

# Factors Affecting Students' Perceptions of Participation in the International Student Exchange Program in Business Administration and Cultural Studies at the Faculty of Management Science, Suan Sunandha Rajabhat University

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## Abstract

This study investigated the factors affecting students' perceptions of participation in the International Student Exchange Program in Business Administration and Cultural Studies at the Faculty of Management Science, Suan Sunandha Rajabhat University. A quantitative survey was conducted with 150 undergraduate students selected through stratified random sampling. The questionnaire measured personal motivation, perceived benefits, institutional support, cultural readiness, and perceived barriers. Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics and multiple regression analysis. Results revealed that the factors collectively explained 61% of the variance in students' perceptions of participation. Personal motivation was the strongest positive predictor, followed by perceived benefits, institutional support, and cultural readiness, while perceived barriers negatively influenced students' perceptions. The findings emphasize the importance of enhancing motivation, institutional support, and cultural readiness while mitigating barriers to improve student engagement in international exchange programs.

**Keywords:** Student perceptions, International exchange program, Participation factors, Cultural studies, Institutional support

## 1. Introduction

### 1.1 Principles and Rationale

In today's globalized educational landscape, international student exchange programs have emerged as an essential strategy for promoting cross-cultural understanding, enhancing academic competencies, and preparing students for careers in an increasingly interconnected world (Altbach & Knight, 2007; Knight, 2015). These programs offer students opportunities to study abroad for a semester or an academic year, exposing them to different academic systems, cultural contexts, and social environments. Participation in international exchange programs has been associated with the development of global competencies, intercultural communication skills, and professional adaptability (De Wit, 2020; Jones, 2013).

At the Faculty of Management Science, Suan Sunandha Rajabhat University, the International Student Exchange Program in Business Administration and Cultural Studies

provides selected students with the opportunity to study at partner universities abroad. This program is designed not only to strengthen students' academic knowledge and practical skills but also to foster an appreciation for cultural diversity and global perspectives (Suan Sunandha Rajabhat University, 2022). However, students' participation in such programs is influenced by multiple factors, including personal motivation, perceived benefits, cultural readiness, financial resources, and institutional support (Chen, 2016; Lee, 2019; Muensank & Sawaengkun, 2025).

Previous studies have emphasized that students' perceptions of participation are critical in determining the effectiveness and sustainability of international exchange programs. Positive perceptions often correlate with higher engagement, greater learning outcomes, and stronger intention to participate in future programs (Luo & Jamieson-Drake, 2015; Wilkins & Huisman, 2011). Conversely, barriers such as financial constraints, lack of information, or insufficient institutional support can diminish students' willingness to participate (Altbach & Knight, 2007; Lee, 2019). Understanding these perceptions can therefore inform program design, policy decisions, and targeted interventions aimed at increasing student engagement and maximizing program benefits.

Despite the recognized importance of international exchange programs, empirical studies focusing on students' perceptions in the Thai higher education context remain limited. Most research has examined academic outcomes or intercultural competency gains, with less attention given to the factors that affect students' perceptions and willingness to participate in exchange programs (De Wit, 2020; Jones, 2013). Addressing this gap, the present study investigates the factors influencing students' perceptions of participation in the International Student Exchange Program in Business Administration and Cultural Studies at the Faculty of Management Science, Suan Sunandha Rajabhat University. Insights from this research are expected to guide program administrators and policymakers in enhancing program attractiveness, accessibility, and effectiveness.

### **1.2 Research Objective**

The specific objectives of the study are as follows:

1. To examine the influence of personal motivation on students' perceptions of participation in the international exchange program.
2. To assess the effect of perceived benefits—including academic, cultural, and professional gains on students' perceptions of participation.
3. To investigate the impact of institutional support, such as guidance from faculty, financial assistance, and program resources, on students' perceptions of participation.

## **2. Literature Review**

### **2.1 Motivation and Expectancy-Value Factors**

Motivation is widely recognized as a key determinant of students' willingness to participate in study-abroad programs. According to expectancy-value theory, students' beliefs about their ability to succeed (expectancy) and the perceived value (benefits minus costs) of participating strongly influence their engagement. A recent study confirms that expectancy (self-efficacy) and perceived benefits positively predict student behavioral and cognitive engagement, while perceived emotional cost (e.g., stress, language anxiety) can deter participation.

## **2.2 Perceived Benefits: Personal, Academic, and Career Gains**

One of the most significant factors shaping students' perceptions of participation is the expected benefit from the exchange. Research has shown that students commonly perceive personal growth, intercultural competence, and enhanced academic or career opportunities as key gains from studying abroad (Bandyopadhyay & Bandyopadhyay, 2015). In the specific context of Thai students, recent survey data indicate that personal development (such as experiencing another culture and improving language ability) and career development are among the top motivations for considering exchange programs. These benefits strengthen students' perceived value of taking part in international mobility.

## **2.3 Institutional Support and Program Structure**

Institutional support—including faculty encouragement, financial aid, curricula alignment, and administrative backing—plays a crucial role in facilitating students' participation (Loberg, 2012). Qualitative research involving study-abroad professionals suggests that faculty support and integration of study-abroad into academic programs are more influential than financial aid alone in encouraging participation. Moreover, at Burapha University in Thailand, research shows that culture, affordability, and institutional services are among the main factors influencing decisions to participate in exchange programs. Institutional structures that provide guidance, information, and curriculum relevance can therefore shape positive student perceptions.

## **2.4 Intercultural Competence and Cultural Readiness**

Intercultural competency—or readiness to interact and adapt across cultures—is another significant factor affecting students' perceptions. Research in educational psychology underscores that intercultural sensitivity, knowledge, and flexibility form part of intercultural competence, which can be developed through study-abroad experiences and structured reflection (Leung et al., as cited in *European Journal of Psychology of Education*). A more recent STEM-education study found that semester-long mobility programs with structured curricula and mentorship contribute to meaningful intercultural learning gains, such as increased empathy, self-awareness, and adaptability. These findings suggest that students who feel more culturally prepared or competent are likelier to view participation positively.

## **2.5 Barriers: Cost, Safety, and Perceived Risk**

Despite the perceived benefits, barriers remain a significant deterrent. Financial cost is frequently cited as the most salient constraint: many students express that they would be more willing to study abroad if financial support or scholarships were available (Student Expectancy and Barriers to Study Abroad). Additional concerns include safety, social costs, academic disruption, and lack of information (De Winter, Van Mol, & De Valk, as cited in mobility research). For students at younger or less globally connected institutions, these barriers may be exacerbated by limited funding, structural constraints, and institutional capacity.

## **2.6 Cultural Experiences, Empathy, and Long-Term Engagement**

Beyond initial decision-making, students' experiences during and after exchange can reshape their perceptions. For example, research on Japanese students returning from abroad shows that empathy, social interaction, and re-categorization (i.e., seeing international peers as equals) emerged as critical outcomes of their study-abroad experiences. These interpersonal

and identity-based components suggest that students' perceptions of participation are not static but evolve with experience.

### 3. Research Methodology

This study employed a quantitative research design using a cross-sectional survey approach to examine the factors affecting students' perceptions of participation in the International Student Exchange Program in Business Administration and Cultural Studies at the Faculty of Management Science, Suan Sunandha Rajabhat University. Quantitative research is suitable for this study because it allows for the systematic collection and statistical analysis of numerical data to identify relationships between independent variables (e.g., motivation, perceived benefits, institutional support, cultural readiness) and the dependent variable (students' perceptions of participation).

#### 3.1 Population and Sample

The population of this study included all undergraduate students enrolled in the Faculty of Management Science who were eligible or had previously participated in the International Student Exchange Program. A sample of 150 students was selected using stratified random sampling to ensure representation across academic programs (Business Administration and Cultural Studies), year of study, and prior experience with international exchange programs. Stratified sampling helps reduce sampling bias and ensures that key subgroups are proportionally represented.

#### 3.2 Research Instrument

Data were collected using a structured questionnaire developed based on existing literature and validated instruments used in previous studies on study abroad participation and student perceptions (Bandyopadhyay & Bandyopadhyay, 2015; Chen, 2016). The questionnaire consisted of two parts:

*Demographic information:* Gender, age, academic program, year of study, and prior international experience.

*Factors affecting perceptions:* Items measuring personal motivation, perceived benefits, institutional support, cultural readiness, and barriers to participation. A 5-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree) was employed to measure responses.

The questionnaire was reviewed by three experts in international education and educational management for content validity. A pilot test was conducted with 20 students to assess reliability, and Cronbach's alpha coefficients for each factor ranged from 0.82 to 0.91, indicating high internal consistency (Hair et al., 2019).

#### 3.3 Data Collection

Data were collected in two phases. First, online and printed questionnaires were distributed to students through faculty communication channels. Second, follow-up reminders were sent to maximize the response rate. Participation was voluntary, and all responses were kept anonymous to ensure confidentiality.

### 3.4 Data Analysis

Collected data were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics. Descriptive statistics (mean, standard deviation, frequency, and percentage) were used to summarize demographic data and item responses. Multiple regression analysis was conducted to determine the influence of independent variables (motivation, perceived benefits, institutional support, cultural readiness, barriers) on the dependent variable (students' perceptions of participation) (Hair et al., 2019). Significance was determined at  $p < 0.05$ .

## 4. Results

A total of 150 students participated in the study. The demographic breakdown is presented in Table 1. Among the participants, 85 were female (56.7%) and 65 were male (43.3%). Most students were aged 19–21 years (48%), followed by 22–24 years (37%), and 25–27 years (15%). Academic programs included Business Administration (60%), Cultural Studies (30%), and dual majors (10%). Prior participation in international programs was reported by 40% of respondents, while 60% had no prior experience.

### 4.1 Descriptive Statistics of Key Factors

The mean and standard deviation for the five independent variables: personal motivation, perceived benefits, institutional support, cultural readiness, and perceived barriers was presented in Table 2.

**Table 1 Descriptive Statistics of Key Variables**

Key Variables	Mean	SD
Personal Motivation	4.12	0.58
Perceived Benefits	4.05	0.61
Institutional Support	3.92	0.65
Cultural Readiness	3.88	0.62
Perceived Barriers	2.81	0.70

Overall, respondents reported moderate to high levels of personal motivation (Mean = 4.12, SD = 0.58) and perceived benefits (Mean = 4.05, SD = 0.61). Institutional support (Mean = 3.92, SD = 0.65) and cultural readiness (Mean = 3.88, SD = 0.62) were slightly lower but still positive. Perceived barriers were moderate (Mean = 2.81, SD = 0.70), indicating some concerns regarding financial, social, and academic challenges.

### 4.2 Multiple Regression Analysis

A multiple regression analysis was conducted to examine the influence of the independent variables on students' perceptions of participation in the exchange program. Table 3 summarizes the regression results.

**Table 2 Multiple Regression Results Predicting Students' Perceptions of Participation**

Predictor	B	SE	$\beta$	t	p
Personal Motivation	0.35	0.08	0.32	4.38	<.001
Perceived Benefits	0.29	0.09	0.27	3.22	.002
Institutional Support	0.25	0.08	0.23	3.13	.003
Cultural Readiness	0.21	0.07	0.19	2.95	.004

Predictor	B	SE	$\beta$	t	p
Perceived Barriers	-0.18	0.06	-0.16	-2.80	.006

$R^2 = 0.61$ ,  $F(5,144) = 45.23$ ,  $p < .001$

The results indicate that the model explained 61% of the variance in students' perceptions of participation ( $R^2 = 0.61$ ,  $F = 45.23$ ,  $p < .001$ ). Personal motivation was the strongest positive predictor ( $\beta = 0.32$ ,  $p < .001$ ), followed by perceived benefits ( $\beta = 0.27$ ,  $p = .002$ ), institutional support ( $\beta = 0.23$ ,  $p = .003$ ), and cultural readiness ( $\beta = 0.19$ ,  $p = .004$ ). Perceived barriers negatively influenced perceptions ( $\beta = -0.16$ ,  $p = .006$ ), suggesting that higher perceived obstacles reduce students' likelihood of participation.

In summary, these results indicate that students' perceptions of participation in the International Student Exchange Program are primarily influenced by internal motivational factors and the perceived advantages of the program. Institutional support and cultural readiness further enhance students' confidence and willingness to participate. Conversely, barriers such as financial concerns, academic workload, and social anxieties act as deterrents, consistent with prior research on study abroad participation. Overall, the findings underscore the importance of holistic program design, which combines motivational enhancement, institutional guidance, cultural preparation, and barrier reduction to increase student engagement in international exchange programs.

## 5. Conclusion

The study aimed to examine the factors affecting students' perceptions of participation in the International Student Exchange Program in Business Administration and Cultural Studies at the Faculty of Management Science, Suan Sunandha Rajabhat University. The results indicate that personal motivation, perceived benefits, institutional support, cultural readiness, and perceived barriers significantly influence students' perceptions and willingness to participate in international exchange programs. Among these factors, personal motivation emerged as the strongest predictor, highlighting the importance of internal drive and goal orientation in decision-making (Altbach & Knight, 2007; Chen, 2016).

Perceived benefits—including academic, cultural, and career gains—positively impacted students' perceptions, supporting prior findings that students are more likely to engage in programs that promise tangible personal and professional development (Bandyopadhyay & Bandyopadhyay, 2015; Luo & Jamieson-Drake, 2015). Institutional support, such as guidance from faculty, financial assistance, and program resources, further facilitated positive perceptions, indicating that universities play a crucial role in enabling student participation (Wilkins & Huisman, 2011). Cultural readiness also contributed positively, suggesting that students with higher intercultural competence feel more confident and prepared to engage in exchange activities (De Wit, 2020; Knight, 2015).

Conversely, perceived barriers—including financial, social, and academic challenges—negatively affected students' perceptions, demonstrating that obstacles can deter participation even among motivated students. These findings underscore the necessity for universities to develop holistic strategies that combine motivation enhancement, structured institutional support, cultural preparation, and barrier reduction to maximize student engagement in international programs.

In conclusion, promoting participation in international student exchange programs requires a multifaceted approach that addresses both internal student factors and external institutional conditions, ensuring that students perceive the program as both beneficial and achievable.

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