



## Factors influencing decision-making of CLMV students to study International Hospitality and Tourism Management Program in Thailand

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### Abstract

The research studies the factors influencing Cambodia, Lao, Myanmar and Vietnam (CLMV) students, decision-making to study higher education in international hospitality and tourism management programs in Thailand in order to develop suggestions for international hospitality and tourism management programs. This research is a qualitative research using in-depth interviews. The main informants are 16 CLMV students who are studying higher education in an international hospitality and tourism management program in Thailand. The data was analyzed by using the computer program ATLAS ti 7.0.

CLMV students selected the program while they were studying in high school level and they have the earnestness about future life. Their families have the potential to send them to study abroad. They think Thailand is a good destination for education and also entertainment such as shopping and traveling. In term of product factor, CLMV students reveal that Thailand has a good image of education, safe, the cost of living is acceptable. They have good relationships with Thai people and they are confident to find jobs after graduating. In regards to the international hospitality and tourism program that they are studying, they are satisfied but want to have professional lecturers. In term of price factor, CLMV students revealed the program fee is cheaper than another Asian country (only in international hospitality and tourism management programs) and the materials are also low priced and acceptable. In term of place factor CLMV students learnt about Thailand's higher education institution at education fairs and advertisement on social media. In term of promotion factor, CLMV students received the scholarship from their universities and discount fee. The guideline to develop the program is professional lecturers and full teaching aid.

### Introduction

Studying higher education abroad is considered popular. The major industrialized education countries of the world are the United States, Canada, the United

Kingdom, Australia, New Zealand, Singapore and the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region. Not only Thai students study abroad, but also Thailand is one of the key goals that foreign students want to come to study at a higher education institute. At present, many educa-

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tional institutes in Thailand have developed curriculums to support international students. However, the curriculum and teaching of Thai as well as the past have problems and obstacles, so the quality of education in Thailand is not good in several aspects. Academic learning activities and the quality of the learners at different levels is not standardized. In addition, the characteristics of Thai people and educational management in many aspects are not satisfactory. Thailand has a tendency to offer new curriculum and teaching styles. According to the statistics of the Higher Education Commission, which surveyed foreign students studying in the country, it was found that most foreign students came to Thailand in order to study higher education. (Office of Higher Education, 2016)

The second is the master degree. In Thailand, there are 105 higher education institutes that have been accredited by the Higher Education Commission to open international colleges such as Assumption University. Assumption University is the most popular university, followed by Mahidol University. According to the statistics of the number of students who come to Thailand by country, the number of students from China is the highest, followed by Lao, Myanmar, Vietnam and Cambodia. The most chosen subjects are Business Administration and Thai Language. (Office of Higher Education, 2016)

The ASEAN Economic Community (AEC), which has 10 member countries, including Thailand, Indonesia, Philippines, Malaysia, Singapore, Brunei, Laos, Myanmar, Vietnam and Cambodia, is aimed at supporting economic, social, cultural, technological, scientific, and service sectors. AEC supports the development of educational standards of higher education institutions to reach standards of national and world class university in accordance with the educational system and style of education in Europe and America (Education: Creating the ASEAN Community, 2015). A drawback for Thailand is that foreign students may not be confident that studying in a higher education institution in Thailand will help them reach their attainment compared to the other 140 countries in the world by the World Economic Forum in 2015-2016. Moreover, the quality of education in Thailand is ranked below some of the CLMV countries; such as Lao and Vietnam. CLMV countries are Cambodia, Lao, Myanmar and Vietnam which have economies that are growing with rich mineral resources and the labor cost is not very high. CLMV countries borders Thailand and have a large number of young

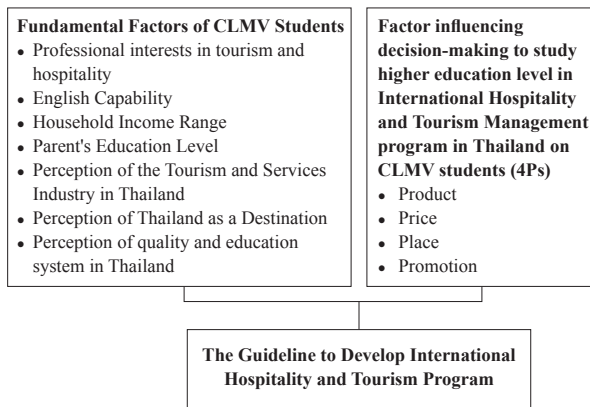
people who are attending to study in Thailand for the sake of the opportunity to work in Thailand with a higher compensation than their own country. Chanda and Pasadilla (2011) and Siam Commercial Bank Public Company Limited (2011) also mentioned that the analysis of the labor capacity development demand showed that it was difficult to recruit labor in some positions, such as housekeepers, laundry attendants, and stewards. Therefore, labor in the neighboring countries are more likely to get a job in these positions because they can be patient and service-minded. However, they need to be trained to acquire or strengthen their skills to meet the ASEAN standards by improving the hotel and tourism curriculum which focuses on theories (Suthinan Pomsuwan and Somruthai Soontayatron, 2018). The most popular countries that CLMV parents sent their children to study in the world are the United States (18th), the United Kingdom (21st), Switzerland (1st) and Australia (13rd). However, the cost of living, education fee and travelling are very high. The newly emerging middle class of the CLMV population cannot send their children to study in those countries. Considering neighbor countries in Southeast Asia, the best quality education is Singapore (3rd place), Malaysia (6th), Philippines (31st) and Indonesia (41st). The information showed that International students focus on the faculty's lecturer ability the most followed by the content of the curriculum and the reliability of the university. (Mckorin, 2014)

An international hospitality and tourism management curriculum is a must-have program for both Thai and foreign students. This program is designed to learn about management service. After graduation, students can work in a variety of jobs including hotel, travel, restaurant, as well as coordinating activities. This research is designed to develop and improve curriculum to find out the needs of CLMV students because CLMV are the countries with growing economies which mean they have the potential for the people to study abroad.

### **The purposes of the research**

1. To study the fundamental factors of studying abroad in higher education on CLMV students
2. To study the factor influencing decision-making to study international hospitality and tourism management program in Thailand on CLMV students
3. To develop the guideline for international hospitality and tourism management programs

## Conceptual Framework



## Literature Review

L.E.K. Consulting CONSUMER SPOTLIGHT (2016) CLMV: Emerging Middle Class, ASEAN economies Vietnam, Myanmar, Cambodia and Lao PDR – have been slow to develop a large middle class with money to spend on retail goods (Singapore and Brunei, both wealthy but extremely small, are special cases). Vietnam (88 million population, \$141.7 billion GDP), for example, has seen overall average household income gains, however weak infrastructure and underdeveloped distribution networks have helped to perpetuate the large income gaps between towns and the countryside. Local grocery stores still predominate in the food and beverage space, although chain supermarkets are growing quickly. One promising note: a third of the Vietnamese population is under 24 years old. While the ASEAN countries have all been affected by the sluggishness of the global economy (and the expected end of the Federal Reserve's quantitative easing program) they remain poised for further industrialization and growth. Near-term growth is likely to be slower than over the last decade, and the rate and form of that growth will vary by market. However, the rise of the middle class is well underway and looks set to continue for years to come.

UMASS Dartmouth (2018) the concept of 7 steps to effective decision making by following steps.

Step 1: Identify the decision, You realize that you need to make a decision. Try to clearly define the nature of the decision you must make. This first step is very important.

Step 2: Gather relevant information, Collect some

pertinent information before you make your decision: what information is needed, the best sources of information, and how to get it. This step involves both internal and external "work". Some information is internal, you will seek it through a process of self-assessment. Other information is external: you'll find it online, in books, from other people, and from other sources.

Step 3: Identify the alternatives, As you collect information, you will probably identify several possible paths of action, or alternatives. You can also use your imagination and additional information to construct new alternatives. In this step, you will list all possible and desirable alternatives.

Step 4: Weigh the evidence, Draw on your information and emotions to imagine what it would be like if you carried out each of the alternatives to the end. Evaluate whether the need identified in Step 1 would be met or resolved through the use of each alternative. As you go through this difficult internal process, you'll begin to favor certain alternatives: those that seem to have a higher potential for reaching your goal. Finally, place the alternatives in a priority order, based upon your own value system.

Step 5: Choose among alternatives, Once you have weighed all the evidence, you are ready to select the alternative that seems to be the best one for you. You may even choose a combination of alternatives. Your choice in Step 5 may very likely be the same or similar to the alternative you placed at the top of your list at the end of Step 4.

Step 6: Take action, You are now ready to take some positive action by beginning to implement the alternative you chose in Step 5.

Step 7: Review your decision & its consequences, In this final step, consider the results of your decision and evaluate whether or not it has resolved the need you identified in Step 1. If the decision has not met the identified need, you may want to repeat certain steps of the process to make a new decision. For example, you might want to gather more detailed or somewhat different information or explore additional alternatives.

Thitisomboonsuch (2015) 4 Strategies to seize opportunities from the rising CLMV, The dawn of the ASEAN Economic Community (AEC) in 2015 marks a new step toward ASEAN becoming an important market place especially, the CLMV region (Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar, and Vietnam) due to many reasons such as high levels of economic growth with plenty of young

and low-cost labor as well as abundant natural resources. Their governments are also opening up the countries to free trade, establishing service centers for businesses, and providing various investment incentives. Moreover, the CLMV region is conveniently located in the heart of ASEAN, a connecting point for many big trade routes around the world. Additionally, CLMV countries have been investing heavily to develop and improve their infrastructure with support from richer counterparts like Japan, China, the U.S., and Germany. These factors make the CLMV a great option as a new production base and a potential region to expand their market.

Watanasiri (2010) researched decision-making behavior of students in the Greater Mekong Sub-region in pursuing an international higher education in Thailand found that the students from GMS who study in Thailand revealed that the target group of Thailand international higher education composes of more undergraduate degree seekers than graduate degree pursuers. They have financial power and their parents are businesses owners or employees of international organizations and their parents have been to Thailand before. Most of the students have average grades in high academic performance, are fond of using internet and peer chatting. They obey their parents, read newspapers and magazines sometimes. They favor independent lifestyle and freedom, are serious students who aim at successful future career, determined to gain knowledge and skills in languages to develop themselves and their countries. Most of the students have made decision by themselves to study in Thailand before getting approval from the parents. The factors to choose Thailand are learning environments in institutions with efficient teachers, affordability of education fees and conveniences of location. The drawbacks are that Thailand does not use English as official language, most Thai people do not speak English and Thai politics is not stable making them feel unsecured. For future education, the students want to pursue advanced degrees in Thailand, USA, England, Australia and Japan. They demand that Thailand subsidize their further education as such, or provide any aids. An exception is on Laotian students; they do not choose Thailand to be destination for further education.

Buchanan (2015) researched the examination of students' selection criteria for international education found that country attractions of the host location was the highest ranked decision criteria, followed by considerations of the educational institution. Research limitations/implications – Prestige and reputation of the

education provider is of high value. However, greater decision influence was seen in respondents' selection of host country for the attributes of safe and pleasant living conditions, as well as on going career opportunities locally. Sampling was cross-sectional and limited to one industry and one country. Although these are natural control variables, generalizability may be limited, and requires further study. Originality/value – Policymakers should be mindful of the match between the educational program and the site selection. Prestige of the school may not overcome a suboptimal location decision

Iacopini (2017) sought to identify the role played by parents in Vietnam in the choice of a university for their children. It also addressed the nature of the parent-child relationships evident in this decision-making process. As has been widely documented, the structure of Vietnamese families is markedly different from that found in Western countries: the family in Vietnam represents the most important unit of society; individuality is not a prominent feature within Vietnamese families; and roles and responsibilities within a Vietnamese family are generally very well defined. These characteristics were all clearly evident in the comments of the 16 participants in the investigation. It was evident that Confucian culture provides a strong cultural force in shaping the nature of family relationships and decision making in Vietnam, and how it impacts on parenting styles is a topic for further investigation. What was also clear, though, was that the parent-child relationships reported by the 16 participants, varied considerably, as did the extent of parental engagement in the choice of a university for their child to attend. Some of the parent-child relationships were clearly authoritarian, in a traditional way, but many others were more in the form of a counseling nature. The forcefulness with which parents dictated which university their child should attend also varied considerably. Parents who were more affluent and more confident about their child's educational prospects were generally much more likely to decide which university their child would attend. Other parents abstractly recognized the importance of the decision but either engaged with it in a cooperative way with their child or left the decision entirely to their child to make. This investigation is interpretive, involving multiple case studies. Its purpose has been to throw light on a cultural phenomenon in Vietnam. Given its methodological approach, the investigation does not provide a basis for generalizing the population of parents of university graduates in Vietnam. The investigation does, however,



provide insights that might well be explored more widely by other scholars with an interest in how decisions are made in Vietnam about the selection of a university to attend, and about the nature of parent-child relationships in Vietnam may impact on the decision-making process.

Pacharajaroenpong (2011) found that respondents choose to study the Business Administration. They stayed in the dormitory and used their own money as a scholarship. With regard to factors that affected student's decisions on advanced study in the International Undergraduate Program, it was found that they focused on personal needs including guidance to achieve their future goals, make friends with other nationalities, experience living abroad, and have a successful life in the future. The marketing mix factors which overseas students focused on included transferring credit to overseas universities provided, when graduate, they will be able to study at a higher level at famous overseas institutions, reasonable fee provided for all courses, online information (website) provided to inform enrollment, courses available, and fee, as well as good safety on campus, contemporary issues raised in classes, and international study tour provided.

## Methodology

This research is a qualitative research conducted by using in-depth interviews. The main informants are 16 CLMV students who are studying higher education in an international hospitality and tourism management program. The research instrument was an interview form which was designed to involve the research objectives and consists of 3 parts;

Part 1 is the fundamental factors of CLMV students consisting of professional interests in tourism and hospitality, English capability before studying undergraduate program, household income range, parent's education level, perception of the tourism and services industry in Thailand and perception of Thailand as a destination.

Part 2 is the factors influencing decision-making to study higher education level in an international hospitality and tourism management program in Thailand on CLMV students (4Ps) consist of product (image of Thailand, safety, cost of living, Thai people, the international hospitality and tourism management program and lecturers), price (tuition fees, material of the program), place (acknowledgement about their

university, transportation) and promotion (discount, scholarship).

Part 3 is provided for extra comments about studying International Hospitality and Tourism Management Program.

The interview form was examined and validity by 3 specialists and tried out with 30 pilots. After the interview, the data was analyzed by using the computer program ATLAS ti 7.0.

## Result

The results reveal that CLMV students attempted to study abroad and also interested in studying hospitality and tourism management program while they were studying at the high school level and CLMV students had the ability that exceeds the criteria of the university where they are studying. The household income range is between \$600-\$1000 but some of students have financial problem. Parent's education level is related to the household income range so some of students need discounts on tuition fees and scholarships, most of their parents finished at the higher education level. For perception of the tourism and services industry in Thailand, most of students agreed that Thailand is famous for hospitality and service and they knew about the world award that Thailand businesses received such as Thai Airway had received the best airline in the world and also some hotels received awards in service quality. The perception of Thailand as a destination, CLMV students said that Thailand is good for shopping and traveling and also there are many tourist attractions such as history attractions, natural attractions also some entertainment attractions and they can travel when they are studying in Thailand but some students found the entrance fees of tourist attraction have different price between Thai and foreigners tourist.

Factors influencing the decision to study in Thailand (4Ps), in term of product factor, CLMV students agreed that Thailand has a good image for education and also Thailand is the best education country in ASEAN. CLMV students agreed that Thailand is safe for them. For the cost of living in Thailand if compared with their country CLMV students revealed Thailand is higher but it is acceptable. About the people who they found or meet in Thailand, CLMV students agreed that they had good relationships with all Thai people who they have met. Regarding receiving knowledge from the program, CLMV students revealed they could gain knowledge and

a job in the future, especially a job in Thailand, where they could earn a higher salary than they would earn in their own country and nobody thought that courses in the program are outdated and they will find a job in Thailand after graduation. CLMV students revealed the lectures in the program are good at their course and the lecturers are necessary to improve students. In term of price factor, CLMV students revealed the program fee is cheaper than another Asian country (only in International Hospitality and Tourism Management Program) and the materials are also low priced and acceptable. In term of place factor, CLMV students learnt about Thailand's higher education institutes at education fairs and advertisement on social media. The transportation around their university offer ease to go to another places. In term of promotion factor, CLMV students received the scholarship from their universities and discount.

In regards to the extra comment from CLMV students, they strive to be intern students in a 5 stars hotel and have planned to study in international hospitality and tourism management program. They would like to have more practical oriented study during studying period and recommend that should be suitable to lectures and need some more explanation in lecture. Some of students also want to work while they studying in Thailand.

Thailand is a developing country and famous for tourism industry that emphasizes on enhancement to people coming to Thailand, they also come for education. Thus the universities should make international hospitality and tourism programs that contain high quality such as lectures, materials and full facilities and the universities should present themselves widely. They have to learn about the culture and tradition of their foreigner students to satisfy the students. In the development of students, Institutions should be targeted with the entrepreneurship, regardless of personality, number of disciplines, multi-screen as well as new target audiences, such as those in working age who need to be revived. In addition, institutions have to raise their level of potential, improve the teaching process to competition in the education market.

## Conclusion and Discussion

The research reveals that CLMV student had the process of thinking, they have prepared their information to study abroad before they graduated from the high

school, which can support the concept of 7 steps to effective decision making. In step 1, they were thinking about studying abroad. In step 2, they gather all information. In step 3, they identified the alternatives in universities choice. In step 4, they weighed the evidence. In step 5, they choose among the universities that they want to study. In step 6, they took an action by contact with the university asking for more information such as scholarships or discount. In step 7, they reviewed their decision, if the decision has not met the identified need, they may want to repeat certain steps of the process to make a new decision.

The research reveals that CLMV student had the motivation for future life and tried to do everything for entrance to the university such as the English capacity that CLMV students passed the obligations of the universities that is similar with Watanasiri (2010) research who found that most of the students have average grades in high academic performance and aim at successful future career and also similar with Pachara Jaroenpong (2011) who found that overseas students focused on personal needs included guidance to achieve their future goals.

The research reveals that CLMV students need the lecturers who are professional at hospitality and tourism and also have experience in this field that can increase their knowledge. Thailand has many Thai lecturers even though they are good and professional but CLMV students still would like more western lecturers which is similar with Watanasiri (2010) who found that the factors in selecting Thailand for high education are learning environments in institutions with efficient teachers.

The research reveals that CLMV students think Thailand is a good destination for education and also entertainment such as shopping and traveling while they have been studying in Thailand similar with Buchanan (2015) who found that country attractions of the host location was the highest ranked decision criteria.

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