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INTERNATIONAL STUDENT MOBILITY TOWARDS SOUTH KOREA:  
Motivations for Choosing South Korea as a Study Abroad Destination

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## Abstract

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This study investigates international student mobility toward South Korea in order to identify factors and information sources influencing international students' choice of study abroad destination. It seeks to explain why international students decide to come to South Korea to pursue higher education, to identify variances of the factors influencing the enrollment decision, and to present possible implications for the government and institutions.

A modified synthesis model is used to explain students' decision making process in three distinct stages and to seek various factors that affect the choice of a host country and institution.

The research sample comprised 343 full-time, degree-seeking international students who enrolled in undergraduate and graduate programs at seven comprehensive universities in South Korea.

The quantitative research method is utilized by using a survey questionnaire.

This research reveals that positive pull-factors play the most important role in decisions to study abroad; characteristics of the host nation are considered the most important factor influencing students when selecting South Korea as the host country; and academic pull-factors play the most significant role in choosing a host institution. Additionally, it reveals that factors and information sources for studying at a South Korean institution differ by international student background characteristics such as gender, level of education, economic status of home country, and preference and language of instruction.

This study provides significant implications for South Korean government and its institutions whereby they should pay greater attention to students' background characteristics in order to attract and recruit them. In addition, according to students' backgrounds different approaches such as marketing strategy or internationalization of education should be applied when looking to recruit international students.

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# Table of Contents

<b>Abstract</b> .....	<b>I</b>
<b>Acknowledgements</b> .....	<b>II</b>
<b>Table of Contents</b> .....	<b>III</b>
<b>List of Tables</b> .....	<b>VI</b>
<b>List of Figures</b> .....	<b>VII</b>
<b>List of Abbreviations</b> .....	<b>VIII</b>
<b>1 Introduction</b> .....	<b>1</b>
1.1 Background of the Research .....	1
1.2 Statement of Problem .....	2
1.3 Purpose of the Research .....	4
1.4 Significance of the Research.....	4
1.5 Research Design.....	6
1.6 Structure of the Study .....	7
<b>2 Literature Review and Context of the Research</b> .....	<b>8</b>
2.1 The effects of Globalization and Internationalization to the International Student Mobility.....	8
2.1.1 <i>Definition of Internationalization and Globalization of HE</i> .....	8
2.1.2 <i>International Student Mobility Trends across the Globe</i> .....	10
2.1.3 <i>Emerging Countries as HE Exporters</i> .....	12
2.1.4 <i>English as a Global Language</i> .....	13
2.2 Facets of South Korean HE.....	14
2.3 International Student Mobility Towards South Korea .....	15
2.3.1 <i>International Students in South Korean HE Sector</i> .....	16
2.3.2 <i>Government’s Initiatives in International Education</i> .....	18
2.3.3 <i>Individual Universities’ Response to the International Mobility</i> .....	20
<b>3 Theoretical Framework</b> .....	<b>22</b>
3.1 Motivations of International Student Mobility .....	22
3.1.1 <i>Definition of Terms</i> .....	22
3.1.2 <i>Factors Influencing International Student Mobility</i> .....	23
3.1.3 <i>Student Mobility from Developing to Developed countries</i> .....	25
3.1.4 <i>Student mobility between or to Developing Countries</i> .....	26
3.2 Summary of Literature Reviews on International Student Mobility .....	27
3.3 Developing a Framework.....	27
3.3.1 <i>Push-pull Theory</i> .....	28
3.3.2 <i>Hossler and Gallapher’s College Choice Model</i> .....	29
3.3.3 <i>Perna’s College Choice Model</i> .....	30
3.3.4 <i>Chen’s Synthesis Model</i> .....	30
3.3.5 <i>Modified synthesis model as a framework</i> .....	34
3.4 Hypotheses .....	38
<b>4 Methodology</b> .....	<b>42</b>
4.1 Sampling Procedure.....	42
4.2 Research Setting.....	43
4.3 Instrument and Procedure of Data Collection.....	45

4.4	Operationalization.....	47
4.5	Data Preparation and Analysis Tool.....	50
4.6	Ethical Issues.....	50
<b>5</b>	<b>General Description of Data .....</b>	<b>51</b>
5.1	Country of Origin.....	51
5.2	Field of Study.....	53
5.3	Funding for Studies.....	55
5.4	Study Period in Korea and Language of Instruction .....	56
5.5	Social Background.....	58
5.6	Applications Pattern and Preference.....	58
<b>6</b>	<b>Factors Influencing Students' Decision Making.....</b>	<b>60</b>
6.1	First Stage: Factors Influencing Decision to Study Abroad.....	62
6.1.1	<i>Descriptive Findings</i> .....	62
6.1.2	<i>PCA</i> .....	64
6.1.3	<i>Reliability</i> .....	66
6.1.4	<i>T-test</i> .....	67
6.2	Second Stage: Factors influencing choice of South Korea .....	68
6.2.1	<i>Descriptive Findings</i> .....	69
6.2.2	<i>PCA</i> .....	70
6.2.3	<i>Reliability</i> .....	73
6.2.4	<i>T-test</i> .....	73
6.3	Third Stage: Factors Influencing Choice of an Institution.....	75
6.3.1	<i>Descriptive Findings</i> .....	75
6.3.2	<i>PCA</i> .....	77
6.3.3	<i>Reliability</i> .....	79
6.3.4	<i>T-test</i> .....	79
6.4	Information Source .....	80
6.4.1	<i>General Description</i> .....	80
6.4.2	<i>PCA</i> .....	82
6.4.3	<i>Reliability</i> .....	83
6.4.4	<i>T-test</i> .....	84
6.5	Summary of Research Findings .....	85
<b>7</b>	<b>Discussion and Implications.....</b>	<b>89</b>
7.1	Discussion .....	89
7.1.1	<i>Framework</i> .....	89
7.1.2	<i>Push-pull Factors</i> .....	89
7.1.3	<i>Recommendations or Referrals from significant others</i> .....	90
7.1.4	<i>Features that Attract Students to South Korea as a Study Destination Country</i> .....	91
7.1.5	<i>Institutional Factors Influencing in Selecting a Host Institution</i> .....	92
7.1.6	<i>Information Sources</i> .....	93
7.2	Implications.....	94
7.2.1	<i>Recruitment of International Students</i> .....	95
7.2.2	<i>Market Segmentation</i> .....	96
<b>8</b>	<b>Conclusions and Recommendations .....</b>	<b>98</b>

8.1	Conclusions .....	98
8.2	Recommendations.....	98
8.3	Limitations and Suggestions for Future Studies .....	100
	<b>Reference .....</b>	<b>101</b>
	<b>Appendix.....</b>	<b>108</b>

## List of Tables

Table 1. Number of In-Bound & Out-Bound Students in South Korea .....	17
Table 2. Number of International Students in South Korea by countries.....	17
Table 3. Number of International Students in South Korea by academic program .....	18
Table 4. Construct and measures .....	48
Table 5. Respondents at seven universities .....	51
Table 6. The composition and background of the survey respondents.....	52
Table 7. Field of study .....	54
Table 8. Funding of studies for international students in South Korea .....	55
Table 9. Language of instruction .....	57
Table 10. Learning period of Korean language .....	57
Table 11. Level of parents' education .....	58
Table 12. First choice of South Korea as a host country.....	59
Table 13. Intermediate variables .....	61
Table 14. Rating of 'the opportunity to experience a foreign culture' .....	64
Table 15. Results of PCA in the first stage of decision making to study abroad.....	65
Table 16. Means of extracted factors influencing decision on study abroad .....	66
Table 17. Cronbach alpha: Decision to study abroad .....	66
Table 18. Summary of factors influencing the decision to study abroad .....	67
Table 19. Rating factor of Korean culture.....	70
Table 20. Results of factor analysis in the second stage.....	71
Table 21. Means of extracted factors influencing selecting South Korea as a HE destination.....	72
Table 22. Cronbach alpha for factors related to decision to study abroad .....	73
Table 23. Summary of factors influencing the decision to choose South Korea.....	73
Table 24. Rating the factor of 'the quality of the university' .....	76
Table 25. Results of factor analysis in the third stage .....	77
Table 26. Means of extracted factors influencing selecting a host institution .....	78
Table 27. Cronbach alpha: Decision to choose a host institution in South Korea.....	79
Table 28. Summary of factors influencing the decision to choose a host institution .....	79
Table 29. Rating the factor of 'internet' .....	81
Table 30. Results of factor analysis in information source .....	82
Table 31. Means of extracted factors on information sources .....	83
Table 32. Cronbach alpha: Decision to choose a host institution in South Korea.....	83
Table 33. Summary of information source factors .....	84

## List of Figures

Figure 1: The synthesis model .....	32
Figure 2: Modified synthesis model .....	37
Figure 3: Field of study.....	54
Figure 4: Funding of studies by level of degree.....	56
Figure 5: Means of factors influencing decisions to study abroad .....	63
Figure 6: Means of factors influencing decisions to choosing South Korea.....	69
Figure 7: Means of factors influencing decisions to choosing South Korea.....	75
Figure 8: Means of factors influencing decisions to selecting a host institution .....	81



## List of Abbreviations

HE	Higher Education
KCEU	Korean Council for University Education
KEDI	Korean Education Development Institute
MEST	Ministry of Education, Science, and Technology
NCCU	National Chengchi University
OECD	Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development
PCA	Principal Components Analysis
SPSS	Statistics Package for Social Science
UK	United Kingdom
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
US	United States

# **1 Introduction**

This chapter is aimed to provide an overview of key components of the study. It introduced the research topic of international student mobility toward South Korea and presented the purpose, the problem statement, the research question, the significance, and the structure of this study.

## **1.1 Background of the Research**

Over the last few decades, HE systems in the world have been in a state of flux. Higher education (HE) sector has been tremendously influenced by the globalization driven by innovations in information and communication technologies, convenient transportation, and dominant use of English as international language for science and scholarship (Scott, 1998 and Altbach, 2002). Scott (1998, p. 122) argued that “Not all universities are particularly international, but all are subject to the same processes of globalization, partly as objects, victims even, of these processes, but partly as subjects, or key agents, of globalization.” It has been also argued that globalization has significantly affected the emergence of mass-HE and the growth of private sector as well (Altbach, 2004).

As HE has been under the great influence of globalization, cross-border student mobility is one of the most significant issues in the internationalization of HE. The increasing interest in the internationalization and globalization of HE has heightened the need for studies on cross-border student mobility.

The origin of international student mobility and international study can be traced back to ancient times, as early as 600 BC in India and other regions such as China, Persia, Greece, Rome, and Western Europe. These countries recruited cross-border students from abroad and used international language like Sanskrit, Pali, Greek or Latin as language of instruction. The international characteristics of HE can be also seen in the medieval European universities, such as Bologna, Cordova, and Paris, in which faculty members and student body were composed of international scholars and students (Altekar, 1965; Dedijer, 1968; Hess, 1982 cited in Chen, 2007, p272).

International student mobility has considerable implications both on economies and academic arena and has rapidly grown across the world. Over the last few decades, international student mobility has

tremendously expanded as the total number of international students has reached over 2.7 million (OECD 2006), with a predicted increase to 7.2 million by 2025 (Bohm, Meares, and Pearce, 2002).

One of the most influential factors for expansion of borderless student mobility is driven by financial reasons. Many HE export countries consider international HE as a private good that can be traded in the free market, and is not a public responsibility (Altbach and Knight, 2007). The impact of the influx of international students on the economies of HE export countries, such as the United Kingdom (UK), Australia, and New Zealand, is very significant from the perspective of generating direct and indirect revenues. HE is considered as a big business to these countries (Albach and Knight, 2007). For instance, international education in Australia is the fourth largest earner in export income and has become an industry worth some US \$8 billion by 2006 (Adams, 2007). Likewise, this influx is also viewed as enriching cultures (Altbach and Knight, 2007, p294) and providing quality and skilled foreign graduates to the labor market (Chen, 2007, p271).

The World Trade Organization (WTO) will formulate a framework to encourage the free trade of international HE as a part of GATS (Albach and Knight, 2007). As HE has become commercialized and privatized, borderless student mobility has become one of the core issues that attracts stakeholders such as government, private agencies, students, parents, national policy makers, individual institutions and institutional administrators.

## **1.2 Statement of Problem**

International student market across the globe has been dominated by developed or advanced English-speaking countries like the United States (US), the UK and Australia for the last several decades. The student mobility has been mainly seen from South (developing countries) to North (developed countries) (Altbach, 2004, p22).

For several decades, China, Singapore, and South Korea have been major countries in East Asia sending numerous students to developed countries for international education. However, this trend of student migration has changed as these countries have become emerging HE destinations in the global student market. These countries host quite many international students to their institutions. For instance, China became the sixth largest host country by recruiting 7% of all international students in 2006 (Verbik and Lasanowski, 2007).

Furthermore, these East Asian nations have set up international student recruitment plans at the national level: China recruiting 500,000 students by 2020; Japan recruiting 300,000 students by 2020; and South Korea recruiting 100,000 students by 2012 (Douglas and Edelstein, 2009).

According to Davis (2003), South Korea was the smallest host country among developed countries in 2000 but its international student population rapidly grew from 12,314 in 2003 to 49,270 in 2007. The majority of foreign students in South Korea are from neighboring Asian countries; mostly coming from mainland China. This type of student mobility from economically developing countries to other developing or newly advanced and non-English speaking countries is a new phenomenon of student flow.

Even though these countries have become emerging host countries, few studies have been conducted on the mobility of international students who choose these countries as their study abroad destination (Bodycott 2009; Roberts et al 2010; Cantwell, Luca, and Lee, 2009).

A significant number of researches that explore the notions of choice and decision making of HE in the context of home students in the developed countries have been done (Hossler and Gallagher, 1987; Blundell, 1988; Moogan, Baron, and Harris, 1999; Mazzarol, Soutar, and Thein, 2000). However, it is rare to see research focusing on international student' choice and decision making process to study overseas in the context of an emerging education exporting country such as South Korea. There is a study on South Korean students' outward mobility of their choosing a destination country to study abroad (Park, 2008).

Despite the importance of international student's presence in the learning environment and society, to the best of my knowledge, few researches on choice and decision making of international students who choose South Korea as a study destination are available. As the population of international students studying at South Korean HE institutions annually increases, conducting research in this arena becomes imperative.

In response to this lack of research, this paper attempted to shed light on the motivations and trends of international students who choose South Korea as their study abroad destination.

### **1.3 Purpose of the Research**

The overall purpose of this research is to identify decision making process and factors influencing international students' choice of South Korea and choice of its HE as a study abroad destination.

Considering this purpose the main research question is as follows:

**Question: What influences international students' decision on choosing South Korea as their study abroad destination?**

In addition, sub-questions are as follows:

1. What is a suitable theoretical basis for understanding factors of international students' decision making to study abroad?
2. What are the possible factors influencing international students' choice of South Korea as a study abroad destination?
3. How do the factors affecting international students' decision making differ by gender, level of education, economic status of sending country (developed/developing), language of instruction, and preference (first choice country)?
4. What is the implication of the findings for stakeholders of international education in South Korea?

### **1.4 Significance of the Research**

First, this research is the first pilot study focusing on indentifying the factors and the process of international students' decision on the choice of South Korea as a study abroad country. Most studies on student mobility have focused on the flow from Southern regions (developing countries) to Northern regions (developed countries) because the North has traditionally provided HE as a knowledge product to Asian and African countries (Albach and Knight, 2007). Contrary to that, this research explores motivations of international student mobility from the perspective of a newly advanced or emerging

education exporting country, South Korea. To my knowledge, this is the first study which attempted to shed light on inward international student mobility in the context of South Korea, which is an emerging study abroad destination.

It is particularly interesting to examine the HE case within South Korea since, over the last several decades; it has been a major country sending a significant number of students abroad, for instance 192,254 in 2005. Conversely, South Korea has become one of the emerging host countries that attract a good number of international students, for example, 15,577 in 2005. The growing influence of international students as consumers of the South Korean HE services underscores the significance of a better understanding of the nature of this trend.

Second, this study attempted to identify the dynamics and strength of both the factors and the processes influencing students' decision making on a study abroad destination. Several previous studies on the trends and patterns of international student mobility have been done by using the 'push-pull' framework (Sirowy and Inkeles, 1985; Fry, 1984; Cummings, 1993; Agarwal and Winkler, 1985; Altbach, 1997). However, the push-pull model could explain only the factors that externally influence student's decision making such as political, academic and economic reasons. The theoretical framework used in this study is comprehensive, thereby it could take into consideration the views of significant others, such as professors, friends, and family, and internal factors like personal characteristics as influential factors.

Third, this study attempted to provide important implications and useful insights with stakeholders of South Korean HE, such as policy makers, institutional administrators, educational agencies, and prospective students and parents, for a better understanding of international student market. To be more specific, it attempted to give insights for the South Korean government and individual HE institutions how to make its HE more attractive to international students through the analysis of students' decision making process and motivations.

Finally, this research is significant in that it investigates differences of students' motivations by gender, level of education, developed/developing country, preference, and language of instruction. There were studies about the difference of motivation by country of origin (Cantwell et al, 2009 and Chen, 2007)

and academic and social spheres (Roberts et al, 2010) but there are few researches done on the difference of motivations by the above variables.

## 1.5 Research Design

The purpose of research design is to provide a framework of the research so that the data can answer the research question in a logical way (Vaus, 2006). In other words, research design is a logical process in order to ensure the data collected enable researchers to answer initial research questions with least ambiguity (Vaus, 2006). Research design includes a set of decisions regarding research topic, the population and research methods (Babbie, 2007). Regarding research methods, two types of approach- qualitative and quantitative methods- can be used to conduct a research (Denzin and Lincoln, 1994). Quantitative method is appropriate and relevant in identifying the distribution of characteristics, attitudes, or beliefs from some samples of a whole population (Marshall and Rossman, 2007, p125). On the other hand, qualitative method is a broad approach used to study social phenomena. This approach is useful when researching little-known phenomena or when relevant variables have not yet been identified (Marshall and Rossman, 2007, p53).

For this research a quantitative research method was chosen as a primary methodology.

The first reason to choose a quantitative method is that this study attempts to identify factors influencing students' choices of a study abroad destination and the variance of factors. The second reason is that this research focuses on identifying and describing international students' characteristics of motivation in choosing a study abroad destination by using several factors already identified in the previous researches. The last reason is that this method is more accurate and reliable in measuring the results since it guarantees anonymity in responding questionnaire.

Quantitative method needs raw data to analyze, thereby I chose a survey method by using questionnaire as a mode of gathering quantitative data. The reasons of choosing a survey method are as follows:

- *It is an efficient way of collecting information from a large number of respondents. Statistical techniques can be used to determine validity, reliability, and statistical significance.*
- *Surveys are flexible in the sense that a wide range of information can be collected. They can be used to study attitudes, values, beliefs, and past behaviors.*
- *Because they are standardized, they are relatively free from several types of errors.*

- *They are relatively easy to administer.*
- *There is an economy in data collection due to the focus provided by standardized questions. Only questions of interest to the researcher are asked, recorded, codified, and analyzed. Time and money is not spent on tangential questions. (Wikibooks, 2011).*

This study attempts to describe and explain some aspects of present findings through analysis of a number of samples from the whole population. Hence, this is a survey-descriptive study. Consequently, the quantitative survey method was considered to be suitable for the purpose of the study.

Secondary research method in the form of literature reviews and document analysis was conducted to understand the student flow patterns and trends, the context of South Korea and its policy toward internationalization of HE.

## **1.6 Structure of the Study**

This study comprises of eight chapters. The first chapter presents the background, the problem statement, the purpose, the significance of the study and research design. In addition, research questions are formulated. In the second chapter, previous literatures regarding international students' mobility and their motivations to study abroad are reviewed and the context of this research is presented. The third chapter mainly deals with methodology used in this study. Research subject, sampling, measurement, and data collection process are described. In the fourth chapter, theoretical framework is constructed in order to develop the main categories of the research. Several models are presented to explain the reasons of choosing the comprehensive 'synthesis model' as a framework for this research. The concept of push-pull model is used in order to identify external factors influencing international student decision-making. Hypotheses are constructed based on the framework and literature. The three-stage model is presented to illustrate different decision-making processes. In the fifth chapter, the general descriptions of empirical data gained from the survey questionnaire are presented. Chapter six presents the main research results and findings after analyzing the empirical data. This chapter is aimed to give answers to the research questions. In the seventh chapter, discussions and implications for the stakeholders of South Korean HE sector are presented. Finally, in chapter eight, conclusions and recommendations are presented. The research questions, the theoretical framework, and all the empirical data are revisited for conclusion.



## **2 Literature Review and Context of the Research**

In this chapter, literature reviews and context are presented in order to provide a background for this research. The definition of the terms of internationalization and globalization are given. International student mobility trends and are also reviewed. In addition, the effort of internationalization of South Korean HE sector is described as a context. A series of literatures regarding motivations of international student mobility are revealed to explain the trends and motivations of cross-border mobility in the globe.

### **2.1 The effects of Globalization and Internationalization to the International Student Mobility**

In order to understand international student mobility, it is useful to review and define the terms of internationalization and globalization as a context since these concepts impact directly on cross-border students' mobility. I briefly illustrate the definition of internationalization and globalization of HE, which are frequently used but often confusing.

In addition, international student mobility trends across the globe are reviewed. As a new phenomenon of student mobility emerging HE export countries are presented.

#### **2.1.1 Definition of Internationalization and Globalization of HE**

De Wit (2002) argued that there are four perspectives to internationalization which are activity, rationale, competency, and process. Activity and process approach are most frequently used. In this research, internationalization refers to two approaches which are activity approach and process approach. In activity approach, internationalization refers to a series of activities, programs and services, international collaboration between institutions, and exporting knowledge and education. As a process approach, it involves policies and directs HE institutions internationally (Chen, 2007, p275). Internationalization and globalization are two key words frequently used in the international education arena and in the political field and both have great influence on HE institutions worldwide (Amy et al, 2009). In the global knowledge economy HE institutions play a critical role as a medium for a variety of 'international relationships and continuous global flows of people, information, knowledge products, and financial capital' (OECD, 2007). People are often confused in using these terms in a correct or

proper way (Altbach, 2004); hence, it is necessary to define these terms clearly for better conducting the present study.

Globalization, which is the process of communication and information, is viewed as a combination of economic and cultural change. It leads to the world-wide markets through real-time and cross-border mobility of production. In addition, it depends on the world-wide systems of communication, information, knowledge, and culture towards a single world community. Globalization is more transformative than internationalization. On the other hand, internationalization is an older and more traditional process, assuming that the nation-states still function as a boundary for economic, social, and cultural interconnection. Conceptually, internationalization has for a long time been regarded as the cross-border mobility of individual students and scholars, but not considered as a strategy that affects HE institutions or systems (Van der Wende, 2001, p. 432). Similarly, Harari (1977, p2293 cited in Chen 2007) defined internationalization as “the international content of the curricula, the international movement of scholars and students concerned with training and research, and the arrangements that engage a system of education cooperation programs beyond its national boundaries.”

The difference between globalization and internationalization is that under the process of globalization, nation-states become more integrated; on the other hand, internationalization makes nation-states more interconnected.

In sum, Knight (2008) identifies the definition of globalization and internationalization of HE as follows:

*Globalization is the process that is increasing the flow of people, culture, ideas, values, knowledge, technology, and economy across borders, resulting in a more interconnected and interdependent world. Globalization affects each country in different ways and can have positive and/or negative consequences, according to a nation's specific history, traditions, culture, priorities, and resources. Education is one of the sectors impacted by globalization.*

*The internationalization of HE is also a process, albeit different from globalization. Internationalization of HE is the process of integrating an international, intercultural, and global dimension into the purpose, functions (teaching, research, and service), and delivery of HE at the institutional and national levels.*

In this study, globalization means broad economic, technological, scientific, political, and cultural trends that directly affect HE (Altbach, 2004, p5). Academic systems and HE institutions in the globe respond to these global trends and developments in different ways, however all academic systems are under the influence of globalization to some extent. For instance, IT, the use of common language in scientific community, the worldwide R&D funding, and international mobility of students and scholars are parts of a global environment that affect HE differently.

Internationalization refers to the reactions of countries and institutions to cope with globalization through specific policies and programs undertaken by governments, academic systems, and institutions. Internationalization has a significant degree of autonomy; hence the ways of responding to the new trends can be different depending on countries and institutions.

### **2.1.2 International Student Mobility Trends across the Globe**

Currently, a great number of students are moving across borders in order to learn from renowned scholars, further a disciplinary knowledge base, and experience multicultural environments (Roberts et al, 2010). A lot of students recognize the need to study abroad to gain global consciousness and international experience, thus competing in the global labor marketplace. They move across borders to pursue advanced education with the aim of both gaining knowledge and advancing personal and professional competences (Chen, 2007, p272).

From the perspective of HE institutions, quite many institutions in the world are keen on recruiting talented international students in order to 'enhance their academic reputation, enrich campuses and programs with cultural, social and academic contributions, and contribute to countries and institution's research and innovation profiles' (Middlehurst, 2003).

From a host country's perspective, the influx of international students can bring significant implications to the economies, its culture and its academies by generating financial benefits, enriching its cultural and academic environment.

The inflow of high skilled, intelligent international students has been viewed as a potential pool of immigrants to host countries. For example, the Canadian government is actively involved in aggressively recruiting and selecting talented students and skilled workers through universities (Government of Canada, 2002, p9 cited from Chen, 2008).

Altbach and Knight (2007) argued that HE has been considered like a big business to education exporting countries such as Australia, New Zealand, and the UK. For instance, Australian government has dramatically changed HE policy toward export approach to international education from 1986 through introducing fee-paying policy to international students (Adams, 2007). Consequently, the government's cutback on finance to HE institutions made Australia's HE institutions actively recruit international students as a way of generating benefits to cover financial cutbacks. International education in Australia became the fourth largest earner in export income and has become a successful industry worth of around US\$8 billion by 2006 (Adams, 2007).

Globalization encourages this flow of international student and it is expected that the growth of student mobility will continue as the academic systems in the world become more compatible, degree recognition across borders becomes easy, and terms of issuing visa become more convenient (Altbach, 2004). The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) (2007) claimed that over 2.7 million of students participated in international education in 2005, a nearly 61% increase since 1999 (Verbik and Lasanowski, 2007). Moreover, the Australian international recruitment organization, IDP (1999) anticipated that the total number of mobile tertiary education students is expected to reach to 7.2 million by 2025 (Bohm et al, 2002).

The reason of the rapid expansion of borderless mobility can be explained in that the capacity for the tertiary education in the source countries, such as China and India, has been very limited in order to meet the excessive demand for HE (Verbik and Lasanowski, 2007). At the same time, the improved economic capacity in the developing countries enabled more students to study abroad.

The flow of international student mobility has been directed largely from the South (developing countries) to the North (developed or industrialized countries) region and the trend will continue (Chen and Barnett, 2000). Traditionally more than 90% of international students chose OECD countries as their destination and the US, the UK, Germany, France and Australia covered more than 70% of the recruitment (Verbik and Lasanowski, 2007). Over 80% of cross-border students come from developing countries such as China and India (Altbach, 2004). English-language countries, such as the US and the UK, have been main destinations for several decades. The British Council (2004) predicted that the population of international students in the five main English-speaking countries will increase from 1 million to 2.6 million in 2020 with students mainly from Asia (British Council, 2004).

However, the overall growth of international students in these countries was not as high as anticipated over the previous five to six years. The main tertiary education export countries, such as the US, the UK and Australia, have suffered either a decrease in enrollments or a slump in the growth in previous years. There have been significant changes in the cross-border markets. Western European countries like Germany and France that have traditionally been main host destination have stepped up as growing providers of international education by reinforcing marketing efforts and moving towards English-language provision in academic programs for the purpose of attracting students from Asia, Africa and so on. In addition, Asian countries, such as Malaysia, Singapore, and China, are becoming emerging study destinations in order to become regional education centers by offering a series of academic programs in English (Verbik and Lasanowski, 2007).

As HE has become commercialized and privatized, borderless international student mobility has become one of the core issues that attracts stakeholders such as private and governmental agencies, students, parents, national policy makers, and institutions.

### **2.1.3 Emerging Countries as HE Exporter**

The international HE market across the globe has been predominantly occupied by the main English-speaking countries like the US, the UK, Australia, and Canada over the last half century. Asian countries have been the major suppliers of international students because Asian students compose the majority of students who study at HE institutions outside their home country (Kell and Vogl, 2010).

However, the trends of international student market have changed with the emergence of new contenders such as China, Singapore and currently South Korea. Developing countries host a significant number of foreign students. Even though these countries have been main source of providing students to developed countries for several decades, China, Malaysia and Singapore shared 12% of the global student markets with 250,000-300,000 students in 2005-2006 (Verbik and Lasanowski, 2007). All of the above-mentioned countries have experienced a rapid increase in international student enrollment because each government actively developed strategic plans to attract overseas students for the purpose of becoming an education center in the global HE sector.

The great majority of international students in these countries come from neighboring Asian countries. Familiarity in socio-cultural background and similarity in language play a significant role in providing students one another in China, Malaysia and Singapore (Verbik and Lasanowski, 2007).

These countries as an emerging HE exporter have succeeded in attracting students since their governments have significantly increased financial and human resources to HE sector so as to make their HE 'world-class'. In addition, the institutions have provided a range of programs conducted in English so that they can compete on equal terms with their English-language competitors. Lastly, the considerably low cost of tuition fees and living cost is a good reason to succeed in global student market (Verbik and Lasanowski, 2007). Developing countries seek to recruit international students in order to diversify the student body, gain prestige and earn financial benefit by charging tuition fees (Altbach and Knight, 2007, p294).

The rapid economic growth in Asia, especially in China can contribute to the increase of international student enrollment in this region. The strong government initiatives, comparatively lower cost of HE and growing provision of programs using English as a language of instruction can help these emerging countries to become more attractive and stronger contenders in near future.

#### **2.1.4 English as a Global Language**

English is the most widely used and studied language in the world. English, the dominant language of globalization has much to do with international student mobility. The majority of international students choose English-speaking countries as their study destination. Anglophone countries, such as the US, the UK, and Australia, could be major host nations attracting a significant number of foreign students due partly to the globalized language, English (Kell and Vogl, 2010, p5).

Crystal (2005) argued that English has become the official language of globalized HE.

*Since the 1960s English has become the normal medium of instruction in HE from many countries-and is increasingly used in several where the language has no official status. Some advanced courses in countries such as the Netherlands. For example are widely taught in English (Crystal 2005, p112).*

As an instruction and communication media, English plays a vital role in motivating students to participate in cross-border education (Altbach and Knight, 2007, p9). In addition, it is main medium in the academic field. Most of international journals use English and universities in many non-English speaking countries stress the use of English in their professors' publishing articles (Altbach and Knight, 2007). Even in non-English speaking countries, such as Japan, South Korea, and China, universities provide degree programs and courses in English to attract foreign students; and language training to the

domestic students (Altbach and Knight, 2007). Many European Union nations like the Netherlands and Germany offer studies in English to draw students from outside the EU. English is predominant language in HE across the globe.

## **2.2 Facets of South Korean HE**

In order to look at the trend of international student mobility towards South Korea, it is meaningful to identify the facets of South Korean HE in general. This exploration helps to provide a contextual background of the present study. Before that I present the general description of South Korean HE sector. There are 405 HE institutions in South Korea as of 2008. Among them there are 174 universities, 10 universities of education, 13 industrial universities, 1 open university, 17 long-distance universities, 37 graduate schools, 2 intra-company universities, and 148 two-year junior colleges (KCUE, 2010).

Following are the five facets of South Korean HE.

First, South Korean HE has expanded significantly over the past few decades in terms of numbers of institutions and total enrollments of students. South Korea was transformed from a system of mass HE into a system of universal HE that bears the responsibility for educating nearly all of the college-aged population. South Korea is one of the highest ranked countries in terms of participation in HE in the world. As of 2008, 83.8% of high school graduates participate in some form of HE in South Korea (OECD, 2009).

Second, up until 1995, when the government's reform of South Korean HE took place, the government had heavily controlled the HE sector through rules and regulations. The followings had been regulated according to presidential decree: (i) Establishment of HE institution; (ii) Institutional regulations; (iii) Faculty personnel; (iv) Students; (v) Programs and academic standards; (vi) Financing, budgeting and facilities; and (vii) Reporting and auditing (Park, 2002).

Third, South Korea has a mixture of public and private institutions within the HE sector and private institutions have predominated over the public ones. This implies that the expansion of HE was mainly driven by the rapid and significant increase in the private sector (Kim and Lee, 2006). Out of 405

institutions, 52 are public and 353 are private institutions. Referring to universities, 25 are public and 149 are private (KCUE, 2010).

Fourth, the HE system is tremendously stratified by ranking, which has a relatively long tradition in South Korea. The unified entrance test, College Scholastic Aptitude Test (CSAT), run by the South Korean ministry of education had been a great influence on the stratification of universities and colleges. Students and their parents now rely highly on information regarding the exam scores of formerly accepted freshmen when applying to universities, and these scores vary depending on the prestige of the university and subject of study. Universities have become more stratified by the exam scores of their freshmen. Within South Korea, graduation from a high ranked university has been considered essential to find a good job, earn a decent salary, take high position of social status, and so on.

Fifth, private contributions (mainly tuition and fees) have been the main financial resources for both private institutions and public ones. The substantial expansion of HE can bring about challenges to institutions, as well as to society as a whole (Adams and Gottlieb, 1993). After the Korean War, the government supported primary and secondary schools and there was great demand for skilled persons with HE training. However, public universities could not accommodate the excessive demand for HE raised by the economic development and the supply of secondary school graduates. Hence, the government relied heavily on the private HE sector (Kim and Lee, 2006). In terms of finance for HE in South Korea, the budget is composed of 2.3% out of total GDP; with 0.5% coming from public and 1.8% from private sources (OECD, 2007). Students' tuition and fees composed 59.7% of the total budgets of universities and colleges in South Korea in 2005 (KCUE, 2010) and this is the highest portion of private contributions in the OECD countries.

### **2.3 International Student Mobility towards South Korea**

This section deals with trends and figures of international student mobility towards South Korea comparing incoming international students and outgoing domestic students. Figures of foreign students are presented according to the country of origin and field of study. The South Korean government's efforts in order to host international students are identified and individual institutions' responses to the global student markets are highlighted.



### **2.3.1 International Students in South Korean HE Sector**

Over the last few decades, developed countries, such as the US, Australia, the UK, and some EU countries, have recruited most international talents within the sphere of HE. East Asian countries, such as China, Japan, and Taiwan, have been the major countries sending students to developed countries for HE. South Korea has been one of those countries sending numerous students abroad over the last few decades.

South Korean students have actively participated in international migration. South Korea has been one of the biggest source countries sending students abroad for several decades. The total number of outgoing students increased from 149,933 in 1997 to 217,959 in 2007 (South Korean MEST, 2010). For example, the number of South Korean students enrolled in the US HE institutions covered 10.7% of total enrolment following by India (14.4%) and China (11.6%) (Open Door, 2007). In Canada, South Korean students accounted for the majority of international students with 13,650 and China was the second source country in 2002 (Verbik and Lasanowski, 2007).

Several reasons were presented in previous researches why such a large number of South Korean students decided to study overseas. A research conducted by the Korean Education Development Institute (KEDI) identified the reasons: “(1) the utility of English language instruction, (2) the excessively competitive environment for college entrance in South Korea and (3) the excessive expenditure for private tutoring in South Korea” (KEDI, 200 cited in Park, 2008).

Interestingly, new trends emerged in international student mobility. Over the last decade, developing or newly industrialized countries, such as South Korea, India, Philippines, Malaysia, and China, have been hosting a significant number of international students with the intention to improve the quality of education, diversify the student body, gain prestige, and earn revenues (Altbach and Knight, 2007). Furthermore, these countries have set up international student recruitment plans at the national level: China recruiting 500,000 students by 2020; Japan recruiting 300,000 students by 2020; and South Korea recruiting 100,000 students by 2012 (Douglas and Edelstein, 2009). According to McCormack (2007), China has recently become as a popular study abroad destination by increasing the enrollment of international students from less than 45,000 in 1999 to more than 141,000 in 2005. Similar trends are occurring in other Asian countries like South Korea, India, Malaysia, Thailand, and Taiwan.

As a result of constant effort for internationalizing HE sector, the enrollment of international students in South Korea has significantly increased over the last decade as shown in below Table 2. It grew from 1,983 in 1995 to 49,270 in 2007 and the growth rate is on the increase as time goes on.

**Table 1. Number of In-Bound & Out-Bound Students in South Korea**

	'95	'01	'07
<b>No. of outgoing</b>	106,458	149,933	217,959
<b>No. of international student</b>	1,983	4,682	49,270

*Source:* Data from MEST [www.mest.go.kr](http://www.mest.go.kr) 2010

Chinese students accounted for 70% of South Korea's roughly 64,000 international students following Japan (5.2%) and Mongolia (3.2%). The large majority of students come from neighboring Asian countries of China, Japan, Mongolia, Vietnam and Taiwan, except for the US. South Korea continues to depend on familiar markets like China and Japan, making it potentially vulnerable to declines on cross-border student mobility within these countries. According to the result of Table 3, geographical proximity to South Korea may be a significant factor for foreign students to select South Korea.

**Table 2. Number of International Students in South Korea by countries**

Country	China	Japan	USA	Vietnam	Taiwan	Mongolia	Others	Sum
Number	44,746	3,324	1,481	1,817	1,158	2,022	9,404	63,952
(%)	70	5.2	2.3	2.8	1.8	3.2	14.7	100.0

*Source:* Data from MEST [www.mest.go.kr](http://www.mest.go.kr) 2010

International students in South Korea chose their study programs mainly from three fields: South Korean language, Social sciences, and Engineering (refer to Table 4). This shows that the students are inclined to choose their disciplines based on utilitarian purposes so that they can easily find jobs after graduation.

**Table 3. Number of International Students in South Korea by academic program**

Program	Korean language	Social sciences	Engineering	Natural sciences	Arts/Sports	Others	Total
Number	19,521	27,399	7,390	3,287	2,509	3,846	63,952
%	30,5	42,8	11,6	5,1	3,9	6,0	100,0

*Source:* Data from MEST [www.mest.go.kr](http://www.mest.go.kr) 2010

The main reasons of recruiting foreign students to individual institutions lie in economic and cultural aspects. A lot of HE institutions in South Korea, specially private ones, have been searching for extra financial resources due to tightened budget and recruiting international student has been regarded a good way to generate benefits. At the same time, the government and institutions have a desire to diversify the student body and internationalize the campus by attracting international students from various countries. Like many developed countries the influx of international students to South Korea has become not only an important source of revenue for local economies, but also a source of academic talents for research fields.

### **2.3.2 Government's Initiatives in International Education**

In several countries especially English-speaking countries, education services have been considered as one of the major industries generating financial revenues. Besides this financial gain social and cultural benefits are main motivations for international education. The host country enjoys diverse cultures driven by international students and provides opportunity to share its culture with its international students (Jenny Lee, 2008). For this reason, a number of countries initiated strategic approaches to international student recruitment at the national level. Developed countries in the North, such as the US, the UK, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand, dominate international student market through the strategic approach at the national level. For example the “national flagship” organizations like the IDP and the British Council play key roles in enhancing international profiles of their HE.

Likewise newly emerging countries in the global student market, such as China, and South Korea, regard increasing international student enrollments as the significant element for internationalization of the HE. The governments make efforts to recruit international students to diversify the student bodies and to enhance institutional prestige.

It is clear that the South Korean government has a great interest in international students. In line with these trends, the South Korean government has implemented strategic tactics through the national body, Ministry of Education, Science and Technology (South Korean MEST). The ministry established a nationwide recruitment plan called 'Study South Korea Project' in 2004 with the aim of making South Korea 'The Education Hub of Northeast Asia' (South Korean MEST, 2007). Accordingly, it made an ambitious goal of recruiting 50,000 international students which is 1% of the total HE enrolment by 2010 from 16,832 (0.3%) in 2004.

The government has been allocating considerable financial resources so as its HE to be competitive and become 'world-class'.

Several efforts have been done by the government in order to make South Korea an educational center in Asia. Key policy tasks are (1) increase scholarships for international students from the government; (2) recruitment fair with the aim of promoting HE; (3) encourage individual institutions to build infrastructure such as dormitory and provision of foreign-language taught programs; expand distribution of South Korean language and culture by establishing more Korean Language Proficiency Test Center abroad; and establish an effective administration system by strengthening the National Institute for International Education Development (NIIED)'s structure and making it more suitable for recruiting students (South Korean MEST, 2007).

The government has been organizing recruitment fairs in a number of Asian and Middle East countries to promote South Korean HE for the purpose of welcoming more foreign students. A variety of HE institutions have been encouraged to participate and have been doing marketing activities in the government-run education fairs, establishing partnerships with foreign institutions, and visiting foreign high schools, agents and universities. As a result of the government's initiatives and individual institutions' activities, the goal of recruiting 50,000 international students by 2010 was already achieved in 2009.

On the other hand, individual institutions have committed to recruiting foreign students by providing more courses in English, expanding scholarship and initiating supporting system like buddy program for international students (South Korean MEST, 2007).

### **2.3.3 Individual Universities' Response to the International Mobility**

Diverse infrastructures have been developed to compete for the world's students at the institutional level. For instance, there has been a trend of establishing branch campus overseas, hiring international student specialists, organizing international student service office in order to increase the inflow of students from abroad (Altbach, 1998). Similar trends can be found in South Korean institutions.

In line with the government's strategic plan to recruit 50,000 students, numerous individual institutions in South Korea seek to increase cross-border student enrolment and enhance their international profiles. A number of universities in South Korea have changed the curriculum in order to host international students. Internationalized curriculum can be regarded as a process of educational change. Since the South Korean HE is in the process of globalization, a multitude of types of internationalized curriculum, such as programs in English, joint degree or dual degree programs, or cross-border disciplines, have been developing.

The main language of instruction within South Korean HE is Korean, however most universities have been increasingly providing courses in English, from the last decade, in order to enhance domestic student' competitiveness in the global labor market and attract international students to their campuses. With the aim of providing the same quality of education, some institutions, such as Konkuk University located in Seoul, provide courses even in Chinese since the majority of international student population are Chinese.

In-depth involvement of academic staff is regarded essential to successful development of internationalized curriculum (Van der Wende, 1996). Concerning professors in South Korean HE institutions, most full-time professors have doctoral degrees from renowned foreign universities and have experienced international academic activities. Since professors are mainly from major academic systems, such as the US, the UK and the EU, they often use the same text books which are written in original languages, even though they conduct lectures in Korean. In addition, more and more international professors have been recruited and contributed to adding international aspects to the campuses in South Korea.

In an effort to internationalize curricula, various methods are implemented. The leading institutions provide more than 30% of all courses in English. Some renowned universities started academic degree

programs taught only in English to attract foreign students at the bachelor and master levels. Quite many institutions have been recruiting foreign academic faculty so as to introduce international contents and context to local students. On top of that, when the new professors are appointed, they are obliged to conduct a minimum of one or two lectures in English. Joint-degree and dual-degree programs are another example of internationalizing curricula, and many institutions are implementing those programs with renowned foreign institutions. International summer program is relatively newly created in order to draw foreign students in particular, thus solving the problem of imbalanced exchange student rate between partner universities.

Accreditation is also one of the main forces to encourage the internationalization of curriculum. Business and Engineering studies are motivated to get accreditations, which are internationally recognized. Especially, professional schools, such as medical school, MBA, law school started by setting up similar contents and structures to those of the US. Hence, the curriculum is very similar to those of the major academic systems.

The curriculum development relies much on academic staff. Curriculum of the South Korean HE is highly influenced by global trends. Returning academic scholars have great contribution to the internationalization of curriculum through using similar or same syllabus and contents during their study abroad. The influx of foreign scholars to the South Korean HE sector is another factor to internationalization of curriculum. After they are appointed, they bring internationalized curriculum to the South Korean HE institutions. Another type of contribution to the internationalization of curriculum is dual and joint degree programs with foreign partners that can be seen in several institutions in South Korea. As the South Korean HE system was rooted internationally from Western countries like the US, the curriculum has been under the influence of globalization for a long time.

### **3 Theoretical Framework**

Various factors influencing international student's decision on a study abroad destination have been explored in previous researches. Accordingly, an explanatory approach is relevant in order to look at the motivations of international students by using a framework used in exploring those factors.

Several factors such as personal, institutional and national characteristics influence the decision-making process of international student's destination. In addition, Mazzoral and Soutar (2002) recognized that there are three stages; (1) the stage of deciding to study locally or internationally, (2) the stage of deciding on a host country and (3) the final choice of a host institution and program when deciding to study abroad.

Accordingly, both factors affecting students' decision and processes that students experience until their final enrollment need to be considered in order to understand the motivations of international students.

#### **3.1 Motivations of International Student Mobility**

Knowledge crosses borders and universities have welcomed international students from the very origin (Altbach, 2004). Students migrate from country to country in pursuit of learning from international scholars and experiencing advanced academic environments. The reasons for students' migration may also be seen from economic and political aspects. This section reviews various literatures regarding the motivations and factors of international students' choice of a study abroad destination from different perspectives.

##### **3.1.1 Definition of Terms**

###### **International student**

For a better understanding of this research, the key terminology 'international students' used in this study followed the definition of Global Education Digest in UNESCO 2006, in which 'internationally mobile students' refer to "individuals who leave their country or territory of origin and travel to another for the purpose of studying there" (UNESCO, 2006).

###### **Decision making and choice**

In this paper, another frequently used terminology, ‘decision making’, refers to “a multistage and complex process undertaken consciously and sometimes subconsciously by a student intending to enter HE and by which the problem of choosing a study destination is resolved.” The concept of choice is associated with HE decision making, which can be defined as “both an outcome and process by which a decision becomes concretized at any given time in the decision-making process.” Thus, the two concepts are very closely related (Maringe and Carter, 2007, p. 463).

### **3.1.2 Factors Influencing International Student Mobility**

In this section, several previous literatures related to the topic of motivations of international students’ migration are reviewed in order to identify the academic gap. College choice factors such as socio-economic background, country of origin, and information sources are considered.

Numerous researches have been done in search for motivation factors of international students’ mobility (Agarwal and Winkler, 1985; McMahon, 1992; Mazzoral, 1998).

Many of them shed light on motivations of traditional flow of cross-border students between developing countries and developed English-speaking countries such as the US, the UK and Australia.

Agarwal and Winkler (1985) attempted to estimate the demand by foreign students for US HE in their research. They researched factors influencing international students who chose the US as a host country by examining students from 15 developing countries in the region of Asia, Africa, and Middle East. ‘Human capital theory’ provided a conceptual framework for this study assuming that students expect enhanced-future income by investing in HE. They found that ‘push-pull’ factors that influence students’ college choice are: (1) per capita income in the home country; (2) the price or cost of education in the host country; (3) the education opportunities available in the home country; and (4) the expected benefits of studying abroad. These authors illustrated that the reason for the growth of foreign students in the USA is due to the rapid growth of eligible population in sending countries. The authors also explained the decline of the foreign student ratio in the US is attributed to the rising of education cost and the increased opportunities of HE within sending countries (Agarwal and Winkler, 1985, p640). This study shows limitation in that it tried to explain the factors of cross-border student migration focusing only on the economic external factors, such as per capita income and the cost of education, without considering other factors like academic and political ones.



Another research done by McMahon (1992) examined the dispositions of international students from 18 developing countries who selected the educational world center, the US during the 1960s and the 1970s. This study assumed that international student flow is attributed to the unequal economic, educational and political relationships between sending and host countries and attempted to identify national-level factors that influence overseas study. In this study, outbound or 'push' factors encourage students to study abroad and inbound or 'pull' factors attract students to a particular host nation.

As 'push' factors, he found: (1) level of economic wealth in the home country; (2) the degree of involvement of the developing country in the world economy; (3) the priority placed on education by the government of the developing country; and (4) the availability of educational opportunities in the home country. 'Pull' factors were: (1) relative sizes of the home country within the world system; (2) an economic linkage between the host and sending countries; (3) host nation political interests in the home country; and (4) a host nation's support for international students via scholarships or other assistance (McMahon, 1992, pp 468-469). This study emphasizes that national characteristics of home and host country can be significant motivational factors in determining international study. It considers academic and political factors as well as economic ones that affect students' decision-making of international education. However, it did not take into account the institutional and individual factors as influential factors.

Mazzarol and Soutar (2002) used a 'push-pull model' to examine the motivations of student choice when determining a host country for overseas higher education. They selected four countries, Taiwan, Indonesia, China, and India, as research samples and found the 'push' factors by which students were influenced in the home countries and the 'pull' factors by which students were attracted to the host countries. Different from previous researches, this research recognized social and cultural aspects as push factors such as 'gaining a better understanding of the West and 'intentions to migration after graduation'. Besides this study identified the institutional factors as major pull factors such as 'institution's reputation, number of enrolled students, alumni, possibility of recognizing a student's qualification at the host country.

Interestingly, the research attempted to recognize that there are three distinct stages in decision-making process of international study. In the stage one, the student decides to study internationally rather than locally. Secondly, he/she decides on a host country. In the third stage, he/she selects a host university.

Even though this study found three different stages in decision-making on a study abroad destination, students do not necessarily follow this process in order. Some students decide to study abroad and choose program and institution, thus passing by the selection of country.

### **3.1.3 Student Mobility from Developing to Developed countries**

Another research investigated the view of college access in the US and attempted to extend it to global sphere. It focused on relationship between the information sources and reasons for studying at the US HE institutions and international student's personal backgrounds (Lee, 2008). This study identified that domestic college access process is significantly different from international one. It highlighted how information sources and reasons for study in the US differ by gender, country of origin, parental educational backgrounds, and developed versus developing country. This research found that the international students are most attracted by the ranking, reputation and prestige of institutions. In particular, students from East Asian countries heavily rely on the institutions' ranking. It notes that how the factors influencing determination of overseas study differ by individual characteristics such as gender, nationality, and parents' education level. Although push-pull model has contributed to identify social, political, and economic factors of student flows, it is necessary to consider that these forces interact within each process. In other words, the framework of push-pull does not fully explain the individual's background, information sources, and multiple reasons for choosing a particular institution (Lee, 2008, p323).

Maringe and Carter (2007) researched choice and decision-making of HE focusing on only one ethnic group, African students, who selected the UK HE. Even though it is hard to generalize the results of this study due to limited number of interviewees not representative of the population of African students in the UK institutions, it contributed to building a destination choice model for African students by using push-pull factors in decision making to study abroad, choice of the UK, and choice of institution and program. In addition, it identified student's degree of satisfaction with the UK HE experience.

### **3.1.4 Student mobility between or to Developing Countries**

Different from the previous studies, the research done by Bodycott (2009) highlighted the mobility between an emerging HE host country, Hong Kong, and a developing country, China. He studied the motivation factors and trends of mainland Chinese students' decisions to study abroad in Hong Kong. This study begins by noting that the parents' role has been greatly ignored in decision-making process of study abroad and highlighted on parents' roles and status that significantly affect choice of a study destination in the context of China. This research shed light on similarities and significant differences between parents and students in viewing influential factors when choosing a study destination. It emphasized the impact of parental influence on students' choosing a study abroad destination in a country based on long-rooted Confucianism (Bodycott, 2009). It underlined that international student marketers need to pay more attention to parents' role when looking to recruit students from Confucian societies, such as mainland China.

This research provides an important insight to the present study by recognizing the significance of parental influence in decision making in the Confucian society like South Korea. Hence it encouraged me to include the 'significant others' such as family, friends, and alumni as influential factors in the framework.

The study done by Amy et al (2009) is interesting because the context of Taiwan is similar situation to South Korean in that it is also an emerging HE host country. This study contextualized student mobility trend in an emerging country, Taiwan, thus reflecting the East Asian patterns of international students' mobility. Amy et al. (2009) conducted a case study on examining the disposition of international students enrolled in Mandarin Studies at one university in Taiwan, National Chengchi University (NCCU), in terms of their academic and social spheres. It found that Mandarin Studies Program is an important pull factor that gives the perception of the premier language institution to NCCU. The findings suggest that the increased number of scholarships sponsored by the government and high standard Chinese study program are crucial in attracting cross-border students.

The present study chooses degree-seeking students as research subjects. However, it attempts to measure how the different language of instruction affects student's choice of an institution.

Several previous literatures explained international student motivations by only using push-pull model mainly focusing on external factors. Conversely, Li and Bray (2007) recognized individual

characteristics such as personal characteristics, perceptions and motivation for choice of destination (p 813). Moreover this paper extended one-way push-pull model to two-way of push-pull model by adding reverse push-pull factors. These authors investigated differences of factors and features that affect mainland Chinese students' choice of a host country by the status of a country's economies, demographic feature, historical background, and culture between Hong Kong and Macau. It implies that different marketing approaches should be used in different territories with heterogeneous cultures, economy, and HE system by exemplifying mainland Chinese students' study destination selection of Hong Kong and Macau.

Interestingly, Cantwell et al (2009) studied the reverse student flows from developed to developing country in pursuit of international HE. This research examined the dispositions, experiences and expectations of international students in a developing country, Mexico with a view to identify emerging trend of reverse student mobility and the impact of political economy to the international student flow. It found the international students' orientations-dispositions, experiences, and expectations-are significantly different by the geographic regions of origin; Europe, Latin America and North America. This research also highlighted that developing countries are becoming important not just as senders but also as receivers of students in the international recruiting markets.

### **3.2 Summary of Literature Reviews on International Student Mobility**

The literatures reviewed above are presented to identify international students' migration trends, patterns and motivations. The traditional pattern of borderless mobility has been done from developing countries to developed countries, mainly English-speaking countries by focusing on external factors using push and pull model. Later on a couple of researches shed light on institutional and individual factors. Researches on a reverse flow of students were also conducted in the context of Taiwan and Mexico.

### **3.3 Developing a Framework**

A comprehensive and dynamic model should be used as a framework to take into consideration of both factors and the process of students' choice of a host country and a host institution. The synthesis model developed by Chen (2007) is used as a framework for this research. This framework accommodates

combined model based on theories of factors or variables and college choice model. Chen (2007) incorporating a push-pull model presented by Mazzarol and Soutar (2002) to explain various factors affecting decisions-making and Hossler and Gallapher's college choice model to identify three distinct stages in the process of enrolment decision.

The basic concepts of push-pull model and college access model were presented because the framework, or the synthesis model, is based on the above two theories. The author attempts to explain how the synthesis model is developed by Chen (2007) and why it is relevant as a framework for this study. This theoretical framework is also constructed in order to develop questionnaire and to analyze the data received from the survey.

The theoretical framework developed in this chapter is revisited in order to discuss the main findings.

### **3.3.1 Push-pull Theory**

In general, students choose study abroad programs mainly for improving cross-cultural understandings of other countries' cultures, gaining advanced knowledge, and improving foreign languages skill (Albach and Knight, 2007).

Many theories have been used to identify the motivations of college choice. Originally the 'push-pull' model has been developed and used in a way to explain motivation factors of migration between home and host countries that affect the movement of people (Lee, 1966 cited in Chen, 2007, p274).

This 'push-pull' theory, has been applied to understand the international student mobility trends, decision making on international education and international student's choice of a host country (Neice and Braun, 1977; Altbach and Lulat, 1985; Mazzarol and Soutar, 2002 cited in Chen 2007).

Push factors are the factors 'pushing' students to study abroad and usually are negative factors such as political instability and limited study place in a home country. While pull factors are the factors attracting students to a host country and in general are positive. Limited access to HE among many developing countries in Asia and Africa has been the key push factor of the majority of international student flow over the last decades. Among pull factors, high quality of education provided in host universities has been as a key driver for the talented international students.

In sum, the decision making, motivations and global pattern of cross-border student flow may be explained by a combination of 'push' factors and 'pull' factors (Mazzarol and Soutar, 2002). The push-pull model has been mainly used to clarify the decision making process in the three stages which are 'predisposition' stage, 'search' stage' and 'choice' stage. Push factors can play a significant role in the first stage in which decision making to study internationally is done. In the second stage, a series of pull factors, such as geographical proximity, become important. In the last stage, the process of selecting a host institution, a variety of pull factors such as reputation of university significantly motivates student's decision ((Mazzarol and Soutar, 2002, p83).

### **3.3.2 Hossler and Gallapher's College Choice Model**

When students select a college, several steps are needed to lead to actual enrolment. Frequently cited and used college choice model is 'three-stage model' defined by Hossler and Gallapher (1987). This model explained that there exist three stages; predisposition phase, application process, and institutional factors until students' enrollment. First stage is 'predisposition' phase which affects potential students' aspirations and expectations about the college. Several factors like socioeconomic status, parental involvement, and peers influence students' college choice. The second phase of this model is 'search' process in which students gather information and determine which institutional factors are most important. Students' socioeconomic status, parents' education level, and financial support are regarded as significant factors in choosing college at this stage. The major information sources are moving from parents to peers, materials and representatives from HE institutions. In the Hossler and Gallapher's (1987) model, the last stage is 'choice' phase in which students select a specific institutions and complete enrollment process. In order to make a final enrollment decision, several institutional factors, such as parental encouragement, financial support, the student's higher school academic performance, the student's educational and occupational aspirations, should be considered (Hossler and Gallapher, 1987, p6). In this stage, sources of information, parents and peers do not influence students anymore and HE institutions have great influence on students' decision process.

Other researchers such as Cabrera and LaNasa (2000) developed a new model of college choice to describe more accurately the decision-making process in a variety of students. These authors used Hossler and Gallapher's model as a foundation in recognition that students go through several stages in

college choice and build on concept of college choice process by including direct and indirect influences on the final decision. Their model has strength in that it illuminates the complexity masked by the linear structure of Hossler and Gallagher's model.

This model provides the concepts for Chen's synthesis model which includes three stages in selection process of international education.

### **3.3.3 Perna's College Choice Model**

Perna's conceptual model of college choice (2006) has a different approach from Hossler and Gallagher, since it includes four layers influencing students' decision process. The first layer refers to an understanding of individual students' background characteristics such as race, ethnicity, parents' education, and the presence of social and cultural capital. The second layer is school and community context. Availability of counseling, size and the overall knowledge of college in the school and communities influence student's decision process. The third layer is HE context. He assumes that institutional factors, such as proximity, regional cultures and norms and the region's tradition and philosophy, could affect the context of institution. The last one refers to social, economic and policy context such as labor market trends, demographics and policies for HE.

This model is also incorporated into theoretical framework since it provides understanding of individual differences in decision-making and illustrates how various contexts influence college choice.

### **3.3.4 Chen's Synthesis Model**

Despite the push-pull model has been frequently used to explain cross border student mobility patterns and has provided great insights in the research on student choice of a study abroad destination, it has a couple of limitations. First, the push-pull model cannot fully account for the decision-making process of individual students who choose to undertake international study (Lee, Maldonado-Maldonado, and Rhoades, 2006), because it looks at the influential factors from a macro perspective without considering other forces like personal characteristics and recommendations or referrals from others (Li and Bray, 2007). Second, the push-pull model does not take into consideration the student mobility from developing countries or developed countries to other developing countries. It applies only to the dominant pattern of student migration which is the flow from developing countries to developed countries (Cantwell et al, 2008, p340).

Chen (2007) attempted to integrate the three-stage model of college choice into the push-pull model to identify the process and factors in his research on the East Asian students' choice of graduate schools in Canada. The synthesis model integrated the factors and process of college choice (Chen, 2007). In other words, this model combined Hossler and Gallagher's college choice model (1987), Niece and Braun's (1977) three-phase model, and Mazzarol and Soutar's (2002) push-pull model to understand factors influencing international students' flow and decision-making process. Chen (2007) found that some international students follow the process of deciding to study internationally, then choosing a nation and finally selecting an institution. However, not all students follow this sequence in choosing the destination, thus skipping the process of determining a host country and directly choosing a host institution. The synthesis model developed by Chen (2007) explains the dynamic process of decision-making in choosing a study destination and accommodates the limitation of Mazzarol and Soutar's (2002) three-stage assuming that students follow the order of deciding to study abroad, a host country and a host institution.

This model also accommodates three stages – predisposition, search/selection/application, and choice in decision-making of international study. In addition, it includes three domains of factors - student characteristics, significant others, and external push-pull factors – which influence the decision-making process of determining a destination. Each domain is reviewed at different stages. Each domain has a variety of factors such as:

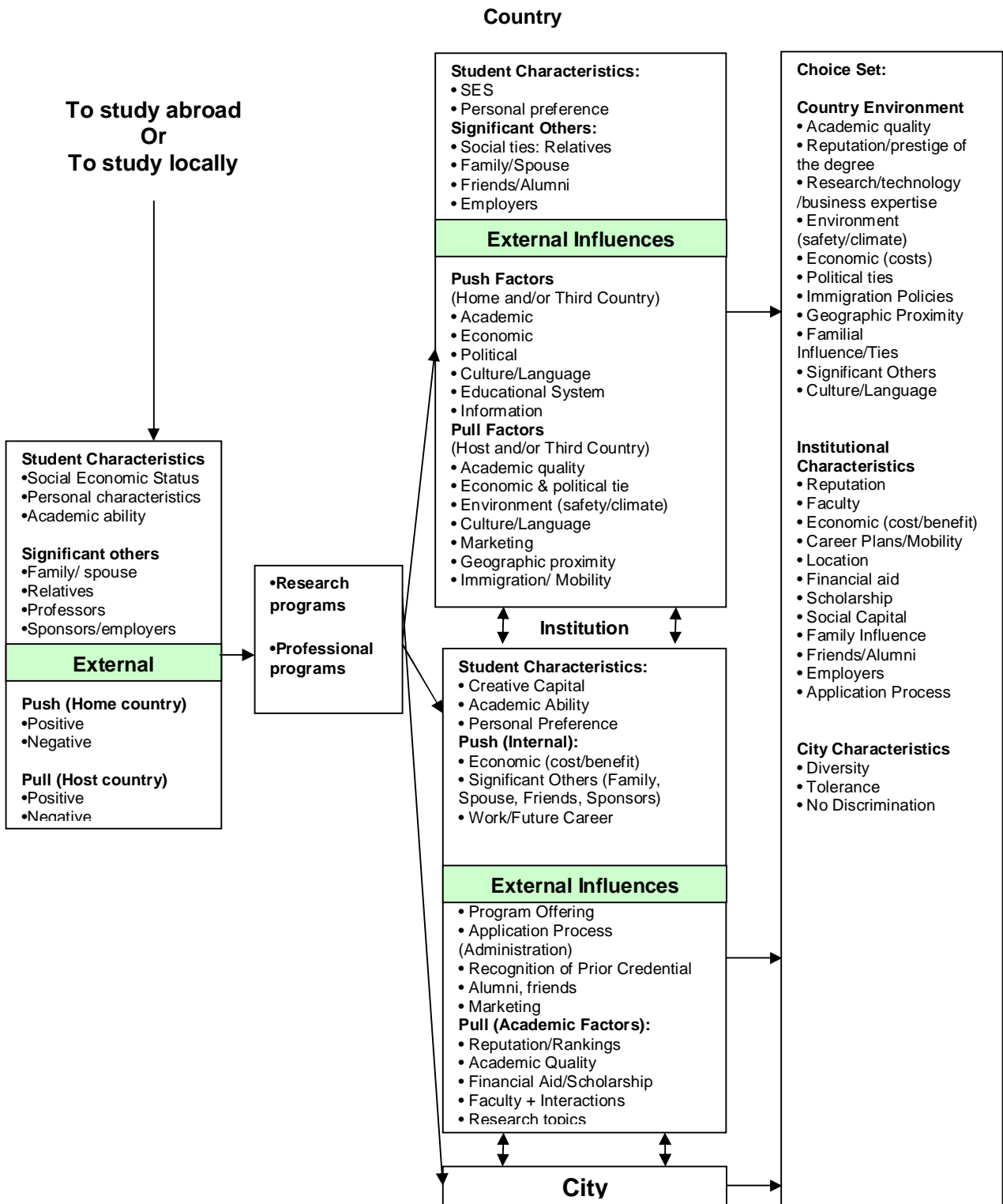
- (1) 'Student characteristics' refer to personal socioeconomic background, personal characteristics, preferences, academic ability, social capital, and creative capital.
- (2) 'Significant others' mean human sources that influence the decisions such as family/spouse, relatives, professors, sponsors, and so forth.
- (3) 'External influences' include push and pull factors from the home and host countries, personal driving forces due to external influences, and institutional characteristics (Chen, 2007, p273).



**Stage 1: Predisposition**

Stage 2: Search/Selection/Applications

**Stage 3: Choice**



**Figure 1: The synthesis model**  
 Source: Chen's synthesis model

### **The “predisposition” stage**

Among the three stages, “predisposition” is the first stage in which the potential student decides to study abroad through searching and collecting information and on the basis of personal preferences and backgrounds. In this stage, factors affecting students’ decision to participate in international studies are categorized into three dimensions: (1) student characteristics (e.g. socio-economic status, personal characteristics, and academic ability); (2) significant others (e.g. family, spouse, relatives, professors, sponsors/employers); (3) push-pull factors (e.g. unavailability of desired program or education in the home country, low quality of education, uncertain political situation, and so on).

### **The “search/selection/application” stage**

Next is the “search/selection/application” stage, in which students search and collect information on prospective host nations, schools, programs, and locations, analyze features of those elements, and select countries, and institutions which to apply to. International students proceed to this stage, “search/selection/application”, after deciding to study overseas.

In this stage, students are required to consider two decisions; selecting host countries and choosing institutions. First, factors influencing students’ decision on host countries are as follows: (1) student characteristics like socio-economic status and personal preferences; (2) significant others like social ties, relatives, family/spouse, friends/alumni, and employers; (3) external influences which include both push and pull factors (refer to Figure 1). This stage includes collecting information on countries, institutions, programs and location from a variety of sources of information – internet, paper-based promotional materials, organizations (e.g. embassies, libraries, agents, study -abroad fairs), and significant others (e.g. parents, relatives, professors, friends, alumni, and so forth.).

Chen (2007) found that the choice of country is not necessarily made before the choice of an institution. Some students choose a range of programs or institutions in different countries at the same time because program characteristics are considered most significant by the students. Country and institution have been considered simultaneously when deciding where and what to study.

### **The “choice” stage**

In the final “choice” stage, students choose to enroll in a particular institution and program among several admission offers from institutions through assessing institutional and country-specific

characteristics. Students experience the process of ‘trade-offs’ among a set of factors taken into consideration in the search stage.

Students consider again the factors of countries (e.g. environment, culture, living cost), institutions (quality, reputation, scholarship, alumni), programs (e.g. ranking, reputation, program specialty) and city (location and diversity), thus deciding on a final enrollment.

In this stage, factors affecting students’ final enrollment in a specific institution are categorized as follows: (1) country environment, (2) institutional characteristics, (3) city characteristics (refer to Figure 1).

### **3.3.5 Modified synthesis model as a framework**

Even though the synthesis model presented by Chen (2007) was constructed in order to explain the motivations of international students who chose Canadian graduate schools, this is a comprehensive and dynamic model in that it takes into consideration both internal and external factors that influence students’ decision. At the same time, it explains decision-making process that students take by identifying three stages – predisposition, search/selection/application, and choice.

For this reason, the author used this synthesis model as a basic framework for conducting this research with the aim of understanding undergraduate and graduate students’ flows and motivations of students in choosing South Korean institutions.

However, in order to adapt this model to South Korea’s case, it was slightly modified from Chen’s (2007) model, and the following model is used as a theoretical framework (refer to Figure 2).

Compared to the original Chen’s (2007) model, the ‘modified synthesis model’ added into or excluded some factors by taking into considerations of South Korean context.

#### **First stage**

In the first stage, ‘sponsor/employer’ factor among the dimension of ‘significant others’ was excluded in that this factor is not considered relevant because the undergraduate students, who may not have sponsors or employers, are included in the research subjects.

Thus, the following hypothesis is developed based on the above assumption to identify possible factors affecting students’ decision making to participate in international study.

H1: The following variables are considered as factors affecting students' decision making to study abroad.

- (1) student characteristics
- (2) significant others
- (3) push-pull factors (refer to Figure 2).

### **Second stage**

In the choice of country, 'employer' factor was taken away from 'the significant others' because the research subjects include undergraduate students who are rarely not employed. There is important change in 'external influences' in the choice of a country. The 'push factors' were excluded and factors related to 'characteristics of South Korea' were presented, since students are more likely to be influenced by positive pull factors and host country's image rather than negative push factors (Chen 2007).

Variables related to Korean language and cultures are also included in the 'characteristics of South Korea' factor because a variety of countries from East Asia to Middle East have been influenced by the South Korean cultures, which may be represented through South Korean TV dramas and popular songs. Accordingly, Korean language is becoming popular among those countries.

In addition, this study tries to identify pull and positive factors affecting students to select South Korea as a HE destination, thus it is different from Chen's (2007) study investigating push factors between home and / or third country, the US.

In the choice of institutions, the dimension of 'student characteristics' and internal push factor, 'economic (cost/benefit)' were excluded from the original model, considering Chen's (2007) findings that institutional factors play the most significant role in selecting institutions. In addition, the factor, 'research topics' among pull factors was also discarded because this factor is applied better to graduate rather than undergraduate students. 'City' variable was not considered relevant since this study does not highlight characteristics of city where university is located in that it focuses on South Korea, which does not show big difference in terms of location of campus.

Several important pull factors, such as 'tuition', 'campus facility', 'international services' and 'language support' were added into 'administrative pull factors' since these factors are regarded as

significant factors in the previous researches (Bodycott 2010) when students are choosing a host institution.

The following hypothesis is developed according to the modified framework.

H2: The following variables are considered as factors affecting students' decision making to select a South Korea as a HE destination.

- (1) student characteristics
- (2) significant others
- (3) characteristics of South Korea
- (4) pull factors (refer to Figure 2)

H3: The following variables are factors influencing students' decision to choose a host institution.

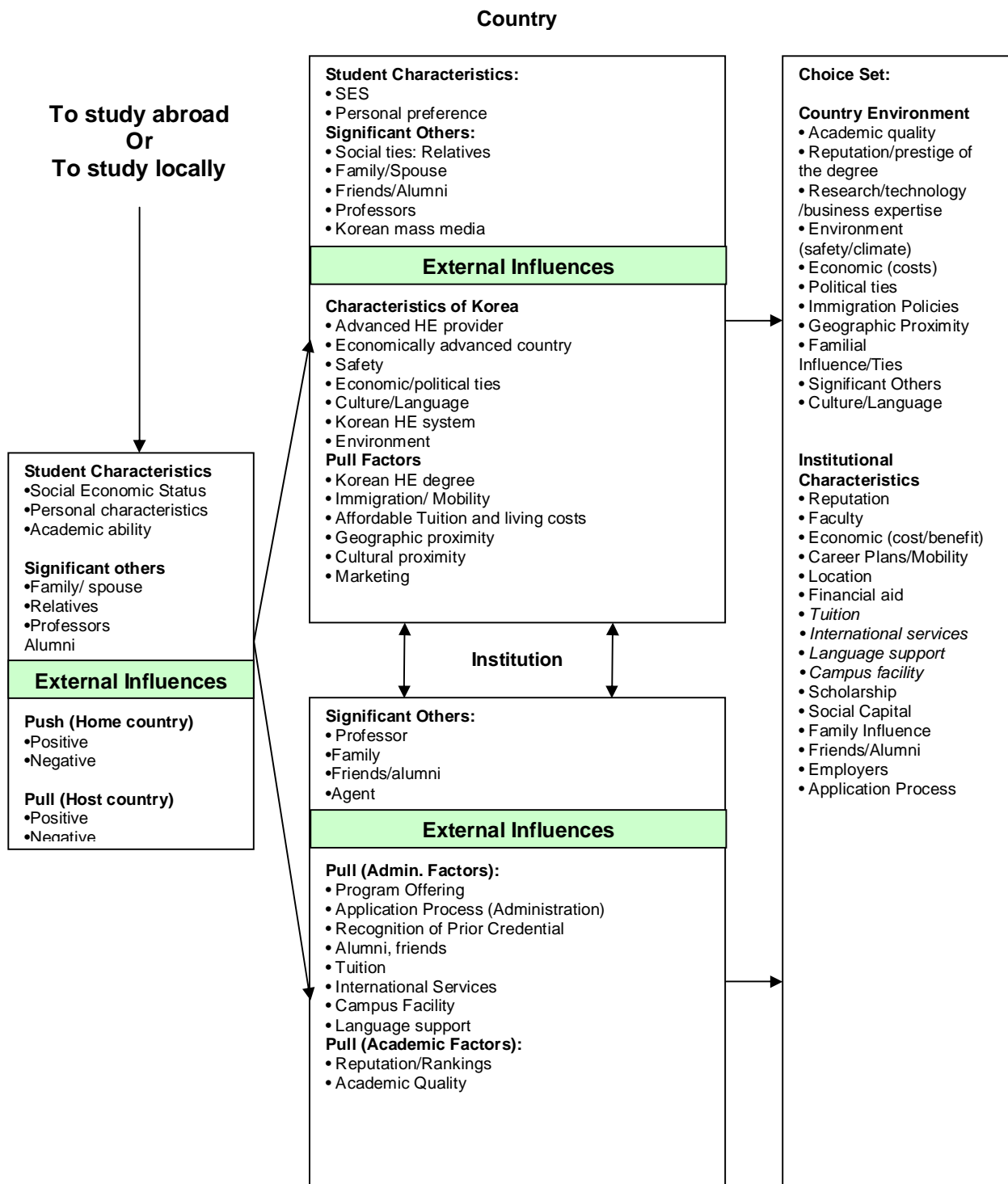
- (1) Significant others
- (2) Administrative pull factors
- (3) Academic pull factors (refer to Figure 2)

This modified synthesis model clearly identifies the reasons of international students to study abroad, to select a host country, and to choose a host institution in the context of South Korea. The framework presented in Figure 2 is highly relevant to the present study which highlights South Korea as an emerging HE host country for international study.

**Stage 1: Predisposition**

**Stage 2: Search/Selection/Applications**

**Stage 3: Choice**



**Figure 2: Modified synthesis model**

Source: Chen's (2007) synthesis model

### 3.4 Hypotheses

Based on the theoretical framework and intermediate variables, the hypotheses for this study were presented.

On the basis of Chen's synthesis model and his findings, I developed the hypotheses in order to investigate the most important factors affecting students' motivations for each stage of decision making and information sources. The hypotheses are as follows:

(1) First stage: Decision to study abroad

Chen (2007) identified that student's personal characteristics and motivations such as preference for foreign degrees and interest in Western culture, are the most important factors in the first stage of decision-making to study abroad. Based on this finding, this research also assumes that personal characteristics like personal preference are rated as most significant when deciding to study abroad.

H4: Student's personal characteristics play the most important role in decision making to study abroad.

(2) Second stage: Choosing a host country, South Korea

Chen (2007) also revealed that when students select a host country, its characteristics (e.g. environment, language and culture) are regarded as the most important factors, followed by pull factors and significant others (p 280). This study also has an assumption that the characteristics of South Korea are considered the most important factors to attract international students.

H5: Characteristics of South Korea are considered as the most important factors for students' when choosing South Korea as a host country.

(3) Third stage: Selecting a host institution

According to Chen's study (2007), she found that when choosing a host institution academic pull factors, such as ranking and quality of program or university, are rated as the important factors. This can be applied to the present study in that the majority of respondents are from Asian

countries just like those of Chen's study, who consider academic factors like ranking of university as important in selecting a host university. Thus, the sixth hypothesis is as follows.

H6: Academic factors play the most significant role when selecting a host institution.

#### (4) Information sources

Internet is the most frequent used media to gather information in a daily life due to its ease of access and convenience. Bodycott (2010) revealed that internet is one of the most important information sources when student collect data regarding study abroad destination in the context of China. Social networks like Twitter or Facebook based on internet are becoming more recognizable to young generations. People can meet, make friends and even share information using virtual social networks. Taking this trend into account, I constructed the following hypothesis.

H7: Internet is the most important information source for international students when gathering data regarding a study abroad destination.

In regard to intermediate variables, the following hypotheses were developed based on previous studies.

Lee (2008) investigated college access in the context of the US HE institutions. She found that information sources and motivations for studying at the US institution differ by international student's background characteristics. This research revealed that there were significant differences in reasons to study abroad and information sources on overseas study by gender and a developed versus developing country. She identified that male students are more likely to use friends as information source. In this study, I also attempt to compare students by gender to seek possible cultural view and expectations about gender role. Hence the hypothesis is as follows:

H8: Male students are more likely to use friends as information source.

(There is difference between male and female students in viewing the importance of each information source when deciding on a study abroad destination).



Lee (2008) also compared students in reasons and information sources whether they came from developed versus developing country. She revealed that students from a developed country are more likely to use friends as information source. Maringe and Carter (2007) also revealed that African students were encouraged to study abroad due to push factors such as political instability and economic reason. The motivations and information sources on a study abroad destination can be different by the economic status of students' home country. Based on these findings, the ninth hypothesis is as follows:

H9: Students from developing countries (as compared to developed ones) are more likely to be influenced by push factors when deciding to study abroad.

Chen (2007) found that there were significant differences by field of studies when international students enrolled in Canadian graduate schools viewed importance of institutional factors influencing their choice of a host institution. Students enrolled in research program than in professional program rated academic pulling factors, such as reputation of program more important, while students enrolled in professional program considered administrative pulling factors like affordable tuition fee more important. Taking this in mind, I assume that there may exist difference between levels of education in rating importance of institutional factors.

H10: Graduate than undergraduate students view academic pulling factors such as reputation and quality of university more important in selecting a host institution.

Chen (2007) also identified that there were differences by field of studies when students gather information on a host institution. Students enrolled in research program are more likely to use direct contact with professor in a host university, while students enrolled in professional program use internet or educational fairs. Based on this finding, I assume that there may be difference between level of education in gathering information on choice of a host country and a host institution.

H11: Graduate students (as compared to undergraduate ones) are more likely to gather information through direct contact to professor in a host institution.

Reberts et al (2009) investigated factors influencing students' choice of a Taiwanese university and revealed that traditional Mandarin study is one of key pull factors that attract international students. This study provides insights that language study can be a strong pull factor in a non-English speaking country. Taking this into consideration, I developed hypothesis associated with Korean language when students are choosing South Korea as a host country.

H12: Those who choose Korean as an instruction language view the pull factor, 'characteristics of South Korea' more important than do the people who choose English.

Chen (2007) studied that attitude and preference for a choice of a host country by using an independent variable, first choice of country. Based on his finding, I assume that students whose first choice of country is South Korea may report higher rating in importance of factors related to a host country, such as characteristics of South Korea and pulling factors, than do those whose first choice is not South Korea.

H13: Students whose first choice of country is South Korea show higher rating in importance of factors associated with a host country, such as characteristics of Korea and pull factors.

## **4 Methodology**

This chapter describes research methodology used for the study, which includes type of research method, research design, sampling procedure, research setting, instrument and procedure of data collection, structure of questionnaire, data preparation, and ethical issues.

### **4.1 Sampling Procedure**

Sampling refers to the process of selecting units of observation from a population. The key of sampling method is how to generalize the results from selected samples. Probability sampling based on probability theory involves the idea of random sample. However, non-probability sampling is used when probability sampling is not appropriate or impossible to be used (Babbie, 2007).

In this research, one of the non - probability sampling techniques - purposive sampling method is selected. Because the whole population is all international students enrolled at South Korean universities as degree-seeking, full time undergraduate and graduate students it is hard to get the empirical data without the permission of each institution. Hence, using random-sample is not selected for this study.

Sampling procedure was undertaken on a convenience basis, usually with the assistance from colleagues at universities in South Korea. In order to get the data, the author used purposive sampling method, thus choosing 7 comprehensive universities; Hanyang University, Yonsei University, Daegu University, Konkuk University, Chosun University, Chung-Ang University, and the Catholic University of Korea, which may represent 4-year comprehensive South Korean universities. Within those universities, all international students are included as research subjects for the purpose of generalizing the results. In this method the units of observation are selected through the research's judgment, that is the ones that are, in research's view, most useful and representative (Babbie, 2007, p184). Even though the sampling process is purposive, the results can be generalized since the number of respondents is large enough. Research subjects were selected purposely in a way to represent the population of international students enrolled in HE institutions in South Korea, thus analyzing and comparing factors based on sets of independent variables such as level of education, gender, medium of instruction, economic status of sending country, and preference of choice of host country.

## **4.2 Research Setting**

The research population in the study is all degree-seeking international students including both full-time undergraduate and graduate students enrolled at HE institutions in South Korea in the 2011 academic year. According to United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) (2006), international students are defined as “Students who have crossed a national or territorial border for the purpose of education and are now enrolled outside their country of origin.” In order to clarify research subject in this study the international students are defined as those who are citizens or residents of a country other than South Korea and who have a student visa.

Only full-time students are taken into account since short-term exchange, visiting, and Korean language learning students may have different personal, academic, social, and cultural motivations in terms of commitment to the academic affairs and integrating to the society as a whole. Second reason is to identify how the factors influencing decision making process are different or similar based on the level of education. There are few researches done comparing study abroad motivations by different levels of education.

The research subjects are international students enrolled at either undergraduate or graduate level at seven comprehensive South Korean universities: Hanyang University, Yonsei University, Daegu University, Konkuk University, Chosun University, Chung-Ang University, and the Catholic University of Korea. Daegu and Chosun University are located outside the capital area and the rest in Seoul, the capitol of South Korea. Considering locations, degree of internationalization, and probability of data gathering, these institutions were selected on a convenience sample technique basis.

These universities were chosen because they have been very active and successful in recruiting a large number of international students in a wide range of academic fields. These universities represent comprehensive, private institutions in South Korean HE sector in which private ones dominate approximately 80% over public universities. For further information on the institutions, followings are brief profiles for each institution. The respondents mirrored total population in terms of country of origin, level of education, gender, and university’s location.

### **Institutions’ profiles**

#### ***Hanyang University***

Hanyang, 4-year comprehensive private university, was founded in 1939. Hanyang University has two campuses: the Seoul Campus, which specializes in fostering talented people and developing practical studies through academic convergence, and the Education Research Industry Cluster at Ansan (ERICA) Campus, a leading academia research-industry cluster. Seoul Campus has 15 colleges and ERICA Campus 9 colleges. The total enrollment is 34,824 (undergraduate 24,722 and graduate 10,102) including 1,500 international students from 42 countries as of 2011 (Hanyang University, 2011).

### ***Yonsei University***

Being the oldest private university in South Korea, Yonsei University was first established in 1885 by Christian missionaries. Yonsei's main campus is ensconced in a spacious, picturesque and natural setting located minutes away from the economic, political, and cultural centres of Seoul's metropolitan downtown. Yonsei has 3,500 eminent faculty members who are conducting cutting-edge research across all academic disciplines. There are 18 graduate schools, 22 colleges and 133 subsidiary institutions hosting a selective pool of students from around the world. Yonsei University is composed of three campuses: Sinchon Campus (Seoul), International Campus (Songdo), and Wonju Campus (Wonju). The total enrolment is 28,409 including 1,447 (undergraduate: 929, graduate: 518) degree seeking international students as of 2009. It has also 153 international faculty members (Yonsei University, 2011).

### ***Daegu University***

Daegu University, South Korea's first HE institute for special education was founded in 1956 and included the fields of Special Education, Rehabilitation Science, and Social Welfare. Today, Daegu University is a comprehensive university with 12 colleges (91 majors), 8 graduate school. The total enrolment is 19,593 (undergraduate 17,613 and graduate 1,980) including 724 international students from 15 countries. There are two campuses at Daegu University. Its main campus is Gyeongsan and downtown campus is located in Daegu, South Korea's third largest city (Daegu University, 2011).

### ***Konkuk University***

During the 2008 academic year Konkuk University had a total enrolment of 26,101 undergraduate and graduate students including 1,830 international students. It has 982 full-time professors and among

them 105 are international professors. Founded in 1946, it is recognized as one of renowned and fastest growing universities specialized in engineering and natural sciences. It is composed of two campuses. The Seoul Campus, located in the heart of Seoul, comprises 15 colleges and 11 graduate schools, offering a diverse range of subjects while the Choongju Campus, also part of the university, consists of 7 colleges and 2 graduate schools (Konkuk University, 2011).

### ***Chosun University***

Chosun University is a four-year private and comprehensive institution founded in 1946 in Gwangju City which is located in 200 km away from the capital of Seoul. It is composed of 10 colleges and 8 graduate schools with 20,878 undergraduate students and 2,480 graduate students as of 2009 academic year (Chosun University, 2011).

### ***Chung-Ang University***

Chung-Ang University, a four-year comprehensive private institution, was established in 1918. It has two campuses which is located in Seoul and in nearby suburban Anseong city with 18 colleges, 17 graduate schools, 5 professional schools, and 11 specialized schools. Total student enrollment is approximately 30,000 (undergraduate 22,388 and graduate 7,364) as of 2008 academic year. There are 870 full-time faculty members and 440 administrative staffs on two campuses (Chung-Ang University, 2011).

### ***The Catholic University of Korea***

This university, a four-year comprehensive private institution, was established in 1855 by a Catholic pastor, Maistre. It has multi campuses; Songeui Campus, Songsin Campus, and Songsim Campus according to disciplines. Total student enrollment is approximately 10,874 (undergraduate 8,121 and graduate 2,753) with 23 departments/divisions and 23 graduate schools (The Catholic University of Korea, 2011).

## **4.3 Instrument and Procedure of Data Collection**

The data were collected through an on-line survey administered in March and April, 2011 in collaboration with Korean Association of International Educators (KAIE) that is an organization comprised of staffs of international offices at universities in South Korea.

The survey questionnaire was produced using 'elomake3', a questionnaire webpage design software application, which is available at the University of Tampere, and was distributed to the international students at seven universities in South Korea through emails and electronic board, thus linking the questionnaire website (<https://elomake3.uta.fi/lomakkeet/4950/lomake.html>). The reason why I used this software program is that it can save time to gather data and be conveniently administered without any limitation in space. Respondents in South Korea can easily get access to the questionnaire website and complete it. Another reason is that the data collected through the website can be converted into Excel or SPSS file without problems for analyzing and interpreting.

In order to raise the response rate I called each of international coordinators at the research subject universities and asked to exert their efforts to encourage students. One university, Konkuk University, even sent text message to the students' mobile phones to encourage responses. Respondents were invited to complete the questionnaire at a designated website and data were collected from 343 international students who were enrolled at seven South Korean institutions when the survey was administered.

Data were collected through internet using a questionnaire written in English and translated into Korean and Chinese for a better understanding of questions by respondents since the great majority are Chinese and main instruction of language is either Korean or English.

Survey research is considered as useful method when researchers need to collect quantitative data for describing a large population (Babbie, 2007). It aims to describe and identify certain features in a population by statistically examining a small number of samples (Marshall and Rossman, 2006). The quantitative data set consists of a structured survey questionnaire designed to provide both descriptive and explanatory evidence. Hence for this research quantitative data gathered from a survey research were used to identify the factors and to evaluate their significance in influencing the choice of study in overseas destinations.

The questionnaire was developed based on previous literature reviews (Chen, 2007; Mazzarol and Soutar, 2002; Hossler and Gallapher, 1987) and previous questionnaires (Li and Bray, 2007 and Roberts et al, 2010).

Closed-ended questions were used since they provide a greater uniformity of responses for analyses and easy processing as compared to open-ended ones (Babbie, 2007). To measure the degree of

importance of factors influencing the decision on a study abroad destination, a five-point Likert “scaling from 1= not important at all, to 5= very important” was used. In the last part, question items regarding information sources were presented to find which information source is considered most important.

Prior to undertaking the surveys, a pilot test was done with 10 international students from Konkuk University as a trial run of procedure and the survey instrument, ‘elomake3’. After pilot test some of question items were coded to conveniently analyze the results. A questionnaire accompanied by a head of explanation was distributed through email to full-time international students enrolled in the academic year of 2011 in regular academic programs of the aforementioned institutions. After first round 84 students responded. Hence to collect enough data to analyze and raise the return rate I increased the number of institutions from four to seven and follow-up emails were administered to encourage non-respondents to participate by attaching a new copy of the survey questionnaire with the follow-up letter. Finally 343 international students from seven universities responded.

#### **4.4 Operationalization**

Question items for the online survey were formulated by drawing on concepts from the framework and international student literatures. The structure of questionnaire followed a three-stage flow of modified synthesis model; predisposition, search/selection/application, and choice stage since the author attempts to identify factors according to different decision-making process; (1) decision to study abroad, (2) selecting a host country, and (3) choosing a host institution.

The questionnaire was grouped into three domains of factors-‘Student’s Personal Characteristics and Motivations’, ‘Significant Others’, and ‘External Push-Pull factors’ to measure the influential factors. For a better understanding of factors influencing students’ decision making the definitions of variables were developed.

Personal characteristics are defined as students’ individual motivations to participate in international HE and their social backgrounds. Significant others can be defined as encouragements or recommendations from other influential people when students decide on a study abroad destination. Finally, push-pull factors are defined as follows: (1) push factors are those which force students to decide to study abroad and these factors are generally negative, (2) pull factors are those which attract students to a specific country or a host institution.



To measure the variables, questionnaire was constructed as follows.

The survey consisted of four parts: Part A-personal profiles (10 items); Part B-factors related to language of instruction (5 items); Part C-degree of importance of each factor (65 items); Part D; sources of information (10 items) and it takes about fifteen minutes to complete.

In the first part, question items related to personal profiles, such as age, gender, country of origin, university's name, study field, level of education, level of parents' education, duration of study in South Korea, and funding for studies, were presented. In the second part, language related question items were developed in order to indentify main language of instruction, duration of Koran language study, and level of Korean language. In addition, to find out preferences of South Korea as a study destination, question items, such as 'South Korea as first choice of country' and 'list of other countries to which international students applied', were constructed. In the third part, question items were constructed to measure the importance of factors influencing the decision on a study abroad destination based on a theoretical framework. In the last part, questions regarding sources of information were developed to investigate the degree of importance of information sources.

Table 1 shows how to measure possible factors affecting students' decision making process in the three stages and in information sources by using question items in the questionnaire.

**Table 4. Construct and measures**

<b>Construct</b>	<b>Factors</b>	<b>Items</b>	<b>*Source</b>
<b>Stage 1: deciding to study abroad</b>	<b>Student Characteristics:</b> • Socio-economic status • Personal preference	Part A 10 Part C 1-3	Li and Bray (2007)
	<b>Significant Others:</b> • Social ties: Relatives • Family/Spouse • Friends/Alumni • Professors	Part C 17 13 14,16 15	
	<b>Push (Home country)</b> •Positive •Negative	Part C 6,7 8-12	Roberts et al (2009)
	<b>Pull (Host country)</b> •Positive	4,5	Roberts et al (2009)
<b>Stage 2: choosing South Korea as a host country</b>	<b>Student Characteristics:</b> • SES • Personal preference	Part A 10 Part B 1	Li and Bray (2007)

	<p><b>Significant Others:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Social ties: Relatives 40</li> <li>• Family/Spouse 42</li> <li>• Friends/Alumni 38</li> <li>• Professors 39</li> <li>• Korean mass-media 42</li> </ul> <p><b>Characteristics of Korea</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Advanced HE provider 18</li> <li>• Economically advanced country 19</li> <li>• Safety 20</li> <li>• Economic/political ties 21,22</li> <li>• Culture/Language 24,25</li> <li>• Korean HE system 23</li> <li>• Environment 26,27</li> </ul> <p><b>Pull Factors</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Korean HE degree 28</li> <li>• Immigration/ Mobility 32</li> <li>• Affordable Tuition and living costs 33</li> <li>• Geographic proximity 34</li> <li>• Cultural proximity 35</li> <li>• Marketing 36,37</li> </ul>	Part C	By the author
<b>Stage 3: choosing a host institution</b>	<p><b>Significant Others:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Professor 60,61</li> <li>• Family 62</li> <li>• Friends/alumni 63,64</li> <li>• Agent 65</li> </ul> <p><b>Pull (Administrative Factors):</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Program Offering 51,54</li> <li>• Application Process (Administration) 53</li> <li>• Recognition of Prior Credential 52</li> <li>• Tuition 50</li> <li>• International Services 55</li> <li>• Campus Facility 58</li> <li>• Language support 56</li> </ul> <p><b>Pull (Academic Factors):</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reputation/Rankings 43,44,47,48</li> <li>• Academic Quality 46,47</li> </ul>	Part C	Roberts et al (2009)
<b>Information sources</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Educational exhibition/fair 2</li> <li>Family or relatives 3</li> <li>Friends 4</li> <li>Internet 5</li> <li>Educational agent 6</li> <li>Newspaper advertising 7</li> <li>Magazine specific to international education 8</li> <li>Television advertising 9</li> <li>Direct contact with host university 10</li> <li>Direct contact with faculty at the host university 10</li> </ul>	Part D 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Bodycott (2010)</li> <li>Bodycott (2010)</li> <li>Bodycott (2010)</li> <li>Bodycott (2010)</li> <li>Bodycott (2010)</li> <li>Bodycott (2010)</li> <li>Bodycott (2010)</li> <li>Bodycott (2010)</li> <li>Chen (2007)</li> <li>Chen (2007)</li> </ul>

Note: \* regarding 'source' all items are based on Chen's synthesis model except for the designated researchers in the section.

#### **4.5 Data Preparation and Analysis Tool**

After collecting data, it is necessary to transform the data into numerical forms in order to be more suitable for statistical analysis. Each choice of items has its own value so that the answers could be transformed into numerical data for analysis. Data gathered through the on-line survey were transformed into Excel file. Because data were gathered through three rounds to have more responses values, such as university name, country, and field of study, should be encoded. After encoding, the Excel file was transformed into the Statistics Package for Social Science (SPSS) data for analysis. Data collected from the survey questionnaire related to personal profiles, and language related question items were encoded and analyzed using SPSS version 17.

In order to analyze differences based on level of education, a dummy variable transforming master and doctoral degree students into graduate students was created. In addition, a dummy variable for age was created to find distributions of respondents' age by making numerical data into interval data.

#### **4.6 Ethical Issues**

In administering a survey questionnaire, the main ethical issue to be considered was providing anonymity of the study. The author conducted survey without asking respondents' name so as not to be exposed to recognition and to make them more comfortable in answering questions. The respondents could understand the purpose of this research through a brief explanation in a guideline section before the questions items in the questionnaire.

## 5 General Description of Data

In the following chapter, I presented the descriptive analysis of the respondents by identifying ages, gender, level of parents' education, country of origin, university, study field, level of education, funding for study, and so on.

The total number of respondents was 343 international students enrolled at seven comprehensive universities in South Korea in 2011 academic year (refer to Table 5). The students were representative of the population of degree-seeking international students in South Korea.

**Table 5. Respondents at seven universities**

University	Bachelor	Master	Doctor	Total Count	Table N %
Hanyang	35	19	10	64	18,7%
Yonsei	24	37	17	78	22,7%
Daegu	6	13	1	20	5,8%
Konkuk	50	17	2	69	20,1%
Chosun	7	14	9	30	8,7%
Chung-Ang	19	31	2	52	15,2%
Catholic	9	19	2	30	8,7%
<b>Total</b>	<b>150</b> (43.7%)	<b>150</b> (43.7%)	<b>43</b> (12.5%)	<b>343</b>	<b>100,0%</b>

### 5.1 Country of Origin

The respondents mirrored the total population of international students in terms of country of origin. The total number of countries of origin was 42 and most of the respondents are from Asian countries. Students from China represented major student sending country to South Korea accounting for 56% of the total respondents, followed by Malaysia 5.5%, Philippines 5%, Vietnam 4.1%, Kazakhstan 4%, Pakistan 3.5%, Mongolia 2.9% and so on. In the samples, 150 students (43.7%) were enrolled at the undergraduate level and 193 students (56.3%) at the graduate level (including 150 students (43.7%) at the master level and 43 students (12.5%) at the doctoral level) (refer to Table 6). In terms of gender, there were slightly more female (51.6%) than male (48.4%) students in the sample. 77.6 percent of the

respondents were below 26 years of age, 16.3 percent were between 26 and 30, and 6.1 percent were over 30 years of age.

**Table 6. The composition and background of the survey respondents**

Country	Gender		Degree			Total	%
	male	female	Master's	Bachelor	Doctoral		
China	79	113	77	99	16	192	56,0
Japan	2	2	0	3	1	4	1,2
the US	2	1	2	0	1	3	,9
Vietnam	8	6	5	3	6	14	4,1
Taiwan	2	1	3	0	0	3	,9
Mongolia	5	5	0	9	1	10	2,9
Malaysia	12	7	5	12	2	19	5,5
India	1	0	0	0	1	1	,3
Indonesia	2	2	4	0	0	4	1,2
Uzbekistan	1	3	2	2	0	4	1,2
Thailand	0	3	2	1	0	3	,9
Russia	1	5	2	3	1	6	1,7
Cambodia	6	0	4	1	1	6	1,7
Myanmar	3	1	1	2	1	4	1,2
France	1	2	2	1	0	3	,9
Sri lank	1	1	1	0	1	2	,6
Guinea Bissau	0	1	0	1	0	1	,3
Singapore	1	1	1	1	0	2	,6
Paraguay	0	1	0	1	0	1	,3
Turkmenistan	1	0	0	1	0	1	,3
Poland	1	1	1	1	0	2	,6
Kirgizstan	1	0	0	1	0	1	,3
Bangladesh	3	0	1	1	1	3	,9
Azerbaijan	1	0	0	1	0	1	,3
Kenya	1	0	0	1	0	1	,3
Tanzania	1	0	1	0	0	1	,3
Kazakhstan	0	4	4	0	0	4	1,2
Spain	1	0	0	1	0	1	,3
Belarus	0	1	1	0	0	1	,3
Switzerland	1	0	0	1	0	1	,3

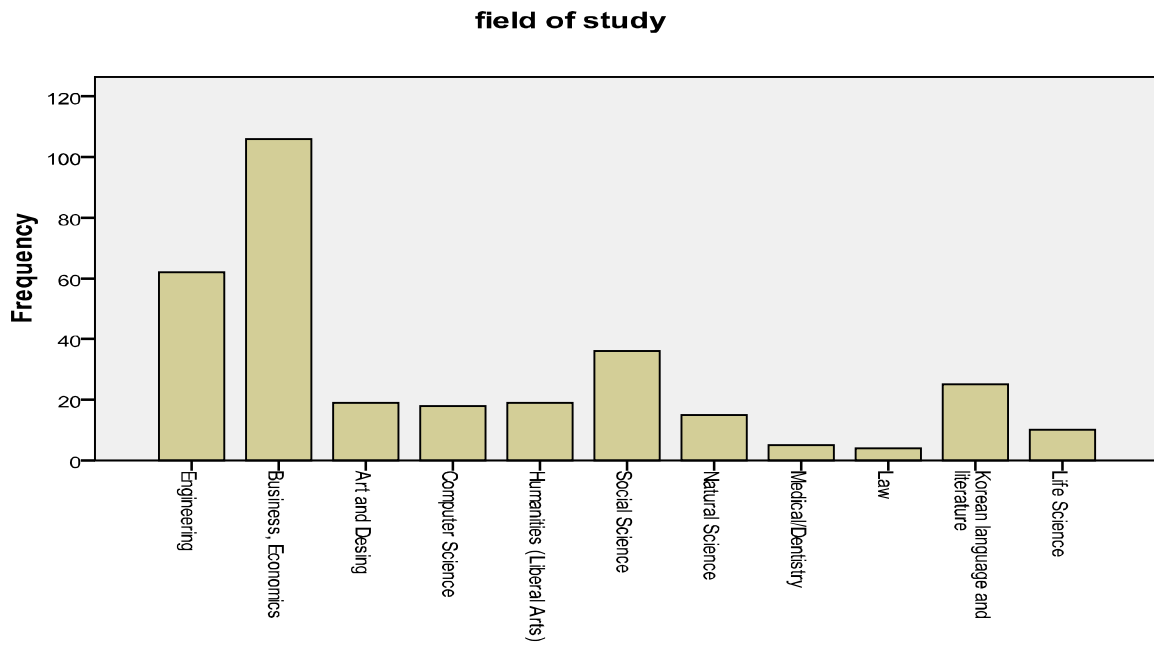
Pakistan	12	0	8	0	4	12	3,5
Hong Kong	1	0	0	1	0	1	,3
Bhutan	1	0	0	1	0	1	,3
Canada	1	1	1	0	1	2	,6
Nepal	2	1	0	1	2	3	,9
Nigeria	0	1	0	0	1	1	,3
German	0	2	1	0	1	2	,6
Yemen	1	0	0	0	1	1	,3
Sudan	0	1	1	0	0	1	,3
Afghanistan	2	0	2	0	0	2	,6
Guatemala	0	1	1	0	0	1	,3
Philippine	8	9	17	0	0	17	5,0
<b>Total</b>	<b>166</b>	<b>177</b>	<b>150</b>	<b>150</b>	<b>43</b>	<b>343</b>	<b>100,0</b>
	<b>(48.4%)</b>	<b>(51.6%)</b>	<b>(43.7%)</b>	<b>(43.7%)</b>	<b>(12.6%)</b>		

## 5.2 Field of Study

In this sample, 106 students (33.2%) were enrolled in business, trade and economics, 62 students (19.1%) in engineering, 44 students (13.8%) in liberal arts (including 7.8% in South Korean language and literature), and 36 students (11.3%) in social science. Few students were enrolled in law (4, 1.2%), medical study (5, 1.6%), and life science (10, 3.1%) (refer to Table 7). More than half of international students (52.3%) were enrolled in two major academic fields, business/economics and engineering. This indicates that majority of students are inclined to choose their subjects by utilitarian purposes which can be directly related to finding jobs after study. Interestingly 25 students (7.8%) selected Korean language and literature as their study field.

**Table 7. Field of study**

Field of study	Degree			Total count	Table Valid N %
	Bachelor	Master	Doctoral		
Engineering	23	29	10	62	19,4%
Business, Economics	56	49	1	106	33,2%
Art and Design	11	5	3	19	6,0%
Computer Science	5	11	2	18	5,6%
Humanities (Liberal Arts)	11	5	3	19	6,0%
Social Science	16	17	3	36	11,3%
Natural Science	3	3	9	15	4,7%
Medical/Dentistry	0	3	2	5	1,6%
Law	1	2	1	4	1,3%
South Korean language and literature	10	14	1	25	7,8%
Life Science	2	4	4	10	3,1%
Total	138 (43.3%)	142 (44.5%)	39 (12.2%)	319	100,0%



**Figure 3: Field of study**

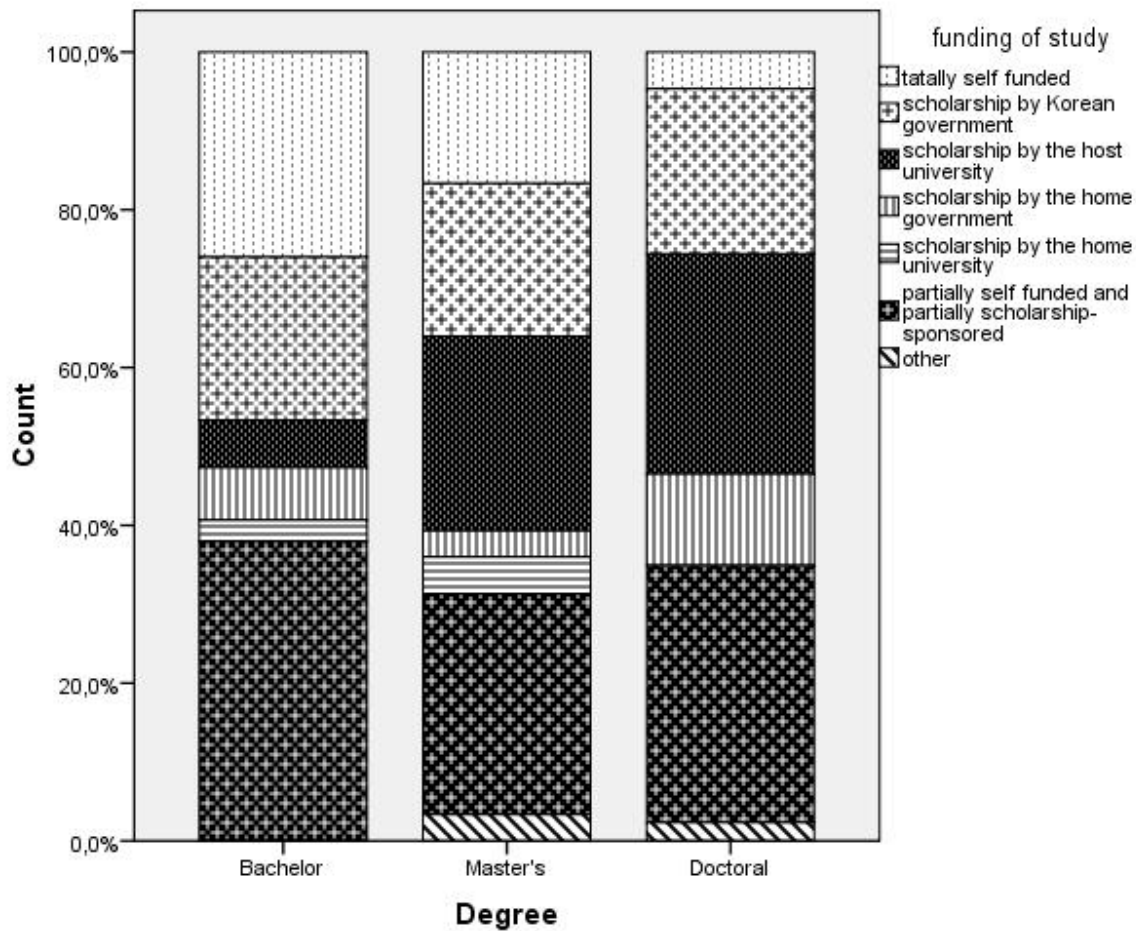
### 5.3 Funding for Studies

According to Table 8, most students enrolled at graduate level receive full or partial scholarship (at the master's level 83.3% and at the doctoral level 95.3%) either from the South Korean government, home government, a host or a home university. The rate of undergraduate students who receive full or partial scholarship was also high (74%), while it was lower than that of graduate students. The rate of self-funded students at the undergraduate level (26%) is higher than that of graduate level (at the master's level 16.7% and at the doctoral level 4.7%). In terms of full scholarship students, doctoral students showed highest rate (62.7%), followed by master students (55.3%), and bachelor students (36%).

**Table 8. Funding of studies for international students in South Korea**

funding of study	Degree							
	Bachelor		Master's		Doctoral		Total	
	Count	Column N %	Count	Column N %	Count	Column N %	Count	Column N %
totally self funded	39	26,0%	25	16,7%	2	4,7%	66	19,2%
scholarship by South Korean government	31	20,7%	29	19,3%	9	20,9%	69	20,1%
scholarship by the host university	9	6,0%	37	24,7%	12	27,9%	58	16,9%
scholarship by the home government	10	6,7%	5	3,3%	5	11,6%	20	5,8%
scholarship by the home university	4	2,7%	7	4,7%	0	,0%	11	3,2%
partially self funded and partially scholarship-sponsored	57	38,0%	42	28,0%	14	32,6%	113	32,9%
other	0	,0%	5	3,3%	1	2,3%	6	1,7%
Total	150	100,0%	150	100,0%	43	100,0%	343	100,0%





**Figure 4: Funding of studies by level of degree**

It was revealed that a couple of students who have other funding sources for studies reported that private companies, such as LG, provides funding.

#### **5.4 Study Period in Korea and Language of Instruction**

The majority of international students (89.5%) in the samples reported that their study period in South Korea was less than 5 years. Only 5.5% of the respondents reported that they have been studying in South Korea for more than 5 years.

In regard to students' choice of a language of instruction, 77.8% reported that they use Korean language as a language of learning, while the rest (21%) reported English (refer to Table 9). Four students (1.2%) reported that Chinese was a medium of instruction. At the bachelor level, the majority of students (90.7%) reported Korean as the language of instruction, while graduate students showed

much higher rate (at the master level of 30%, and at the doctoral level - 37.2%) in choosing English. This can be explained by the fact that most universities require Korean language ability for the undergraduate admission. Before the undergraduate students enter the university, they usually study Korean language for 1 year because most undergraduate programs are taught in Korean and, institutions require certain level of Korean language.

**Table 9. Language of instruction**

**Degree \* Language of Instruction Cross tabulation**

			Language of Instruction			Total
			Korean	English	other	
Degree	Bachelor	Count	136	11	3	150
		% within Degree	90,7%	7,3%	2,0%	100,0%
	Master's	Count	104	45	1	150
		% within Degree	69,3%	30,0%	,7%	100,0%
	Doctoral	Count	27	16	0	43
		% within Degree	62,8%	37,2%	,0%	100,0%
Total	Count		267	72	4	343
	% within Degree		77,8%	21,0%	1,2%	100,0%

In regard to the period of Korean language study, 209 students (60.1%) reported that they learned Korean language over 9 months. There were differences in learning period of Korean language by level of degree; bachelor students 70%, master's students 55.3% and doctoral students 48.8% (refer to Table 10).

**Table 10. Learning period of Korean language**

**Degree \* Learning period of Korean language Cross tabulation**

			Learning period of Korean language					Total
			none	1-4 months	5-8 months	9-12 months	over 1 year	
Degree	Bachelor	Count	9	14	22	40	65	150
		% within Degree	6,0%	9,3%	14,7%	<b>26,7%</b>	<b>43,3%</b>	100,0%
	Master's	Count	39	23	5	24	59	150

	% within Degree	26,0%	15,3%	3,3%	<b>16,0%</b>	<b>39,3%</b>	100,0%
Doctoral	Count	15	5	2	8	13	43
	% within Degree	34,9%	11,6%	4,7%	<b>18,6%</b>	<b>30,2%</b>	100,0%
Total	Count	63	42	29	72	137	343
	% within Degree	18,4%	12,2%	8,5%	<b>21,0%</b>	<b>39,9%</b>	100,0%

## 5.5 Social Background

In order to identify the respondents' social background, education level of their parents was reviewed. Regarding the background of parents' educational level, the majority (65.9%) had HE degree (2-3 year college degree 19%, bachelor degree 35.3%, and master or above degree holders 11.7%) (refer to Table 11).

**Table 11. Level of parents' education**

Level of education	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
no education	1	,3	,3	,3
primary school	4	1,2	1,2	1,5
middle school	26	7,6	7,6	9,0
high school	86	25,1	25,1	34,1
2-3 year college degree	65	19,0	19,0	53,1
bachelor degree	121	35,3	35,3	88,3
master or above	40	11,7	11,7	100,0
Total	343	100,0	100,0	

## 5.6 Applications Pattern and Preference

The majority of the respondents (62.7%) reported that South Korea is their first-choice country, while 37.3% mentioned that they chose other countries as their first country. Those who reported that they applied to institutions outside South Korea identified the US (21.3%) as the country they had applied,

followed by Japan (19.7%), the UK (14.8%), Canada (6.6%), China (6.6%), Singapore (4.9%), and so on. This implies that those who applied to institutions in other countries selected either English-speaking countries, such as the US and the UK or Asian countries like Japan, China, and Singapore. It is apparent that outside of South Korea, traditional study destinations like the US, the UK, Japan, and Canada were preferred for this sample. Emerging host countries, such as China and Singapore, were also considered as a destination.

In regard to gender, more female (66.1%) than male (59%) students had a preference towards South Korea as their first-choice study country (refer to Table 12).

**Table 12. First choice of South Korea as a host country**

**Gender \* First choice of South Korea Cross tabulation**

			First choice of South Korea		Total
			yes	no	
Gender	male	Count	98	68	166
		% within Gender	59,0%	41,0%	100,0%
	female	Count	117	60	177
		% within Gender	66,1%	33,9%	100,0%
Total		Count	215	128	343
		% within Gender	62,7%	37,3%	100,0%

## 6 Factors Influencing Students' Decision Making

This chapter presented findings from four perspectives; general descriptions, results of Principal Component Analysis (PCA), results of reliability test, and results of t-test according to three stages of decision making of a study abroad destination and information sources.

First, the findings were presented in a descriptive way based on the three stages of decision making process: (1) decision making to study abroad, (2) choosing South Korea as a host country, (3) selecting a South Korean HE institution, and (4) information sources on a host country and a host institution. First, a general description of factors in each stage was presented through comparison of means of extracted factors. The question items are not tested for reliability because the primary task in this research is not to regroup the items. The regrouping process was done after gathering data through survey.

Second, data reduction process was implemented in order to construct some meaningful factors extracted from a number of variables. In order to gain a better understanding of the factor construct, to look at the inter-correlation between variables, and to facilitate analysis, PCA was utilized as a data reduction procedure (Field, 2005). PCA is usually used “when a researcher does not want to include all of the original measures in analyses but still wants to work with the information that they contain” (DeCoster, 1998, p3). All the 80 items in the questionnaire were subjected to a factor analysis using PCA, which was followed by a varimax rotation. The decision to include a variable in a factor was based on factor loadings greater than 0.4. Three factors for each decision making process were retained with an aim to investigate whether the extracted factors conform to those presented in the theoretical framework.

Third, reliability tests were conducted to investigate consistency of the extracted factors.

Theoretically, reliability is defined as ‘... the degree to which measures are free from error and therefore yield consistent result’ (Peter, 1979, p6). In this study, coefficient alpha analysis was utilized for the factors extracted. George and Mallery (2003) provide the following rules of thumb: “ $\alpha > 0.9$  – Excellent,  $\alpha > 0.8$  – Good,  $\alpha > 0.7$  – Acceptable,  $\alpha > 0.6$  – Questionable,  $\alpha > 0.5$  – Poor, and  $\alpha < 0.5$  –

Unacceptable” (p. 231). Alpha value of 0.7 or above is regarded to be acceptable and 0.8 or above as good.

Finally, I presented how the factors are different by several intermediate variables. The data were analyzed and presented based on five sets of intermediate variables to compare differences between and among the groups: (1) gender, (2) economic status of sending country, (3) language of instruction, (4) level of education, and (5) preference of country choice (South Korea as a first choice of country) (refer to Table 13).

‘Independent t-test’ was utilized to investigate if there are significant differences by the level of education, gender, language of instruction, economic status of sending country, and preference and the means values between different groups were compared. The reason to use t-test is that it is suitable statistical test to look at differences in the means of a continuous variable between two independent groups (Field, 2005).

**Table 13. Intermediate variables**

<b>Dimension</b>	<b>Intermediate variables</b>	<b>Values</b>	<b>Statistical Analysis Tool</b>
<b>Background</b>	Gender	Male/female	Independent t-test
	Economic status of sending country	Developed/developing	
<b>Academic perspective</b>	Language of Instruction	South Korean/English	
	Level of education	Undergraduate/graduate	
<b>Preference</b>	First choice country	Yes/no	

(1) I compared students by gender to seek differences between male and female students as a background. (2) I compared students whether they came from a developing or developed country to broadly identify any differences by the economic status of a sending region. The definition of developed and developing country was followed by the United Nations’ classification (UN, 2011). According to Kofi Annan, the former Secretary General of the United Nations, a developed country is defined as follows. “A developed country is one that allows all its citizens to enjoy a free and healthy life in a safe environment.” (3) I compared student groups by the languages of instruction, either Korean or English. (4) I compared the means of importance of influential factors by level of education;

graduate or undergraduate students. Finally, (5) I compared students by preference of choice of a host country, i.e. South Korea.

Parameter is a numeric quantity, usually unknown, that describes a certain population characteristics. (Encyclopedia, 2011). To analyze students' motivations for a study abroad destination, the means for each variable are used as a parameter.

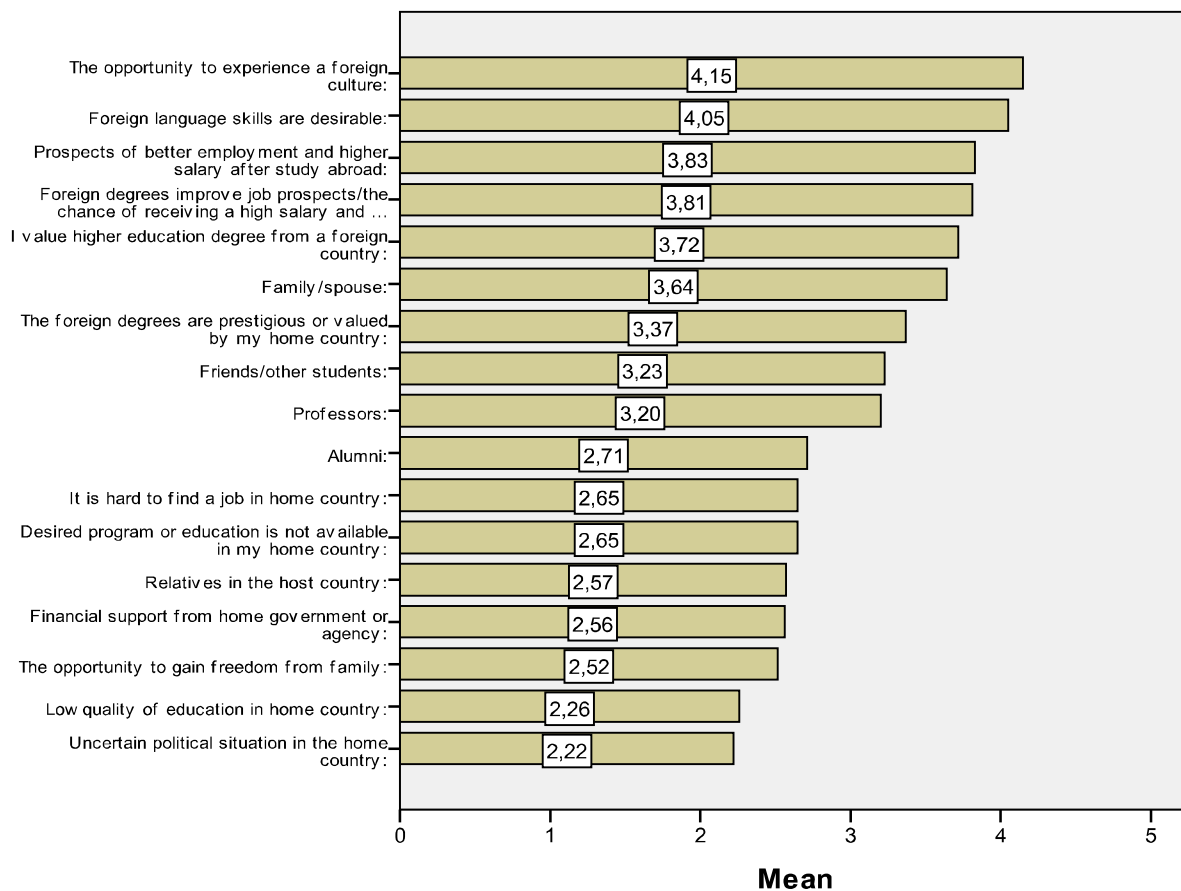
I do not suggest that the following findings represent all international students in South Korea. Nor do I mean that this sample represents all international students in South Korea. Rather, these findings are an interpretation of the analysis in the samples. Nevertheless findings in this study help to explain influential factors of international students study abroad decision making.

## **6.1 First Stage: Factors Influencing Decision to Study Abroad**

Based on the framework the decision-making to undertake overseas study is influenced by three domains of factors- (1) student characteristics and motivations, (2) external push-pull factors related to a home-host country and (3) encouragement from significant others. However, this study extracted three factors: pulling factor to study abroad, recommendations from significant others, and pushing factor to study abroad as influential factors for study abroad decision after factor analysis.

### **6.1.1 Descriptive Findings**

Figure 5 shows how students rated the importance of factors when deciding to study abroad.



**Figure 5: Means of factors influencing decisions to study abroad**

*Note:* Mean is calculated based on a five-point scale, ranging from “5-most important” to “1- not important at all.”

The respondents reported that pull factors, such as ‘the opportunity to experience a foreign culture’ (4.15) and ‘foreign language skills are desirable’ (4.05), played the most significant role in determining whether to seek HE outside of the home country, followed by recommendations from significant others like ‘family’ (3.64), ‘friends’ (3.23) and ‘professors’ (3.2). Push factors like ‘low quality of education in the home country’ (2.26) and ‘uncertain political situations in the home country’ (2.22) were regarded as least important when students’ deciding to study abroad. For instance, 77.9% rated the factor, ‘the opportunity to experience a foreign culture’ more than ‘4’, which refers to very important (refer to Table 14).



**Table 14. Rating of ‘the opportunity to experience a foreign culture’**

**The opportunity to experience a foreign culture:**

*	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid 1	6	1,7	1,7	1,7
2	7	2,0	2,0	3,8
3	63	18,4	18,4	22,2
4	121	35,3	35,3	57,4
5	146	42,6	42,6	100,0
Total	343	100,0	100,0	

Note: \* “5-most important” to “1- not important at all”

In reviewing the push-pull factors related to home country and South Korea, positive pull factors, such as language, culture, academic, and economic factors, were much more influential than negative push factors, such as low quality of education, uncertain political situation, unavailability of desired programs or education in home country, and limited job opportunities, in making the decision to undertake international study (refer to Figure 5).

Among significant others, ‘family’ (3.64) is most influential group for a student’s decision making of overseas study, followed by friends and other students, professor, alumni, and relatives. Relatives in the host country were found least influential (2.57).

### **6.1.2 PCA**

Three factors were extracted after the factor analysis. Table 15 shows the result of PCA in terms of the variable loadings on each factor in the first stage of decision making to study abroad.

**Table 15. Results of PCA in the first stage of decision making to study abroad**

**Rotated Component Matrix**

Variables	Component		
	Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 3
Prospects of better employment and higher salary after study abroad:	,806		
Foreign degrees improve job prospects/the chance of receiving a high salary and promotions:	,778		
Foreign language skills are desirable:	,726		
I value HE degree from a foreign country:	,662		
The opportunity to experience a foreign culture:	,622		
The foreign degrees are prestigious or valued by my home country:	,580		,403
Professors:		,778	
Friends/other students:		,771	
Alumni:		,756	
Family/spouse:		,722	
Relatives in the host country:		,611	
Low quality of education in home country:			,732
Uncertain political situation in the home country:			,717
It is hard to find a job in home country:			,697
Desired program or education is not available in my home country:			,691
Financial support from home government or agency:			,531
The opportunity to gain freedom from family:			,508

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization.

a. Rotation converged in 4 iterations.

The three factors identified in Table can be described as follows:

- **Factor 1: Pulling factor to study abroad.** This factor consists of 6 items that motivate students to participate in overseas study and it is composed of academic, economic, and cultural reasons which attract students to choose international study rather than local.

- **Factor 2: Recommendations from significant others.** The items that describe this factor are people, such as family, friends, and professors, who recommend or influence students to select overseas study.
- **Factor 3: Pushing factor to study abroad.** This factor is loaded with items that negatively affect students so as not to take local education, but push them to undertake foreign education such as unstable political and economic situation, low quality of education, and so forth.

The results presented in Table 15 are certainly related to the factors developed by Chen (2007) and support the existing literature. All the extracted factors conformed to those that Chen (2007) identified in the framework.

Table 16 shows means of extracted factors influencing decisions on study abroad.

**Table 16. Means of extracted factors influencing decision on study abroad**

<b>Descriptive Statistics</b>					
	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Pulling factor to study abroad	343	1,00	5,00	3,81	,70946
Recommendation from significant others	341	1,00	5,00	3,06	1,03022
Pushing factor to study abroad	343	1,00	5,00	2,47	,87838

In the ‘Push factor to study abroad’, only 4.1% of the respondent reported this factor very important by rating ‘4’ or ‘5’. In other words, most students thought the pushing factor as not important when deciding to study abroad.

### 6.1.3 Reliability

After coefficient alpha analysis, the extracted three factors influencing decision to study abroad were found reliable, since all values are above 0.7 (refer to Table 17), which is regarded as acceptable (George and Mallery, 2003).

**Table 17. Cronbach alpha: Decision to study abroad**

<b>Dimensions</b>	<b>Cronbach alpha (<math>\alpha</math>)</b>
<b>Factor 1: Pulling factor to study abroad</b>	<b>0.80</b>
<b>Factor 2: Recommendations from significant others</b>	<b>0.82</b>
<b>Factor 3: Pushing factor to study abroad</b>	<b>0.75</b>

#### 6.1.4 T-test

Findings indicated that there are significant differences by gender (refer to Table 18). Male students (3.20) as compared to female students (2.94) were more encouraged by significant others, such as friends, professors and alumni, when deciding to participate in overseas study. This can be explained in that the majority of respondents are from Asian countries where their cultures are mainly based on Confucianism; thus male students tend to attract more attentions from others like family and professors. Male students (2.58) (cf. 2.37female) were more influenced by the negative pushing factor like ‘the opportunity to gain freedom’, ‘desired program of education is not available in the home country’, ‘uncertain political situation’, and ‘low quality of education in the home country’ when deciding to study abroad. This finding implies that male students are more likely to be pushed by economic, academic or political situations in the home country.

**Table 18. Summary of factors influencing the decision to study abroad**

Factors	Gender	Economic status	Level of education	Language of instruction	First choice of South Korea
	Male/female	Developed/developing	Undergraduate/graduate	Korean/English	First/Not
Pulling factor to study abroad					
Recommendation from significant others	√ (3.20/2.94)			√ (2.96/3.45)	√ (3.18/2.86)
Pushing factor to study abroad	√ (2.58/2.37)	√ (2.08/2.50)	√ (2.61/2.37)		

Note:

- (1)  $P < 0.05$
- (2) Mean is calculated based on a five-point scale, ranging from “5-most important” to “1- not important at all.”
- (3) “√” – Significant difference among independent variables (e.g. level of education).
- (4) Data is presented from the lowest importance to the highest importance based on students’ responses.

I found that there is significant difference by economic status of sending country when deciding to participate in international study. Students from developing countries (2.50) rather than from developed ones (2.08) regarded ‘recommendation from significant others’ as important. This implies that students from developing countries are more likely to be influenced by influential people. Compared to

developed countries, in the developing countries the decision to study abroad is highly related to family, especially parents since financial sources are mainly from them.

There is also significant difference by level of education. Undergraduate students (2.61) as compared to undergraduate (2.37) considered 'pushing factor to study abroad' more important in deciding to study abroad. Bachelor level students are more likely to be pushed by this negative pushing factor than are master and doctoral students. This can be explained in that graduate students are more likely to be attracted by academic factors related to their research topics or faculty members, while undergraduate students are more likely not to be satisfied with present academic, economic and political situations in the home country.

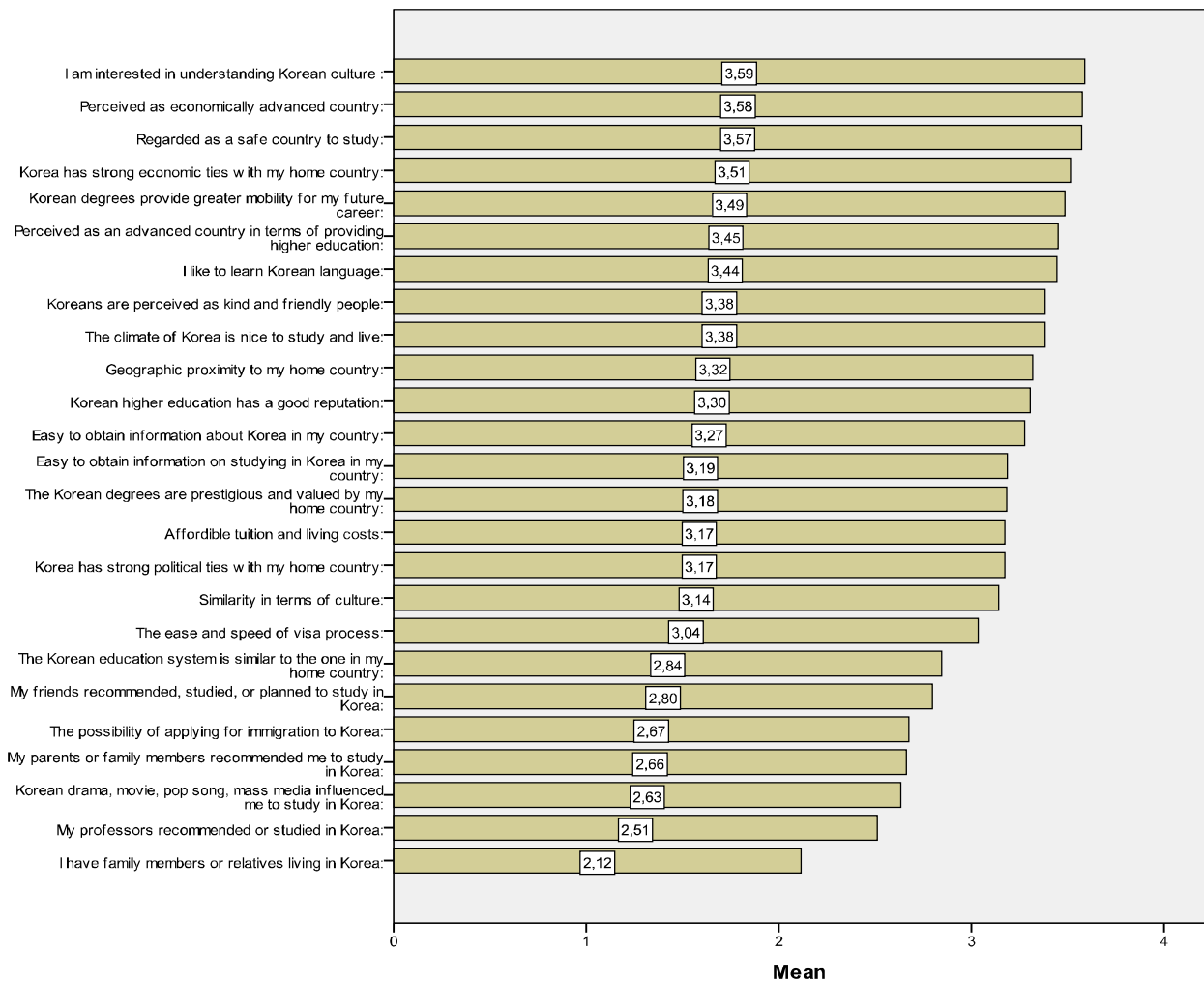
Regarding language of instruction, there is significant difference. Students who chose English (3.45) rather than Korean (2.96) regarded 'recommendation from others to study abroad' more important. There is also significant difference based on the fact of choosing South Korea as the first destination. Students who chose South Korea as a first choice country (3.18) reported that recommendations from significant others are more important than those who did not (2.86) in their decision to study abroad. This implies that South Korea is regarded as an emerging HE host country, while not much information on the country and host university is available. Thus, recommendations or referrals from others, such as family and friends, are considered more important to those whose first choice country is South Korea than whose choice is not in the decision making process.

## **6.2 Second Stage: Factors influencing choice of South Korea**

Selecting a study destination country is a complex process that requires commitment, due to the various options for international education destination in the world (Cubillo et al. 2006). The choice of South Korea was related to three domains-(1) the characteristics of South Korea (e.g. culture, language, environment, HE system, economics) (2) pulling factor to choose South Korea (e.g. High recognition of South Korean HE degree, economic benefit, a good reputation of South Korean HE, easy and fast visa process, information on the country, geographic, cultural proximity, and South Korean mass media such as TV drama, movie, and popular songs), and (3) recommendation from others to choose South Korea (e.g. friends, parents, professors, and so on).

### 6.2.1 Descriptive Findings

Figure 6 shows means of factors affecting students' choosing South Korea as a HE destination country. Among the three categories of factors, 'the characteristics of South Korea' such as Korean culture (3.59), perceptions of economically advanced country (3.58), a safe country to study (3.57), and academically advanced higher education system (3.45) have the most significant influence on the students' selection of Korea (refer to Figure 6). External push-pull factors (Economics, geographic reason, marketing, and information) such as 'Korean degree provides greater mobility for my future career' (3.49), 'geographic proximity to home country' (3.32), and 'Korean higher education has a good reputation' (3.30) followed it. 'Significant others' like parents (2.66) and professors (2.51) were found least influential in deciding on Korea as a study destination country.



**Figure 6: Means of factors influencing decisions to choosing South Korea**

*Note:* Mean is calculated based on a five-point scale, ranging from “5-most important” to “1- not important at all.”

For instance, 84.2% of respondents rated the factor related to Korean culture as important (same or above 3) according to Table 19.

**Table 19. Rating factor of Korean culture**

**I am interested in understanding Korean culture :**

*	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid 1	19	5,5	5,5	5,5
2	35	10,2	10,2	15,7
3	94	27,4	27,4	43,1
4	118	34,4	34,4	77,6
5	77	22,4	22,4	100,0
Total	343	100,0	100,0	

Note: \* “5-most important” to “1- not important at all”

Most survey respondents showed favorable impression especially on Korean culture and language. Perception of Korea’s economy such as a ‘perception of economically advanced country’ and ‘close economic ties with the home country’ play a significant role in international students’ decision making as well.

Geographic proximity (3.32) was considered an important factor influencing decision making. This may be explained by the fact that the majority of students are from neighboring Asian countries such as China. Respondents reported that the factor of immigration to Korea after graduation is least influential among external pull factors.

Recommendations or referrals from others such as friends, family, relatives and professors are relatively less important compared to ‘Korea’s characteristics’ and pull factors related to economic issues.

### 6.2.2 PCA

Table 20 shows the result of PCA in terms of the variable loadings on each factor in the second stage of decision making to choose South Korea as a host country.

**Table 20. Results of factor analysis in the second stage**

Variables	Component		
	Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 3
Perceived as an advanced country in terms of providing higher education:	,799		
South Korean higher education has a good reputation:	,782		
The South Korean degrees are prestigious and valued by my home country:	,739		,431
Perceived as economically advanced country:	,730		
South Korean degrees provide greater mobility for my future career:	,722		
I am interested in understanding South Korean culture :	,682		
South Koreans are perceived as kind and friendly people:	,642		
Regarded as a safe country to study:	,604		
South Korea has strong political ties with my home country:	,594		
South Korea has strong economic ties with my home country:	,589		
I like to learn South Korean language:	,556	,434	
The climate of South Korea is nice to study and live:	,556	,417	
Similarity in terms of culture:		,825	
Easy to obtain information about South Korea in my country:		,802	
Geographic proximity to my home country:		,770	
Easy to obtain information on studying in South Korea in my country:		,769	
Affordable tuition and living costs:		,648	
The South Korean education system is similar to the one in my home country:		,530	
South Korean drama, movie, pop song, mass media influenced me to study in South Korea:		,518	
I have family members or relatives living in South Korea:			,604
My friends recommended, studied, or planned to study in South Korea:			,595
The possibility of applying for immigration to South Korea:			,549
My professors recommended or studied in South Korea:			,525
The ease and speed of visa process:			,522
My parents or family members recommended me to study in South Korea:			,501

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization.

a. Rotation converged in 7 iterations.



The three factors identified in Table can be described as follows:

- **Factor 1: Characteristics of South Korea.** This factor consists of 12 items that attract students to South Korea as a host country. It is related to items that show students’ positive perceptions of South Korean HE, economy, culture, language, and environment.
- **Factor 2: Pulling factor to choose South Korea.** The seven items that describe this factor are related to practical reasons: (1) information on studying in South Korea, (2) geographic and cultural proximity to home country, and (3) financial matters.
- **Factor 3: Recommendation from others to choose South Korea.** This factor is loaded with six items including influential people that advise or recommend students to select South Korea as a host nation. All items represent people except items related to visa and immigration.

The results presented in Table 20 closely conformed to the factors developed by Chen (2007) in the theoretical framework. ‘Factor 2’ was identified as important pulling factors in the previous researches (Mazzarol and Soutar, 2002). It is significant to note that three factors extracted well conformed with the theoretical framework of this study.

Table 21 shows means of extracted factors influencing decisions on study abroad.

**Table 21. Means of extracted factors influencing selecting South Korea as a HE destination**

Descriptive Statistics					
	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Characteristics of South Korea	343	1,00	5,00	3,41	,78294
Pulling factor to choose South Korea	340	1,00	5,00	3,07	,92760
Significant others to choose South Korea	337	1,00	5,00	2,61	,87307

In the factor ‘Significant others to choose South Korea’, only 5.9% of the respondents reported this factor very important by rating ‘4’ or ‘5’. In other words, the great majority of respondents (94.1%) regarded recommendations from others as not important when selecting South Korea as a host country.

### 6.2.3 Reliability

After coefficient alpha analysis, the three extracted factors influencing decision to choose South Korea were found reliable, since all values of Cronbach alpha are above 0.7 (refer to Table 22), which is regarded as acceptable (George and Mallery, 2003).

**Table 22. Cronbach alpha for factors related to decision to study abroad**

Dimensions	Cronbach alpha ( $\alpha$ )
<b>Factor 1: Characteristics of South Korea</b>	<b>0.909</b>
<b>Factor 2: Practical pulling factor to choose South Korea</b>	<b>0.869</b>
<b>Factor 3: Recommendations from others to choose South Korea</b>	<b>0.704</b>

### 6.2.4 T-test

Table 23 presents t-test result of factors influencing the decision on choice of South Korea as a host country.

**Table 23. Summary of factors influencing the decision to choose South Korea**

Factors	Gender	Economic status	Level of education	Language of instruction	First choice of South Korea
	Male/female	Developed/developing	Undergraduate/graduate	Korean/English	First/Not
Characteristics of South Korea					✓ (3.59/3.12)
Pulling factor to choose South Korea		✓ (2.35/3.12)	✓ (3.23/2.94)		✓ (3.20/2.84)
Recommendations from others to choose South Korea		✓ (2.23/2.64)		✓ (2.56/2.80)	✓ (2.70/2.45)

$P < 0.05$

Mean is calculated based on a five-point scale, ranging from “5-most important” to “1- not important at all”

“✓” – Significant difference among independent variables (e.g. level of education)

Significant difference was not identified by gender in viewing factors influencing selection of South Korea as study country.

Findings indicate that there were significant differences by economic status of sending country in viewing influential factors of students' choice of South Korea. Students from developing countries (3.12) rather than from developed countries (2.35) were much more encouraged by 'pulling factor to choose South Korea', such as geographic and cultural proximity, affordable financial issues, information on host country and university, South Korean TV drama, movie, and mass media. This implies that since the majority of students from developing countries are from neighboring Asian regions, they may consider geographic proximity and cultural similarity as important factors when selecting South Korea.

In this study, there were significant differences by level of education in rating the importance of 'pulling factor to choose South Korea'. Undergraduate (3.23) compared to graduate students (2.94) ranked higher the external pull factor like 'geographic proximity to South Korea', 'similarity of culture', affordable tuition and living costs, and similarity of South Korean HE system. This implies that undergraduate students are more likely to be influenced by practical reasons than are graduate students.

In terms of significant others, even though there were differences by developed/developing country, language of instruction, first choice of South Korea, the means are all lower than '3' which may be interpreted as not so important. Thus, these were not considered for analysis in this study.

The results indicated considerable differences in rating the importance of factors between the group; whose first choice of host country is South Korea and the group; whose choice is not. The respondents whose first choice is South Korea rather than those whose first choice is not - reported that all three dimensions: characteristics of South Korea (3.59 vs. 3.12), pulling factor to choose South Korea (3.20 vs. 2.84), and recommendations from others to choose South Korea (2.70 vs. 2.45) were regarded more significant. Students who chose South Korea as their first choice showed positive perceptions towards South Korea.

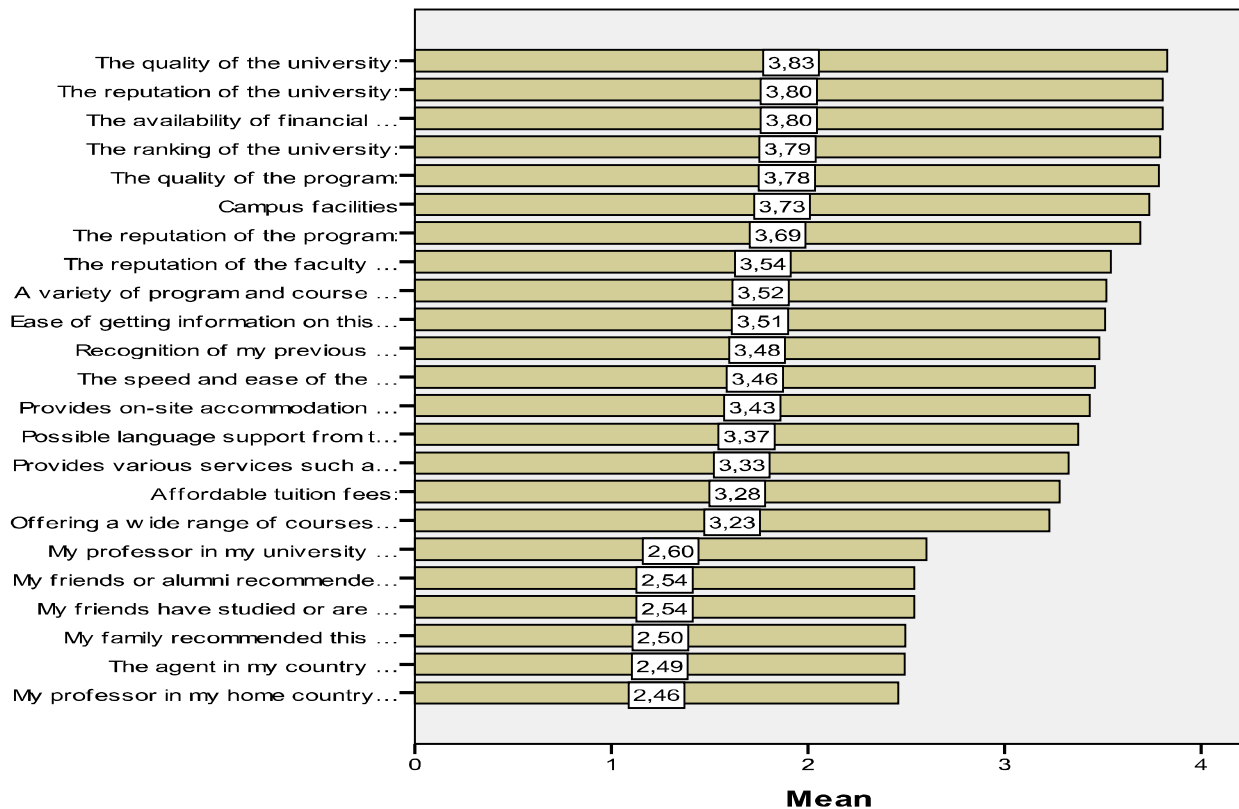
### 6.3 Third Stage: Factors Influencing Choice of an Institution

The three key influences of the choice of an institution are: (1) academic pulling factor (e.g. quality, reputation, ranking), (2) administrative pulling factor (e.g. financial aid, tuition, admission, marketing and information), and (3) significant others.

#### 6.3.1 Descriptive Findings

Figure 7 indicates the means of factors influencing decisions on selecting a host institution in South Korea.

The academic pulling factors such as ‘the quality of the university’ (3.83), ‘the reputation of the university’ (3.80), and ‘the ranking of the university’ (3.79) were ranked as most important, followed by the administrative pulling factors like ‘the availability of financial aid/scholarship’ (3.80), ‘campus facilities’ (3.73), ‘a variety of program and course offering’ (3.52), and ‘ease of getting information on this university’ (3.51).



**Figure 7: Means of factors influencing decisions to choosing South Korea**

*Note:* Mean is calculated based on a five-point scale, ranging from “5-most important” to “1- not important at all.”

Table 24 indicates that 92.7% of the respondents considered ‘the quality of university’ as important by showing higher than ‘3’ values.

**Table 24. Rating the factor of ‘the quality of the university’**

The quality of the university:					
*		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1	14	4,1	4,1	4,1
	2	11	3,2	3,2	7,3
	3	103	30,0	30,0	37,3
	4	107	31,2	31,2	68,5
	5	108	31,5	31,5	100,0
	Total	343	100,0	100,0	

Note: \* “5-most important” to “1- not important at all”

Findings indicate that compared to academic and administrative pulling factors, ‘recommendations or referrals from significant others’ have least influence in students’ selection of institutions (refer to Figure 7). All values in regard to significant others showed less than ‘3’ which means that these are not considered important.

These academic factors are core pulling factors that attract students to South Korea and its institutions. Among the academic pulling factors, ‘reputation of faculty in the program’ was found least important and this implies that students consider university and program factors rather than individual professors’ reputation more important determinants in selecting an institution.

In these samples, like in the previous studies (Chen 2007), students were most keen on ‘financial aid or scholarship’ when selecting a host university.

As shown in the process of choosing a host country, ‘recommendations from others’ were not considered as important factors compared to other academic and administrative factors.

Although the administrative pulling factors related to funding and financial aid were of great importance in attracting international students to a Korean university, they were secondary only to the academic pulling factors.

### 6.3.2 PCA

Table 25 shows the result of PCA in terms of the variable loadings on each factor in the last stage of decision making on selecting a host institution in South Korea.

**Table 25. Results of factor analysis in the third stage**

<b>Rotated Component Matrix</b>			
<b>Variables</b>	Component		
	<b>Factor 1</b>	<b>Factor 2</b>	<b>Factor 3</b>
Provides various services such as buddy program and cultural excursion for international students through institution:	,779		
The speed and ease of the application process:	,751		
Ease of getting information on this university (website etc.):	,717		
A variety of program and course offering:	,713		
Affordable tuition fees:	,689		
Provides on-site accommodation (dormitory):	,676		
Campus facilities _ buildings, library etc.:	,674		
Recognition of my previous degrees:	,653		
Offering a wide range of courses in English :	,652		
Possible language support from the university (opportunity to learn South Korean language after admission):	,585		
The availability of financial aid/scholarship:	,546		
The quality of the program:		,851	
The quality of the university:		,848	
The reputation of the program:		,816	
The reputation of the university:		,796	
The ranking of the university:		,764	
The reputation of the faculty members in my program:		,668	
My professor in my home country recommended this university :			,827
My professor in my university recommended this university:			,792

My friends or alumni recommended this university:				,740
My family recommended this university:				,690
The agent in my country recommended this university:				,679
My friends have studied or are studying at this university:				,650

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization.

a. Rotation converged in 5 iterations.

The three factors identified in Table can be described as follows:

- **Factor 1: Administrative pulling factor.** This factor consists of 11 items that attract students to a specific host institution in South Korea. It is related to items that institutions can provide for international students. This factor refers to administrative services, course offering, campus facilities, financial aid, application process, and provision of information which students practically take into consideration when deciding an institution.
- **Factor 2: Academic pulling factor.** Six items that describe this factor are related to academic dimension such as quality, reputation of program, university and faculty in a host university. This factor was rated as the most important determinant in the previous research (Chen, 2009).
- **Factor 3: Recommendation from others to choose a host institution.** This factor consists of six items related to people that recommend students to choose a study destination university in South Korea.

The results presented in Table 25 certainly conform to the dimensions created by Chen (2007) in the theoretical framework of this study. Factor 2 (academic pulling factor) was found as the most important pulling factor in the existing literature (Chen 2007). It is considerable to note that three factors extracted well conformed with the theoretical framework of this study.

Table 26 shows the means of extracted factors selecting a host institution in South Korea.

**Table 26. Means of extracted factors influencing selecting a host institution**

Descriptive Statistics					
	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Administrative pulling factor	343	1,00	5,00	3,46	,84737
Academic pulling factor	343	1,00	5,00	3,73	,88203
Recommendation from others to choose a host institution	343	1,00	5,00	2,52	1,04261

In the factor ‘Significant others to choose a host institution’, only 7.9% of the respondents reported this factor very important by rating ‘4’ or ‘5’. In other words, the majority of students (92.1%) thought recommendations from others as not important when choosing a host institution in South Korea.

### 6.3.3 Reliability

After coefficient alpha analysis, the extracted three factors influencing decision to choose a host institution in South Korea were found reliable since all values are above 0.7 (refer to Table 27).

**Table 27. Cronbach alpha: Decision to choose a host institution in South Korea**

Dimensions	Cronbach alpha ( $\alpha$ )
<b>Factor1: Administrative pulling factor</b>	<b>0.903</b>
<b>Factor2: Academic pulling factor</b>	<b>0.914</b>
<b>Factor3: Recommendation from others to choose a host institution</b>	<b>0.835</b>

### 6.3.4 T-test

Table 28 indicates the result of independent t-test by using five intermediate variables to identify variations in deciding to choose a host institution.

**Table 28. Summary of factors influencing the decision to choose a host institution**

Factors	Gender	Economic status	Level of education	Language of instruction	First choice of South Korea
	Male/female	Developed/developing	Undergraduate/graduate	Korean/English	First/Not
Administrative pulling factor					
Academic pulling factor	✓ (3.63/3.83)				
Recommendation from others to choose a host institution		✓ (1.81/2.57)			✓ (2.60/2.38)

$P < 0.05$

Mean is calculated based on a five-point scale, ranging from “5-most important” to “1- not important at all”

“✓” – Significant difference among independent variables (e.g. level of education)



The results showed in Table 25 indicated that there was statistical significance between male and female students in rating the importance of academic pulling factor influencing decision making of a host university in South Korea. Female (3.83) as compared to male students (3.63) viewed academic pulling factor of an institutions more important. Therefore, female students are more likely to be attracted by academic pulling factors such as ranking, quality and reputation of host universities.

Even though there were significant difference by economic status of sending country and first choice of country, the means for each factor were lower than '3' which may interpreted as 'not so important'. Thus these were not taken into consideration in this study.

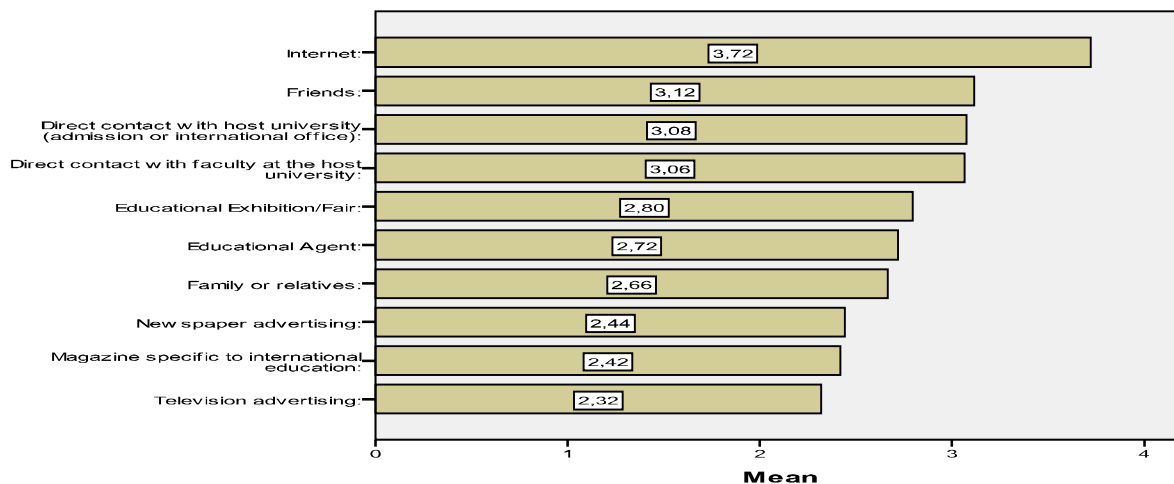
Results indicated no significant differences by level of education and by language of instruction in their ranking of factors influencing students' decision making of a host university in South Korea.

## **6.4 Information Source**

The information sources are associated with the ways the students get the information needed for the study abroad decision. There are 10 sources that students can get the information on the host university: (1) Educational Exhibition/Fair, (2) Family or relatives, (3) Friends, (4) Internet, (5) Educational Agent, (6) Newspaper advertising, (7) Magazine specific to international education, (8) Television advertising, (9) Direct contact with a host university, and (10) Direct contact with faculty at the host university. However, after factor analysis and coefficient alpha analysis, the dimensions were reduced to two factors: indirect information source, direct information source.

### **6.4.1 General Description**

Figure 8 shows the means of information sources when students rating the importance.



**Figure 8: Means of factors influencing decisions to selecting a host institution**

Note: Mean is calculated based on a five-point scale, ranging from “5-most important” to “1- not important at all.”

The results shown in Figure 8 indicate that students viewed ‘internet’ (3.72) as the important source of information on a study abroad destinations, followed by ‘friends’ (3.12) and ‘direct contact with host university’ (3.08), and ‘faculty member in the host university’ (3.06). Interestingly educational fair, magazine, newspaper, and TV advertisement were viewed as less important sources of information than other sources (refer to Figure 8). These findings can be interpreted in that internet is most frequently used in daily life due to its ease of gaining information and friends are regarded as most reliable information source to students.

**Table 29. Rating the factor of ‘internet’**

Internet:					
		Frequenc y	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1	31	9,0	9,0	9,0
	2	16	4,7	4,7	13,7
	3	84	24,5	24,5	38,2
	4	99	28,9	28,9	67,1
	5	113	32,9	32,9	100,0
	Total	343	100,0	100,0	

Note: \* “5-most important” to “1- not important at all”

Table 29 indicates that 86.3% of the respondents rated ‘internet’ as an important information source.

Direct contact with a host university and professor was also perceived as strong information source for selecting a study destination.

### 6.4.2 PCA

Table 30 shows the result of PCA in terms of the variable loadings on each factor in the information source of decision on study abroad destination.

**Table 30. Results of factor analysis in information source**

Variables	Rotated Component Matrix		
	Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 3
Newspaper advertising:	,863		
Television advertising:	,852		
Magazine specific to international education:	,824		
Educational Agent:	,764		
Family or relatives:	,699		
Educational Exhibition/Fair:	,563		
Direct contact with host university (admission or international office):		,876	
Direct contact with faculty at the host university:		,827	
Internet:			,821
Friends:			,792

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization.

a. Rotation converged in 5 iterations.

The three factors identified in Table 27 can be described as follows:

- **Factor 1: Indirect information source.** This factor consists of six items that students indirectly use to gain information on a host country and a host institution. It is related to items like mass media, educational agent, educational exhibitions, and family. Prospective institutions or host countries wanting to actively attract international students usually use these channels as a marketing strategy.

- **Factor 2 Direct information source:** Two items that describe this factor are related to a host institution or faculty at the host university. This factor implies information sources that students can gain through direct contact to a host institution to which he/she like to apply.
- **Factor 3: Social networks.** This factor consists of two items, internet and friends that perspective students can use in order to gain information. This implies that students can use social structures made up of individuals or friends in virtual or physical space to gain information on a study abroad destination.

Table 31 shows the means of extracted factors on information sources when students collect data to decide on study abroad destination.

**Table 31. Means of extracted factors on information sources**

Descriptive Statistics					
	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Indirect information source	343	1,00	5,00	2,56	1,09414
Direct information source	343	1,00	5,00	3,07	1,32378

In the factor ‘Indirect information source’, only 12.5% of the respondents reported this factor very important by rating ‘4’ or ‘5’. In other words, most students (87.5%) thought indirect information source as not important when choosing study abroad destination.

### 6.4.3 Reliability

After coefficient alpha analysis, two extracted factors of information sources were found reliable since those Cronbach alpha’s values are above 0.7. However, the value of Cronbach alpha of the factor, ‘social networks’ (0.57) was shown below 0.6, which is not acceptable, thereby this factor was discarded and was not taken into consideration (refer to Table 32).

**Table 32. Cronbach alpha: Decision to choose a host institution in South Korea**

Dimensions	Cronbach alpha ( $\alpha$ )
<b>Factor1: Indirect information source</b>	<b>0.883</b>
<b>Factor2: Direct information source</b>	<b>0.79</b>
<b>Factor3: Social networks</b>	<b>0.571</b>

#### 6.4.4 T-test

I compared the means to identify differences by using independent t-test at the  $p < 0.05$  level with independent variables of gender, developed/developing country, level of education, language of instruction, and first choice of South Korea.

Results showed that there was no significant difference by gender. However, there were significant differences by developed/developing country, level of education, language of instruction, and first choice of South Korea (refer to Table 33).

**Table 33. Summary of information source factors**

Factors	Gender	Economic status	Level of education	Language of instruction	First choice of South Korea
	Male/female	Developed/developing	Undergraduate/graduate	Korean/English	First/Not
Indirect information source		✓ (1.95/2.60)	✓ (2.76/2.40)		✓ (2.69/2.33)
Direct information source			✓ (2.84/3.24)	✓ (2.98/3.38)	

$P < 0.05$

Mean is calculated based on a five-point scale, ranging from “5-most important” to “1- not important at all”

“✓” – Significant difference among independent variables (e.g. level of education)

Graduate students (3.24) when compared to undergraduate ones (2.84) ranked higher the direct information source factors, such as ‘direct contact from the faculty at the host university’ and ‘direct contact with the host university’, while undergraduate students (2.76) more than graduate students (2.40) placed greater emphasis on indirect information source like ‘family’, ‘educational agent’, ‘newspaper’, ‘magazine’, and ‘television’ when getting information on a study abroad destination. It is apparent that graduate students are more likely to seek information on their own by doing direct contacts with professors at a host institution, while undergraduate students are more likely to rely on indirect sources, such as family, educational fairs and mass media advertisements, as information sources.

Students who chose Korean (2.98) rather than English (3.38) as a language of instruction showed lower rating in direct information source. This can be explained in that more graduate students chose English, thus they are more likely to gain information through direct information source as explained above.

As shown in Figure 8, although significant difference was found by preference of choice of South Korea in rating the importance of information sources, both values were lower than '3', thus the analysis may not be meaningful.

## **6.5 Summary of Research Findings**

The first goal of this chapter was to identify possible factors influencing the decision to study abroad, choosing a host country, South Korea, selecting a host institution, and information sources by looking at students' rating importance of those factors. These were presented in a descriptive way and some possible factors were found by computing and analyzing the empirical data.

When students decide to study abroad, the pull factors played the most important role, followed by significant others and push factors. Concerning the push factors, all the means showed lower than '3', which implies they are not so important, and do not influence much in students' decision to study abroad.

When selecting South Korea as a host country, the characteristics of South Korea and pull factors played a more important role than did significant others. These findings can be interpreted that the South Korea's positive image and practical pull factors are much more significant than recommendations from others in attracting foreign students to South Korea.

When selecting a specific host institution, the academic pull factors are regarded as most significant in this study. The result implies that academic factors are core factors when deciding on a host institution.

The second goal was to reveal which factors are most important in each decision-making stage. To identify this, hypotheses were developed in the previous chapters. In this chapter, those hypotheses were tested and verified.

### **Hypotheses and analysis related to decision-making stages and information sources.**

(1) First stage: Decision to study abroad

H4: Student's personal characteristics play the most important role in decision making to study abroad.

(2) Second stage: Choosing a host country, South Korea

H5: Characteristics of South Korea are considered as the most important factors when students are choosing South Korea as a host country.

(3) Third stage: Selecting a host institution

H6: Academic factors play the most significant role in selecting a host institution.

(4) Information sources

H7: Internet is the most important information source for international students when gathering data regarding a study abroad destination.

After closer analysis, the research findings show that in the first stage, the positive pull factors played the most important role in deciding to study abroad. Hence, the first hypothesis was not acceptable in this study. In other words, students were more attracted by pull factors rather than push factors or recommendations from others when deciding to undertake international study.

In association with the choice of South Korea as a study destination country, 'characteristics of South Korea' exerted the strongest role, followed by pull factors related to internationalization and globalization, and recommendations from others in the choice of South Korea as a HE destination country. Hence, the second hypothesis was verified and found acceptable. It can be interpreted that the country's image and perceptions are considered more significant to international students when selecting a host country like a HE emerging destination, South Korea.

In the third stage, a choice of a specific institution, this study found that 'academic pull factors' were the dominant influence, followed by 'administrative pull factors' and 'recommendation from others to choose a host institution'. In other words, this research revealed that academic pull factors played the most significant role when students are selecting a host institution in South Korea. Hence, the third hypothesis was also verified acceptable.

In regard to the information sources, respondents reported that they rated 'internet' as the most significant information source on a study abroad destination by showing highest means. Concerning information sources, the fourth hypothesis was also found acceptable.

The third aim was to find if there are variations in rating factors by using intermediate variables; gender, developed/developed country, level of education, language of instruction, and first choice of country.

To achieve these goals, a number of hypotheses were developed and tested.

In this section, based on the hypotheses, research findings were presented as follows

**Hypotheses and analysis related to intermediate variables; gender, developed/developing country, level of education, language of instruction, and preference.**

H8: Male rather than female students are more likely to use friends as information source.

H9: Students from a developing as compared to developed countries are more likely to be influenced by push factors when deciding to study abroad.

H10: Graduate rather than undergraduate students view academic pulling factors, such as reputation and quality of university, more important in selecting a host institution.

H11: Graduate rather than undergraduate students are more likely to gather information through direct contact to professor in a host institution.

H12: Those who choose South Korean as an instruction language view the pull factor, characteristics of South Korea, more important than do the people who choose English.

H13: Students whose first choice of country is South Korea show higher rating in importance of factors associated with a host country, South Korea, such as characteristics of South Korea and pull factors.

The findings showed that there were significant differences in rating importance of influential factors by gender, developed/developing country, level of education, language of instruction, and first choice of country.

The research findings revealed that the first hypothesis could not be verified in that the variable, friends, was discarded after Cronbach's analysis. Regarding the second hypothesis, this study found that students from developing countries are more likely to be affected by push factors when making decision on studying abroad. Hence, the second hypothesis was verified acceptable. For the third hypothesis, the research found that there is no difference between graduate and undergraduate students in rating the importance of academic factors when selecting a host institution. In the fourth hypothesis,



significant difference was found in rating the importance of direct information sources on a host country and a host institution between graduate and undergraduate students. Hence, the hypothesis was verified true. Regarding the fifth hypothesis, it was verified true. Students who chose Korean as a language of instruction rated higher the importance of ‘characteristics of Korea’ than did students who chose English. For the final hypothesis, students whose first choice of country is South Korea viewed ‘characteristics of South Korea’ more significant than did those who did not. Hence, the hypothesis was verified true.

## **7 Discussion and Implications**

The intent of this section is to discuss the relevant information and themes that emerged from the surveys. This study attempted to identify the factors influencing the choice of South Korean institutions as a study abroad destination by using survey questionnaire. This chapter discusses based on findings and present what the results imply and make recommendations for the stakeholders of South Korean HE. Lastly, suggestions for future studies are presented.

### **7.1 Discussion**

#### **7.1.1 Framework**

This research identified a modified synthesis model developed by Chen (2007) as a suitable framework in order to analyze factors influencing decision-making on overseas study in the context of South Korea. Chen developed and used this framework to seek reasons of Asian students' choosing Canadian graduate schools. This framework was found appropriate to the present study in that it is a comprehensive frame dealing with the strengths and dynamics of the influential factors by recognizing different stages of decision making and considering various dimensions, besides push-pull factors, such as characteristics of a host country and significant others which were not covered in the previous researches (Chen, 2007). The researches of Agarwal and Winkler (1985) and McMahon (1992) seek to identify national level push-pull factors, such as political and economic ties between home and host countries, however, this study could take into account both national and institutional level of external push-pull factors and personal level of motivations through using synthesized model as a framework.

#### **7.1.2 Push-pull Factors**

The study revealed that external push-pull factors play key roles throughout the processes of decision making to study abroad. To be more specific, pulling factors rather than pushing factors exerted more influence decisions to study abroad. This can provide some important insights for the host institutions and host country, South Korea to consider when developing an international marketing strategy. Negative push factors such as 'unavailability of programs' and 'limited places for HE admission in the home country' were not any more considered significant factors pushing students to undertake foreign

education. This can be explained in that with the rapid expansion of HE in sending countries for the past decade institutions in the home country could increase availability of programs and places by providing a variety of programs and expanding admission places.

This finding was different from previous studies done by Agarwal and Winkler (1985), McMahon (1992), and Mazzarol and Soutar (2002), which identified negative push factors important in making students choose to study abroad. The results in this research support Chen's study (2007) arguing that positive pull factors, such as cultural/language, academic and economic factors from the host country and host institutions rather than negative push factors like unavailability of programs and unstable political situation from the home country play more important roles in attracting international students.

### **7.1.3 Recommendations or Referrals from significant others**

The present research found that recommendations and referrals from others, such as family, professor, and friends, exerted the most considerable influence when deciding to study abroad, followed by choosing a country, and selecting an institution. This implies that students were much influenced by recommendations or encouragements from others in the first two stages of decision making: to study overseas or locally and to choose a host country. Compared to the previous two stages, in the last stage of selecting an institution, 'significant others' influenced least, while other pull factors like academic pull ones had a greater impact in the decision-making.

The decision to study abroad is highly complicated and is associated with various influential 'significant others' such as family, friends, and professors. Especially parental influence is strong when deciding to undertake overseas study and choosing a host university because parents are the main financial source for students' study. This finding is in line with the studies of Mazzarol and Soutar (2002) and Bodycott (2009) that family play an important role when students decide to undertake international study and select a host country. This can be explained in that the majority of respondents in this study were from Asian countries, such as China and Mongolia, where students are usually required to respect and follow parents' opinion in important decision-makings like study-abroad (Bodycott, 2009).

However, selecting a specific institution or program is more likely to be decided by students according to his/her interest, academic background, and expectation. This is supported by the data that respondents considered institutional factors like academic factor and administrative factor as most important throughout the decision making process.

This explanation is only possible under the assumption that students follow the three stage model in deciding their study destination. As Chen (2007) identified, not all students followed this sequence and some jump to choose a program or an institution first and select a host country later. Since this study has limitation of using one methodology, quantitative method, there is a limit to seek the sequence of study abroad decision making process.

There were significant differences in rating the importance of recommendations from others between students from developed and developing countries. Students from developing countries rather than from developed ones placed higher emphasis on encouragements from others when selecting a host country and a host university. This can be also explained by that students from developing countries were mainly from Asian countries, especially China, where obedience and respect toward authorities or old people are regarded important values (Bodycott, 2009).

#### **7.1.4 Features that Attract Students to South Korea as a Study Destination Country**

Compared to the factors influencing the decision to study internationally, students' selection of a specific nation seems to be influenced by the reputation or profile of the country in which the student is searching to study (Kinnell, 1989). If the student has better knowledge and awareness of a country, they are more likely to select it as a host country. Since the country's image is crucial when international students make decisions, institutions highly rely on their country's efforts to be exposed to more foreign students and parents. The major factors that South Korea is becoming a popular study destination can be explained in that it has increased the awareness of prospective students and parents in foreign countries, such as in the region of Asia, Africa, and Middle East, through South Korean culture like South Korean TV drama, movies and singers. As shown in Table 18, characteristics of South Korea such as South Korean cultures and language played a key role in attracting students to South Korea compared to other pulling factors.

The positive perceptions of South Korea as economically advanced, safe to study, and culturally rich country, were found as dominant factors making South Korea attractive as a HE host country.

The other reason is practical pulling factor such as geographic proximity and cultural similarity. The majority of students are from neighboring countries and they consider ease of traveling to meet family and friends during their study.

As Mazzarol and Soutar (2002) argued, one factor is not sufficient to attract students to South Korea. In other words, the three factors: characteristics of South Korea, pulling factor to choose South Korea, and recommendations from other, must work together in order for South Korea to be an attractive host country. Good image of South Korea, practical pull factors, such as visa, easy access to information, and reasonable tuition fees and living cost, and words of mouth from others, should work simultaneously to ensure students to choose South Korea.

Significant differences were found in rating the importance of pulling factors to choose South Korea between developed/developing country and undergraduate/graduate students. Students from developing countries rather than those from developed countries and undergraduate students rather than graduate students placed higher emphasis on pulling factors such as geographic and cultural proximity, ease of gaining information, South Korean TV, drama, and so on. This can be partly attributed to the 'Korean wave', also known as the 'Hallyu', which refers to spread of South Korean culture across the world. New media and magazines have recognized the increasing popularity of South Korean culture in Asia by naming it the 'Korean Wave' (Hallyu in Korean) (Shim, 2006, p25). The 'Korean Wave' continues to be a popular trend in Asia and is gaining popularity across North America and Europe. The majority of students are from Asian countries where the Korea wave is widespread, hence they are likely to be pulled by this trend when choosing a host country.

#### **7.1.5 Institutional Factors Influencing the Selection of a Host Institution**

Findings demonstrated the reason that international students selected a specific South Korean institution was most strongly related to 'academic pulling factor' such as quality, reputation, and ranking of program and university. This finding supports the previous study done by Chen (2007) in the context of Canadian graduate school that identified the academic reputation/quality of graduate education played the most significant role in the final enrollment of Canadian graduate school. This is also verified by the survey result that the academic pulling factor shows the highest means among institutional factors (refer to Table 21).

Academic competences of a university, such as quality and reputation, can be the core factors to attract and recruit foreign students to a specific institution. This is in line with the efforts from South Korean universities which are working on improving the quality of education (teaching and research capacity) and raising the universities' world ranking. For example, Korea Advanced Institute of Science and Technology (KAIST), the leading research oriented science and engineering institution, recruited a renowned professor from Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) as a president of this institution (McNeill 2008). A number of foreign professors have been appointed by the South Korean universities. Numerous courses have been taught in English as a strategy of internationalization.

South Korean universities are keen on worldwide university ranking systems, such as "Shanghai Jai Tong University Institute of HE [SJTUIHE]", and "World University Rankings," which significantly impact on the recognition of importance of research performance (OECD, 2007). The South Korean government initiated 'World Class Research-oriented Universities Project (WCU) in 2008 with the aim to enhance the competence of South Korean universities and research capacity. With the government's financial provision, the selected universities have recruited top-notch international scholars from abroad (South Korean MEST, 2007). In sum, to draw and recruit quality international students institutions in South Korea should make efforts in improving institutional competences by competing with other contenders in the world students markets.

#### **7.1.6 Information Sources**

The study notes that direct information source, such as direct contact with a host university or a professor, were rated as more important than indirect information source like educational fair, newspaper, TV, magazine, and family when deciding on a study abroad destination. Internet and friends showed high means in rating importance, however, these variables were not taken into consideration, since the result of reliability analysis showed low value which is not acceptable.

There are considerable differences in rating the importance of information sources by developed/developing country and by level of education. Students from developing countries are more likely to use indirect sources such as family, educational agent, newspaper, magazine, and television compared to students from developed countries. Graduate students are more likely to use direct sources such as 'direct contact with a host university or professors' while undergraduate students are more inclined to utilized indirect sources such as family, educational agent, newspapers, and magazines. This finding is in line with previous research

done by Chen (2007) that graduate students were highly influenced by academic pulling factors when choosing Canada as their study destination. Chen (2007) identified that graduate students consider the faculty and their research topic as important factors influencing the decision of final enrolment in a university.

Undergraduate students placed a greater emphasis on indirect information source. Bodycott (2009) argued that the decision making of international study is highly involved with family because parents are main financial source for students study. This indicates that parents can have great influence on the student's choice of a study abroad destination. As Bodycott (2009) emphasized, educational fairs and educational agents may be regarded as more useful and reliable information sources to the parents and students who pursue undergraduate study rather than direct contact to a host university, since educational fairs are run frequently throughout the year by private providers or host institutions in the home countries and educational agents are regarded as a reliable information provider.

While internet and friends as information sources were not included in this study, these sources should be taken into consideration as important information sources. Because internet is most frequently used in finding information and friends may be most reliable or influential source when students decide to select a study abroad destination. However, targeted online marketing using internet would seem an effective way for HE recruiters to spread their message, there is some doubt as to the effectiveness of using this marketing strategy alone in a Confucian society where parents have great influence on their student's decision making.

## **7.2 Implications**

There are a number of implications from this study. This section reviews the dynamics of important factors raised by international students that influenced their decision-making process and choice, and the implication of these factors for the stakeholders: ministry of Korean education and South Korean HE institutions. The key issues include (1) recruitment of international students, and (2) information sources.

### **7.2.1 Recruitment of International Students**

Recruitment is an effort made with the objectives of enrolling students at a specific institution in a host nation. Recruitment of international students takes more than internationalization and marketing efforts.

It is important for the South Korean government to note that when international students chose South Korea as a host country, ‘characteristics of South Korea’ played the most crucial role in attracting foreign students, followed by pulling factors like ease of gaining information and geographical proximity to the home country.

In order to sustain and increase the number of international students, the South Korean government can make use of positive images of South Korea as a national level marketing strategy. Based on the findings in this research, I suggest that to draw foreign students to South Korea, promoting the positive country images can be more effective marketing strategy than highlighting other pulling factors related to practical issues like visa process, information and so forth. However, these factors are not exclusive of each other but should play together as a pulling factor. For example, the ‘Korean wave’ representing the spread of South Korean TV, drama, and pop songs highly contributes to building a positive country image of South Korea. Words of mouth from friends, relatives, and professors who have positive experience in South Korea and its HE can significantly influence students’ decision making to choose South Korea as a host university.

In line with the South Korean government’ policies of recruiting foreign students, individual institutions are making efforts to recruit more foreign students. The findings indicate that academic pulling factors are considered more important than administrative pulling factors when students decide on final enrollment. This is clarified by the survey results that academic factors, such as reputation, quality and ranking of university and program, showed much higher means than did administrative factors (refer to Table 22). In order to attract high profiled foreign students in the long term, institutions should take into consideration improving the core aspects such as quality, reputation and more specifically ranking of the university and program. Even though academic factors were rated more important than administrative factors, both factors simultaneously influence students decision on choosing a host institution, thereby both should be taken into account by institutions when developing marketing strategies. For instance, to recruit international students, host institutions should have a



balanced package. They need to invest in education and research to improve core competences as well as to provide competitive financial aid/scholarship to students.

### **7.2.2 Market Segmentation**

As Chen (2007) argued both concepts of internationalization and marketing contribute to explaining international students' choice of a host country and a host institution. As identified in the findings, market segments, for example, undergraduate versus graduate students, students from developed versus developing country, or male versus female, provides significant implications for institutions to consider when looking to recruit international students.

For example, this research revealed that undergraduate students are more likely to consider indirect information as important sources, while graduate students use direct information more. This provides significant insights for institutions that they should use different approaches based on level of education to attract foreign students.

The findings imply that the effects of the internationalization of education are more applicable to graduate students and students from developed countries, while the applications of marketing strategies are more applicable to undergraduate students and students from developing countries.

In other words, to attract students for undergraduate level or from developing countries marketing strategies using indirect sources like educational agents or educational fairs may be more relevant, while to recruit graduate students from developed countries internationalization activities, such as conferences, seminars, and presentation through professors in the host university, can play a more important role.

Institutions can encourage their professors to participate in internationalization activities so that they can individually and directly contact prospective students and choose proper students thus, considering study field and topics. These internationalization activities can be of mutual benefits to both institutions and students in that they help institutions in recruiting targeted students and provide students with information supporting their decision making.

On the other hand, marketing, a useful approach to promoting HE in general, is considered effective especially in attracting undergraduate students or students from developing country. Those students are more likely to use indirect information sources such as educational agents or educational fairs. In this regard, study fairs organized by the South Korean government under the slogan of 'Study Abroad

Project' with a number of South Korean institutions' participating are useful and effective way of targeting undergraduate students and students in the developing countries.

In sum, the concepts of internationalization and marketing can play a significant role in recruiting international students even though they have different characteristics. In order to draw graduate students or students from developed countries, it is evident that internationalization approach should be carried out at the institutional or department level, while marketing approach should be used to at the national or institutional level to enhance general awareness and the image of a country and its HE sector, thus recruiting undergraduate students or students from developing countries.

## **8 Conclusions and Recommendations**

### **8.1 Conclusions**

This study, the first research focusing on international student mobility towards South Korea, provides some useful insights into the motivations of international students' choice of South Korea and its institutions for their study abroad destination. By using Chen's (2007) synthesis framework focusing on both the factors and the processes in international students' study abroad decisions, it attempted to identify the factors influencing international students' choice of a host institution and a host country. In regard to decision making process to select study destination, three-stage model is applied.

It contributed to identifying key factors influencing international student's final enrollment decision at a South Korean institution. The research findings illustrate that international students are more likely to be attracted by positive pulling factors than negative pushing factors when deciding to study abroad. And when students chose South Korea as a host country, its general perception or image represented as the factor, characteristics of South Korea, plays the most significant role in pulling students. In other words, the awareness and reputation of a host country seem crucial. The research reveals that in the process of choice of a host institution, international students are attracted by strong academic pulling factors, such as high quality and reputation of program and university, than administrative pulling factors. But both factors are influencing students' decision on final enrollment by mutually supporting.

It reveals that the recruitment strategy to attract international students should be different depending on the level of education and developed/developing country. In other words, market segmentation strategy should be applied when recruiting and attracting international students. The internationalization approach plays a crucial role in guiding graduate students' and students from developed countries' decision-making process, and marketing efforts, such as educational fair, educational agents, and rankings play a key role in influencing undergraduate students' decision-making process.

It is hoped that this research will engender further discussion and study in this area.

### **8.2 Recommendations**

The findings from this research suggest that a host government and its institutions should consider the importance of influential factors categorized as external push-pull factors, and significant others when students are choosing a study abroad destination.

In sum, three recommendations are presented to achieve the goal of an education-exporting country and its HE institutions to recruit international students.

The first recommendation is to improve core competencies of institutions by ensuring high quality or reputation of HE institutions and putting more efforts in raising university ranking.

The second recommendation is to carry out market segmentation approach when implementing international student recruitment. Even though the South Korean government and its HE institutions have policies at the national and institutional level for recruiting international students, the target students do not seem to be segmented. Thereby, the international student market can be segmented by level of education, by region of origin or more specifically by country of origin. The host country and host institution should use different recruiting approaches depending on the target students. In this sense, the marketing strategy at the national level needs to be tuned to target countries so as to provide knowledge and awareness of South Korea and its HE system.

The third recommendation is to utilize social networks: internet and friends as a communication or promotion tools. Owing to easy access without limitation of time and space, internet is the most frequently used media when students find information on a study abroad destination, and friends, words of mouth, are considered as a most reliable information source when students make a decision. The South Korean government and its institutions can create social networks such as Twitter or Facebook so that prospective students, alumni, friends, and institutions can share reliable information which supports students' decision making. At the same time, since the university websites play a key role in providing solid information on application process, it should be well organized and written in several foreign languages, such as Chinese and English, so as students to navigate and find information without problem.

The fourth recommendation is to diversify the country of origin in order to recruit a substantial number of international students and to enhance international profile of host institutions. As of now, more than 70% are from Mainland China and it might be rapidly reduced because of fast increase of local HE and its improved learning environment. When institutions set up their marketing strategy, they should consider characteristics of country of origin and approach the market in a sophisticated manner.

In sum, market segments, for example, students from developed/developing countries, under/graduate students, and male/female may provide useful insights for South Korean institutions to consider when seeking to recruit international students.

### **8.3 Limitations and Suggestions for Future Studies**

There are a couple of limitations in this study, while it provides valuable information and useful insights. In terms of research method, this study used quantitative method by doing survey questionnaire due to time limit. The findings could have been more strengthened had this study used the mixed methodology including qualitative method, interview in order to verify the factors known from quantitative method. In the future study, mixed methodology will be more relevant and appropriate to identify the factors and process of decision-making to study abroad.

This study shed light on the factors of international students' choice of a study abroad destination in the context of South Korea by selecting samples from seven private and comprehensive universities. Even though the sample size is enough to analyze this research does not show the whole picture of South Korean HE because it did not include public universities due to unavailability of data. The future studies can include the public sector so as to look at the bigger picture of South Korean HE.

The future study may be interesting if it selects exchange students as research subjects and compare the factors and process with degree-seeking students to indentify how different or similar they are.

This research only focused on international student's disposition by identifying the factors that motivate them to choose a study destination. For future studies, the international students' experiences during the studies and expectations after graduation can be a good research topic to measure how much they are satisfied or dissatisfied with their experiences in South Korea and its HE and to explore what their expectations are.

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## Appendix

### Questionnaire for International students' decision-making process of 'study abroad'

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Questionnaire for International students' motivations for choosing a Higher Education Institution in South Korea as the study abroad destination

March 1<sup>st</sup>, 2011

Dear Respondent,

This research aims to examine the characteristics and the determinants of international students' mobility to Korea for higher education. The research will attempt to identify which factors influence students' decisions to study abroad, their choice of Korea, choice of institution and program. The results of this study will be used to make a recommendation to policy makers and administrative staffs in institutions in order to enhance the quality of service for international students so that Korean institutions become more attractive to perspective students.

All answers will be kept strictly confidential and you will be given a code to protect your identity. Please write your answer in the blank areas provided. Except the multi-choice items, all the others are monomial choice items. Thank you very much for your cooperation and contribution!

#### Part A: Personal profile

1. You were born in 19\_\_ \_\_
2. What is your gender? \_\_\_\_
  - a. Male
  - b. Female
3. What is your nationality? \_\_\_\_\_
4. In which institution in Korea are you studying now? \_\_\_\_\_
5. In which faculty (college) and department are you studying in?  
Faculty (college) : \_\_\_\_\_  
Department : \_\_\_\_\_

6. Which degree are you pursuing? \_\_\_\_\_

- a. Bachelor
- b. Master
- c. Ph.D or Doctorate degree

7. What year are you in at this university? 1<sup>st</sup>(Freshmen)\_\_\_\_ 2<sup>nd</sup>(Sophomore)\_\_\_\_ 3<sup>rd</sup>(Junior)\_\_\_\_  
4<sup>th</sup>(Senior)\_\_\_\_ 1<sup>st</sup> (master)\_\_\_\_ 2<sup>nd</sup> (master)

8. For how long have you been studying at the university in Korea?

9. How are you currently funding your studies?

- a. Totally self-funded
- b. Scholarship sponsored by Korean Government
- c. Scholarship sponsored by the host institution
- d. Scholarship sponsored by the home government
- e. Scholarship sponsored by the home institution
- f. Partially self-funded and partially studentship-sponsored
- g. Other (Please specify) \_\_\_\_\_

10. Which is the highest level of education your father attained? \_\_\_\_\_

- a. No education
- b. Primary education
- c. Middle school
- d. High school
- e. 2-3 year college degree
- f. Bachelor Degree
- g. Master or above

### **Part B: Factors related to language of instruction**

1. Is Korea your first choice of country for study destination?

Yes\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_

2. Which is main language of instruction at the university?

a. Korean \_\_\_\_ b. English \_\_\_\_ c. Other (specify) \_\_\_\_\_

3. Have you applied to any other institutions in foreign countries besides Korea?

a. yes\_\_\_\_ b. no\_\_\_\_

if yes, which countries have you applied?

a. \_\_\_\_\_ b. \_\_\_\_\_ c. \_\_\_\_\_

4. How was your Korean language level when you applied?

a. no skill b. beginner c. average d. slightly over average e. advanced

5. How long did you learn Korean language before you entered the university in Korea? \_\_\_\_\_

a. none b. 1-4 months c. 5-8 month d. 9-12month e. over 1 year

**Part C: Degree of importance**

The following questions are the known factors influencing the decision to study abroad. These are listed in a five-point Likert **“scaling from 1 = least important, to 5 = very important to.”** Please show to what extent you think each item is important by ticking ‘√’ in the relevant box.

**Factors influencing the decision to study abroad**

Personal characteristics and motivations	Least important ←—————▶ Most important				
	1	2	3	4	5
1.Foreign degrees improve job prospects/the chance of receiving a high salary and promotions					
2. value higher education degree from a foreign country					
3.The opportunity to gain freedom from family					
External push-pull factors (Internationalization and globalization)	Least important ←—————▶ Most important				
	1	2	3	4	5
4.Foreign language skills are desirable					
5.The opportunity to experience a foreign culture					
6.Prospect of better employment and higher salary after study abroad					
7.The foreign degrees are prestigious or valued by my home country					
8.Desired program or education is not available in my home country					
9.It is hard to find a job in my home country					
10.Financial support from home government or agency					
11.Uncertain political situation in the home country					
12.Low quality of education in my home country					
Encouragement from significant others (Check items only applicable to you)	Least important ←—————▶ Most important				
	1	2	3	4	5
13.Family/Spouse					
14.Friends/other students					
15.Professors					

16.Alumni					
17.Relatives in the host country					

**Factors influencing choice of Korea**

Factors related to characteristics of Korea	Least important      Most important				
	←—————→				
	1	2	3	4	5
18.Perceived as an advanced country in terms of providing higher education					
19.Perceived as economically advanced country					
20.Regarded as a safe country to study					
21.Korea has strong economic ties with my home country					
22.Korea has strong political ties with my home country					
23.The Korean education system is similar to the one in my home country					
24.I like to learn Korean language					
25.I am interested in understanding Korean culture					
26.Koreans are perceived as kind and friendly people					
27.The climate of Korea is nice to study and live					
External push-pull factors (Economics, marketing, and information)	Least important      Most important				
	←—————→				
	1	2	3	4	5
28.Korean degrees provide greater mobility for my future career					
29.The Korean degrees are prestigious and valued by my home country					
30.Korean higher education has a good reputation					
31.The possibility of applying for immigration to Korea					
32.The ease and speed of visa process					
33.Affordable tuition and living costs					
34.Geographic proximity to my home country					
35.Similarity in terms of culture					
36.Easy to obtain information about Korea in my country					



37.Easy to obtain information on studying in Korea in my country					
Factors related to significant others	Least important		Most important		
	←—————→				
	1	2	3	4	5
38.My friends recommended, studied, or planned to study in Korea					
39.My professors recommended or studied in Korea					
40.I have family members or relatives living in Korea					
41.Korean drama, movie, pop song, mass media influenced me to study in Korea					
42.My parents or family members recommended me to study in Korea					

### Factors influencing choice of an institution

External push-pull factors (Academic pulling)	Least important		Most important		
	←—————→				
	1	2	3	4	5
43.The reputation of the university					
44.The reputation of the program					
45.The quality of the program					
46.The quality of the program					
47.The ranking of the university					
48.The reputation of the faculty members in my program					
External push-pull factors (Administrative pulling)	Least important		Most important		
	←—————→				
	1	2	3	4	5
49.The availability of financial aid/scholarship					
50.Affordable tuition fees					
51.A variety of programs and courses offering					
52.Recognition of my previous degrees					
53.The speed and ease of the application process					
54.Offering a wide range of courses in English					
55.Provides various services such as buddy program and cultural excursion for international students through institutions					
56.Possible language support from the university (opportunity to learn Korean language after admission)					
57.Ease of getting information on this university (website etc.)					
58.Campus facilities-buildings, library, etc.					
59.Provides on-site accommodation (dormitory)					

Factors related to significant others	Least important      Most important				
	←—————→				
	1	2	3	4	5
60.My professor in my home country recommended this university					
61.My professor in my university recommended this university					
62.My family recommended this university					
63.My friends have studied or are studying at this university					
64.My friends or alumni recommended this university					
65.The agent in my country recommended this university					

**Part D: Source of information**

Source of information	Least important      Most important				
	←—————→				
	1	2	3	4	5
1.Educational Exhibition/Fair					
2.Family or relatives					
3.Friends					
4.Internet					
5.Educational Agent					
6.Newspaper advertising					
7.Magazine specific to international education					
8.Television advertising					
9.Direct contact with host university (admission or international office)					
10.Direct contact with faculty at the host university					

For gaining further information, I would like to invite you to join an interview when you are available. If you would like to have interview by phone or Skype please check the box and leave your email address.

( ) yes, I would like to join the interview.

My email address is \_\_\_\_\_

Thank you so much for your sharing time and sincere response!