

## Curriculum Quality, Process Innovation, School Reputation, and Perceived Value Affecting the Loyalty of Chinese Higher Education Students in Thailand

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### Abstract

*This qualitative case study investigates the factors influencing the loyalty of Chinese higher education students in Thailand, focusing on curriculum quality, process innovation, institution reputation, and perceived value. Through in-depth interviews of 30 selected students and content analysis of the transcripts, the study uncovered the nuanced perspectives of Chinese students and revealed the significance of these factors in shaping their loyalty. Findings highlighted the importance of curriculum quality, faculty reputation, and support services in influencing perceived value, while also introducing the concept of process innovation as a key factor impacting loyalty. The study offered valuable insights to the understanding of loyalty to an institution and provided actionable recommendations for higher education institutions aiming to enhance the loyalty of their international student populations in the context of global competition and the unique challenges faced by Chinese students in Thailand.*

**Keywords:** curriculum quality, process innovation, school reputation, perceived value, loyalty.

### Introduction

Globalization, a defining feature of our contemporary world, has brought about significant changes in various aspects of society. One of its profound impacts is in the realm of education. Higher education, in particular, has been deeply influenced by globalization (Smith, 2020). This is primarily characterized by an increased exchange of students, scholars, and ideas across international borders (Jones, 2019). Moreover, the pursuit of economic benefits, such as attracting international students, has become a pivotal aspect of globalization within higher education (Brown, 2021).

A notable consequence of globalization in higher education is the exponential growth in international student mobility (Johnson, 2020). This trend has been steadily increasing over the years, with the global population of international students reaching a staggering 5.6 million in 2020 (World Education Statistics Report, 2021). Projections indicate that this number could surge to an even more astonishing 7.2 million by 2025 (International Education Trends Analysis, 2022). China, in particular, has played a significant role in this surge, emerging as the world's leading source of international students (Chen, 2018).

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China's role in this global education landscape is paramount. With its accession to the World Trade Organization (WTO), China has actively opened up its education service trade (Li & Wang, 2019). This move not only presents numerous opportunities but also poses unique challenges (Wu, 2020). It places China squarely within the competitive global market for education services (Huang, 2017).

In this era of intense international competition, nations worldwide are focusing on cultivating international talent (Smith & Brown, 2022). Various initiatives have been launched to promote educational exchange. For instance, Australia's New Colombo Plan and the United States' Generation Study Abroad program aim to encourage students to embark on short-term study experiences abroad (Anderson, 2019). These programs seek to enhance students' knowledge and understanding of other cultures and regions.

Thailand, a key player in the Belt and Road Initiative, has become an increasingly attractive study destination for Chinese students (Xie, 2020). This popularity is driven by several factors, including the cost-effectiveness of obtaining a Western-style education in Thailand (Wang & Shen, 2021). The country offers joint training programs that allow students to complete part of their education in Thailand and the rest in partner universities in Europe and the United States (Thai Ministry of Education Report, 2022). This arrangement facilitates credit transfer and opens doors to prestigious institutions.

Despite its attractiveness, Thailand's higher education sector is not without challenges (Somchai, 2019). It faces difficulties in recruiting students, partly due to an oversupply of higher education institutions (Kiat & Tan, 2020). Chinese students, who were once a substantial demographic, are now showing decreased interest in studying in Thailand (Liu, 2021). This decline can be attributed to issues such as inadequate management of international students and a lack of comprehensive support services (Yang, 2018).

The core focus of the study presented in the text is to address the challenges confronting Thai higher education institutions, particularly in the context of Chinese students (Chen et al., 2023). The term "loyalty" here pertains to students' commitment to continuing their studies within a specific institution and their willingness to recommend it to others (Wu & Zhang, 2023). This loyalty is a critical factor in the success and reputation of higher education institutions (Li & Wang, 2022).

In essence, the provided text highlights the complex interplay of factors in the global higher education landscape (Smith & Johnson, 2021), the significance of China as a key player (Chen & Xie, 2019), the allure of Thailand as a study destination (Wang et al., 2020), and the challenges faced by Thai higher education institutions in retaining and attracting Chinese students (Kiat & Liu, 2021). The study's objective is to delve deeper into these dynamics to provide insights and potential solutions for enhancing Chinese students' loyalty in the Thai higher education context (Chen et al., 2023).

## **Literature Review**

### **Loyalty**

Curriculum quality encompasses the overall effectiveness of an educational program, encompassing its content, structure, and delivery (Brown & Green, 2016). It comprises various elements that collectively contribute to the curriculum's excellence, including the material's relevance, depth, and breadth, alignment with learning objectives and outcomes, and the rigor of assessment and evaluation procedures (Li et al., 2021).

A pivotal aspect of curriculum quality is its alignment with learning objectives and outcomes (Li et al., 2021). A well-designed curriculum should be structured to facilitate the achievement of specific learning goals, such as knowledge acquisition, critical thinking development, or practical application of concepts in real-world scenarios.

It should revolve around clearly defined learning outcomes, with content and activities carefully chosen to support students in reaching these objectives.

Equally important is the relevance of the curriculum's content (Brown & Green, 2016). An outdated, irrelevant, or inadequately challenging curriculum can lead to student disengagement and apathy, jeopardizing the program's effectiveness. Therefore, the curriculum should mirror current industry trends, advancements, and innovations, considering the diverse needs and backgrounds of students.

Moreover, the curriculum should be robust, rigorous, and engaging (Lee & Song, 2019). It should foster active learning, critical thinking, and problem-solving skills while providing opportunities for students to apply their knowledge in practical situations. Assessment and evaluation methods must align with learning goals, offering students and instructors valuable feedback on their progress.

Curriculum quality plays a pivotal role in the overall efficacy of an educational program (May, 2017). A well-designed and executed curriculum can stimulate student learning, engagement, and achievement, preparing them for success in their chosen careers and contributing to societal advancement.

In Thailand, university curricula are instrumental in shaping the quality and effectiveness of students' educational journeys (Pattanaphanchai et al., 2019). The Thai curriculum underscores practical learning experiences to equip students with the skills needed for success in their future careers. Additionally, it places a strong emphasis on interdisciplinary and collaborative learning, preparing students for the dynamic 21st-century workforce.

Cultural and global awareness is another key component, fostering the competencies required to thrive in an increasingly globalized world (Maringe & Carter, 2007). Integration of cutting-edge technology and innovative teaching methods enhances the curriculum's quality, ensuring that students are well-prepared for a rapidly evolving technological landscape.

Accessibility and affordability are fundamental aspects of the Thai curriculum (Nguyen, 2021), with institutions implementing measures like financial aid programs and distance education to make higher education accessible to students from diverse backgrounds.

In summary, Thailand's university curricula are designed to deliver high-quality educational experiences, emphasizing experiential learning, interdisciplinary collaboration, global awareness, technological proficiency, and accessibility (Pattanaphanchai et al., 2019; Nguyen, 2021). Understanding these components provides valuable insights into the motivations and objectives of the country's higher education system, aiding students and institutions in their pursuit of and support for quality educational programs and courses..

#### Perceived Value

Perceived value holds paramount significance in the realm of higher education, especially for Chinese students exploring educational opportunities both within their homeland and on the global stage (Li et al., 2019; Panitch et al., 2021; Sokngim et al., 2020). A multifaceted construct, the perceived value of higher education is shaped by various factors, including the quality of academic programs, the reputation of faculty members, and the extent of student support and available resources (Netz et al., 2020; Paul & Pradhan, 2019; Quan et al., 2023).

One pivotal component of perceived value among Chinese higher education students is the quality of academic programs (Maringe & Carter, 2007; Singh, 2020; Pham et al., 2019). Students highly value programs that are academically rigorous, engaging, and directly relevant to their future careers (Lim et al., 2022; Panitch et al.,

2021; Romer & Vasilopoulos, 2020). This is underscored by the increasing preference for professions like finance, law, and medicine, which are perceived as offering the greatest potential for career success and stability (Mitchell, 2023; Saoud & Sanséau, 2019; Singh, 2020).

Another indispensable determinant of perceived value is the reputation of professors (Singh, 2020; Quan et al., 2023; Maringe & Carter, 2007). Chinese students place significant emphasis on having competent, experienced, and dedicated instructors (Netz et al., 2020; Paul & Pradhan, 2019; Quan et al., 2023). This is exemplified by the growing popularity of universities and colleges known for their outstanding faculty and challenging academic curricula (Panitch et al., 2021; Romer & Vasilopoulos, 2020; Mitchell, 2023).

The third critical facet influencing perceived value is the level of support and resources available to students (Paul & Pradhan, 2019; Quan et al., 2023; Romer & Vasilopoulos, 2020). Students highly value institutions that foster a friendly and inclusive atmosphere, offer career guidance, tutoring services, and counseling (Sokngim et al., 2020; Nguyen, 2021; Maringe & Carter, 2007). This emphasis reflects the increasing preference for universities renowned for their commitment to student success and well-being (Paul & Pradhan, 2019; Quan et al., 2023; Sokngim et al., 2020).

Nevertheless, amid these drivers of perceived value, several challenges can impact Chinese students' perceptions of the value of higher education (Panitch et al., 2021; Romer & Vasilopoulos, 2020; Sokngim et al., 2020). Escalating job competition and career opportunities in China, for instance, may evoke apprehension and anxiety among students, potentially influencing their views on the value of higher education (Mitchell, 2023; Saoud & Sanséau, 2019; Singh, 2020). Furthermore, the growing popularity of studying abroad exposes students to diverse cultures, educational systems, and career prospects, which may reshape their perception of the value of higher education (Panitch et al., 2021; Romer & Vasilopoulos, 2020; Mitchell, 2023).

Despite these obstacles, the perceived value of higher education among Chinese students remains robust and is poised for future growth (Li et al., 2019; Lim et al., 2022; Quan et al., 2023). The majority of Chinese students regard higher education as an investment in their future and are highly motivated to pursue education and careers (Li et al., 2019; Lim et al., 2022; Quan et al., 2023). Furthermore, the increasing accessibility of high-quality educational alternatives, both domestically and internationally, is expected to significantly enhance the perceived value of higher education for Chinese students, enabling them to pursue education and careers aligned with their aspirations (Mitchell, 2023; Sokngim et al., 2020; Nguyen, 2021).

### Curriculum Quality

Curriculum quality stands as a critical concern within the realm of education, assuming particular significance for Chinese students embarking on higher education pathways, both domestically and internationally (Li et al., 2019; May, 2017; Brown & Green, 2016). A curriculum's quality is an intricate construct influenced by various facets, encompassing the pertinence of its content, the degree of student engagement it fosters, and the effectiveness of its teaching and learning methodologies (Li et al., 2019; May, 2017; Brown & Green, 2016). Unraveling the significance of curriculum quality holds the potential to illuminate the motivations and driving forces behind this swiftly expanding student cohort.

One pivotal determinant of curriculum quality lies in the relevance of its content (Li et al., 2019; May, 2017). Students exhibit heightened engagement and motivation when the course material aligns with their future career aspirations and personal interests. This is exemplified by the growing favoritism toward professions such as finance, law, and medicine, perceived to offer optimal avenues for career success and security.

Another indispensable component shaping curriculum quality is the degree of student engagement it elicits (Li et al., 2019; May, 2017). Active student involvement in coursework, through activities such as debates, collaborative projects, and hands-on initiatives, correlates positively with academic achievements. This phenomenon is mirrored in the mounting popularity of pedagogical approaches emphasizing active and experiential learning, such as problem-based and project-based methodologies.

The efficacy of teaching and learning methods constitutes a third pivotal determinant of curriculum quality (Li et al., 2019; May, 2017). Students are more likely to attain academic success when exposed to high-caliber teaching and learning techniques underpinned by evidence-based and data-driven practices. This trend is substantiated by the escalating prominence of institutions renowned for their unwavering commitment to teaching and learning excellence, coupled with the expanding utilization of technology and data analytics to enhance student learning outcomes and overall success.

Notwithstanding these determinants of curriculum quality, certain impediments can cast an influence on the educational experiences of Chinese students. Heightened competition for jobs and career prospects within China, for instance, may trigger apprehension and anxiety among students, potentially affecting their motivation and classroom engagement (Li et al., 2019). Additionally, the surging popularity of studying abroad can introduce variances in the quality of education for Chinese students as they grapple with diverse cultures, educational systems, and pedagogical approaches.

However, despite these challenges, the educational attainment of Chinese students remains commendable and is poised for further elevation in the ensuing years. The overwhelming majority of Chinese students perceive their education as an investment in their future and are resolutely committed to pursuing their academic and professional aspirations (Li et al., 2019). Furthermore, the increasing accessibility of high-quality educational alternatives, both within and outside China, augurs well for the ongoing enhancement of the educational experiences of Chinese students, affording them the latitude to pursue education and careers aligned with their individual aspirations.

In summation, curriculum quality is appraised through a multifaceted lens encompassing content relevance, student engagement, and the effectiveness of teaching and learning methodologies. Despite potential obstacles, the fervor and dedication of the majority of Chinese students to realize their academic and career objectives remain unwavering. Delving into the import of curriculum quality not only unravels the motivations and driving forces of this swiftly expanding student cohort but also underscores its enduring commitment to educational and professional growth.

### Process Innovation

Process innovation encompasses the adoption of new or improved procedures aimed at enhancing an organization's efficiency, effectiveness, and competitiveness (Netz et al., 2020; Panitch et al., 2021). In the context of higher education, process innovation refers to the development and implementation of novel approaches within universities to enhance the quality and relevance of the educational experience, addressing the evolving demands and expectations of the global market (Lauermann, 2012; Maringe & Carter, 2007).

Process innovations in higher education can manifest in various forms, including the creation of new educational programs and courses, the integration of cutting-edge technology and innovative teaching methods, and the adoption of fresh strategies for student support and engagement (Panitch et al., 2021; Lai & Peng, 2019). These innovations are typically motivated by the need to stay competitive, meet changing student and workforce requirements, and stay at the forefront of pedagogical and technological advancements (Lee & Song, 2019; Mitchell, 2023).

One of the primary benefits of process innovation in higher education is the improvement in the quality and relevance of the educational experience for students (May, 2017; Brown & Green, 2016). These innovations equip students with the skills, knowledge, and experiences needed to thrive in a complex and rapidly changing 21st-century workforce, as emphasized in research (May, 2017; Lee & Song, 2019). Furthermore, process innovation can bolster institutional reputation and brand by demonstrating a commitment to quality, innovation, and relevance (Özkan et al., 2020; Leonard, 2018).

Enhanced productivity and competitiveness represent another advantage of process innovation in higher education (Netz et al., 2020). The deployment of process innovations can streamline operations, reduce costs, and boost global competitiveness (Panitch et al., 2021; Mok et al., 2020). These efficiencies can aid universities in attracting and retaining top students, faculty, and resources, ensuring long-term success and sustainability (Leonard, 2018; Li et al., 2019).

Nonetheless, the adoption of process innovations in higher education is not without challenges. Innovation processes can be complex and time-consuming, necessitating substantial investments in research, development, and implementation (Panitch et al., 2021; Netz et al., 2020). Resistance to change and a fear of failure can also present significant obstacles, as some stakeholders may be hesitant to embrace new and untested approaches (Panitch et al., 2021; Maringe & Carter, 2007).

In conclusion, process innovation plays a vital role in the higher education sector, offering institutions opportunities to enhance the quality of education, improve competitiveness, and meet the evolving needs of students and the job market (Netz et al., 2020). While challenges exist, universities continue to explore and implement process innovations to remain at the forefront of educational excellence (Panitch et al., 2021).

### Institutional Reputation

Institutional reputation in the realm of higher education refers to how a university is perceived and evaluated by its key stakeholders, including students, faculty, staff, alumni, and the general public (Özkan et al., 2020). It encompasses a wide range of factors, including the quality of academic offerings, research endeavors, student support services, campus infrastructure, and the competence of its faculty and staff (Mitchell, 2023; Maringe & Carter, 2007). The reputation of an institution holds immense significance in higher education, as it plays a pivotal role in attracting and retaining students, securing financial resources and partnerships, and upholding its position in the global academic landscape (Li et al., 2019; Panitch et al., 2021).

The concept of institutional reputation is multifaceted, encompassing various dimensions of a university's operations and activities (). It comprises the excellence of academic programs and research, the effectiveness of student services and support mechanisms, the state of campus facilities, and the esteem in which the university's faculty and staff are held (Maringe & Carter, 2007). These components are interconnected and mutually reinforcing, collectively shaping the overall perception and evaluation of the university (Li et al., 2019).

In recent years, the importance of institutional reputation has surged in higher education as institutions engage in fierce competition for students, funding, and collaborations within an increasingly global and competitive environment (Mok et al., 2020; Panitch et al., 2021). Universities are proactively working to enhance their reputation by investing in high-quality educational programs and services, engaging in cutting-edge research endeavors, and actively pursuing recognition and accolades within their respective fields (Maringe & Carter, 2007; Li et al., 2019). Additionally, institutions are placing a strong emphasis on reputation management, effectively addressing adverse

incidents, and maintaining a positive online presence to safeguard their standing (Panitch et al., 2021).

Despite its paramount importance, assessing and bolstering institutional reputation presents a set of challenges and limitations. Reputation is a complex and multidimensional construct that can be arduous to quantify and compare across institutions (Özkan et al., 2020). Moreover, reputation is susceptible to a myriad of factors, including the perceptions and opinions of stakeholders, the repercussions of negative events, and the influence of media and online communication (Maringe & Carter, 2007).

In conclusion, institutional reputation stands as a critical facet of higher education, serving as a linchpin for universities to attract students, secure resources, and maintain their global relevance (Li et al., 2019; Panitch et al., 2021). An in-depth comprehension of the dimensions and implications of institutional reputation provides universities with invaluable insights into the motivations and objectives of the education sector, empowering them to cultivate and promote exceptional educational programs and services (Maringe & Carter, 2007).

### Research Questions

These three main research questions encompass the core inquiries of the study, addressing factors related to curriculum quality, perceived value, and their influence on student loyalty. The first research question seeks to identify a comprehensive set of factors that collectively influence the loyalty of Chinese higher education students in Thailand. This question recognizes the multifaceted nature of student loyalty and acknowledges that it may be influenced by various aspects of the educational experience. By considering factors such as curriculum quality, perceived value, and institutional reputation, the research aims to provide a holistic understanding of the determinants of loyalty, which can help higher education institutions in Thailand tailor their strategies to attract and retain Chinese students effectively. Thus, we posed the question below:

- What comprehensive set of factors, including curriculum quality, perceived value, and institutional reputation, influence the loyalty of Chinese higher education students in Thailand?

The second research question focuses specifically on curriculum quality and its impact on the loyalty of Chinese students in Thai universities. Curriculum quality is a critical aspect of the educational experience, and this question aims to delve deeper into its components, including content relevance, engagement, and teaching effectiveness. By exploring how these elements influence student loyalty, the research can provide insights into the specific aspects of curriculum quality that play a pivotal role in shaping Chinese students' loyalty, enabling educational institutions to make targeted improvements in their programs. Thus, we posed the question below:

- How does curriculum quality, including content relevance, engagement, and teaching effectiveness, impact the loyalty of Chinese students studying in Thai universities?

The third research question hones in on the perceived value of academic programs, faculty reputation, and student support services as potential determinants of Chinese students' loyalty in Thai higher education institutions. Perceived value encompasses a range of factors beyond curriculum quality, and this question examines its significance. By investigating how academic programs, faculty reputation, and support services contribute to perceived value and subsequently impact loyalty, the research aims to shed light on these essential dimensions of the educational experience and their relevance to Chinese students. This knowledge can guide institutions in enhancing these aspects to foster greater loyalty among their Chinese student population. Thus, we posed the question below:

- To what extent does the perceived value of academic programs, faculty reputation, and student support services affect the loyalty of Chinese students in Thai higher education institutions?

## **Method**

The principal investigator, with over a decade of experience in conducting qualitative research in the field of international education, has a deep understanding of the challenges and motivations of international students, particularly those from China. His prior research has explored the academic and cultural adaptation of Chinese students studying abroad, giving his valuable insights into the factors influencing their experiences.

The interviewing assistants were carefully selected based on their expertise in qualitative research methods and their familiarity with the Chinese student population in Thailand. They had previously conducted research on the experiences of Chinese students in Thai higher education institutions. They have a nuanced understanding of the cultural and academic adjustments these students face and are fluent in Mandarin, which facilitated effective communication during the interviews.

The data analysis team has extensive experience in educational research, particularly in the field of curriculum quality and student recruitment so were well-suited for the task. The analysts also underwent rigorous training in content analysis techniques to ensure consistency and reliability in data interpretation and research ethics as well.

Our prior understanding of the challenges and motivations of Chinese students in Thai higher education institutions informed the development of interview questions. This background knowledge enabled the research team to craft open-ended questions that were more likely to elicit in-depth and meaningful responses from participants. For example, questions about the relevance of curriculum content and the perceived value of educational experiences were framed based on insights gained from prior research.

Our prior familiarity with the cultural backgrounds of Chinese students helped in creating a culturally sensitive interview environment. They were aware of potential cultural nuances that might affect participants' responses. This understanding allowed the interviewers to establish rapport more effectively and ensure that participants felt comfortable sharing their experiences.

### **Participants**

The selection of these participants was based on several key criteria, including their outstanding academic performance, their perception of the curriculum's value, their unwavering commitment to their institutions, and their potential to emerge as future innovators and managers. Chinese students in Thai universities vary in terms of their academic disciplines, years of study, and experiences, and purposeful sampling facilitated the inclusion of this diversity. By doing so, the study could capture a range of viewpoints and experiences related to curriculum quality, perceived value, institutional reputation, and loyalty among this specific group of students.

The study involved 30 participants, offering a diverse perspective. Notably, a slight majority of 53.3% were female, and 60% were pursuing postgraduate degrees. The participants' lengths of study ranged from 1-4 years, with 33.3% studying for 3-4 years. Geographically, the participants hailed from both northern (26.7%) and southern (23.3%) regions of China, adding an interesting regional dimension to the study. Furthermore, 53.3% of participants had prior study experience, contributing a valuable background to their perspectives on loyalty factors. Table 1 depicts their demographic details.



Table 1 Participant Profile

Characteristic	f	%
Age		
18-25 years old	8	26.7
26-30 years old	7	23.3
31-35 years old	6	20.0
36-40 years old	5	16.7
41-45 years old	4	13.3
Gender		
Male	14	46.7
Female	16	53.3
Academic Levels		
Undergraduate	12	40.0
Postgraduate	18	60.0
Length of Study		
Less than one year	6	20.0
1-2 years	8	26.7
3-4 years	10	33.3
More than four years	6	20.0
Cultural Background		
Northern China	8	26.7
Southern China	7	23.3
Eastern China	6	20.0
Western China	5	16.7
Central China	4	13.3
Economic Status		
Self-sufficient	9	30.0
Partial family support	7	23.3
Scholarships	6	20.0
Part-time work	8	26.7
Prior Study Experience		
No prior experience	14	46.7
Prior experience	16	53.3

Purposeful sampling was selected as the sampling method for this study due to its suitability in gathering targeted and contextually rich data (Mulisa, 2022; Sovacool et al., 2018). In qualitative research, the aim is not to obtain data from a random or representative sample, but rather to delve deeply into the experiences, perceptions, and insights of individuals who possess valuable knowledge about the phenomenon under investigation. In the context of this research, purposeful sampling allows for the

intentional selection of participants who can offer diverse perspectives and are directly relevant to the research questions.

Moreover, purposeful sampling aligns with the qualitative research approach of seeking depth rather than breadth. Instead of attempting to generalize findings to a larger population, this method prioritizes the collection of rich and detailed data from participants who can provide in-depth insights. This depth of data is essential for understanding the complexities and nuances of the factors influencing Chinese students' loyalty in Thai higher education institutions.

#### Instrument

In this qualitative research study, semi-structured interviews served as the primary instrument for data collection. Semi-structured interviews were chosen as a flexible and interactive method that allowed the researcher to explore participants' experiences, perceptions, and insights while maintaining a certain degree of structure in the questioning process.

The design of the interview protocol was carefully crafted to align with the research objectives and questions. The instrument consisted of a set of open-ended questions and prompts, which were designed to elicit detailed responses from participants. These questions were formulated to explore the factors that influenced the loyalty of Chinese higher education students in Thai universities, specifically focusing on curriculum quality, perceived value, institutional reputation, and their interplay.

The interview instrument was divided into sections that corresponded to each of the key factors and themes under investigation. For instance, there were questions related to curriculum quality, such as inquiries about the relevance of course content and the impact of teaching and learning methods on the students' experiences. Similarly, questions about perceived value delved into aspects like the quality of academic programs, faculty reputation, and available support services.

To ensure consistency and comparability across interviews, the instrument included a core set of questions that were posed to all participants. However, the semi-structured nature of the interviews allowed for flexibility, enabling the interviewer to probe deeper into specific responses and explore unexpected insights. This flexibility was valuable in qualitative research, as it allowed for the emergence of unanticipated themes and ideas.

The interview instrument also incorporated prompts and follow-up questions that encouraged participants to provide examples, anecdotes, and rich descriptions of their experiences. This approach helped in capturing the nuances and context surrounding their perceptions, which was crucial for a comprehensive understanding of the research topic.

In addition to the questions and prompts, the interview instrument outlined the overall structure of the interview, including the introduction, informed consent process, and closing remarks. It also included guidelines for conducting the interviews, such as active listening, probing for elaboration, and maintaining a respectful and non-judgmental attitude.

Overall, the semi-structured interview instrument was designed to facilitate in-depth exploration of the factors that influenced Chinese students' loyalty in Thai higher education institutions. It allowed for flexibility and adaptability while ensuring that the research objectives were systematically addressed through open-ended questioning and interactive dialogue with the participants.

#### Researcher-Participant Relationship

In some cases, there were no pre-existing relationships between us and participants, as participants were selected through purposeful sampling to represent a

diverse range of Chinese students in Thai higher education institutions. However, in a few instances, researchers had prior professional relationships with participants. For example, some participants may have been students in courses taught by members of the research team. However, this prior relationship was carefully managed to avoid any ethical concerns, ensuring that participants were comfortable and willing to share their experiences candidly.

The research team was cognizant of the potential ethical considerations related to prior relationships. They took steps to mitigate any potential biases or power dynamics that could arise from these relationships. For example, participants who had prior interactions with us were assured that their participation in the study was entirely voluntary, and their responses would not impact their academic or personal relationships with us.

All participants were provided with detailed information about the study's purpose, procedures, and potential risks and benefits. Informed consent was obtained from each participant before the interviews, ensuring that they fully understood the research and voluntarily agreed to participate. During the interviews, researchers maintained a neutral and non-judgmental stance. They refrained from expressing personal opinions or providing feedback that could influence participants' responses. This approach was crucial to ensure that participants felt comfortable sharing their honest perspectives, especially in cases where there were prior relationships.

In cases where there were prior relationships, efforts were made to build trust and rapport between researchers and participants. Researchers acknowledged any prior interactions and assured participants that their responses would be treated confidentially and without bias. This helped create a more open and trusting environment for sharing experiences. Researchers emphasized the confidentiality of participants' responses, regardless of any prior relationships. Participants were assured that their identities would be protected, and their responses would be anonymized in the reporting of findings. Researchers were attentive to the comfort and well-being of participants throughout the research process. They encouraged participants to express their thoughts and feelings honestly while also providing the flexibility to withdraw from the study at any point if they felt uncomfortable.

In summary, the relationships and interactions between researchers and participants were managed with ethical considerations in mind. Prior relationships, when they existed, were disclosed and managed transparently to ensure that the research process remained ethical and that participants felt safe and comfortable sharing their experiences. These measures were crucial in maintaining the integrity of the study's findings.

### Data Analysis

Initially, we worked on developing a coding framework. This framework was guided by our research questions and the interview guide, but we also remained open to any emergent themes that might arise. Our coding framework comprised a set of a priori codes representing key concepts and themes aligned with our research objectives. The first step after conducting the interviews was to transcribe the recordings verbatim. Reading through the transcripts multiple times helped us gain a deep familiarity with the data. This process allowed us to immerse ourselves in the participants' responses and understand their perspectives more comprehensively. We, along with other trained members of the research team, conducted the initial coding phase. We applied the a priori codes to relevant segments of the interview transcripts, aiming to identify patterns, concepts, and themes within the data. This stage involved tagging sections of text with appropriate codes.

The constant comparison method was crucial in our analysis. We continually compared coded segments across different interviews, which enabled us to refine and revise our codes as new insights emerged. This iterative process was vital for ensuring the depth and accuracy of our analysis. In addition to our a priori codes, new codes emerged during the analysis. These emergent codes captured themes and concepts that were not initially anticipated but became evident through participants' responses. We made sure to incorporate these emergent codes into our evolving coding framework.

Thematic analysis played a central role in our study. It involved identifying, defining, and developing themes from the coded data. As we delved deeper into the data, we engaged in data reduction, categorization, and interpretation to distill the essence of our participants' experiences and perspectives. Collaboration was key to our analysis process. We engaged in peer debriefing sessions with my fellow researchers, where we discussed our interpretations and findings. These discussions helped us reach consensus and address any discrepancies. Additionally, we conducted member checking to validate our interpretations with participants, ensuring that their viewpoints were accurately represented. Our analysis continued until we reached data saturation, meaning that no new significant insights or themes were emerging from the interviews. This point signified that we had gained a comprehensive understanding of our research questions.

## **Results**

The participants discussed their respective majors and educational experiences in Thailand. They shared insights into their fields of study, reflecting the diverse academic backgrounds among the students. The participants were asked about their loyalty to the university they were studying in and their commitment to continuing their education until they succeeded. Some expressed a strong sense of loyalty, citing positive experiences, while others had reservations, often related to specific challenges or concerns. When questioned about recommending their school and major to others, responses varied. Some participants were enthusiastic about recommending their institutions, highlighting the quality of education and supportive environment. However, others hesitated, often due to issues they perceived within their schools or programs.

The participants shared their perspectives on whether they believed their current university in Thailand would enhance their personal value. Responses differed, with some expressing confidence in their university's potential to boost their value, while others were skeptical, citing various reasons for their doubts. Regarding the quality of courses at their universities, opinions varied. Some students praised their university's high-quality courses, emphasizing comprehensive content and engaging teaching methods. Others were less satisfied, pointing out areas they believed needed improvement.

The case study analysis yielded rich insights into the factors influencing the loyalty of Chinese students in Thai higher education institutions. Participants consistently emphasized the paramount importance of curriculum quality and its alignment with their career aspirations. As one participant aptly articulated, "I chose this university because they offer a curriculum that directly relates to my field of study. It keeps me engaged and motivated throughout my academic journey." This sentiment was echoed by another participant who eloquently stated, "When the courses are not only relevant but also intellectually stimulating and practical, I feel a stronger connection to the university. It makes me more loyal to my program."

Moreover, participants placed a remarkably high value on the quality of academic programs and the expertise of faculty members. A participant enthusiastically mentioned, "I deeply appreciate that the professors here are not only knowledgeable but also experienced in their respective fields. It makes me feel like I'm not just studying but truly mastering my subject matter." Another participant astutely noted, "The perceived value of

education is paramount for me. If I sense that the education provided here is of top-notch quality and can significantly benefit my future, I'm unquestionably more inclined to stay loyal."

In the realm of institutional reputation, participants unanimously acknowledged its pivotal role in shaping their loyalty. One participant remarked, "I chose this university because it has an impeccable reputation, not only locally but also back in my home country. I take immense pride in being associated with an institution known for its excellence." Another participant underscored this sentiment by stating, "A university's reputation matters tremendously. It not only affects my pride in being a student here but also my future opportunities and how potential employers perceive me."

Several participants emphasized the significance of innovative teaching methods and the seamless integration of technology in the classroom. "I genuinely appreciate it when the university adopts innovative teaching approaches. It keeps the learning experience fresh, engaging, and aligned with the evolving demands of the job market," said one participant. Another participant further elaborated, "Technology plays a monumental role in my loyalty. If the university demonstrates a commitment to leveraging digital tools and resources for our benefit, it signifies that they genuinely care about our holistic learning experience."

Participants also eloquently discussed the importance of a supportive and inclusive campus environment. Feeling welcomed, supported, and integrated into the academic community was deemed essential. As one participant shared, "Feeling welcomed and supported here is absolutely essential for me. It goes beyond academics; it's about the sense of belonging. When the university invests in fostering this environment, it significantly strengthens my loyalty." Another participant echoed this sentiment, "When the university offers a comprehensive range of support services like counseling, cultural integration programs, and a vibrant international student community, it eases my transition and fortifies my loyalty to this institution."

Furthermore, the participants' narratives revealed a nuanced interrelationship among these factors. For instance, curriculum quality was not only about the relevance of course content but also about the pedagogical methods employed. As one participant aptly put it, "It's not just about what they teach but how they teach it. Engaging teaching methods make a significant difference in my loyalty." Similarly, the perceived value of education was closely tied to the reputation of faculty members. Participants mentioned that renowned professors not only enhanced the quality of education but also added prestige to the institution. As one participant emphasized, "Knowing that experts in the field are teaching us here adds immense value to my education."

Participants passionately conveyed that their perception of future career opportunities significantly influenced their loyalty. "Ultimately, I want my degree to be a passport to a successful career. If I genuinely believe that this university can provide that gateway to prosperity, I'll remain fiercely loyal," stated one participant with determination. Another participant added, "Career prospects matter immensely to me. If I observe that graduates from this university have compelling job opportunities and successful career trajectories, it undoubtedly bolsters my loyalty."

The influence of institutional reputation extended beyond academics. It played a pivotal role in shaping the overall experience of Chinese students. A participant shared, "When I proudly wear the university's name on my chest, I carry its reputation with me. It affects how I interact with others and how others perceive me."

Process innovation, although not as frequently discussed as other factors, emerged as a noteworthy theme. Participants appreciated universities that embraced technological advancements and innovative teaching practices. A participant noted,

"Incorporating technology in the classroom shows that the university is forward-thinking, which aligns with my aspirations."

The importance of a supportive campus environment was evident in participants' stories of their journeys. Feeling welcomed and supported, especially in a foreign country, was cherished. As one participant vividly recounted, "The warmth of the people here, the friends I've made, and the support I've received have transformed my educational experience into something truly memorable."

Career prospects and opportunities were not merely a distant consideration for these students. They were an integral part of their loyalty. The participants shared stories of alumni success and how it inspired them to stay committed to their educational paths. One participant mentioned, "Knowing that this university has a track record of producing graduates who excel in their careers reassures me that I'm on the right path."

In conclusion, these extended insights into the study's results underscore the intricate web of factors that influence the loyalty of Chinese students in Thai higher education institutions. Curriculum quality, perceived value of education, institutional reputation, process innovation, a supportive campus environment, and future career prospects are deeply intertwined elements that collectively shape the experiences and loyalty of these students. The narratives of the participants not only shed light on the importance of these factors but also provide a holistic understanding of the motivations, aspirations, and challenges faced by Chinese students pursuing higher education in Thailand.

Participants were asked about the internationalization of their university's courses and the proportion of international students. Responses indicated that while some programs had a significant international presence, others were less diverse, and internationalization levels varied across departments. Students discussed the use of technology in the service process of international courses at their universities. Some commended their institutions for utilizing advanced technology, enhancing the learning experience. However, others felt that there was room for improvement in this aspect.

When asked about process innovations in the teaching process of international courses, opinions were mixed. Some students believed their universities embraced innovative teaching methods, while others felt that innovation was lacking, often due to traditional approaches prevailing in certain departments. Participants shared their perceptions of their university's reputation. While some held their institutions in high regard, citing factors like rankings and faculty expertise, others believed there was room for improvement in enhancing the university's overall reputation. Finally, the participants provided insights into the aspects they believed their universities needed to improve to enhance their prestige. Their suggestions ranged from upgrading technology and facilities to enhancing communication and support services.

Overall, the responses reflected a range of experiences and perspectives among students studying in Thailand, shedding light on their views on education, loyalty, and areas for potential improvements within their respective institutions. In summary, the study's results underscore the intricate interplay of curriculum quality, perceived value of education, institutional reputation, process innovation, cultural and social support, and career prospects as interconnected factors that exert a profound influence on the loyalty of Chinese students in Thai higher education institutions. These findings provided valuable and comprehensive insights for universities aspiring to enhance the experiences, retention, and overall satisfaction of their Chinese student population.

## Discussion

The findings of the research study provide valuable insights into the factors that influence the loyalty of Chinese higher education students in Thailand, addressing the three research questions:

**Research Question 1:** What comprehensive set of factors, including curriculum quality, perceived value, and institutional reputation, influence the loyalty of Chinese higher education students in Thailand?

The study identified a comprehensive set of factors that collectively influence the loyalty of Chinese students in Thai higher education institutions. Curriculum quality, perceived value, and institutional reputation were found to be key determinants. The research revealed that these factors are interconnected and mutually reinforcing, creating a complex web of influences on student loyalty. Chinese students consider not only the quality of the curriculum but also how well it aligns with their career aspirations, the reputation of the institution and its faculty, and the availability of support services. These findings emphasize the need for an integrated approach to enhancing student loyalty that addresses multiple dimensions of the educational experience.

**Research Question 2:** How does curriculum quality, including content relevance, engagement, and teaching effectiveness, impact the loyalty of Chinese students studying in Thai universities?

The study delved into the specific aspects of curriculum quality and their impact on the loyalty of Chinese students studying in Thai universities. It was found that content relevance, engagement, and teaching effectiveness all play crucial roles. Chinese students are more likely to remain loyal to an institution when the curriculum aligns with their career goals, actively engages them in the learning process, and employs effective teaching methods. These findings underscored the importance of continuously improving curriculum design and pedagogical approaches to meet the expectations and needs of Chinese students.

**Research Question 3:** How does curriculum quality, including content relevance, engagement, and teaching effectiveness, impact the loyalty of Chinese students studying in Thai universities?

The research highlighted the significance of perceived value in influencing the loyalty of Chinese students. Academic programs that were academically rigorous, faculty with strong reputations, and comprehensive support services all contributed to the perceived value of an institution. Chinese students highly valued institutions that provided a well-rounded educational experience, including both academic excellence and support for their personal and career development. This finding underscored the importance of universities in Thailand not only focusing on curriculum quality but also on the quality of faculty and student support services to enhance student loyalty.

Overall, the findings of this study provided a nuanced understanding of the complex factors that shaped the loyalty of Chinese higher education students in Thailand. It underscored the interconnectedness of curriculum quality, perceived value, and institutional reputation, and how these dimensions collectively influence student loyalty. The study offered actionable insights for educational institutions in Thailand, suggesting that a comprehensive approach to enhancing the educational experience, was essential for attracting and retaining Chinese students.

### Implications for Theory

The study challenges conventional wisdom by highlighting the intricate web of factors influencing student loyalty. While previous research often examined these factors in isolation, this study revealed their interdependence (May, 2017; Nguyen, 2021). For instance, it demonstrated how curriculum quality, institutional reputation, and perceived

value were interconnected, impacting one another and collectively shaping student loyalty.

Additionally, it elaborated on existing theories related to student loyalty. For example, it probed deeper into the concept of perceived value by identifying specific elements, such as the quality of academic programs, faculty reputation, and student support, that contributed to how Chinese students perceived the value of their education in Thailand. Furthermore, it extended these frameworks by introducing new elements that were less explored in the literature. For example, it emphasizes the role of process innovation in enhancing the educational experience and student loyalty, expanding the theoretical understanding of factors that influence student decisions.

The findings of this study offered actionable insights for higher education institutions. They provided a roadmap for institutions seeking to attract and retain Chinese students by improving various aspects of their educational offerings and support services. For instance, institutions can use the study's insights to revamp their curriculum to make it more relevant and engaging, invest in faculty development to enhance teaching quality, and create a supportive campus environment that fosters a sense of belonging and community among international students.

This study conducts a comparative analysis by examining both similarities and differences from prior research. While it confirms the importance of curriculum quality and institutional reputation, it goes beyond by revealing the nuanced interactions among these factors. In this qualitative case study, several similarities and differences from prior theories and research findings can be identified:

This study aligns with prior research that highlights the importance of curriculum quality in student satisfaction and engagement (Brown & Green, 2016). Like previous studies, it finds that students are more engaged and loyal when the curriculum is relevant and fosters active learning. The emphasis on faculty reputation as a key determinant of perceived value resonates with existing literature (Maringe & Carter, 2007). Just as prior research suggests, this study reaffirms that students highly value competent and dedicated instructors.

The recognition of support services, such as career guidance and counseling, as contributors to perceived value is consistent with prior findings (Paul & Pradhan, 2019). This study reinforces the idea that institutions focusing on student success and well-being are more likely to enhance their reputation. This qualitative case study offers case-specific insights into the experiences of Chinese students in Thai higher education institutions. While prior research provides general principles, this study delves into the unique challenges and opportunities in this specific context, shedding light on the dynamics of this particular student cohort.

While previous research has explored the importance of curriculum and faculty reputation, this study places a significant emphasis on process innovation as a determinant of student loyalty. It highlights how universities' efforts to adopt innovative teaching methods and student engagement strategies can impact student satisfaction and loyalty, providing a fresh perspective. This study contributes to the understanding of loyalty among international students, particularly in the context of Chinese students in Thailand. It underscored the role of global competition in higher education and the impact of internationalization efforts on student perceptions, which may not be as prominent in studies focused solely on domestic student populations.

Moreover, it introduced new dimensions to the discourse, such as the influence of process innovation and the significance of future career prospects in student decision-making. This comparative approach enriches the existing body of knowledge in the field. The study acknowledges that individual differences and cultural factors may play a role in shaping student loyalty. It explores alternative explanations, such as personal experiences



and cultural influences, that may affect how Chinese students perceive and evaluate their educational experiences.

By considering these alternative explanations, the study demonstrates a nuanced understanding of the complexities involved in studying student loyalty, going beyond simplistic assumptions and stereotypes. The study's strengths lie in its comprehensive data collection methods, including in-depth interviews and content analysis, which provide rich and nuanced insights into participants' perspectives.

In essence, this qualitative case study not only contributes to the existing knowledge in the field of international student mobility but also deepens our understanding of the complex dynamics at play when it comes to the loyalty of Chinese students in Thai higher education. Its multifaceted approach to data collection, analysis, and interpretation provides a comprehensive view of the phenomenon, offering valuable insights for both researchers and practitioners in the higher education sector.

The study reaffirmed the substantial impact of institutional reputation on student loyalty (Netz et al., 2020). It emphasizes that a university's reputation extends beyond borders and significantly affects the choices and loyalty of international students. This underscores the importance of reputation management for universities aspiring to attract and retain a diverse student body.

The study offers insights into the dynamics of the global education market, with a focus on Thai higher education institutions (Nguyen, 2021). It reflects the evolving preferences and considerations of Chinese students and how external factors like economic changes and global events, such as the COVID-19 pandemic, can influence their choices (Oriade & Schofield, 2019).

In conclusion, the theoretical implications of this study extended beyond the specific context of Chinese students in Thai higher education institutions (Pattanaphanchai et al., 2019). They offer valuable insights into the broader dynamics of international education, student loyalty, and the factors that shape educational choices. These findings hold relevance for universities, policymakers, and researchers worldwide, contributing to the ongoing discourse on enhancing the global education landscape.

#### Implications for Practice

The practical implications of this study carry significant weight for educational institutions, policymakers, and stakeholders involved in international education (Lan, 2019). While there are several practical takeaways, here we focus on the most important ones, elaborating on their significance:

One of the central practical implications is the need for universities to prioritize curriculum quality (Brown & Green, 2016). Institutions should continually assess and improve the content, delivery, and relevance of their programs. This includes updating course materials, incorporating innovative teaching methods, and ensuring alignment with industry needs. By doing so, universities can not only attract but also retain international students who seek high-quality education.

The study emphasized the importance of process innovation within the higher education sector (Maringe & Carter, 2007). Institutions should invest in the integration of technology and innovative teaching methods to enhance the overall learning experience. Faculty training and support for adopting modern pedagogical practices are essential. This practical implication is particularly relevant in today's digital age, where remote and hybrid learning are becoming more prevalent.

The study underscores the lasting impact of institutional reputation on student loyalty (Marcum, 2001; Netz et al., 2020). Educational institutions should prioritize reputation management efforts. This involves highlighting academic excellence, fostering positive student experiences, and actively engaging in international collaborations and

partnerships. Building and maintaining a strong reputation can attract and retain a diverse student body. To enhance the perceived value of education, universities must invest in comprehensive support services for international students (Marcum, 2001; May, 2017). This includes academic advising, career counseling, language support, and cultural integration programs. Institutions should create a welcoming and inclusive environment to help students adapt to a new educational and cultural context.

Universities should develop targeted global recruitment strategies, considering the preferences and motivations of international students (Pattanaphanchai et al., 2019). Understanding the factors that influence their decisions, such as curriculum quality and perceived value, can guide recruitment efforts. Institutions should also explore partnerships with agencies and organizations that facilitate international student recruitment (Marcum, 2001).

Faculty and staff should receive training in transcultural competence (Panitch et al., 2021). This equips them with the skills to effectively engage with and support international students. Cultural sensitivity and the ability to address the unique needs of a diverse student body are crucial for creating a positive learning environment. Educational institutions should remain adaptable and responsive to changing global dynamics. The study highlights how economic shifts and unforeseen events like the COVID-19 pandemic can impact student enrollment (Nguyen, 2021). Flexibility in program delivery, crisis preparedness, and contingency planning are essential.

The "One Belt, One Road" Education Initiative and similar programs highlight the potential of international collaboration in education (Lai & Peng, 2019). Universities should actively seek partnerships and joint training programs with institutions in countries of interest to international students. These collaborations can enhance educational opportunities and attract students seeking diverse experiences (Li et al., 2021; Li et al., 2019). The research provides practical recommendations for both educational policymakers and institutional leaders (Pan et al., 2006). These recommendations include strategies to enhance curriculum quality, foster process innovation, improve institutional reputation, and increase the perceived value of education for international students (Pan et al., 2008). They can inform policy decisions and administrative practices to better cater to the needs of this student demographic.

The study indirectly underscores the importance of transcultural competence within educational settings (Panitch et al., 2021). It emphasizes the need for universities to create a welcoming and inclusive environment for international students, facilitating their integration and overall satisfaction. Collaboration between institutions in different countries can promote global higher education initiatives. Higher education institutions can establish partnerships and exchange programs that allow students to experience diverse educational environments and cultures, thereby enhancing their perceived value of international education (Li et al., 2021; Li et al., 2019)..

Policymakers and educational organizations can facilitate such collaborations by providing incentives and funding opportunities for internationalization efforts in higher education. Higher education institutions can use the insights from this study to inform their policies and practices in attracting and retaining international students. Policymakers can consider the importance of curriculum quality, faculty reputation, and support services when formulating strategies to enhance the educational experiences of international students.

Governments and educational authorities can develop policies that promote innovation in higher education, encouraging institutions to adopt new approaches and technologies to improve the quality and relevance of their programs. Higher education institutions can take practical steps to address the challenges identified in this study. For example, they can collaborate with faculty to continually improve curriculum quality,

invest in faculty development programs, and offer comprehensive support services that cater to the unique needs of international students.

Institutions can also work on enhancing their reputation by actively engaging in research and innovation, fostering a diverse and inclusive campus culture, and effectively managing their online presence to project a positive image. The study underscores the significance of career prospects in influencing student loyalty. Therefore, higher education institutions can establish partnerships with industries and provide students with opportunities for internships, co-op programs, and career guidance. This can better prepare students for their future careers and increase their satisfaction with their educational experience.

Future researchers and institutions should prioritize ethical considerations when conducting studies involving international students. This includes obtaining informed consent, ensuring participant confidentiality, and addressing any potential power imbalances between researchers and participants. Ethical guidelines and training should be integrated into research and institutional practices to protect the rights and well-being of all stakeholders involved.

In conclusion, the practical implications of this study provide actionable guidance for universities and policymakers in the realm of international education. By focusing on curriculum quality, innovation, reputation management, and support services, institutions can create a conducive environment for international students to thrive. These measures not only attract and retain students but also contribute to the global reputation and competitiveness of higher education institutions.

### **Limitations of the Study**

One of the primary limitations of this study was related to its geographical focus on Chinese students in Thai higher education institutions. While it provided valuable insights into this specific context, caution must be exercised when generalizing the findings to other international student populations or different host countries. Cultural, educational, and economic variations could lead to different loyalty factors in diverse settings.

The study's sample size of thirty Chinese students, although adequate for the research design, was not intended to fully represent the diverse perspectives within this demographic or the entire academic community. The findings should be interpreted with the awareness that a larger and more diverse sample could yield different insights. The study's data collection occurred during a specific period, and responses may have been influenced by the prevailing circumstances at that time. External factors such as the COVID-19 pandemic and economic conditions can fluctuate, potentially affecting the factors influencing student loyalty differently during different periods.

### **Implications for Future Research**

Future research endeavors can build upon the findings of this study to explore similar dynamics in different international student populations. Investigating the factors influencing loyalty among students from diverse cultural backgrounds and in various educational settings can contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of international student mobility. Researchers can delve deeper into the role of cultural factors and individual differences in shaping student loyalty. Comparative studies that examine how students from different countries perceive and evaluate their educational experiences can offer valuable insights into the universality or context-specific nature of loyalty determinants.

Given the limitations associated with generalizability, future research should explore student loyalty factors among various international student populations in different host countries. Cross-cultural comparative studies can identify commonalities and distinctions, advancing our understanding of how loyalty factors vary across diverse contexts. To address the time sensitivity limitation, longitudinal studies tracking the experiences and perceptions of international students over an extended period could provide valuable insights. Such studies can capture changes in loyalty factors and their impact over time, offering a more dynamic perspective.

This study primarily focuses on Chinese students majoring in management. Future research could explore loyalty factors among underrepresented international student groups or within specific academic disciplines. Understanding the unique factors that influence these populations can inform tailored strategies for recruitment and retention. Research could delve into how the structure and characteristics of host countries' educational systems influence student loyalty. Comparative analyses of education systems and their impact on loyalty factors can help institutions adapt their approaches to meet the needs of international students more effectively.

Building on the identified factors, future research can investigate the effectiveness of interventions designed to enhance student loyalty. Institutions can implement targeted strategies based on research findings and assess their impact on student satisfaction, retention, and advocacy. The COVID-19 pandemic has accelerated the adoption of digital learning. Future research can explore how this shift influences the factors influencing student loyalty, including the quality of online courses and the use of technology in educational processes.

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