

Factors Influencing Vietnamese Students' Decision to Study Abroad and Selection of the Host Institution and Host Country: Implication for Marketing Strategies

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Recent studies have found numerous factors influencing international students' choice of the host country and/or institution. However, it seems that students from different countries are influenced by those factors differently. Additionally, recent studies have suggested that there has been a slight shift of the flow of international students from the traditional Western host countries to Asian ones. Investigating Vietnamese students' opinions, this case study seeks to identify (i) reasons why Vietnamese students choose to study abroad, (ii) their targeted host countries and (iii) factors influencing their choice of the host country or institution. The study was conducted in two stages. In the first stage, 55 prospective international Vietnamese students were interviewed to uncover reasons why they decided to study abroad and factors that they considered when choosing the host country and institution. In the second stage, a survey, which was developed based on the results of the first stage and the literature review, was used to collect data from 400 prospective students. Data were analyzed with descriptive statistics, independent samples T-tests and one-way ANOVA tests using the SPSS version 20. The results showed that the students chose to study abroad because of pull factors more than push factors. The study also found a possible increase in the outflow of students to the USA and emerging Asian countries and a decrease to Australia and China. The participants appeared to be concerned about practicalities for their survival, learning and benefits gained upon graduation more than other factors when choosing the study destinations. Finally, demographic factors – age groups, gender, the targeted level of education and discipline – were found to make differences in their selection of the host country and institution.

Key words: international students, Vietnamese students, host country, host institution, influencing factors