

**TITLE**

**AN EXAMINATION OF THE CONGRUENCY BETWEEN NEW  
ZEALAND ITP PRACTICES TO ATTRACT CHINESE  
STUDENTS AND THE CRITERIA EMPLOYED BY THOSE  
STUDENTS TO EVALUATE EDUCATION PROVIDERS**

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**A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the  
degree of Master of Business, Unitec New Zealand, 2012**

**July 2012**



# Declaration

**Name of candidate:** Jun Zhang

This Thesis entitled: “**An Examination of the congruency between New Zealand ITP practices to attract Chinese Students and the criteria employed by those students to evaluate education providers**” is submitted in partial fulfilment for the requirements for the Unitec degree of Master of Business.

## CANDIDATE’S DECLARATION

I confirm that:

- This Thesis/Dissertation/Research Project represents my own work;
- The contribution of supervisors and others to this work was consistent with the Unitec Regulations and Policies.
- Research for this work has been conducted in accordance with the Unitec Research Ethics Committee Policy and Procedures, and has fulfilled any requirements set for this project by the Unitec Research Ethics Committee.

Research Ethics Committee Approval Number: 2011-1245

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## **ABSTRACT**

The export education industry boosts the economies of participating countries. In the current tertiary education environment the reputed institutions enjoy a strong demand for enrolment from overseas Chinese students. Even though this market is still at the growth stage in New Zealand, some tertiary education institutions, especially ITPs, face many challenges in attracting potential students from overseas markets. The aim of this research is to assist underperforming ITPs to enhance their attractiveness and improve the market share by identifying the decision-making criteria used by overseas Chinese students to select their tertiary education providers. This was achieved using a qualitative approach to gather information from a group of overseas Chinese students in New Zealand.

The study used a purposive sample. Twenty interviews were conducted with the Chinese overseas students, who were recruited from four language schools based in Auckland. Specific criteria were used to select the sample.

A four factor model of decision making criteria was established from the data gathered. This recognizes a range of important influences on the decision-making process of Chinese overseas students when selecting a tertiary education institution in New Zealand. Moreover, the relevant issues effecting promotion strategies of ITPs that are linked to the decision making criteria of Chinese students have been established. The preferences for new media and the Internet were also investigated.

The sample size selected and use of in-depth interviews as single data collection method was sufficient to gather the information required to answer the research question. This research provides useful market information to ITPs to improve the effectiveness of their communication programs. Future research should focus on testing the validity of these decision criteria using a large sample, both qualitatively and quantitatively.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

First of all, I would like to show sincerest gratitude to my principal supervisor of the thesis, Dr. Asoka Gunaratne. He has provided the most insightful and professional guidance and most valuable comments and feedback, and he also gave me great encouragement, support and assistance in the research, especially when my study was in the frustrating stage. I also would like to thank my secondary supervisor, Alastair Emerson, for his comments and contribution.

I wish to thank everyone who participated in the interviews of the research for their assistance; they provided most valuable opinions and information to me. Thanks also go to the managers from the four language schools for their kind support in searching for participants, and letting me have the chance to communicate with the targeted students.

I would like to thank some helpful Unitec staff for their assistance during my study: Dr Simon Peel, the dean of research and postgraduate centre, Glenis Spencer, a programme administrator of Master of Business, Dr. Scott Wilson and Kath Bridges in charge of ethics application, and Cynthia Almerida in the postgraduate and research centre.

I wish to thank my two kind classmates, Mary Lim and Daniel Bourne-Hunt, for their assistance and encouragement, and for other classmates' encouragement. I also thank my friends and relatives for their support and encouragement.

Finally I give heartfelt gratitude to my dear mother, Yuhua Zhang, for her encouragement and understanding, and for offering unconditional love and support. This thesis is dedicated to my mother especially.

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

## Contents

Declaration .....	ii
ABSTRACT.....	iii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	iv
TABLE OF CONTENTS.....	v
LIST OF FIGURES.....	ix
LIST OF GRAPHS .....	x
LIST OF CHARTS.....	xi
LIST OF APPENDICES .....	xii

## Chapters

<b>Chapter one: Introduction.....</b>	<b>1</b>
1.1 Background .....	1
1.2 Problem Description.....	3
1.3 Research Question .....	6
1.4 Aim and Objectives .....	7
1.5 Chapter Summary .....	8
<b>Chapter two: Literature Review .....</b>	<b>9</b>
2.1 Introduction .....	9
2.2 Consumer Decision Making of Overseas Students .....	9
2.2.1 Conceptual description .....	9
2.2.2 Study of “push-pull” model influencing the students’ decisions in UK.....	11
2.2.3 Theoretical framework .....	13
2.3 Decision Making of Chinese Students in NZ .....	17
2.4 Marketing Strategy of TEI.....	19
2.4.1 Conceptual Model .....	19
2.5 Studies in Overseas Markets .....	22
2.5.1 Experienced study in Australia.....	22
2.5.2 Experienced study in UK.....	23
2.5.3 Studies in the Asian market .....	25

2.6 Promotional Strategies.....	26
2.6.1 Types of promotional techniques.....	26
2.6.2 Internet marketing description.....	28
2.6.3 Social media marketing description.....	31
2.7 Chapter Summary .....	34
<b>Chapter three: Methodology.....</b>	<b>35</b>
3.1 Introduction .....	35
3.2 Research Philosophy .....	35
3.3 Methodology .....	37
3.3.1 Quantitative approach.....	37
3.3.2 Qualitative approach.....	38
3.3.3 Why choose Qualitative approach.....	39
3.4 Operational Method.....	40
3.4.1 Data collection—Interview .....	40
3.4.2 Sampling.....	41
3.4.3 Data analysis.....	42
3.4.4 Ethics considerations .....	43
3.5 Chapter Summary .....	43
<b>Chapter Four: Findings .....</b>	<b>44</b>
4.1 Introduction .....	44
4.2 Chinese students’ views on the factors affecting their decision-making process.....	44
4.2.1 Main reasons for choosing New Zealand as a study destination .....	44
4.2.2 Dominant reasons for students’ choice of major .....	48
4.2.3 Determinants of preference for an institution.....	49
4.2.4 Main purposes for studying in New Zealand.....	50
4.2.5 Plans after completing tertiary education in New Zealand.....	52
4.2.6 Expected values from New Zealand tertiary education.....	53
4.2.7 Effect of personal reasons in making decisions in choosing an institution .....	54
4.2.8 Influence of city’s image when making decisions on choosing an institution .....	55
4.2.9 The role of the image of the institution in decision-making.....	56
4.2.10 Programme evaluation.....	58
4.2.11 Summary of key findings on factors effecting decision making of Chinese students .....	60
4.3 Chinese students’ views on the awareness of the characteristics of institutions .....	67

4.3.1 Characteristics of universities.....	67
4.3.2 Characteristics of ITPs .....	68
4.3.3 Characteristics of Private Training Establishments (PTEs).....	70
4.4 Chinese students' views on the channels of information search .....	73
4.4.1 Types of channels of searching information.....	73
4.4.2 Comments on information search through social media (SM), such as Forum and Social Network Site (SNS).....	74
4.5 Chinese students' views on steps in selecting a tertiary institution.....	78
4.6 Chinese students' views on frequently used promotion techniques .....	79
4.7 Chapter summary .....	81
<b>Chapter Five: Discussion .....</b>	<b>82</b>
5.1 Introduction .....	82
5.2 Decision making criteria of Chinese students when selecting a New Zealand TEI .....	82
5.2.1 Personal reasons .....	84
5.2.2 City image .....	86
5.2.3 Institution image.....	86
5.2.4 Programme evaluation.....	88
5.3 Promotion strategy of ITPs in Chinese student market .....	89
5.3.1 Which Characteristics of ITPs attract Chinese students compared with Universities and PTEs?.....	89
5.3.2 What are the Chinese students' preferred channels of information search when applying to an institution? .....	90
5.3.3 How Chinese students think about the use of Social Media in applying to an institution.....	92
5.3.4 How ITPs can improve their focus on Chinese students through promotion techniques in New Zealand .....	93
5.4 Chapter Summary .....	95
<b>Chapter Six: Conclusions and Recommendations .....</b>	<b>96</b>
6.1 Research Conclusions.....	96
6.2 Recommendations .....	99
6.3 Limitations of the research .....	101
6.4 Further research.....	102
<b>References.....</b>	<b>103</b>

## LIST OF TABLES

Page

Table 3.1:	Key features of the Positivistic and Phenomenological paradigms	36
Table 4.1:	Summary of the main findings of the characteristics of institutions	72
Table 4.2:	Advantages and Disadvantages of ITPs compared with universities	73
Table 4.3:	Summary of main findings in the styles of information search	77
Table 4.4:	Summary of key findings in familiar promotion techniques	80

## LIST OF FIGURES

Page

Figure 2.1:	Five-step decision-making processes in purchase behaviour	10
Figure 2.2:	Theoretical model	13
Figure 2.3:	Main factors influencing decision-making process	16
Figure 2.4:	Basis of marketing strategy	20
Figure 4.1:	Reasons for studying in New Zealand	45
Figure 4.2:	Factors referring to quality education	46
Figure 4.3:	Factors referring to the environment	46
Figure 4.4:	Factors referring to New Zealand's culture	47
Figure 4.5:	Dominant reasons for students' choice of major	48
Figure 4.6:	Determinants of preference for an institution	49
Figure 4.7:	Purposes of studying in NZ	51
Figure 4.8:	Factors referring to receiving a tertiary education	52
Figure 4.9:	Plan after completing study	52
Figure 4.10:	Expected value from New Zealand education	53
Figure 4.11:	Effect of personal improvement	54
Figure 4.12:	Source of advice	55
Figure 4.13:	Influence of city image	56
Figure 4.14:	Effect of image of the institution	57
Figure 4.15:	Effect of faculty	57
Figure 4.16:	Effect of facilities	58
Figure 4.17:	Effect of programme evaluation	59
Figure 4.18a:	Summary of key findings on factors affecting decision-making in terms of personal improvement	62
Figure 4.18b:	Summary of key findings on factors affecting decision-making in terms of source of advice	63
Figure 4.18c:	Summary of key findings on factors affecting decision-making in terms of City image	64
Figure 4.18d:	Summary of key findings on factors affecting decision-making in terms of institution image	65
Figure 4.18e:	Summary of key findings on factors affecting decision-making in terms of programme evaluation	66
Figure 4.19:	Characteristics of universities	67
Figure 4.20:	Characteristics of ITPs	68
Figure 4.21:	Issue of industry based education in ITPs	69
Figure 4.22:	Characteristics of ITPs compared with Universities	70
Figure 4.23:	Characteristics of PTEs	71
Figure 4.24:	Channels for searching for information	74
Figure 4.20:	Characteristics of ITPs	65
Figure 4.21:	Issue of industry based education in ITPs	66
Figure 4.22:	Characteristics of ITPs compared with Universities	67
Figure 4.23:	Characteristics of PTEs	68
Figure 5.1:	Main factors influencing the decision-making process of Chinese students in New Zealand	83

**LIST OF GRAPHS**

**Page**

Graph 1.1:	International Student Trends in Tertiary Education Institutions in New Zealand 2002-2009	5
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## **LIST OF CHARTS**

**Page**

Chart 4.1:	Features of information through SM	75
Chart 4.2:	Comments on SM in searching information	75
Chart 4.3:	Motivation in using SNS	76
Chart 4.4:	Motivation in using Forum	77
Chart 4.5:	Frequent use of promotion techniques	79
Chart 4.6:	Types of advertising	80

**LIST OF APPENDICES**

**PAGE**

Appendix 1:	Information sheet	111
Appendix 2:	Consent form	112

## **LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS**

CD-ROM	Compact Disc Read-only Memory
CIE	Certificate in English
EAP	English for Academic Purposes
GE	General English
IELTS	International English Language Testing System
ITPs	Institutes of Technology and Polytechnics
NZ	New Zealand
NZIOS	New Zealand Institute of Studies
NZLC	New Zealand Language Centres
PR	Permanent Residence
PTEs	Private Training Establishments
SE	Search Engine
SEOT	Search Engine Optimization Techniques
SM	Social Media
SNS	Social Networking Sites
TAFE	Technical and Further Education
TEI	Tertiary Education Institution
TNQT	Tropical North Queensland TAFE
TV	Television
UK	Unites Kingdom
UNITEC	Unitec Institute of Technology
UREC	Unitec Research Ethics Committee
USA	United States of America
VET	Vocational Education and Training



# **Chapter one: Introduction**

## **1.1 Background**

Understanding customer behaviour plays a significant role in improving organization performance. Its aim is to understand the motives of past and present customers so as to predict the behaviour of future customers (Intoweb, 2010). A tertiary institution is able to design an appropriate marketing strategy and long-term business plans by analysing customer behaviour (Vallaster, 2005). Consumer decision-making and understanding of customer behaviour has been the subject of considerable research in commercial fields. They have also been examined in relation to the purchase of education (Maringe & Carter, 2007). According to Education Account (2010), the performance of tertiary institutions in New Zealand is weak in regard to attracting overseas students. Moreover, the number of overseas Chinese students, which represents the largest group of overseas students in New Zealand, has continued to decline since 2003 (Tan, 2011).

With the increased demand for a high quality education, students have a strong desire to pursue studies overseas. A large number of students who choose to study outside their own country base their choice on the criteria related to the quality of the available programmes. According to the Ministry of Education's report in 2006 regarding overseas students in New Zealand, in the last few decades, two million students have chosen to study outside their own country. In the next 20 years, this figure is estimated to reach 5 million (International Division, 2006).

Export education has become a vital commercial business (Schroth & McCormack, 2000). The market for export education is still huge and has great further potential. This significantly contributes to the economy of countries, such as New Zealand. For instance, in 2009-2010, there were 73,400 overseas students studying in New Zealand, who contributed over \$2.3 billion to the economy (Tan, 2011).

Export education plays a key role in terms of its contribution to the development of New Zealand. However, the benefits of export education are not only economic. They also improve New Zealand's global impression and international relationships, attract other cultures and improve cross-cultural communication skills (International Division, 2006).

New Zealand is now recognized as a world-class provider of education to international students, with well-regarded institutions and a progressive education system. The quality of tertiary education in New Zealand is highly regarded. In addition, it is an English-speaking country with high living standards and affordable costs. Hence, New Zealand is very attractive for overseas students. There are eight universities and 20 public Institutes of Technology and Polytechnics (ITPs) offering a broad range of professional, vocational and academic courses. Most ITPs also offer short full-time and part-time courses. Conveniently, these courses are scheduled throughout the year for overseas students (Cravens & Piercy, 2009).

In accordance with the Education Act 1989, the ITPs provide vocational education and training, promote community education, and are focused on applied and technological programmes (Codling & Meek, 2003). The economic future of New Zealand depends on the provision of up-to-date technical knowledge, and training by providers of vocational education plays an essential role in this economic development (Abbott & Doucouliagos, 1999).

Furthermore, since 1990, most of the ITPs have not only provided vocational education and training, but also services similar to those provided by universities (Codling & Meek, 2003). In 1990, the ITPs were dramatically transformed by new legislation, which focused on giving them autonomy by providing bulk funding as well as giving them permission to offer degree programmes. These two fundamental changes gave the ITPs the ability to compete with universities (Codling & Meek, 2003). Fifty-three percent of degree students at ITPs completed their programmes in six years, which is close to the 58% achieved in universities (Shulruf, Tumen & Hattie, 2010). As a result, most universities started providing vocational qualifications, or a

series of applied programmes, to cope with the direct competition from the ITPs (Codling & Meek, 2003).

## **1.2 Problem Description**

However, ITPs in New Zealand are not as well-known as the universities, which are well recognised internationally. “More than half of New Zealand universities are ranked among the top 500 universities in the world and one is in the top 50” (University Education, 2012). Thus, when international students choose a public tertiary institution, they are unable to differentiate between the ITPs and the universities because of their lack of awareness of the courses offered by ITPs. Many students, therefore, tend to enrol at universities rather than ITPs due to the perceived higher prestige of university degrees. This occurs despite the ITPs providing a broad range of flexible, practical courses to international students, which offer good value as well as the ability to acquire life skills. According to a survey by the Ministry of Education in 2009, the numbers of international students enrolled in tertiary institutions in New Zealand were: Universities 22,291, ITPs 11,624. As can be seen, the number of international students enrolled in the ITPs was only about half that in the universities (Education Counts, 2010).

The ITPs’ ability to attract overseas students is weak. In a study conducted by Gray, Fam & Llanes (2003) on 315 education institutions from USA, UK, Canada, New Zealand and Australia, two major factors that influence success in the export education market were determined. They are:

1. Image and resources – these are comprised of the strength of the institution’s financial resources, its market profile or recognition, the range of courses and programmes offered, the size and influence of the alumni, and last but not least, its reputation for quality education;
2. Coalition and forward integration – these refer to the establishment of international strategic alliances, and arrangements for offshore teaching programs.

ITPs in New Zealand are weak in both ‘image and resources’ and ‘coalition and forward integration’. This is due to their status, lack of international recognition, limitation of courses, and lack of cooperation with other countries’ tertiary education institutions (Codling & Meek, 2003).

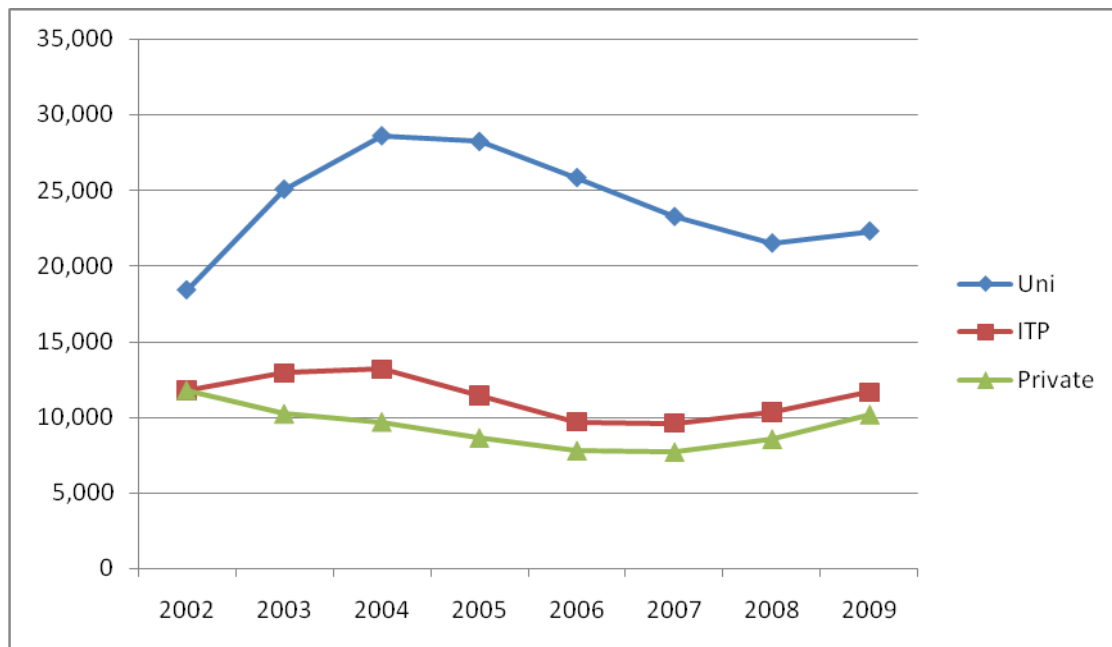
However, ITPs have a unique advantage in the tertiary education sector in New Zealand. ITPs emphasise learning from current industries, for instance, Unitec, one of the largest ITPs, emphasizes “Real World Experience”. ITPs provide courses that are focused on practical experience and application in the workplace (Ministry of Education, 2011). They provide professional, applied degrees, and their courses include industry-based learning and work experience, so most programmes suit the needs of their communities (Ministry of Education, 2011). They also provide flexible course delivery, such as weekend classes, night classes, part-time, on-line, and distance courses. In addition, their teachers have in-depth knowledge of their particular industry or profession and have often been working in a practical environment for many years (Ministry of Education, 2011). Moreover, ITPs also provide a wide range of subjects at varying levels, and their qualifications enjoy international recognition (Ministry of Education, 2011).

The unique academic strengths and the flexibility of ITPs give their graduates the edge when scouting for jobs. According to Unitec’s 2010 Annual Report, 85 percent of undergraduate degrees at Unitec incorporated elements of learning based on industry experience, and 83 percent of graduates found a job in relation to their qualification within three months (Unitec, 2010). According to Sherry, Bhat, Beaver & Ling (2004), the reasons international students choose New Zealand as an overseas study destination are the higher probability of being employed after completion of the course, as well as the high standard of living, the low cost, and the opportunity to enhance English language skills. ITPs also have a distinct advantage in assisting international students to gain work experience.

Therefore, the ITPs have distinct and unique advantages in export education compared with universities. However, most of them fail to attract large numbers of overseas students (Codling & Meek, 2003). There is intense competition in the globalized education industry as well as huge profit potential resulting from the demand for quality education by overseas students. The ITPs, therefore, need to research and respond to the true requirements of international students. Increased enrolments could be achieved by promoting their institution and programmes, based on their own unique strengths and specialities.

However, the ITPs still have a long way to go in terms of defining market segments and promoting and attracting international students. According to Graph 1.1 (Enrolled International Student Trends from 2002 to 2009 in Tertiary Education Institutions), the number of enrolled international students in ITPs is about half of that in universities, but marginally higher than the number in private training establishments. The number of total international students increased slightly from 2006 to 2009.

**Graph 1.1: International Student Trends in Tertiary Education Institutions in New Zealand 2002-2009**



(Sources: Education Counts 2010).

The number of Chinese students, which make up the largest proportion of overseas students in New Zealand, has continued to fall since 2003, when they made up almost half of international students (Tan, 2011). According to the Ministry of Education's report dated 31<sup>st</sup> March 2011 on international student enrolments in New Zealand, the total number of international students in 2010 was 96,211. Of these, 21,258 or 22% were Chinese, the lowest percentage since 2000 (International Division, 2011).

However, there has been a rapid increase in the number of Chinese students studying overseas. In 2010, 229,300 Chinese students chose to study overseas, a 30 percent increase on 2009 (Yang, 2011). According to statistics from China's Ministry of Education, the number of Chinese students who choose to study overseas has increased at an average rate of 20 percent each year since 2000 (Yang, 2011). This number is predicted to rise to between 550,000 and 600,000 in 2014 (Yang, 2011), indicating the huge potential of the overseas Chinese student market. The Chinese students, however, appear to have lost interest in studying in New Zealand recently. **Therefore, the business problem is:** *How could ITPs in New Zealand increase enrolments in their programmes to improve their business share of the international education market.*

### **1.3 Research Question**

As described above, tertiary education at ITPs in New Zealand has lost its attractiveness for overseas students compared to universities (Codling & Meek, 2003). With the intense competition of a globalized education industry and the huge profit potential that overseas students provide, especially the Chinese student market, ITPs need to find out how overseas Chinese students make their decisions when choosing a TEI in New Zealand, and devise proper marketing promotion activities to target this market.

This research is aimed at providing suggestions for the marketing departments of ITPs by identifying how overseas Chinese students make their decisions when choosing a TEI in New Zealand. The unique strengths and advantages of ITPs will be analysed, thus enabling ITPs to improve their attractiveness to overseas Chinese students, based

on those criteria. The results will support ITPs in improving their international student market share.

This research will determine the criteria critical to overseas Chinese students when choosing an institution. It will then aim to identify the unique advantages of ITPs compared to the other overseas education providers in New Zealand. Appropriate marketing and promotional activities will be defined for developing the overseas Chinese student market. Moreover, this study will provide personalized recommendations for ITPs to improve their ability to attract overseas Chinese students.

The research question is:

*To what extent could Institutes of Technology and Polytechnics in New Zealand improve their attractiveness to overseas Chinese students by identifying the criteria they use to choose tertiary education institutions in New Zealand?*

## **1.4 Aim and Objectives**

As described above, there is a strong demand for tertiary education institutions nowadays, especially from overseas Chinese students. The export education industry boosts the economy of the providing countries; however, the full market potential is still under-estimated. New Zealand education institutions, especially ITPs, face many challenges in developing their overseas markets. The aim of this research, *based on the characteristics of a small group of overseas Chinese students in New Zealand, is to assist ITPs to improve their attractiveness to meet overseas students' decision-making criteria in order to gain more market share.*

The objectives of this research are:

- To identify factors influencing the decision-making processes of overseas Chinese students in selecting New Zealand tertiary institutions.
- To determine what features of ITPs attract overseas Chinese students.
- To develop proper marketing promotion activities to exploit the overseas Chinese student market.

## **1.5 Chapter Summary**

This chapter summarises the background information of the research, including the problem description, the research question, and the aim and objectives. It provides an outline of the research project, including a discussion of the expected results, and the focus of the research.

The following chapter delivers an in-depth literature review of consumer decision making and marketing strategy in the overseas tertiary education industry.

## **Chapter two: Literature Review**

### **2.1 Introduction**

In the preceding chapter, an overview of the components of this research is provided. The purpose of this chapter is to provide a clear description of the concepts of consumer decision making and marketing strategy from various sources which sustain the research theoretically. This chapter presents the views and findings of past studies that investigated the decision-making process of overseas students, and describes the aspects of marketing strategy that are reviewed in past literature and their relevance to this study. Relevant concepts about promotional techniques are described in order to identify appropriate promotional activities for ITPs for the Chinese student market. The emphasis is on the use of Internet and social media on communication programmes.

Because Chinese international students come from different cultural backgrounds and have distinct needs and desires when choosing a TEI, the differing requirements of Chinese students are investigated in this chapter.

### **2.2 Consumer Decision Making of Overseas Students**

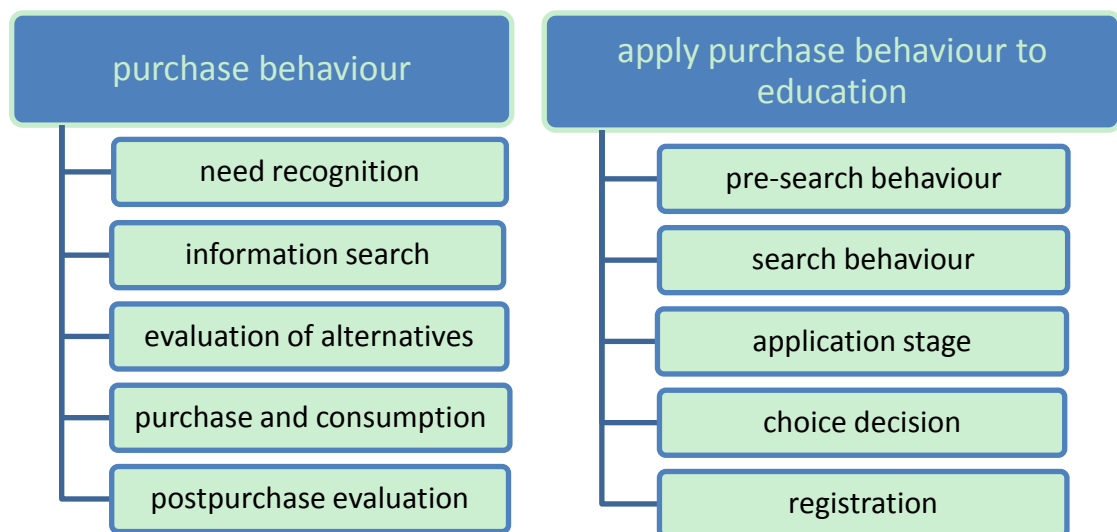
#### **2.2.1 Conceptual description**

The aim of customer behaviour analysis is, ultimately, to improve organization performance by understanding the motives of previous and current customers so as to identify future customers and predict their behaviour (Intoweb, 2010). When an organization understands clearly why people want to buy its products or services, how they choose their most appreciated products or services, it is able to design an appropriate and successful marketing strategy and long term business plan (Vallaster, 2005).

Customer behaviour is closely interrelated with customer purchase decision-making (Donaldson, 1990). Understanding that link is the key to analyzing why customers tend to buy more or less, or choose not to buy (Donaldson, 1990). Consumer decision-making has been the subject of considerable research, especially in commercial fields, and the purchase of education has also been examined to (Maringe & Carter, 2007). The step-by-step process of how consumers make decisions and process information about services or products plays a significant role when making expensive education purchases, such as where and what to study (Zeithaml & Bitner, 2003). The decision to study abroad is often one of the most vital and expensive initiatives that students may ever take (Cubillo, Sanchez & Cervino, 2006). Decision-making by students is a complex process when applied to a high cost item such as overseas study (Cubillo et al., 2006).

Zeithaml & Bitner (2003) stated that consumers go through a five-step decision-making process in the purchase of services: need recognition, information search, evaluation of alternatives, purchase and consumption, and post purchase evaluation. Maringe (2006) integrated these processes into the choice of the institution or subjects of study, and developed a five-stage decision making process for the choice of an institution: pre-search behaviour, search behaviour, application stage, choice decision, and registration, as shown in Figure 2.1:

**Figure 2.1: Five-step decision-making process in purchase behaviour**



(Source: Zeithaml & Bitner, 2003; Maringe, 2006)

Maringe (2006) explained each step as:

- Pre-search behaviour: applicants have early thoughts about their future in relation to any available tertiary education information;
- Search behaviour: applicants have clear thoughts about potential providers and start to make up their minds by combining various pieces of information while looking for data integrated with decision criteria;
- Application stage: applicants submit their applications to the institutions;
- Choice decision: applicants choose from the multiple offers;
- Registration: applicants turn up to register.

### **2.2.2 Study of “push-pull” model influencing the students’ decisions in UK**

UK is strongly recommended as a study destination for overseas students all over the world, and a number of overseas students choose to study in UK every year (Binsardi & Ekwulugo, 2003). Some studies have determined and discussed some of the factors influencing the decision-making of overseas students in the choice of institutions in UK. For example, Mazzarol & Soutar (2002) described a “push-pull” model from the results of four surveys undertaken in China, India, Taiwan and Indonesia, which examine the students’ decision-making process regarding study overseas: Push factors tend to motivate the student to seek overseas education; Pull factors are identified as some factors that influence the decision-making process in the selection of a study destination. Maringe & Carter (2007) also identified why African students chose to study in UK tertiary education institutions by the “push-pull” model.

Push factors, such as the perception of seeking a better overseas course of study, or a course which is unavailable in their own country, or studying internationally to acquire an understanding of the “west” and migrating to a Western country after graduation, tend to motivate students to seek an overseas education (Mazzarol & Soutar, 2002). Political and economic factors often motivate African students to study in the UK (Maringe & Carter, 2007).

Pull factors are identified as the factors that influence the decision-making process in selection of a study destination, including the choice of the country, the institution and

the course or programme. The decision-making process relating to overseas study is dependent on “pull” factors (Maringe, 2006). When choosing a country, pull factors include the reputation of the country, acquiring a better knowledge and awareness of a special host country, its geographic proximity, the cost of an international education, and the local environment in the host country (Mazzarol & Soutar, 2002). For African students, the pull factors include international recognition of qualifications, obtaining a high quality international tertiary education, a safer environment, and an easier application process (Maringe & Carter, 2007).

The choice of a TEI has long been a vital subject of substantial research (Maringe, 2006). Mazzarol & Soutar (2002) list the pull factors influencing the choice of a TEI as: employers’ recognition after graduation; reputation of quality; links or alliance with another co-operating institution that students know; high quality teaching staff; alumni and word-of-mouth comments; the number of students enrolled, and recognition of students’ qualifications obtained in other country. In the example of African students choosing to study in UK, Maringe & Carter (2007) also recognized the following factors as quite significant: employers’ recognition, institutional research/teaching profile, course availability, and accommodation costs and availability.

In the choice of a course or programme of study, the range of pull factors influencing students’ decisions appears to be similar to the institutional choice decisions. They include: employment reputation of the course; teaching quality; and teaching approach, including learning delivery approach and assessment approach (Maringe, 2006).

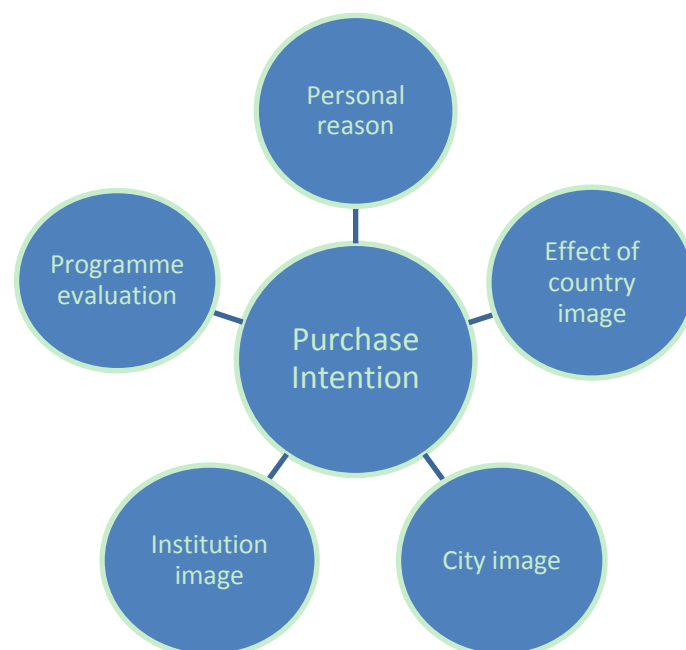
Moreover, Maringe & Carter (2007) identified some other significant factors influencing decision-making of international students as being: family and friends, private agencies, Internet based information, direct contact, school staff, media, and British Council (UK government agent). Mazzarol & Soutar (2002) thought family preference is the most essential factor influencing decision-making of international students in selecting an institution for overseas study.

Mazzarol & Soutar (2002) and Maringe & Carter (2007) used the “Push-pull” model to identify lots of factors that influence international students choosing to study in UK. Therefore, the “Push-pull” model plays a guiding role for further research, especially for those countries and institutions where interest in the international education industry is strong. However, geographical differences between countries, and their educational history and reputation, are reflected in the choice of institutions. Thus, the export of education from New Zealand and the UK to international markets is totally different from each other, especially in the case of ITPs, and it is an area worthy of future research.

### 2.2.3 Theoretical framework

Cubillo, Sanchez & Cervino (2006) integrated a number of factors based on research and constructed a theoretical model (Figure 2.2) to analyze factors influencing the decision-making process of international students in selecting a place of study overseas. The model aims to explain the factors that affect international students' purchase intentions concerning a destination country as a provider of education services. The theoretical model has five aspects influencing purchase intentions: personal reasons; effect of country image; city image; institution image; and programme evaluation. The main factors relating to those five aspects are identified and shown in Figure 2.3.

**Figure 2.2: Theoretical model**



### ***Personal reason***

- ***Personal improvement***

Cubillo et al. (2006) indicated that in choosing to study abroad, students not only intend to obtain degrees, but also seek the benefits a degree can offer. Occupation, status and lifestyle, employment prospects and higher status play important roles. In addition, improving language skills, living in a different culture, making international contacts and meeting new people are factors in international students' choices.

- ***Advice***

Advice represents an important factor in the list of personal reasons for choosing an overseas study target. Recommendations from family, friends, student networks or colleagues who have already chosen an institution can influence decision-making (Cubillo et al., 2006).

### ***Effect of country's image***

Potential students tend to select the country first, before the institution. Students prefer institutions from developed countries rather than developing countries, except when lower prices are a consideration. Students also tend to believe that the tertiary education provided in countries with a prestigious image is of high quality (Cubillo et al., 2006).

### ***City image***

The city is the environment in which international students will live and consume the education services. The decision-making process will be affected by the location, transport, and social facilities in the environment (Cubillo et al., 2006).

### ***Institution image***

Institution image is the combination of impressions, ideas and opinions that prospective students have of the institution. The institution's image can affect students' decisions by means of several factors, such as academic reputation, the quality and experience of its teaching faculty, and its attractiveness and campus atmosphere (Cubillo et al., 2006).

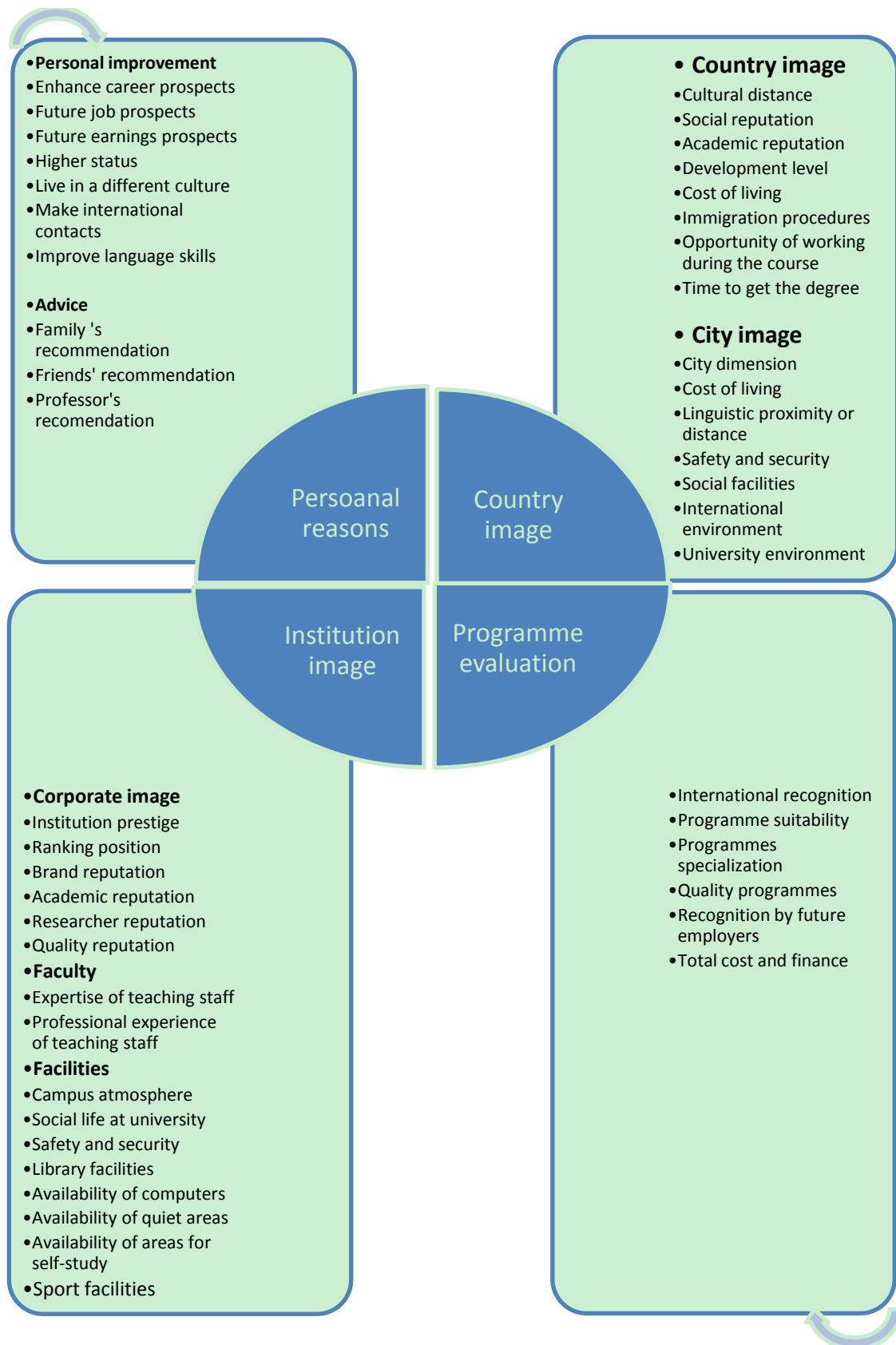
### ***Programme evaluation***

Cubillo et al. (2006) described programme evaluation as the attitude of students toward targeted programmes. Choosing from a wide variety of courses, students are looking for programme suitability, quality and availability, international recognition of the degree, suitable admission requirements and costs, and availability of financial support.

Cubillo et al. (2006) provided a clear model for the research. However, the way to get advice has been expanded dramatically. Maringe & Carter (2007) have demonstrated that some essential advice comes from private agencies, Internet, direct contacts, school staff, media, and the British Council, family, friends, colleagues and students networks. Internet based information and media are especially influential.

The Internet has changed most people's way of searching for information nowadays, and Internet information influences the decision-making of students and provides advice on their choices. Examples are social networking sites (SNS), and Internet media and forums. For example, in America, 93% of adult Internet users are on Facebook, and spend 11 hours a month on Facebook (Morris, Teevan & Panovich, 2010). Because of the rise in popularity of SNS, it has become an essential option for finding information on Internet (Morris et al., 2010). According to a survey on the use of Facebook, people prefer to seek opinions on Facebook, which can provide valuable opinions and viable alternatives for subjective questions. The results from SNS are regarded as very reliable (Morris et al., 2010). Therefore, it can be inferred that for the majority of college-age students who use computers, the Internet has become a direct way for them to know the world and help them make choices for overseas education.

**Figure 2.3: Main factors influencing decision-making process**



(Source: Cubillo et al., 2006)

## **2.3 Decision Making of Chinese Students in NZ**

According to a national survey in New Zealand for the Ministry of Education in 2007, the main factors influencing the choice of New Zealand for study were cost, quality, safety and international recognition of a qualification (Ministry of Education by Deloitte, 2008). Other factors include the students' own preference over family preference, and recommendations from agents, friends and teachers. All of these have an essential place in selecting an institution, and also students would like to get support through scholarships and other financial sources (Ministry of Education by Deloitte, 2008). International students expect to improve their English language ability, get a "good job" when they return home, and finish their programme in the expected timeframe. Moreover, according to the survey, 61% of international students intend to apply for Permanent Residence in New Zealand (Ministry of Education by Deloitte, 2008). Chinese students, the largest proportion of international students, have three main concerns – personal reasons, advice and image – which were identified as influencing their decision-making when choosing a New Zealand TEI. These are discussed below.

### ***Personal reasons***

According to 110 Chinese students studying postgraduate courses at the Auckland campus of Massey University, their most significant educational objectives when selecting New Zealand as their destination for tertiary study were "to obtain a qualification essential to my career", and to develop English language competence (Selvarajah, 2006). A qualification or a degree is a very important objective for Chinese students (Marriott, Du Plessis & Pu, 2010). In particular, obtaining employment after graduation is the most important personal aspect of decision-making for Chinese students seeking an education in New Zealand (Selvarajah, 2006). According to the survey conducted for Ministry of Education by Deloitte (2008), fifty-six per cent of Chinese students stated that their immediate intention was to look for a job in New Zealand after graduation. Marriott et al. (2010) also stated that job expectations, that is, both local and foreign jobs, are one of the most crucial factors affecting Chinese students' choice of a study destination. Moreover, according to the survey, seventy-six percent of Chinese students intended to apply for permanent

residence in New Zealand (Ministry of Education by Deloitte 2008). Also, some students seek local qualifications to access the local labour market in order to immigrate to New Zealand (Selvarajah, 2006). Furthermore, making friends with Westerners or having a personally fulfilling experience in New Zealand was a crucial personal objective for Chinese students (Marriott et al., 2010).

### *Advice*

In the choice of an overseas education, there is experiential evidence that students' peers or racial background influence their decisions (Chung, Holdsworth, Li & Fam, 2009). Students are more likely to look for social and emotional support from their international classmates or from students of the same nationality (Ministry of Education by Deloitte, 2008). For Chinese students, cultural supports from friends and family, and from students of the same nationality, have been identified as significant factors in the choice of study destination (Chung et al., 2009). In particular, Marriott et al. (2010) stated that, traditionally, Chinese parents pay close attention to sponsoring and supporting their children so that they receive the necessary education. Their advice naturally influences the decision-making of Chinese students in choosing education institutions. Moreover, the findings of the national survey also showed that agents' recommendations had a significant impact on students' choices, exceeded only by friends' and teachers' recommendations: 53% of students used agents to help with arranging their study in New Zealand (Ministry of Education by Deloitte, 2008).

### *Image*

Chinese traditional culture is influenced by Confucian culture and traditionally Chinese students are more likely to want to live in the host country harmoniously (Chung et al., 2009). Some important value factors of New Zealand are its low corruption and high level of honesty and fairness, which has a huge attraction for Chinese students (Chung et al., 2009). In particular, issues surrounding personal safety, such as racial discrimination and the risk of victimisation of Chinese students, significantly influence the choice to study in New Zealand (Chung et al., 2009). In addition, the quality of New Zealand education attracts many international students to New Zealand to study, including Chinese students (Ministry of Education by Deloitte, 2008). The total cost of studying in New Zealand and the English language-learning

environment in an English-speaking country also play a significant role in the selection of New Zealand as a study destination (Marriott et al., 2010).

Relating to the educational institutions, the crucial issues for Chinese students making a choice are the institutions' reputation, the job and career prospects of the programme and the student learning environment (Chung et al., 2009). Students will also be attracted if they can be supported by scholarships and financial support from government or employers (Ministry of Education by Deloitte, 2008). In addition, the provision of relevant services by institutions affects the choice of international students, including Chinese students. If the students are very satisfied with the orientation services, the international student office, computing services, library services and recreational facilities, and are able to seek assistance from the staff with language issues or practical problems, these factors will influence the choice of institution (Ministry of Education by Deloitte, 2008).

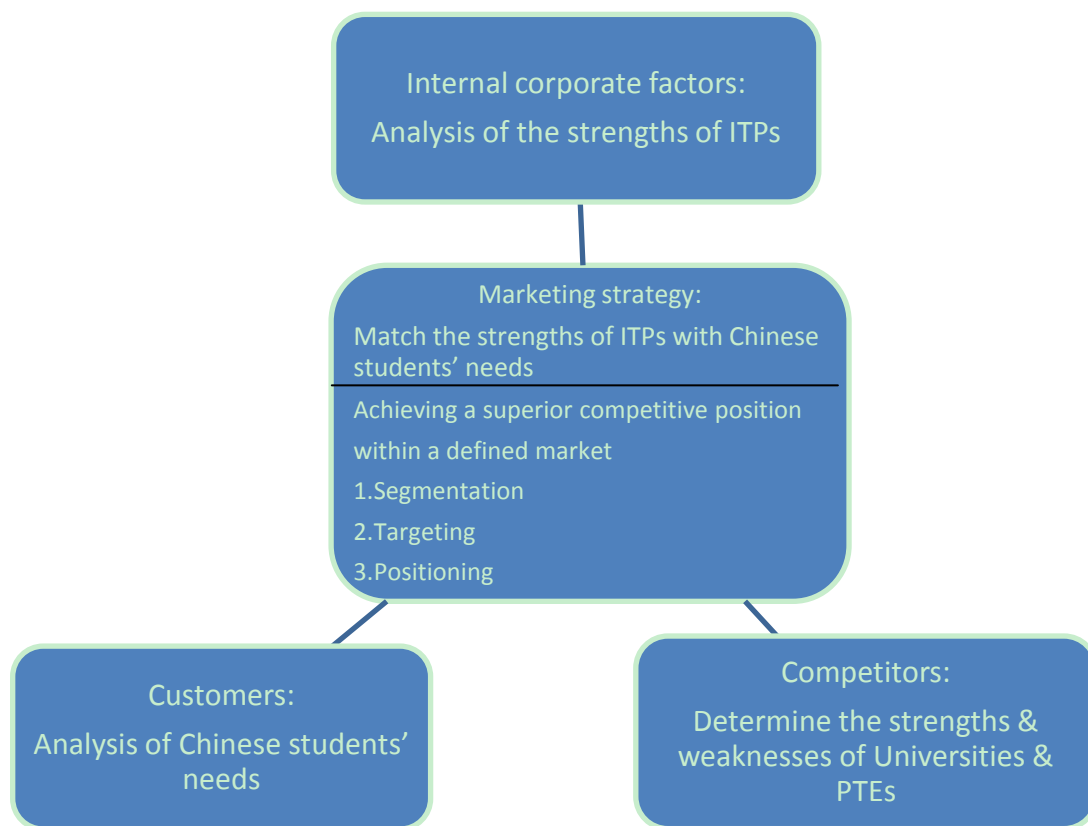
## **2.4 Marketing Strategy of TEI**

### **2.4.1 Conceptual Model**

A marketing strategy is defined as “the design, implementation, and control of a plan to influence exchanges to achieve organizational objectives” (Peter & Olson 2006). A marketing strategy of an organisation is the way the company fulfils the requirements of its customers (Ferrell & Hartline, 2011). It may also include other activities such as maintaining relationships with other stakeholders. Marketing strategy basically involves analysis, strategy development and implementation of activities focused on developing a vision for a target market. It includes choosing a strategy for the target market, setting objectives, and executing the marketing positioning strategies to meet the requirements of the customers in the target market (Cravens & Piercy, 2009). The essence of a marketing strategy is to achieve the objectives of an organisation in a defined market by allocating and effectively monitoring its marketing resources and activities (Walker & Mullins, 2009).

There are three elements comprising the marketing strategy, namely, internal corporate factors, customers, and competitors, as shown in Figure 2.4 below:

**Figure 2.4: Basis of marketing strategy**



(Source: Drummond et al., 2008).

The first step is how to consider customers' needs; second, how to establish a competitive position in the defined market segments; and, finally, how to match internal corporate factors with the customers' needs (Drummond et al., 2008). An organization is able to develop and maintain a strong market position by successfully managing these three factors.

The purpose of a marketing strategy is to implement segmentation, targeting and positioning, and to integrate the following three elements: internal corporate factors,

customers and competitors (Drummond et al., 2008). Segmentation involves dividing the market into groups according to common attitudes, behaviours and characteristics; targeting refers to evaluating and choosing market segments; and positioning is undertaken to establish discriminative competitive advantages over the competitors (Drummond et al., 2008).

Moreover, when developing a marketing strategy one should ensure the right integration has been used in the defined target market, including the use of the marketing mix tool to create discriminative competitive advantages among those competitors (Ferrell & Hartline, 2011). Today, the marketing mix plays an increasingly vital role in student recruitment in higher education (Ivy, 2008). The courses provided by the institutions can be filled by providing the qualifications students want, providing the tuition to meet students' expectations, and making information available regarding a choice of qualifications and the costs. These make up the basic factors of the marketing mix (Ivy, 2008). "The marketing mix is a set of controllable communication tools that an institution uses to produce the response it wants from its various target markets" (Ivy, 2008). It involves all the activities that are on influencing the demand for its services. The traditional 4Ps model (product, price, place and promotion) is used for the tangible products. In the services sector, the 7P approach is used to satisfy the needs of the customers: product, price, place, promotion, people, physical evidence and processes (Ivy, 2008).

The purpose of marketing is to transfer the organizational objectives and strategy into a competitive environment (Drummond et al., 2008). The focus of an effective marketing strategy is to define distinguishing services or products to meet customer needs more effectively than the competition (Drummond et al., 2008). The focus of the strategy is to assess the organization's strengths and weaknesses, and its opportunities and threats to developing effective strategies (Hooley, Saunders & Piercy, 2004). Marketing strategy includes analysing the business environment and specific customer needs combining the ongoing services or products with customer segments, and achieving programmes that exceed those of the company's competitors (Drummond et al., 2008).

## **2.5 Studies in Overseas Markets**

### **2.5.1 Experienced study in Australia**

Australian education providers are very experienced in promoting their international education market by designing appropriated marketing strategies. Tropical North Queensland TAFE (TNQT) in Cairns, Australia, which provides English courses and vocational education and training (VET), like ITPs in New Zealand, has evaluated the viability of its marketing strategy in the international market (Barker & Habermann, 2007).

Barker & Habermann (2007) found that overseas students have similar needs and tastes even though they have varying backgrounds. Potential overseas students are influenced by the choice of location and the availability of visas as well as the opportunities provided by education providers and the culture of a study destination in Australia. Moreover, for the overseas market, the three main marketing distribution channels are agents, online marketing and international visits. The major channel in Australia is through an agent (Barker & Habermann, 2007).

When competing in the international market, education providers should recognize the strengths and weaknesses of the location, such as safety, cost and accessibility. For example, in comparison with the large tertiary education providers, the competitive advantages of TNQT are its location and cost leadership, and its product differentiation in the form of its available educational pathways (Barker & Habermann, 2007).

Barker & Habermann (2007) pointed out that TNQT should maintain its Asian marketing focus. Its target market is in the growing Asian education market in countries such as China, Thailand, and South Korea. It needs to concentrate on its current distribution channels, the educational agents, because students from China, Thailand, and South Korea are identified as being most likely to utilise those educational pathways (Barker & Habermann, 2007). TNQT was also advised to adopt a strategy of regional and national alliances to cope with the competition from the

large tertiary education providers, and to establish good relationships with the educational agents in the target countries (Barker & Habermann, 2007).

Australian TAFE institutes are more like the ITPs in New Zealand. However, there are differences between TAFEs and ITPs. The proportion of part time students in TAFEs is higher (80-85 percent) than in ITPs, and TAFEs cannot offer degree courses. They also have a shorter history than ITPs (Abbott & Doucouliagos, 1999). Most of the TAFEs are under state government supervision, and, thus, are not completely autonomous. Moreover, ITPs operate on a higher degree of technical efficiency than TAFEs (Abbott & Doucouliagos, 1999).

### **2.5.2 Experienced study in UK**

UK is universally recommended as a study destination for overseas students because their universities have a reputation for excellence in international education. In a study carried out among 62 international students in UK, the main reason for choosing UK as a study destination was the high educational standards combined with the internationally recognized qualifications. Other reasons included the easier immigration procedures and university admission requirements. Further factors were the ease of finding jobs during and after study, as well as the cost of living, the safe environment, the culture, and the availability of accommodation (Binsardi & Ekwulugo, 2003). In addition, Shah (2009) described the following as reasons for choosing UK as study destination by overseas students: purchasing a degree, high quality education, improving their career prospects, experiencing overseas culture, getting funding for their living expenses and getting higher post-graduate education. Furthermore, Russell (2005) pointed out that the purchasing of a vocational qualification and gaining overseas study experience in UK were overriding factors in influencing overseas education. Thus, the key reasons for overseas study are: high quality education, internationally recognized qualifications, gaining overseas study experience and improving career prospects.

The advantage of attending UK universities was that they provided the best opportunity for attaining an international higher education experience, compared with USA, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, and some European countries like Germany and France (Maringe & Carter, 2007). Given their advantageous position, Binsardi & Ekwulugo (2003) suggested that the best way to attract more overseas students was to lower the tuition fees in UK universities. Other ways included providing more scholarships and better quality pastoral care and services for international students, as well as increased support services such as more campus facilities, greater access to computers and to alumni networks. Shah (2009) also found that the product and price elements of the marketing mix were major factors considered by overseas students in their decision-making process concerning tertiary education. Moreover, Binsardi & Ekwulugo (2003) identified the best marketing promotion strategy as being via alumni, friends and relatives, together with other promotion strategies including promotion through local universities and colleges, web-sites, British Council and Consulate, and through newspaper and government Contacts. Shah (2009) also suggested that the best promotion strategy was to promote the reputation of the university and provide related support and facilities for overseas students in UK.

In addition, UK universities provide specialized segmentation strategies to attract students from regional markets. According to research on African students in UK universities, Maringe & Carter (2007) observed that many students chose the UK not just to improve their English language ability and learn a new culture, but also to escape political crises and poverty. These students tend to take leadership positions in their own countries after completing their qualifications (Maringe & Carter, 2007). Universities needed more financial assistance for African students, through fellowships, scholarships and study bursaries, and they also needed to integrate leadership development elements into their programmes (Maringe & Carter, 2007).

However, because of geographic differences, and differences in educational history and reputation, export education from New Zealand to international markets is totally different from the UK situation, especially in the case of ITPs.

### **2.5.3 Studies in the Asian market**

For New Zealand education providers, it is necessary to understand the Asian market, because New Zealand is geographically close to Asia. According to a study based on 315 education institutions in USA, UK, Canada, Australia and New Zealand, Gray et al. (2003) found that cross-cultural values influenced the marketing strategy of international education. Despite universities having increasing competitive ability in the overseas students market, many institutions still attracted overseas students by implementing a marketing strategy focused on providing programmes through alliance partners or wholly owned foreign ventures in other countries (Gray et al., 2003).

The study found that web pages and print media were the most significant sources for universities in three Asian markets: Malaysia, Singapore and Hong Kong. It stated that a media mix could be used by universities to target students in these three markets. Students themselves were the main decision-makers, and parents of students were a significant second group of decision makers.

The research also suggested that universities could use media mix to attract overseas students from Malaysia, Hong Kong and Singapore, and that the effective media could include print media, web pages, open days and trade fairs. Brochures, stickers, bookmarks and postcards were not important impact factors in attracting overseas students from these three regions (Gray et al., 2003).

Image and resources played a vital role in terms of market success in the study as well as the reputation for quality, size and influence of alumni, market profile or recognition, range of courses and programmes and strength of financial resources (Gray et al., 2003). Moreover, Gray et al. (2003) pointed out key education values like career prospects and reputation should be emphasized in the marketing strategy.

However, overseas students from Malaysia, Hong Kong and Singapore were not concerned about the reputation of the universities and graduates' career prospects, and

cultural integration was also not important for overseas students from these three regions (Gray et al., 2003).

## **2.6 Promotional Strategies**

### **2.6.1 Types of promotional techniques**

The purpose of a promotion strategy is to communicate with buyers and others who have an impact on purchasing decisions by coordinating and integrating promotional techniques to manage the communications initiatives of the organization (Cravens & Piercy, 2009). Promotional techniques consist of advertising, personal selling, direct marketing, public relations, interactive/Internet marketing, and sales promotion (Cravens & Piercy, 2009). The purpose of marketing is to achieve the level of communications sought by management for each individual of the audience (Cravens & Piercy, 2009). The promotion strategies should be changed and challenged using alternative communications and customer relationship management initiatives, by promptly changing markets and competitive space, and expanding global markets (Ferrell & Hartline, 2011).

#### ***Advertising***

Advertising includes any form of non-personal communication regarding a product, an organization, or an idea, which is paid for by a particular sponsor (Jill, 2009). The sponsor is paid to communicate with one or more media, including television, magazines, newspapers, direct mail, radio, Internet, and outdoor advertising (Jill, 2009). The advantages of advertising are the low cost per exposure, the control of exposure, the variety of media, the opportunity for creative message design, consistent message content and adjusted appeal and message. In particular, Internet advertising can target specific customers with more focus (Cravens & Piercy, 2009). Its disadvantages are it cannot interact with the customer and hold the viewer's attention and messages in a fixed period (Cravens & Piercy, 2009).

### ***Personal Selling***

Personal selling means a salesperson (or selling team) uses verbal communication with prospective buyers to obtain sales (Jill, 2009). The advantages are that a salesperson can interact with buyers, target buyers, get feedback, and have access to market and competitor knowledge (Cravens & Piercy, 2009). Moreover, both advertising and personal selling have common factors, including persuading people to buy, transmitting information, and creating awareness of the brand (Cravens & Piercy, 2009).

### ***Sales Promotion***

Sales promotion includes promotional activities, such as sampling, contests, point-of-purchase displays, trade shows, trade incentives, coupons, and product placement in films and other media (Jill, 2009). The objective of sales promotion is to target buyers, thus creating an incentive for them to make purchases, and to elicit responses to special occasions. Consumers, employees and value chain members can also participate in sales promotion activities (Cravens & Piercy, 2009). Effective sales promotion initiatives include placement of advertisements about promotional schemes in magazines, and other media such as TV (Cravens & Piercy, 2009).

### ***Direct Marketing***

Direct marketing means companies make direct contact with buyers through various communication channels, for example, television selling, telemarketing, direct mail, catalogues, electronic shopping, and radio/magazine/newspaper selling (Jill, 2009). The distinctive feature is that the marketer can gain direct access to the buyer. On the other hand, the buyer is able to make a purchase with several potential benefits, such as convenience, no salespeople involved, no middlemen, customization of the purchase, and they can take advantage of special offers (Cravens & Piercy, 2009).

### ***Public Relation***

Public relations means a company advertises its product or service through commercial media, and the media coverage appears to be an article or news (Jill, 2009). The objective is to place company-released information in relevant media communications (Jill, 2009). Public relations can contribute significantly to a promotion strategy focused on planning and implementing to attain particular

promotion objectives (Ferrell & Hartline, 2011). It is a cost-effective method of communication, which can also be controlled by the company (Cravens & Piercy, 2009). For many companies, to manage “corporate reputation” is a public relations priority, and this reputation affects many stakeholders in the company (Cravens & Piercy, 2009).

### ***Interactive/Internet Marketing***

Interactive/Internet Marketing consists of promoting through the Internet, Kiosks, CD-ROM, and interactive television, and buyers and sellers can communicate with each other through interactive media (Jill, 2009). The Internet performs an increasingly essential and escalating role in promotion strategy (Ferrell & Hartline, 2011). The use of Internet includes providing a direct sales channel, identifying sales leads, providing product information, conducting Web-based surveys, and displaying advertisements (Cravens & Piercy, 2009).

## **2.6.2 Internet marketing description**

Mainstream broadcasting and print media have faced major challenges in recent years. Many newspapers are facing closure and television channels are facing shortfalls in revenue (Palmer & Koenig-Lewis, 2009). An essential reason for this is that the majority of advertising budgets have migrated to online channels (Palmer & Koenig-Lewis, 2009). With a large number of budgets moving to online advertising, the layouts for communicating with target audiences has been shifted to placing mass appeal banner advertisements on frequently-visited web sites, and sending personalized e-mail messages to individual target buyers (Palmer & Koenig-Lewis, 2009).

According to Tikkanen, Hietanen, Henttonen & Rokka (2009), the types of Internet marketing are the ones shown below:

- Search Engine (SE) Marketing: promoting websites by adding their visibility to the result pages of a search engine, including the use of paid placement,

paid inclusion, contextual advertising, or the use of search engine optimization techniques (SEOT).

- Display Advertising: using web banners or banner advertisements to drive traffic to a firm's own website and add product awareness on a third-party website.
- Social Media Marketing: gaining attention via social media websites, such as Twitter and Facebook
- Email Marketing: using electronic mail to directly market a commercial message to people.
- Referral Marketing: promoting services or products to new customers via referrals, usually word of mouth.
- Content Marketing: converting prospects into buyers and buyers into repeat ones through creating and freely sharing informative content.
- Affiliate Marketing: rewarding one or more affiliates for each customer or visitor brought through the affiliate's marketing efforts.

In Internet marketing, three important factors are addressed: creation of value for customers, community management, and interactive applications (Tikkanen et al., 2009). Customers have more active roles than in the traditional media, where customers are engaged in one-way communication (Tikkanen et al., 2009). Interactivity is the cornerstone, as it contributes to both customer input and customer learning, and the customers can energetically interact with the company's representatives or products (Tikkanen et al., 2009). Therefore, the company can deliver value for customers, consider real representatives, and create communities as a vital role (Tikkanen et al., 2009).

For international marketing of overseas education, the Internet will play an increasing role in recruiting and marketing (Gomes & Murphy, 2003). Trust is a key issue in online enrolments (Gomes & Murphy, 2003). Winning and keeping customer trust is essential for high involvement online purchases, especially overseas education (Warrington, Abgrab & Caldwell, 1999). Three stages contribute to building online trust in the Internet and the website, including cumulative processes of establishing trust, the display of information, and the delivery of fulfilment and service (Warrington et al., 1999). Trust in fulfilment is more essential than trust in the site and

information (Warrington et al., 1999). In developing Internet marketing strategies, education providers should initially create a trusting relationship that overcomes the cultural and geographic distances and the perceived insecurity of an online environment (Hoffman, Novak & Peralta, 1999). The information provided through the education providers' e-mail responses and web sites should be relevant, and fully satisfy the prospective students who are seeking information online (Gomes & Murphy, 2003).

According to a survey by Gomes & Murphy (2003), of 156 overseas students considering studying in Western Australia, the institutional e-mail responses and web site information influenced the choices of the prospective students, who were the main decision makers rather than their parents (Gomes & Murphy, 2003). Thus, if institutions fail to respond personally, politely and promptly to e-mails and web site enquiries, students may become dissatisfied and will begin to lose their trust and commitment to that institution (Gomes & Murphy, 2003).

Education institutions, therefore, should provide prompt, accurate, excellent online customer service, via a highly structured e-mail response system, and sophisticated, up-to-date web sites for overseas students (Gomes & Murphy, 2003). Education providers should give high priority to e-mail queries. Web sites should contain specific areas for overseas students, with a section of "frequently asked questions" and a template for e-mail answers (Gomes & Murphy, 2003). Moreover, institutions should have well-trained staff who follow expected standards for response times and e-mail response formats, as appropriate responses to e-mail enquiries exemplify excellent customer service (Strauss & Hill, 2001). In addition, the education provider should provide relevant information online for the parents of prospective students, who often provide financial support for the students and, therefore, play an essential role in the decision-making (Gomes & Murphy, 2003).

### 2.6.3 Social media marketing description

Social media can be defined as: “online applications, platforms and media which aim to facilitate interactions, collaborations and the sharing of content” (Universal Maccann International, 2008). Lorenzo-Romero, Constantinides & Alarcon-del-Amo (2011) described social network sites (SNS) as: “websites that allow building relationships online between persons by means of collecting useful information and sharing it with people. Also, they can create groups which allow interacting amongst users with similar interests”. The significance of SNS is that it opens out interaction between the community and consumers, and the facilitation of “interactive, immediate, asynchronous, low-cost communications” (Miller, Fabian & Lin, 2009). In a word, SNS appear to be alternative communication tools that support existing activities and relationships in a colourful and fun way that is able to enrich users’ experiences (Palmer & Koenig-Lewis, 2009).

According to Palmer & Koenig-Lewis (2009), the major categories of social media include:

- Blogs. Consisting of firms’ or individuals’ online journals, sometimes with video or audio podcasts;
- Social network sites (SNS). Through building personal web sites, users can access other users in order to exchange personal communication and content, such as Facebook;
- Content communities. Sharing and organising particular sorts of content by web-sites;
- Forums/bulletin boards. Exchanging information and ideas usually around distinct interests by sites;
- Content aggregators. Users can fully customise the web content they want to access.

There are several distinguishing features of SNS being identified by Lorenzo-Romero et al. (2011), as shown below:

- SNS provide new ways for people to build and sustain social networks, share information, create relationships, participate in social movements and generate and edit content through the Internet;
- SNS also can locate individuals who share the same interests and backgrounds according to the characteristics in personal profiles;
- SNS can contribute to maintaining the contacts by the individuals, and facilitate the enhancement of links between them;
- Understanding the motivations and features of people in using SNS can be a vital application for marketers in their marketing strategy;
- The majority of SNS primarily sustain already existing social relationships.

Moreover, Harris & Rae (2009) also identified other several features of SNS:

- Online communities/SNS have been recognized as having huge potential in developing companies' brand and building close relationships with customers;
- Companies can build customer relationships and raise brand awareness at a very low cost by a Facebook group;
- "Microblogging" is another form of SNS appearing recently, such as Twitter. Users can communicate with people in these sites in a real time with an abbreviating content format.

Online networks provide users with the possibility of gaining more information about brands, companies and products and making better purchasing decisions (Lorenzo-Romero et al., 2011). As stated by Lorenzo-Romero et al. (2011), the potential of SNS as marketing tools can be substantial within the marketing strategy, for the following reasons:

- They are able to build a social networking environment, and inspire customers and prospects to use them resulting in engaging with customers and enhancing customer trust and loyalty;
- Companies can obtain a large amount of customer information in SNS, including their personality, lifestyle and perceived ease of use, and so on;
- Companies can listen to a customer voice via SNS to develop and test new services or products;

- Companies can selectively notify customers about their services or products in SNS by user analysis and segmentation, and provide useful and interesting information as customer service channels.

According to Lorenzo-Romero et al. (2011), to entice participation in the SNS, it is essential that users' have positive attitudes to the use of SNS. Providing user-friendly web sites and establishing trust in the SNS will impact on the establishment of positive attitudes, and diminish the perceived risk. Trust directly and positively influences the attitude towards SNS; likewise, it influences the perceived ease of use and perceived usefulness, and perceived risk will be lower when perceived ease of use is higher (Lorenzo-Romero et al., 2011). Marketers should offer cues that heighten the feelings of trust, usefulness and ease of use, and likewise, take steps to lessen the perceived risk of taking part in SNS; the aim is to create a positive attitude to their web sites, and increase return visits by people (Lorenzo-Romero et al., 2011). Establishing user trust can be helped by ensuring the services that the users expect, fulfilling commitments and promises to customers, and safeguarding the privacy and information of customers (Lorenzo-Romero et al., 2011).

Educational institutions create customer communities that show by user feedback that online trust can be established (Gomes & Murphy, 2003). For example, creating an online alumni community will be a great cyber venue for prospective and past students to share study experiences and recommendations. Satisfied students will recommend their study experiences to friends through the online community (Gomes & Murphy, 2003).

## **2.7 Chapter Summary**

An understanding of the decision making process is essential to design an appropriate and successful marketing strategy. Understanding of the step-by-step process of how consumers make decisions and process information about services or products plays a crucial role in making non-routine and complex purchases, such as education.

An appropriate and effective marketing strategy is imperative for organizations to achieve their objectives when targeting specific markets. The effectiveness and efficiency of a market strategy can create a distinct competitive advantage among competitors in a defined target market by using the right integration of factors in the marketing mix.

Effective promotional techniques can help organizations to communicate with buyers and others successfully. These impact on their purchasing decisions substantially. Internet marketing and SM marketing play increasingly important roles in promotional activities and media plans due to the embracing of these technological advancements by the target audiences.

In the following chapter, the research philosophy, methodology and operational methods are also described. Discussion includes the approach to data collection, sampling and data analysis.

## **Chapter three: Methodology**

### **3.1 Introduction**

In the previous chapter, the literature review presented an in-depth review of the concepts of consumer decision-making and marketing strategy, as well as their relevance to this research from diverse theoretical perspectives. In this chapter, the research philosophies are discussed, including the positivistic paradigm and the phenomenological paradigm. Both quantitative and qualitative approaches to methods of data collection are discussed, and, especially, why the qualitative approach is chosen for this research. The sample selection, collection of data using a qualitative approach and the process followed in data analysis are discussed in detail. Finally, the relevant ethical considerations are presented.

### **3.2 Research Philosophy**

The term “research philosophy” refers to the development of knowledge and the nature of knowledge (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2009). The point of embarking on research is to develop precise knowledge in an extraordinary field (Saunders et al., 2009). To understand philosophical issues is useful for the research due to the following reasons: (1) to identify the availability of the research designs; (2) to explain the research designs and the whole construction of the research; and (3) to identify or create research designs that have not been uncovered in the past (Gunaratne, 2008). Easterby-Smith, Thorpe & Lowe (1993) considered that a clarified philosophical position enables the researcher to adapt a research design within the limitations of different knowledge and subjects. Hunt (1991) mentioned that an underlying “philosophy” is necessary for all research activities and that it is helpful for researchers to make assumptions about the role of theory, the nature of reality, and the suitability of the methodologies chosen so as to conduct more effective research.

There are two main research paradigms or philosophies guiding the conduct of research - the positivistic paradigm and the phenomenological paradigm (Collis &

Hussey, 2003). The positivistic paradigm emphasizes working in the tradition of the natural scientist (Saunders et al., 2009). It is concerned with understanding causes or facts of social phenomena, which is based on assuming that social reality is independent of us, regardless of the subjective statement of the individual; and it considers the world as singular, objective, and external to the researcher (Collis & Hussey, 2003). The phenomenological paradigm emphasizes the understanding of differences between humans in our role as social actors (Saunders et al., 2009). It is regarded as considering human behaviour from the individual's own frame of reference, and is based on the assumption that social reality is within us, and implies that social reality is not independent of the mind; it also considers the world as multiple, subjective and socially constructed by the perceptions of the participants in the research (Collis & Hussey, 2003).

**Table 3.1 Key features of the Positivistic and Phenomenological paradigms**

	<b>Positivistic paradigm</b>	<b>Phenomenological paradigm</b>
Basic Beliefs	The world is external and objective Observer is independent Science is value free	The world is socially constructed and subjective Observer is part of what is observed Science is driven by human interests
Researcher should:	Focus on facts Look for causality and fundamental laws Reduce phenomena to simplest elements Formulate hypotheses and then test them	Focus on meaning Try to understand what is happening
Preferred methods include:	Operationalising concepts so that they can be measured Taking large samples	Using multiple methods to establish different views of phenomena Small samples investigated in-depth or over time

(Source: Easterby-Smith et al., 1991)

### **3.3 Methodology**

The 'methodology' refers to "the overall approach to the research process" (Collis & Hussey, 2003). It relates with the ideas sustaining the research design, methods of data collection and data analysis. It concerns the way researchers can find what they believe about what can be known, and is limited by the characteristics of the paradigm (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). This includes gaining an understanding of the issues in the research project, the variety of methods of data collection available and the adequacy of the qualitative and quantitative approaches (Cohen & Manion, 1994). The choice of the methodology to be used in a research project is sourced from the aims of the research.

Quantitative and experimental approaches are used to search for fundamental laws and causal explanations by positivism, and to simplify possible elements for facilitating analysis by reducing the whole generally (Amaratunga, Baldry, Sarshar & Newton, 2002). Qualitative and naturalistic approaches are used by phenomenism to understand and explain a phenomenon by considering human experience in context-specific settings, rather than searching for fundamental laws or external causes (Amaratunga et al., 2002).

#### **3.3.1 Quantitative approach**

The quantitative approach assumes that human behaviour can be explained by "social facts" in which the focus is on facts (Amaratunga et al., 2002). This approach focuses on dealing with the truth-value of propositions and makes the treatment of data flexible. Comparative analysis and statistical analyses are undertaken, and repeatability of data collection is used for verifying reliability (Amaratunga et al., 2002). Also, quantitative research simplifies the quantifying of large amounts of data by using some form of statistical analysis. Its objective is to quantify the data and generalise the results from the samples of the population of interest. The samples used consist of a large number of representative cases. Moreover, the data collected is structured and the feature of data analysis is statistical.

The strength of the quantitative approach is its focus on facts; it can be used in a large number of situations, and the data gathered can be analysed using statistical procedures. It is considered to be relevant to policy decisions. Furthermore, the main strength of this approach is its speed and economy (Amaratunga et al., 2002).

However, the quantitative approach does have a weakness in that its relevant methods can be inflexible and artificial (Saunders et al., 2009). The important point is that this approach does not produce an effective understanding of processes or the significance of the related actions. Moreover, because of the focus on what is, or what has been recently, from this approach it is hard for policy-makers to deduce what changes and actions should take place in the future (Amaratunga et al., 2002).

### **3.3.2 Qualitative approach**

As society is believed to be socially created, a qualitative approach with an emphasis on words and observations enables influences and actions to be investigated and meaning to be ascribed to relationships (Murphy, 1995). This, in turn, enables the researcher to gain an understanding from the data of how ideas develop. As a qualitative approach is generally unstructured, it can also be exploratory, thus providing additional insights into problems (Amaratunga et al., 2002). In this way, the researcher can determine underlying motivations and reasons from observing people in their natural surroundings. The main qualitative survey methods used are unstructured in-depth interviews and focus groups. Moreover, the qualitative approach is focused on a small number of samples investigated in depth or over time (Amaratunga et al., 2002).

Natural data-gathering methods are used which demonstrate how processes evolve over a period of time (Amaratunga et al., 2002). From the data, understanding can be achieved from a small number of in-depth samples. From the results, new issues and ideas can be determined and new theories generated.

Although one of the strengths of a qualitative approach is the ability to extract meaning and ideas from a small amount of data, it also has some negative aspects. It requires sufficient resources to support the effort of data collection, which can take a

long time, and the data can be difficult to analyse and explain. Furthermore, the results from a qualitative approach are given low credibility by policy-makers (Amaratunga et al., 2002). In addition, the qualitative process is harder to control and to measure.

### **3.3.3 Why choose Qualitative approach**

A qualitative approach is, therefore chosen for this research for the following reasons. For research on the ITPs' overseas Chinese student market, a qualitative approach, rather than a quantitative approach, can focus on the meaning of the data. From a small number of samples, analysed in depth, the needs of overseas Chinese students will be identified. More detailed information can also be obtained by qualitative analysis. The participants have the opportunity to express themselves in depth rather than simply answering yes or no. A qualitative approach seeks to explore phenomena very well, which meets the purpose of this study (Mack, Woodsong, MacQueen, Guest & Namey, 2011).

A qualitative approach is descriptive, non-structured, and flexible (Mack et al., 2011). This approach increases the possibilities of getting effective information, which the researcher cannot predict. Qualitative analysis expands the scope of the data, which can improve the research's value and ensure that the process of this research goes smoothly. Compared with a quantitative approach, first, flexibility is the main attribute that a qualitative approach offers. The design of a qualitative study is flexible and iterative, which means that data collection and questions are adjusted for different circumstances (Mack et al., 2011). Second, the qualitative method offers an elastic way for the researcher to lead participants to openly discuss the topic, and acknowledging the participants' insights is the optimal way to clarify the participants' real needs. Third, qualitative research can provide complex textual descriptions of people's experiences, and it is a convenient way to collect and analyze the data.

## **3.4 Operational Method**

### **3.4.1 Data collection—Interview**

There are three main methods used in qualitative analysis: participant observation, in-depth interviews and focus groups. For collecting data, in-depth interviews are the best way to gather information on participants' perspectives and experiences, and are predominantly used to get insight into the experience of participants (Mack et al., 2011). It is a special research method in that only one participant is involved at one time, and that person is able to express their thoughts in depth in a non-structured personal interview. The researcher uses interview skills to make participants comfortable and this allows them to express themselves freely. In-depth interviews are used to motivate participants to explore non-superficial and deep thoughts (Saunders et al., 2007). Therefore, in-depth interviews have been chosen as the method of data collection in this research.

The design of the interview questions aims to answer the research question. The questions are focused on the factors influencing consumer (Chinese overseas students) decision-making when selecting a TEI in New Zealand, and some of the issues in regard to the development of ITPs' promotion strategies for Chinese students. In relation to consumer decision-making, the main questions for in-depth interviews are about the factors influencing the decision-making process of overseas Chinese students in choosing TEI in New Zealand, including their personal reasons, the effect of the city's image, the effect of the institution's image and programme evaluation. With regard to the development of promotion strategies of ITPs, some questions identify the important characteristics of TEIs in New Zealand attended by Chinese students, how Chinese students search for information, what are their motivations in using social media in searching for information, and what promotion techniques interest them.

Upon the completion of the data collection in Chinese, the researcher personally translated the interview scripts into English. The translations made by the researcher were re-checked by another competent person for accuracy. After collection, the data were preserved carefully for future analysis.

### 3.4.2 Sampling

The researcher interviewed Chinese international students from IELTS preparation courses and Advanced Level English courses in four language schools in Auckland. At the language schools, most of the students are studying English to gain entry into Tertiary Education Institutions (TEI). The language schools from which the students were selected are: NZLC Auckland (New Zealand Language Centres), NZIOS (New Zealand Institute of Studies), Victoria Institute of NZ, and the St George Institute of Learning.

The criteria for selecting the four language schools were:

- Located in Auckland, where there is a greater nationality mix;
- More than 100 international students studying English language courses;
- More than 20% of the students were international Chinese students;
- The courses offered include either IELTS preparation courses or Advanced Level English courses in General English (GE), English for Academic Purposes (EAP) and Certificate in English (CIE);
- Availability of access for the researcher.

The researcher selected participants by using a purposive sample. This sampling method was adopted because according to Saunders et al. (2009) it allowed the researcher to use his judgement in selecting participants who were best able to answer the research questions and meet the research objectives. Collis & Hussey (2003) stated that a purposive sampling enables the researcher to use his judgement to select participants according to participants' knowledge and experience of the issues investigated. In this research, the researcher selected students based on his understanding of the students' knowledge and experience of the criteria used in making decisions regarding their tertiary education providers in New Zealand. The researcher visited the classes and asked several questions from Chinese international students to gather the required information related to decision making criteria. Based on their responses, the researcher chose and invited the students to participate in the face-to-face interviews. Twenty Chinese international students were selected from four schools, based on the following criteria:

- Over 18 years old;

- Have been in New Zealand for at least 3 months;
- Have searched for information about New Zealand tertiary institutions, and know the characteristics of universities, ITPs and private education establishments;
- Prefer to search for information via the Internet, using SNS, Internet media, forum;
- Know the application process for enrolment in an institution;
- Currently preparing applications for TEI or have conditional offers from several institutions;
- Have high concern about service quality in their choice of an institution.

The rationale for these purposive sampling criteria was to recruit participants who have actively engaged in the decision-making process for admission to a TEI in New Zealand.

### **3.4.3 Data analysis**

Data collected from the interview was analysed via Microsoft Excel and conventional content analysis, which is one approach of qualitative content analysis. “Qualitative content analysis is a widely-used qualitative research technique, and provides knowledge and understanding of the phenomenon under study, and it is defined as a research method for the subjective interpretation of the content of text data through the systematic classification process of coding and identifying themes or patterns” (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). Conventional content analysis is usually used when there is limited existing theory or prior research about a phenomenon (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005).

The researcher started with deriving codes by reading word by word about the content of text data from open-ended questions, then sorting the codes into categories based on relationships and links between different codes (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). Next, the researcher broke down the categories into different themes in order to sustain an emphasis on the research topic and avoid interference from irrelevant data (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). Moreover, the researcher sometimes used prior research findings to help with coding the words, and identifying any common patterns (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). Based on identification of codes, themes and common patterns, the consequences from interviews can be outlined and simplified. Finally, the researcher

presented the importance of common patterns, themes and codes for each question focused on the purpose of the study, as ascertained by Excel according to the number of respondents for each common pattern, theme and code. By doing this, the researcher can undertake a detailed analysis of text data from the interviews to get useful and interesting outcomes to answer the research question, such as finding out the causal factors influencing the choice of an overseas study institution.

#### **3.4.4 Ethics considerations**

In order to collect data from the Chinese student group, there were ethics issues the researcher had to consider in the process of the in-depth interviews, which include such things as cultural issues, religion and political issues. Awareness of ethics issues is essential to avoid any difficulties and problems in the research process. All data secured as a result of the interviews was treated as confidential, and no one was identified by name in the in-depth interviews that the researcher conducted. The students' permission for the interviews was sought before the start. The students themselves expressed their wishes regarding protection of their rights or refusing the interview. This research was submitted and approved by the Unitec Research Ethics Committee (UREC) to be conducted from 15 December, 2011, to 15 December, 2012. The ethical application number is 2011-1245. The researcher completed UREC application Form A, and attached both documents of an information sheet (Appendix 1) and a consent form (Appendix 2) in the ethical application.

### **3.5 Chapter Summary**

This chapter explains the research philosophy and the methodology applied in this research. It explains how the researcher conducted research in the target population. The researcher used mainly interviews to gather information for this thesis. Microsoft Excel and conventional content analysis were used as the main methods to analyse the data collected from respondents.

The results of data analysis are presented in the following chapter, and an overview of the related data collected and analysed is gained using a qualitative method.

## **Chapter Four: Findings**

### **4.1 Introduction**

This chapter presents the researcher's findings from in-depth interviews with twenty respondents. The Chinese students were chosen according to the criteria described in Chapter Three. The information gathered was analysed using the content analysis technique that helped to understand the decision making criteria used by Chinese students in selecting an institution in New Zealand for tertiary study. Another purpose of this study was to understand the characteristics of ITPs, universities and PTEs that are considered by the students in their evaluation of tertiary institutions for future education. The study also identified the channels of information preferred by the students as well as the promotional techniques used by competing institutions.

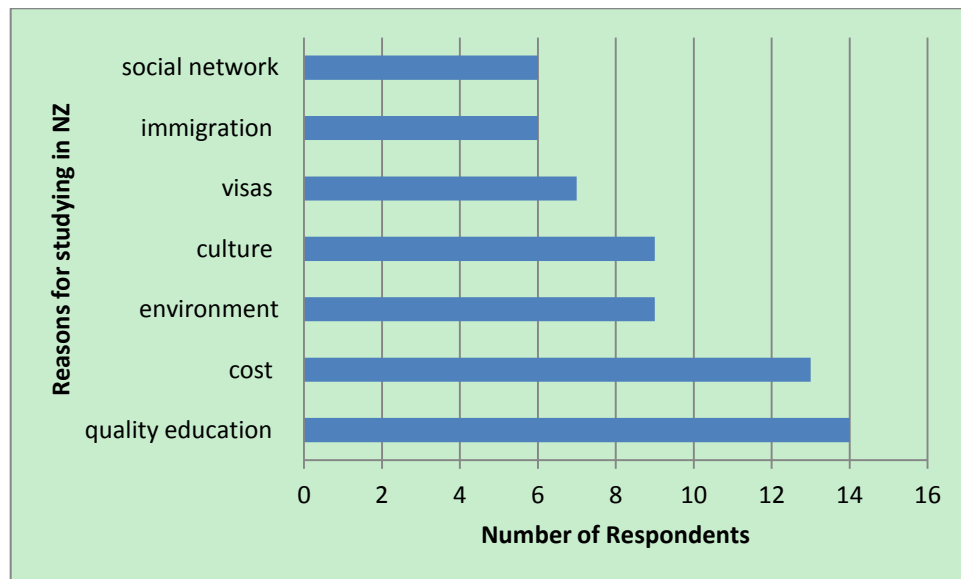
The findings are presented as the Chinese students' views on the factors affecting their decision-making process, their awareness of the characteristics of the institutions, their channels of information search, their steps in selecting a tertiary institution, and frequent used promotion techniques. A summary of the key findings of the interview results is also presented.

### **4.2 Chinese students' views on the factors affecting their decision-making process**

#### **4.2.1 Main reasons for choosing New Zealand as a study destination**

The findings on the main reasons for choosing New Zealand as a study destination are presented in Figure 4.1.

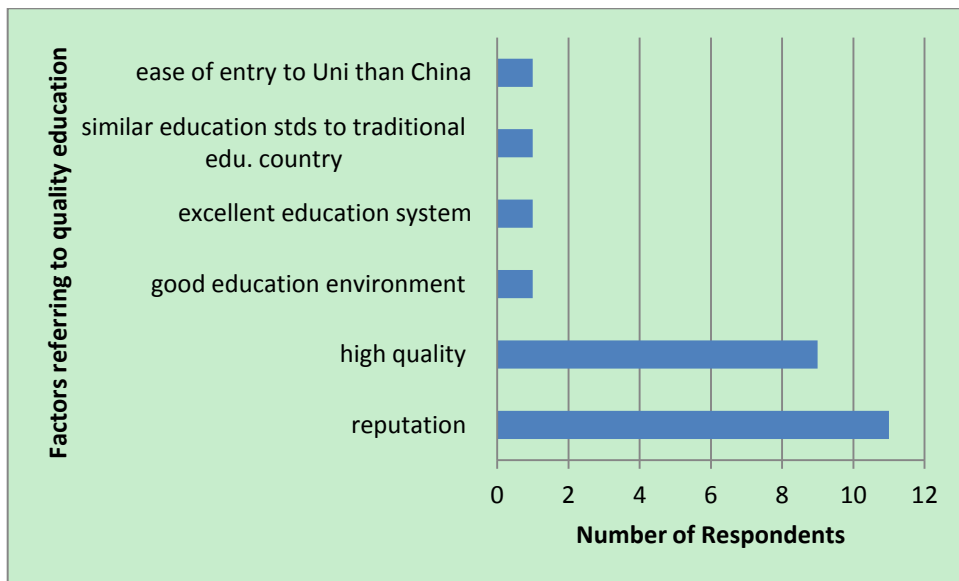
**Figure 4.1: Reasons for studying in New Zealand**



Fourteen respondents stated that the dominant reason for choosing New Zealand was because the education service in New Zealand is reputed to have a high quality; thirteen respondents declared that it is cheaper to study at the tertiary education level in New Zealand compared with the USA, UK, Europe, Canada, and Australia. Thus, the reputation for providing a quality education, and lower costs compared with other popular countries as a study destination, are the main reasons for Chinese students choosing New Zealand as a study destination.

In relation to quality of education, 11 respondents referred to reputation, and 9 respondents referred to high quality. Individual respondents referred to New Zealand's reputation for having a 'good' educational environment; an 'excellent' education system, and that New Zealand's education standards are similar to those in the other traditional education destinations such as the UK. Also in relation to the quality of education in New Zealand, 1 respondent mentioned that gaining entry into a university in New Zealand is easier than in China. See Figure 4.2:

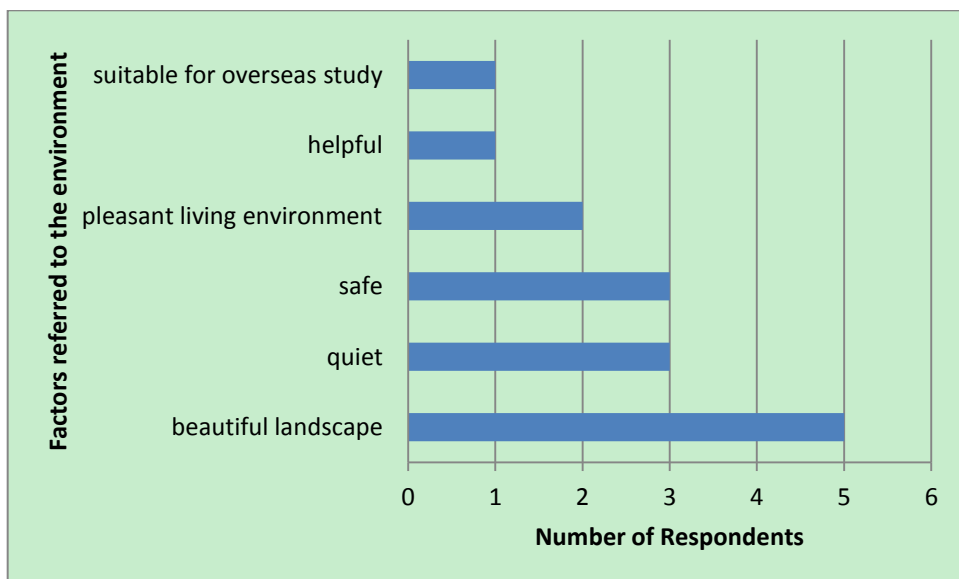
**Figure 4.2: Factors referring to quality of education**



Moreover, respondents also described the issues of the environment, culture, visas, immigration and social networks influencing the selection of NZ as a study destination.

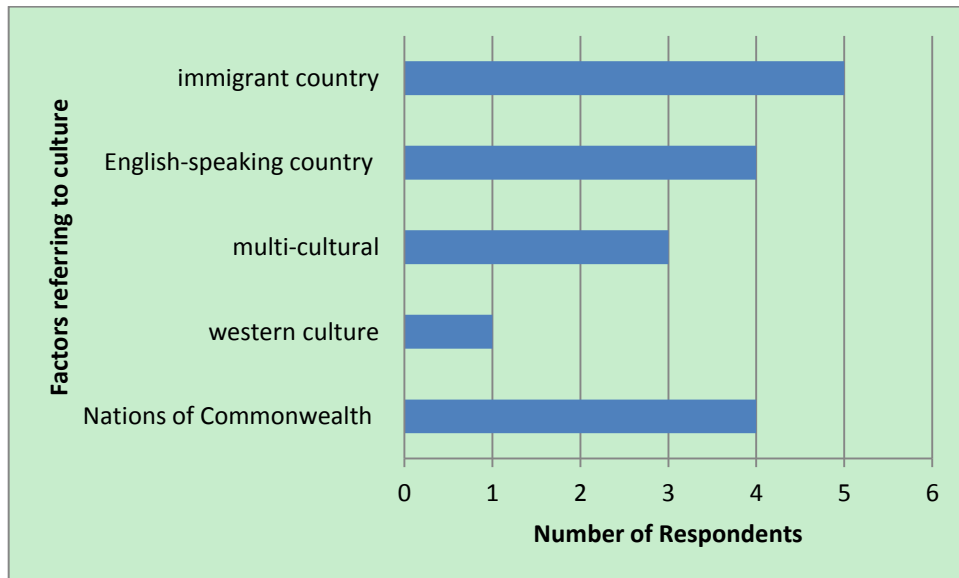
With regard to the issue of the environment in New Zealand, it was mentioned by 9 respondents, including 5 respondents who mentioned the beautiful landscape, 3 respondents who mentioned the quiet environment, 3 who stated that the environment is safe, 2 who referred to the pleasant living environment, and 1 who referred to the helpful environment being suitable for overseas study, as shown in Figure 4.3:

**Figure 4.3: Factors referring to the environment**



With regard to the issue of culture, it was mentioned by 9 respondents, including 5 respondents who described New Zealand as an immigrant country, 4 respondents who referred to New Zealand as a member of the Commonwealth of Nations and also an English-speaking country. 3 mentioned its multi-cultural society, and 1 mentioned it has a Western culture, as shown in Figure 4.4:

**Figure 4.4: Factors referring to New Zealand’s culture**

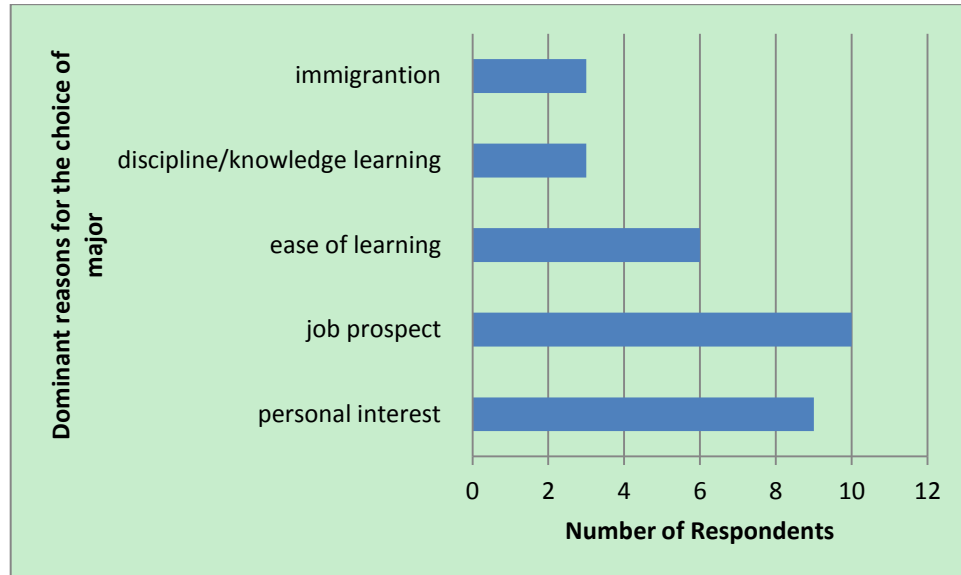


Furthermore, in relation to the issue of visas, it was mentioned by 7 respondents, including 7 respondents who described the ease of applying for a visa for New Zealand, and 3 respondents who mentioned that there is no language requirement in applying for a visa for New Zealand as a reason that makes it easy to obtain a visa for NZ as compared to other countries. With regard to the issue of immigration, it was mentioned by 6 respondents, including 6 respondents who commented on the ease of immigrating, and 5 respondents who mentioned that it is harder to immigrate to the USA, Australia, or Canada compared with New Zealand. Moreover, 6 respondents mentioned the influence of social networks in choosing New Zealand, and that they have friends or relatives studying or living in New Zealand.

## 4.2.2 Dominant reasons for students' choice of major

The findings of dominant reasons for their choice of major are presented in Figure 4.5.

**Figure 4.5: Dominant reasons for students' choice of major**



When choosing a major, ten respondents stated that their dominant reason was based on job prospects. They do not just want to be able to find a job easily; they also require a good job after graduation. They also mentioned finding a job in NZ is quite helpful to obtain approval for immigration. Nine respondents stated that they had chosen their majors based on their personal interest because they thought subject majors should be integrated with their interest. Six respondents stated their choice of major was based on the comparative ease of learning; they mentioned that because of the difficulty of studying in a second language, they tended to choose majors that do not require high English language skills. Other reasons mentioned by 3 respondents included discipline/knowledge learning, like medicine, law and accountant learning, as well as immigration. It is notable that they referred to the issue of immigration again in regard to choosing their major.

In relation to the issue of job/career prospects, 8 respondents stated that they chose their major so it would be comparatively easy to find a job, in New Zealand and in China. Four respondents stated that studying their chosen major would make a good start for their career journey, that is, it would be helpful for good personal career prospects. Moreover, with regard to the issue of one major being easier to study than others, 3 respondents stated that their choice of major was based on its perceived

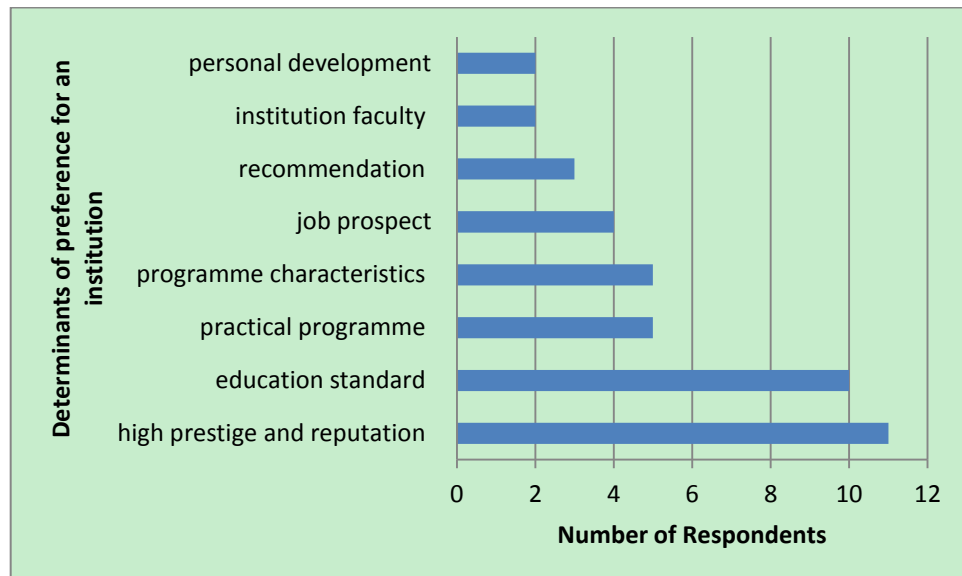
difficulty of learning, 2 respondents referred to the comparatively low English requirement for the major, but 1 respondent mentioned each of the following: the ease of entry, the lower cost than other majors, and it being a pathway to transfer to other institutions.

In summary, the dominant reason for choosing a particular major is the prospect of finding suitable employment and future career prospects, combined with possible immigration requirements. Next, except for the issue of personal interest, the respondents tended to choose a major that is comparatively easy to learn. In addition, a small number of respondents chose the major based on their intention to immigrate.

### 4.2.3 Determinants of preference for an institution

The findings of the main purposes for studying in New Zealand are presented in Figure 4.6.

**Figure 4.6: Determinants of preference for an institution**



Thirteen respondents declared that they would prefer to enrol in a university; six respondents stated their interest in enrolling in ITPs, and only 1 mentioned PTEs. Of the respondents who preferred universities, their first choice was Auckland University, which is rated the best in New Zealand. Eleven respondents stated that their dominant reasons for choosing an institution would be for its well-known reputation and prestige.

Ten respondents stated they chose the institution according to the education standard of the institution. Five respondents mentioned that they had chosen the institution because of the practical programmes that the institutions provide as well as other programme characteristics. Four respondents referred to choosing the institution based on the job prospects of the programme. Three respondents mentioned that their choices were recommended by friends. Two respondents stated that their choices were based on the institution's faculty and their personal development. These findings indicate that in Chinese students' minds, they prefer an institution with high prestige and a good reputation. They are also looking for high education standards in the institution.

In relation to high prestige and reputation, 4 respondents stated that they preferred institutions based on their high prestige and reputation, while 4 respondents mentioned that they chose an institution because it had a specialty programme that would enable them to study a major in that topic during their studies. One respondent referred to Auckland University as having a high ranking in the world, and another referred to Waikato University's management school's high reputation.

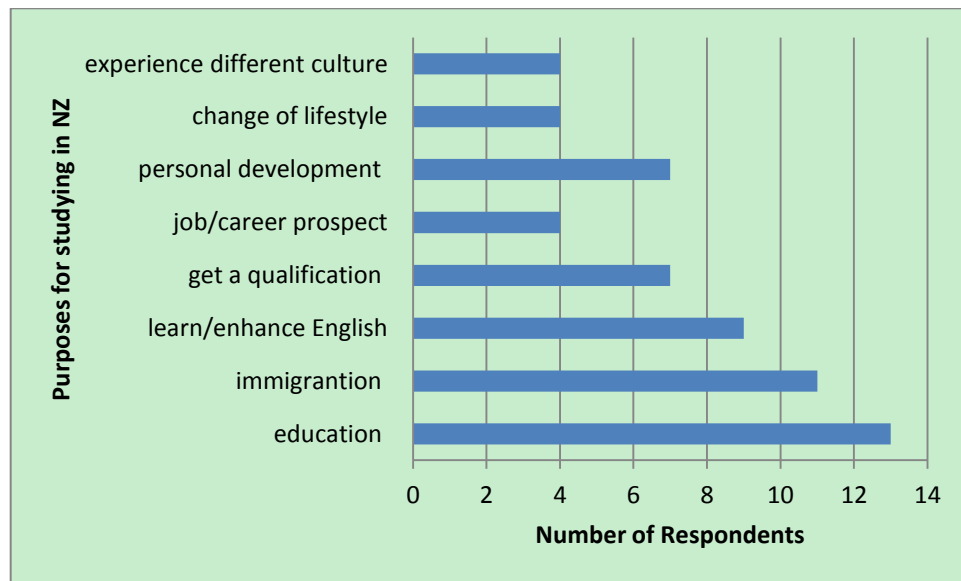
With regard to educational standards, 3 respondents referred both to the well qualified teaching staff in the faculty and the excellent education standards. Two respondents mentioned high quality education, being a public institution, and that one of the ITPs has similar educational standards to the universities.

On the subject of the practicality of the programme, 3 respondents mentioned the practical courses the institutions provide; 1 respondent touched on each of the skill shortage programmes the institutions provide, and the fact that the programme integrates practice with theory. In regard to other programme characteristics, 2 respondents referred to the following: cheap tuition fees, breadth of programmes and courses, ease of graduation, and recognition in China.

#### **4.2.4 Main purposes for studying in New Zealand**

The findings of the main purposes for studying in New Zealand are presented in Figure 4.7.

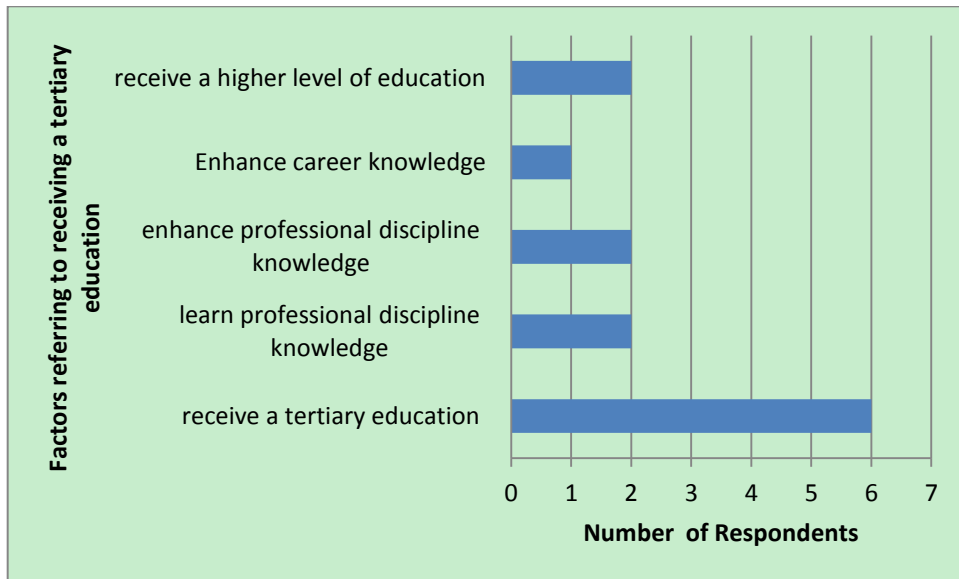
**Figure 4.7: Purposes for studying in NZ**



Thirteen respondents stated their dominant purpose for studying in New Zealand was to go to college to receive a western style tertiary education in New Zealand. Eleven respondents evinced their desire to immigrate to New Zealand after graduation. Nine respondents mentioned that they wanted to learn or enhance their English ability through studying in New Zealand. Seven respondents stated that their purpose was a desire for personal development in the future, and the same number of respondents mentioned that they wanted to get a qualification. Four respondents referred to their purpose as improving job/career prospects, personal change of lifestyle, and experiencing a different culture, as shown Figure 4.7. Moreover, with regard to the issue of job/career prospects, two respondents stated that their purpose was to find a good job after studying in New Zealand, and one respondent referred to career prospects, seeking overseas work experience, and increasing their income. It is notable that job/career prospects are not one of the main purposes for studying in New Zealand.

In relation to the purpose of receiving a western style tertiary education, except for a direct expression of wanting to receive a tertiary education by 6 respondents, 2 respondents referred to learning and enhancing their knowledge of a professional discipline and receiving a higher level of education, and 1 mentioned enhancing relevant career knowledge, , as shown in Figure 4.8.

**Figure 4.8: Factors referring to receiving a tertiary education**

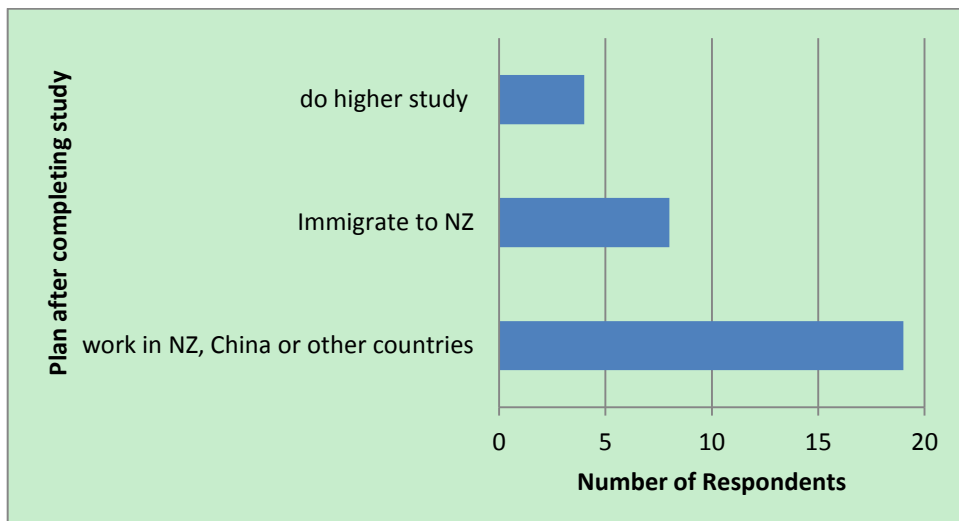


In summary, the dominant purpose of studying in New Zealand is to go to college to receive a tertiary education; the next purpose is the desire to immigrate to New Zealand after completing their study. Following those aims, the students' purpose is to learn or enhance their English ability, get a qualification and having a high desire for personal development in the future.

#### **4.2.5 Plans after completing tertiary education in New Zealand**

The findings on the students' plans after completing tertiary education in New Zealand are presented in Figure 4.9.

**Figure 4.9: Plan after completing study**

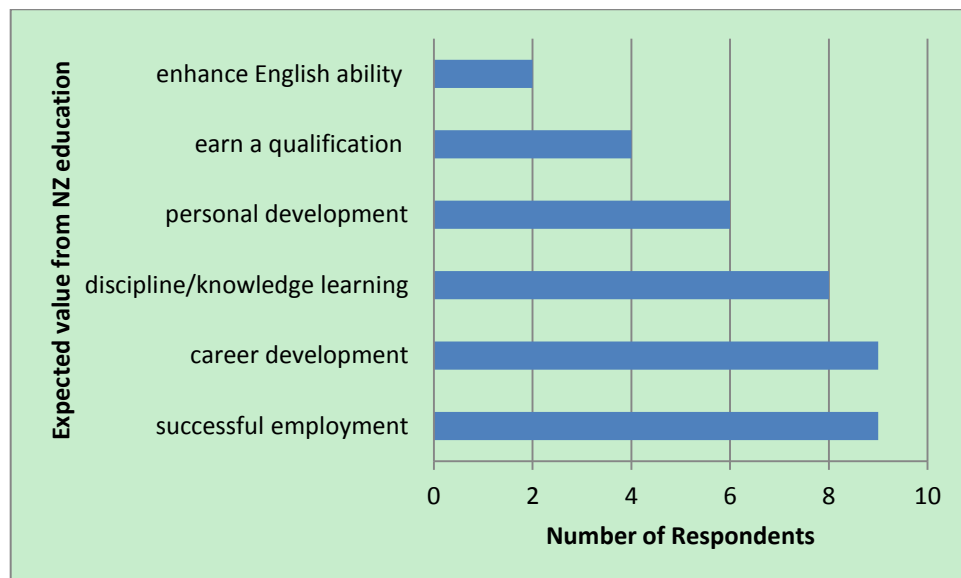


Nineteen respondents stated that they wanted to work in New Zealand, China or other countries after graduation. Eight respondents asserted that they wanted to stay in New Zealand and immigrate after graduation, and 4 stated that they wanted to do higher study in New Zealand or in other countries. Their dominant plan, however, is to work in New Zealand or in China, followed by a plan to immigrate to New Zealand.

#### 4.2.6 Expected values from New Zealand tertiary education

The findings of the Expected value from New Zealand education are presented in Figure 4.10.

**Figure 4.10: Expected value from New Zealand education**



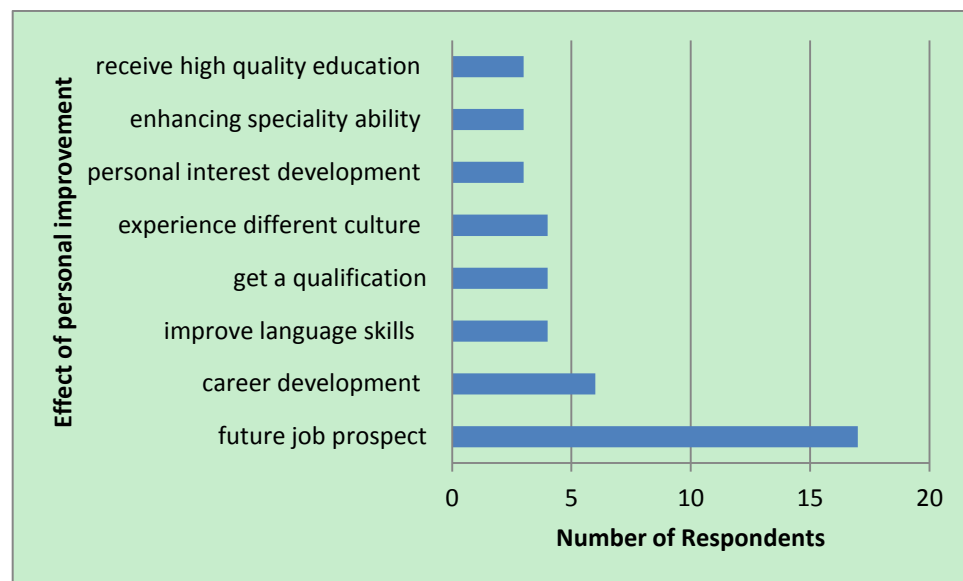
Nine respondents mentioned their expectation of successful employment after completing their study, and their career development. Eight respondents mentioned learning discipline and acquiring knowledge, including learning professional knowledge, and using the knowledge gained effectively. Six respondents declared that they hoped they would develop their personal ability by studying in a New Zealand TEI. Four respondents mentioned their expectation of earning a qualification, including a high value qualification with high recognition. Only two respondents mentioned that their English ability would be enhanced by studying in New Zealand.

#### 4.2.7 Effect of personal reasons in making decisions in choosing an institution

##### *Personal improvement*

The findings on the effect of personal improvement in making decisions in choosing an institution are presented in Figure 4.11.

**Figure 4.11: Effect of personal improvement**

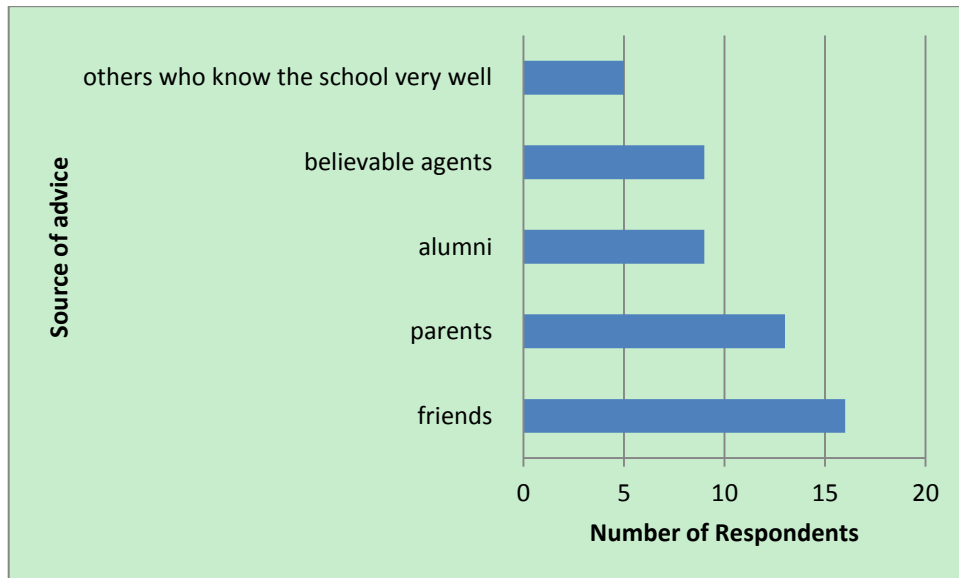


Seventeen respondents stated that they would normally make decisions based on future job prospects, which the dominant reason was given in the decision-making process of Chinese students selecting an institution. Six respondents mentioned that they cared about their career development. Four respondents mentioned improving their language skills, getting a qualification and experiencing different cultures. Three respondents referred to personal interest development, enhancing speciality abilities and receiving high quality education.

### *Advice*

The findings on the source of advice for making decisions in choosing an institution are presented in Figure 4.12.

**Figure 4.12: Source of advice**



Sixteen respondents stated that they predominantly seek advice from their friends when making decisions on choosing an institution. Thirteen respondents mentioned that they like to seek advice from their parents. Nine respondents referred to seeking advice from both believable agents and from alumni. Five respondents mentioned seeking advice from others who know the school very well.

### **4.2.8 Influence of city's image when making decisions on choosing an institution**

The findings on the influence of a city's image in making decisions on choosing an institution are presented in Figure 4.13.

**Figure 4.13: Influence of city image**



Fourteen respondents stated that they cared quite a lot about the safety and security of the city. Eight respondents mentioned that they cared about the transport and social facilities in the city. Six respondents referred to the city as having an international environment and providing the opportunity to work during the course. Four respondents mentioned the population and size of the city as being factors in their decision. Three respondents made mention of the cost of living.

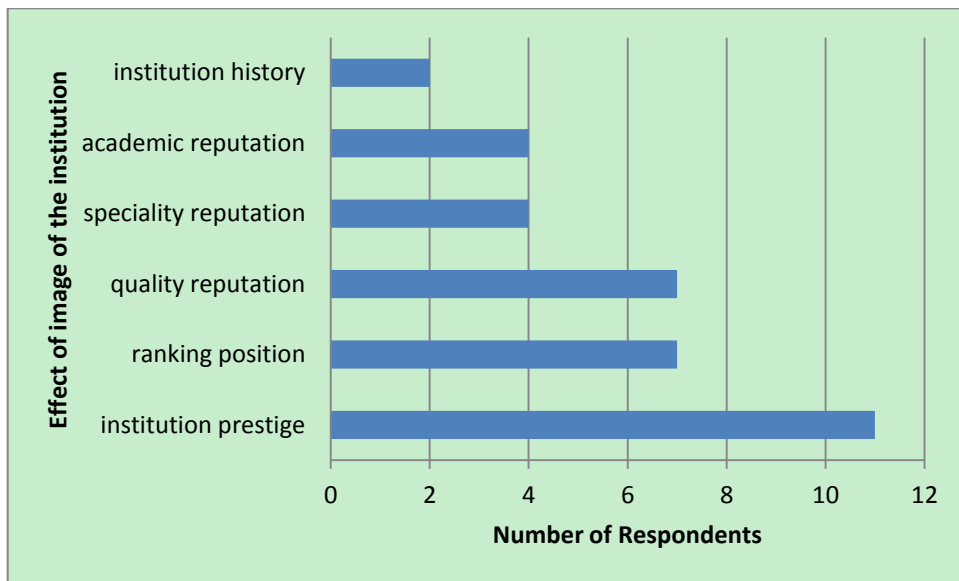
In summary, however, the dominant factor influencing decision-making by Chinese students is the safety and security of the city. The next factors are transport and social facilities, and the opportunity of working during the course. The following factors, international environment, city dimension, and cost of living, are considered the least important.

#### **4.2.9 The role of the image of the institution in decision-making**

##### ***Image of the institution***

The findings of the effect of the image of the institution on making decisions in choosing an institution are presented in Figure 4.14.

**Figure 4.14: Effect of image of the institution**

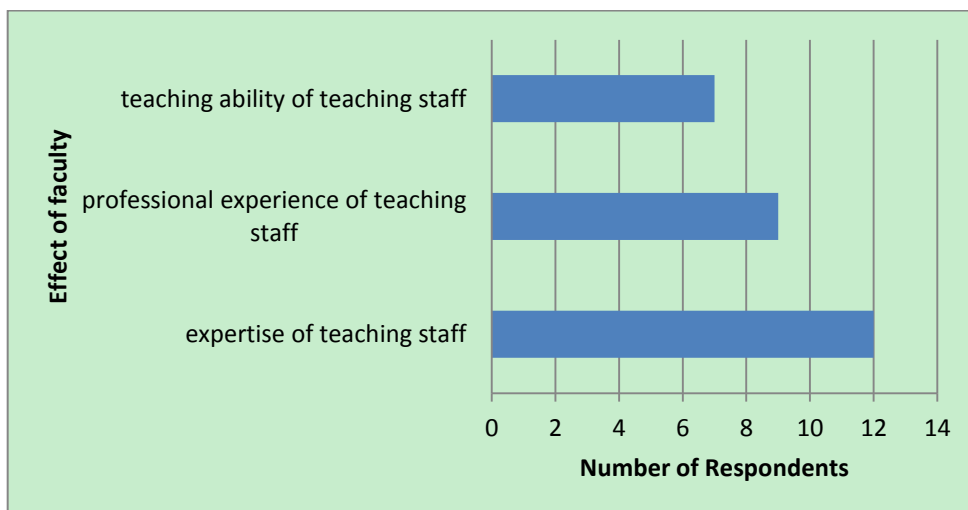


Eleven respondents stated that they were greatly concerned about the institution's prestige; seven respondents declared that they considered the ranking of the institution, and Seven respondents mentioned the reputation for quality of the institution. Four respondents referred to its speciality reputation and academic reputation; only two mentioned the institution's history. The dominant factor in the corporate image is institution prestige, the next factors being ranking position and quality reputation, followed by speciality reputation and academic reputation.

### ***Faculty***

The findings on the effect of faculty on making decisions in choosing an institution are presented in Figure 4.15.

**Figure 4.15: Effect of faculty**

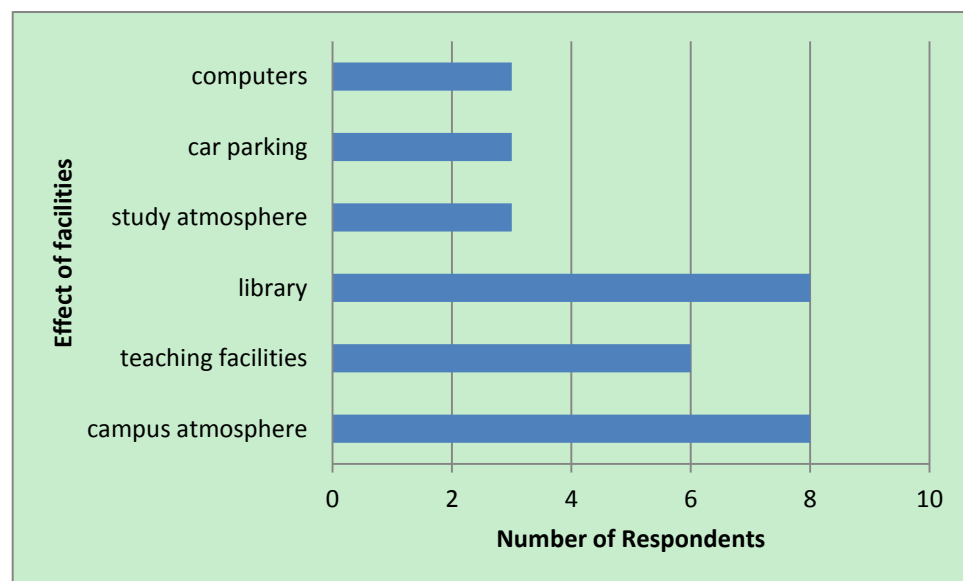


Twelve respondents stated that they cared about the expertise of the teaching staff; nine respondents mentioned the professional experience of teaching staff, and seven referred to the teaching ability of the teaching staff.

### ***Facilities***

The findings on the effect of facilities on making decisions in choosing an institution are presented in Figure 4.16.

**Figure 4.16: Effect of facilities**

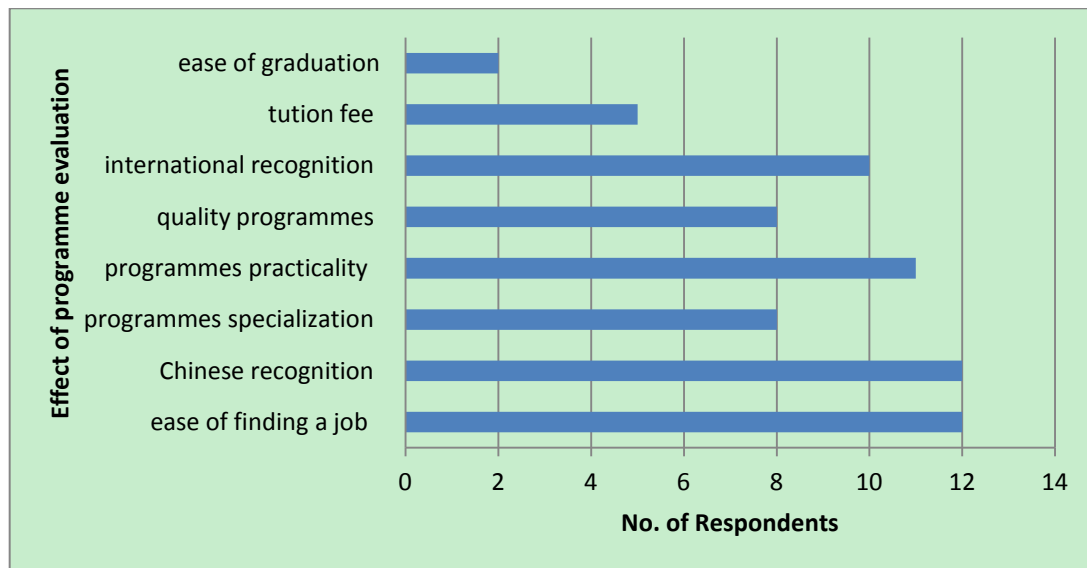


Eight respondents stated that they cared about the campus atmosphere, and eight respondents mentioned the importance of the library. Six respondents made mention of teaching facilities. Three respondents referred to the study atmosphere, availability of car parking and computers.

### **4.2.10 Programme evaluation**

The findings on the effect of programme evaluation on making decisions in choosing an institution are presented in Figure 4.17.

**Figure 4.17: Effect of programme evaluation**



Twelve respondents stated that they cared about the ease of finding a job resulting from the programme; twelve respondents mentioned the importance of Chinese recognition of the qualification of the programme. Eleven respondents referred to programme practicality, and ten respondents made mention of international recognition. Nine respondents mentioned programme specialization, eight referred to quality programmes, five mentioned tuition fees and two mentioned the issue of ease of graduation.

#### **4.2.11 Summary of key findings on factors effecting decision making of Chinese students**

In summary, the researcher identifies many factors affecting the decision making of Chinese students when selecting a TEI in New Zealand from 10 questions (Q 4.2.1-Q 4.2.10). Based on the model developed by Cubillo et al. (2006) (see Figure 2.3), the researcher summarized the important factors influencing the choice of a TEI and divided them into five categories: personal improvement, source of advice, city image, institution image, and programme evaluation, as shown in Figures 4.18 (a, b, c, d, e).

It can be deduced that Figure 4.18 (a) shows some important factors affecting decision making in terms of personal development. Future job prospect came out on top of the key important factors affecting decision making in terms of personal development due to the high number of respondents who mentioned it and the frequency of it being mentioned. Receiving high quality education was also important as it was ranked in second place, followed by immigration opportunity, improving language skills and earning a qualification. Interestingly, relatively few respondents mentioned learning discipline/knowledge or enhance specialty ability, personal interest & future development and career development when they make decisions towards selecting a TEI in New Zealand.

It can be deduced that Figure 4.18 (b) shows some important factors affecting decision-making in terms of source of advice. This figure shows that advice from friends came out on top as one of the key factors affecting decision-making in terms of source of advice due to the high number of respondents who mentioned it and the frequency of it being mentioned. Advice from parents was ranked in second place, followed by advice from believable agents and alumni. Only a few respondents mentioned advice from relatives (15%) and others who know the school very well (25%).

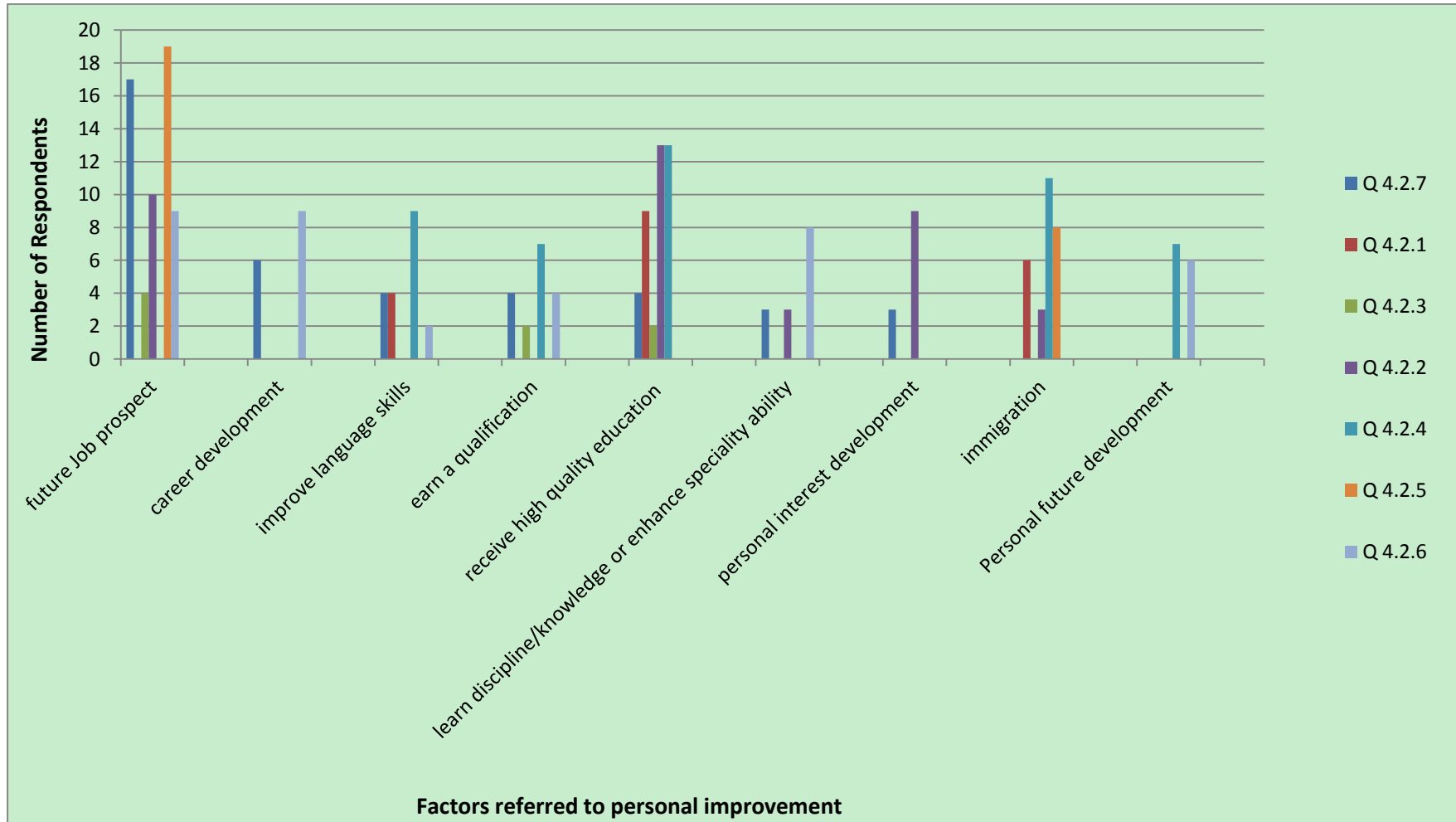
It can be deduced that Figure 4.18 (c) shows some important factors affecting decision-making in terms of influence of city image. The safety and security of a city came out on top as one of the key factors affecting decision making in terms of influence of city image due to the high number of respondents who mentioned it and

the frequency of it being mentioned. The cost of living in the city was ranking in second place, followed by transport and social facilities, the opportunities of working during the course, and the international environment. Only a few respondents (20%) mentioned the city dimension.

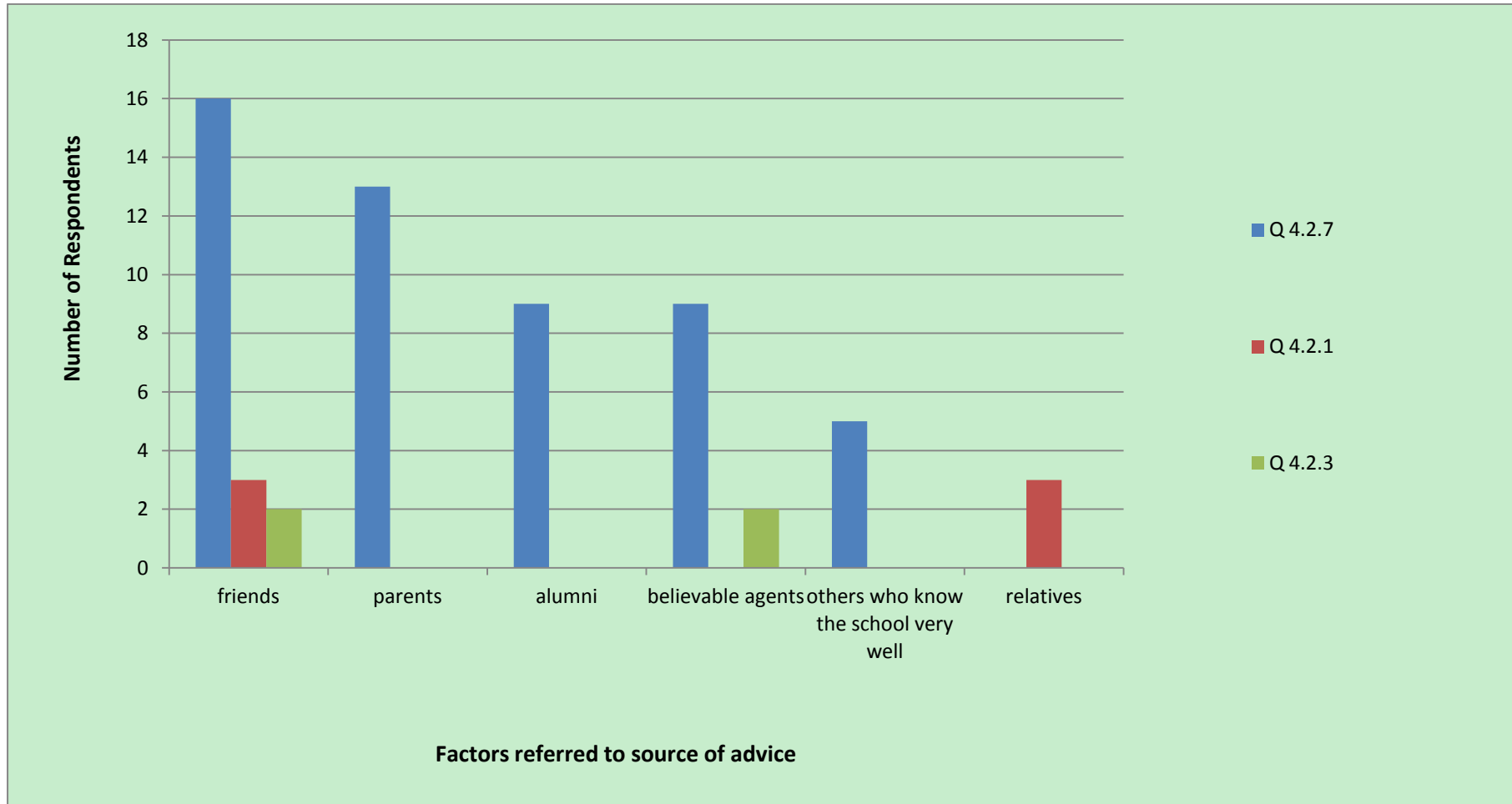
It can be deduced that Figure 4.18 (d) shows some important factors affecting decision-making in terms of the influence of institution image. Institution image was divided into three aspects: corporate image, faculty and facilities. Based on this figure, with regard to corporate image, institution prestige came out on top as one of the key important factors affecting decision-making in terms of the corporate image of an institution due to the high number of respondents who mentioned it and the frequency of it being mentioned. Quality reputation was ranked in second place, followed by ranking position and speciality reputation. Academic reputation, institution history, excellent education standard and public institution were less important. With regards to faculty, expertise of teaching staff came out on top as one of the key important factors. The professional experience of teaching staff was ranked at second place, following by the teaching ability of teaching staff. With regards to the facilities of the institution, campus atmosphere and library came out on top as the two important factors affecting decision making, followed by teaching facilities. Availability of computers, car parking and study atmosphere were less important.

It can be deduced that Figure 4.18 (e) shows some important factors affecting decision-making in terms of the influence of programme evaluation. Ease of finding a job came out on top as one of the key factors affecting decision making in terms of the influence of programme evaluation due to the high number of respondents who mentioned it and the frequency of it being mentioned. The qualification being recognized by the Chinese government was ranked at second place, followed by programme practicality, international recognition of qualification, tuition fee and ease of learning or graduation. Programme specialization and quality programmes were less important, and only a few respondents (5%) mentioned range of courses in evaluating the programme.

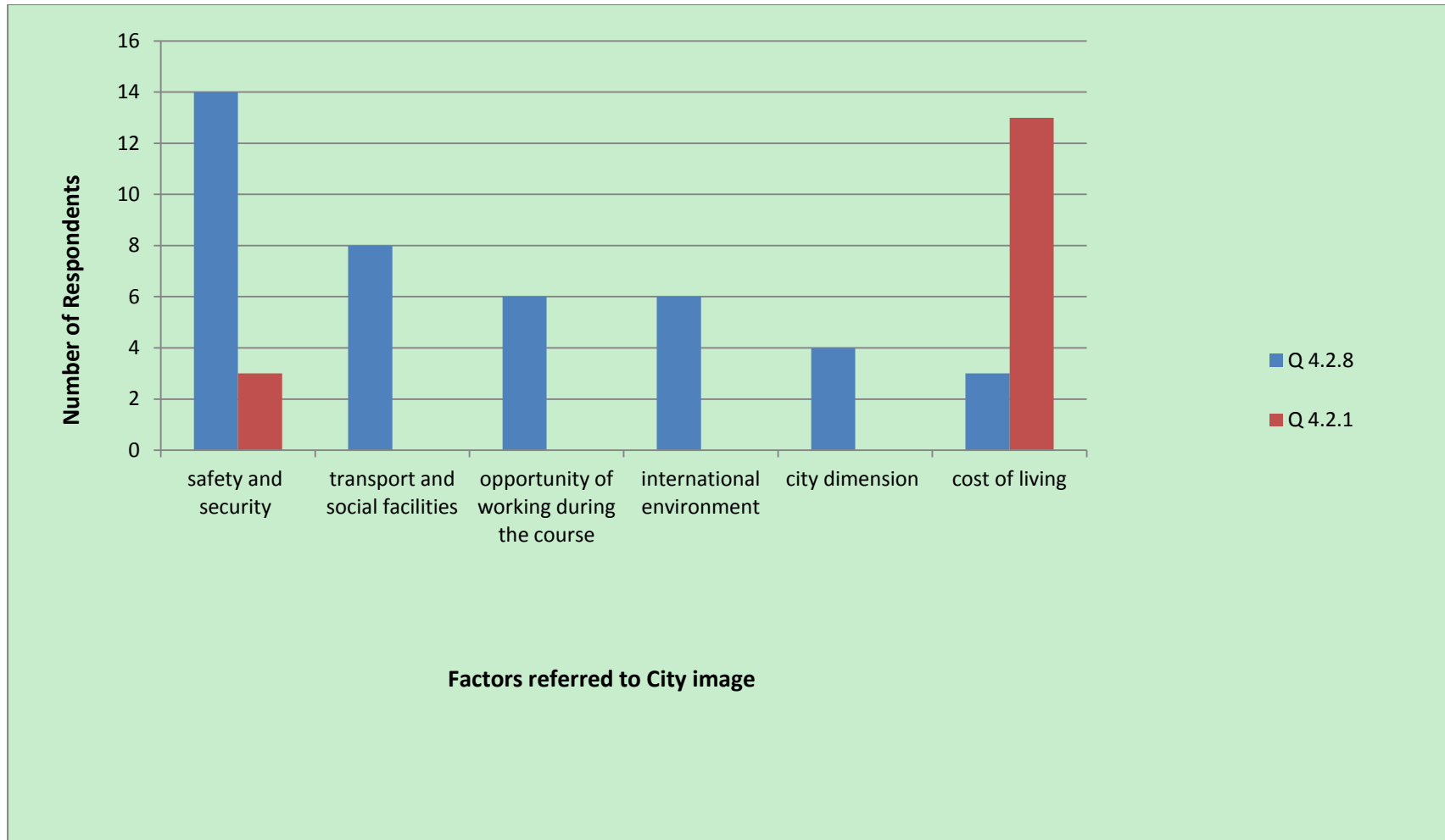
**Figure 4.18 (a): Summary of key findings on factors affecting decision-making in terms of personal improvement**



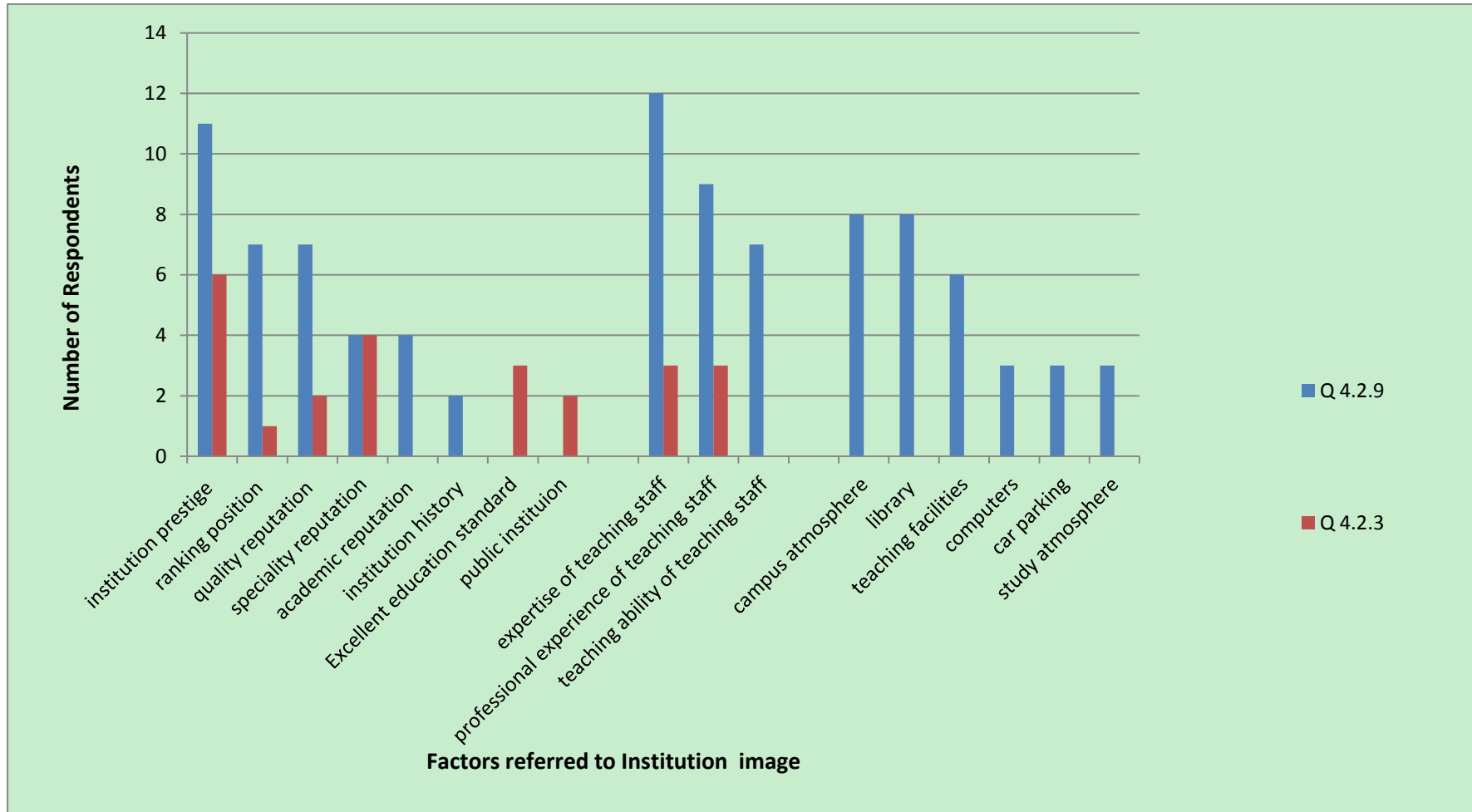
**Figure 4.18 (b): Summary of key findings on factors affecting decision-making in terms of source of advice**



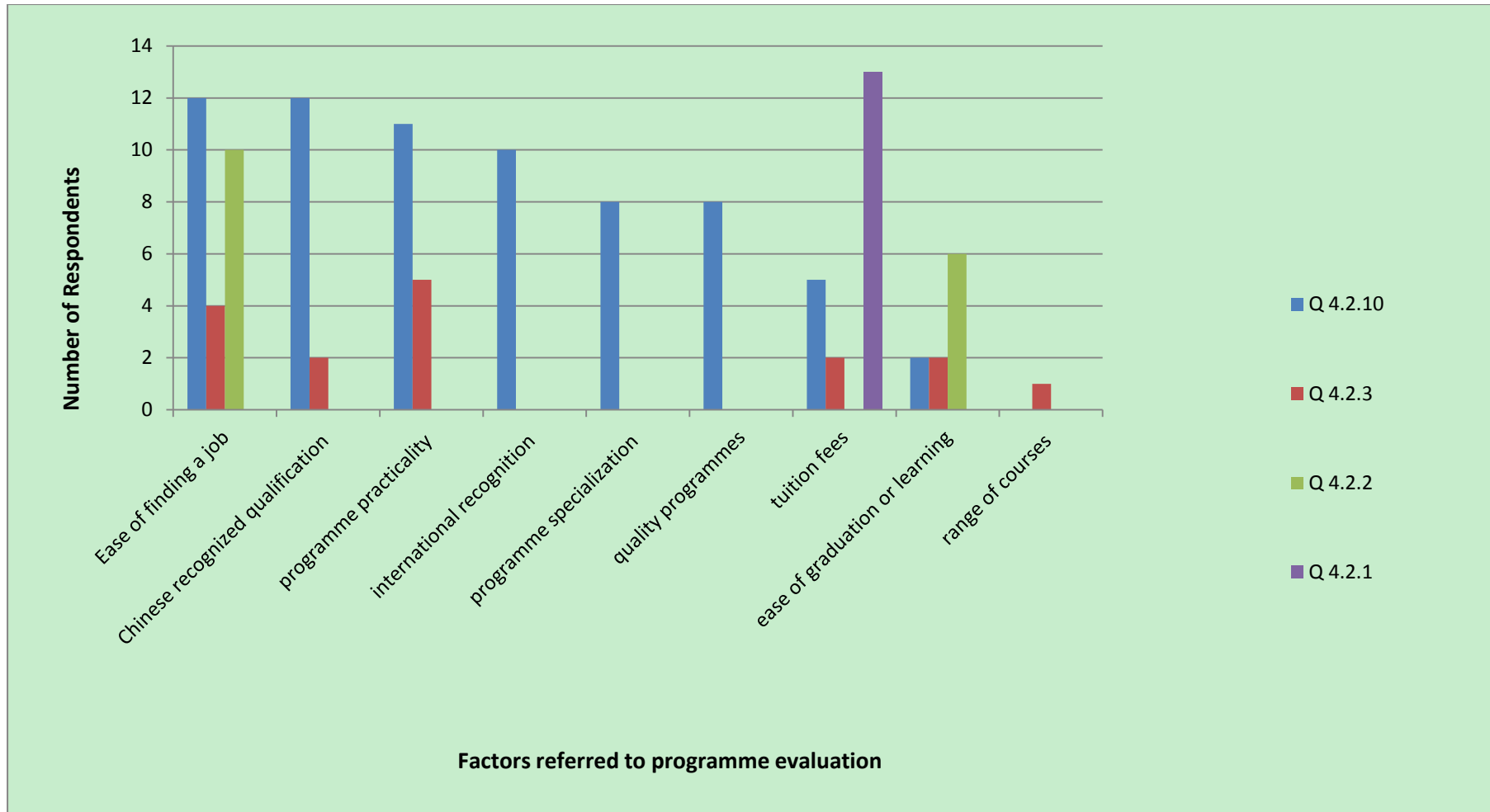
**Figure 4.18 (c): Summary of key findings on factors affecting decision-making in terms of City image**



**Figure 4.18 (d): Summary of key findings on factors affecting decision-making in terms of institution image**



**Figure 4.18 (e): Summary of key findings on factors affecting decision-making in terms of programme evaluation**

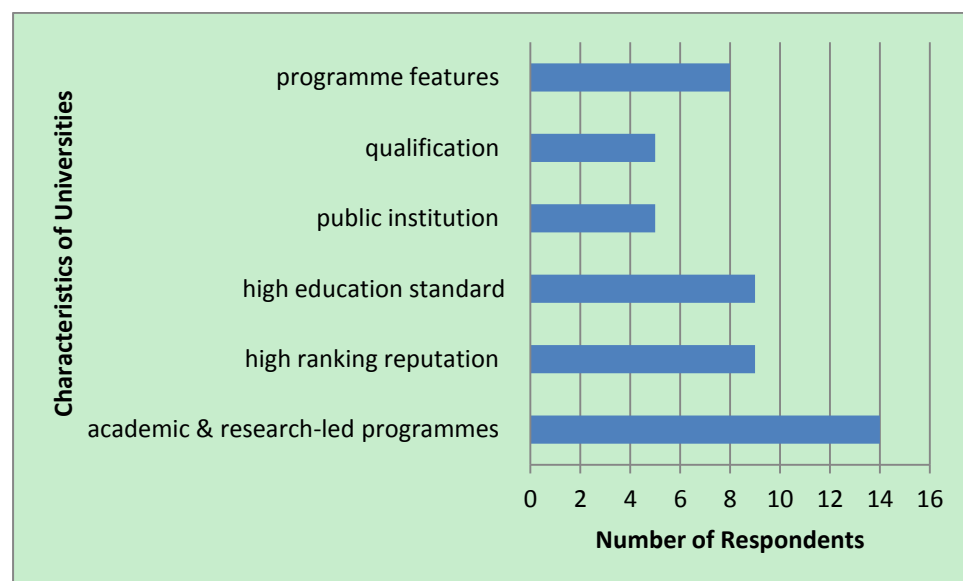


## 4.3 Chinese students' views on the awareness of the characteristics of institutions

### 4.3.1 Characteristics of universities

The findings on the awareness of the characteristics of universities are presented in Figure 4.19.

**Figure 4.19: Characteristics of universities**



Fourteen respondents stated that the most impressive characteristics of universities are the academic and research-led programmes provided. Nine respondents mentioned the high-ranking reputations and high education standards of universities, and eight respondents referred to impressive programme features. Five respondents mentioned that as the universities are public institutions they receive government funding support, and also that qualifications from universities are recognised internationally, as well as by the Chinese government.

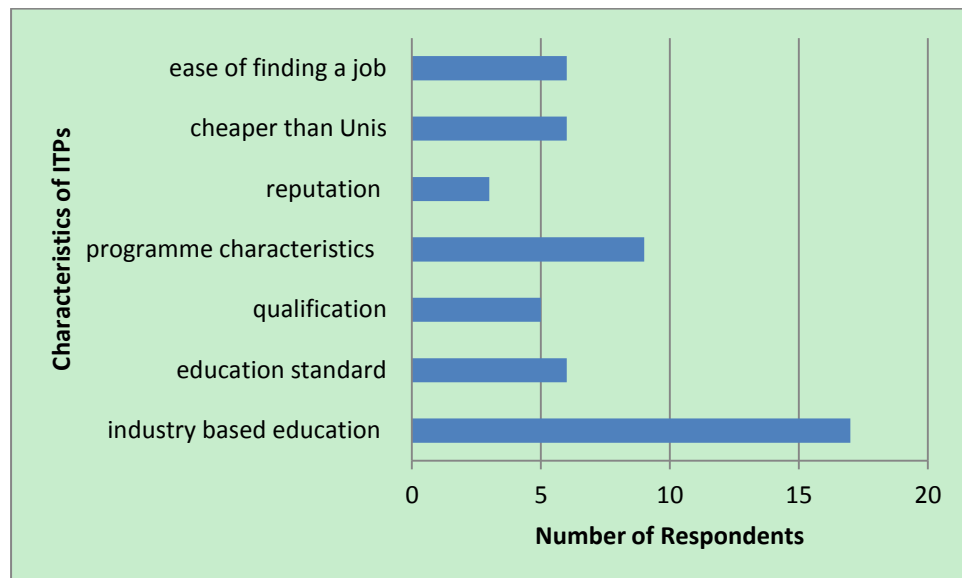
In relation to high education standards, six respondents referred to high standards of teaching and research, five mentioned strong and qualified teaching faculties, and one mentioned high quality education. Moreover, in regard to programme features, four referred to the difficulty of graduating, three mentioned high tuition fees, two

mentioned strict language entry requirements, and one mentioned the breadth of subject design up to PhD, ease of entry compared to China, and a lower ease of finding a job than ITPs. With regard to the issue of qualifications, two mentioned that qualifications from universities are recognized highly by the Chinese government, and three mentioned international recognition.

### 4.3.2 Characteristics of ITPs

The findings on the awareness of the characteristics of ITPs are presented in Figure 4.20.

**Figure 4.20: Characteristics of ITPs**

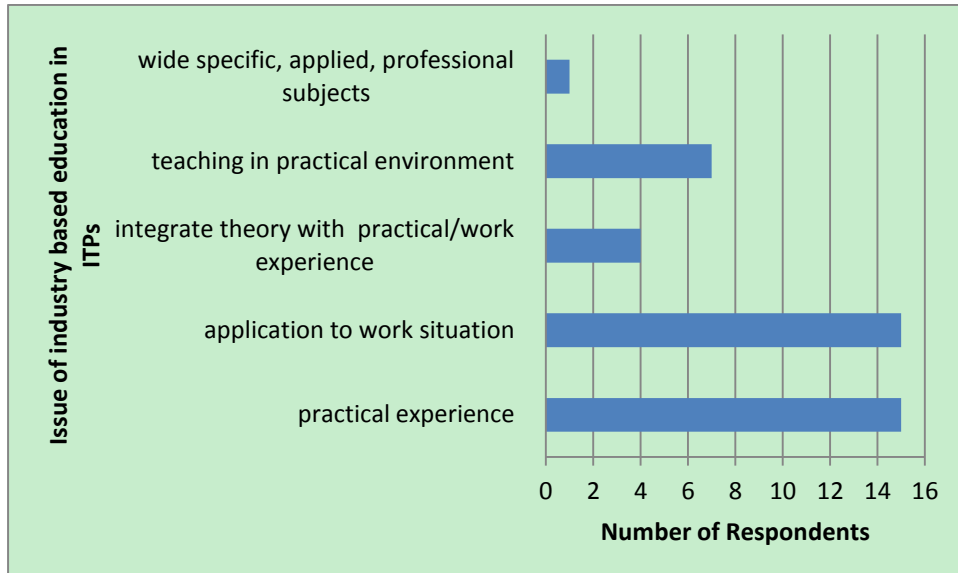


Seventeen respondents stated that the most impressive characteristic of ITPs is that they provide industry-based education. Nine respondents mentioned the programme characteristics ITPs provide. Six respondents mentioned the education standards of ITPs; that their tuition fees are cheaper than universities, and the ease of finding a job after graduation from ITPs. Five respondents referred to the issue of qualifications, and 3 respondents mentioned the issue of reputation.

In relation to industry based education, fifteen respondents mentioned that the focus of ITPs is on practical experience and application to work situations; seven referred to teaching in a practical environment; four mentioned that their programmes integrate

theory with practical and work experience. One referred to wide specific, applied, professional subjects, as shown in Figure 4.21:

**Figure 4.21: Issue of industry based education in ITPs**

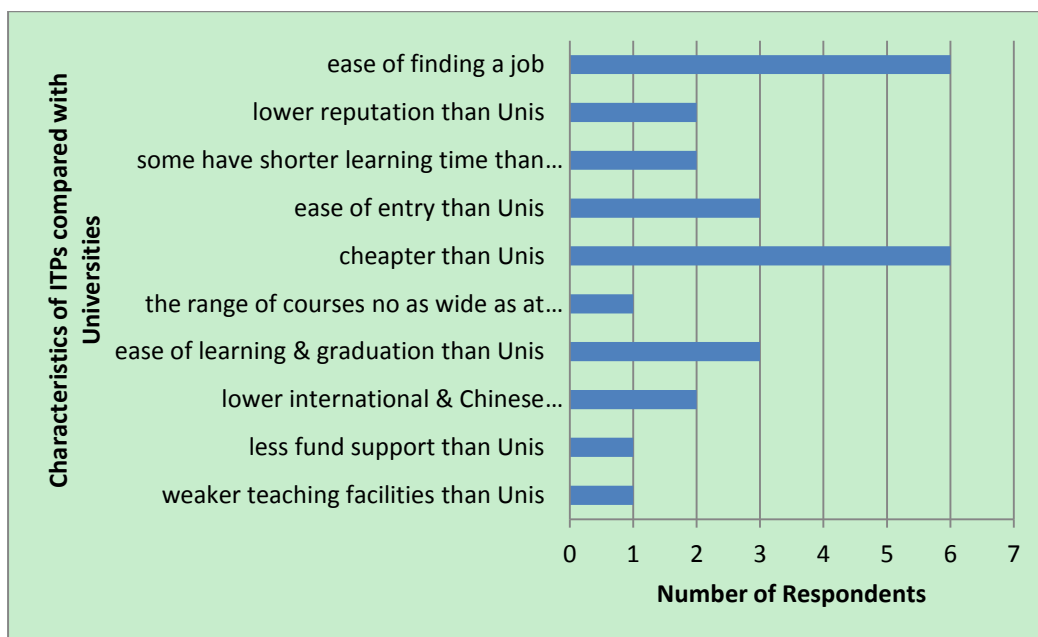


Moreover, in relation to the education standards of ITPs, three respondents referred to their focus on vocational education; two respondents mentioned public institutions; one respondent made mention of high quality education, high standard of education and training, as well as some weak features, such as weaker teaching facilities than universities and less funding support than universities. With regard to the issue of qualifications, three respondents mentioned that the qualifications of ITPs are recognized by the Chinese government, one referred to industry and community recognition and two respondents mentioned lower international and Chinese recognition than universities.

In addition, in relation to the issue of reputation, two mentioned lower reputations than universities, and one mentioned that some specialized subjects rank highly in New Zealand. And in regard to programme characteristics, three mentioned entry is easier to some programmes than to universities, three mentioned it is easier to study and graduate than at universities, one respondent referred to there not being such a wide course choice as at universities, while another mentioned shorter programmes than at universities and flexible delivery at all levels.

Notably, many respondents compared some characteristics of ITPs with universities. Six respondents mentioned the ease of finding a job and those ITPs are cheaper than universities. Three referred to the ease of entry, learning and graduation compared with universities. Two mentioned their lower reputation, and lower international and Chinese recognition than Universities, and that some programmes have shorter learning times than universities. Moreover, one mentioned the range of courses not being as wide as at universities and that there is less funding support and weaker teaching facilities than at universities, as shown in Figure 4.22.

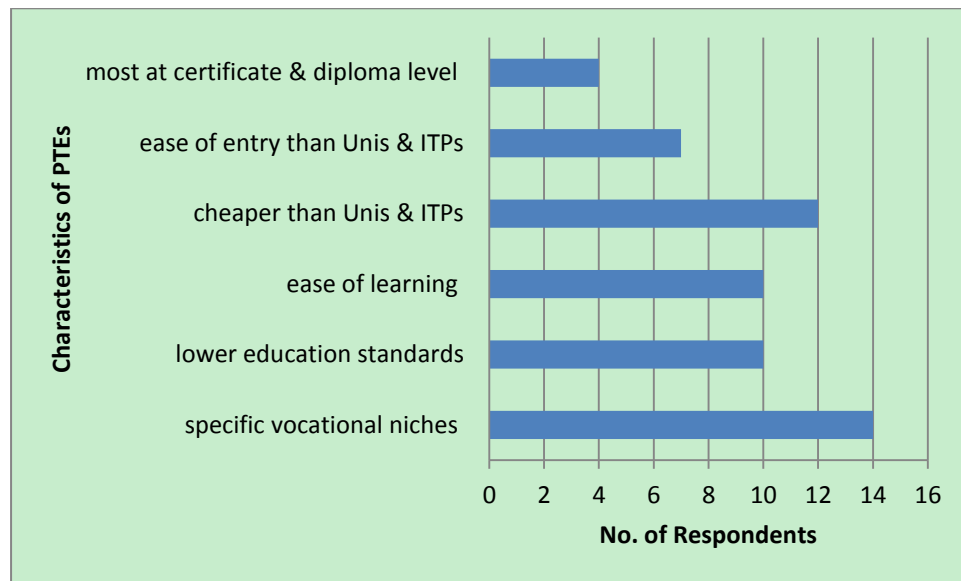
**Figure 4.22: Characteristics of ITPs compared with Universities**



### 4.3.3 Characteristics of Private Training Establishments (PTEs)

The findings on the awareness of the characteristics of PTEs are presented in Figure 4.23.

**Figure 4.23: Characteristics of PTEs**



Fourteen respondents stated that the most impressive characteristic of PTEs is that their programmes are focused mainly on specific vocational niches. Twelve respondents mentioned that tuition fees are cheaper than universities and ITPs. Ten respondents made mention of their lower education standards, and the ease of learning in PTEs. Seven respondents referred to the ease of entry into PTEs compared with universities and ITPs. Four respondents referred to the fact that most of their programmes are at certificate and diploma level.

In relation to specific vocational niches: nine respondents referred to their programmes specialising in niche subjects; eight respondents mentioned that some skill shortage programmes are provided in PTEs; and four referred to specific vocational niches. Moreover, in regard to weak education standards, eight respondents referred to the lower education quality in most PTEs, and one mentioned each of the following: weaker teaching faculties and education systems than at universities and ITPs, most of them have external lecturers, many PTEs are not recognized by the Chinese government, and PTEs rely on private funding support.

**Table 4.1: Summary of the main findings of the characteristics of institutions**

Universities	ITPs	PTEs
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>1. academic &amp; research-led programmes</b></li> <li>• <b>2. high reputation</b></li> <li>• <b>3. high education standard</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• high standards of teaching &amp; research</li> <li>• strong &amp; qualified teaching faculties</li> <li>• high quality education</li> </ul> </li> <li>• <b>4. programme description</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• difficulty of graduating</li> <li>• high tuition fee</li> <li>• strict language entry requirement</li> <li>• the breadth of subjects design until PhD</li> <li>• ease of entry compared to China</li> <li>• lower rate of employment than ITPs</li> </ul> </li> <li>• <b>5. qualification</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recognized highly by the Chinese government</li> <li>• International recognition</li> </ul> </li> <li>• <b>6. public institution</b></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>1. industry based education</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Focus on practical experience</li> <li>• Application to work situation</li> <li>• Teaching in practical environment</li> <li>• integrated theory with practical/work experience</li> <li>• wide specific, applied, professional subjects</li> </ul> </li> <li>• <b>2. programme characteristics</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ease of learning &amp; graduated than Unis</li> <li>• ease of entry than Unis</li> <li>• some have shorter learning time than Unis</li> <li>• flexible delivery at all levels</li> </ul> </li> <li>• <b>3. education standard</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• vocational education</li> <li>• public institution</li> <li>• high quality education</li> <li>• high standard of education &amp; training</li> <li>• weak teaching facilities than Unis</li> <li>• less fund support than Unis</li> </ul> </li> <li>• <b>4. cheaper than Unis</b></li> <li>• <b>5. ease of finding a job</b></li> <li>• <b>6. qualification</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recognized by the Chinese government</li> <li>• lower international &amp; Chinese recognition than Unis</li> <li>• industry &amp; community recognition</li> </ul> </li> <li>• <b>7. reputation</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• lower reputation than Unis</li> <li>• some specialized subjects rank highly in NZ</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>1. specific vocational niches</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• many specialise in niche subjects</li> <li>• some skill shortage programmes</li> <li>• specific vocational niches</li> </ul> </li> <li>• <b>2. cheaper than Unis &amp; ITPs</b></li> <li>• <b>3. ease of learning</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ease of learning, pass &amp; graduated than Unis &amp; ITPs</li> <li>• short learning time in most</li> </ul> </li> <li>• <b>4. weak education standard</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• lower education quality in most</li> <li>• most no recognized by the Chinese government</li> </ul> </li> <li>• <b>5. ease of entry than Unis &amp; ITPs</b></li> <li>• <b>6. most at certificate &amp; diploma levels</b></li> </ul>

**Table 4.2: Advantages and Disadvantages of ITPs compared with universities**

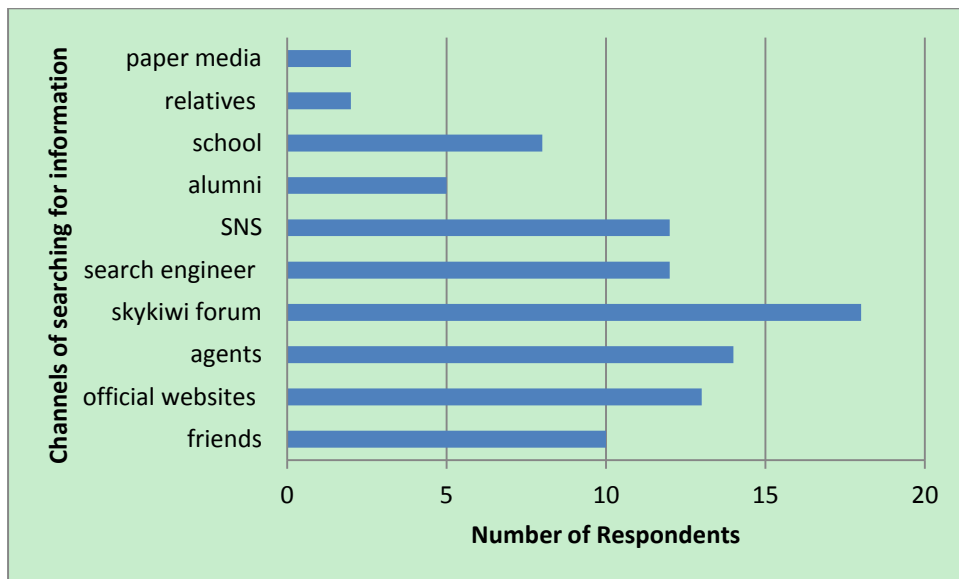
Advantages	Disadvantages
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• ease of finding a job</li><li>• cheaper than Universities</li><li>• ease of entry than Universities</li><li>• ease of learning &amp; graduation than Universities</li><li>• some similar programmes have shorter learning times than Universities</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• lower reputation than Universities</li><li>• lower international &amp; Chinese recognition than Universities</li><li>• weaker teaching facilities than Universities</li><li>• range of courses are not as wide as Universities</li><li>• less funding support than Universities</li></ul>

## **4.4 Chinese students' views on the channels of information search**

### **4.4.1 Types of channels of searching information**

Eighteen respondents stated that they liked to search for information about institutions by means of the forums of Skykiwi (New Zealand local Chinese Website). Fourteen respondents declared they liked to ask for information from New Zealand local Chinese agents. Thirteen respondents mentioned that they search for information through the official websites of the institutions. Twelve respondents mentioned that they searched for information through the search engine (Baidu: Chinese search engine) and SNS (Renren: Chinese Facebook, Sina Weibo: Chinese Twitter). Ten respondents referred to their preference for gathering information through their friends. Eight respondents mentioned that they also went to the school to ask for relevant information about the programmes, and emphasized that they just trusted what they saw. Five respondents referred to preferring to seek for information through alumni of the institutions or someone who knows the institutions very well. Only two referred to obtaining information from their relatives and from the media. See Figure 4.24:

**Figure 4.24: Channels for searching for information**

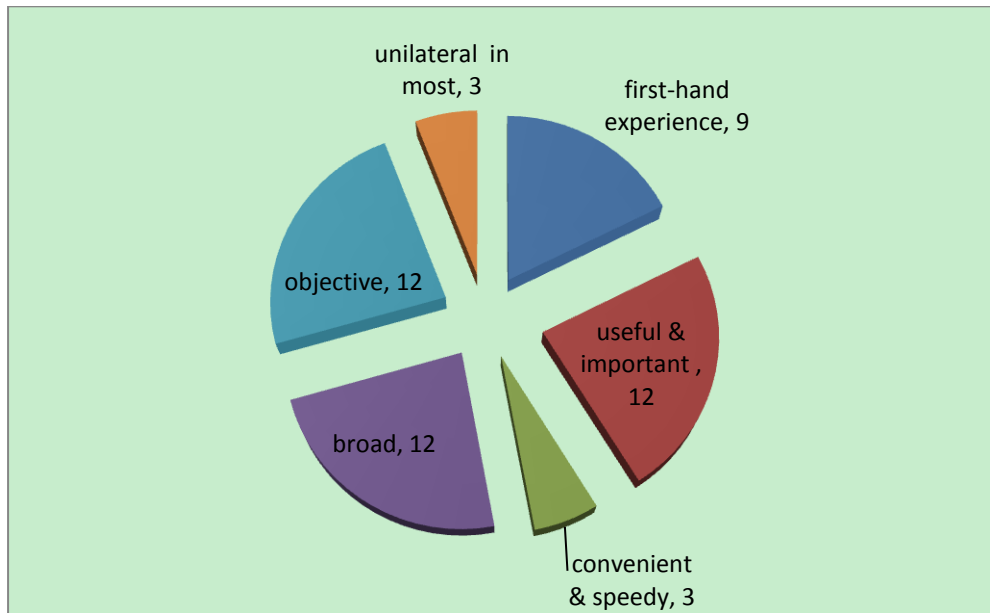


#### **4.4.2 Comments on information search through social media (SM), such as Forum and Social Network Site (SNS)**

##### *Features of information through SM*

Twelve respondents stated that the main reason they find the information they receive through the social media useful is because it includes some important points and covers a broad range. In addition, SM enables them to receive objective information. Nine respondents appreciated receiving information from people with first-hand experience of an institution that they know very well. Three respondents referred positively to the speed and convenience of the information. Three respondents, however, acknowledged that the information could be unilateral, that is, possibly from a limited point of view, and also that most of the information is just people's personal views. See Chart 4.1 below.

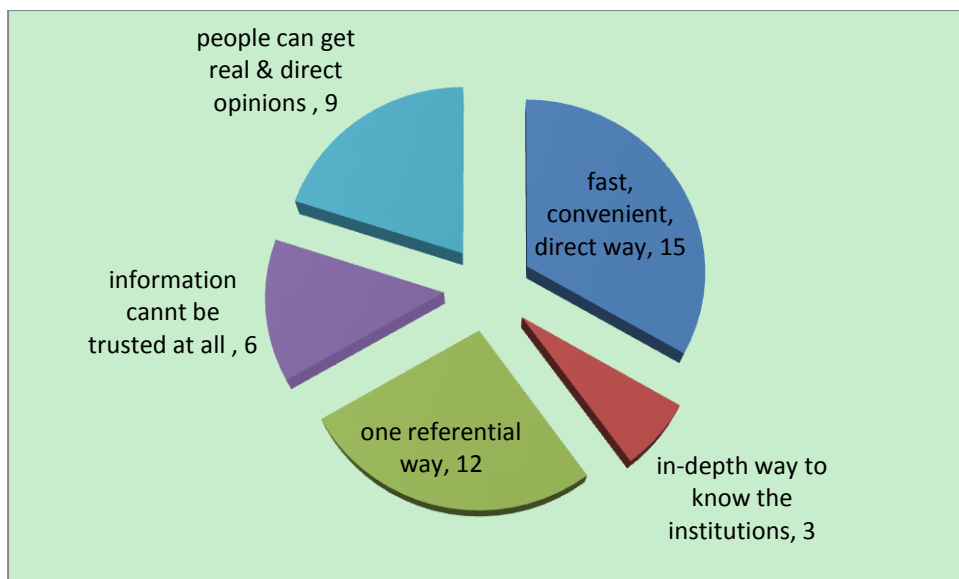
**Chart 4.1: Features of information through SM**



***Comments on SM in searching information***

Predominantly, 15 of the 20 respondents considered that SM is a fast, convenient and direct way to search for information. The next largest group of respondents (12) stated that using SM was just one referential way to search for information about particular institutions. A further 9 respondents said that they thought they could get information about people’s own experiences directly from them through SM. Three of the respondents used SM as an in-depth way to get to know an institution. On the other hand, 6 of the respondents expressed doubts about the trustworthiness of the information obtained. These comments are shown in Chart 4.2.

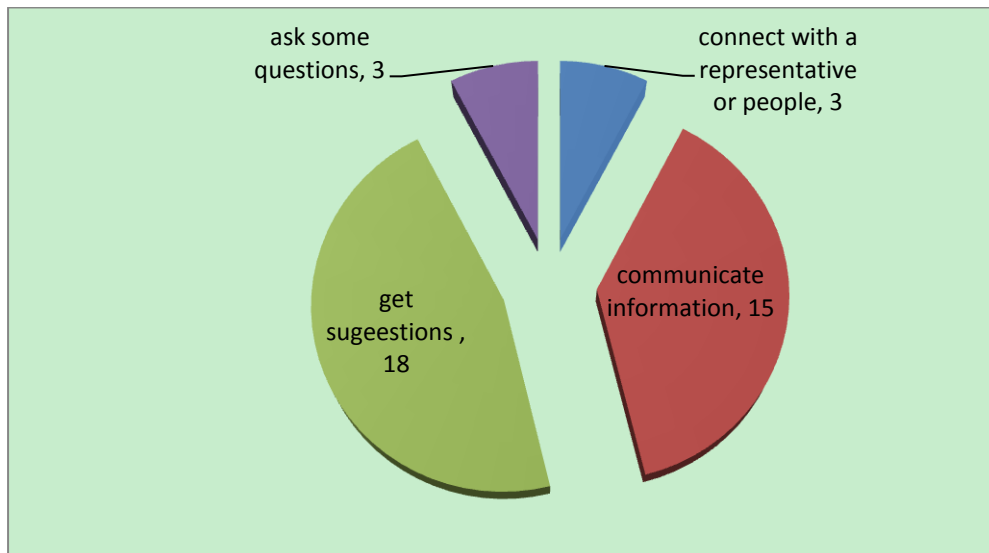
**Chart 4.2: Comments on SM in searching for information**



### ***Motivations for using SNS and Forum in information search***

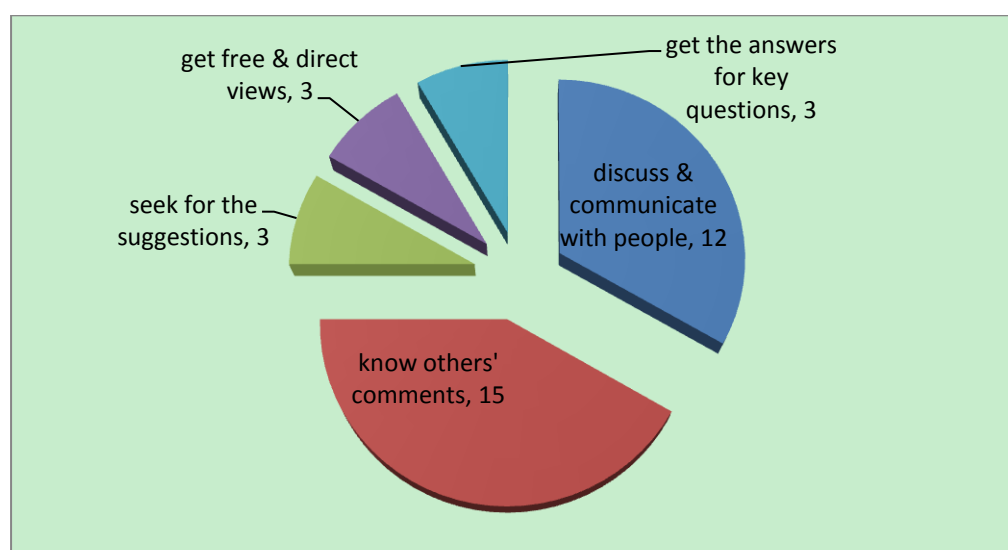
Eighteen respondents stated that they predominantly relied on the suggestions from close friends and associates received via SNS when searching for information about different institutions. Fifteen respondents indicated that they communicated information about institutions on SNS with alumni and other potential applicants. Three of the respondents said they used SNS to seek answers to their questions about various institutions. Further, three mentioned that they were able to contact representatives of the institutions, or people who were knowledgeable about an institution, using SNS. See Chart 4.3 below:

**Chart 4.3: Motivation in using SNS**



In relation to Forum, fifteen respondents stated that their dominant motivation for using Forum is mainly so they can gather other people's comments. twelve respondents declared they liked being able to discuss and communicate with people on Forum. Three respondents mentioned they liked to ask for suggestions, get answers for key questions, and they liked getting free and direct views from Forum. These styles are summarised in Chart 4.4:

**Chart 4.4: Motivation in using Forum**



**Table 4.3: Summary of main findings on the styles of information search**

Area of interview	Key findings
<b>Styles of searching for information</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Skykiwi forum</li> <li>2. agents</li> <li>3. official websites</li> <li>4. search engine</li> <li>5. SNS</li> <li>6. friends</li> <li>7. school</li> <li>8. alumni</li> </ol>
<b>Features of information from SM</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. useful &amp; important</li> <li>2. objective</li> <li>3. broad</li> <li>4. first-hand experienced</li> <li>5. convenient &amp; speedy</li> <li>6. unilateral in most</li> </ol>
<b>Comments on SM in searching information</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. fast, convenient, direct way</li> <li>2. one referential way</li> <li>3. get real &amp; direct opinions</li> <li>4. can't trust at all</li> <li>5. in-depth way</li> </ol>
<b>Motivation in using SNS</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. get close people's suggestions, like friends</li> <li>2. communicate information</li> <li>3. ask some questions</li> <li>4. contact representatives or people</li> </ol>
<b>Motivation in using Forum</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. gather others' comments</li> <li>2. discuss &amp; communicate with people</li> <li>3. seek for the suggestions</li> <li>4. get free &amp; direct views</li> <li>5. get the answers for key questions</li> </ol>

#### **4.5 Chinese students' views on steps in selecting a tertiary institution**

In the pre-search stage, respondents mainly search for information about institutions. Fifteen respondents stated that they searched for information through the Internet. Seven respondents mentioned searching for information through agents and friends. Four respondents mentioned using the official websites of the institutions.

While in the search phase, respondents stated that they narrowed their choice down to several institutions by evaluating their own situation and integrating it with their decision-making criteria. Eight respondents mentioned that they liked to ask for other people's advice to help them decide on which institutions to choose. Six of the respondents relied on information about each institution's image when making their choices. Four respondents acknowledged that they used information from the Internet, or from SM, when reducing their choice to several institutions.

In the application stage, twelve respondents said they preferred to apply for an institution through the agents. Eight respondents stated that they had applied to an institution by themselves. All respondents said they had applied to two or three institutions at the same time. They had prepared all the application documents the institution required and completed the application form, then submitted it to the international office/enrolment centre/enrolment website of the institutions. Three mentioned they had asked relevant advisors and staff for help with some problems.

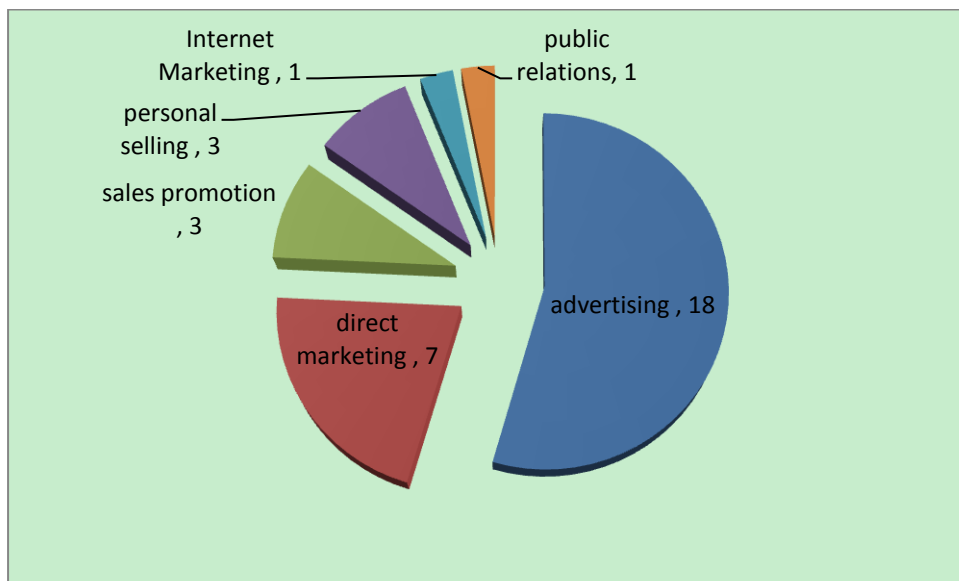
In the choice/decision stage, if they received offers from two or three of the institutions, nine respondents stated that they would choose the institution according to the one with the highest prestige. Six respondents said they thought about the institution's faculty and facilities before making the decision. Four respondents mentioned that they would choose an institution according to each of the following: their personal situation, suggestions from others, and programme evaluations.

At the registration stage, they all said they would go to the student centre of the institution, enrol and pay, buy student insurance, apply for a student visa, and apply for student and Internet ID. They emphasized that applying for a student visa is the most important thing for international students.

#### 4.6 Chinese students' views on frequently used promotion techniques

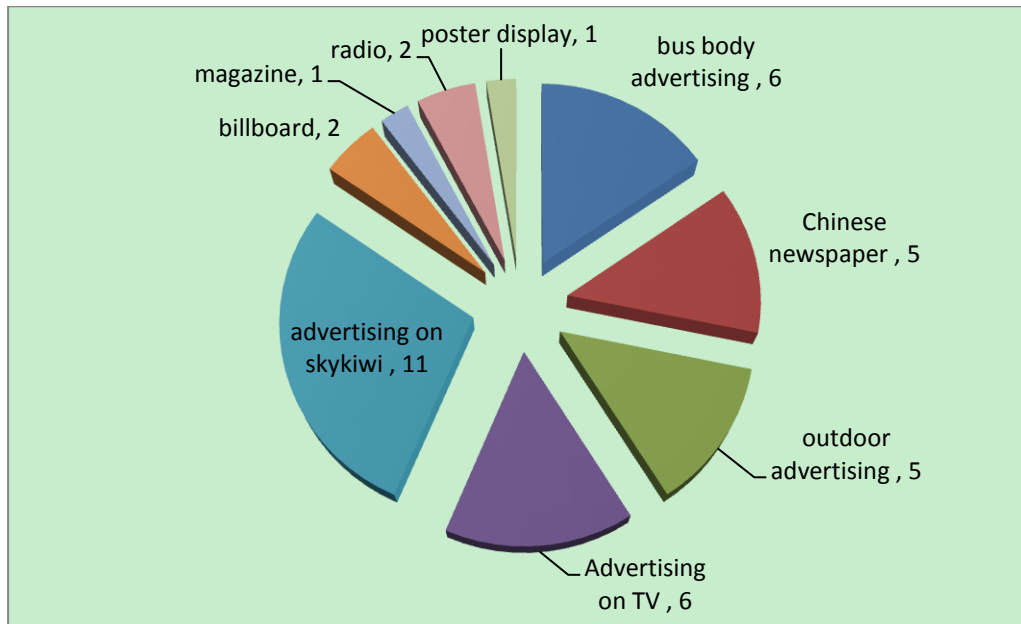
With reference to promotion techniques frequently used by New Zealand tertiary institutions, eighteen respondents mentioned advertising, seven referred to direct marketing, and three mentioned sales promotion and personal selling. Only one referred to Internet marketing and public relations, as shown in Chart 4.5 below.

**Chart 4.5: Frequent use of promotion techniques**



In relation to types of advertising, eleven respondents mentioned advertising on Skykiwi, six referred to the advertising on the outside of buses and the advertising on TV, and five mentioned outdoor advertising and advertising in Chinese newspapers, on billboards and on radio. Only one mentioned poster display advertising and advertising in magazines (See Chart 4.6 below). Moreover, in regard to direct marketing, four mentioned brochures, and three referred to leaflets, posters and leaflets from agents. In relation to styles of sales promotion, two mentioned international education exhibitions, and one referred to open days. With regard to personal selling, three respondents mentioned oral promotion from agents.

**Chart 4.6: Types of advertising**



**Table 4.4: Summary of key findings in familiar promotion techniques**

Area of interview	Key finding
Familiar promotion techniques	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. advertising <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● advertising on Skykiwi</li> <li>● bus body advertising</li> <li>● advertising on TV</li> <li>● outdoor advertising</li> <li>● advertising on Chinese newspaper</li> </ul> </li> <li>2. direct marketing <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● poster &amp; leaflet on agents</li> <li>● leaflet</li> <li>● brochure</li> </ul> </li> <li>3. sales promotion <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● international education exhibition</li> <li>● open days</li> </ul> </li> <li>4. personal selling <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● oral promotion from agents</li> </ul> </li> </ol>

## **4.7 Chapter summary**

The main objective of this chapter is to investigate Chinese students' views and gain some descriptive and in-depth findings from the participating respondents. This chapter starts by investigating their real needs and the factors affecting the decision-making process of Chinese students in selecting an institution. Different questions are implemented to address their real needs and determine the essential influencing factors, including the reasons for the choice of New Zealand, preferred institutions and majors. The purpose of studying in New Zealand, and the participants' plans and expected value of the study afterwards, as well as the factors they consider when they make a decision, are investigated. Next, the main characteristics of the institutions are identified in order to determine the differentiating characteristics of ITPs compared with universities and PTEs. Last, the preferred types of channels for searching for information, some comments on SM, such as Forum and SNS, and frequently used promotion techniques are presented.

In summary, some of the essential factors, views and issues have been found and recognized as influencing the decision-making of Chinese students. In turn, they can affect the development of the promotion activities of ITPs hoping to improve their attractiveness to the Chinese student market. In the next chapter, Chinese students' real needs will be discussed, and some of the crucial factors in the decision-making process that help to define their decision-making criteria will be identified. The features of ITPs compared with universities will be determined and matched with Chinese students' needs and decision-making criteria, and some feasible promotion activities will be discussed, especially promotion by SNS.

## **Chapter Five: Discussion**

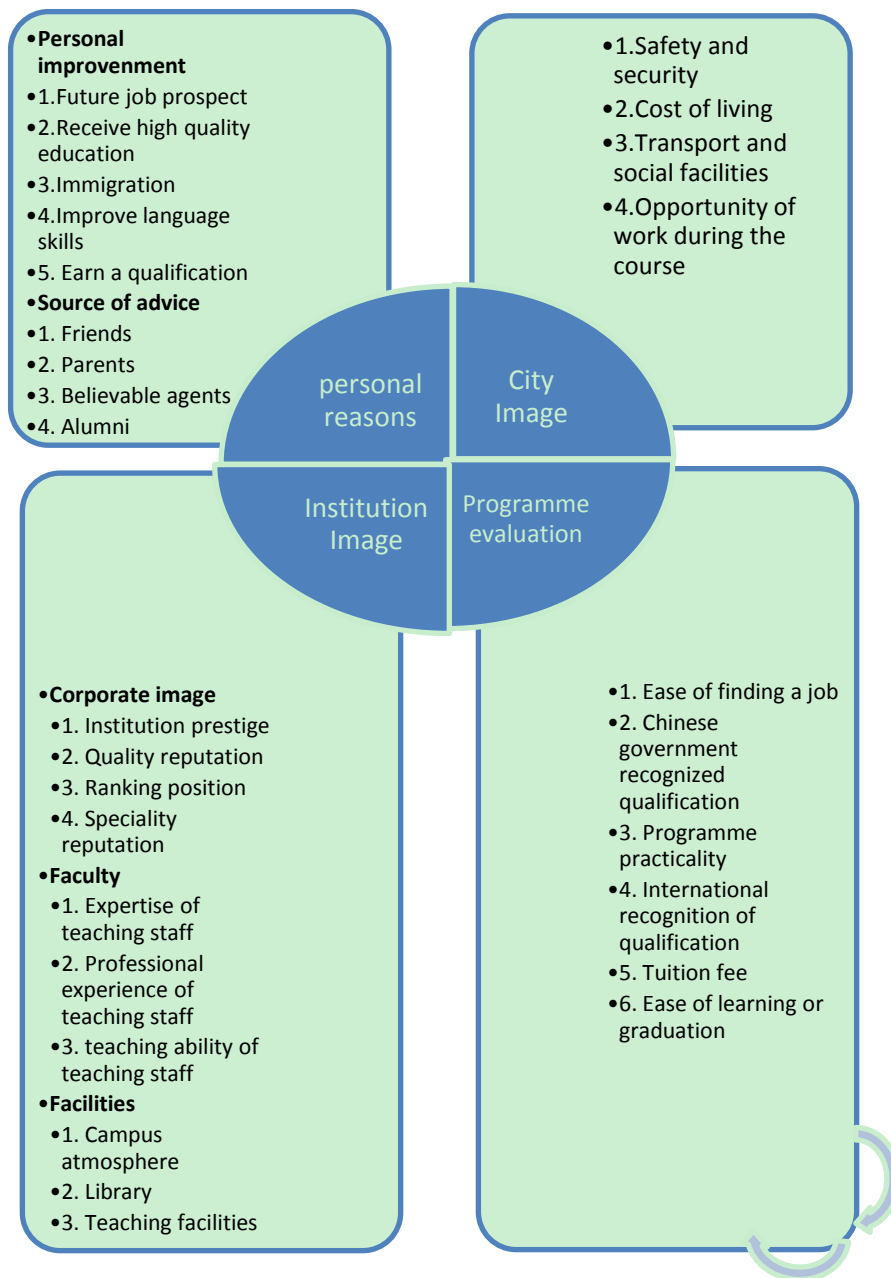
### **5.1 Introduction**

In Chapter four, the findings from the results of the data collection and data analysis were presented. In this chapter, the discussion is conducted based on the findings in Chapter four, and is also integrated with relevant previous studies and theories mentioned in the literature review in Chapter two. The discussion mainly focuses on finding answers to the research question described in Chapter one: to what extent could Institutes of Technology and Polytechnics in New Zealand improve their attractiveness to overseas Chinese students by identifying the criteria they use to choose tertiary education institutions in New Zealand. Along with the discussion, some in-depth analysis and further ideas are presented in regard to the decision making of Chinese students when selecting a New Zealand TEI, and suitable promotion strategies for ITPs in the Chinese student market.

### **5.2 Decision making criteria of Chinese students when selecting a New Zealand TEI**

According to findings in this study, a model depicting the decision making criteria of Chinese overseas students in selecting a TEI in New Zealand is developed (Figure 5.1). This model includes the following four major categories: (1) personal reasons, (2) city image, (3) institution image, and (4) programme evaluation. Further sub-categories are found in relation to personal reasons and institution image. The two sub-categories in personal reasons are: personal improvement and source of advice. The three sub-categories in institution image are: corporate image, faculty, and facilities.

**Figure 5.1: Main factors influencing the decision-making process of Chinese students in New Zealand**



(Adopted by the author based on findings of the current study)

### **5.2.1 Personal reasons**

#### ***Personal improvement***

According to the findings, in relation to personal improvement, which investigates the personal needs of Chinese students looking for a New Zealand TEI, the most dominant factor influencing their decision-making is future job prospects. The next most important factors are to receive a high quality education, to immigrate to New Zealand, to improve their language skills, and to earn a qualification. Significantly, Chinese students have a high desire to seek a job after graduation from a New Zealand TEI. They specifically mention this issue as the most dominant reason after their choice of major. It is their main plan after completing their tertiary education and is one of the most expected values from a New Zealand tertiary education. Selvarajah's (2006) study found that obtaining employment after graduation is the most important personal aspect of decision-making for Chinese students seeking an education in New Zealand. Marriott, Du Plessis & Pu (2010) also stated that job expectations, that is, both local and foreign jobs, can be identified as one of the most crucial factors affecting Chinese students' choice of study destination.

In relation to receiving a high quality education, Chinese students emphasized that this is the main purpose for studying in New Zealand, and it is the most attractive factor for coming to New Zealand for them. They also mentioned the importance of this factor both in determining their preference for an institution and as a dominant reason for their choice of major. Ho, Li, Cooper & Holmes (2007) also referred to the quality of the education as one of the major factors influencing the choices of Chinese students when selecting a study destination.

Moreover, most Chinese students expressed a strong desire to stay and immigrate to New Zealand, and this factor influenced their choice of an institution or a major. According to a national survey of international students in New Zealand in 2008, Chinese students were the most likely ones to want to stay in New Zealand, and 76% of Chinese students intended to apply for permanent residence (PR) in New Zealand (Ministry of Education by Deloitte, 2008).

Improvement of English language skills and earning a qualification also play important roles in selecting an institution for Chinese students. According to 110 Chinese students studying postgraduate courses at the Auckland campus of Massey University, their most significant educational objectives when selecting New Zealand as their destination for tertiary study were “to obtain a qualification essential to my career”, and to develop English language competence (Selvarajah, 2006). Moreover, Marriott et al. (2010) thought a qualification or a degree is a more important objective for Chinese students. Selvarajah (2006) found that some Chinese students seek local qualifications to access the local labour market in order to immigrate to New Zealand (Selvarajah, 2006). In other words, one of the reasons for earning a local qualification was related to the issue of employment and immigration in New Zealand.

### *Source of Advice*

In relation to the sources of advice, Chinese students emphasized the importance of friends' suggestions in selecting an institution, followed by their parents' suggestions. The advice from trustworthy agents and alumni were the least important. For Chinese students, cultural support from friends and family has been identified as a significant factor in the choice of study destination (Chung et al., 2009). However, although the findings of the national survey of New Zealand showed that agents' recommendations had a significant impact on students' choices, these were exceeded by friends' recommendations. Fifty-three percent of students used agents to help with arranging their study in New Zealand (Ministry of Education by Deloitte, 2008). The respondents specially emphasized that they would only trust trustworthy agents who can provide valuable information for their choices. Thus, the institutions should assist students by identifying and monitoring the quality of agents. Furthermore, respondents mentioned that alumni can also provide some of the most valuable information. However, it is harder to find qualified alumni due to the limitations of information and information channels. The institutions could create a group of current and previous Chinese students' offline or online to enhance recruitment opportunities for potential applicants.

### **5.2.2 City image**

In relation to city image, the dominant factor influencing decision-making in selecting an institution in New Zealand is the safety and security of the city. The cost of living, transport and social facilities, and the opportunity of work during the course in the city are the next most important. Importantly, the Chinese students thought their personal safety was more important than other factors. Issues surrounding personal safety, in particular racial discrimination and the risk of victimisation of Chinese students, significantly influence the choice to study in New Zealand (Chung et al., 2009). Moreover, the respondents expressed their ideas about the cost of living in the city. They hoped to live as economically as they can to conserve funds because an overseas education is a big investment for them and their family. The lower cost of education in New Zealand is also one of the main reasons why they come to New Zealand. Furthermore, they were concerned about the convenience of living, such as availability of transport and part-time work opportunities. Respondents mentioned that they would like to work part-time during their course of study, not only to provide life and work experience, but also to help them to reduce their cost of living. Thus, these are the reasons why a majority of Chinese students choose to study in Auckland. It is the biggest city in New Zealand, and it can provide convenient living and more part-time work opportunities.

### **5.2.3 Institution image**

#### *Corporate image*

In terms of corporate image, the Chinese students thought the most dominant factor was the prestige of the institution. The next factors were the reputation for quality of the institution, its ranking position, and the reputation of specialty courses. Chung et al. (2009) mentioned one of the crucial issues for Chinese students making a choice are the institutions' prestige and reputation, and the Chinese students interviewed expressed strong interest in an institution's prestige and reputation. They thought high prestige and reputation demonstrated a high value education and provided a guarantee of quality. Modern Chinese people believe that qualifications from an institution with high prestige and reputation are well recognised by society and employers, and they

will enable graduates to get a “good” job after graduation and benefit their further development. Thus, a majority of Chinese students prefer to study in the USA and UK, where there are many high prestige universities with worldwide reputations.

Moreover, a quality reputation, ranking position and the reputation of its specialty courses are able to help students identify the quality of an institution from the public’s perspective. Specifically, in regard to an institution’s reputation in some disciplines and majors in the specialized fields, this factor also influences the choice of institution that some Chinese students make. Their preference is for interesting disciplines or majors.

### ***Faculty***

In relation to faculty, the Chinese students particularly consider the expertise of teaching staff, and their professional experience. Most of them thought a high quality education is attributable to the expertise of the teaching staff in the education industry. Moreover, they thought teachers with good teaching ability can effectively deliver knowledge to students. This factor was important to the Chinese students.

### ***Facilities***

With regard to facilities, the Chinese students preferred a campus atmosphere or environment in an institution, followed by the quality of the library and the teaching facilities. They thought a good campus atmosphere or environment can provide a good learning environment and make them feel they are at a “real university”. Moreover, they considered that the library and teaching facilities are important resources at an institution. The library also brings lots of value to students, and provides the availability of self-study area. They believe excellent and advanced teaching facilities help students to absorb knowledge very well.

#### **5.2.4 Programme evaluation**

The Chinese students placed a lot of emphasis on the ease of finding a job related to their programme of study, which was the most essential factor influencing their programme evaluation. The next most essential factor was to obtain a Chinese government recognized qualification. The other factors in order of preference were programme speciality, internationally recognised qualifications, tuition fees and ease of learning or graduation. The availability of employment was associated with job prospects, as discussed above. Notably, as mentioned above about the importance of earning a qualification for Chinese students, it is also important that the qualification is recognized by the Chinese government, since it leads to the availability of further study and jobs in China. The Chinese government has the sole assessment centre and makes the regulations regarding the qualifications gained from outside China. A qualification is acceptable in China when it has been recognized by the government. Although international recognition of a qualification is still important for Chinese students from the point of view of further work or further studies in other countries, it is less important than Chinese government recognition.

Moreover, in regard to programme practicality, the Chinese students stated that they looked for programme practicality so they can use the knowledge learned from the institution effectively in their job; a practical programme is also quite helpful for finding a job. In relation to the issue of tuition fees, they look for high quality programmes with the lowest tuition fees possible, because their fees are paid by themselves or their family. However, some of them mentioned that this factor is not the main one influencing their programme evaluation when in New Zealand. They evaluated the programme according to the comparative ease of learning or graduation. Most of them mentioned that they tended to choose programmes that do not require high English language skills and academic ability because of the difficulty of studying in a second language.

## **5.3 Promotion strategy of ITPs in Chinese student market**

### **5.3.1 Which Characteristics of ITPs attract Chinese students compared with Universities and PTEs?**

According to the findings (see Table 4.1) from an analysis of the characteristics of the TEIs in New Zealand attended by the Chinese students, ITPs have excellent characteristics compared with Universities and PTEs, because of their bias towards industry-based education, including the focus on practical experience, application to the work situation, teaching in a practical environment in most programmes, integrating theory with practical/ work experience, and providing a wide range of specific, applied, and professional subjects. Moreover, they mentioned the following characteristics of ITPs compared with Universities (as shown in Table 4.2): the significant advantages of ITPs attended by Chinese students include the ease of finding a job, cheaper tuition fees than universities, easier entry than universities, ease of learning and graduation compared with universities, and having similar programmes that have shorter learning times than at universities. The following factors match the decision making criteria of Chinese students when selecting an institution in New Zealand (as shown in Figure 5.1): the ease of finding a job, industry-based education, cheaper tuition fees, ease of learning and graduation. They satisfy the needs of Chinese students in regard to job prospects, tuition fees and ease of learning. Moreover, finding a job in New Zealand is helpful for obtaining the approval of immigration in New Zealand. Hence, ITPs can also provide support for the immigration needs of students in New Zealand.

It can be seen that ITPs have impressive competitive advantages compared with Universities for the Chinese student market: ease of finding a job, industry based education, cheaper tuition fees, ease of learning or graduation, and assistance to immigrate to New Zealand. Thus, the marketing strategy of ITPs in the Chinese student market should be focused on promoting these competitive advantages to Chinese students.

Moreover, compared with universities (as shown in Table 3), the major disadvantages of ITPs attended by Chinese students are their lower reputation, less international and

Chinese government recognition, and weaker teaching facilities than universities. ITPs should enhance their reputation, gain international and Chinese government recognition, and improve their teaching facilities to reduce their differences with Universities.

### **5.3.2 What are the Chinese students' preferred channels of information search when applying to an institution?**

According to the findings (see Figure 4.1) about the channels of information used by Chinese students when applying to an institution in New Zealand, they expressed a high use of the Skykiwi forum, followed by main channels such as agents, official websites, search engine, SNS, friends, going to school, and alumni. Regarding the use of the Internet, the Skykiwi forum, official websites, search engine, and SNS take an important role. Respondents mentioned they mainly used the Internet to search for information in the pre-search stage when looking for an institution. The Internet has changed our way of searching for information nowadays, and Internet information influences the decision-making of students and provides advice on their choices.

Skykiwi is “the largest local Chinese website in New Zealand”, and is a platform to introduce the New Zealand lifestyle and culture to the Chinese community (Skykiwi, 2012). “Skykiwi Forum is the most visited Chinese online community in New Zealand” (Skykiwi, 2012). As a powerful local Chinese media in New Zealand, Skykiwi plays important role in the life of Chinese students; likewise, students also stated Skykiwi forum is a significant channel of information when applying to an institution. In this ever-changing world, online communication is becoming the top mode of information search. Thus, ITPs should consider co-operation with Skykiwi to promote their programmes through this platform to attract Chinese students.

With the rise in popularity of SNS, for example Facebook, they have become an essential option for finding information on the Internet (Morris et al., 2010). In America, 93% of adult Internet users are on Facebook, and spend 11 hours a month on Facebook (Morris, Teevan & Panovich, 2010). According to a survey on the use of Facebook, people prefer to seek opinions on Facebook, which can provide valuable

opinions and viable alternatives for subjective questions (Morris et al., 2010). The results from SNS are regarded as very reliable (Morris et al., 2010). Therefore, it can be inferred that for the majority of college-age students who use computers, SNS have become the direct way for them to know the world and help make choices for overseas education. In addition, due to culture differences, Chinese students are more likely to use Chinese SNS. Sina Weibo, a SNS in China, is “now the most powerful social media platform in China and had taken 56.5% of China’s microblogging market based on active users as of March 2012” (Rapoza, 2011). “Sina Weibo has more than 300 million registered users as of February 2012” (Cao, 2012). Sina Weibo is hugely influential in China nowadays. As adherents and active users of SNS, the Chinese students expressed their frequent uses of Sina Weibo in New Zealand. Hence, ITPs should have a presence on Sina Weibo to build relationships with students, and communicate the institutions’ information to Chinese students through this essential platform to promote ITPs.

Furthermore, most respondents stated that they were more likely to apply to the institutions through agents. According to a national survey of New Zealand in 2007, over half of the students used agents to assist with their choices in New Zealand (Ministry of Education by Deloitte, 2008). Despite frequent use of agents, Chinese students are confused about how to choose qualified agents; they are not sure which agents can provide valuable information for them. Thus, ITPs should enhance their co-operation with qualified agents, and enhance their monitoring and access to the agents in order to ensure agents can provide qualified services for students.

In addition, the ITP’s official website is a dominant platform for an institution, and ITPs should think about designing a differentiated page or area to focus on Chinese students, in Chinese, and provide the information they are concerned about, as shown in their decision criteria. However, the Chinese students thought official websites are there to serve the institutions, and probably provide only positive information for students. Thus, the websites should provide objective information for Chinese students as much as possible. In addition, most students mentioned the use of search engine. Baidu is the biggest Chinese search engine; and ITPs should consider using it as a platform to put their websites on the front page to catch the attentions of Chinese students searching for information.

In a word, for ITPs in the Chinese student market, Skykiwi, Sina Weibo and agents are the three essential channels to promote ITPs competitive advantages compared with universities in order to attract Chinese students. Moreover, official websites and search engines should be used to gain students' attention.

### **5.3.3 How Chinese students think about the use of Social Media in applying to an institution**

According to findings (see Chart 4.2), most respondents indicated that they can collect much positive information from Social Media (SM). Most thought the information from SM is useful, important, broad, objective, and comes from personal good experience. Only a few respondents thought that the information from SM is unilateral and is a personal view at best. As we can see, Chinese students put a lot of trust in information from SM and think they can get positive information from SM.

As motivation for the use of Forum, the Chinese students mainly want to hear others' comments about the institutions, programmes and majors, and to discuss and communicate information with people who know the institutions. They think they can collect much deeper information, especially when they have some queries on special areas. Their main motivation in using SNS is to focus on getting the suggestions of people who are close to them, and communicating with them. They indicate that they can get more valuable suggestions, especially friends' suggestions. This point also proves the importance of friends for them as the source of advice. Thus, both forum and SNS can provide valuable information for them. The common point is that respondents like to seek suggestions when encountering queries in applying to institutions. However, the difference between the forum and SNS is that forum has comments from people who know the institution, and SNS provides comments from people close to them. Hence, since they are reliable channels that can provide valuable information, ITPs should emphasize SM marketing, including SNS and forum, and use personalized promotion activities to attract Chinese students through SM marketing.

### **5.3.4 How ITPs can improve their focus on Chinese students through promotion techniques in New Zealand**

As mentioned in the discussion about the purpose of promotion strategy in Chapter 2, the purpose of a promotion strategy for institutions is to communicate with potential applicants and others who have an impact on education purchasing decisions. This can be done by co-ordinating and integrating promotional techniques to manage the communications initiatives of the institutions. Promotional techniques consist of advertising, personal selling, direct marketing, public relations, interactive/Internet marketing and sales promotion. According to the findings, the most impressive promotion techniques for Chinese students are advertising, including advertising on Skykiwi, on bus bodies and outdoor advertising, and TV and Chinese newspaper advertising. Moreover, only one respondent mentioned promotion in social media, which indicates that institutions have not used interactive marketing, or that promotion activities in Social media have not attracted the attention of Chinese students.

As an Internet medium and an important platform for Chinese students, Skykiwi has been employed by some institutions for the Chinese student market. With a large number of budgets having moved to online advertising nowadays, the layouts for communicating with target audiences have been shifted to placing mass appeal banner advertisements on frequently-visited web sites, and sending personalized e-mail messages to individual target buyers (Palmer & Koenig-Lewis, 2009). ITPs, therefore, should place online advertising on Skykiwi to attract the attention of Chinese students.

With regard to Internet/interactive marketing, three important factors are addressed,: creation of value for customers, community management, and interactive applications (Tikkanen et al., 2009). In SM marketing, ITPs should deliver value for potential applicants, consider real representatives, and create communities focused on Chinese students as vital role. In developing Social Media marketing strategies, ITPs should initially create a trusting relationship. The information provided through social media should be relevant and fully satisfy the prospective students who are seeking information online. According to Lorenzo-Romero et al. (2011), to entice participation in the SNS, it is essential that the users have a positive attitude to the use

of SNS, and that user-friendly web sites are provided. Trust needs to be established in the SNS' impact on the establishment of positive attitudes, and to diminish any perceived risk. Educational institutions create customer communities which show, by user feedback, that online trust can be established (Gomes & Murphy, 2003). Cao & Zhang (2012) considered SNS may become a platform with great potential for improving the performance of institutions for potential students.

Trust in fulfilment is more essential than trust in the site and information (Warrington et al., 1999). ITPs could create accounts in SNS, and provide prompt, accurate, excellent online responses via SNS for Chinese students, and have well-trained staff following expected standards for response times and online response formats, as appropriate responses to online enquiries exemplify excellent customer service. Moreover, ITPs should also create an online alumni community which will be a great cyber venue for prospective and past students to share study experiences and recommendations. Satisfied students will recommend their study experiences to friends through such an online community (Gomes & Murphy, 2003).

## 5.4 Chapter Summary

In the consumer decision making of Chinese students in New Zealand, this study has identified some crucial factors from four aspects that influence the decision making of Chinese students when selecting an institution in New Zealand. Chinese students are very focused on further job prospects, high quality education, qualifications being recognized by the Chinese government, English study and immigration. Moreover, friends' and parents' advice, the safety and security of the city, the institution's prestige and reputation, the ease of finding a job following the programmes also influence significantly the choice of institution for Chinese students.

In the promotion strategy of ITPs in the Chinese student market, this chapter first focused on the analysis of competitive advantages of ITPs compared with universities by matching the decision making criteria of Chinese students. ITPs' advantages include their provision of industry-based education, the ease of finding a job, cheaper tuition fees and the greater ease of learning or graduation compared with Universities. ITPs are also considered to be helpful for gaining approval to immigrate to New Zealand. Second, this chapter identified the dominant platforms for Chinese students when applying to the institutions, such as, Skykiwi, agents and SNS. In addition, official websites and search engines should be considered. This chapter then discussed Chinese students' perspectives on social media; the students consider that social media is a reliable channel for information searching and it can provide valuable information for them. Finally, this chapter discussed some important promotion techniques, including online advertising and Internet marketing, with the focus on SNS.

The next chapter will cover research conclusions and recommendations, and the limitations of the research and areas for further research will be presented.

## **Chapter Six: Conclusions and Recommendations**

### **6.1 Research Conclusions**

Nowadays, a majority of Chinese students choose to study out of China. Chinese students comprise the biggest number of international students in New Zealand, and create huge revenue for the TEIs. However, it is necessary to understand the Chinese student market to be able to improve ITPs' attractiveness to this market. This study focuses mainly on investigating the application of consumer decision making among Chinese students when selecting a TEI in New Zealand with the aim to improve the attractiveness of ITPs for the Chinese student market, and develop appropriate promotion strategies for them. Relevant issues around promotion strategies have been identified, especially Internet marketing.

This study conducted in-depth interviews with Chinese students from four language schools whose students have high needs concerning TEIs in New Zealand. The results were obtained from the respondents, who were chosen carefully based on sampling criteria. In analysing the data collected, the researcher observed that the understanding of consumer decision making can help TEIs analyse the Chinese students' purchase intentions very well. TEIs are then able to develop personalized and effective promotion strategy based on the decision making criteria of Chinese students.

This research is mainly in two parts: first, the decision making of Chinese students when selecting a TEI in New Zealand, and second, the promotion strategies of ITPs in the Chinese student marketing that are based on the decision making criteria of Chinese students when choosing an institution. The issues arising from the research on Chinese students show the importance of consumer decision making in purchasing education, and indicate that an insightful analysis of consumers can form the foundation to developing a marketing strategy for TEIs. Although the respondents have different perceptions when choosing a TEI, some repeated and significant factors have been defined through different questions to develop the decision criteria. Different questions include reasons for studying in New Zealand, determinants of preferred institutions, dominant factors for the choice of major, purpose for studying

in New Zealand, plans after study, expected value from TEI, and how the students make decisions. The questions focus on factors in decision making and different questions that help to identify the significant factors.

The first objective of this research is to identify factors influencing the decision-making processes of overseas Chinese students in selecting New Zealand tertiary institutions. The findings show that the significant factors relate to personal reasons, city image, institution image and programme evaluation. These influence the decision making of Chinese students in selecting a New Zealand TEI. The results indicate that Chinese students are highly focused on job prospects, high quality education, qualifications (especially those recognized by the Chinese government), English language skills, assistance with immigration, the safety and security of the city, the prestige and reputation of the institution, programme practicality, tuition fees, ease of learning, as well as friends' and parents' advice.

The second objective of this research is to determine what features of ITPs attract overseas Chinese students. In relation to developing the promotional activities of ITPs in the Chinese student market, the researcher found from the responses of Chinese students considering New Zealand TEIs the significant characteristics of ITPs when compared with universities. The characteristics were then matched with the decision making criteria to confirm the competitive advantages, which are industry based education, ease of finding a job, cheaper tuition fees and greater ease of learning or graduation when compared with universities, and assistance for immigration into New Zealand.

The third objective of this research is to develop proper marketing promotion activities to exploit the overseas Chinese student market. Firstly, the findings show that Chinese students like to search for information when applying to the institutions through the Internet, and agents still play an important role when students are applying to the institutions, and they are a vital source of advice. The Internet platforms used for searching information include Skykiwi forum, the official websites of the institutions, SNS, and search engine. Skykiwi is the biggest Chinese local website, and can be considered as an important platform for advertising. Sina Weibo

is the biggest SNS in China, and it can be defined as a useful platform for marketing. The official websites and Baidu could also be used as platforms to promote ITPs by focusing on their individual competitive advantages.

Moreover, this chapter discusses the social media marketing for Chinese students. Most of the Chinese students considered that they get positive, reliable and valuable information from SNS. They mainly read other people's comments from the forum, and usually consider suggestions from people close to them from SNS. The common point is that they like to look for suggestions on both of these two platforms. In the application of social media marketing, the relevant literature addressed three important factors: creation of value for Chinese students, community management, and interactive applications for students. In addition, maintaining a trust relationship with customers is a significant issue to be considered. Trust in the fulfilment of obligations is more essential than trust in the site and the information.

Hence, with regard to the third objective of this research, ITPs should pay attention to promoting their competitive advantages mainly through Skykiwi, Sina Weibo, and trustworthy agents. Official websites and Baidu are also important promotion platforms. When promoting themselves through social media, ITPs should pay attention to creating value for students, community management, and interactive applications for students. Most of all, ITPs should emphasize the building of trust relationships with students.

Finally, the above discussion indicates the findings of this study address the research question: "to what extent could Institutes of Technology and Polytechnics in New Zealand improve their attractiveness to overseas Chinese students by identifying the criteria they use to choose tertiary education institutions in New Zealand?" The criteria identified to improve the attractiveness of ITPs are: (a) opportunity for personal improvement, (b) preferred sources of advice, (c) image of the institution and the faculty, (d) on campus facilities, (e) quality of the programmes and (f) the city image.

## 6.2 Recommendations

The researcher's recommendations from this study, which are applicable to the promotion strategy of ITPs and based on the decision making criteria of Chinese students are as follows:

1. Focusing on the competitive advantages of ITPs matched with the needs expressed by Chinese students. The focus of the promotion should be ease of finding a job, industry-based education, cheaper tuition fees and ease of learning or graduating compared to universities, and, in addition, assistance provided with immigration into New Zealand.

2. Working with qualified agents. Agents play significant roles in providing advice and assistance for Chinese students when applying to the institutions. ITPs should enhance working with qualified agents and promoting themselves through agents. However, most Chinese students have negative attitudes towards agents. Thus, ITPs should monitor the quality of agents, and only recommend qualified agents to students in order to build a trust relationship with Chinese students.

3. Co-operating with Skykiwi. Skykiwi is the biggest local Chinese medium in New Zealand, and is the most popular website for Chinese students. Advertising on Skykiwi will target the biggest number of Chinese students online. Moreover, Skykiwi forum is also an essential channel of information search for choosing an institution. ITPs should create a community in the Skykiwi forum to listen to the students and provide information for students. Moreover, ITPs can also understand what students are looking for through the questions asked and the information students are looking for in the forum, and this will enable ITPs to improve offline services based on the online information.

4. Developing Websites in both the Chinese web pages and in certain areas focused on Chinese students. It is necessary to provide Chinese services in websites, due to the language difference. Chinese students are more likely to use Chinese to receive the information, and Chinese pages are helpful for their parents to be able to search for information, because their parents also provide essential advice for their decision. In

the specific areas of official websites focused on Chinese students, ITPs should provide the information that Chinese students are concerned about, like the information listed in their decision making criteria, and give objective information as much as possible.

5. Co-operating with language schools directly. Students from language schools have high needs in the choice of institutions. It is necessary to promote TEIs in language schools, and let students know about the institutions and provide suggestions for their choices.

6. Co-operating with Baidu, the biggest Chinese search engine. Key words should be defined in Baidu and linked to the information about the institutions, which can be shown on the front page when students are searching for relevant information.

7. Continuing to use outdoor advertising and bus body advertising, as well as advertising in local Chinese Newspapers, Radio, and TV. Despite Chinese students paying more attentions to the Internet, traditional media promotion can still attract their attention in their daily life.

8. Making a concerted effort to participate on Sina Weibo by

- Listening to students' needs, responding on time, and enhancing online customer services
- Having two way engagement with students
- Providing online responses to offline activities
- Integrating it with other platforms, including official websites, Facebook, Skykiwi forum
- Endorsing online co-operation with agents and language schools
- Building online alumni communities
- Enhancing construction of contents by
  - a) Presenting information about institutions, programmes and majors
  - b) Posting graphs, interesting pictures and videos relevant to ITPs
  - c) Posting authorized information, such as videos of current Chinese students being interviewed, and Chinese alumni who have already got "good" jobs or senior positions in a company

- d) Reposting students' activities, and information students attended, like job-seek, and immigration
- e) Focusing on life of Chinese students in New Zealand, like their accommodation, social networks, study, discrimination, culture difference, language problem, and visas
- f) Encouraging student generated contents and showing students participating in online promotion activities
- g) Providing content analysis of topic responses, targets and the degree of interest shown
- h) Attending some active users of the activities of students
- i) Integrating current events at institutions with promotion activities

### **6.3 Limitations of the research**

There are three essential limitations to this study that prevent broadening the context of these findings. First, this was an exploratory study based on a small sample of Chinese overseas students from four language schools in Auckland. While the findings generally support the awareness of the students' decision making in applying to an institution in New Zealand, they do not yet provide an adequately valid basis for generalising about Chinese students as a whole. Secondly, the respondents were from Auckland only, and mainly expressed their awareness about institutions located in Auckland or close to Auckland. Thus, the awareness of the respondents did not cover all New Zealand TEIs. Some of the institutions in the South Island were not mentioned at all. Thirdly, data collection and sampling were limited. Data collection was undertaken only from interviews, and some respondents were not able to express their thoughts very well face-to-face, or their thoughts were incomplete. Moreover, the respondents were chosen by purposive sampling, which is based mainly on the judgement derived from the knowledge of the researcher. Thus, the adequacy of the sample was limited due to the limitations of the knowledge of the researcher as a postgraduate student.

## **6.4 Further research**

Areas for further research could be focused on testing the decision making criteria of Chinese students when selecting an institution, both qualitatively and quantitatively. An online questionnaire could be delivered to larger numbers of Chinese students who are already studying in New Zealand. A combination of interviews and focus groups could be conducted with Chinese students still in China who are planning to come to New Zealand for tertiary education. In order to access the Chinese student market, interviews could be conducted with recognised, qualified and well-experienced agents, both in New Zealand and in China. Moreover, due to the recent internationalization of overseas education, New Zealand ITPs face many competitors for the Chinese student market from other countries, such as America, UK, Australia, Canada, and some European countries. The ITPs need to get to know the motivation of Chinese students in choosing an overseas education in order to attract them. Further research could also be focused on Chinese students who are planning to study overseas and are already studying in America, UK, Australia and other countries.

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## Appendix 1: Information Sheet



### Information for participants

<b>An Examination of the Congruency between New Zealand ITP practices to attract Chinese Students and the Criteria Employed by those Students to Evaluate Education Providers</b>
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My name is Jun Zhang, and I am a postgraduate student at Unitec, pursuing the Master of Business qualification at Unitec. A research thesis is a part of our degree programme, and I am doing my study on an examination of the congruency between New Zealand ITP practices to attract Chinese students and the criteria employed by those students to evaluate education providers for my thesis in order to fulfill the programme.

#### ***What I am doing***

A large number of overseas students choose to study outside their own country nowadays. There is great opportunity for tertiary education institutions (TEI) as export education has become a vital commercial business. Also, export education plays a key role in terms of contribution to the development of New Zealand. New Zealand is now commonly recognized as a world-class provider of education to overseas students. There are eight universities and 20 public Institutes of Technology and Polytechnics (ITPs) in New Zealand offering a broad range of courses. However, ITPs in New Zealand are not as well-known as universities. TEI through ITPs in New Zealand lacks attractiveness for overseas students compared to universities. In particular, as the largest proportion of overseas students in New Zealand, the number of overseas Chinese students has continued to reduce since 2003. With the intense competition of globalization in education industry and huge profit potential that overseas students provide, especially huge potential from overseas Chinese students, the researcher wants to identify the criteria Chinese overseas students use in selecting New Zealand TEI in order to devise proper marketing strategy to attract them.

#### ***What it will mean for you***

I will seek your input through the interview on the following:

- Perception and recognition for tertiary education and its providers in New Zealand
- Decision making in choosing an institution
- Ideas on information search through Internet media, forum, SNS
- Expectation on service quality of institutions

This conversation would take between 40 minutes to an hour, and the interview will be conducted at your convenience. For purposes of integrity, research purity and accuracy, the interviews will be recorded by a recorder, and transcribed to enable analysis. All information collected from you will be stored on a password protected file and only you, the researcher and our supervisors will have access to this information.

If you agree to participate, you will be asked to sign a consent form. This does not stop you from changing your mind if you wish to withdraw from the interview.

Please contact us if you need more information about the project. At any time if you have any concerns about the research project, you can contact me and my primary supervisor:

My email: zhangj119@wairaka.com. Department's Phone: 09 849 4180  
Department's Address: Building 172, 139 Carrington Rd, Mt Albert, Auckland  
My supervisor is Dr Asoka Gunaratne,  
Phone 09 815 4321 ext.7035 or email agunaratne@unitec.ac.nz

#### **UREC REGISTRATION NUMBER: (2011-1245)**

**This study has been approved by the UNITEC Research Ethics Committee from (November, 2011) to (October, 2012). If you have any complaints or reservations about the ethical conduct of this research, you may contact the Committee through the UREC Secretary (ph: 09 815-4321 ext 6162. Any issues you raise will be treated in confidence and investigated fully, and you will be informed of the outcome.**

## Appendix 2: Consent Form



### Participant consent form

**An Examination of the Congruency between New Zealand ITP practices to attract Chinese Students and the Criteria Employed by those Students to Evaluate Education Providers**

I have had the research project explained to me and I have read and understood the information sheet given to me.

I understand that I don't have to be part of this if I don't want to and I may withdraw from this project at any time prior to the date of the interview, and up until two weeks after the interview.

I understand that everything I say is confidential and none of the information I give will identify me and that the only persons who will know what I have said will be the researcher and their supervisors. I also understand that all the information that I give will be stored securely on a computer at Unitec for a period of 5 years.

I understand that my discussion with the researcher will be recorded and transcribed.

I understand that I can see the finished research document.

I understand that it is possible that this study is published in journals.

I have had time to consider everything and I give my consent to be a part of this project.

*Participant Signature:* ..... *Date:* .....

*Project Researcher:* ..... *Date:* .....

**UREC REGISTRATION NUMBER: (2011-1245)**

This study has been approved by the UNITEC Research Ethics Committee from (November, 2011) to (October, 2012). If you have any complaints or reservations about the ethical conduct of this research, you may contact the Committee through the UREC Secretary (ph: 09 815-4321 ext 6162). Any issues you raise will be treated in confidence and investigated fully, and you will be informed of the outcome.