

# Enhancing University Education Business: Motivations of Chinese Students Studying in Thailand

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## Abstract

This qualitative study investigates the motivations driving Chinese students to pursue higher education in Thailand, focusing on both undergraduates and doctoral students during the academic years 2021 and 2022. This research comprises 15 Chinese doctoral students enrolled at a public university in Bangkok and 43 Chinese undergraduates in bachelor's programs at a private university. Data collection occurred in two phases: the first during the second semester of 2021, targeting undergraduates, and the second in the first semester of 2022, focusing on doctoral students. Content Analysis was employed as the chosen methodology for data analysis, with the overarching aim of enhancing educational services for Chinese students in Thailand.

Chinese students are drawn to Thai universities for various compelling reasons. These institutions uphold rigorous educational standards and offer flexible teaching methods that accommodate in-person, onsite, and online learning preferences. Language barriers are adeptly addressed through Chinese translators, facilitating the seamless translation of academic content, while instructors proficiently switch between Thai and Chinese during lectures. An integrated approach encourages Chinese students to develop Thai language skills alongside their chosen fields of study, with some even engaging in teaching Chinese to Thai high school students, thus creating potential career opportunities in education. Doctoral programs offer more intensive and complex instruction, including in-depth examples and case studies. Graduate students express profound satisfaction with the quality of education and deeply value the unexpected insights gained during their studies. In summary, Chinese students are increasingly drawn to Thai universities due to their unwavering commitment to high educational standards, adaptable teaching methods, comprehensive language support, and the unique opportunities for language acquisition and teaching experience they offer. This enriching academic environment not only benefits Chinese students but also contributes positively to Thailand's educational landscape and internationalization efforts.

**Keywords:** Motivations, Chinese Students, Education Services, Thai university

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## Introduction

The promotion of university education business between Thailand and China has evolved over time, driven by various factors such as diplomatic relations, economic opportunities, and cultural exchanges. **Historical Overview: Early Relations:** The diplomatic relations between Thailand and China have a long history dating back centuries. These relations have often included cultural and educational exchanges. **Modern Diplomacy:** In the modern era, diplomatic relations between Thailand and China were officially established in 1975. Both countries have since worked to strengthen their ties through various initiatives, including educational collaborations. **Economic Ties:** The growing economic cooperation between Thailand and China, especially through trade and investment, has created a conducive environment for educational partnerships. As economic relations expanded, so did opportunities for educational exchanges. **Cultural and Educational Exchanges:** Over the years, both countries have engaged in cultural events, student exchanges, and academic collaborations. These activities have fostered a mutual understanding and appreciation of each other's cultures and educational systems. **Joint Programs and Scholarships:** Universities in Thailand and China have established joint academic programs, research collaborations, and student exchange programs. Scholarships have often been provided to encourage Thai students to study in China and vice versa. **Language and Cultural Studies:** Institutes and departments dedicated to the study of the Chinese language and culture have been established in Thai universities, promoting cross-cultural understanding and communication. **Bilateral Agreements:** A bilateral agreement and a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the government and an educational institution have facilitated the exchange of students, faculty, and academic resources. **Thailand 4.0 and China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI):** Thailand's economic development strategy, known as "Thailand 4.0," focuses on transforming the country into a value-based economy driven by innovation and technology. China's Belt and Road Initiative, which aims to enhance connectivity and cooperation across regions, has also created opportunities for educational collaborations between the two countries. **Challenges and Opportunities:** While there have been successful initiatives and collaborations, challenges such as differences in educational systems, language barriers, and administrative complexities may have posed obstacles. However, these challenges have also presented opportunities for innovation and creative solutions. **Recent Developments:** Beyond September 2021, it's likely that the promotion of university education business between Thailand and China will continue to evolve, influenced by changing geopolitical dynamics, technological advancements, and global trends in higher education.

In 2019, the Chinese State Council introduced two transformative educational reform plans aimed at propelling the nation's education sector in alignment with its broader modernization ambitions. (People's Republic of China, the State Council, 2018) The "China's Education Modernisation 2035 Plan" and the "Implementation Plan for Accelerating Education Modernisation (2018-2022)" both share a common vision to overhaul China's education system by 2035, a crucial milestone in the journey towards socialist modernization and educational excellence. President Xi Jinping's clarion call in September 2018 to shift the educational focus from 'capacity' to 'quality' underscores this shift towards modernization that actively supports national advancement. To concretize these aspirations, the plans underscore critical objectives such as enhancing teacher quality, upgrading educational infrastructure, mitigating educational disparities, fostering a culture of lifelong learning, and modernizing all tiers of education.

The blueprints encompass strategies to elevate higher education through disciplined development, undergraduate entrepreneurship and employment opportunities, and the stimulation of postgraduate research and academic expansion. Notably, the plans prioritize the efficient management of Sino-foreign collaborations, optimize the distribution of Confucius Institutes to promote Chinese language acquisition, and underscore international collaboration, particularly within the framework of the Belt and Road Initiative.

The increasing trend of Chinese students choosing to study in Thailand can be attributed to various factors, including both the policies of the Chinese government and the personal motivations of the students themselves. This phenomenon has consequently led to a growing number of researchers engaging in teaching at various academic levels. This includes undergraduate, master's, and doctoral courses, as these researchers are encouraged to delve into the underlying reasons driving this interest and to gain insights into the post-graduation plans of these students. Thailand has emerged as a significant higher education destination for Chinese students in comparison to other Southeast Asian countries. This trend has been amplified in the post-COVID-19 era, with a noticeable increase in both new and returning Chinese students choosing to study at Thai universities. (Thai PBS, 2023)

To the point of “Enhancing University Education Business: Motivations of Chinese Students Studying in Thailand”, it is essential to understand that this trend is significantly impacting the landscape of university education in Thailand. It's not just about the increasing numbers of Chinese students enrolling in Thai universities, but also the implications for the educational institutions and the broader business of university education in Thailand. Chinese students' motivations for studying in Thailand play a vital role in shaping university education in the region. These motivations can range from the pursuit of high-quality education, exposure to international experiences, and the allure of specific programs or fields of study offered by Thai universities. Additionally, factors like the Chinese government's policies encouraging overseas education and Thailand's attractiveness as a study destination come into play. As we explore these motivations and understand the driving forces behind this trend, we gain valuable insights into how universities in Thailand can tailor their programs, services, and support systems to accommodate the needs and expectations of Chinese students. This not only enhances the educational experience but also has a direct impact on the business of university education in Thailand, including enrollment numbers, revenue generation, and international collaborations. In conclusion, the motivations of Chinese students studying in Thailand are not only of academic interest but also of strategic importance to the growth and enhancement of university education businesses in Thailand. By comprehensively understanding these motivations, universities can better position themselves to attract and retain Chinese students, ultimately contributing to the overarching modernization objectives of both China and Thailand in the field of education.

## **Research Objectives**

1. To study the factors that motivate Chinese students' interest in choosing to study at the university level in Thailand.
2. To gather information about Chinese students' post-graduation plans, whether to continue working in Thailand or return to work in China.
3. To survey the opinions of Chinese students regarding the trends over the next 10 years and the potential phenomena that may occur in the education business between Thailand and China.

## **Literature Review**

Successful international business education interactions between Thailand and China require a comprehensive understanding of trade dynamics, cultural nuances, regulatory environments, and strategic considerations. Adapting business strategies to the unique characteristics of each country can contribute to successful cross-border collaborations and ventures. The Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), introduced by Chinese President Xi Jinping in 2013, has garnered substantial attention and analysis from scholars across various fields, including economics and geopolitics (Lim, 2022). The core objective of the BRI is to foster global “peace and cooperation, openness and inclusiveness, mutual learning and mutual benefit” by facilitating collaboration among nations across diverse regions such as Southeast Asia, Africa, and Europe. Since its inception, more than 140 countries have expressed their interest in participating by signing Memorandums of Understanding (MOUs). One noteworthy aspect of the BRI is the bilateral educational cooperation between China and Thailand. This partnership encompasses higher education institutions and the establishment of vocational institutions, with Thailand emerging as a key player in this endeavor. The establishment of Confucius Institutes (CIs) exemplifies Thailand’s commitment to this collaboration, as it has become the preferred destination in Southeast Asia for setting up these non-profit institutions aimed at promoting the Chinese language and culture globally. An example is the CI of the Maritime Silk Road, an initiative aligned with the BRI’s vision. This initiative underscores Thailand’s dedication to comprehensive strategic bilateral cooperation.

A significant milestone in China-Thailand educational cooperation occurred on September 24-25, 2021, during the 3rd Forum on China-Thailand Higher Education Cooperation and the 2021 Alliance of China-Thailand Universities (ACTU) Assembly. This event brought together over 360 representatives from more than 140 universities in both nations. ACTU, established in 2020, is a pivotal driving force behind higher education exchanges and collaboration between China and Thailand within the BRI framework and Thailand’s national development strategy. The 2021 assembly yielded crucial outcomes, including the signing of several MOUs between Chinese and Thai universities. For instance, Jiangsu University and Chiang Mai University inked an MOU to collaboratively establish an international laboratory. Similarly, Beijing Language and Culture University and Siam University joined hands to create a Chinese language international college. Additionally, the China-Thailand University Presidents Forum facilitated in-depth discussions, paving the way for expanded bilateral educational cooperation concerning the BRI.

The ACTU’s encouragement has led to deepened exchanges between higher education institutions in both countries, particularly in research and the training of international talents to bolster the BRI’s implementation. This collaboration has been instrumental in preparing students from both nations for roles in the China-Thailand railway project. Notably, the Lu Ban Workshop, established by Tianjin Bohai Vocational Technical College at Ayutthaya Technical College in Thailand, is a prime illustration of such collaboration. Named after the legendary Chinese architect and builder, Lu Ban, this workshop has provided vocational training to over 2,000 students between 2016 and 2018. The partnership extends beyond training, as mutual recognition of academic qualifications enables students trained in Thailand to seek employment in China and vice versa, further enhancing cross-border mobility.

In conclusion, the bilateral educational cooperation between China and Thailand under the BRI framework exemplifies the initiative’s multifaceted approach. Through collaborations

between higher education and vocational institutions, these countries are not only fostering cultural and academic exchanges but also preparing a skilled workforce to contribute to the success of BRI projects. This cooperation serves as a testament to the vision of shared prosperity and mutual learning that underpins the Belt and Road Initiative (Suwannathachote, 2015; Priemsamorn, 2016; Premssmit, 2018; Wei, 2018; Gu, 2019; Kanchanopast, 2020).

One such example is Yang Yaohong, also known as Win, an exchange student from China majoring in the Thai language at Dhurakij Pundit University. Win's passion for Thai drama, culture, and cuisine motivated them to independently study the Thai language since the age of 16. Over the span of 7 years, Win has become proficient in speaking, listening, reading, and writing Thai, comparable to native Thai speakers. Win mentioned that numerous universities in China have started offering Thai language courses due to the growing interest among Chinese students. This interest is partly driven by the strong business and tourism connections between China and Thailand, creating a demand for individuals proficient in the Thai language. Moreover, the experience of studying in Thailand enhances the prospects of securing better employment opportunities and higher income for Chinese students, considering the intense competition associated with the Chinese university entrance examination system, known as "Gaokao".

Another example is Li Yi, also known as Rainy, a fourth-year international business student at China International College Dhurakij Pundit University. Rainy's decision to study in Thailand follows her parents, who have been residing and working in Thailand for over 15 years. In contrast to the rigorous and highly competitive educational environment in Chinese universities, Thai universities offer a more relaxed and balanced approach to learning, allowing students like Rainy ample time for extracurricular activities. Upon completing her bachelor's degree, Rainy aspires to undertake an internship with a Thai company and pursue a career in Thailand. Despite the potentially lower salary compared to China, Rainy is drawn to the simplicity of living, cost of living, and the unique business dynamics between Thailand and China.

The influx of Chinese students has contributed to the growth of the "education business" in Thailand. Although not as substantial as other industries, this sector exhibits promising potential for expansion. The Chinese International College at Dhurakij Pundit University, for instance, presently enrolls nearly 3,000 Chinese students across bachelor's, master's, and doctoral programs. In addition, there are Huachiew Chalermprakiet University and Krirk University, etc. Most of these students are enrolled in fields such as international business, tourism, and hotel management. This popularity can be attributed in part to the recognition of the university's curriculum by Chinese education authorities, making it a favored choice among Chinese students.

### **Related Theoretical Concepts**

The application and emphasis of these management theory concepts can vary based on the unique cultural, economic, and social contexts of Thailand and China. Management Theory Concepts in University Education (Thailand and China), such as:

1. **Cultural Context:** Both Thailand and China have distinct cultural norms and values that influence management practices in educational institutions. Concepts like Hofstede's Cultural Dimensions or the GLOBE framework could be applied to understand and adapt management practices to the cultural context of each country. Cultural Context in Educational Management Practices: A Comparative Study of Thailand and China. The management of educational institutions is significantly influenced by the cultural norms and values of the society in which



they operate. This paper aims to explore and compare the cultural dimensions of Thailand and China, utilizing Hofstede's Cultural Dimensions and the GLOBE framework, and their impact on educational management practices in each country. By understanding these cultural contexts, educational leaders can adapt their management strategies to ensure effective and harmonious operations.

**Hofstede's Cultural Dimensions:** Hofstede's framework provides insights into cultural differences across various dimensions (Hofstede, 1980). This may influence decision-making processes and communication within educational institutions. In contrast, China also exhibits a significant power distance, emphasizing respect for authority and seniority. Thailand leans towards collectivism, emphasizing group harmony and interdependence. Educational institutions may prioritize group cohesion and collaboration. China also tends towards collectivism, emphasizing family and societal relationships.

**GLOBE Framework:** The GLOBE framework further examines cultural dimensions, including Assertiveness, Future Orientation, Gender Egalitarianism, Performance Orientation, Humane Orientation, and Institutional Collectivism (House et al., 2004). Both Thailand and China exhibit relatively high assertiveness, valuing competitiveness and ambition. Educational management may encourage students to express their opinions and strive for success. China places a strong emphasis on future orientation, which may manifest in educational institutions' focus on preparing students for upcoming challenges. Thailand also demonstrates a future-oriented perspective. Both countries emphasize performance and success. Educational institutions may focus on academic excellence and rigorous standards. Thailand exhibits a highly humane orientation, emphasizing compassion and community. This may influence a supportive and nurturing educational environment. China also demonstrates a humane orientation, focusing on benevolence and social responsibility. Both countries display institutional collectivism, emphasizing group loyalty and teamwork. This may impact decision-making processes and collaboration in educational management.

**Conclusion:** The cultural dimensions identified through Hofstede's Cultural Dimensions and the GLOBE framework highlight the distinct norms and values that influence educational management practices in Thailand and China. By recognizing these cultural differences, educational leaders can tailor their management strategies to effectively navigate and adapt to the unique cultural contexts of each country. This adaptation will contribute to the successful operation of educational institutions and the development of students in both Thailand and China.

2. **Quality Assurance and Accreditation in Higher Education.** Total Quality Management (TQM) is a comprehensive management approach that focuses on continuous improvement, customer satisfaction, and involvement of all members of an organization (Yusof & Bajuri, 2017). In the context of higher education, TQM emphasizes a holistic view of quality, aiming to enhance processes, curricula, and overall student experience. **Challenges and Outcomes of TQM Implementation:** Both countries face challenges in implementing TQM, including resistance to change, resource allocation, and maintaining a balance between standardization and academic freedom. However, the outcomes are promising, as universities in both countries have seen improvements in graduation rates, student satisfaction, and employability. TQM has contributed to a culture of accountability, innovation, and adaptability in higher education institutions (Kaymakci & Akyuz, 2018).

Six Sigma is a data-driven methodology that aims to minimize defects and variations in processes, thus enhancing efficiency and quality (Deng & Dart, 2009). It involves defining,

measuring, analyzing, improving, and controlling processes to achieve optimal performance. Challenges and Outcomes of Six Sigma Implementation: Both countries encounter challenges with Six Sigma implementation, including data availability, training, and alignment with traditional academic structures. Nevertheless, the outcomes demonstrate a measurable impact on educational quality. Reduced administrative redundancies, improved resource allocation, and enhanced student outcomes are notable achievements in the universities of both countries (Long, 2012).

**Conclusions:** Quality assurance and accreditation play crucial roles in ensuring the quality of higher education. The adoption of Total Quality Management and Six Sigma models in Country A and Country B has led to significant improvements in educational processes, student experiences, and overall quality. While challenges persist, the commitment to continuous improvement and data-driven decision-making has shaped a culture of excellence in both higher education systems. To explore the theoretical concepts of study abroad and internationalization in higher education and understand how these concepts can support the analysis of the motivations of Chinese students studying in Thailand, this review will provide a foundation for comprehending the broader context of international education and its relevance to the specific case of Chinese students in Thailand.

1. Study Abroad in Higher Education: Study abroad is a phenomenon wherein students pursue educational opportunities in foreign countries. This concept is rooted in several theoretical frameworks:

**Cross-Cultural Adaptation Theory:** Developed by Berry (1980), this theory emphasizes the acculturation process students undergo when studying in a foreign culture. It involves phases like culture shock and adjustment, which impact students' motivations and experiences.

**Global Perspective Development:** The theory posits that studying abroad enhances Students' global perspectives. Exposure to diverse cultures, languages, and worldviews fosters a broader understanding of global issues.

**Social Identity Theory:** This framework by Henri Tajfel explores how individuals identify with various social groups. Studying abroad can influence one's social identity, as students may adapt or develop new identities in the host country.

2. Internationalization in Higher Education: Internationalization refers to the process of integrating an international, intercultural, or global dimension into the goals, functions, and delivery of higher education. Several key concepts and models underpin internationalization efforts:

**Knight's Paradigm:** Knight's framework outlines four aspects of internationalization: recruitment of international students, development of international curricula, faculty exchange, and establishment of overseas campuses. It underscores the multifaceted nature of internationalization. **Cultural Exchange:** Internationalization aims to facilitate cultural exchange among students, faculty, and institutions. This fosters mutual understanding and cross-cultural competencies. **Global Citizenship:** Internationalization often seeks to cultivate global citizenship among students, encouraging them to engage with global challenges and adopt a sense of responsibility toward global issues.

3. "Enhancing University Education Business: Motivations of Chinese Students Studying in Thailand": Understanding the motivations of Chinese students studying in Thailand in the context of these theoretical concepts can shed light on their decision-making processes. Chinese students' motivations may be influenced by factors such as Academic Quality: The perceived quality of education in Thailand's universities and the availability of programs of interest.

Cultural and Language Factors: The desire to experience Thai culture, and learn the Thai language, and interact with locals.

Cost Considerations: The relative affordability of studying in Thailand compared to other countries.

Global Perspective: The aspiration to gain a global perspective and enhance cross-cultural competencies.

Networking Opportunities: The potential to build international networks and connections for future career prospects.

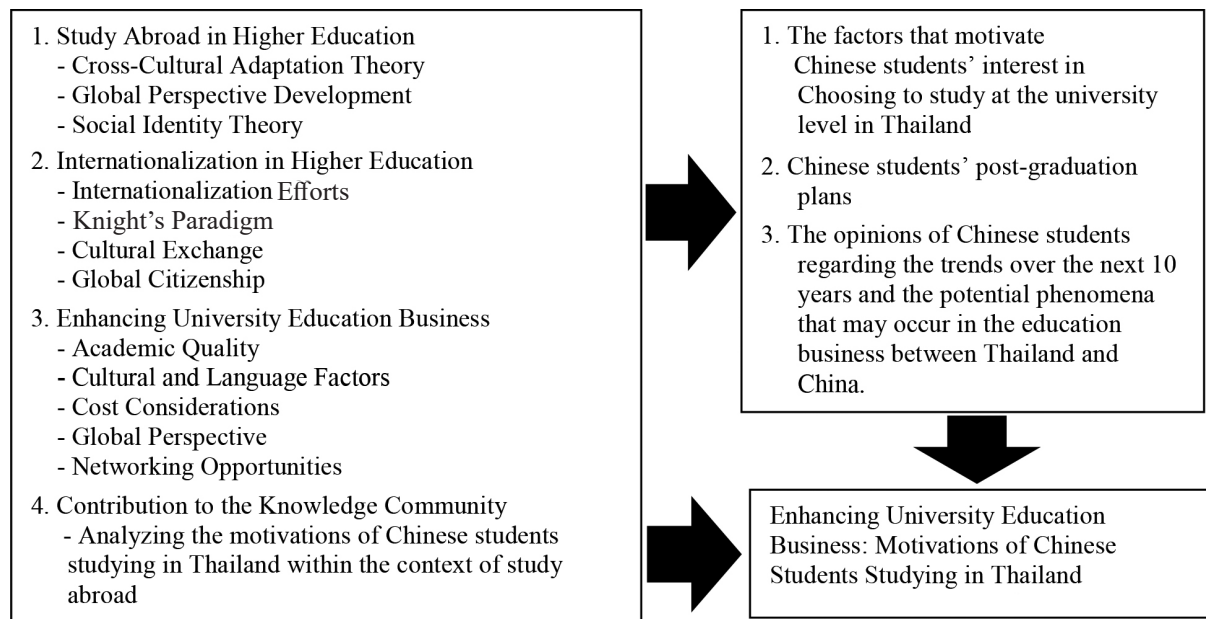
Political and Economic Factors: Geopolitical relations between China and Thailand, and economic opportunities in Thailand.

4. Contribution to the Knowledge Community: Analyzing the motivations of Chinese students studying in Thailand within the context of study abroad and internationalization theories can provide valuable insights. It contributes to the knowledge community by helping educators, policymakers, and researchers understand the dynamics of international student mobility and the factors that influence destination choices. This knowledge can inform strategies for enhancing the attractiveness of higher education institutions and programs to international students, ultimately contributing to the internationalization goals of universities and countries.

Motivation theories such as Push-Pull, Expectancy-Value, Self-Determination, and others play a pivotal role in comprehending why students choose to study abroad and how institutions can foster internationalization (Altbach & Knight, 2007; Dwyer & Peters, 2004). Push factors, driven by limitations in their home country, and pull factors, driven by attractive aspects of the host country or institution, influence students' decisions. Additionally, theories like Cultural Learning and Adaptation, Social Cognitive Career, and Goal-Setting highlight the importance of factors like intercultural competence, self-efficacy, and goal alignment in motivating students to pursue international experiences. Tailoring support services and programs based on these theories can greatly enhance the effectiveness of study abroad and internationalization initiatives.

In conclusion, the theoretical concepts of study abroad and internationalization in higher education provide a robust framework for understanding the motivations of Chinese students studying in Thailand. Analyzing their motivations in this context can contribute significantly to our understanding of international education and its impact on individuals and institutions.



**Table 1** Conceptual Framework

**Source:** Applied by Natthanen Siricharoen

## Methodology

**Methodology:** Enhancing University Education Business: Motivations of Chinese students studying in Thailand

**Data Collection Methods:** This research adopts a qualitative approach to explore the motivations of Chinese students studying in Thailand. Data collection primarily involved in-depth interviews with individual participants, as well as small group discussions. These discussions, commonly referred to as focus group discussions, were conducted to complement the insights gained from one-on-one interviews.

**Participant Demographics:** The study's participants consisted of two distinct groups:

**Undergraduate Students:** A total of 43 Chinese students who had recently enrolled in bachelor's degree programs in Intercultural Communication at a private university.

**Doctoral Students:** A cohort of 15 Chinese students pursuing doctoral studies in the field of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) at a Public University in Bangkok.

**Data Collection Phases:** The data collection process was divided into two distinct phases to capture the perspectives of both undergraduate and doctoral students:

**Phase One (Undergraduate Students):** Data collection occurred during the second semester of the academic year 2021, spanning from January to May 2022.

**Phase Two (Doctoral Students):** Data collection for this phase took place during the first semester of the academic year 2022, spanning from August to December 2022.

The research process for data collection in Phase 1 and Phase 2 follows a structured approach:

**Phase 1: Undergraduate Students**

**Data Collection Process:**

**Group Interviews:** Initially, the researcher conducts group interviews with 8-10 undergraduate students to gain broad insights into their experiences and emotions regarding their decision to study in Thailand.

**Individual Interviews:** Following the group interviews, the researcher conducts one-on-one semi-structured interviews with undergraduate students. These individual interviews allow the researcher to delve deeper into their emotions and gather more detailed information. Researchers select individuals known for their willingness to express their opinions and feelings across various areas that influence their decision to study in Thailand.

**Research Instruments for Interviews:** To guide these interviews, researchers develop semi-structured interview guides with open-ended questions covering topics such as academic challenges, personal well-being, and overall university satisfaction.

**Phase 2: Doctoral Students**

**Data Collection Process:**

**Group Discussion Interviews:** The research begins with group discussion interviews involving 5-8 doctoral students to identify common themes and trends in their experiences related to studying in Thailand.

**Individual Interviews:** Subsequently, researchers conduct individual interviews with doctoral students to obtain in-depth insights into their unique perspectives. Similar to Phase 1, these interviews use a semi-structured format, and participants are carefully selected for their willingness to express their opinions and feelings regarding various factors influencing their choice to study in Thailand.

**Research Instruments for Interviews:** For doctoral students, specific semi-structured interview guides are employed. These guides contain questions related to their research, career goals, challenges faced, and overall satisfaction with the doctoral program.

This structured research process ensures a comprehensive understanding of the experiences and emotions of both undergraduate and doctoral students, facilitating the extraction of meaningful insights from their respective educational journeys.

**Quality Assurance in Qualitative Research:**

Ensuring the rigor and credibility of qualitative research is essential. To maintain the quality of this study, several strategies were employed:

**Triangulation:** Multiple data sources were used, combining individual interviews and group discussions, to provide a comprehensive understanding of the motivations of Chinese students.

**Member Checking:** After conducting interviews and discussions, participants were given the opportunity to review and validate the findings, ensuring the accuracy of the interpretations.

**Peer Review:** An external peer review process was undertaken to gain additional perspectives and insights, enhancing the study's credibility.

**Researcher Reflexivity:** The researcher maintained a reflexive journal to document their thoughts, biases, and assumptions throughout the research process, enhancing transparency and reducing researcher bias.

**Data Analysis:**

To analyze and synthesize the collected data, the study employed a 'Content Analysis' approach. This method allowed for the systematic examination of interview transcripts and

discussion notes to identify key themes and patterns. The resulting summary aimed to optimize business education services for Chinese students studying in Thailand, with the goal of benefiting both Thailand and China.

In summary, this qualitative research utilized a combination of interviews and discussions (including focus group discussions) to explore the motivations of Chinese students studying in Thailand. Rigorous quality assurance measures, such as triangulation, member checking, peer review, and researcher reflexivity, were employed to ensure the trustworthiness and validity of the findings. The analysis of data followed a content analysis approach to uncover valuable insights for enhancing university education business in the context of Chinese students in Thailand.



**Figure 1** Shows the Atmosphere in the Researcher's Classroom

**Source:** Applied by Natthanan Siricharoen

Group of informants who were undergraduate students in private universities.

## Research Results

The information was gathered through a combination of qualitative data collected from both group and individual interviews. Among the findings, several key points stand out as particularly important:

### Objective 1: Factors Motivating Chinese Students to Study in Thailand

The data gathered from Chinese undergraduate and doctoral students studying in Thailand revealed several motivations for choosing Thailand for their university education. Notably, both groups expressed a sense of comfort and understanding from Thai teachers, emphasizing the importance of this factor.

“Undergraduate students cited ‘the kindness and considerate nature of Thai people’ as a key motivator. They felt that Thai teachers were supportive and ready to help with any study-related problems or misunderstandings. This emotional support contributed to a sense of peace of mind while studying in Thailand.”

“Similarly, doctoral students also mentioned Thai teachers’ understanding of the difficulties Chinese students may face in adapting to a new educational environment. They appreciated the ample time provided for research and information gathering for their assignments, which eased their academic journey. This understanding and accommodation by Thai teachers contributed to their confidence in graduating according to their study plans.”

These findings align with the Cross-Cultural Adaptation Theory, as Chinese students’ positive experiences with Thai teachers and the cultural adjustment process played a significant role in their choice to study in Thailand. The Social Identity Theory also highlights how these students perceived themselves as welcomed and supported in Thailand, potentially impacting their decision to assimilate or acculturate.

**Objective 2: Post-Graduation Plans of Chinese Students**

When considering the post-graduation plans of Chinese students in Thailand, it is essential to examine their academic experience and networking opportunities. Both undergraduate and doctoral students shared their perspectives. “Undergraduate students, particularly females, emphasized the manageable workload and flexibility provided by Thai universities. This suggests that many might be inclined to pursue further education or careers in Thailand or other international destinations. The positive experience of studying in Thailand could shape their global perspectives and career aspirations, aligning with the Global Perspective Development theory. Similarly, doctoral students appreciated the academic environment in Thailand, which allowed them ample time for research and assignments. This could lead to a desire to continue their academic careers or engage in research, possibly in an international context, aligning with the idea of enhancing university education and business”.

**Objective 3: Chinese Students’ Opinions on Future Education Trends**

Chinese students studying in Thailand also shared their views on the future of education business between the two countries. Both undergraduate and doctoral students expressed a sense of satisfaction with their educational experience in Thailand, largely attributed to the kindness and supportiveness of Thai teachers.

Their comments indicate a potential trend of increased Chinese enrollment in Thai universities in the future, provided that the universities maintain their current standards of understanding and accommodation. This aligns with Knight’s Paradigm of Cultural Exchange and Global Citizenship, suggesting that Chinese students see themselves as contributing to cultural exchange and global citizenship through their educational experience in Thailand.

**Contribution to the Knowledge Community:**

The findings from this research indicate that Chinese students’ motivations for studying in Thailand are closely tied to the understanding and support they receive from Thai teachers. This positive experience may lead to increased cooperation between Thailand and China in the field of education, fostering cultural exchange and global citizenship. As Chinese students perceive themselves as bridge builders, universities in both countries could benefit from further collaboration and internationalization efforts.

In conclusion, the motivations, post-graduation plans, and opinions of Chinese students studying in Thailand revolve around the comfort and support they receive from Thai teachers, as well as the academic environment provided. These findings highlight the potential for continued collaboration and growth in the education business between Thailand and China, with Chinese students playing a vital role as cultural ambassadors and future leaders in various fields.

The majority of Chinese students have expressed strong interest in pursuing their studies at Thai universities due to several compelling factors. One key aspect is the availability of high educational standards, which ensures a quality learning experience. Additionally, the universities offer a comprehensive teaching system that accommodates both in-person, onsite, and online learning preferences. A notable feature that appeals to Chinese students is the presence of Chinese translators who aid in translating academic content from Chinese to Thai. This facilitation extends to classroom settings, where instructors provide lectures in Thai and promptly translate the content into Chinese, ensuring a seamless understanding of the subject matter.

This comprehensive support system contributes to a smooth and hassle-free learning process, fostering the students’ ability to comprehend and advance in accordance with their individual goals and the established curriculum. Notably, Chinese students studying in Thai-

land are given the opportunity to concurrently learn the Thai language alongside their chosen subjects. This integrated approach allows for the practical development of listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills in Thai.

Furthermore, certain faculties and fields of study impose requirements for Chinese students to engage in teaching Chinese to Thai high school students. This initiative not only enriches the Chinese students' learning experience but also provides them with a potential career trajectory. Graduates can opt to pursue teaching roles at both secondary and university levels, thus offering a multifaceted career path for those interested in education.

In the case of opinions from undergraduate and graduate students, there are noticeable differences in the intensity of teaching. This disparity arises because doctoral-level studies involve professors incorporating greater complexity into the subject matter, utilizing more in-depth examples and case studies. Furthermore, doctoral students are tasked with preparing reports and engaging in various creative projects that entail more intricate subject matter.

Graduate students are expected to generate works encompassing heightened complexity, necessitating the application of relevant concepts and theories to engage in thorough analysis, synthesis, and innovation. As a result, the group of graduate students exhibited high levels of satisfaction with the instructors' quality and expressed that they gained unexpected insights. They also found themselves capable of applying their newfound knowledge to expand their academic achievements.

In summation, the allure of Thai universities for Chinese students lies in their commitment to high educational standards, versatile teaching methodologies, language support, and opportunities for language development and teaching experience. These elements combine to create an enriching academic environment that equips Chinese students with valuable skills and diverse career prospects. These institutions offer a holistic and enriching educational experience that equips Chinese students with the tools and knowledge to thrive in an interconnected global landscape. In addition, most Chinese students also express their appreciation for the character of Thai people, who are good-hearted and generous — exemplifying kindness and often seen with smiles. These impressions reflect the general perception Chinese students have of Thai people, making their university trips to Thailand enjoyable, comfortable, delicious, and affordable. Consequently, there is a sense of desire to pursue opportunities for employment after graduation.

There may be some problems and obstacles in studying in Thailand. One of them is communication, as most Thai people do not understand and cannot speak Chinese. Even some Chinese students struggle with speaking Thai fluently. Therefore, there can be misunderstandings between Thai professors and Chinese students. However, this is not a very significant issue, as Chinese undergraduate students are prepared to listen and can speak Thai well enough to understand. I believe that with time and practice, they can overcome this challenge. Another aspect of the issue is making Thai friends. Sometimes, Thai people are shy and hesitant to communicate with each other. This means that it takes time to get to know each other well enough to become comfortable and have open conversations about various topics.

Overall, both groups of informants at different educational levels expressed positive opinions and attitudes toward studying at universities in Thailand. They would be likely to recommend to their friends or younger acquaintances to consider studying at a university in Thailand as an alternative option for pursuing education and eventually entering the workforce.



## **Discussion**

From the research objectives, it can be inferred that the study aims to explore and understand the motivations and intentions of Chinese students who choose to pursue university-level education in Thailand.

The first objective implies that the research seeks to identify and analyze the factors influencing Chinese students' decisions to pursue higher education in Thailand. These factors could include academic reputation, program offerings, cultural exchange opportunities, cost of education, potential career prospects, and any distinctive advantages that studying in Thailand might provide to Chinese students.

The second objective aims to collect information about the post-graduation plans of Chinese students after completing their studies in Thailand. This could involve investigating students' perceptions of job opportunities, quality of life, and other factors influencing their decisions after graduation. This research aims to provide insights into the motivations, preferences, and intentions of Chinese students pursuing university-level education in Thailand. The third objective aims to survey Chinese students' opinions, revealing a collective anticipation of increased collaboration, technological integration, and flexible learning approaches in the education sector between Thailand and China over the next decade. These perspectives underscore the significance of cultural exchange, policy support, and maintaining academic standards in shaping the evolving educational landscape.

For opinions on the future forecast for the next 10 years in the education business between Thailand and China, two groups of respondents provided their respective responses on 10 topics chosen by the researcher. The item with the highest score was 'Increased Collaboration and Partnerships', while the item with the lowest score was 'Mobility and Visa Regulations. Here are some potential trends and considerations for the university education business between Thailand and China over the next 10 years.

**Table 2** The Trends Over the Next 10 Years and the Potential Phenomena that May Occur in the Education Business Between Thailand and China

No.	Potential Trends and Considerations for the University Education Business between Thailand and China over the Next 10 Years	Period Occurring Over the Next 10 Years (n = 58)
		Number of People Selected & Percent
1.	Increased Collaboration and Partnerships	50 (86 %)
2.	Growing Chinese Student Enrollment in Thailand	46 (79 %)
3.	Technological Advancements	45 (78 %)
4.	Online and Hybrid Learning	44 (76 %)
5.	Research and Innovation	42 (72 %)
6.	Cultural and Language Exchange	40 (69 %)
7.	Government Policies and Bilateral Agreements	39 (67 %)
8.	Quality Assurance and Accreditation	37 (64 %)
9.	Economic and Geopolitical Factors	30 (52 %)
10.	Mobility and Visa Regulations	23 (40 %)

**Source:** Applied by Natthanan Siricharoen

This data is sourced from questionnaires distributed to undergraduate and doctoral students, who were provided with a selection of topics to choose from.

Some general trends and considerations that might influence the future of university education business between Thailand and China over the next 10 years. However, please note that these are speculative and should not be considered definite predictions. The actual outcomes may vary based on a wide range of factors, such as:

**Increased Collaboration and Partnerships:** There could be a rise in collaborative initiatives between universities in Thailand and China. Joint academic programs, research collaborations, and student exchanges might become more common as institutions seek to leverage each other's strengths and resources.

**Growing Chinese Student Enrollment in Thailand:** Thailand's higher education institutions might see an increase in the enrollment of Chinese students. This could be driven by factors such as Thailand's strategic location, lower tuition costs compared to Western countries, and the opportunity for cultural exposure and language learning.

**Technological Advancements:** Technological advancements, such as advancements in virtual reality, artificial intelligence, and other educational technologies, could reshape the way education is delivered and experienced, potentially enhancing cross-border collaborations.

**Online and Hybrid Learning:** The adoption of online and hybrid learning models might accelerate, especially in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic. Universities could offer more online courses and degree programs to cater to both domestic and international students, potentially leading to greater cross-border collaboration.

**Research and Innovation:** Both Thailand and China have been investing in research and innovation. Over the next decade, collaborations in cutting-edge research areas such as technology, healthcare, renewable energy, and environmental studies could strengthen the ties between the two countries' universities.

**Cultural and Language Exchange:** Universities might emphasize cultural and language exchange programs to foster mutual understanding and collaboration. This could involve initiatives like language courses, cultural immersion programs, and joint cultural events.

**Government Policies and Bilateral Agreements:** The education sectors of both countries could be influenced by changes in government policies and bilateral agreements. Trade and diplomatic relations between Thailand and China may shape the direction and extent of educational cooperation.

**Quality Assurance and Accreditation:** Ensuring consistent and high-quality education will be crucial. Efforts to align accreditation standards and quality assurance mechanisms between the two countries might lead to smoother recognition of degrees and qualifications.

**Economic and Geopolitical Factors:** Economic developments, geopolitical shifts, and global trends could influence the demand for higher education in both countries. Economic growth and changing trade dynamics might impact students' ability to afford international education.

**Mobility and Visa Regulations:** Changes in visa regulations and mobility agreements could impact the ease with which students and faculty members can travel between Thailand and China for educational purposes.

It's important to note that the actual future of the university education business between Thailand and China will depend on a complex interplay of these and many other factors. Adaptation to changing circumstances, strategic planning, and a focus on quality and innovation will likely be key to success in this evolving landscape. In assessing the future forecast for the next 10 years in the education business between Thailand and China, two distinct groups of informants were consulted. These groups provided their respective responses on ten different topics selected by the researcher. Among these topics, "Increased Collaboration and Partnerships" emerged as the highest-scoring item, signifying its perceived significance in shaping the future of educational interactions between the two nations. Conversely, "Mobility and Visa Regulations" garnered the lowest score, suggesting that challenges related to mobility and visa regulations might pose obstacles to the anticipated growth and development of the education business between Thailand and China.

The increasing number of Chinese students opting to study in Thailand's universities has led to the growth of the education sector. The unique appeal of Thailand's culture, language, and relaxed learning environment, along with economic and business opportunities, has attracted Chinese students to pursue higher education in the country. This trend is expected to continue to evolve and presents opportunities for further expansion and development in the education sector.

The trend of studying abroad for higher education has gained immense popularity among students seeking broader career opportunities and personal growth. Studying in Thailand offers a unique pathway towards a promising career, both within the country and beyond, as opposed to returning to their home country, such as China.

**Studying in Thailand: A Gateway to Prosperity:** The allure of pursuing a bachelor's degree in Thailand lies in the perception that it can open doors to a diverse range of career opportunities.

Many students believe that upon graduation, they will have enhanced prospects for employment and income generation. This aspiration resonates with the idea of gaining a competitive edge in the job market through an internationally recognized education. The diverse academic offerings, language exposure, and cultural experiences in Thailand contribute to a well-rounded education that is seen as advantageous for future professional endeavors.

**Private Business Ventures: A Symbol of Autonomy and Success:** Another prevailing notion among these undergraduate informants is the appeal of launching private businesses in Thailand. Students perceive that starting and growing a business in the Thai environment can be a transformative experience, enabling them to test their entrepreneurial acumen and potentially achieve financial success. The allure of this entrepreneurial path is rooted in the belief that through hard work and innovation, individuals can establish profitable enterprises that not only secure their financial well-being but also contribute to the broader economy.

**A Choice of Hopeful Opportunities:** The decision to study in Thailand represents a conscious choice made by these students, driven by a desire for promising opportunities. The multifaceted nature of Thailand's educational system, which combines academic excellence with experiential learning, resonates with their aspirations. This resonates with their aspiration to not only gain knowledge but also develop practical skills that can be applied in real-world scenarios. This aligns with the student's pursuit of meaningful career paths that offer stability and growth potential.

**Contrasting Perspectives: Graduating and Returning to China:** While the allure of studying in Thailand is undeniable, some students contemplate the option of returning to China after graduation. However, this alternative is often perceived as less enticing due to the prevailing notion that studying abroad offers a wider range of professional avenues. The prospect of experiencing different cultures, languages, and academic systems contributes to a more holistic skill set, which is often perceived as a valuable asset in the global job market.

## **Conclusions**

In conclusion, the perspectives of undergraduate and Ph.D. students considering studying in Thailand illustrate a shared aspiration for a prosperous future filled with promising career opportunities and entrepreneurial ventures. These students are motivated by the belief that pursuing education and business endeavors abroad, particularly in Thailand, can lead to a stable and fulfilling life. For undergraduate students, the appeal of Thailand lies in the multifaceted education and practical experiences it offers, which are seen as valuable assets in shaping dynamic and successful careers. While returning to China remains an option, the advantages of studying in Thailand make it an attractive choice for those looking to broaden their horizons. For Ph.D. candidates from China, Thailand presents a compelling option due to several key factors: the cost-efficiency and lump sum system, flexible learning opportunities, high-quality teaching, and exposure to diverse cultures. These elements combine to create an environment conducive to personal and academic growth, positioning students for success in their chosen fields. Overall, the allure of pursuing education in Thailand for Chinese students is multifaceted and compelling, driven by factors such as cost-effectiveness, flexibility, support for familial responsibilities, quality teaching, and cultural exposure. This decision represents a strategic investment in a brighter future in an increasingly interconnected world. The information provided about the implementation of Total Quality Management (TQM) in higher education institutions, while

valuable, may not directly relate to the subject research on “Enhancing University Education Business: Motivations of Chinese Students Studying in Thailand”. However, it is possible to draw some indirect connections and potential implications: Quality Assurance: The implementation of TQM in higher education institutions emphasizes the importance of maintaining and improving the quality of education. In the context of Chinese students studying in Thailand, this could be relevant in ensuring that collaborative programs between Thai and Chinese universities meet high academic standards. Quality assurance could be a key factor in attracting Chinese students to study in Thailand. Student Satisfaction: TQM often includes a focus on student satisfaction. Understanding the motivations of Chinese students to study in Thailand includes considering their satisfaction with the educational experience. The positive outcomes mentioned in the TQM context, such as elevated levels of student satisfaction, may align with the goals of universities in Thailand to attract and retain Chinese students. Innovation and Adaptability: TQM promotes innovation and adaptability within academic institutions. This could be relevant to the discussion of why Chinese students choose Thailand for their education. If Thai universities can demonstrate a commitment to innovation and adaptability in their programs, it may be appealing to Chinese students seeking dynamic and fulfilling educational experiences. Data-Driven Approaches: The mention of the Six Sigma methodology being used in TQM highlights the importance of data-driven decision-making. In the context of the research on Chinese students studying in Thailand, universities and education businesses could benefit from data-driven insights to understand and meet the needs of their Chinese student population. Overall, while the information about TQM may not directly address the motivations of Chinese students, it does emphasize the importance of quality, satisfaction, innovation, and data-driven approaches in higher education. These factors could indirectly impact the success of education businesses and collaborations between Thailand and China in attracting and retaining Chinese students.

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