of that country. Secondly, that's choosing a host country to apply for their study, which is influenced by the "pull factors" of countries. After all, students have to choose an institution in the last stage.

From the second stage (*choosing a host country*), the “pull” factors started to affect student’s choice by the six small determinants: student’s *knowledge and awareness* about a host country, *personal recommendations*, *cost issues*, *environment*, *geographic proximity*, and *social links*.

In the result of the research, it was revealed that students decided to study abroad because of the four following “push” factors. The first one was the perception that studying abroad is better than studying in home countries. The second factor is related to the difficulty to entry local universities. The two last factors were the desire to getter better understanding and experiences about “West cultures” and the migration prospect after graduation.

Coming to the effect of “pull factors”, it was found out that the decision to choose a particular university is strongly driven by the *reputation and profile* of the host country, which is evaluated by the knowledge and awareness of students. In other words, if students have a better understanding of any country in comparison with other countries, there is a high possibility that they will choose that country as they are familiar with. Likewise, recommendations from family members, friends, relatives, and lecturers also impact student’s selection of host countries, based on the *level of familiarity*. Lastly, the *cost* of education programs and the *local environment* are those aspects attracting students also.

By using a similar method, Chen (2007) applied the *synthesis model* and "*push-pull*” *model* to explain the student's decision-making process as well as understanding the strength and relationships between factors influencing student's choice. Fundamentally, synthesis model was defined as " *a comprehensive and dynamic model that incorporates the process models and important factors*" based on the combination of (Hossler and Gallagher, 1987), three-phase model of (Neice and Braun, 1977), and Mazzarol & Soutar’s (2002b) “push–pull” model.

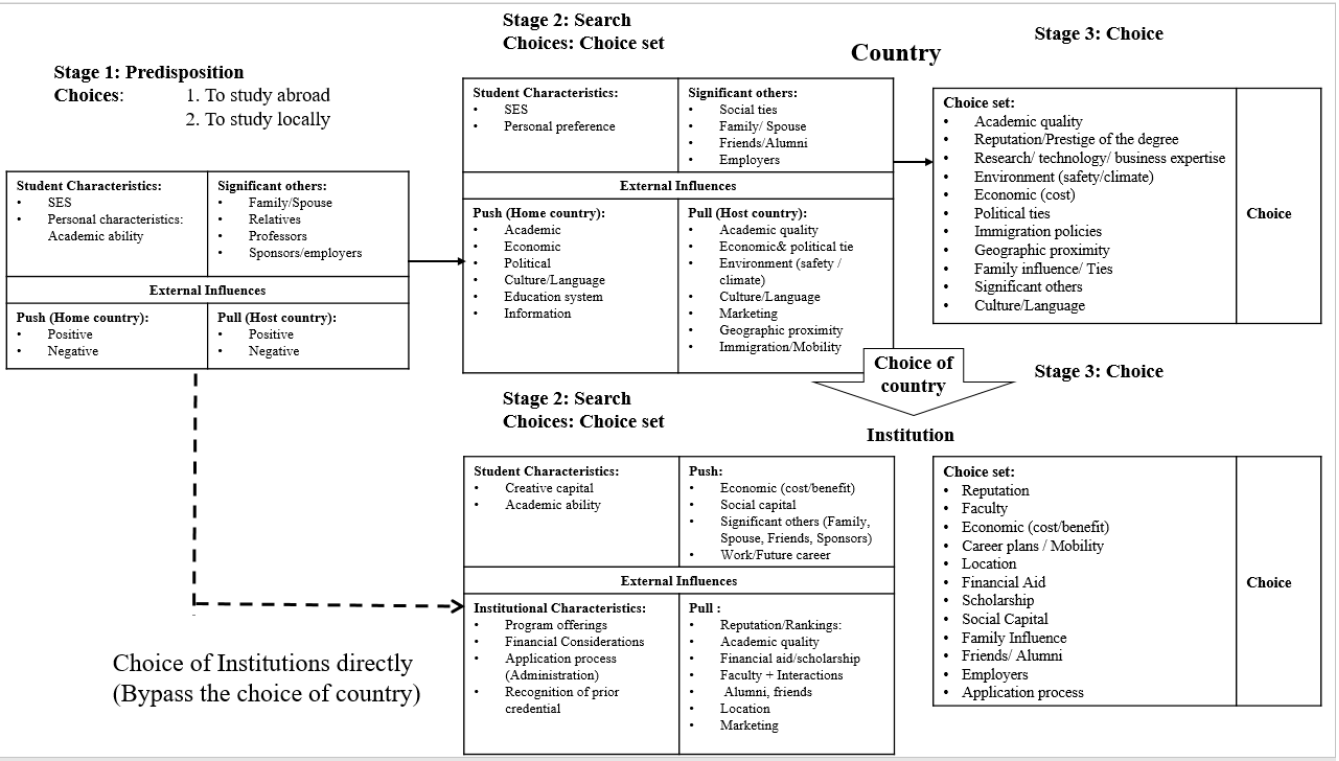


Figure 3: The (Original) Synthesis Model (Source: Chen,2007)

According to the model, the student's decision-making process includes three stages - *making decisions to study abroad*, *choosing the host country*, and *selecting the university*. In each stage, the decision will be influenced also by three domain factors comprising *Student's Characteristics*, *Significant Other Factors* such as recommendation of friends and family, and "*Push-Pull"* Factors. In detail, the "push-pull" factors were used to understand the student's decision or motivation to seek a degree abroad (Glaser, 1978; Rao, 1979; Alback and Lulat, 1985) and international student's decision in choosing country (Mazzarol and Soutar, 2002b). In general, "push factors" are those factors related to home countries, and "push factors" are conditions from host countries that attract international students. Hence, the final decision and motivation of students or parents will be influenced by the combination of both "push" and "pull" factors.

In the result, the research found out some valuable factors that are considered as key drivers of student's choice. Firstly, the most popular topics discussed by students were *tuition fees and scholarships*. It is explained that when students decided to study in Canada, it was because of the lower cost tuition, or because they received support from institutions or government related to financial aids or scholarships. However, this cannot eclipse the importance of institution reputation and quality. In cases of consideration between two universities, students tended to choose a better institution with

high quality and high rank of reputation. For the students, the rank of university seems to have effects on their future career, regardless of financial support. Lastly, although *visa and immigration* initially seem to have no influence on student's learning in a particular university, it is, in fact, significant to put under consideration. The student's decision will be influenced by *the ease and speed of visa process* as well as the *possibility of applying for immigrant status*.

Then, Bodycott (2009) also used "push-pull factors" to analyze the student's choice regarding overseas studying, especially Chinese mainland students. Similar to the above researches, *push factors* were mentioned above as those factors related to conditions within the home country such as *economic*, *social*, and *political status*. In opposite, *pull factors* were identified by (Bass, 2005), (Fam, K.S. and Gray, B., 2000), (Hiu, 2001), (Hung, F.S., Shive, G., Wang, X. And Diu, J., 2005), Mazzarol and Soutar (2002), and (Zhao and Guo, 2002), including 10 comment factors such as *institution reputation*, *recommendations*, *geography*, *etc*. In the findings of the research, there were some differences between parents and students regarding the most powerful determinants. While the parents concerned *pragmatic factors* as critical influences, for example, cost, employment after graduating, immigration prospects, and distance from home; the children considered *high-quality education* and *international experience* as the priority factors. In other words, students put particular emphasis on features related to *study environment* and *nature of the degree*.

The research findings also revealed that both parents and students view *exhibition/fair* as the most common source of information, followed by *Friend's or relative's recommendations*, *Internet*, *Agent acting on behalf of the university*, *Newspapers*, *etc.*

Regarding the motives of international education, Altbach and Knight (2007) stated that the growth of internationalization -"*the policies and practices undertaken by academic systems, institutions, and even individuals—to cope with the global academic environment*" is somehow related to the development of globalization in the 21st century. The motivations of academic internationalization vary across countries and cultures; however, there are some commons such as *commercial advantage* (profits), *enhance of knowledge and skills*, *improvement of international experiences*. In general, "*earning money is a key motive for all internationalization projects*" in some countries such as the US, UK, Canada, Australia, and this is undertaken by charging high tuition fees in international programs. However, one of the main reasons leading to the increase of international students comes from the demand for worldwide knowledge access, especially young people in emerging countries such as Asia

countries or Middle East countries. In the future, internationalization in academics is predicted to increase continuously accompanying the growth of globalization.

In 2012, Chatfield, Lee, Chatfield (2012) also launched an investigation to identify different variances affecting the choice of students in tourism and hospitality programs in the Hotel College (University of Nevada Las Vegas). After surveying students from three different groups: *in-state, out-state, and international students*, the research findings pointed out 11 factors that can help to understand the student's selection. In detail, the process of making decisions about a university for higher education will be heavily influenced by *school characteristics, influencers, financial support, degree benefit, environment, facilities, family support, aspiration, cost, career preparation, and media*. Moreover, the research indicated that out-state prospective students considered significantly the factors related to "*cost"* (tuition fees and living cost), "*school facilities"*, and "*family support"* when choosing the university, in comparison with other factors. The result also pointed out the lead role of media in attracting foreign students as it provided school information more effective than other sources, especially with the population of Korean students.

Recently, Manns and Swift (2016) suggested a four-stage sequential model in order to investigate the choice of Chinese students in business and management studies in the UK. Particularly, the four main factors that have considerable influences on student choice include factors related to *country, program, university,* and *city*. This means that when choosing a particular academic destination, students often give priority choice to the *country*, while other factors such as *program, university*, and *city* go after respectively. Besides that, information channels were also necessary to pay attention to student recruitment. The research findings indicated that respondents were strongly influenced by *recommendations of university lecturers* – the most trusted people for students, including local university 's lecturers and British lecturers. However, it's also remarkable that *agencies* and the *internet* did not really affect student choice. For example, the *internet* only provide information about the cities in the UK, while the final decision depends almost on personal recommendations.

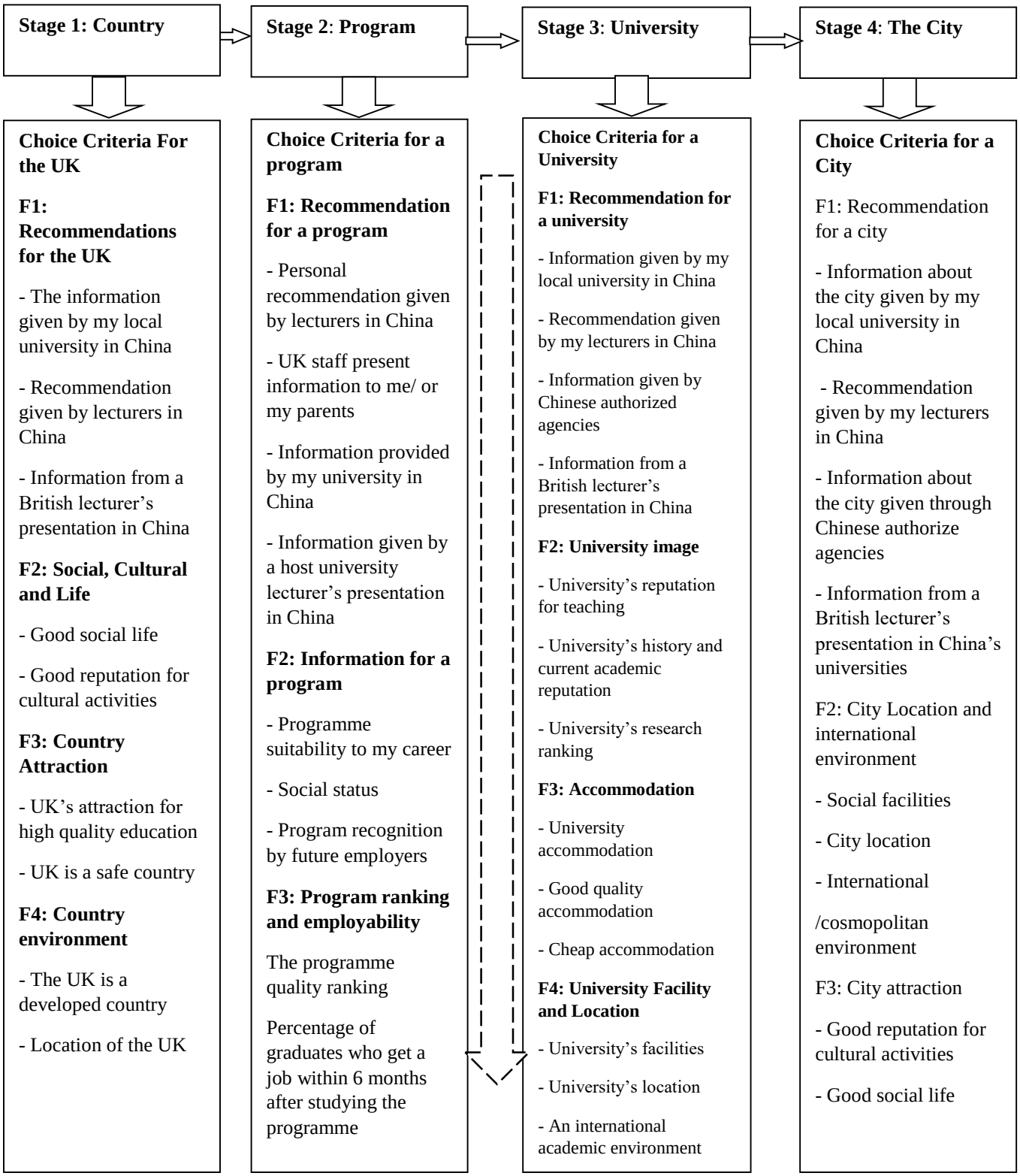


Figure 4: Chinese students' decision-making process and criteria for enrolling on a UK PGT B&M Programme (Source: Manns and Swift,2016)

In conclusion, the student's decision on choosing academic programs and academic destinations overseas is influenced by many determinants. In fact, the order of choice criteria and the importance of factors vary greatly depending on the student's backgrounds and cultures. However, as mentioned in the above literature, there are some common-significant criteria those are often applied in making decision process, for example, the "push factors" of sending countries, the "pull factors" of host countries, student's ability, school's facility, and environment, etc. There were also many economic and sociologic theoretical frameworks used to investigate the factors in different universities and colleges. Based on the combination of those theoretical frameworks, empirical research will be constructed to investigate the reasons why and how international students selected the Ca' Foscari University of Venice to pursue higher education. In detail, a new research model will be developed based on a combination of the key factors identified in the articles and the appropriate adjustments to the research context, which will be explained in the next following parts.

2.2 Conceptual Framework

2.2.1 Key Push Factors

There are many factors influencing the student's decision to pursue higher education in another country. In particular, many studies have shown that the decision to leave a country and come to another country to get a higher study is related to some "push - factors" that operate within the sending countries. Those push factors, together with pull factors, increases the demand for international education. According to Mazzarol and Soutar (2002), the fundamental push factors comprise *the quality of education system*, *the commonality of language*, *the availability of science-technology based programs*, even the *wealth* of that country, have certain impacts to student's decision. Furthermore, Agarwal and Winkler (1985) suggested that *the price/ cost of education*, *education opportunities available in the home country*, and *the benefits of studying abroad* are key drivers of seeking degrees abroad.

Bodycott (2009) studied the parent's and student's opinions regarding the most and the least important factors affect to their destination choice. The results released that *higher quality education* and *international experience* are the deciding *"push-factors"* for students to seek study abroad. Besides that, *employment following graduation* and *prospects of immigration* are also other critical push factors, which is strongly rated by both parents and students.

2.2.2 Country Image Effect

As mentioned above by Cubilo et al. (2006), the country image can contribute effectively to the selection of educational destination, which is demonstrated through *Academic reputation, Development Level, Social Reputation, Culture, Landscape, etc.* Initially, when students have to make decisions and compare between two or three countries, the Country Image is assumed to be the first source base, due to the stereotype about the country of origin (Peng et al., 2000). Similar to products, country image is also influential when choosing service providers, according to (Harrison-Walker,1995). This corresponds to Bourke (2000) who indicated that the prestige image of some developed countries can have certain effects on student's decisions as they believe that educational services offered by these countries are of high quality.

Similarly, Mazzarol and Soutar (2002) concluded that the student's choice of a particular host country or educational destination is influenced strongly by the reputation or profile of that country, depending on their knowledge and awareness. For those reasons, some students tend to choose the country firstly in their decision-making process, even it is considered as much more important than other factors.

2.2.3 Environment and location (choice of the city)

According to Chen (2007), *location* is very essential for students in decision-making process as it influences strongly in choosing university for application, focusing on metropolitan cities. Many students in the interviews had proposed their preference to study in an institution that is located in a metropolitan city. Besides that, a lot of students, especially in Business programs, concerned "*the possibility of staying and working in the city where my university is located after graduation*" as an considerable factor. The research also indicated some important aspects within the city and the institution that students tend to pay attention to, including "*safety, discrimination, tolerance (being accepted), diversity, multiculturalism*", in which, *safety* and *diversity* are first priorities to consider. In contrast to this, Rawson (2004) argued that not only did the factors *safety* and *diversity* but also *low cost of living, local diversity culture, small-town location, ease of access for travel, and proximity to major cities* affect to student's choice in the UK East-Midlands region.

In another research, Hunter-Jones and Warnaby (2009) investigated that students at Liverpool University (UK) selected the institution because of *the culture and history of Liverpool*, *the city's environment, a friendly atmosphere, opportunities to work and play*, and the *relatively low cost of*

living. From the points of view, it can be concluded that the factors *safety, diversity of the city, low cost of living, opportunities to work after graduation* are significantly important and influential.

2.2.4 Institution Image

The institution image or organization image is critically important for any organization that wants to remain its long-term development and create a competitive advantage in the market, especially in the service sector. As mentioned above, the image perceived gradually by "*words of mouth, past experiences, and marketing activities"* (Ivy,2001) and it is formed by public and audiences of that institution, all the stakeholders involved, for example, students, employees, staffs, teachers, etc. Mazzarol and Soutar, (2002) even stated that "*word-of-mouth referral is one of the most powerful forms of promotion that international education institutions can use*".

In addition, the institution image definition varies greatly depending on the author's focus and beliefs. For instance, Nguyen and Leblan (2001) identified institution image as a perceived image that the public has about the university, for example about the architecture, products or services, the tradition of the university, students of the university, the way that university communicated with the external environment, etc. Those evaluations are based on personal ideas and experiences. In the same article, Nguyen and Leblanc (2001) mentioned two main components involved in the university image: *functional* and *emotional*. In short, the functional component refers to tangible characteristics those are easily measured, while the emotional component is identified as the characteristics related to physical aspects and can only be measured through feeling and attitudes. Once again, those feelings and attitudes depend on the experiences and comparisons of the external public. Therefore, an organization may possess various images rather than one.

In higher education institutions, a university image is considered as that university reputation, it not only impacts directly in attracting and retaining talented students, teachers, and employees but also helps to attract community endowment, investments, or research contracts. As Manns and Swift (2016) pointed out in an investigation of MBA Chinese students in the UK, the university image should take into account the university's reputation of teaching, university's history and current academic reputation, university's research ranking.

2.2.5 Costs and Scholarships

One of the most considerable push-factors is the cost issue, which is mentioned by Mazzarol's (2002) in an investigation to determine "push-pull" factors impact destination choice of international students coming from 4 countries: China, Taiwan, Indonesia, and India. In general, the cost issue is associated with *cost of fees, living expenses, travel cost, and social cost.* Besides that, the availability of part-time jobs (financial cost) is also necessary to take into consideration. This determinant even had a significantly higher rank than other aspects included in the *cost issue,* especially for students from China, India, and Indonesia.

Likewise, Chen (2007) investigated that economic consideration has a heavy influence on the student's decision. The respondents (students from China and other East-Asian countries) indicated that they enrolled in the current universities not only because the universities have *prestigious degrees* or *high academic reputation* but also because of the *affordable tuition fees* and *lower living costs*.

Having the same idea, Hung (2000) pointed out that "*competitive lower tuition fee and living cost*" is one of the three factors strongly influencing student's choice for university in higher education.

However, if tuition fees and costs cause difficulties in making decisions between academic destinations, scholarships and financial aids, on the other hand, provide students more alternatives and a wide range of choices. According to Mazzarol and Soutar (2002), "*Scholarship and Institution Financial Aid is an important determinant which decides whether or not students choose to enroll a university in Australia*".

Similarly, Chen (2007) mentioned that scholarship and financial aid are the main factors that influenced the student's enrolment in Canada and it was also the most discussed item in interviews regarding studying abroad. In fact, many students cannot pursue higher studies without sponsored scholarships or financial aids to cover basic fees such as living expenses or tuition fees. Unlike self-funded students who come from upper classes, loads of students from growing middle classes, such as East-Asia, whose parents are not wealthy, depend a lot on the financial support from institutions or governments to make decisions, regardless of how valuable the offers received.

Lastly, drawing on the study of (Li, 2007), the institution's scholarships was one of the most attractive reasons leading mainland Chinese students to choose Hong Kong and Macau Universities.

2.2.6 Program Evaluation

Manns and Swift (2016) in an investigation to understand Chinese post-graduate student's decisions when considering Business & Management programes in the UK stated that students tend to choose the program right after choosing the country. This factor even took priority over other considerations, before the university and the city. In which, the respondents suggested that a program that is "*suitable to my career"* and has "*percentage of graduates who get a job within six months of completing their studies"* are essential to consider in advance. This indicates that students enrolled in Business & Management programes in the UK concentrated on future career. On the other hand, Chen (2007) found that students from China, Korea, Japan, Hong Kong, and Taiwan selected programe first and considered other factors later.

Besides that, (Lowe, 2007) found that Chinese students also put greater emphasis on **"**'*opportunity to improve my English level*" when considering Business and Management programs in UK Universities. Similarly, Yang (2007) suggested that *a wide range of programs* is a major determinant affecting Chinese student choice.

2.2.7 Recommendation

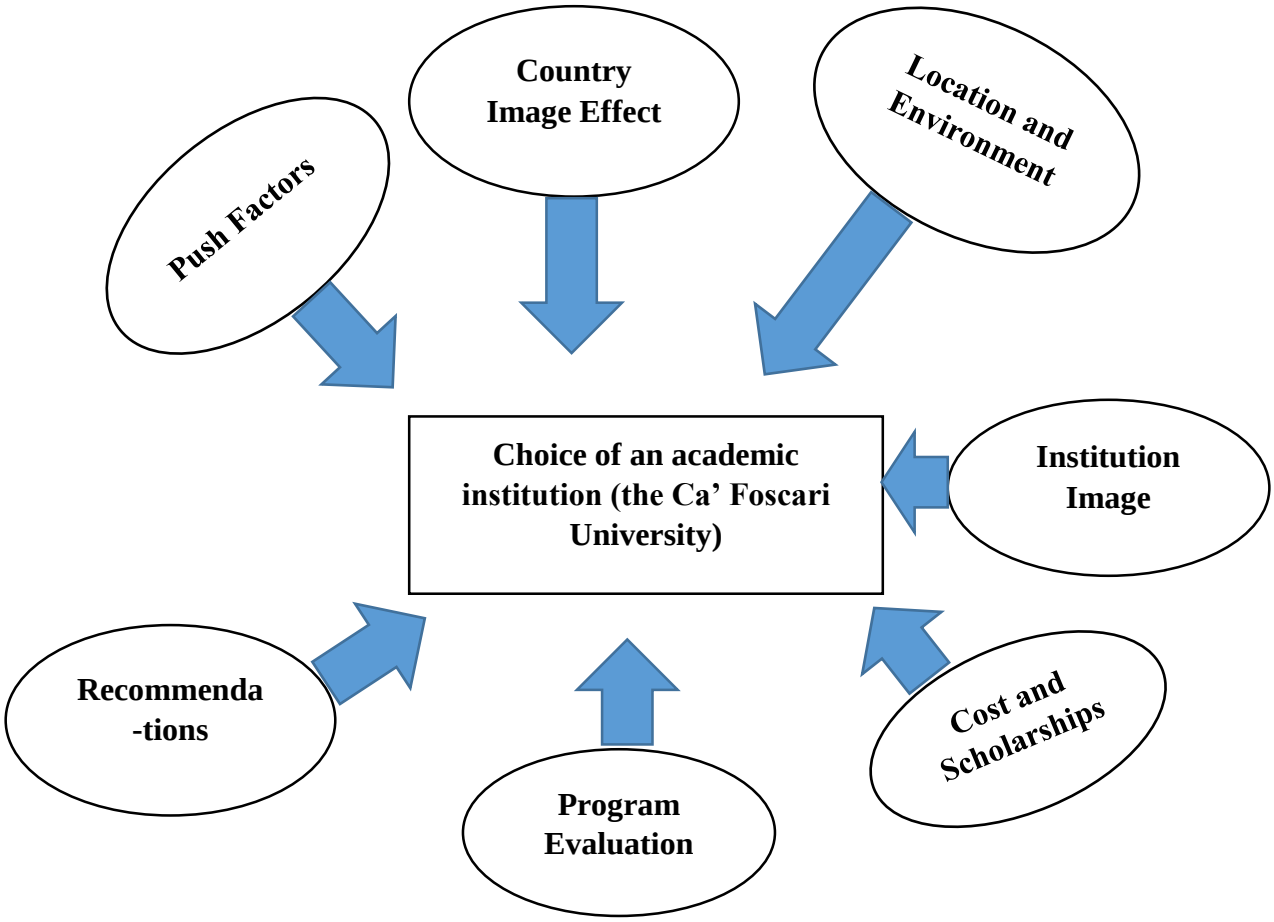
According to Chen (2007), the recommendation is perhaps one of the most significant determinants affecting student's making decision process when choosing a school for higher education, which is exhibited through an investigation related to student's decisions when choosing Canada Universities.

As stated by the research, a large number of students ranked their *professor's recommendations* and *Alumni's recommendations* as strong influences impacting their choice of country and graduate school.

Likewise, Mazzarol and Soutar, (2002) suggested that personal recommendation is the second prior factor leading students to the final decision, including recommendations from parents, friends, relatives, and other "*gatekeepers*". In particular, if parents or relatives had graduated from any particular university and have a good image of that university, they would strongly recommend that to their children or family members. This happens similarly to recruitment agents that have graduated students from a *good institution*. Furthermore, the research also revealed the significant importance of *international alumni* who has strong, direct, and valuable impacts on the choice of an international education institution, especially in cases parents have less experience in selecting college or university.

2.3 Conceptual Model

Based on the summary of previous studies, there are seven main factors identified that will together affect the student's choice of an academic institution overseas, particularly the Ca' Foscari University of Venice in this study. This will be demonstrated by the following model:



CHAPTER III: METHODOLOGY

This chapter is going to outline the research approach, research method, and process of analysis. In detail, it points out the method to collect data, and analyzes the data collected.

3.1 Research Approach

In this research, a mixed method is chosen to investigate the influences affecting students in choosing an educational institution, particularly the Ca' Foscari University. According to Saunders et al. (2009), "*mixed method research uses quantitative and qualitative data collection techniques and analysis procedures either at the same time (parallel) or one after the other (sequential) but does not combine them*". Therefore, in this study, the quantitative method was chosen firstly, which will help to identify the external influences affecting student's choice through certain factors, as well as the importance of each factor from each particular group of individuals. Simultaneously, another qualitative research through interviews is implemented separately in another group of student in order to understand better the research problems, and find out more determinants those were not identified in quantitative research. Alter all, the results of each research will be compared to investigate the difference as well as the match between two groups of students. In summary, both quantitative analysis and qualitative analysis will be conducted in this study.

3.2 Data collection

Firstly, a survey from quantitative research will be delivered to around 300 students in the Economic campus and some other students from other campuses. Due to the impacts of Covid-19, all surveys will be collected online through Google form. Then, interviews will be implemented at the same time to another group with around 10 students from different countries, in order to have a broad view of student's opinions and evaluations. Similar to the survey, interviews will be conducted by video conferences.

3.2.1 Questionnaire

Based on the review of previous studies (Chapman, 1981, Cubillio et al., 2006, Marrazol and Soutar, 2002, etc.) the questionnaire consists a series of questions, mainly focusing on the factors influencing their decision making process during the application process in universities as well as the demographic questions for later analysis. The questionnaire is divided into four parts:

- Part 1: Source of information

- Part 2: The key "push-factors" leading students to seek a degree in another country, rather than the home country.
- Part 3: Questions relating to factors such as country image effect, location and environment, university image, cost and scholarship, program evaluation, recommendations,
- Part 4: Demographic questions

Variable	**Measurement**	**Authors**
Key *"Push-Factors"*	An inadequate supply of university places in home country	Bodycott (2009)
	Improved employment opportunities	
	Higher quality education	
	Strong economic growth	
	Understanding Western cultures	
	International/intercultural experiences	
	Difficult to gain entry at home	Mazzarol and Soutar (2002)
	Course not available at home	
Country Effect	The country's landscape and culture heritage	Cubilo et al (2006)
	The country's academic reputation	
	The country's development level	
	The work opportunities	
	The ease of Immigration procedures	
	The living cost in Italy is affordable	
Location and environment	The city where my university is located is safe	Chen (2007), Rawson (2004)
	There is no discrimination against me at this university	

	The diversity of the city where my university is located	
	The possibility of staying and working in the city where my university is located after graduation	
	The living cost in the city is affordable	
University Image	University's reputation for teaching	Manns and Swift (2016)
	University's history and current academic reputation	
	University's research ranking	
Cost and scholarships	The tuition fees are affordable	Mazzarol (2002) Li (2007
	The living expenses are affordable	
	Part-time works are available	
	Availability of university scholarships or region scholarships.	
Program Evaluation	Program suitability to my career	Manns and Swift (2016)**,** Lowe (2007) , Yang (2007)
	The program quality ranking	
	Program taught by English	
	Programme recognition by future employers	
	Because a wide range of programe	
Recommendations	Recommendation from my professor in my country	Chen (2007)
	Recommendation from my friends/alumni	

	My friends have studied or are studying at this university	
	Recommendation from my family/spouse	
	Recommendation from my sponsor	
	My personal feeling	

Table 2: The factors influencing students' decision- making process

In order to answer the questionnaire, respondents are asked to choose the option that reflects at best their opinion about different factors of influence based on the 6-scales of importance.

- 0: Not considered
- 1: Little consideration/importance
- 2: Moderate consideration/importance
- 3: Average consideration/importance
- 4: High consideration/importance
- 5: Extreme consideration/importance

3.2.2 Interviews

A semi-structured interview will be conducted simultaneously with another group of 10 students from different countries. Similar to the questionnaire, the aims of interviews are to understand better the motives of students when choosing to study at the university. In general, the questions in the interview are similar to the questionnaire in the survey, but focusing on certain aspects those cannot be identified deeply in the questionnaire, such as visa procedure, backgrounds of students before going abroad, student's evaluation after entering the university, etc. The semi-structured interview is designed to focus on the following main parts:

- Part 1: Backgrounds of students
- Part 2: The reasons leading students to study abroad
- Part 3: The influences affecting students to choose Italy, and the Ca' Foscari University
- Part 4: Application process evaluation
- Part 5: Visa procedure
- Part 6: Students evaluation and suggestions

The information collected from interviews will be transcribed for later analysis.

3.2.3 Data analysis techniques

In quantitative research, after completing the survey, data from questionnaires will be analyzed by Microsoft Excel software. As such, the student's evaluation will be analyzed based on their respondents. Besides that, the AHP (Analytic Hierarchy Process) analysis will also be conducted in order to test the relationships of the criteria involved in student's decision-making process.

The Analytic Hierarchy Process

The Analytic Hierarchy Process (AHP) (developed at the Wharton School of Business by Thomas Saaty) is a method of multi-criteria decision-making process which allows decision makers to solve complex problems by using hierarchical structure models. In other words, the problems are modeled as figure 5, by creating a structure of Goals, Objectives, Sub-Objectives, and Alternatives (Forman and Selly, 2001). At the same time, this method of problem-solving also helps to assess relative rakings or weights in case the quantitative ratings (weights) are unavailable. In this study, the AHP analysis is applied to identify the priority rankings of criteria in each factor.

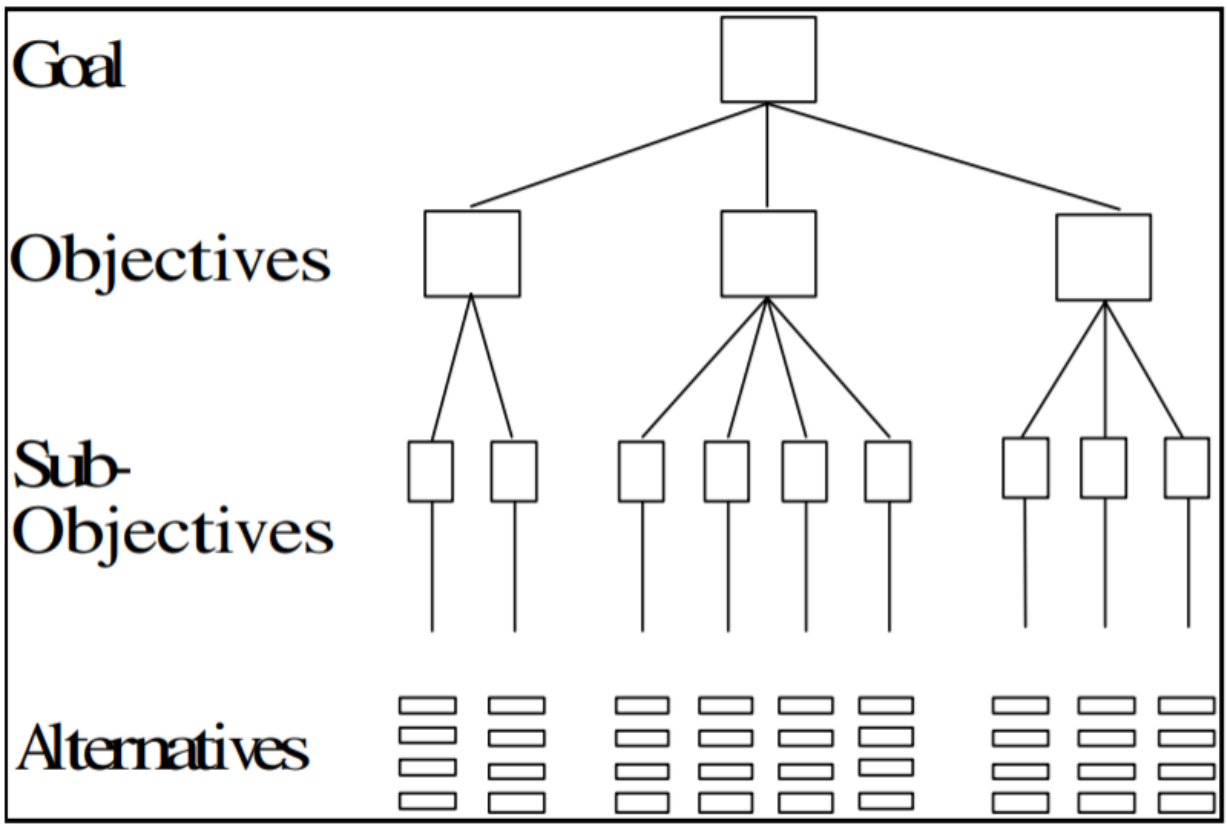


Figure 5: Decision hierarchy (Source: Forman and Selly, 2001)

The core of AHP analysis is the pairs comparisons, which means that each alternative/criterion will be assigned a value and compared to another alternative/criterion by using the Expert Choice comparison scale (Figure 6). For example, if criterion 1 is worth "1" and the criterion 2 is worth "2", then the criterion 1 vs. criterion 2 = "1/2". The same technique is applied to all pairs of criteria.

In the result, all of the alternatives (criteria) will be compared to each other, creating a "consolidated comparison matrix". The final result by scoring vector will show *which criterion/alternative is more important than others.*

Numerical Value	Verbal Scale	Explanation
1.0	Equal importance of both elements	Two elements contribute equally
3.0	Moderate importance of one element over another	Experience and judgment favor one element over another
5.0	Strong importance of one element over another	An element is strongly favored
7.0	Very strong importance of one element over another	An element is very strongly dominant
9.0	Extreme importance of one element over another	An element is favored by at least an order of magnitude
2.0, 4.0, 6.0, 8.0	Intermediate values	Used to compromise between two judgments

Figure 6: EC Comparison Scale (Source: Forman and Selly,2001)

Steps involved in AHP analysis (Appendix 3):

1) Assigning values to the evaluations based on the importance/ consideration level. In case the criterion is evaluated as "not consideration', it will be assigned as "1/9".
2) Computing Geometric means of each criterion
3) Constructing the "consolidated pairwise comparison matrix" of all criteria in each factor, applying the same technique for all factors.
4) Assessing the consistency
5) Developing overall priority ranking

In general, the most important tests are the rate of student respondents, the median, and the AHP analysis.

On the other hand, information collected from interviews will be transcribed and arranged based on topics. After that, the content clouds method – "*a type of visualisation that summarises the contents of a document by depicting the words that appear most often in larger, darker type within the cloud"* (Cidell, 2010) will be applied to analyze the frequency of similar response.

CHAPTER IV: DATA ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

4.1 Quantitative analysis

4.1.1 Sample Demographic

In order to start further data analysis, the sample demographic is analyzed generally by information gathered from surveys, for example, the information about student's age, major, home country, level of academic pursuing, etc. That basic information will help to have a better understanding of the audience's backgrounds and characteristics, which could be helpful for further group analysis. In general, the information will be presented by pie charts and tables.

Firstly, among 110 students from different majors in the university, the majority of responded students are from Economics and Management, which accounts for 79 per cent, including both bachelor's and master's degrees. This shows that the later information and evaluations are mainly based on opinions from students in Economics and Management. The rest of students those from Science and Technology, Information studies and Globalization, and other majors, accounting for 21 per cent of total respondents.

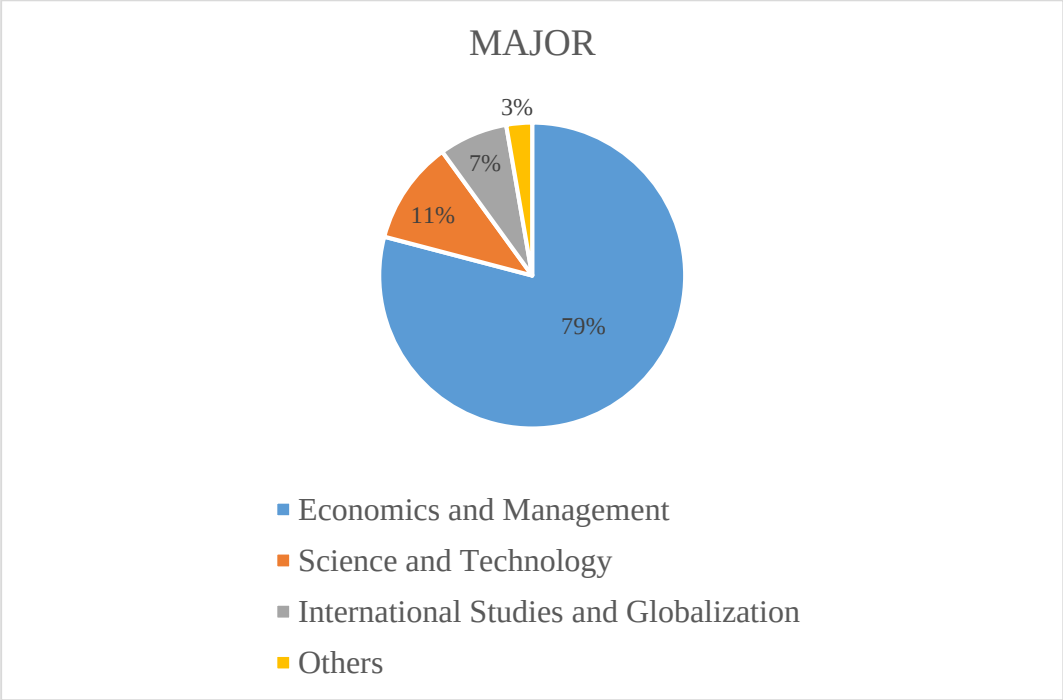


Figure 7: Students' major

Major	Amount	Percentage
Economics and Management	87	79%
Science and Technology	12	11%
International Studies and Globalization	8	7%
Others	3	3%
Sum	110	

Table 3: Students' major

Secondly, in terms of home countries, the data shows 46 countries where students come from; however, the majority of students are from Asian and emerging countries such as Vietnam, India, Indonesia, Philippine, Iran, Turkey, Cameroon, etc. Particularly, the number of Asian students accounts for more than 64.5 per cent of total surveyed students, in comparison with 35.5 per cent of students from other areas.

Countries	Students from Asian countries	Students from other countries
46	71 (64.5%)	39 (35.5%)

Table 4: Students' home countries

Thirdly, nearly 64 per cent of total respondents are master's degree students, while the students from bachelor's degrees and other academic levels account for 33 per cent, and 3 per cent, respectively. It can be seen a significant dominant of master's degree students in comparison with students from other degree levels.

Academic Level	Amount	Percentage
Master's degrees	70	63.6%
Bachelor's degrees	37	33.6%
PhD	2	1.8%
Others [1]	1	0.9%
Sum	110	100%

Table 5:Academic level

[1] Others academic levels: Associate degree or Postdoctoral researcher

Besides that, the data indicated that the majority of surveyed students are current students, which accounts for 90 per cent of total respondents. Whilst, the number of incoming students and graduate students accounts only for 10 per cent.

Students' status	Amount	Percentage
Current students	99	90%
Graduate students	9	8%
Incoming students	2	2%
Sum	110	100%

Table 6: Students' status

4.1.2 Sources of information

Results in Table 7: Sources of information indicated that students endorsed the *Internet* as one of the most useful sources of information when choosing future academic destinations, which accounts for 46 per cent of total respondents. For other sources of information, *Friends or relatives* and *Agents* received higher ratings (with 26 per cent and 18 percent respectively) in comparison with *Exhibition/ fair*, *School career adviser*, *Magazines*, and *Others*. Specifically, in this study, *Television and Advertising* seemingly did not get attention from surveyed students as shown in the table below that no student had searched for information through this source of information. From the result, it could be concluded that the *Internet* is one of the most popular sources of information for students in the earliest stage of the application process.

Sources of information	Amount	Percentage
Internet	73	46%
Friends or relatives	41	26%
Agents	29	18%
Exhibition/ fair	9	6%
School career adviser	6	4%
Magazines specific to international education	1	1%
Others: Alumni, exchange programs	1	1%
Television advertising	0	0%
Sum	160	100%

Table 7: Sources of information

4.1.3 Key Push Factors

I. Key "push" factors	0 Not Cons.	1 Little Cons.	2 Moderate Cons.	3 Average Cons.	4 High Cons.	5 Extreme Cons.	MEDIAN
1. An inadequate supply of university places in my home country	42	18	17	13	10	10	1
2. Some courses are not available at home	34	12	13	15	21	15	2
3. It was difficult to gain entry (in universities) at home	69	19	4	13	4	1	0
4. I want to improve employment opportunities	3	2	4	10	29	62	5
5. The higher quality education	2	3	4	7	39	55	5
6. The strong economic growth of other countries	7	3	13	24	33	30	4
7. I want to understand Western cultures	6	5	8	21	29	41	4
8. International/intercultural experiences	0	0	1	10	20	79	5

Table 8: Key Push Factors

Data from Table 8 viewed differences in students' evaluations among eight criteria in the "Push - Factors". In general, the three factors those did not take serious considerations from students are the *inadequate supply of university places in the home country*, s*ome courses are not available at home*, and *It was difficult to gain entry (in universities) at home*. The number of students who did not consider those factors is significantly high, compared to other factors. Especially, the third criterion – *the difficulty to gain entry to home universities*- is the least considerable influence since 69/110 students did not consider this factor with only 1 student extremely considered it. This could be concluded that students almost did not agree that they decided to study abroad because of the lack of universities or course supplies.

In contrast to the first three criteria, the other five criteria in "Push-Factors" received serious considerations from students. In detail, the main part of students rated the criteria *improvement of employment opportunities*, *higher quality education*, *understanding Western cultures*, and *international/intercultural experiences* as extremely important reasons. Especially, many students ranked the last criterion - *International/ intercultural experiences* - as the most considerable push factor since the figure showed 79 students extremely considered this criterion. Lastly, although the *economic growth of other countries* was less considerable than the other mentioned factors, it received great emphasis from students.

The final results from the table above also correspond with the result from AHP analysis [2]:

Criteria	Geometric means	Scoring Vector
8	2.465253407	0.225796527
5	2.095071499	0.19189097
4	2.06672883	0.18929502
7	1.638617711	0.150083633
6	1.529305965	0.140071595
2	0.562653033	0.051534297
1	0.390063631	0.035726556
3	0.170336585	0.015601402
SUM	10.91803066	1

Table 9:AHP analysis from "Push Factors"

Based on the AHP analysis, the order of concerning factors in the "Push – factor" is criterion 8, criterion 5, criterion 4, criterion 7, criterion 6, criterion 2, criterion 1, and criterion 3. So, following the indicated results, the *international/intercultural experience* is the key factor influencing students to study abroad. Then, the next two criteria those should be considered are *higher quality education* and the *improvement of employment opportunities*. Lastly, as mentioned from the table above, those criteria such as *lack of home universities* or *the difficulty to gain entry* are the least important consideration.

[2] Please see full computations of AHP analysis in APPENDIX C

4.1.4 Country Image Effect

II. Country Image Effect	0 Not Cons.	1 Little Cons.	2 Moderate Cons.	3 Average Cons.	4 High Cons.	5 Extreme Cons.	Median
1. The country's landscape and culture heritage	5	2	3	21	36	43	4
2. The country's academic reputation	4	5	13	32	38	18	4
3. The country's development level	3	8	11	44	33	11	3
4. The work opportunities	11	17	18	29	16	19	3
5. The ease of Immigration procedures	21	16	26	21	13	13	2
6. The living cost in Italy is affordable	13	10	10	24	30	23	3

Table 10: Country Image Effect

As shown in Table 10, the most participated students (43) in the survey rated *the country's landscape and culture heritage* as an extreme consideration. This means that the students placed greatest emphasis on this factor, compared with other conditions of countries. The next factor influencing students in choosing a country is the *academic reputation* of that country, which is described by the number of students who highly considered this factor – 38 over 110 students. Similarly, the *affordability of living costs* in a country also received careful consideration, which is illustrated by the number of students who rated this factor as high consideration- 30/110 students.

Other factors such as *the country's development level*, the *work opportunities*, and the *ease of immigration procedures* received rather low ratings. Especially, the least considerable factor would be the *ease of immigration procedures* as the majority of students (26) did not seriously consider this factor. The order of these factors are showed in the AHP analysis as below:

Criteria	Geometric means	Scoring Vector
1	1.452503	0.272043
2	1.253026	0.234682
3	1.20605	0.225884
6	0.922489	0.172775
4	0.839168	0.157170
5	0.588501	0.110222

Table 11: AHP Analysis from Country Image Effect

As shown in Table 11, the three main factors in the Country Image Effect is the *country's landscape and heritage*, *the country's academic reputation*, and the *country's development level*. Between the three factors, there is no big difference in students' evaluations, which is demonstrated through the small range of scoring vector.

In addition, the two factors those received least considerations from students are the *work opportunities* and *the ease of immigration procedure*.

4.1.5 City Image Effect

III. Location and environment	0 Not Cons.	1 Little Cons.	2 Moderate Cons.	3 Average Cons.	4 High Cons.	5 Extreme Cons.	Median
1. The city where my university is located is safe	5	2	11	13	36	43	4
2. There is no discrimination against me at this university	10	11	8	24	27	30	4
3. The diversity of the city where my university is located	4	5	7	27	32	35	4
4. The possibility of staying and working in the city where my university is located after graduation	30	15	20	24	11	10	2
5. The living cost in the city is affordable	12	22	14	17	29	16	3

Table 12: Location and Environment

Data from Table 12 indicated the importance of *safety*, the *discrimination level*, and *the diversity* of the place where the university is located since the greater number of surveyed students extremely considered these factors. Particularly, there is a large number of students (43/110) consider the first criteria – *safety*- as the most powerful influence while other 36 students also agreed that this factor should be given high consideration when choosing a city for study. The number of students those rated *discrimination level* and *city's diversity* as "extreme importance" is high as well, accounting for 30/110 and 35/110 respectively.

Lastly, it is surprising that the *possibility of staying and working in the city after graduation* did not receive many considerations from students sampled, with a great number of students (30/110) who did not consider this factor. The order of factors associated with *Location and Environment* is showed as the table below:

Criteria	Geometric means	Scoring Vector
1	1.503909901	0.278485344
3	1.455282998	0.269480896
2	1.100232262	0.203734652
5	0.855418808	0.158401511
4	0.485475766	0.089897597
SUM	5.400319735	1

Table 13: AHP Analysis from Location and Environment

Table 13 shows the order of influences related to the Location and Environment of the city where students will live in future. In detail, *safety* is the most considerable factor influencing the destination choice of students. This is followed by the *diversity*, *discrimination level*, *living cost*. The first three factors received seemingly similar evaluations from students since there is no big difference in scoring vector. This totally contrasts to the two last criteria – *work opportunities* and *living cost*- since those factors received very little considerations from students.

4.1.6 University Image

IV. University Image	0 Not Cons.	1 Little Cons.	2 Moderate Cons.	3 Average Cons.	4 High Cons.	5 Extreme Cons.	Median
1. University's reputation for teaching	4	5	8	35	32	26	4
2. University's history and current academic reputation	1	3	11	24	42	29	4
3. University's research ranking	6	2	15	26	38	23	4

Table 14: Analysis of University Image

As showed in Table 14, the *university's history and current academic reputation* and *university's research ranking* received relatively great emphasis from surveyed students, in comparison with the remaining factor – *the university's reputation for teaching*. In particular, while more than half of students rated the criterion 2 and 3 as key factors, they rated criterion 1 as average consideration. However, there are no big differences between evaluations among these factors. The order of considerable influences in University Image is given in details as below:

Criteria	Geometric means	Scoring Vector
2	1.11694	0.37107171
1	0.972102	0.322953296
3	0.920997	0.305974994

Table 15: AHP Analysis of University Image

From the AHP analysis of university image, the U*niversity's history and current academic reputation* was recognized as the most serious condition, this is proven by the figure of students highly considered this factor – 42 over 100 students sampled. The next influence is the *University's reputation for teaching*. Lastly, the last seemingly important factor in this group is the *University's research ranking*.

4.1.7 Cost and Scholarship

V. Cost and Scholarship	0 Not Cons.	1 Little Cons.	2 Moderate Cons.	3 Average Cons.	4 High Cons.	5 Extreme Cons.	Median
1. The tuition fees are affordable	4	2	5	9	32	58	5
2. The living expenses are affordable	6	8	14	20	33	29	4
3. Part-time works are available	29	21	20	17	13	10	2
4. Availability of university scholarships or region scholarships.	10	4	6	5	21	64	5

Table 16: Cost and Scholarship

The survey data in Table 16 shows the high importance factors placed on the *tuition fees* and the *availability of university scholarship and region scholarship*. The major part of students extremely considered these factors, accounting for 58/110 and 64/110, respectively. Besides that, the number of students placed emphasis on the *living expenses* was also relatively high, with 33/110 students rated this factor as high consideration. Lastly, it is clear from the table that *the availability of part-time works* did not get much attention from surveyed students as the largest amount of students did not consider this factor, accounting for 29/110 students. The four factors in this group are ranked in AHP analysis as following:

Criteria	Geometric means	Scoring Vector
1	1.551202	0.351013
4	1.264518	0.286141
2	1.166433	0.263945
3	0.437066	0.098901
SUM	4.419219	1

Table 17: AHP Analysis of Cost and Scholarship

As showed from Table 17, the *tuition fees* were rate as a key influence, which is followed by the *availability of university scholarship and region scholarship*, and the *living expense*. Lastly, *part-time works* is the least considerable factor in comparison with others.

4.1.8 Program Evaluation

VI. Program Evaluation	0	1	2	3	4	5	Median
	Not Cons.	Little Cons.	Moderate Cons.	Average Cons.	High Cons.	Extreme Cons.	
1. Program suitability to my career	0	2	3	9	29	67	5
2. The program quality ranking	3	4	11	16	39	37	4
3. The program taught by English	1	1	3	4	16	85	5
4. Program recognition by future employers	2	4	4	22	39	39	4
5. A wide range of program	3	2	9	30	26	40	4

Table 18: Program Evaluation

Results from program evaluation surveys show that students put the greatest emphasis on the factor *the program taught by English* when choosing a program to study in the university. From the result, 85/110 students rated this factor as extremely consideration, which accounts for more than 77 percent of total respondents. The result seems correct when English is one of the most popular languages nowadays for international education programs.

Similarly, the *suitability of program to career* received relatively high rakings as many students highly considered this condition, with 67/110 students sampled. For other conditions associated with the program such as *program quality ranking*, *program recognition by future employers*, and the *wide range of program*, the rankings are also relatively high with a large number of students placed “high consideration” or “extreme consideration”. In general, all criteria associate with the program as showed in the table above are evaluated from “high consideration’’ to extremely consideration’’. There is no criterion which is un-important for the majority of students sampled.

The criteria priority is showed as following in the AHP analysis:

Criteria	Geometric means	Scoring Vector
3	1.17437272	0.233125
1	1.140102375	0.226322
4	0.945215358	0.187635
5	0.892155331	0.177102
2	0.885684309	0.175817

Table 19: AHP Analysis of Program Evaluation

The AHP analysis of program evaluation revealed that students clearly put *the program taught by English* as a top priority. The second determinant is the *suitability of program to future career*, with very little difference in evaluation. The other following factors are *program recognition by future employers*, a *wide range of program*, and *the program quality ranking*. Especially, the second criteria – *program quality ranking*- is the least considerable factor in this group.

4.1.9 Recommendations

VII. Recommendations	**0**	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**	**Median**
	Not Cons.	**Little Cons.**	**Moderate Cons.**	**Average Cons.**	**High Cons.**	**Extreme Cons.**	
1. Recommendation from my professor in my country	**53**	14	11	13	6	13	1
2. Recommendation from my friends or alumni (who have studied at this university)	**44**	5	13	10	18	20	2
3. Recommendation from my family/relatives	**53**	6	13	20	10	8	1
4. Recommendation from my sponsor	**65**	9	8	9	13	6	0
5. My personal feeling	1	1	4	23	36	**45**	4

Table 20: Recommendations

The results in Table 20 indicate that surveyed students did not really consider recommendations from the relationships around them, the students instead strongly believed in their *personal feeling*. In detail, a great number of students, from 44-65 students overall, did not consider any

recommendation. Especially, the *recommendation from my sponsor* received significant low consideration of students, since 65/110 students rated this factor as "not consideration'' while only 13/110 "highly considered" this. In contrast, there was a great number of students placed *personal feeling* as "high consideration'', or "extremely consideration'', accounting for a totally 91/110 respondents.

In the second phase of recommendation evaluation, students were asking about the three most valuable sources of recommendations whose have the greatest influences on their decision-making process. In the end, most students rated *personal feeling* as the most important reference, which is similar to the result released from the above analysis. Some other students, on the other hand, believed that *recommendation from professors in my country* or *recommendation from my friends or alumni* should be the main references, however, the numbers are relatively low: 23/110 and 22/110, respectively.

The second important source of recommendation is placed in *recommendations from friends/alumni*, which received a majority of respondents (45/110). Lastly, the same number of students (27/110) believed that *recommendations from friends/alumni* and *recommendations from family/relatives* are the third important sources of recommendation.

VII. Recommendations	**The most important rec.**	**The 2nd important rec.**	**The 3rd important rec.**
1. Recommendation from my professor in my country	23	6	19
2. Recommendations from my friends or alumni (who have studied at this university)	22	45	27
3. Recommendations from my family/relatives	9	27	27
4. Recommendation from my sponsor	2	6	15
5. My personal feelings	54	26	22

Table 21: The three most important sources of recommendation

The results from Table 21 also correspond with the results from the AHP analysis as below:

Criteria	Geometric means	Scoring Vector
5	4.572087237	0.617753888
2	0.995312318	0.134480823
3	0.696983019	0.0941723
1	0.656545662	0.088708639
4	0.480218602	0.06488435

Table 22: AHP Analysis of Recommendations

As showed in the AHP analysis, criterion 5 – *personal feelings* - is the major recommendation when students deciding academic destinations. The next valuable source of recommendation is the criterion 2 – *recommendations from friends/alumni*. Although *recommendations from friends/alumni* is the second most important personal recommendation, there is a big difference between evaluations of the first and the second priority of factors; as mentioned above, almost all students did not consider recommendations from outside. Lastly, similar to the above analysis, *recommendations from sponsors* is the least considerable factor in comparison with other four factors.

4.1.10 Students' changes on study plan due to Covid-19 pandemic

The Covid-19 pandemic is spreading to all countries in the world, with all sectors and industries impacted adversely; education is not an exception. Therefore, some students have changed their study plans. In this study, among 110 respondents, around 24.5 per cent of students mentioned that they would change on the study plan, due to the impacts of the pandemic. Whilst, the number of students who are not sure and who do not have change account for approximately 46.5 per cent and 29 per cent. In which, among 27 students who have mentioned their change in study, 14 students have planned to *defer entry to next year* and three students have planned to *cancel study overseas temporally*. Participated students have given the three greatest concerns that have influenced their decision: *the difficulty in visa procedure*, *health concern*, and the *family's recommendation*. In which, the difficulty in visa procedure received the most emphasis from respondents, this could be caused by the travel restriction order which is applied in almost countries in the world after the pandemic has spread.

Student's changes on study due to Covid-19		
Change	No Change	I don't know, I am not sure
27 (24.5%)	32 (29%)	51 (46.5%)

Table 23: Student's changes on study plan due to Covid-19

Reasons for changes	
10	Health concern
4	My family's recommendation
1	The quality of education
11	The difficulty in visa procedure

Table 24: Student's concerns

4.2 Qualitative phases

In addition to 110 surveys collected from students by Google form, interviews had been conducted to have a better investigation of their choice influences. Similar to the surveys, students had been asked to explain the factors leading them to choose Italy, especially the Ca' Foscari University for higher education. However, there is a small difference in the interviews where students are expected to give more details about their evaluations after entering the university, as well as their suggestions for the university's improvement, which could be useful for international students in the future.

4.2.1 Source of information: how do you know the Ca' Foscari University?

1. How do you know the Ca' Foscari University?	- By Internet (2) - By Exchange program in bachelor's degree - Facebook - Agents (2) - Friends and Facebook groups - Family - Facebook

Table 25: Sources of information from interviews

Internet and *Agents* were perceived as the most common sources providing information about the university. Some students explained that they could find all information about the best academic destinations based on their criteria just by the internet.

On the other hand, some students believed that the agents would bring better information about the university, especially if the agents are partners of the university in their home countries. In addition, they also believed that consultants from agents could help them better in preparing documents and give them advice regarding universities based on their family financial statements, which helps them to save a lot of time and effort. Moreover, the services from agents are particularly helpful for students who have never experienced in documentation works, or who live far away from the capital.

Then, Facebook communities are also viewed as good sources of information. Some students explained that they often join in Facebook groups – where they believed that it could bring more specific information related to scholarship offers.

Lastly, although it is not the common source of information, 'exchange programs by universities' was identified by an interviewee as the main source of information leading to the choice of Ca' Foscari University. The student explained that she made decision to pursue higher education in Ca' Foscari university because she had participated one semester in an exchange program in her bachelor's degree, and she believed in the quality of the university. In some case, the real experiences have more value than any other source of information.

4.2.2 Choosing to study abroad: why students decided to seek degree from another country instead of their home countries?

2. Why you chose to study abroad?	- Experience in different culture; I want to be independent from my family. - Experience new culture; - I was already out of the country, so it was easier for me to continue my study in that country, than to go back my home country and continue my study; opportunities after graduation - Because of the differences in education system; I have desire to study abroad, I want to try something new. - Because the universities in Europe are better than in my country; more job opportunities in future; Studying MBA in Iran is much harder than in Europe. - Because international diploma is more valuable; I want to get to know new people, new culture, Italian culture; a long enchant position for business - I like the idea of studying abroad; build the network or partnerships that will be helpful in the future - I want to try studying abroad. I used to study abroad before so just continue. - I wanted to change the environment of my education, the culture is very attractive. - Because the degree from Europe countries is more valuable in future career; experiencing new culture.

Table 26: Reasons of studying abroad

Findings indicate that experiencing a new culture is the most common factor that pushed students to seek a degree in another country. Interviewed students expressed desires to explore new countries, new cultures, to go know new people that they have never met in life. Being independent of family is also a good chance for students to become mature. This is particularly true for students from the East cultures who always have strong desires to experience the cultures from the West countries.

Besides that, some other students have explained that they chose to study in another country because of the value of the degree. In detail, the students believe that a degree seek from another country, especially European countries, is more valuable than a degree get from their home countries. As such, it brings more job opportunities later in their career.

After that, some students from the interviews mentioned that they chose to study abroad because it was too difficult to study in their home countries, such as Iran. It is evaluated that the education system in European countries is more advance, more practical, and closer to the market requirements.

Even though it is a small idea, one among 10 interviewed students believed that if students study in a developed country such as Italy, it could create a small part of networks from developing countries and developed countries, or at least creating the collaboration between academic organizations.

4.2.3 Factors influencing host country selection

3. what are the most important things when you consider countries for studying?	- The food, the culture, the climate; Italy culture is a lot similar to Vietnamese culture - Living cost, and the tuition fees; the environment and availability of part-time jobs. - Cost of living; Possibility to gain student jobs to support my study; Scholarship opportunities; the culture of the country: you're free to do whatever you want, not so many restrictions. - the culture of the country; the cost - Living cost and scholarship; The process to get visa; The culture of the country; how the people in the country accept us. People in Italy are same in Iran, they are more warmed, friendly, active, etc. It's similar in my country. - The living cost of Italy is cheaper than other countries; The tuition fee is also cheaper; I had regional scholarship.

	- The living cost, living standard in Italy is very competitive to other countries; the diversities of international students; the diversities of international students - the tuition fees and the living cost; the academic reputation of the country; the environment.

Table 27: Factors influencing the country selection

It can be seen from Table 27 that the most common words mentioned when students were asked about the factors influencing them in choosing a country are *culture* and *cost* (living cost and tuition fees). This is explained by the fact that almost all students who participated in the interviews are students from Asian and Emerging countries. Therefore, before considering any host country, *living costs* and *tuition fees* are the two most powerful influences since their studies depend mostly on their family's support.

However, it cannot be denied that the *culture* and the *living environment* contribute strongly to their final decision making. As mentioned in the second part, one of the main reasons pushed students to study abroad because they want to *experience new cultures*. Most students expressed in the interviews that they would change their current living environment, for some reasons. One of the reasons mentioned by students is that if the students change their current living environment, besides the knowledge from university, they could learn more from living experiences and culture exchanges. However, the environment mentioned here is not only about the people and conditions where students live, but also about the climate. Some students had agreed that the environment in Venice, or Italy is particularly suitable to live and study, that is why they chose to study in Venice. As mentioned by some students, the *similarity between cultures of home country and host country* is particularly essential for students who are the first time living outside of their home.

Lastly, *the availability to get part-time jobs* during the study also received serious considerations of students. This was explained by two reasons. Firstly, although the salary from part-time jobs are not high and cannot cover all of the fees, it still helps students to gain some income. Secondly, the experiences gaining from part-time jobs are significantly valuable if students want to continue studying or working in that country after graduation. It is mentioned by a PhD student that it would be very difficult for students in job application later if students do not speak Italian and do not

have any experience. Finally, if students do not plan to stay in the country after graduation, the working experiences from study time could benefit them later when they return home countries.

In addition to the above factors, the *scholarships* provided by countries, the possibility to get visa for study, the academic reputation of countries are also necessary to give consideration. For some students, the *scholarship* is the biggest promotion influencing them to choose a particular country instead of other countries.

4.2.4 Why students decided to study in Italy, or particularly in Ca' Foscari University?

4. What led you choosing the Ca' Foscari University, or the country?	- For the Ca' Foscari, they accepted me from different backgrounds, also because Venice is very beautiful. - I chose Italy for exchange program, and after exchange program I fail in love with the country and I decided that it's where I want to be and I applied for master's degree here because of that reason; Italy is in Europe, so if I go to Italy, I can go to other countries around. - Actually I got the scholarship, because of the scholarship so I decided to study there. - I have a strong passionate to Venice, I really the city. I like the culture, and I also read some articles (information) about Ca' Foscari so I really like the university. - In Ca' Foscari, they accepted people in a different background, so I tried to apply and I got it. - Ca' Foscari has a lot of international partners (universities) in US, in France, etc. You can do exchange programs in those universities, which also adds the reputation of your degree. - Scholarship from the university. - I had 2 alternatives: one is Ca' Foscari and another university in Germany, Ca' Foscari gave me acceptance letter first, so I chose Ca' Foscari.

	- Because I have friends here, it's good for me at the first time living outside of my country, and also the tuition fees are affordable.

Table 28:Why students decided to study in Italy, or particularly in Ca' Foscari University?

There are many reasons given by students expressing the reasons behind their choice of Italy, particularly the Ca' Foscari University. Firstly, some students explained that they chose Italy because *the country belongs to Europe*, so if they go to Italy, there would be opportunities to go to other countries in Europe. This is not only important for students in traveling, but it was mentioned to be beneficial in the future career if students want to find job opportunities in other countries that belonged to Europe.

Similar to the above mentioned factor, one of the reasons for students to consider the Ca' Foscari University was because of the *university's partnerships*. In particular, the opportunities to study in another (other) university is also interesting and valuable for the final degree. This would be difficult to implement if students study in their home country, or in any other institutions. Besides that, the collaboration between the universities could bring more opportunities for students in the future career.

From different points of view, for some students, *scholarship* is the biggest promotion leading them to choose the Ca' Foscari University, other factors belonged to the country were seemingly not important. The scholarships here are divided into two types: the *scholarships provided by the university* and *the scholarships that could be provided by the region Veneto* after enrolling. Therefore, if students are not provided scholarships by the university at the beginning, they still consider the possibility to get scholarships from the region. The final decision will be given after considering both types of scholarships.

Along with the scholarships, another driver influencing students to choose the university is the possibility to study in another field which is different from their previous backgrounds. It is the key influence for some students who want to change their major from the bachelor's degrees.

After that, the *tuitions fees* and *living cost* is one of the considerable factors, especially for students who are not able to get scholarships.

Lastly, some students expressed that they chose Italy because of the *country's nature and culture*, especially the city of Venice. "*I had 3 opportunities actually: Japan, South Korea, and Italy. But I chose Italy because it was the only one that's outside of Asia. Because I think Asian culture is*

already clear to me, so I would like to try something new and I chose Italy because it's in Europe. Western is something more different".

4.2.5 Factors influencing program selection

5. Which factors you considered when choosing a program to study?	- I chose management because it was continuing my major in bachelor's degree; - I love international economics, global economics because I pursue my previous program in bachelor's degree. - I want to study something useful for my career, so that's why I chose the entrepreneurship because I would like to start my own business in the future. - Job opportunities in future; - I chose this program because I like the industry. I want to know more business. Because economics is the future in our lives, in every country; I also want to become an entrepreneur, so that's why chose business and economics. - I like to study management. I want to have my own business. - I learned about the Business Administration, so then I chose to continue in international management. - I want to continue my major in bachelor's degree.

Table 29: Factors influencing program selection

As shown in Table 29 that international students' decisions to select their current programs were mainly affected by either their *future career* or their *previous backgrounds*. In detail, some students want to study, for example the economics and management, because they want to open their own business in the future or because they want to be an expert in this field. On the other hand, some students chose to study in the current program just because they want to pursue their studies from bachelor's degree (or previous degree).

However, for some students, especially who have changed to another program in master's degree, the key influence is the job opportunities after graduation. In other words, their decision in choosing program is driven by the market requirements.

4.2.6 Choice criteria

6. Could you please tell me order of your choice criteria?	- Country first, then university, and program (5) - Program, University, and Country (2) - Country, then the program, and university - University first, then program - Program first, then country, and university

Table 30: Choice criteria

Fifty per cent of interviewed students answered that they chose the country first before choosing the university and program. Whilst, other students such as who want to continue the study from bachelor's selected program first and then chose the university. Lastly, for some students, because they have relatives or close friends who have studied at the university, the university was chosen firstly, followed by the program.

4.2.7 Evaluation of application process in Ca' Foscari University

7. How about the application process in Ca' Foscari University, as well as support from departments?	- I think it's quite standardize and everything is online; the instruction is quite clear on the university website; I started very friendly with welcome unit. - I got support from them (staffs), they are very kind. - Actually the website of Ca' Foscari is very clear for students to find information; - the staffs supported me well in application process - They are really helpful; challenge by the documentation process, the application took time but wasn't so long, and any information is in the internet; The school departments such as welcome unit and their staffs were helpful. - It was kind of easy for me, I just follow the website step by step. I got support from the departments also; - Actually it was a little bit complicated for me because there is many information there on the website.

Table 31: Application process in Ca' Foscari University

Application is one of the major steps for any students after considering all the relevant factors. As showed in Table 31, many students agreed that information needed for application in the university is provided clearly on the website, students then only need to follow the introductions. Besides that, almost all students who participated in the interviews expressed their satisfaction with the departments involved in the recruitment process. For example, the Welcome Unit has received very good evaluations from students by friendly support.

In addition to the positive evaluations, there were a few opinions about the complication of documentations.

4.2.8 Visa procedure

8. How about the visa procedure when you applied to study in Italy?	- It was very easy for me because I had scholarship (full). So I didn't need to prove my financial statement a lot. - It's quite difficult for us, because they asked a lot documents to prove our family financial statements and it took time. - Problems in documentations - It's was a little bit difficult because there were a lot of documentations. It was not so hard, but some difficulties. I had to prove my financial statement. I had to find a lot of documents from different organizations. It's time consuming. - I got the visa late and came to Venice quite late. - I had problems with the visa. It's very difficult. Because our education system is different with Italian education system, so we have to convert our diploma to international diploma. It's a lot of processes. And that costed a lot also. I took me a lot of time also. - Because when I got scholarship from Ca' Foscari, it became easier when I applied in visa. It's very sure that I can get the visa, because I had the full scholarship. It's not really a problem for me. - It very difficult. There are many requirements, and because I don't live in capital, so I have to flight to the

	capital to submit the documents; It took a lot of time (4-5 months) to get the visa. It wasn't nice. - It was a big challenge for me. I was very hard to ask for visa to study abroad in Italy. We have to a lot of processes, it took me about 4-5 months and I had to submit a lot of documents. - It's quite difficult, took me a lot of time and I had to submit a lot of documents to prove my family finance.

Table 32: Visa procedure

Visa application is the final stage that students have to finish before going abroad to study. However, as mentioned in Table 32, almost all students participated in the interviews faced problems when asking for a visa. Except for a few students who got a full scholarship from the university at the beginning, all other students faced a lot of difficulties in this step. Students expressed that they had to submit a lot of documents in order to prove their financial statement, or their family financial statement. This is especially difficult for students whose families do business in agriculture production as the documents in business are not easy to collect. In addition to the difficulties with *documentation*, *time consuming* is another problem faced by students. As students explained, they often took from 4-5 months to get the visa, not to mention the possibility of being rejected by embassies. Some students had arrived in Venice and started their first term of study late due to the postponement of the visa. This problem is critical for students as they believed that it could affect prospective students in the future if they consider studying in Italy.

4.2.9 Challenges in the early stage of student life.

9. Did you face any difficulty when first arrived Venice or when you study the university?	- No, I didn't because I had friends here. - Document works, language, and finding accommodation. - There was difficulty about finding place - It's about the language. That's a big problem for me. - It was hard at the beginning because not too many people speak English, they speak Italian only. I was hard to get taxi, find the house, get the support when I first come in.

	- It was hard at the beginning to find places, but then it's okay.

Table 33: Difficulties faced by students when first arrived Venice/ university

Finding accommodation is the most difficult challenge that students have to pass in the early stage of studying in Venice. Since the city is one of the top tourist destinations in Italy, accommodation is always expensive and scarce. Some students have mentioned that they almost could not find a house in the first weeks after arriving due to some specific reasons. The first reason is because of the language barrier. Secondly, because of the late arrival due to problems with visa, it became more and more difficult to find houses with a reasonable price. As the number of students coming to Venice is increasing every year, the possibility to find accommodation with a suitable price for students is really a challenge, and it takes time.

In addition to accommodation issues, *language* is another challenge for international students. If *finding accommodation* is just the problem which can be solved in a few weeks, the language barrier is a long-term issue.

4.2.10 Students' level of satisfaction with the university

10. Are you satisfied with study in the university?	- Yes, I'm satisfied with my study; - For me everything is nice. - The main thing I was not satisfied with the university was the accommodation problem; The second problem: the international student office doesn't really help; About the professors, I am satisfied with them. Another concern is making friends with students. About the infrastructure, and faculty staffs, they are very good to us. - I'm really satisfied with the university. I gain some challenges; Also different events during my study added some colors in my student life. I also met a lot of people, it's exciting. - What make me satisfied is I am gaining a lot of knowledge, I think that's really good; I am also satisfied as the courses have a lot of practices. But I am not also satisfied with some of the courses those are very theoretical; - I live in Treviso, so it's very boring. The program is very good, but actually it's not what I expected. The program is more about examinations, papers, projects, etc. I expected it would be more practical, more realistic approaches than idealistic. As I study in Global Development and Entrepreneurship, so I expect to have more international students. - Yes, I am very satisfied with my decision. I met a lot of friends. I have met a lot of people in the future I can work with. And I want to continue in PhD here. - I feel good with the quality of program in our university. - I am totally satisfied with the university. The environment is great, professors and my classmates are very friendly. I really learned a lot from here, and got many support also. I really enjoyed Venice.

Table 34: Students' level of satisfaction with the university

In general, Table 34 indicates the students' satisfaction with the university. Among 10 interviewed students, not only students who are studying but also students who have graduated and worked are very satisfied with what they have learned and experienced from the university. Although the study

in the university is extremely difficult and challenging, according to some students, the students really gain a lot of knowledge those would be helpful for them in the future.

In addition to the studies at the university, living experiences are also very important for students. Venice is a beautiful city with full of activities and festivals, this creates great satisfaction with both living and studying.

However, in addition to the positive evaluations of studying in the university and living in Venice, there are negative evaluations regarding the programs. As mentioned by some students, some courses in the program (management) are pretty theoretical, which is not suitable for the current market requirements, especially for those who study in marketing and communication. Students also complained about the exams since some of them are too difficult for students, even the results could not present all students' abilities. Lastly, it was suggested to eliminate some course those are not suitable in the program.

In conclusion, although there are small opinions about the limitations of programs, the university has brought students good experiences.

4.2.11 Students' suggestions

11. Do you have any suggestion for the university to improve in future?	- Yes. It's about the €5000 scholarships. Because the university sent me scholarships so late so I got problems with my visa. I was rejected at the first time. The second time when I applied again, I got the visa just because I had the scholarship. So, if the university sent it soon, it would be much easier. - Yah it's about the accommodation problem. I think there should have an apartment closed to the campus (Computer science) or a residence closed to the campus. Then international students can stay there a few weeks before looking for accommodation, or before they decide to remain there for rest of the semester. The second point, some lecturers don't really understand international students. When the internal students come, there should be a meeting with

	them and talk to them, explain them everything and let them ask their questions. That would help in the future. - In the welcome day, university should provide more helpful information rather than information about clubs, etc. Maybe each campus can hold a meeting at the beginning, for conference, for introduction, to let students know how to work in each campus. University also need to help students with accommodation when they first arrived. About language, maybe each campus can offer Italian class for students. Like in the science campus there is offered, but they rejected students from other campus. So I thought our campus can do the same. - I hope the university can help to support students in visa process, instead of just leaving them with procedure, working closer to the embassy. University need to help students with documentation process, not just leaving them alone. Lastly, please keep the scholarship for international students. It's very important. - I hope the university will continue the scholarship for students in countries like us, especially who passionate in study, like me, then we have chance to work with colleagues, experts. - I hope there will be more activities between professors and students. - I think the university should move the program in Venice, not in Treviso. In Treviso, we feel like high school students. It's master's program, it should be in bigger city.

	- I think the most important thing is the visa procedure, so I hope the university can support students to over the visa challenge. - Need support from school at the first time when we arrived Venice, because almost international students don't speak Italian. For example, we need the buddy or some persons coming to airport and pick up us, and put us in the right places. I think at the first time when we don't know anything about the country, it's very necessary. - The only thing I want to mention is the visa. But I don't know how can the university can help students, because it's problem with the embassy, not the university. - And if it's possible, I really hope the university can provide free Italian course for new students, maybe not so much, just to get to know the language and then we can study in center, in school, or by ourselves.

Table 35: Students' suggestions

As mentioned above, students did face plenty of difficulties with their visas, as well as challenges when they first arrived in Venice and started studying. Therefore, although students are satisfied with the university in general, there are still some limitations that need to be improved in the future. This will be expressed by the suggestions of interviewed students.

Firstly, visa issues are always a top priority for international students. Many students have been rejected at least one time because of the late arrival of scholarships. Besides that, the documentation is also very costly and time-consuming, students suggested that there should be steps taken to improve the situation. Lastly, students expect that the university can give brief introduction about visa procedure, instead of leaving them alone with the process.

Secondly, accommodation is the next challenge after visa issues. Therefore, students strongly expressed their expectations about improvement in the future. In fact, the university has a *housing*

service office where students can find support in finding accommodation. However, some students have mentioned that this office is not working effectively. The office often sends information about accommodation in Venice before students get visas and start coming to Venice. As such, students often reject offers when they are not sure about the acceptance of visa. Therefore, when students arrive in Venice, they have to contact the office again, but the answers are always asking them to wait for more. In the first time of arrival, students really need help from the university.

In addition, along with the accommodation issues, students also have to adjust and become familiar with the new city, and this is not easy. Therefore, some students from interviews expected that the university can provide support by buddies, or similar activities to help students become easier in adjusting and adapting to a new environment.

Finally, some students have complained about the programs. Although they agreed that the programs in Ca' Foscari are good in general, some courses designed are too theoretical and not corresponded with the market requirements or their future career. Therefore, they expect that this issue could be improved in up-coming years.

4.3 Final results

4.3.1 Sources of information

The data from both quantitative and qualitative analyses indicated that the *internet* is the major source of information when students chose an academic destination. However, if surveyed students suggested that *friends and alumni* are the second useful reference, the results from interviews, on the other hand, indicated *agents* as the second influential variable. The third common source of information is the *exhibition/ fair*. Lastly, it seems that other sources of information such as *magazines*, *television*, *advertisement*, are new for students since not many students rated them as common tools for information searching.

4.3.2 Why students seek to study abroad?

There are many reasons that pushed students to study in another country instead of their home countries. However, there is a common belief from both surveys and interviews that students decided to study abroad because they want to *experience a new culture*. Especially for students from Asian countries, culture experiencing in European countries are always attractive. Besides that, some students also agreed that studying overseas will bring them *a better education system*, which will be helpful in the future for their career. Lastly, the *value of international degrees* is one

of the main reasons when students considered studying overseas. The results from surveys and interviews are similar in investigating the "push-factors".

4.3.3 Factors influencing students in choosing host country.

Both students in surveys and interviews rated *the country's culture* as the most influential variable when deciding *where* should they study in the future. However, if the surveyed students believed that *the country's academic reputation* is the second considerable determinant, interviewed students considered *living cost* and *tuition fees* as the second important influence. Lastly, unlike the result from surveys which indicated that the *country's development level* has a strong effect, results from interviews indicated that students did not consider this factor. Similarly, other factors such as *the work opportunities* and *the ease of visa procedure* did not receive attention from interviewed students.

4.3.4 Why students chose to study in the Ca' Foscari University?

Results from the quantitative analysis indicated the seemingly-equally evaluations among the *university's reputation* and *research raking*. However, in the interviews, other variables that strongly influenced students have been discovered. For example, some students expressed that they chose the university is because of the *possibility to study in different backgrounds*. Whilst, some other students identified that *scholarship* is the most influential factor motivating them to study at the university.

4.3.5 Students' choice of program

Results from interviews indicated the decision of *what* to study is partly influenced by the backgrounds of students; in this case, most students will choose to *continue their studies* from the previous level of education. However, for some students, the decision of program is driven by *what* they can do in the future. In other words, the *opportunities after graduation* could be considered as a strong influence. Lastly, it can be seen that the choice of the program sometimes depends on *students' desire in their future career*, which aims to answer the question: *what* they want to do in the future.

4.3.6 Importance of cost and scholarship.

Data from both interviews and surveys showed the importance of *cost issues* in influencing student's decisions of a particular host country or particular host institution. It can be seen from the quantitative analysis that the *affordability of tuition fees* and *availability of scholarships* are the major factors influencing student's decision, which has substantially greater importance than

other factors such as *living expense* or *availability of par-time works*. This is particularly true for students from Asian countries or Emerging countries when their studies almost depend on university scholarship or regional scholarship. Similar to survey results, students expressed in the interviews that tuition fees and living cost are the most essential – critical factor which should be given full consideration at the beginning. Some students have explained in the interviews that they may not pursue higher education if they do not have scholarships to afford the expenses. Therefore, if the *cost* is one of the obstacles to the students' study plans, the *scholarships*, on the other hand, can help students to solve the issues and bring more opportunities and confidence in choosing any particular academic institution. For some students, *cost and scholarship* became more and more important since Venice is a tourist attraction where all of its expenses are totally higher than in other cities.

4.3.7 Difficulties faced by students in application process and when start studying

As mentioned in the interviews, almost all students faced problems with documentation in *visa application*. This was explained clearly in the interviews since students had to take a lot of time in preparing documents and transporting. This also leads to later problems faced by students such as late arrival and difficulty in finding accommodations. In the meantime, students also faced challenges in getting familiar with the new environment, especially in creating networks with Italian students, or communicating with people around, due to the language barrier.

4.3.8 What did students suggest?

To begin with, students' suggestions from surveys almost focused on the language using by the university's departments. In particular, students expected in surveys that the university can use both Italian and English in *email*, instead of the Italian language only. This made some difficulties to students in approaching information, especially important announcements. In addition, students also expected that the university can organize more activities to connect Italian and international students due to the difficulty in communicating between international students and Italian students. Lastly, there are also other suggestions such as support in finding accommodation or documentation in applying the stay permit.

There is a small difference between surveys and interviews; as in the interview, students almost mentioned the support in *visa application* and *finding accommodation* in the first time of arrival.

Lastly, there are some opinions asked to improve the service in Welcome Unit (the International Office). However, this is opposite to the evaluations of interviewed students since most students from interviews rated high satisfaction of the Welcome Unit and their support.

CHAPTER V: CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Conclusions and suggestions

The specific aim of this study is to identify the group factors influencing students' decisions in studying abroad and choosing host academic destinations as well as the importance rate of each factor. Moreover, students' evaluations and expectations after entering the university is also explored in this research, which could help the university in future in improving school quality and attracting more international students.

Firstly, results from surveys and interviews have indicated several main reasons that "pushed" students to study abroad, including the *international experience*, *higher quality education*, *improvement of job opportunities*, etc. Secondly, in choosing an academic destination, the "pull-factors" of each country were considered carefully. The majority of students considered the culture of countries since one of the purposes of studying abroad is *exploring the international culture*. In addition, the *nature of a country*, or *validity of degree* after graduation from that country is also another influential variable. As Italy is one of the top attractive destinations for both tourists and students, this is attracting more and more international students every year. Not only the country, but the attraction of Venice is also one of the big promotions bringing students to the Ca' Foscari university. However, besides the above mentioned factors, it cannot be denied that *cost and scholarship* factor has a great influence on student decision on host academic institution.

Besides that, students sampled also had some evaluations through the application process in the university. Although almost all students have great satisfaction with the university and the city of Venice, there are students some limitations that students expect to improve in the future. For example, *visa procedure* and *finding accommodations* are the most discussed problems that students both in interviews and surveys expected to improve in up-coming years, if the university or the country wants to attract more international students.

In the last part, based on the students' perspectives, evaluation, and suggestions about applying in the university, several suggestions have been generalized for academic institutions.

Firstly, it is critically important for any academic institution to consider students from Asian and Emerging countries since the number of students from those countries who studying abroad is more and more increasing in recent years. As mentioned in the first chapter, two-third of international students in OECD countries in current years are from Asian countries. There is a large number of those

students who have kept living in the country after graduation to work and contribute to the country's human and capital development, or such as in R&D activities in organizations, universities, etc. This should be considered and encouraged. The increase in the number of international students and their satisfaction contribute greatly to the awareness of education services of any particular institution, which helps to enhance the university's reputation in academic activities as well as research collaborations. In the long-term development, the increase of international students creates a win-win solution for both sending and host countries.

Secondly, as indicated by the results, "*internet power*" has significant importance, compared to other sources of information. Therefore, a website that appeals to students is significantly necessary. Besides that, the website content should be organized appropriately so that students can search quickly and effectively. The *usability of the sites* has a particular impact on building the users' satisfaction and loyalty (Chang, 2017).

Thirdly, the drivers influencing students to study overseas almost based on the "push-factors". In recent years, students from those countries increasingly go abroad to pursue higher education not because of the lack of supply in the home country, but because they want to look for *new experiences*, *higher quality education*, and *job opportunities*. Therefore, in order to attract students, the *education quality* is the first variable. It is always the heart of any educational institution. Regardless of any other reasons, when students decided to study abroad, *quality education* is absolutely one of the most concerning factors. Therefore, in order to connect talented students and compete effectively with other institutions, educational organizations should improve teaching and learning activities effectively. Besides that, the network of universities and outside organizations is also necessary to expanded, which brings students and schools to collaborate with reputable institutions.

Then, it should be mentioned again that *cost and scholarship* is the key motive that helps students to maintain their studies. In addition to quality education, tuition fees and financial aid are considered as the second "pull-factor" influencing students' decision of enrolling. Contrary to students from high social-economic backgrounds, many students who are studying in the university depend largely on the school's financial support. In other words, without investment from the university in financial support, those students cannot continue their studies. Likewise, many students had to give up opportunities to study in top countries just because they cannot afford the tuition fees, regardless they have received acceptance from top universities. Therefore, it is suggested that, besides the affordability of tuition fees, scholarship and financial aid should be maintaining to support students who especially need it.

After that, it's also necessary to support students who have problems with visa issues such as providing introductions about the procedure, which can help students in active working with their process. At the same time, the support from university can help students to save time and enter the university on time. Also, the support also help university to not miss talented students.

After enrolling, there should be also supported in connecting with local students, helping international students to get familiar with the new environment, and finding places. There were suggestions from interviewed students including providing support services in airports or establishing buddy clubs. Similarly, language is another barrier which prevents students to communicate and get help from local students and local people, therefore, offers of Italian courses are also necessary.

Lastly, in general, the trust of prospective students is almost from the experiences shared by students who are studying or have studied at the university. Therefore, listening to students and improving quality in services or education activities are always worthy of serious consideration.

5.2 Research limitations

Although providing valuable information about international students' perspectives when choosing Ca' Foscari University for higher study, there are limitations existing in this study. Firstly, due to the impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic and closure of the university, it was impossible to approach students on campus. This led to the small sample size of the research. Therefore, the results of the research could not be so generalizable and presented for the whole group of school students. Secondly, all the interviews in this study were conducted online, so there are limitations in understanding and exploring respondents' opinions. If there were opportunities to have face-to-face interviews, the information collected could be better with more details.

Nevertheless, the research provides basic understandings of international students' perspectives and their decisions when choosing to study abroad. The author hopes that this study could be helpful for further studies in the same field.

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APPENDIX

Appendix A: Questionnaire for surveys

SURVEY OF FACTORS INFLUENCING STUDENTS TO CHOOSE CA' FOSCARI UNIVERSITY

Dear friends, dear colleagues,

My name is Phan Thi Nga (Jasmine), I am a master's degree student in the Department of Management at Ca' Foscari University of Venice.

I am writing my thesis on "Exploring Factors Influencing International Student's Decision in Selecting Ca' Foscari University for Higher Education".

In order to understand the reasons leading international students to select Ca' Foscari University, as well as your evaluation and expectation about the university, I need to collect opinion of foreign students. So, I hope you can take a few minutes to fill in the survey. Your help will be really important for me!

The questionnaire is anonymous and the data, provided voluntarily, will be treated in compliance with the methodologies foreseen by art. 13 and 14 of the GDPR - EU Regulation 2016/679 and used exclusively for this analysis.

To complete the questionnaire, you must be of legal age.

Thank you in advance for your time.

(Estimated time for compilation: 5 minutes)

Part I: Source of Information.

Which source of information below helped you to know the Ca' Foscari University? (More than one option are possible)

- ☐ Internet
- ☐ Friends or relatives

- ☐ Exhibition/ fair
- ☐ School career adviser
- ☐ Agents
- ☐ Television advertising
- ☐ Magazines specific to international education
- ☐ Others

Part II: Factors influenced students to choose the Ca' Foscari University

In the next questions, choose the option that reflects at best your opinion about different factors of influence. If you do not consider this factor at all, please select **"Not considered"**. The scale of evaluation will be:

0: Not considered

1: Little consideration/importance

2: Moderate consideration/importance

3: Average consideration/importance

4: High consideration/importance

5: Extreme consideration/importance

I. Key "push-factors" (The reasons why I wanted to seek degree in another country were because (of)…)	**0 Not Cons.**	**1 Little Cons.**	**2 Moderate Cons.**	**3 Average Cons.**	**4 High Cons.**	**5 Extreme Cons.**
1. An inadequate supply of university places in my home country						
2. Some courses are not available at home						
3. It was difficult to gain entry (in universities) at home						
4. I want to improve employment opportunities						
5. The higher quality education						
6. The strong economic growth of other countries						
7. I want to understand Western cultures						
8. International/intercultural experiences						

II. Country Image Effect (Why did you choose Italy?)	**0 Not Cons.**	**1 Little Cons.**	**2 Moderate Cons.**	**3 Average Cons.**	**4 High Cons.**	**5 Extreme Cons.**
1. The country's landscape and culture heritage						
2. The country’s academic reputation						
3. The country's development level						
4. The work opportunities						
5. The ease of Immigration procedures						
6. The living cost in Italy is affordable						

III. Location and environment (the Venice city was important to consider because (of)…)	**0 Not Cons.**	**1 Little Cons.**	**2 Moderate Cons.**	**3 Average Cons.**	**4 High Cons.**	**5 Extreme Cons.**
1. The city where my university is located is safe						
2. There is no discrimination against me at this university						
3. The diversity of the city where my university is located						
4. The possibility of staying and working in the city where my university is located after graduation						
5. The living cost in the city is affordable						

IV. University Image (I selected to study in the Ca' Foscari University because (of) …)	**0 Not Cons.**	**1 Little Cons.**	**2 Moderate Cons.**	**3 Average Cons.**	**4 High Cons.**	**5 Extreme Cons.**
1. University's reputation for teaching						
2. University's history and current academic reputation						
3. University's research ranking						

V. Cost and Scholarship in the Ca' Foscari University (I chose to study in the Ca' Foscari University because (of)…)	**0 Not Cons.**	**1 Little Cons.**	**2 Moderate Cons.**	**3 Average Cons.**	**4 High Cons.**	**5 Extreme Cons.**
1. The tuition fees are affordable						
2. The living expenses are affordable						
3. Part-time works are available						
4. Availability of university scholarships or region scholarships.						

VI. Program Evaluation (I chose to study this program because (of)…)	**0 Not Cons.**	**1 Little Cons.**	**2 Moderate Cons.**	**3 Average Cons.**	**4 High Cons.**	**5 Extreme Cons.**
1. Program suitability to my career						
2. The program quality ranking						
3. The program taught by English						
4. Program recognition by future employers						
5. A wide range of program						

VII. Recommendations (I followed the following recommendation when choosing the Ca' Foscari University)	0 Not Cons.	1 Little Cons.	2 Moderate Cons.	3 Average Cons.	4 High Cons.	5 Extreme Cons.
1. Recommendation from my professor in my country						
2. Recommendation from my friends or alumni (who have studied at this university)						
3. Recommendation from my family/relatives						
4. Recommendation from my sponsor						
5. My personal feeling						

6. Please choose the three most important channels of recommendation and put in order

	From my professor	From my friends or alumni	From my family/relatives	From my sponsor	My personal feeling
The most important recommendation					
The 2nd important recommendation					
The 3rd important recommendation					

Impacts of Covid-19 pandemic on your study plan (This part is only for prospective students)

1. Is there any change in your study plan due to the outbreak of coronavirus?
   - ☐ No, there is not.
   - ☐ Yes, there is.
   - ☐ I don't know/ I'm not sure.
2. If there is any change (or maybe change) in your study plan, so what are you going to do?
   - ☐ I intend to defer the entry to next year

- ☐ I intend to study in different country
- ☐ I want to cancel my study overseas temporally
- ☐ Others

3. If there is any change in your study plan, what is your concern(s)?
   - ☐ Health concern
   - ☐ The difficulty in visa procedure
   - ☐ My family's recommendation
   - ☐ Others

CURRENT STUDENT'S SUGGESTIONS.

For current students only, do you have any suggestions for the university's improvement?

VIII. Your personal Information

1. Your age
   - ☐ 18-21
   - ☐ 22-24
   - ☐ 25-28
   - ☐ >28

2. Your Major (* Please refer to the following university URL to find your course: https://www.unive.it/pag/10478/)

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3. Your home country (Where are you from? Please, use the English name of your country as listed here:* https://www.nationsonline.org/oneworld/countries_of_the_world.htm#I)

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4. The academic level you are pursuing
   - ☐ Bachelor's degree
   - ☐ Master's degree
   - ☐ PhD
   - ☐ Others

The end!

Thank you so much for your help. If you have any recommendations to improve my survey, please don't hesitate to write here, or you can contact me directly via my mail address: 877309@stud.unive.it.

Thanks and best wishes!

Appendix B: Questionnaires for Qualitative Analysis

1. Personal information (age, major, home country, living in accommodation or not)
2. How do you know Ca' Foscari, by internet, or friends, relatives?
3. What were the **main reasons** you seek to **study in another country** but not in your country?
4. Which **factors** you considered significantly when choosing a country, and city?
5. Could you please tell me in details why you chose Italy, or particularly the Ca' Foscari University?
6. Which factors you considered when choosing a **program** to study?
7. Could you please tell me **order of your choice criteria** (Country, program, university, city, etc..)?
8. During the application process, did you find enough information on the university's website, or did you get help from the recruitment department?
9. Did you face any problem when applying for Italy visa?
10. When you first arrived Venice, did you face any difficulty/ challenge?
11. What make you satisfied and not satisfied about the university (the Ca' Foscari)? Or do you have any difficulty when study in the campus? What do you think about the application process and recruitment process in out university?
12. Do you think the Covid-19 pandemic will influence your decision to study abroad, or change your decision about a host country? (*This question only for prospective students who have applied Ca' Foscari and will attend university next year*).
13. Do you have any suggestion for the university?

Appendix C: AHP Methodology

An example of "push-factors"

Reference: Ernest H. Forman, Mary Ann Selly. (2001). *Decision by Objectives: How to Convince Others That You Are Right.* World Scientific.

Step 1: from the data collected, assigning '1/9' to '0' as the lowest level of consideration (not consideration) and consider 8 criteria of "push-factors" such as 'An inadequate supply of university places in my home country', 'Some courses are not available at home', etc. as 8 criteria in AHP analysis.

Step 2. Computing Geometric mean of each criterion

No. of respondents	1. An inadequate supply of university places in my home country	2. Some courses are not available at home	3. It was difficult to gain entry (in universities) at home	4. I want to improve employment opportunities	5. The higher quality education	6. The strong economic growth of other countries	7. I want to understand Western cultures	8. International experiences
1	2	4	1/9	4	5	4	5	5
2	1/9	1/9	1/9	4	4	4	2	4
3	1/9	1/9	1/9	4	4	2	5	5
4	1	1	1/9	5	4	2	4	5
5	2	1/9	1/9	3	4	3	4	5
6	3	3	1/9	5	5	5	5	5
...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
110	1	1	1	5	4	4	4	5
Geometric mean [(1)]	**0.719180973**	**1.037393193**	**0.314058581**	**3.81053739**	**3.862794271**	**2.819662394**	**3.02120625**	**4.545318258**

Table 36: Geometric mean of "push-factors"

Note [(1)]: Geometric means are computed by using GEOMEAN command.

Step 3: constructing the 'consolidated comparison matrix'

Based on the Geometric mean calculated, a 'consolidated comparison matrix' of all pairs of criteria is constructed. The principle is: if criterion 1 is worth "**0.719180973"** and criterion 2 is worth **"1.037393193"**, then criterion 1 vs. criterion 2 = **0.719180973/ 1.037393193 =** 0.693258 (*). Similarly, if criterion 1 is worth "**0.719180973"** and criterion 3 is worth "**0.314058581"**, then criterion 1 vs. criterion 2 = **0.719180973/0.314058581 =** 2.289958 (**).

This technique is applied the same for all the remaining pairs of comparison as the following table:

Criteria	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1	1	0.693258*	2.289958 **	0.188735	0.186182	0.255059	0.238044	0.158225
2	1.442465	1	3.303184	0.272243	0.26856	0.367914	0.343371	0.228233
3	0.436689	0.302738	1	0.082418	0.081303	0.111382	0.103951	0.069095
4	5.29844	3.673185	12.13321	1	0.986472	1.351416	1.261264	0.838343
5	5.371102	3.723559	12.2996	1.013714	1	1.369949	1.27856	0.84984
6	3.920658	2.718027	8.978142	0.739964	0.729954	1	0.93329	0.620344
7	4.200898	2.912306	9.619881	0.792856	0.78213	1.071478	1	0.664685
8	6.320131	4.381481	14.47284	1.192829	1.176692	1.612008	1.504471	1

Table 37: "Push-factors" - comparison matrix

Step 4: Assessing the consistency

a) Computing the Geometric means along columns

Criteria	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	**Geo. Means =** $\sqrt[8]{A = ai1.ai2 \dots ai8}$
1	1	0.693258	2.289958	0.188735	0.186182	0.255059	0.238044	0.158225	0.390063631
2	1.442465	1	3.303184	0.272243	0.26856	0.367914	0.343371	0.228233	0.562653033
3	0.436689	0.302738	1	0.082418	0.081303	0.111382	0.103951	0.069095	0.170336585
4	5.29844	3.673185	12.13321	1	0.986472	1.351416	1.261264	0.838343	2.06672883
5	5.371102	3.723559	12.2996	1.013714	1	1.369949	1.27856	0.84984	2.095071499
6	3.920658	2.718027	8.978142	0.739964	0.729954	1	0.93329	0.620344	1.529305965
7	4.200898	2.912306	9.619881	0.792856	0.78213	1.071478	1	0.664685	1.638617711
8	6.320131	4.381481	14.47284	1.192829	1.176692	1.612008	1.504471	1	2.465253407

Table 38: "Push-factors" - Geometric means along columns

The sum of Geometric means = 10.9180306613007

b) Computing scoring vector by diving the Geometric means by the sum

Criteria	**Geo. Means =** $\sqrt[8]{A = ai1.ai2 \dots ai8}$	Scoring Vector
1	0.390063631	0.035726556
2	0.562653033	0.051534297
3	0.170336585	0.015601402
4	2.06672883	0.18929502
5	2.095071499	0.19189097
6	1.529305965	0.140071595
7	1.638617711	0.150083633
8	2.465253407	0.225796527

Table 39: "Push-factors" - Scoring vector

c) Computing lambda λ

To compute the lambda, we firstly multiply each row of the matrix (Table 37) by the scoring vector.

For example, result of criterion 1 = (1, 0.693258, 2.289958, 0.188735, 0.186182, 0.255059, 0.238044, 0.158225) X (0.035726556, 0.051534297, 0.015601402, 0.18929502, 0.19189097, 0.140071595, 0.150083633, 0.225796527) = 0.285812 *

λ is obtained by diving by the scoring vector 1 (0.035726556)

$\lambda = \frac{0.285812}{0.035726556} = 8$

Applying the same method to all the rest criteria, we obtain the table of results as below:

Lambda estimates	
0.285812 *	8.0000
0.412274	8.0000
0.124811	8.0000
1.51436	8.0000
1.535128	8.0000
1.120573	8.0000
1.200669	8.0000
1.806372	8.0000

Table 40: "Push-Factors" - Lambda estimates

The average lambda of all criteria = 8.00

d) **Computing the consistency index**

The consistency index = $\frac{\lambda - n}{n-1}$

Where: *n* = number of alternatives (criteria) = 8

If *CI* is close to zero, the evaluation is consistent.

If *CI* is close to 1.41, the evaluation is completely inconsistent, according to the table of perfect consistent index:

No. of Alternatives	Inconsistency index
3	0.58
4	0.9
5	1.12
6	1.24
7	1.32
8	1.41
9	1.45

Table 41: Values of perfect inconsistency for different dimensions (Source: ALONSO and LAMATA, 2006)

So, in this case, the consistency index (CI) $= \frac{8-8}{8-1} = 0$

The consistency ratio = $\frac{\mathbf{CI}}{1.41} = 0\%$

Since the consistency ratio is less than 10%, we conclude that the comparison matrix is consistent.

Step 5: Evaluating overall rankings

The rankings of criteria are shorted from highest ranking to lowest ranking as in the following table:

Criteria	Geometric means	Scoring Vector
8	2.465253407	0.225796527
5	2.095071499	0.19189097
4	2.06672883	0.18929502
7	1.638617711	0.150083633
6	1.529305965	0.140071595
2	0.562653033	0.051534297
1	0.390063631	0.035726556
3	0.170336585	0.015601402

Table 42: "Push-Factors" - Criteria rankings