FACTORS INFLUENCING CHINESE STUDENTS' INTENTION ON CHOICE
TO STUDY AT BANGKOKTHONBURI UNIVERSITY, THAILAND

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Abstract

The objectives of this research were to (1) determine the factors influencing Chinese students' intention to choose to study at Bangkokthonburi University in Thailand, (2) propose the Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) of these factors, and (3) investigate these influencing factors in detail.

This quantitative study targeted a population of 3,400 Chinese students studying at Bangkokthonburi University. A sample group of 400 students was selected using simple random sampling. Data were collected using a 5-level rating scale questionnaire. Descriptive statistics and SEM were used for data analysis.

The research found that (1) there were seven factors expected to influence Chinese students' intention to choose Bangkokthonburi University, with the level of intention being high, (2) the SEM fit the empirical data well with values such as Relative Chi-square = 1.55, GFI = 0.92, AGFI = 0.90, TLI = 0.97, RMR = 0.04, and RMSEA = 0.04, and (3) only the quality factor of the university had a statistically significant direct influence on Chinese students' choice.

บทคัดย่อ

วัตถุประสงค์ของงานวิจัยนี้คือ (1) การหาปัจจัยที่มีผลต่อความตั้งใจของนักศึกษาจีน ในการเลือกเรียนที่มหาวิทยาลัยกรุงเทพธนบุรี ประเทศไทย (2) การวิเคราะห์โครงสร้างของการจำแนก ตัวแปร (SEM) ของปัจจัยที่มีผลต่อความตั้งใจของนักศึกษาจีนในการเลือกเรียนที่มหาวิทยาลัยกรุงเทพธนบุรี

ประเทศไทย และ (3) การสำรวจปัจจัยที่มีผลต่อความตั้งใจของนักศึกษาจีนในการเลือกเรียนที่มหาวิทยาลัย กรุงเทพธนบุรี ประเทศไทย

การวิจัยนี้เป็นการศึกษาในเชิงปริมาณโดยประชากรเป็นนักศึกษาจีนที่เรียนอยู่ที่มหาวิทยาลัย กรุงเทพธนบุรี จำนวน 3,400 คน กลุ่มตัวอย่างได้จากการสุ่มอย่างง่ายเพื่อเป็นตัวแทนของประชากรมีจำนวน 400 คน เครื่องมือที่ใช้ในการวิจัยเป็นแบบสอบถามมาตราส่วนประมาณค่า 5 ระดับ สถิติที่ใช้ในการวิเคราะห์ ข้อมูล ได้แก่ สถิติพรรณนาและการวิเคราะห์แบบจำลองสมการโครงสร้าง

ผลการวิจัยพบว่า (1) มีปัจจัยทั้งหมด 7 ปัจจัยที่คาดว่ามีอิทธิพลต่อความตั้งใจของ นักศึกษาจีนในการเลือกเรียนที่มหาวิทยาลัยกรุงเทพธนบุรี โดยความตั้งใจของนักศึกษาจีนอยู่ในระดับสูง (2) การวิเคราะห์แบบจำลองสมการโครงสร้าง (SEM) ของปัจจัยที่มีผลต่อความตั้งใจของนักศึกษาจีน ในการเลือกเรียนที่มหาวิทยาลัยกรุงเทพธนบุรีมีความสอดคล้องกับข้อมูลเชิงประจักษ์ โดยมีไคว์สแคร์สัมพัทธ์ เท่ากับ 1.55, GFI = 0.92, AGFI = 0.90, TLI = 0.97, RMR = 0.04, และ RMSEA = 0.04 และ (3) พบว่า มีเพียงปัจจัยเดียวที่มีอิทธิพลส่งผลทางตรงต่อการตัดสินใจของนักศึกษาจีนในการเลือกเรียนที่มหาวิทยาลัย กรุงเทพธนบุรีอย่างมีนัยสำคัญทางสถิติ คือ ปัจจัยด้านคุณภาพของมหาวิทยาลัย

คำสำคัญ: ปัจจัยที่มีผลต่อความตั้งใจของนักศึกษาจีนที่ต้องการศึกษา, มหาวิทยาลัยกรุงเทพธนบุรี ประเทศไทย

Introduction

The Kingdom of Thailand has always been a very friendly partner to China. Since Thailand is located in the center of Southeast Asia, it is geographically close to China. According to the Thailand Office of Higher Education Commission (OHEC, 2013), there are 171 recognized universities in the country offering graduate programs in a variety of academic disciplines. The growing number of institutions in the higher education sector has generated competition among Thai universities, especially in terms of student recruitment. Bangkokthonburi University is one of the private universities in this competitive situation. Therefore, it is necessary and important for universities to analyze and understand the factors influencing students' decisions.

Previous studies have identified student perceptions regarding studying abroad, especially in Western countries, but not many recent studies focus on why Chinese students decide to study in Thailand. As Chinese students rank as the major international students in Thailand, this study aims to analyze the factors influencing their decisions for choosing Thailand's higher education market. Previous studies have shown that multiple

factors influence decision-making among Chinese students. Binsardi and Ekwulugo (2003) emphasized that school image has a positive relationship with decision-making. DeShield et al. (2005) further argued that school reputation is a significant factor for students and parents in the decision-making process. Arambewela and Hall (2009) highlighted that the perceived value of university facilities impacts student decision-making, noting it as one of the main ways universities attract students. Picciano (2012) argued that students' expenditure and the cost of studying abroad are critical factors influencing Chinese students' choices. Hemachandra and Kodithuwakku (2007) added that social network promotion plays an important role in these decisions. Meanwhile, Yin, Hongzhi, et al. (2015) reported that factors contributing to Chinese students' decision-making come from three main sources: external factors (recipients of the degree, family relationships), internal factors (national matriculation exams, language proficiency, self-perception), and information channel factors (academic cooperation, intermediaries, educational exhibitions, online information, friends' referrals).

Currently, in Thailand, there is a lack of similar research focusing on understanding the needs of Chinese students and effective ways to communicate with them. Therefore, it is crucial to examine what factors influence Chinese students' decisions, especially from their perspectives. Understanding these factors will enable higher education institutions to develop better policies and admission strategies to attract Chinese students. This study aims to fill this research gap, particularly focusing on Bangkokthonburi University in Bangkok. As a Chinese student studying in Thailand in the field of education management and a coordinator for Chinese students at Bangkokthonburi University, I have observed various factors that lead Chinese students to choose this university. Expect that the findings from this study will benefit the university, the researchers, and the Chinese students who are studying or interested in studying here in the future.

Research objectives

1.   To determine the components that influence Chinese students' intention to choose to study at Bangkokthonburi University in Thailand.

2.   To propose a Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) of factors influencing Chinese students' intention to choose to study at Bangkokthonburi University, Thailand.

3.   To investigate the factors influencing Chinese students' intention to choose to study at Bangkokthonburi University, Thailand.

Research Hypothesis

The factors in this study are theory-driven and supported by various academic scholars:

1. Personal factor has a statistically significant direct influence on Chinese students' intention to choose to study at Bangkokthonburi University.

2. Economic and social factors have a statistically significant direct influence on Chinese students' intention to choose to study at Bangkokthonburi University.

3. Environment and location factors have a statistically significant direct influence on Chinese students' intention to choose to study at Bangkokthonburi University.

4. Access factor has a statistically significant direct influence on Chinese students' intention to choose to study at Bangkokthonburi University.

5. Quality factor has a statistically significant direct influence on Chinese students' intention to choose to study at Bangkokthonburi University.

6. Affordability factor has a statistically significant direct influence on Chinese students' intention to choose to study at Bangkokthonburi University.

7. Peace factor has a statistically significant direct influence on Chinese students' intention to choose to study at Bangkokthonburi University.

These hypotheses that stated above were supported by:

Hypothesis 1: Supported by Kee Ming (2010); Agrey & Lampadan (2014); Moorthy et al. (2017); Pirgaru & Turcan (2017); Wittawat Laumaloo (2019); Maybelle Paulino and Mary Caroline Castaño (2019); Zainab and Noureldien (2019); Hung Quang (2020); Vu Minh Hieu et al. (2020); Alzoubi and Aziz (2021).

Hypothesis 2: Supported by Agrey and Lampadan (2014); Thu (2014); Robinson and Dobele (2019); Linh and Quy (2020).

Hypothesis 3: Supported by Kee Ming (2010); Agrey & Lampadan (2014); Robinson & Dobele (2019); Alzoubi and Aziz (2021).

Hypothesis 4: Supported by Kee Ming (2010); Kitsawad (2013); Agrey & Lampadan (2014); Lien, Hoa, and Anh (2015); Robinson et al. (2019); Linh and Quy (2020).

Hypothesis 5: Supported by Kee Ming (2010); Hataichanok Yimpensook (2014); Agrey & Lampadan (2014); Moorthy et al. (2017); Pirgaru & Turcan (2017); Wittawat Laumaloo (2019); Maybelle Paulino and Mary Caroline Castaño (2019); Zainab and Noureldien (2019);

Taylor et al. (2019); Chandra et al. (2019); Robinson and Dobele (2019); Linh and Quy (2020); Linh & Khuc (2020).

Hypothesis 6: Supported by Kee Ming (2010); Hataichanok Yimpensook (2014); Agrey & Lampadan (2014); Lien, Hoa, and Anh (2015); Moorthy et al. (2017); Pirgaru & Turcan (2017); Maybelle Paulino and Mary Caroline Castaño (2019); Zainab and Noureldien (2019); Taylor et al. (2019); Chandra et al. (2019); Robinson and Dobele (2019); Linh and Quy (2020); Linh & Khuc (2020).

Hypothesis 7: Supported by Wagner and Fard (2009); Hataichanok Yimpensook (2014); Agrey & Lampadan (2014); Taylor et al. (2019); Chandra et al. (2019); Robinson and Dobele (2019); Linh and Quy (2020).

Research Method

1. Research Design

This study employs a quantitative research design to examine the factors influencing Chinese students' decisions to study at Bangkokthonburi University in Thailand. The quantitative approach allows for the systematic collection and analysis of data to identify significant relationships and patterns among the variables of interest (Creswell, 2014).

2. Population and Sample

The target population for this study comprises Chinese students currently enrolled at Bangkokthonburi University included 3,400 persons in 2022. A sample of 400 students was selected using stratified random sampling, suitable under the G*Power Software criteria, ensuring an adequate number of respondents to achieve statistically significant results.

3. Instrumentation

The questionnaire was consisting of a 5-level rating scale questionnaire of Likert-scale to measure the respondents' agreement with statements related to the factors items influencing their decision to study at Bangkokthonburi University. The Likert scale provides a reliable and valid measure of attitudes and perceptions (Likert, 1932). To ensure the validity and reliability of the instrument, a pilot study was conducted with a small sample of Chinese students. The results of the pilot study used to refine the questionnaire. Cronbach's alpha will be calculated to assess the internal consistency of the scales, with a value of 0.80 and higher which indicating acceptable reliability (Tavakol & Dennick, 2011).

Construct validity was assessed through confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) as part of the SEM process (Hair et al., 2014).

4. Data Collection

Data was collected using a structured questionnaire designed to measure the various factors influencing students' decisions. The questionnaire will be developed based on existing literature and validated scales. It will include sections on personal factors, economic and social factors, environment and location factors, access factors, quality factors, affordability factors, and peace factors (DeVellis, 2016). The questionnaire was administered both online and in person to maximize response rates.

5. Data Analysis

Descriptive statistics, including percentages and frequencies, were used to describe the characteristics of the respondents. Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) was performed using AMOS Software to test the model fit and hypotheses. For assessment the model fit with the empirical data, based on the suggestions of various reference such as: Diamantopoulos & Siguaw, 2000; Schumacker & Lomax, 2010; Jöreskog & Sörbom, 2012; Kelloway, 2015; Hair, et al, 2019; Poonpong Sooksawang, 2021).

Research Results

1. **Factors Influencing Choice:** Seven factors were identified: Personal, Economic and Social, Environment and Location, Access, Quality, Affordability, and Peace. All factors were rated at a high level of influence.

Table 1 Shows the value of mean, standard deviation, skewness, kurtosis, and level of factors that expect influencing Chinese students' intention on choice to study

(n = 400)

Factor (Latent variable)	$\bar{x}$	S.D.	Sk.	Ku.	Level
1. Personal	3.64	.823	-.888	.609	High
2. Economic and Social	3.64	.528	-.782	.886	High
3. Environment and location	3.55	.601	-.770	.543	High
4. Access	3.65	.566	-.882	1.028	High
5. Quality	3.72	.554	-1.065	1.547	High
6. Affordability	3.85	.717	-.527	-.215	High
7. Peace	3.78	.692	-1.060	1.338	High

Table 1 shows that all selected factors in this study were at a high level, with affordability being the highest ($\overline{x}$ = 3.85), followed by peace ($\overline{x}$ = 3.78) and quality ($\overline{x}$ = 3.72).

Table 2 Shows the value of mean, standard deviation, skewness, kurtosis, and level of Chinese students' attention on choice to study at Bangkokthonburi classify by variable

(n = 400)

Observed variables	$\overline{x}$	S.D.	Sk.	Ku.	Level
1. I have faith in my decision to choose this University.	3.75	1.069	-.677	.023	High
2. In general, choosing this University's study program is the right decision for me.	3.74	1.104	-.764	.066	High
3. Based on various studies on further education in Thailand. I have many choices, but the choices I have firmly intended. It's a decision to study at this university.	3.71	1.067	-.607	-.103	High
4. I wanted to study in Thailand. I found that I had the greatest need to study at this university.	3.83	1.101	-.864	.277	High
5. I learned a lot about my studies at various institutions in Thailand, and I was determined to study at this university.	3.69	1.143	-.612	-.294	High
Total	3.74	.977	-.930	.783	High

Table 2 shows the overall high level of Chinese students' intention to choose Bangkokthonburi University.

2. The Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) fit with the empirical data well: Relative Chi-square = 1.55, GFI = 0.92, AGFI = 0.90, TLI = 0.97, RMR = 0.04, and RMSEA = 0.04. the result as shows in Figure 1

Figure show the construct of SEM analysis result of factors influencing Chinese student intention on choice to study at Bangkokthonburi university
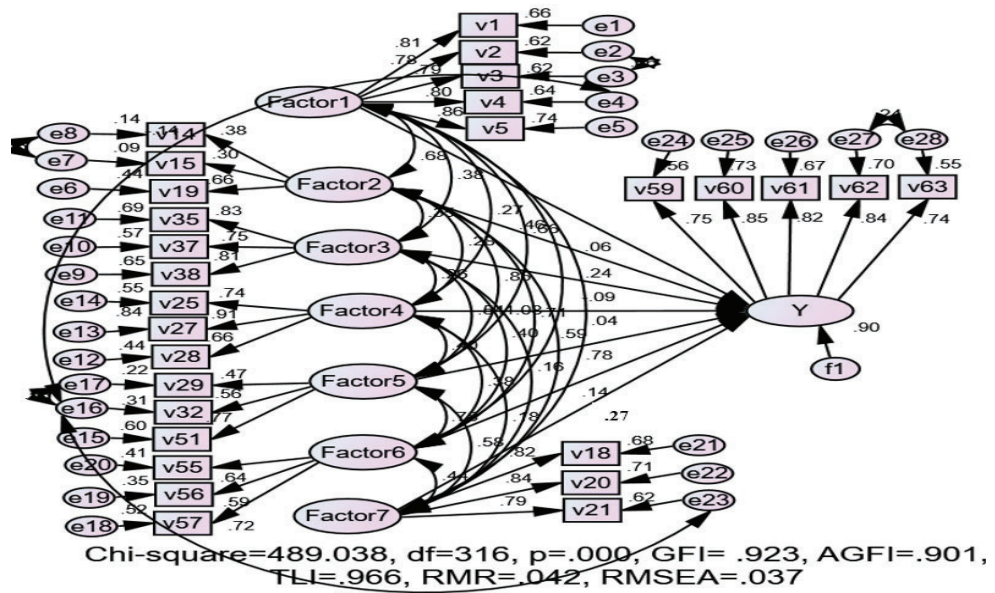

Figure 1 shows the SEM analysis results indicating a good fit with the empirical data. The overall fit indices meet the criteria set by scholars.

Table 3 The results of data analysis from the index used to examine the consistency and harmony of the variables with the empirical data.

Value	Standard	Final value After adjustment	Result
x^2	P > 0.05	x^2 = 489.34, p=0.00	reject
X^2 / df	< 2.00	1.55	accept
GFI	0.90 < GFI ≤1.00	0.92	accept
AGFI	0.90 ≤ AGFI ≤1.00	0.90	accept
TLI	0,90 ≤TLI ≤1.00	0.97	accept
Standardized RMR	< 0.05	0.04	accept
RMSEA	0.00 ≤ RMSEA ≤ 0.08	0.04	accept

Note: Index to determine the CFA model fit with the empirical data were cited from various reference such as: Diamantopoulos & Siguaw, 2000; Schumacker & Lomax, 2010; Jöreskog & Sörbom, 2012; Kelloway, 2015; Hair, et al, 2019; Poonpong Sooksawang, 2021).

Table 3 shows that the fit indices for the SEM analysis meet the required standards, indicating a good fit with the empirical data.

3. Hypotheses Testing:

Table 4: SEM Results of Factors Influencing Chinese Students' Intention to Choose Bangkokthonburi University

Hypothesis	Unstandardized regression weight	Standardized regression weight	S.E.	Z-test	p	R²
Y						.902
1. Personal factor has statistically significant directly influences Chinese students' intention	0.61	.059	.076	.805	.421	.004
2. Economic and social factor has statistically significant directly influences Chinese students' intention	.322	.241	.245	1.311	.190	.058
3. Environment and location factor has statistically significant directly influences Chinese students' ...	.129	.093	.104	1.233	.217	.009
4. Access factor has statistically significant directly influences Chinese students' intention	.069	.036	.097	.717	.474	.001
5. Quality factor has statistically significant directly influences Chinese students' intention	.774	.785	.243	4.187	.001	.616
6. Affordability factor has statistically significant directly influences Chinese students' intention	.170	.136	.174	.981	.327	.018

Hypothesis	Unstandardized regression weight	Standardized regression weight	S.E.	Z-test	p	R²
7. Peace factor has statistically significant directly influences Chinese students' intention	.289	.269	.189	1.523	.128	.072

Table 4 summarizes the SEM results, showing that only the quality factor has a statistically significant direct influence on Chinese students' intention to choose Bangkokthonburi University. Therefore, 6 hypotheses stated were reject, and only one was accept this was hypothesis 5.

Discussion

This study aims to understand the factors influencing Chinese students' decisions to study at Bangkokthonburi University in Thailand. By examining personal, economic and social, environment and location, access, quality, affordability, and peace factors, this research provides a comprehensive analysis supported by existing literature.

1. Personal Factors: Personal factors such as individual preferences, personal goals, and academic aspirations significantly influence students' choices. According to Kee Ming (2010) and Agrey & Lampadan (2014), personal motivations, including career prospects and personal development opportunities, are critical in decision-making. Moorthy et al. (2017) found that students' aspirations to enhance their skills and knowledge play a vital role in their choice of study destination. Furthermore, Wittawat Laumaloo (2019) noted that personal experiences and interactions with alumni or current students also influence prospective students' decisions.

2. Economic and Social Factors: Economic considerations, such as the cost of living and tuition fees, and social factors, like cultural fit and social network, are crucial in students' decision-making. Agrey and Lampadan (2014) highlighted that financial affordability is a major determinant for students choosing their study destinations. Robinson and Dobele (2019) emphasized that social networks and familial influences significantly affect students' decisions. In addition, Thu (2014) pointed out that economic stability and job prospects post-graduation are critical considerations for international students.

3. Environment and Location Factors: The physical and social environment, including the safety and accessibility of the location, are essential in students' decision-making process. Kee Ming (2010) and Alzoubi and Aziz (2021) found that a conducive learning environment and favorable location are significant attractors for international students. According to Robinson and Dobele (2019), the overall living conditions and cultural environment also play a pivotal role in students' choices.

4. Access Factors: Accessibility to quality education and resources is another key factor. Kitsawad (2013) argued that the ease of access to educational facilities and resources, including libraries and laboratories, significantly influences students' choices. Lien, Hoa, and Anh (2015) further supported this by indicating that access to academic support services and career counseling is crucial for students. Additionally, Robinson et al. (2019) found that accessibility to information about the institution and its programs is vital for prospective students.

5. Quality Factors: The perceived quality of education, including the reputation of the institution and the quality of faculty, significantly influences students' decisions. Hataichanok Yimpensook (2014) emphasized that the academic reputation and accreditation of the institution are primary considerations for students. Robinson and Dobele (2019) highlighted that the quality of faculty and the curriculum's relevance to industry standards are critical determinants. Linh & Khuc (2020) added that the availability of research opportunities and the institution's global ranking also play significant roles in students' decision-making.

6. Affordability Factors: Financial considerations, including tuition fees and living expenses, are critical in students' decision-making. Kee Ming (2010) and Linh & Khuc (2020) demonstrated that affordability is a major determinant for students choosing their study destinations. Hataichanok Yimpensook (2014) found that scholarships and financial aid availability are crucial factors for students. Agrey & Lampadan (2014) also noted that the overall cost-effectiveness of the education provided significantly influences students' choices.

7. Peace Factors: The stability and safety of the study environment are paramount for students. Wagner and Fard (2009) argued that a peaceful and stable environment is essential for attracting international students. Chandra et al. (2019) highlighted that political stability and low crime rates are significant considerations for students. Robinson and Dobele (2019) added that the general perception of safety and security in the host country greatly influences students' decisions.

Recommendation

Based on the findings of this study, several recommendations can be made to higher education institutions, particularly Bangkokthonburi University, to attract and retain Chinese students:

1. Enhance Personal Engagement: Develop personalized communication strategies to address the specific needs and aspirations of Chinese students. Establish alumni networks and mentorship programs to provide prospective students with insights and guidance.

2. Strengthen Economic and Social Support: Offer competitive tuition fees and financial aid packages to alleviate economic concerns. Create a supportive social environment by organizing cultural events and peer support groups to help Chinese students integrate smoothly.

3. Improve Environment and Location Appeal: Ensure a safe and welcoming campus environment. Highlight the benefits of the location, such as cultural richness, accessibility, and opportunities for extracurricular activities.

4. Increase Accessibility: Enhance access to academic resources and support services. Provide comprehensive information about the institution, its programs, and the support available to international students.

5. Maintain High Quality Standards: Focus on maintaining high academic standards and continuously improving the quality of education. Emphasize the institution's strengths, such as qualified faculty, research opportunities, and industry connections.

6. Ensure Affordability: Offer scholarships and financial aid to make education more affordable. Provide transparent information about the cost of living and potential part-time work opportunities for students.

7. Promote Peace and Stability: Highlight the safety and stability of the campus and surrounding areas. Provide clear information about safety measures and support services available to students. By implementing these recommendations, Bangkokthonburi University can enhance its appeal to Chinese students and improve its competitive position in the higher education market.

For Further Research

Based on the findings and discussions of this study, several areas for future research have been identified. These areas aim to build on the current understanding of factors

influencing Chinese students' decisions to study at Bangkokthonburi University and can provide deeper insights and broader implications for higher education institutions.

1. Longitudinal Studies Future research could adopt a longitudinal approach to track changes in Chinese students' perceptions and decision-making factors over time. This would help to understand how external events, such as economic changes or political shifts, influence students' choices. Longitudinal data could provide more robust insights into the stability and evolution of the factors identified in this study.

2. Comparative Studies Comparative studies between different universities in Thailand and other countries could offer valuable perspectives on what unique attributes or strategies make Bangkokthonburi University attractive to Chinese students. Such comparisons could extend to universities in Western countries, which are often preferred destinations, to identify distinctive factors or strategies that can be adopted or adapted by Thai institutions.

3. Qualitative Research While this study employed a quantitative approach, qualitative research methods such as interviews and focus groups could be used to gain a deeper understanding of the personal and nuanced experiences of Chinese students. These qualitative insights could complement the quantitative findings and provide a more holistic view of the factors influencing their decisions.

4. Broader Demographic Factors Future research could examine additional demographic variables, such as students' socioeconomic background, prior educational experiences, and career aspirations. Understanding how these broader demographic factors interact with the identified influences could offer more tailored and effective recruitment strategies.

5. Policy Implications and Institutional Strategies Research could be expanded to explore the policy implications of the findings and how higher education institutions can develop and implement strategies to better meet the needs and expectations of Chinese students. This includes examining the effectiveness of specific recruitment policies, support services, and educational programs.

8. Impact of Global Events The impact of global events, such as the COVID-19 pandemic, on international student mobility and decision-making is a critical area for future research. Understanding how such events influence students' choices can help universities

to develop more resilient and adaptive strategies to attract and support international students during times of crisis.

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