

**KEY FACTORS THAT ATTRACT CHINESE STUDENTS TO  
THAI UNIVERSITIES**



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## **KEY FACTORS THAT ATTRACT CHINESE STUDENTS TO THAI UNIVERSITIES**

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### **ABSTRACT**

This study investigates the motivations driving Chinese students to pursue graduate studies at universities in Thailand amidst the backdrop of the COVID-19 pandemic and shifting global educational landscapes. Employing qualitative research methods, including focus group discussions, supplemented by literature review and analysis, the study delves into the multifaceted factors influencing students' decisions. Through in-depth interviews with Chinese graduate students in Thailand, the study uncovers the interplay of external (push factors) and objective (pull factors) influences guiding students' choices. Key findings reveal a predominant desire among students to enhance their qualifications for better job prospects while avoiding the challenges associated with China's graduate entrance exam. Factors such as Thailand's geographical proximity, lower costs, compatible education system, cultural similarities, and vibrant lifestyle contribute to its appeal as a study destination.

**KEY WORDS: CHINESE STUDENTS/ STUDY ABROAD/ THAILAND UNIVERSITY/ HIGHER EDUCATION/ CONSUMER BEHAVIOR**

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# CHAPTER I

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Background

Since the outbreak of the COVID-19 virus in 2020, the pandemic has had profound implications on global outbound and inbound mobility, standardized testing, and worldwide school closures, significantly impacting the decision-making process for studying abroad (刘主光 & 纪桥丽, 2021). In the post-pandemic era, nations are required to adopt flexible strategies across various domains to adapt to the new international landscape. Against the backdrop of globalization, international student mobility has become a crucial issue in the higher education sector.

China has consistently faced a substantial demand for quality educational resources, coupled with inadequate supply (刘主光 & 纪桥丽, 2021). Due to historical reasons and regional disparities, opportunities to enter high-quality institutions are limited. The national statistics indicate that there are 2.9 million applicants for master's programs in China, with an enrollment of 916,503 students (刘主光 & 纪桥丽, 2021). In contrast, overseas higher education institutions boast higher admission rates and abundant educational resources, serving as a vital supplement to educational opportunities for Chinese students (刘主光 & 纪桥丽, 2021).

With the current surge in Chinese university graduates, challenging employment prospects, and more lenient policies from destination countries for Chinese students, the landscape of the Chinese study abroad market has rapidly shifted from the "rational study abroad era" to the current "mass study abroad era" (刘红霞 & 房嘉煦, 2011).

International rankings such as the Times Higher Education World University Ranking and QS World University Rankings use the degree of a school's internationalization as a key evaluation criterion. As the world's largest source country for international students (UNESCO, 2020), China's substantial cohort of overseas students has attracted widespread attention regarding the motivations behind their study choices. With the rise of emerging economies and the increasingly close political and



economic ties between China and Thailand, Thailand has become a famous destination for study abroad (刘进 & 张露瑶, 2018). The Office of the Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Higher Education, Science, Research, and Innovation has released data on international student numbers from 2008 to the first semester of 2022. Thailand's higher education institutions host international students from over 190 countries, with Chinese students constituting the largest group, reaching a total of 21,419 students in 2022 (MHESI, 2022). Thailand possesses numerous higher education institutions with a high standard of education. In comparison to the intricate application processes and timelines in Western countries, entering Thailand for studies is considered easier (You Huicai, 2006). Furthermore, each institution in Thailand exhibits distinct academic strengths, attracting an increasing number of Chinese students and providing them with significant academic choices (何妍, 2020).

Since the introduction of the "Belt and Road" initiative in 2013, the countries along the route have rapidly emerged as prominent study destinations due to policy support and increased economic trade (刘进 & 张露瑶, 2018). Over the past decade, student mobility along the "Belt and Road" countries has outpaced non-"Belt and Road" nations, with emerging study destinations primarily concentrated in this region. This indicates that "Belt and Road" countries are becoming the most dynamic region for global student mobility, continuously shaping a new global pattern of studying abroad (刘进 & 张露瑶, 2018). Southeast Asian countries are becoming the most dynamic region for global student mobility, with Thailand, as one of the most important nations in Southeast Asia, engaging in extensive cooperation with China across various fields. In the realm of overseas study choices, Thailand stands out as a significant option in the Southeast Asian region due to its unique advantages and characteristics (何妍, 2020).

Simultaneously, given the tense global economic environment, collaborative education programs from less developed countries have become a new form of study abroad for Chinese students (李琴, 2010). Thailand boasts 156 universities, offering 769 international programs at the bachelor's, master's, doctoral, and other levels, collaborating with renowned universities in English-speaking countries (何妍, 2020). Studying in Thailand not only means receiving international education but also provides Chinese

students with opportunities to further their studies in third countries, such as Europe and America, after completing their education, making it highly appealing(叶艳, 2015). Collaborative education programs can save foreign exchange and allow access to high-quality educational resources. This form serves as a shortcut for Chinese students to study in developed countries, using a third-party country as a stepping stone (李琴, 2010).

## 1.2 Problem Statement

The central question under investigation is: What key factors motivate Chinese students to choose Thailand as their destination for higher education? Chinese students applied to Thai universities using methods such as educational agents, joint programs, friend referrals, online applications, and participation in education exhibitions (Yan Ye, 2021). The younger generation pursuing overseas studies is primarily driven by six major factors: seeking superior education, realizing career aspirations, fostering personal growth and refinement, obtaining recognition of achievements, yearning for foreign environments and lifestyles, and being influenced by external factors and individuals (刘红霞 & 房嘉煦, 2011).

Research indicates that, during the COVID-19 pandemic, how Chinese college students make decisions on international mobility or immobility was explored. Among the surveyed participants, the majority opted to pursue studying abroad, while some abandoned this choice after securing admission to prestigious Western universities. This divergence in decisions was linked to varying levels of resilience to risk and uncertainty among the respondents (Shen et al, 2023).

By precisely defining our objectives, we can better guide subsequent research design and data analysis, ensuring that the study addresses key questions regarding the choices Chinese students make in pursuing education abroad. These objectives will provide a solid foundation for our theoretical framework, enhancing its practical application and guidance.

## **CHAPTER II**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

#### **2.1 Literature Review**

The multi-faceted framework guiding college students' decisions to pursue international education, encompasses cognitive advancement, personal growth, career prospects, and self-discovery (耿婕, 2017). Drawing from insights provided by various scholars, the dependent variable for this study is identified as "Intention to Choose Thai Universities," with the following independent variables:

##### **2.1.1 Cost of Living**

The cost of living is a crucial factor when Chinese students choose a study destination. Thailand offers a lower cost of living, making it financially feasible for most families (何妍, 2020). Additionally, the importance of considering study expenses, particularly for students sensitive to their family's financial situation (刘红霞 & 房嘉煦, 2011).

##### **2.1.2 Educational Costs**

Educational costs encompass both expenditure and quality components. The overall cost of studying in Thailand is considerably lower than in developed countries such as Europe, the United States, Japan, and South Korea, making it affordable for ordinary Chinese families (叶艳, 2015). Thai higher education, grounded in the Western teaching system (何妍, 2020), ensures a high quality of education (Siricharoen, 2023). Furthermore, as one of the early promoters of internationalization in Asia, Thailand adopts many educational programs using Western textbooks and English as the medium of instruction (何妍, 2020).

### **2.1.3 Cultural Adaptability**

Cultural adaptability plays a crucial role in study destination choices. Li Qin's research underscores the significance of students' adaptability to a new culture in influencing study satisfaction (李琴, 2010). Cultural differences have a certain impact on students' study experiences (刘主光 & 纪桥丽, 2021).

### **2.1.4 Job Opportunities**

Job opportunities can be categorized into employment prospects in China and Thailand. The promotion of the "Belt and Road" initiative has led to a continuous increase in investment, trade, and collaboration between China and Thailand(何妍, 2020). To better adapt to this trend, there is a growing demand for highly skilled professionals proficient in both Chinese and Thai languages and cultures (何妍, 2020). Studying in Thailand can precisely provide the talent pool needed by companies in this context, graduates from foreign countries carry a certain prestige, as recruiters believe these individuals are better equipped to meet specific occupational requirements, fostering personal career development (刘红霞 & 房嘉煦, 2011). Additionally, with Chinese enterprises investing in Thailand and local large corporations having robust economic strength, Chinese international students can find numerous internship opportunities in Thailand(叶艳, 2015). They can relatively easily secure part-time positions such as translators, tour guides, receptionists, and Chinese language teachers (何妍, 2020). Some may even explore positions in well-known Chinese companies operating in Thailand and secure employment in the country (何妍, 2020).

### **2.1.5 Study Abroad Experience**

The stable political, economic, and social development in Thailand provides an excellent study environment for Chinese students (You Huicai, 2006). And that the consistency between the study experience and students' choices significantly impacts satisfaction (李琴, 2010).

Through a review of existing literature, we can distinctly observe the primary factors influencing Chinese students' study abroad choices and potential unique factors

when selecting Thai universities. This forms the foundation for posing subsequent research questions and constructing a theoretical framework.

## **2.2 Framework Development**

While previous research has provided some insights into the motivations of Chinese students in choosing universities, it has not answered the crucial question of what pain points Thai universities truly address for those students who select Thailand as their study destination. Identifying these pain points is essential to formulating targeted marketing strategies, as inadequate understanding may lead to blind policy and recruitment decisions. Additionally, recognizing the varied impacts of different study choice factors on diverse student groups is imperative. Failure to comprehend these differences may result in improper support measures for international students, affecting both their study experiences and the overall development of school internationalization. This research question is not limited to the context of Chinese students choosing Thai universities. By delving into this case, we may uncover more universal patterns in the destination choices of Chinese university students studying abroad, offering insights and guidance for other countries and regions in their study destination decision-making processes.

The study employs a variable analysis from a causal perspective, utilizing the push-pull theory framework. This framework aids in understanding whether Chinese students are drawn by the appeal of the host country Thailand as a pull factor, or compelled by home country policies, subjective intentions, and personal economic issues are push factors. Through this framework, we gain an in-depth understanding of the motivations behind choosing Thai universities and explore how various variables impact the decisions of Chinese students.

First, by delving into the motivations behind students' decisions to study abroad, we can gain a more comprehensive understanding of the key considerations they have when selecting Thai universities. This will aid Thai universities in understanding their strengths better and offering targeted services and support to meet student needs.

Furthermore, this research seeks to comprehend the opportunities and challenges brought about by changes in study-abroad decisions among Chinese students



in the post-pandemic era. The global uncertainties arising from the pandemic have significantly impacted international student mobility, and as a vital source country for international students, Chinese students' choices are influenced by various factors (刘主光 & 纪桥丽, 2021).

Finally, this study will offer targeted development recommendations for Thai universities. College students now prioritize certainty more than ever when deciding to study abroad, alongside their safety concerns. This shift in mentality is expected to impact the landscape of studying abroad (Shen et al, 2023). By analyzing the motivation theories of Chinese international students and identifying current and potential factors, summarizing the characteristics of Chinese students' study intentions, the research aims to provide Thai universities with more flexible and student-oriented enrollment and support policies. This is crucial in addressing the challenges posed by post-era developments and changes. Tailored enrollment strategies improved educational service quality, and proactive measures for internationalization are recommended for the most significant group of overseas students, Chinese international students (耿婕, 2017). This will enhance Thai universities' ability to attract and retain Chinese students, establishing a more competitive position in the international education sector.

Building upon the consideration of the dependent and independent variables, and drawing insights from past research, I pose specific research questions:

In the post-pandemic era, what additional overlooked variables may influence Chinese students' study choices, beyond the five independent variables?

How do push-pull factors interact for Chinese students when considering Thailand, a destination representing a non-traditional study abroad choice?

Through these questions, I aim to delve deeper into understanding the motivations behind Chinese students' choice of Thai universities, providing a robust theoretical foundation for future research. Therefore, this study holds significant practical importance, offering robust support and decision references for various stakeholders, advancing the research on Chinese students' study abroad choices into more profound and comprehensive dimensions.

## **CHAPTER III**

### **METHODOLOGY**

#### **3.1 Research Methods**

To thoroughly analyze the motivations behind Chinese students choosing Thai universities for their studies, a qualitative research approach is deemed necessary. Qualitative methods, particularly focus group discussions, will be employed to directly capture students' perspectives and experiences, thereby revealing the underlying reasons behind their choices. Thus, focus groups will serve as the primary data collection method to obtain more authentic and profound information.

#### **3.2 Data Collection**

The rationale and representativeness of sample selection are crucial for the credibility of the study. We have chosen two focus groups, each comprising 5 Chinese students. One group is enrolled in a public university in Thailand, Mahidol University, while the other group is from a private university, Rangsit University. This selection helps cover the study motivations of students from different types of universities, making the research findings more generalizable. Focus groups will be conducted through semi-structured guided discussions, covering themes such as cost of living, educational costs, cultural adaptability, job opportunities, and study experience. This will provide participants with an opportunity for in-depth discussions to better understand their motivations for studying abroad.

## CHAPTER IV

### FINDINGS

**Table 4.1 Interviewee Information**

Name	Gender	Age	Hometown	School
Vinki	Female	29	Guang Dong	Mahidol
Mia	Female	24	Fu Jian	Mahidol
Taylor	Female	26	Yun Nan	Mahidol
Ozze	Female	24	Yun Nan	Mahidol
Yang	Male	25	Yun Nan	Mahidol
Jiahao	Male	28	Guang Dong	Rangsit
GS	Female	28	Yun Nan	Rangsit
Du	Male	28	Yun Nan	Rangsit
Gong	Female	26	Chong Qing	Rangsit
Peter	Male	32	Guang Dong	Rangsit

#### 4.1 External Influences (Push Factors)

Many interviewees mentioned that external factors such as the internal competition for educational qualifications, the pressure of societal competition, recruitment standards of target companies, and the lengthy and challenging process of pursuing postgraduate studies in China played significant roles in triggering and reinforcing their motivation to study abroad.

##### 4.1.1 Unhealthy competition and vicious cycles in educational systems

Wenki: "I am considering a career in the education sector for my future, and in my hometown, there's a high requirement for educational qualifications in this field. Just having an undergraduate degree might not secure a good job."



Mia: "Currently, there are too many undergraduates in China, making it hard to find competitive jobs. I think having a higher degree might give me some advantages in the job market, so I want to pursue a master's degree."

Peter: "I lost my job during the COVID-19 pandemic. At my age, I have no advantage in the job market, especially with only an undergraduate degree. Despite having extensive experience in my field, I couldn't find a job because my competitors all have master's degrees or higher. So, after facing a long period of unemployment, I decided to pursue a master's degree."

#### **4.1.2 Fresh Graduate Status:**

Ozze: "I pursued postgraduate studies because when I graduated from university, I failed the national postgraduate entrance exam in China. This affected my status as a fresh graduate, which is crucial for finding a job in China. To secure better job opportunities or meet more company requirements, I must improve my educational qualifications. With fresh graduate status, I can take more exams and apply to more companies, which is why I chose to pursue postgraduate studies."

Peter: "After obtaining a master's degree, I'll have the right to participate in campus recruitment, which is the best opportunity for more companies to notice me. My advantages in social recruitment aren't as prominent. If I were a fresh graduate looking for employment, my age disadvantage would be overlooked accordingly."

#### **4.1.3 Too Difficulty in Chinese Postgraduate Entrance Exam**

Mia: "I find the situation of taking the Chinese postgraduate entrance exam too daunting. I don't want to take the risk. Just in case I don't pass, then I would have wasted a lot of time studying again."

Ozze: "Since I've already experienced failing the entrance exam once and exerted a lot of effort, the pressure was immense. The competition was too fierce. If I choose to study abroad, I can relax more. The cost of trial and error would be smaller. If I spend another year preparing for the exam and fail again, it would waste a lot of time. So, I chose to study abroad."

GS: "Before graduating, I was already preparing for the postgraduate entrance exam. I wanted to pursue a master's degree. After failing to pass the national postgraduate entrance exam for two years, I started considering applying abroad."

Peter: "As someone who is older and has been out of school life for a long time, taking the postgraduate entrance exam is a huge challenge for me. There's a high possibility that I'll put in a lot of effort, but the result might not be ideal."

## **4.2 Objective Factors (Pull Factors)**

Thailand's advantageous geographical location, its proximity to southern Chinese cities, affordable tuition fees, conducive classroom atmosphere within the education system, adherence to the educational framework of the Commonwealth, high frequency of admissions, and shorter teaching periods are among the objective factors that lead Chinese students to choose Thailand as a destination for studying abroad. These factors meet students' considerations regarding the convenience of studying abroad, high-quality education, and the cost of studying overseas.

### **4.2.1 Geographical Advantage**

Mia: "I primarily considered destinations that were just a few hours' flight away from China, so I evaluated and compared neighboring countries to China. "

Taylor: "I chose Thailand because it's relatively close to my hometown. It's just a two and a half hour flight, so I can easily go back home if needed, like during emergencies or festivals. "

### **4.2.2 Price Advantage**

Wenki: "Whether the expenses fit within my financial capacity was my primary consideration. After COVID-19, my family's financial situation isn't as good as before, and studying abroad would add financial pressure. So, I wanted to choose a country with good-quality courses that align with international standards and have low tuition fees, making it a suitable choice for families with limited budgets like me . "

Jiahao: "Since I've been working for a while, if I were to leave work to study, I'd have no source of income and would have to rely on my parents for financial support. I don't want to burden them too much, so I chose Thailand. "

### **4.2.3 Education System and Structure**

Mia: "I find the classroom atmosphere here great. The rote learning system in China is terrifying, with strict teachers and a dull atmosphere. Just thinking about it makes me nervous. "

Jiahao: "The teaching style here is also British, which can serve as a good stepping stone if I want to go to other Western countries later. Admission only requires passing the school's language exam; there's no need for an IELTS score. Studying for the IELTS exam takes a long time and is expensive. "

Yang: "Thailand follows the education system of the Commonwealth, which I really like. "

Mia: "I was eager to pursue my master's right after graduation. So, for me, being able to go abroad as soon as possible was the best option, which was also a significant reason for choosing the school. Within a few months of graduating from my undergraduate program, I could immediately pursue my master's without waiting for a long time. "

Taylor: "Because I didn't want to stay in China after the pandemic ended. The chance of admission to graduate school in China is very slim, and the competition is too intense. Some schools in Thailand offer three opportunities for admission per year, providing more flexibility in terms of enrollment. "

Peter: "It takes three years to graduate in China, so the sooner I graduate, the better! Graduate programs in Thailand only require two years, which is equivalent to saving a year of time. "

### **4.3 Self-Improvement and Development (Push Factors)**

Interviews revealed that the desire to enhance their current status through higher education is a significant driving force for Chinese students to study in Thailand.

Yang: " I am very interested in health care, so I wanted to study this field and improve my knowledge. "

Du: "You can learn things that you can't learn in China. You can have exposure to a wider world and opportunities to interact and learn from people of different cultural backgrounds, which can enhance your abilities beyond just academics. "

### **4.4 Cultural Factors (Pull Factors)**

Through interviews, it was found that many Chinese university students choose to study in Thailand because of the similarity between Thai and Chinese cultures. Additionally, Thailand's diverse culture, Thai people's optimistic mindset, and status as a Buddhist country make students highly enthusiastic about studying there, feeling safe and finding inner peace.

#### **4.4.1 Diversity in Thai Culture**

Wenki: "Thailand specifically caters to different nationalities, such as holding Chinese New Year events for Chinese people. I've never experienced anything like that elsewhere. As an international student, experiencing care from a school and another country is very special. "

Peter: "Thai culture is very diverse. I've always heard that Thailand is one of the most inclusive countries in the world before I came to Thailand, which makes me have a good impression of this country. "

#### **4.4.2 Similarities between Thai and Chinese Cultures**

Taylor: "Thai culture has many similarities with Chinese culture. It's especially similar to the Dai ethnic group in Xishuangbanna, Yunnan Province. "

GS: "I really enjoy spicy food, and Thai cuisine suits my taste buds well. Many flavors are similar to Yunnan cuisine, and the cultures are alike too. Yunnan also has a Water Splashing Festival. "

#### **4.4.3 Thai People's Optimistic Spirit**

Ozze: "They seem to combine freedom with optimism. The whole country is peaceful, with fewer conflicts and constraints to suppress you, making me feel accepted. Chinese people might experience unfair treatment in some countries, but discrimination against Chinese people is rare in Thailand. "

Gong: "The atmosphere in Thailand is more relaxed compared to China. I admire this way of life, which is why I came here. "

#### **4.4.4 Thai People's Belief**

Taylor: "The level of respect for the royal family impressed me because when the ninth king passed away, I didn't see it, and I haven't seen it anywhere else. The people showed great reverence; they were all crying and kneeling in front of the Grand Palace for three days, a scene I've never witnessed before. "

Yang: "Thailand practices Buddhism, so people who believe in Buddhism seem to be kind-hearted and simple-minded. "

Peter: "Living and studying in a Buddhist country gives me a sense of security. Thai people seem optimistic and helpful to each other, which has given me a strong liking for this country. "

### **4.5 Leisure Activities (Pull Factors)**

Entertainment and leisure activities are essential aspects of daily life. Before coming to Thailand, some Chinese students have watched Thai films and television shows, gaining understanding and appreciation for Thai culture. They also have preferences for Thai celebrities, and studying in Thailand provides them with opportunities to meet their favorite stars. Additionally, Thailand's vibrant nightlife offers convenience for students' social lives.

#### **4.5.1 Convenient Celebrity Encounters**

Gong: "I personally enjoy watching Thai dramas, and I'm also a fan of some Thai celebrities. "



Mia: "Because I've followed Thai dramas before and have some understanding of Thai culture, I also enjoy traveling there. I feel quite fond of the country and its culture. I like watching Thai dramas and following many Thai celebrities. Actually, the study abroad agency didn't initially mention Thailand as a study destination, but I know that you can often encounter celebrities in Thailand, so I choose to study here. "

#### **4.5.2 Vibrant Nightlife**

Peter: "Thailand's night markets are famous, and you can still go out with friends at night. Convenience stores and restaurants remain open even in the early hours of the morning, which is much more convenient compared to most other study abroad destinations. My friend is studying in the UK, and he says that after 6 p.m., he hardly goes out because most stores close early. "

A recurring theme among the interviewees was their desire to enhance their qualifications to gain a competitive advantage in the Chinese job market (刘红霞 & 房嘉煦, 2011). However, they expressed reluctance to take the Chinese graduate entrance exam due to the significant effort, time commitment, and likelihood of unsatisfactory results. The pressure of academic competition, job market demands, and the difficulty of the Chinese graduate entrance exam are significant factors driving Chinese students to pursue higher education abroad (刘主光 & 纪桥丽, 2021). Additionally, Thailand's geographical proximity to China facilitates easy travel between the two countries, which is advantageous for handling emergencies or visiting home. Moreover, the relatively lower tuition and living costs in Thailand appeal to students from families with limited financial resources (何妍, 2020). Thailand's education system aligns with the Commonwealth framework, offering students high-quality education that meets international standards and lays a solid foundation for their future careers (Siricharoen, 2023). In Thailand, multiple admission opportunities per year and shorter teaching periods provide students with greater flexibility and choice (何妍, 2020). Furthermore, the conducive learning environment in Thailand, coupled with the cultural inclusivity and the country's status as a Buddhist nation, fosters a sense of belonging and security among Chinese students. Thai society's openness to diverse cultures and beliefs enables Chinese students to integrate and feel accepted, while the Buddhist atmosphere provides inner peace and

tranquility (叶艳, 2015). The similarities between Thai and Chinese cultures in cuisine and festivals ease the adaptation process for Chinese students, enhancing their sense of belonging (何妍, 2020). Thai people's optimism and simplicity create a relaxed lifestyle that resonates with Chinese students (何妍, 2020). Moreover, Thailand offers a vibrant nightlife and diverse leisure activities, enriching students' experiences (何妍, 2020). They can enjoy culinary delights, shopping, entertainment, and opportunities to meet Thai celebrities, adding to the enjoyment of their study abroad experience.



## **CHAPTER V**

### **CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

The study analyzed the focus group interviews with Chinese students pursuing graduate studies in Thailand to investigate the primary motivations behind their choice to study at Thai universities. In exploring the motivations of Chinese students for choosing Thai universities, the study revealed the complex interplay of various factors influencing their decision to study in Thailand. By examining external influences (push factors) and objective factors (pull factors), we gained insight into the multifaceted motivations driving students' choices.

#### **5.1 Limitations and future studies:**

The study's sample primarily comprised Chinese students already enrolled in Thai universities, future research could consider expanding the sample to include students from different schools, ages, genders, and academic backgrounds to obtain more comprehensive data and insights. Alternatively, interviewing more Chinese students planning to study in Thailand or those who have already graduated could provide a more holistic understanding. The study relied on self-reported data from international students, which may be subject to subjective and recall biases. Future research could mitigate these biases by integrating objective data, such as academic performance metrics like grades, test scores, and achievements, along with demographic information. Employing quantitative research methods enables researchers to collect data from a larger and more diverse sample, thereby enhancing the generalizability of the findings. By surveying a broader population of Chinese students studying in Thailand, researchers can derive more robust conclusions about the trends and patterns in their experiences.



## 5.2 Recommendations:

Thai universities can strengthen their promotion in China, particularly targeting Chinese students. Promotional activities at Chinese universities, online platforms, and social media channels such as Redbook, Zhihu, Weibo, and Douyin can enhance visibility and showcase the advantages and features of studying in Thailand. In addition to highlighting the advantages of the universities, Thailand's vibrant nightlife can be showcased to Chinese students through promotional videos, images, and text. It can help universities increasing the number of Chinese students enhances the cultural diversity and internationalization of the university campus. This diversity enriches the learning environment for all students by exposing them to different perspectives, cultures, and ways of thinking. Additionally, increasing enrollment from China can have economic benefits for Thai universities. Chinese students contribute to tuition revenue, which can help support various university initiatives, including infrastructure development, academic programs, and student services. To attract more outstanding international students, schools can increase the number and scope of scholarships and financial aid. This would help alleviate students' financial pressure and increase their willingness to choose the university. can attract more talented faculty, researchers, and funding opportunities, further elevating the university's academic and research profile. Additionally, simplifying the admission process, providing more convenient application methods, and offering timely application feedback and guidance can help students successfully complete the application process. Establishing a mentorship system for Chinese students to guide their academic and personal development and address any issues or challenges they may encounter during their study abroad journey is essential. Furthermore, strengthening cooperation with Chinese schools and study abroad education institutions to establish long-term and stable exchange and cooperation relationships can provide students with more opportunities for study and exchange. Furthermore, fostering long-term partnerships and collaborations with Chinese schools and study abroad education institutions can open doors for joint research projects, faculty exchanges, and academic collaborations. These partnerships can lead to knowledge sharing, research advancements, and academic innovations, benefiting both Thai and Chinese academic communities. Moreover, Chinese students often engage in local spending, such as accommodation, food, and transportation, thereby stimulating the Thailand economy and creating more job opportunities.

In summary, by actively promoting and supporting the enrollment of Chinese students, Thai universities can enhance their internationalization efforts, strengthen their reputation and academic standing, generate economic benefits, and foster valuable partnerships, ultimately contributing to their overall growth and success in the global higher education landscape.



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## Appendix A: Interview Questions

Questions for 2 focus groups (~ 1 h interviews):

1. Please briefly introduce yourself, including your name (in English), age, and the city in China you're from.
2. Why did you choose to pursue a master's degree?
3. Why did you choose to study abroad instead of taking the domestic postgraduate entrance examination?
4. What factors did you primarily consider when choosing the destination country for your study abroad?
5. How did your family's attitude and opinions influence your decision-making process?
6. To what extent do you think school rankings and reputation influenced your choice of school?
7. Thailand is not traditionally considered a study destination. How did you learn about studying in Thailand?
8. What factors led you to choose Thailand as your study destination?
9. During the decision-making process for studying in Thailand, what proportion of your decision-making was influenced by the cost of studying abroad?
10. What advantages do you think Thailand offers compared to other study destinations?
11. Is studying in Thailand popular in your region?
12. Has Thailand's higher education system met your expectations?
13. Could you share your experiences and insights from studying in Thailand? What unique feelings or insights do you have?
14. After enrolling, what specific advantages do you think Thai schools have?
15. What challenges did you encounter in adapting to the local culture in Thailand?
16. Do you think there are areas for improvement in studying at Thai schools? Do you have any suggestions for improvement?
17. What are your plans for future study, life, and domestic work after graduation?