Factors Influencing International Student Mobility: Lesson Learned from Malaysian Public Higher Institution

Subramaniam Govindan[1], Salmi Mohd Isa[2], and Nur Farah Wani Mohd Nasir[3]

[1] Registrar Office, Universiti Sains Malaysia, 11800 USM, Pulau Pinang Malaysia
[2] Graduate School of Business, Universiti Sains Malaysia, 11800 USM, Pulau Pinang, Malaysia
[3] School of Social Sciences, Universiti Sains Malaysia Main Campus, 11800 USM, Pulau Pinang, Malaysia
salmi.mohd.isa@usm.my
*Corresponding Author

Received: 22 June 2023
Accepted: 15 August 2023
Date Published Online: 01 September 2023

Abstract: The international student market is growing exponentially. A growing number of offered higher education at home and abroad contributes to increasing competition in the international student market. To attract prospective students, Malaysian public universities must differentiate themselves from their competitors. To this end, they are developing and implementing international mobility programs to tap into new markets. Currently, the motivating factors in the decision-making process for students to study abroad include student expectations, self-efficacy, and social media role. Through empirically studying five Malaysian public higher education institutions with 309 international students, this study provides a comprehensive overview of the current patterns of international student mobility. Interestingly, social media does not influence destination image and intention to use international student mobility programs. Students' expectations and self-efficacy reveal significant future trends influencing mobility programs.

Keywords: destination image, higher learning institution, international mobility program, public, student mobility

Introduction

Within the past decade, international student mobility has been increasingly important in the global higher education landscape. Developing higher education's internationalization pushes tertiary education's development in universities worldwide. It also develops cross-border cooperation and increases student flexibility. The transformation of nations worldwide into knowledge economies developed higher education and personal goals. They offer various education programs and opportunities in higher education, changing the educational landscape for their populations and opening the doors to international students. Most national governments allocated more resources to higher education to increase the quantity and quality of tertiary education provided within its borders. Many European countries have kept their recruitment numbers stable. Meanwhile, new players in Asia and the Middle East entered the market with ambitions to become regional centers of education by attracting several international students to their countries. Mobility programs provide students the opportunity to acquire intercultural skills, a cosmopolitan attitude, an awareness of global issues, and potential advantages in the labor market. Mobility programs are planned and structured to provide a sense of "personal reward" and give individuals the opportunity to experience another culture first-hand and develop a global mindset. As a result, mobility programs have become one of the most prominent issues at Malaysian public universities.

However, the Malaysian Higher Education Data Unit has found that the overall number of international students in Malaysia's public universities is inconsistent. In some of the major public universities, a decline of almost 50% has been observed in recent years. This study examines the factors that influence the intention of international students to participate in mobility programs at Malaysian public universities.

Literature Review

Student Expectations

Morgan (2014) argued that international students expect mobility programs to be demanding in shaping an individual's identity. Swain and Hammond (2011) argued that the life stage at which one chooses to study influences enthusiasm for learning in a historical and geographical location. Ham and Hayduk (2003) explain that in understanding students, universities should recognize contextual factors influencing students' expectations and their perceptions of the services provided. This increased background diversity results in students enrolling in a degree program or stimulating place for students with a greater variety of expectations (Smith, 2011). Furthermore, academic rankings were originally developed to measure and rank universities based on their academic performance. Once ranked, these universities are placed on a list according to top performance, depending on the indicators used to rank them. Using academic rankings is widespread among students, graduates, and employers. Following institutional reputation, students may believe that participation in mobility programs helps to achieve certain goals that bring certain benefits (Wæraas & Byrkjeflot, 2012). Previous studies by Keling (2006), Agrey and Lampadan (2014), and Cokgezen (2012) have shown that a strong correlation between institutional reputation, rankings, English language, and quality of educational institutions has a significant impact on students' expectations when choosing a university. Therefore, the above factors are believed to significantly influence international students' intentions toward mobility programs in Malaysian public universities. Accordingly, this study developed the following hypothesis

> H_1: *Student expectation has a positive relationship with intention toward the Mobility Program*

Social Media's Roles

Gülbahar (2014) claims that social media significantly contributes to education and the environment by sharing knowledge and sociable characteristics that support collaborative learning. Social media platforms, such as Facebook, YouTube, LinkedIn, photo and video sharing, Twitter, and blogs, have become important channels to transform marketing communication through sharing and learning online. Therefore, educators could utilize social media to their advantage in encouraging instructional procedures (Amaruddin & Rosli, 2022). Social media encourages marketers in the education sector to develop strategies and communicate with potential students. Previous studies have found that in the digital age, most social media can be used as a teaching tool to support learning in universities. Therefore, contemporary students prefer and are more familiar with digital natives because they have been exposed to computers and the virtual world early (Wankel, 2009). Social media is increasingly used for academic purposes and communication, attributing to students' engagement with social media. Using social media offers education providers the flexibility to facilitate interactions economically regardless of time. Using social media or Web 2.0 applications shows the younger generation a new stage in the network world. Several researchers point out that young consumers have integrally adopted online social media as part of their lives. The change in consumer needs is reflected in the growing demand for online services, especially in social media, particularly e-WOM. Consumers interact with marketers through and use social media to access like-minded people in the borderless digital world. Choosing social media as a subjective norm also affects the international student's choice, which refers to a person's belief that social media influences how one must behave consistently with these constraints. Thus, the social burden is

placed on international students whether to choose or not a program that meets the student's expectations through social influence. Therefore, the following hypothesis was made in this study:

> H_2: *Social media has a positive relationship with intention toward the Mobility Program*

Students Self-Efficacy

Self-efficacy refers to people's assessments of their ability to perform certain tasks. Task-related self-efficacy increases effort and perseverance in demanding tasks to successfully perform the action and achieve the goal. Individuals without elevated levels of self-efficacy will therefore avoid doing the work. In contrast, people with a prominent efficiency level will do the task. People who struggle will be insecure about their abilities to work harder and longer (Bandura et al., 1996). Ishak and Jamian (2021) stated that self-efficacy is important in social cognitive theory, which promotes high job performance. This is linked to Bandura's (1997) definition of self-efficacy, describing an individual's capability to produce assigned performance levels in various life events, including academic and job performance. Salami (2010) stated that developing a positive attitude requires students a high self-efficacy and encouragement to perform. Several researchers found that social media influences personal beliefs, and attitudes strongly influence referral intention (Salami, 2010; Kusumawati, 2013). If a person is self-satisfied and their beliefs and expectations match the actual outcome, they will show loyalty by considering the same thing again or recommending it to their peers. Following students' intentions toward mobility programs, people's behavior determines their plan to perform a particular action. Pimpa (2004) discovered the relationship between family factors influencing Thai students' decision to study in a different country, city, state, academic program, and university. The result indicates a positive relationship between the decisions and the influencing factors. Kusumawati (2013) showed that factors influencing students' choice of university or place of study exist. The most influential factors mentioned by the respondents were personal beliefs. Kao et al. (2008) linked recommendation intention to consumer loyalty. Therefore, international students should have the desire to participate in mobility programs, which should be reflected in their intention to participate in such programs. Therefore, this study hypothesized the following:

> H_3: *Self-efficacy has a positive relationship with intention toward Mobility Program*

Student Expectations and Destination Image

Student expectations are associated with behavioral choices facilitating academic success and experiential learning opportunities under the mobility program. External and internal atmosphere factors are essential in students' mobility and internationalization. Ham and Hayduk (2003) described that students' expectations are closely related to a country's political stability, financial considerations, culture, and safety. Ming and Kee (2010) and Avram (2014) argued about the factors and expectations influencing students' decisions in choosing a destination. Individuals continue to form attitudes toward a destination during the travel experience based on positive or negative evaluations of attributes associated with the destination's image (Funk et al., 2009). The positive or negative evaluations of the destination image affect decision-making and influence subsequent attitudes and future behavioral intentions. According to Aaker (1991), brand image is also a psychological symbol in collective memory that can change and influence consumer behavior. However, Chen and Chen (2010) confirmed that the predominant influencing factors are perceived values and satisfaction, illuminating students' intentions to visit a destination. Therefore, this study hypothesized the following:

> H_4: *Student expectation has a positive relationship with the destination image.*

Social Media and Destination Image

Social media is essential in the digital era of an institution. It is an instrument to disseminate pieces of information, sharing opinions, experiences, and entertainment purposes for consumers (Chaffey, 2015). Notwithstanding the existence of numerous online sources, the dissemination of information from the preferred source is considered the most influential factor in travel-related decision-making. Effective marketing strategies require the influence of technology, such as social media, as a prominent tool to reach customers worldwide and obtain valuable feedback. The impact of social media offers various values to the institution, such as sharing educational information, enabling word-of-mouth communication (Chen et al., 2011b), increasing brand appeal (de Vries, et al., 2012), and creating social support for consumers (Ali, 2011; Ballantine & Stephenson, 2011). For the university to develop marketing strategies and attract more international students to mobility programs, it is essential to understand the reasons behind students' choices of where to study and the factors that influence their choices when they decide to study abroad. Previous researchers have consistently asserted that social media significantly and positively influence destination attitudes. According to Wegert (2010), numerous online information sources influence 81% of consumers, and 74% of those who receive such information consider it influential for deciding a destination. In the tourism industry, the attitude of tourists toward visiting a destination is a reliable indicator of their conscious choice of the image of that destination. Findings by Laroche (2012) claim that the influence of subjective norms on behavioral intention is essential to develop attitudes about using communication systems, such as social media and eWOM, to the known travel destination. Agreeing with Moogan (2011), social media and eWOM are essential in increasing students' intentions and creating a favorable image of the destination. Social networks are the second most trusted resource to accumulate enough information to make the right decision (Nielsen, 2012). Therefore, this study has developed the hypothesis provided below:

H_5: *Social media has a positive relationship with destination image.*

Self-Efficacy and Destination Image

Self-efficacy refers to a person's belief that an individual can achieve a certain level of performance in a given situation to accomplish a specific task (Bandura, 1997). When a person has a strong self-efficacy belief, they will assume high self-efficacy. Hence, they will be more willing to challenge themselves and they will often seek opportunities to challenge themselves more (Tal-Or et al., 2004). Self-efficacy is an essential aspect of human motivation, influencing the actions affecting one's life. Self-efficacy is about what a person can achieve with their abilities under certain circumstances and challenges. It can also influence a person's ability to learn and perform the task successfully (Lunenburg, 2011). Self-efficacy encompasses the process of setting personal goals and the selection process of how a person organizes and chooses their goal. Wang et al. (2015) examined the context of a destination and found that self-efficacy is a critical factor. In these scenarios, a person with prominent levels of self-efficacy envisions a successful outcome with positive support and guidance within the cognitive thinking process. Therefore, the following hypothesis was formulated in this study:

H_6: *Self-efficacy has a relationship with the destination image.*

Destination Image and International Students Intention

A study in international education confirms that one of the key factors influencing the choice of a country for international study relates to the quality of education in the partner country (Lee, 2014; Macready & Tucker, 2011). Reference is made to the Institute of International Education's report "Who goes where and why?" (Macready &Tucker, 2011). It provides an overview of global educational mobility and finds

that the availability of quality study opportunities offered by host countries is one of the most influential factors in choosing a destination country for mobility programs. Chen (2006) examined the factors influencing East Asian students to choose Canadian higher education institutions. She found that the quality of education in Canada and the country's academic reputation are the two key features of the country that attract students to research or study there. Chen's work is particularly relevant to this study because it deals exclusively with graduate students. As Wilkins and Huisman (2011) found, the quality of education is the most influential factor in international students' decisions to pursue education in the UK. Mpinganjira (2011) investigated the international students' reasons for choosing South Africa as a place to study and confirmed that the country's education quality was one of the determining factors for the students interviewed for their final year as part of a research project. Ajzen (1991) defined intention as an individual aiming at a subjective probability related to the two parties of the action. Behavioral expectations are also commonly used to construct intentions and are used to test the effects of recommending intention of mobility programs and destination attractiveness. Chen and Zimitat (2006) found that Taiwanese students' individual beliefs (attitudes or perceptions) determine destination and influence their recommendation intention to study in Australia. While family and peers influenced Taiwanese students' recommendation intentions to study in the US, they concluded that improving English proficiency and skills, better understanding of Western culture, and better job prospects are the main reasons for studying in Australia and the US (Chen & Zimitat, 2006). Therefore, this research aims to determine the influence of study destination image on international students' recommendation intention for mobility programs in Malaysian public universities. It is therefore hypothesized that:

> H_7: *Destination image has a positive relationship with intention toward mobility program.*

The Mediation Effects of Destination Image

Reports from the World Tourism Organization (WTO) state that tourism industries significantly contributed to the Asian national economy. By 2020, almost 1.5 billion international tourists will visit Asian countries (Chueng & Lee, 2012). However, previous research on educational tourism is still incomplete and indicates substantial gaps in the educational tourism industry (Lam, 2000). Due to the lack of research on attitudes toward education tourism, tourism marketing formulates the positive attitudes of tourists in selecting a particular destination for education tourism (Abodeeb et al., 2015). These form the perceptual interpretation of tourists' feelings, knowledge, and wisdom to select a particular destination (Pantano & Servidio, 2011). According to Cubillo et al. (2006), the image of a country or institution influences international students' decision to choose a particular destination. Various aspects, such as safety in the city, English-speaking country, international experience, university environment, facilities, visa application, and immigration prospects, are cited as decisive factors. Furthermore, the value of a university is based on its relationships with international students and the delivery of its services rather than its facilities and student income (Petruzzellis & Romanazzi, 2010). The concept of destination image influences an individual consumer's attitude when choosing a destination (Saraniemi, 2011). Previous research has found that the destination was significantly in the larger cities than the smaller cities. In addition, the host country and destination country's characteristics influence exchange students' intention to study abroad (Van Mol & Ekamper, 2016). According to Zeeshan (2013), political stability is one of the most crucial factors in choosing a destination country. Therefore, a country's image influences international students' choice of study destination, although the relative importance of image attributes may vary from person to person. While some prospective international students focus only on a country's educational reputation (image) and the status associated with study outcomes, most inform themselves extensively about exploring, living, and traveling in their potential host country. The result shows the importance of political stability and economic factors. Interestingly, the association with the ranking and reputation of a particular host university could be significant. Other institutional attributes, such as tuition fees, quality of education, availability of scholarships, and different

fields of study, were also identified. Recognizing the degree obtained in the home country is also an essential factor how international students select their host university (Muschter, 2015). Meanwhile, a significant correlation was found between an institution's advertising/marketing activities in social media. It creates an institutional image strongly influencing the student's choice of destination image as a mediating function (Saraniemi, 2011; Mazzarol & Soutar 2002, Zeeshan et al., 2013). Kao et al. (2007) highlighted recommendation intention with the consumer's loyalty. Wang et al. (2015) suggested self-efficacy as a critical driver, scrutinized the role of self-efficacy, and found a strong influence of self-efficacy on destination loyalty. This argument supports the role of self-efficacy on recommendation intention through destination image. Therefore, the following hypotheses were made in this study:

H8: Destination image mediates the relationship between students' expectations and their intention to participate in the mobility program.
H9: Destination image mediates the relationship between social media and students' intention to participate in the mobility program.
H10: Destination image mediates the relationship between students' self-efficacy and students' intention to undertake the mobility program.

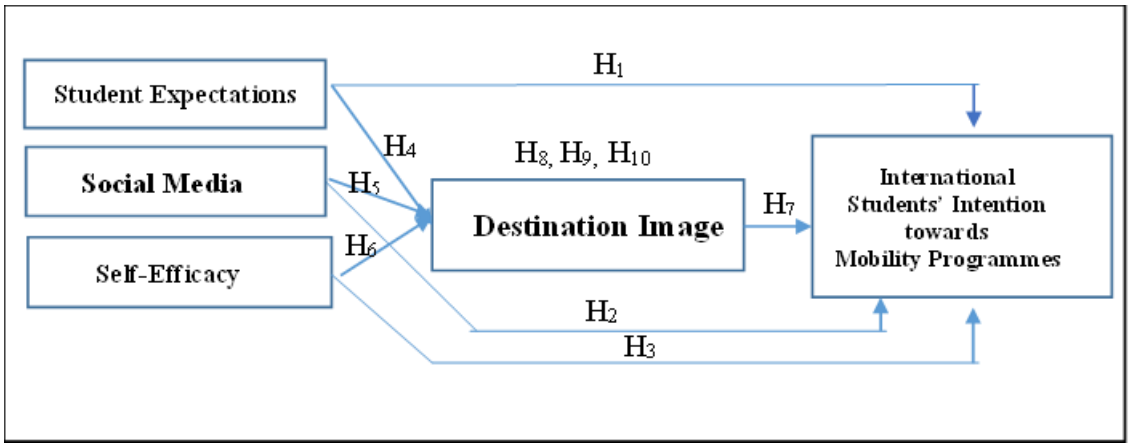

Fig. 1 Factors Influencing Student's Intention toward the Mobility Program

Methodology

The study distributed 400 questionnaires to five public universities: Universiti Malaya (UM), Universiti Sains Malaysia (USM), Universiti Teknologi Melaka Malaysia (UTeM), Universiti Malaysia Sabah (UMS), and Universiti Malaysia Terengganu (UMT). Three hundred and nine questionnaires were used for the analysis. Among the twenty public universities, this study selected these five institutions because of the high enrolment in their mobility programs. Second, the selected universities also represent the twenty public universities in Malaysia based on the regions where the universities are located. The universities are located in five states, divided into four regions in West Malaysia: the Northern Region, the Central Region, the Southern Region, the Eastern Peninsula, and one in Sabah, East Malaysia. The unit of analysis is the international students participating in the mobility program in Malaysian public universities from 2018 to 2019. A purposive sampling technique was used to select the sample from five public universities in Malaysia. Partial least square (PLS) was used to statistically analyze the data using PLS – structural equation modeling approach. The results indicated that the number of response rates from UM is 109 (35.3%) and 38 (12.3%) respondents from UMT. From the outcomes, UM has more respondents than UMT, the lowest among the selected universities in this survey, and international students prefer to stay in a bigger city. Table 1 details about response rate of selected universities.

Table 1. Responses Rate from Selected Universities (N = 309)

University Name	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Universiti Malaya	109	35.3
Universiti Sains Malaysia	66	21.3
Universiti Teknologi Melaka Malaysia	54	17.5
Universiti Malaysia Sabah	42	13.6
Universiti Malaysia Terengganu	38	12.3
Total	**309**	**100**

Following the type of mobility program and the duration of the program, most (52.8%) students on exchange programs were enrolled in Malaysian universities, followed by short-term programs (23.6%) and programs lasting 4–6 months (42.1%). Half of the respondents (49.8%) visited Malaysian universities as part of a collaboration signed under a Memorandum of Understanding, as shown in Table 2.

Table 2. Types of Mobility Programs and Collaborations (N = 309)

	Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Type of Mobility Program	Short-Term Programs	73	23.6
	Student Exchange Program	163	52.8
	Internship	6	1.9
	Research Attachment	67	21.7
Duration of the Mobility Program	1–2 weeks	20	6.5
	3–4 weeks	25	8.1
	1–3 months	62	20.1
	4–6 months	130	42.1
	7–10 months	7	2.3
	10–12 months	65	21.0
Types of Collaborations	Memorandum of Understanding (MoU)	154	49.8
	Memorandum of Agreement (MoA)	72	23.3
	Others	83	26.9

Regarding the regions of origin of the respondents, most (41.75%) of the respondents belong to the Southeast Asian region, followed by Oceania (20.71%) and the Middle East (14.24%) as shown in Table 3.

Table 3. Region of Origin (N = 309)

Region (Country)	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Oceania (Australia, Japan, South Korea)	64	20.71
Europe (Belgium, Finland, France, Germany, Netherlands, Spain)	32	10.36
Southeast Asia & China (Brunei Darulsalam, Cambodia, Indonesia, Myanmar, Thailand, Vietnam, China)	129	41.75
South Asia (India, Pakistan)	13	4.21
Middle East (Iran, Iraq, Palestine, Saudi Arabia, Jordan, UAE, Yemen)	44	14.24
Central Asia (Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan)	8	2.59
Africa (Nigeria, Somalia, Sudan)	18	5.83
America (USA)	1	0.32

Findings and Discussion

We used PLS modeling using the Smart PLS 3.2.8 version (Ringle et al., 2015) as the statistical tool to examine the measurement and structural model as it does not require a normality assumption, and survey research is not normally distributed (Chin et al., 2003).

Measurement Model

We followed the suggestions of Anderson and Gerbing (1988) to test the model developed using a two-step approach. First, we tested the measurement model to test the validity and reliability of the instruments used following the guidelines of Hair et al. (2019) and Ramayah et al. (2018), then we ran the structural model to test the hypothesis developed. For the measurement model, we assessed the loadings, the average variance extracted (AVE), and the composite reliability (CR). The loading values, AVE, and CR should be ≥ 0.5, ≥ 0.5, and ≥ 0.7, respectively. As shown in Table 4, all the AVEs are higher than 0.5, and all the CRs are higher than 0.7. The loadings were also acceptable, with only one or two loadings less than 0.708 (Hair et al., 2019).

Table 4. Measurement Model for the First Order Constructs

First Order Construct	Item	Loading	*CR*	*AVE*
Student Expectation	SE1	0.845	0.931	0.693
	SE2	0.860		
	SE3	0.847		
	SE4	0.796		
	SE5	0.824		
	SE6	0.821		
Social Media	SM1	0.840	0.943	0.768
	SM2	0.894		
	SM3	0.902		
	SM4	0.886		
	SM5	0.861		
Self-efficacy	SY1	0.769	0.919	0.654
	SY2	0.803		
	SY3	0.868		
	SY4	0.845		
	SY5	0.820		
	SY6	0.738		
Destination Image	D11	0.839	0.939	0.719
	D12	0.838		
	D13	0.880		
	D14	0.856		
	D15	0.868		
	D16	0.806		
Intention	11	0.901	0.924	0.802
	12	0.907		
	13	0.877		

CR = Composite Reliability, *AVE* = Average Variance Extracted

Then, in step 2, we assessed the discriminant validity using the HTMT criterion suggested by Henseler et al. (2015) and updated by Franke and Sarstedt (2019). The HTMT values should be ≤0.85 the stricter criterion, and the moderately lenient criterion should be ≤0.90. As shown in Table 5, the values of HTMT were all lower than the stricter criterion of ≤0.85. As such, we can conclude that the respondents understood that the five constructs are distinct. Taken together, these validity tests have shown that the measurement items are both valid and reliable.

Table 5. Discriminant Validity (HTMT)

		1	2	3	4	5
1	Destination Image					
2	Intention	0.620				
3	Student Expectations	0.725	0.424			
4	Social Media	0.640	0.460	0.652		
5	Self-efficacy	0.707	0.550	0.623	0.794	

Structural Model

In the research model, the next step assesses the structural model by using the path coefficient with the bootstrapping technique, which has been utilized for 309 samples. The significance of the path coefficient was determined by comparing the t-values to the critical t-values for significance levels of 0.05 and 0.01. Bootstrapping was used to compute the empirical t-value for the significance of path coefficients using 1,000 subsamples, as Hair Jr. et al. (2016 recommended). Table 3 tabulates the path coefficients obtained from the analysis to assess the statistical significance of the structural model. The present study evaluates the significant effects stated in the research model. The results of the data analysis revealed that student expectation has no relationship with intention, as $\beta = -0.049$ at $p > 0.05$; therefore, H_1 was unsupported. Social media also has no relationship with recommendation intention, as $\beta = 0.021$ at $p > 0.05$. Thus, H_2 was unsupported. The data analysis results reveal that self-efficacy has a positive influence on recommendation intention, as $\beta = 0.238$ at $p < 0.01$. Therefore, H_3 was supported. Student expectation has a positive influence on destination image, as $\beta = 0.410$ at $p < 0.01$. Thus, H_4 was also supported. Social media was found unrelated to the destination image, as $\beta = 0.094$ at $p > 0.05$. Therefore, H_5 was unsupported. Self-efficacy is positively related to the destination image, as $\beta = 0.352$ at $p < 0.01$. Therefore, H_6 was supported**.** The H_7 was also supported as a destination image with a positive influence on the intention, as $\beta = 0.424$ at $p < 0.01$. Table 6 summarizes the criteria the study used to test the hypotheses we have developed.

Table 6. Hypothesis Testing Direct Effects

Hypothesis	Relationship	Beta	SE	t-value	p-value	Decision
H_1	SE -> RI	−0.049	0.077	0.642	0.260	Not supported
H_2	SM -> RI	0.021	0.088	0.238	0.406	Not supported
H_3	SEF -> RI	0.238	0.097	2.459**	0.007	Supported
H_4	SE -> DI	0.410	0.066	6.183***	0.000	Supported
H_5	SM -> DI	0.094	0.063	1.489	0.068	Not supported
H_6	SEF -> DI	0.352	0.064	5.517***	0.000	Supported
H_7	DI -> I	0.424	0.096	4.418***	0.000	Supported

Note: *p < 0.05(t > 1.645); **p < 0.01(t > 2.33); ***p < 0.001(t > 3.33) one tailed,
SE: Student Expectation, SM: Social Media, SEF: Self-Efficacy, DI: Destination Image, I: **Intention**

To test the mediation hypotheses, we followed Ramayah et al.'s (2018) suggestions for bootstrapping the indirect effect. If the confidence interval does not straddle a 0, we can

conclude that there is significant mediation. As shown in Table 7, the specific indirect effect analysis shows that destination image mediates the relationship between student expectation and recommendation intention with β = 0.174, confidence interval (CI) 0.084 and Unit Interval (UI) 0.277. Thus, H_8 was supported. The destination image does not correlate the relationship between social media and recommendation intention at β = 0.040, LL −0.009 and (UL) 0.107. Thus, H_9 was unsupportive. The results found that destination image correlates with the relationship between self-efficacy and recommendation intention at β = 0.149, LL 0.071 and (UL) 0.243. Therefore, H10 was also supported.

Table 7. Hypothesis Testing Indirect Effects

	Relationship	Beta	SE	t- value	p-value	Confidence Interval LL 2.5%	Confidence Interval UL 97.5%	Decision
H_8	SE->DI->I	0.174	0.05	**3.502*** **	0.000	0.084	0.277	Supported
H_9	SM ->DI->I	0.040	0.029	1.356	0.175	0.009	0.107	Not Supported
H10	SEF -> RI	0.149	0.045	**3.323** **	0.001	0.071	0.243	Supported

Note: *p < 0.05(t > 1.645); **p < 0.01(t > 2.33); ***p < 0.001(t > 3.33) one tailed,
SE: Student Expectation, SM: Social Media, SEF: Self-Efficacy, DI: Destination Image, I: Intention

Conclusion

To conclude, the research framework (Figure 1) has ten research hypotheses (including the mediating hypotheses) emanating from it, and student expectations in this research framework are perceived to exert a direct or indirect positive impact on international program mobility intentions. Meanwhile, the destination image could mediate the relationship between student expectation, self-efficacy, and international mobility program intention. Furthermore, international mobility students have different perceptions of the destination regarding safety and security, culture, environment, cost, and infrastructure. The findings also revealed that personal beliefs and recommendations from family, friends, and professionals' advice also influence students' expectations about destination image. Furthermore, the facilities and environment around the university also influence their decision to choose a host university. Therefore, student expectations and self-efficacy play a significant role in predicting the level of international mobility program intention. Hence, failure to understand students' expectations and students' self-efficacy may hinder marketing outcomes attracting international students (i.e., intention for an international mobility program). Evidently, students' expectations are also important (Ritchie & Crouch, 2003; Jupiter et al., 2017). Thus, students with favorable expectations toward a destination image that matches their self-efficacy are more likely to have the intention to participate in international mobility programs. Therefore, the framework has the potential to offer significant insights into marketing theory by emphasizing interactions among various psychological and behavioral variables.

Suggestions for Future Research

The study suggests that future research should include a triangulation of data collection. This includes using a qualitative instead of a quantitative approach since qualitative research involves understanding participants' internal feelings, opinions, and experiences, and interpreting their actions through interviewing the participants. With this approach, future studies can analyze the student's expectations, use of social media, self-efficacy, and destination image influencing their choice of the student mobility program.

Co-Author Contribution

The authors confirmed no conflict of interest in this article. Author 1 conducted the fieldwork and prepared the literature review. Author 2 oversight the research methodology and provided the statistical analysis and interpretation of the results. Author 3 proofread and edited the study while simultaneously providing insight to the study.

References

Aaker, D. A. (1991). *Managing brand equity: Capitalizing on the value of a brand name*. The Free Press.

Abodeeb, J., Wilson, E., & Moyle, B. D. (2015). Shaping destination image and identity: Insights for Arab

Tourism at the Gold Coast, Australia. *International Journal of Culture, Tourism and Hospitality Research, 9*(1), 6-21.

Agrey, L., & Lampadan, N. (2014). Determinant factors contributing to student choice in selecting a university. *Journal of Education and Human Development, 3*(2), *391-404*

Ajzen, I. (1991). The theory of planned behavior. *Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Process*, *50*(2), 179-211.

Ali, H. (2011). Exchanging value within individuals' networks: Social support implications for health marketers. *Journal of Marketing Management, 27*(3/4), 316-335.

Amaruddin, H. I., & Rosli, S. H. (2022). An overview of utilizing short video on social media platform as T&L tool during ODL: case study of diploma civil engineering students. *GADING (Online). Journal of Social Sciences*, *25*(3), 41-49.

Anderson, J. C., & Gerbing, D. W. (1988). Structural equation modeling in practice: A review and recommended two-step approach. *Psychological Bulletin, 103*(3), 411-423.

Ballantine, P. W., & Stephenson, R. J. (2011) Help me, I'm fat! Social support in online weight loss networks. *Journal of Consumer Behaviour, 10*(6), 332-337.

Bandura, A. (1997). *Self-efficacy: The exercise of control*.

Bandura, A., Barbaranelli, C., Caprara, G. V., & Pastorelli, C. (1996). Multifaceted impact of self-efficacy beliefs on academic functioning. *Child Development, 67*(3), 1206-1222.

Chaffey, D. (2015). *Digital business and e-commerce management*.

Chen, C., & Chen, F. (2010). Experience quality, perceived value, satisfaction, and behavioral intentions for heritage tourists. *Tourism Management, 31*, 29-35.

Chen, C. H., & Zimitat, C. (2006). Understanding Taiwanese students' decision-making factors regarding Australian International Higher Education. *International Journal of Educational Management, 20*(2), 91-100.

Chen, Y., Fay, S., & Wang, Q. (2011). The role of marketing in social media: How online consumer reviews evolve. *Journal of Interactive Marketing, 25*(2), 85-94.

Cheung, C. M., & Lee, M. K. (2012). What drives consumers to spread the electronic word of mouth in online consumer-opinion platforms. *Decis. Support Syst, 53*(1), 218–225.

Cokgezen, M. (2012). *Determinants of university choice: A study on economics departments in Turkey*.

De Vries, L., Gensler, S., & Leeflang, E. S. H. (2012). Popularity of brand posts on brand fan pages: An investigation of the effects of social media marketing. *Journal of Interactive Marketing, 26*(2), 83-91.

Franke, G., & Sarstedt, M. (2019). Heuristics versus statistics in discriminant validity testing: A comparison of four procedures. *Internet Research*, 29(3), 430-447.

Funk, D. C., Alexandris, K., & Ping Y. (2009). To go or stay home and watch: Exploring the balance between motives and perceived constraints for major events: A case study of the 2008 Beijing Olympic Games. *International Journal of Tourism Research, 11*(1), 41–53.

Gülbahar, Y., & Center, D. E. (2014). Current state of usage of social media for education: Case of Turkey. *Journal of Social Media Studies, 1*(1), 53-69.

Hair, J., Risher, J., Sarstedt, M., & Ringle, C. (2019). When to use and how to report the results of PLS- SEM. *European Business Review*, *31*(1), 2-24. 10.1108/EBR-11-2018-0203

Ham, L., & Hayduk, S. (2003). Gaining a competitive advantage in higher education: Analysing the gap between expectations and perceptions of service quality. *International Journal of Value-Based Management, 16*, 223-242.

Henseler, J., Ringle, C., & Sarstedt, M. (2015). A new criterion for assessing discriminant validity in variance-based structural equation modeling. *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science, 43*(1), 115-135.

Ishak, N., & Jamian, L. S (2021). Self-efficacy level of lecturers in a centre of foundation studies, Selangor, Malaysia. *GADING (Online) Journal for Social Sciences*, Vol 24 (01)

Jupiter, H., Othman, I. W., Suki, N. M., Yusoff, M. S., Awang, H., & Razak, R. A. (2017). Factors influencing the international student's decision to choose study destination abroad. *Labuan e-Journal of Muamalat and Society (LJMS), 11(*2017), 86-97. Available at https://jurcon.ums.edu.my/ojums/index.php/ LJMS/article/view/728/481

Kao, Y. F., Huang, L. S., & Yang, M. H. (2007). Effects of experiential elements on experiential satisfaction and loyalty intentions: A case study of the super basketball league in Taiwan. *International Journal of Revenue Management, 1*(1), 79-96.

Keling, S. B. A. (2006). Institutional factors are attracting students to Malaysian institutions of higher learning. *International Review of Business Research Papers, 2*(1), 46-64.

Kusumawati, A. (2013). A qualitative study of the factors influencing student choice: The case of public universities in Indonesia. *Journal of Basic and Applied Scientific Research, 3*(1), 314-327.

Lam, H. X. (2000). Challenges and constraints of hospitality and tourism education in China. *International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management, 12*(5), 291-295.

Laroche, M., Habibi, M. R., Richard, M. O., & Sankaranarayanan, R. (2012). The effects of social media- based brand communities on brand community markers, value creation practices, brand trust, and brand loyalty. *Computers in Human Behavior, 28(5),* 1755-1767.

Lee, C.-F. (2014). An investigation of factors determining the study abroad destination choice. *Journal of Studies in International Education, 18*(4), 362–381.

Lunenburg, C. F. (2011). Self-efficacy in the workplace: Implications for motivation and performance. *International Journal of Management, Business, and Administration, 14*(1), 1-6.

Lunenburg, C. F. (2011). Self-efficacy in the workplace: Implications for motivation and performance.*International Journal of Management, Business, and Administration, 14*(1), 1-6.

Macready, C., & Tucker, C. (2011). *Who goes where and why? An overview and analysis of global education mobility*. New York: Institute of International Education.

Mazzarol, T., & Soutar, G. N. (2002). "Push-pull" factors are influencing international student destination choice. *International Journal of Educational Management, 16*(2), 82-90.

Ming, J., & Kee, S. (2010). Institutional factors influencing students' college choice the decision in Malaysia: A conceptual framework. *International Journal of Business and Social Science, 1*(3), 53-58.

Moogan, Y. J. (2011): Can a higher education institution's marketing strategy improve the student-institution match?. *International Journal of Educational Management, 25*(6), 570-589.

Morgan, M. (2014). Study expectations of 1st/2nd generation STEM postgraduate taught students. *Quality Assurance in Education, 22*(2), 169-184. doi.org/10.1108/QAE-03-2013-0014.

Mpinganjira, M. (2011). Retaining Africa's talent: The role of Africa's higher education. *International Journal of Emerging Markets, 6*(2), 168-179.

Muschter, S. (2015). European students' decision-making processes when choosing to study in Australia and their travel behaviour during their stay (Ph.D. thesis, Southern Cross University).

Nielsen. (2012*).* Global consumers' trust in "earned" advertising grows in importance. Retrieved from http://www.nielsen.com/us/en/press-room/2012/nielsen-global-consumers-trust-in-earned-advertising-grow.

Pantano, E., & Servidio, R. (2011). An exploratory study of the role of pervasive environments for the promotion of tourism destinations. *Journal of Hospitality and Tourism Technology, 2*(1), 50-65. Petruzzellis, L., & Romanazzi, S. (2010). Educational value: How students choose university: Evidence from an Italian university. *International Journal of Educational Management, 24*(2), 139-158.

Pimpa, N. (2004). The relationship between Thai student's choices of international education and their families. *International Education Journal, 5*(3), 352-359.

Ramayah, T., Cheah, J., Chuah, F., Ting, H., & Memon, M. A. (2018). Partial least squares structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM) using SmartPLS 3.0: an updated guide and practical guide to statistical analysis (2nd ed.). Pearson.

Ringle, C. M., Wende, S., & Becker, J.-M. (2015). "SmartPLS 3." Boenningstedt: SmartPLS GmbH, http://www.smartpls.com

Ritchie, J. R. B., & Crouch, G. I. (2003). The competitive destination, a sustainable tourism perspective.CABI Publishing.

Salami, S. O. (2010). Emotional intelligence, self-efficacy, psychological wellbeing and students attitudes: Implications for quality. *European Journal of Educational Studies, 2*(3), 247-257.

Saraniemi, S. (2011). From destination image building to identity-based branding. *International Journal of Culture, Tourism and Hospitality Research, 5*(3), 247-254.

Smith, R. A., & Khawaja, N. G. (2011). A review of the acculturation experiences of international students. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations, 35*(6), 699-713.

Swain, J., & Hammond, C. (2011). The motivations and outcomes of studying for part-time mature students in higher education. *International Journal of Lifelong Education, 30*(5), 591-612.

Tal-or, N., Boninger, D. S., & Gleicher, F. (2004). On becoming what we might have been: Counterfactual thinking and self-efficacy. Self and Identity, 3(1), 5-26.

Van Mol, C., & Ekamper, P. (2016). Destination cities of European exchange students. Geografisk Tidsskrift-Danish Journal of Geography, 116(1), 85-91.

Wæraas, A., & Byrkjeflot, H. (2012). Public sector organizations and reputation management: Five problems. International Public Management Journal, 15(2), 186-206.

Wang, S., & Xu, H. (2015). Influence of place-based senses of distinctiveness, continuity, self-esteem, and self-efficacy on residents' attitudes toward tourism. Tourism Management, 47, 241-250.

Wankel, C. (2009). Management education using social media. Organization Management Journal, 6.

Wegert, T. (2010). Reach your customers while social media peaks. Retrieved from www.clickz.com/clickz/column/1699974/reach-your-customers-while-social-media-peaks

Wilkins, S., & Huisman, J. (2011). International student destination choice: The influence of home campus experience on the decision to consider branch campuses. Journal of Marketing for Higher Education, 21(1), 61-83.

Zeeshan, M., Sabbar, S. D., Bashir, S., & Hussain, R. I. (2013). Foreign students' motivation for studying in Malaysia. International Journal of Asian Social Science, 3(3), 833-846.

Appendix 1

Sources: Planning, Research, and Policy Coordination Division, Higher Education Data Unit, MoE, 2018.

Appendix 2

List of selected public universities	**State**	**Region**	**Mobility Program Enrolment**			**Total**
			2015	2016	2017	
UM	Kuala Lumpur	Center	601	1,251	2,122	3,974
USM	Penang	Northern	363	503	727	1,593
UTeM	Melaka	South	193	302	498	993
UMS	Sabah	East Malaysia	78	140	225	443
UMT	Terengganu	East Peninsular	68	220	113	401
Grand Total			**1,303**	**2,416**	**3,685**	**7,404**

Source: Author consolidated the data obtained from MoE, 2018.