

Factors that Undermine International Students' Decision to Choose China as Work Destination: An Exploratory Study

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Abstract

Recently, China has become one of the top leading destinations in Asia and fifth global host destination for international students from across the globe. Unlike the developed countries, China is not an attractive work destination for those global students graduating from Chinese universities. This study aims to explore the determinants of de-motivation for international students to choose China as work destination. This research leads to expand the understanding of the various elements that support students' decision with regards to choosing a study destination. The questionnaires were distributed personally at international students' dormitories of various universities in Wuhan to ensure the highest response. The results shows that 64 percent responded that Chinese economy is growing but 74 percent of the respondents mentioned that they do not want to stay for seeking jobs after graduation and 80 percent of the respondents were not to start their own business in China. One of the reasons was that majority of students was legally bound to go back to their countries after graduation as they were on scholarships. Policy suggestions will be directed in the light of these results. This research also, exploring that contribution of growing countries as not only senders, but also recipients of international students.

Keywords: de-motivation, international graduates, work destination

1. Introduction

After 1970s reforms of the Chinese Government, rapid economic growth and high government investment have supported the expansion of higher education (Carnoy et al.2012). Twenty-first century blessed China with economic power which attracted a number of multi-national companies. It also gave impetus to bring the international students. The Chinese government also focused to attract more and more students, both scholarships and self-supporting students, also to internationalize its academia. There is an evident inundation of international students from 1,236 in 1978 to 328,330 in 2012 (Wangshu, 2013).

Lately Singapore, Malaysia and China, have begun to dynamically emulate with their Western counterparts for receiving international students (Chan & Ng, 2008). The students are more curious to acquire study outside rather than their home country if they have financial support, the Chinese Scholarship Council (CSC) began in 1997 to establish a series of government scholarships for international studies in accordance with agreements signed between foreign governments, organizations, and educational institutions. With the passage of time, it is performing a magic to attract academic sojourners and, hence, the number is increasing by leaps and bounds through different scholarships (CSC, 2013). In 2012, China was fetching a number of 328,330 international students from different countries to study in the best Chinese higher education institutions, showing an increase of 12% since 2011. In this cross cultural mobility, the main predictor which helps in interactions among foreign students chose to study outside due to quality of education, overall cost, International experience, Cultural values and to strengthen their base for the future employment opportunities (Anderson & Bhati, 2012; Bodycott, 2009; Gibson, Qi, & Zhang, 2008; Ziguras & Law, 2006). As it is one of the important factors for all who move from one culture to another but it has more importance for international students. On one hand, they have to interact with host nationals and to adjust with social and cultural life of that new environment; on the other hand they also need to perform good in the academics which needs extra competence than a person who just visit as a tourist or a business person. Academic travelers are one of the most intensively studied groups in intercultural communication (Findlay, King, Smith, Geddes, & Skeldon, 2012; Jou & Fukada, 1997; Misra & Castillo, 2004; Ward, Bochner, & Furnham, 2001; Ying, 2005). When they cross the borders, they confront number of problems like, anxiety, homesickness, financial pressures, food, language etc, while living and studying in unknown and unfamiliar social, cultural and education environment (Foster, 2014; Lee, Koeske, & Sales, 2004; Ying, 2005).

The United States and Europe have retained the international minds after graduation by providing them opportunities to work and build their future destiny which is not a case in China. One of the causes could be that verbal communication is the biggest barrier among locals and international students every bit apart from mandarin, Chinese people speak their local accents as well. Guangdong is one of the models who speak Cantonese to perform their everyday affairs. Moreover, the international students who graduated from Chinese universities are also not well versed in Chinese which can help them to adapt with business affairs and dealing with local people To comprehend student's choice, future expectations, and experience in the context of China

this thesis, can serve as the background for future research on international students studying in China, as the current body of literature on developing host countries is quite limited. In this study, international students include individuals who are studying at institutions of higher education in China and do not speak Chinese as their primary language. This study explored the factors that drove them to study in China and their perceptions about Chinese culture. This study is also looking at the students' ambitions, in the future to stay work in China after their graduation, and how studying in China fits into their plans for working in the global workforce market and their home country. This study also examines how student's choices, future expectations, and experiences differ from those who are studying in their home country. I will be examining how these regional differences are associated with economic, cultural, and educational structures of the students' region of origin (Chen, 2007; Lee & Rice, 2007).

"Push-pull" models are the most frequently used frameworks in the educational research on international student destination choice and expectations. The intensity for each push or pull factor may be different across different cultures, regions and origins. The 'Push' factors, lack of admittance to local higher education, more dependable quality of overseas educational system, the availability of innovative technology-based programs also identified as pull factors influencing the choice of a host country; knowledge and awareness, personal testimonials, price issues, geographic proximity and social links are also important factor (Foster, 2014; Liu, Elston, & Zhou, 2013; Mazzarol & Soutar, 2002; Smith & McCabe, 2008; Wilkins, Balakrishnan, & Huisman, 2011).

2. Literature Review

A wide range of literature is available in cross cultural adaptation and choice of destination in the context of abroad education with new explorations and findings in Western context but as the international borders are opening for academic voyagers all across the globe, so it still needs to explore the issues of international students in new perspectives and set of data. As this study, mainly deals with the choice of study destination, perception about societies and the career destination after graduation.

There is a bulk of studies on language competency and international students' adjustment in an alien environment. (Fletcher & Richard, 1989) mentioned, in a Western context, that "difficulty with English diminishes the overall experience of foreign students by undercutting satisfaction with their academic programs." In suggestions they further emphasized that the university should proper attention to enhance their language skills as it is pertinent to their overall adaptation. They concluded their study that "the more effectively, they develop their English skills- other things being equal- the more satisfied they will be with their university experience" and then they further mentioned that "the effective use of the language of instruction is a crucial element in both academic learning and overall social adjustment." (Lakey & Hill, 1991) found that Thai students have faced the problem of communication in the American society. (Lewthwaite, 1996) defined the language competence, in a western context, as, "ability to speak and understand (in both academic and social settings) and to read and write (especially in academic English).

(Sam, 2001) in his survey found that in Norwegian context language does not significantly contribute to life satisfaction of international students in Norway. He further explained that the result of his study is not in the line with previous intercultural literature which is another exploration. He indicated that there is besides a need for further research to prove his results by examining the same case study where English is not the home language but international students use English in their tests and appointments. There are six factors that delineate (Mazzarol & Soutar, 2002) students' decisions, including; knowledge and awareness, recommendations from relatives and friends, financial issues, climate issues, social links, and origin proximity. They also demonstrated, in their studies of prospective students in East Asian lands, that economic and social situations in the home nations can act as push factors, and that knowledge and cognizance of the host countries can act as pull factors. International Ph.D. student's generally show a high degree of satisfaction, who hold scholarships and who experience particular financial difficulties. Language problems sometimes affect adversely, they are more sanguine about their careers, return home countries having permanent jobs, few look forward to seek job over here or other developed countries (Harman, 2003).

A study on some international students in European countries showed that, money, prestige and advancement are valuable motivators. Those who have already had an international experience through students exchange programs are more likely to work abroad. Language skills seem to be not a barrier for the international mobility. Host country language skill substantially increases the intention of international student to keep and start career over in that respect. Student exchange is an important impulse for international labor mobility (Harzing, 2004). Sociocultural adjustment is a crucial issue for international graduate students in multicultural societies, while slightly different educational systems, English proficiency problems, psychological stress, and difficulties in routine life are the core repellent factors in destiny decisions (Mostafa, 2006). The relationship between global students' and cross-cultural adaptation, language is big impediment on the adjustment process (Huang & Yongsheng, 2011; Selmer, 2006; Xu & Du-Babcock, 2012). They analyzed that language competency

has a positive affiliation with their socio-cultural adjustment but the relationship with work adjustment is quite weak. They further observed that language ability is stronger in the case of personal interaction. (Selmer, 2006) observed that western expatriate, being competent in Chinese language, but it does not have very strong influence of workplace and the benefits are limited only to the social interaction. He mentioned himself that “Although the findings of this study may also be relevant to other cultural areas with, from a Western point of perspective, similarly impregnable languages, the investigation can both be replicated and extended.” He concluded the work that “Unfortunately, there appears to be no single solution to ease the language problems in China.” (Norris & Gillespie, 2008) Study abroad affected the career choice and career growth. Career possibilities and social adjustment are critical factor in influencing international students’ intention about where they prefer to start their careers. Home countries wanted to increase the return of students need to straighten out the policies that decrease the proportional differences in these genes between the home nations. In particular that improve public safety, private and public opportunities, clean water, and living standards will have significant impact on the return of the highly educated human capital. Policies that enhance family and cultural values would attract students to bring back home. Student selected by State for foreign studies and assigning important position upon return for gaining new knowledge and skill, economic and positive political participation is expected (Bodycott, 2009; Xiang & Shen, 2009).

One of the most relevant information on higher education has been mentioned by (Marginson, 2010) in his study, which provided a good support for this study as a motivation. He summarized the changing global landscape of higher education in which China has shown tremendous record in the last few years. He explained that China has increased the number of universities and also increased the number of universities in the best 500. This rising number of the best universities and publication rate in China mean that the authorities are serious to bring their academia at international level. The growing number of international scholars is another parameter to back up the authors to get the subject of cross cultural adjustment in China (CSC, 2008; IIE, 2008). (Lim, Yap, & Lee, 2011; Mahmud, Amat, Rahman, & Ishak, 2010) are explained that culture, climate and local language ability influence the adjustment of international students, the ability of local and English language both help an international student to adopt and understand the lifestyle of the host country. The international online study is also beneficial for a future career, they can recognize differences, willing to adjust in a fresh environment and culture, but English language proficiency affects to earn experience for a vocation. Abroad education can explore the personality factor, vocational interest regarding cross-cultural environment (Earl & Cong, 2011; Fan, Cheung, Leong, & Cheung, 2011).

(Anderson & Bhati, 2012; Zheng, 2014) Study sought that international student interested in global and culture exposure being their choices behind the country safety and racism, familiar with culture, quality of education, financial prospects and job prospects. Economic, societal and political elements are also cogent reasons. International female student’s, being more stressed about their Employment and marriage, but academic burden and excessive homework affect the tension level of male student’s, while language proficiency has been significant in both male and female (Aydin, 2013).

3. Methods

3.1. Questionnaire Design

A four-part questionnaire was developed and content-validated to determine and analyze factors responsible for overall satisfaction of international students in Chinese universities. The 10 items in Part I sought information on respondents’ demographics. Part II comprised 7 items anchored on a closed type scale with “Yes” or “No”. Part III consists of 10 items on a five point Likert scale.

3.2. Sample and Participants

The sample comprised international students enrolled in public universities in Wuhan. In total, four hundred questionnaires were distributed with a return of 387 filled responses. The questionnaires were delivered to the students’ rooms and picked up within seven days. Again, this high response rate was largely attributed to the personalization of the questionnaire-distribution and data-collection processes and to the personal assurance for anonymity.

A total of three hundred and eighty-seven international students enrolled in Chinese universities responded to the survey. Of the total respondents of the survey, 60.9 % were male students and 39.1 % were female. In terms of age, the results shows that 33.4 % were between 21-25 years and 31.6 % were between 26-30 years. That means that 65 % of the respondents were between 21 and 30 years. 43.2 % of the total international students were undergraduates, 29.6 % were post-graduates, 19.5 % were doctoral students and only 3.6 % students are studying the Chinese language as a major. Half of the students of total sample were on full or partial scholarships while half, 49.4 %, of the respondents were enrolled on self-financed bases. Likewise majority of the respondents mentioned that they are good and average in Chinese speaking but average and

below average in reading, writing and listening. 60 % of the respondents have 2 or less than 2 years stay in China. 26.5 % have stayed 4 or less than 4 years while very few have more than 4 years stay in China.

4. Correlation Analysis

4.1. China as a Study Destination

The results of correlation analyses indicated that cultural influence has a significant association ($r = 0.168, p < .01$) with job planning in China. Likewise, previous experience to study abroad has also a positive association ($r = 0.162, p < .01$) with cultural influence. The result also indicated that cultural influence has positive association ($r = 0.345, p < .01$) with economic growth. The results further showed that both cultural influence ($r = 0.157, p < .01$) and economic growth ($r = 0.207, p < .01$) are positively associated with friends circle. Low study cost is also positively associated ($r = 0.167, p < .01$) with job planning, cultural influence ($r = 0.146, p < .01$) and economic growth ($r = 0.170, p < .01$). Business plan is also positively associated ($r = 0.412, p < .01$) with job planning.

Table 1 *Pearson Correlation Coefficients for Measures of Choosing China for Studying (N=387)*

Adaptation Variable	Job Planning	Previous abroad study experience	Cultural influence	Economic growth	Friend circle	Low cost of study	Business plan
Job planning							
Prev. exp. Sty. brd.	-0.51						
Cultural influence	0.168**	0.162**					
Economic growth	0.072	0.081	0.345**				
Friends circle	0.004	0.059	0.157**	0.207**			
Low study cost	0.167**	0.028	0.146**	0.170**	0.064		
Business Plan	0.412**	0.020	-0.005	0.081	0.096	-0.038	

* $p < .05$, two-tailed; ** $p < .01$, two-tailed.

4.2. Perceptions about Chinese Society

The correlation results show that cultural differences and inspiration from Chinese culture has significant positive association ($r = 0.193, p < .01$). Likewise differences of Chinese society with our culture has significant negative correlation with cultural differences ($r = -0.119, p < .05$). Our culture is superior has a significant negative association with job planning ($r = -0.116, p < .05$) and has significant positive associations with cultural differences ($r = 0.245, p < .01$) and inspiration from Chinese culture ($r = 0.125, p < .05$). The feeling comfortable has a significant positive association with inspiration from Chinese culture ($r = 0.185, p < .01$). Not interested to settle down in China has a significant negative correlations with inspiration from Chinese culture ($r = -0.157, p < .01$) and feeling comfortable in China ($r = -0.192, p < .01$) while it has significant positive correlation with differences of Chinese society with our culture ($r = 0.153, p < .01$). The table also shows that cultural similarity has a significant positive associations with cultural differences ($r = 0.236, p < .01$), inspiration from Chinese culture ($r = 0.117, p < .51$) and feeling comfortable in China ($r = 0.144, p < .01$) while has a significant negative association with our culture is superior ($r = -0.138, p < .01$). The results further show that missing home has a significant negative associations with inspiration from Chinese culture ($r = -0.106, p < .05$) and our culture is superior ($r = 0.192, p < .01$) while has a positive significant association with not interested to settle down in China ($r = 0.224, p < .01$). Moreover the table shows that religious adjustment has a significant negative association with missing home ($r = -0.160, p < .01$).

Table 2 *Pearson Correlation Coefficients for Measures of perceiving about Chinese Society (N=387)*

Adaptation Variable	Job Planing	Cultr.l diff.	Insp. Ch.cultr	Diff. of Ch.socty	Our cultr is super.	Feel comfort.	N.Int stl. down	Cultr. similarity	back home	Rel. Adj
Job Planing										
Cultr. diff.	-0.060									
Insp. Ch.cultr	-0.068	0.193**								
Diff. of Ch.socty	0.015	-0.119*	-0.074							
Our cultr is super.	-0.116*	0.245**	0.125*	-0.058						
Feel comfort.	0.065	0.067	0.185**	0.007	0.042					
N.Int stl. down	0.116*	-0.082	-0.157**	0.153**	-0.074	-0.192**				
Cultr. similarity	0.054	0.236**	0.117*	-0.055	-0.138**	0.144**	-0.062			
back home	0.140**	-0.041	-0.106*	-0.059	-0.192**	-0.054	0.224**	0.246**		
Rel. Adj	-0.056	0.088	0.030	-0.017	0.033	-0.001	-0.040	-0.094	-0.160**	

* $p < .05$, two-tailed; ** $p < .01$, two-tailed.

4.3. Perceptions about staying for a job in China after graduation

The results show that value of Chinese language has a significant negative correlation with job planning in China ($r = -0.123, p < .05$). The growing Chinese economy has a significant negative correlation with job planning ($r = -0.358, p < .01$) while positive correlation with value of Chinese language ($r = 0.240, p < .01$). Over expectation has a significant positive association with job planning ($r = 0.159, p < .01$) and significant negative correlations with value of Chinese language ($r = -0.176, p < .01$) and growing economy if China ($r = -0.241, p < .01$). Lack of business knowledge has a significant negative association with job planning ($r = -0.230, p < .01$) and significant positive correlation with growing Chinese economy ($r = 0.228, p < .01$).

Table 3 Pearson Correlation Coefficients for Measures of Choosing China for Studying (N=387)

Adaptation Variable	Job planning	Value of Chinese language	Chinese growing economy	Over expectation	Lack of business knowledge	Legally bound to go back
Job Planning						
Value of Chinese language	-0.123*					
Chinese growing economy	-0.358**	0.240**				
Over expectation	0.159**	-0.176**	-0.241**			
Lack of business knowledge	-0.230**	0.064	0.228**	0.035		
Legally bound to go back	-0.044	-0.045	.020	.009	-0.032	

* $p < .05$, two-tailed; ** $p < .01$, two-tailed.

5. Discussion

The main objective of this study is to ascertain influential factors responsible for not choosing China as a work destiny after their graduation. The results of this study indicate that 73% of the respondents do not want to choose China as place of job destination. One of the possible reasons is that half of the students are legally bound to go back to their home countries as they have bond to return their home countries after completing their studies in China. Secondly, most of the respondents also mentioned that language barrier is the biggest hurdle to communicate with local people which might create problems to sustain their job in China.

The results further showed that most of the respondents mentioned their cultural superiority which has significant negative relationship with job planning in China. The logic behind is when a person thinks himself different from host culture then it is hard for him or her to adjust with local cultures. As job demands cultural integration for a successful future which is not possible without accepting local cultural values at same footings.

Though over expectation has positively associated with job planning but lack of Chinese language and lack of business knowledge are negatively associated with job planning. That means that if a graduate does not have sound information about business and have a command on Chinese language he or she will face problem to choose China as a job destination.

On the other hand, China does not offer any privilege to extend visa for work permission which is common in Western countries. West countries allow their graduates for a year or two to work in the country from where they graduated. There is no such policy in China. And thus, apart from the above mentioned influential variables, Chinese government policy is also one of the factors which creates hurdle for international students to Choose China as work destination station.

The frequency analysis shows that majority of the students did not know Chinese language which is a key to any student as well as for job seekers. As all of the work is done in Chinese language, that can also be a reason that students after graduation don not want to choose work in China.

6. Conclusions and Suggestions

China has marked its educational market across the globe. The main objective of this study is to explore the importance of key factors responsible for pushing the graduate from Chinese universities not to choose China as their work destination. The study has following suggestions for public policies on international students' job approach in China.

First, like Western countries, Chinese government may also allow the extension of visa for work after graduation from Chinese universities. In this way, China can retain the intellectual cadre which can play a very positive role in the Chinese economy. As Chinese local industries are now hiring international workers, so it would be much better if it can retain those students who have knowledge about Chinese culture as well as some competency in Chinese language.

Second, Chinese government should also extend the languages school across the globe like Confucius institutes and so does the languages proficiency tests, like TOFEL, GRE and IELTS. International HSK can fulfill this purpose if streamline it accordingly. If the graduates from Chinese universities are well versed in Chinese language well before they join the Chinese universities, then they will also be able to perform well in jobs.

In the context of international students job destination further research might use a revised sort of the survey, need to employ further refine quantitative approaches to test the conclusions made in this study, and include qualitative methods.

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