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How to market Kymenlaakso University of Applied Sciences and increase its competitiveness in Chinese market in order to attract more Chinese degree students.

Bachelor's Thesis 2011

ABSTRACT

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Supervisor

Key words

90 Pages + 15 pages of appendices

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cooperation, competitiveness, go-studying-abroad agencies, potential applicants

With the increasing number of Chinese students studying abroad, more and more Chinese students and their parents consider such an opportunity nowadays. The competition among international education services in different countries has become fierce. This thesis suggests guidelines how to utilize one of the strategies to attract more potential Chinese degree students to Kymenlaakso University of Applied Sciences.

The main objective of the thesis was to find out how to attract more Chinese students by promoting and increasing competitiveness of Kymenlaakso University of Applied Sciences in Chinese market through cooperation with Chinese go-studying-abroad agencies

Both qualitative and quantitative research methods were used to ensure a comprehensive approach to the problem under research. Personal interviews with contact persons from universities and Chinese education agencies help to get in-depth view to the information. Designed questionnaires filled in by the Chinese students studying in KyUAS, help to prove the importance of go-studying-g abroad agencies in China.

The results of the research could be used as a framework for further cooperation proposals in order to attract more Chinese degree students to both International Business and Design programmes. The cooperation proposals include 5 sections, namely, medium developed regions in China are main selection areas of potential cooperation partners, the responsibilities of KyUAS includes: inform the agencies of the latest information and communicate with them on a regular basis and give public presentations. While, go-studying-abroad agencies are responsible for promoting KyUAS' image, arranging the time and place for public presentations, the best time to promote KyUAS is from June to August and the best places for holding entrance examinations are Beijing and Shanghai.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Chinese economy has shown a rapid development in the past few decades. Such economic development has brought a large amount of middle and higher income groups of people who have economic abilities to send their children to study abroad to receive better education. At the same time, a dream of becoming a Hai Gui (a Chinese who studied abroad and then returned to the home country) is another motivation to encourage Chinese students to go abroad for studying. Hai Guis are highly appreciated by Chinese government and society and also rewarded with eye-catching salaries and prominent job positions. (Wang 2007, 40.)

According to the Ministry of Education of P.R. China (2002), the total number of Chinese students and scholars studied in foreign countries reached 700,200 in total between 1978 and 2003. It was reported that the number of Chinese go-overseas students had reached 284,700 in 2010, which showed a 24% increase compared with the previous year (Education China, 2011).

We could draw the conclusion that studying abroad is more and more accepted by Chinese students and their parents. Foreign educational institutions realized that China is a big market, so the competition of international educational institutions between different countries has become fierce. Many foreign universities have also realized the importance of marketing promotion in attracting Chinese students.

1.1. Objectives of the thesis

The most important objective of the thesis is to build a development plan for Kymenlaakso University of Applied Sciences by establishing cooperation with go-studying-abroad agencies in order to promote and increase the competitiveness of KyUAS in Chinese market for the purpose of attracting more Chinese students for the International Business and Design Programmes.

In addition, the thesis would also give the readers a big picture of the main reasons motivating Chinese students to study abroad and the main factors have

influencing their decisions. Moreover, the thesis helps to understand the roles of Chinese go-studying-abroad agencies and the services they provided in China. This aims at finding the most suitable cooperation between Kymenlaakso University of Applied Sciences and Chinese go-studying-abroad agencies. What is more important, we will put forward the cooperation proposals and explain the cooperation processes.

1.2. Research questions

The research questions to be answered are related to cooperation with Chinese go-studying-abroad agencies. Results of the research will be put and presented in the form of suggestions as the development plans for Kymenlaakso University of Applied Sciences to attract more Chinese students.

The questions to be solved are as follows:

What would be the most suitable cooperation between Kymenlaakso University of Applied Sciences and Chinese go-studying-abroad agencies?

In order to determine the best solutions for this problem, the following sub-questions are also covered in the research.

- 1) Macro-environmental analysis of Chinese overseas students?
- 2) What is the go-studying-abroad agency business in general?
- 3) What are the main services provided by the go-studying-abroad agency?
- 4) What are the roles of go-studying-abroad agencies in Chinese market?
- 5) What are the marketing promotion methods used by go-studying-abroad agency?
- 6) What are the customers satisfaction evaluation methods?
- 7) What is the cooperation like between Lahti University of Applied Sciences and Chinese go-studying-abroad agency?
- 8) What are the benefits of cooperation for the Finnish University of Applied Sciences?
- 9) What are the benefits of cooperation for the Chinese go-studying-abroad agency?

10) What factors have to be taken into consideration when selecting Chinese agencies from KyUAS perspective?

In order to answer these research questions, it is useful to find out different information from various publications, business agencies, Internet and literature.

1.3. Research methods

Both qualitative and quantitative research methods are applied in the empirical part of the thesis. Benchmarking is also an important part included in the empirical part.

1.3.1. Qualitative research

There have been many attempts to define what qualitative research is and consequently there are different definitions of this notion. It is generally accepted that qualitative research is a mixture of the rational, explorative and intuitive research. It often concentrates more on the social process, where the researcher seeks to have a rich and in-depth understanding of the respondents' attitudes, perceptions, motivation and behaviors. The focus of qualitative research is on the verbal data, such as words, texts and images. It is often conducted in focus groups, in-depth interviews and observation to obtain information from the respondents. The advantage of these qualitative survey methods is high flexibility in data collection. (Ghuri & Gronhaug 2005, 109-129.)

However, the limitation of qualitative research is that it can be subjective since the skills and experiences of the researcher have a significant role in the analysis of data. In addition, the sense of observation and interaction of the researcher could also lead to the biased data analysis. (Ghuri & Gronhaug 2005, 109-129.)

In the empirical part of the thesis, qualitative research method is utilized to conduct interview with Dr. Maija Romo, the contact person of Lahti University of Applied Sciences. The main reason we chose Dr. Romo is because she is one

of the main contact persons of Lahti University of Applied Science and she is experienced and familiar with the cooperation with go-studying-abroad agency since she has been dealing with one of the go-studying-abroad agencies in Chengdu for a few years. In addition, such cooperation was successful. Therefore, we believe it was very useful to conduct an interview with her. During the interview, open-ended questions were mainly used to get as much useful information as possible. The questions such as what are the cooperation processes with the go-studying-abroad agency in China, what benefits Lahti University of Applied Sciences could get from the cooperation with Chinese go-studying-abroad agency and the question about future perspective of the cooperation from Lahti University of Applied Sciences point of view were asked. More details information on the questions from the interview can be found in Appendix 1.

Also, interviews with the managers of Chinese go-studying-abroad agencies were conducted to prove and verify the information we have searched and collected. In this case, we mainly focus on the interviews with two different Chinese go-studying-abroad agencies. One is the Sichuan Huaxiang International Service Co, Ltd, an agency conducting the cooperation with Lahti University of Applied Sciences for several years. The other go-studying-abroad agency we choose to interview is Henan Yiming Overseas Education Services Co., Ltd, since this company has many years of cooperation experiences with the universities of the United Kingdom, the United States, Canada, Australia, etc. The questions regarding the go-studying-abroad agency business in general and what functions or services they provide to customers were asked during the interviews. Then questions related to the benefits they could get from the cooperation with foreign universities and their future perspectives. The final version of the questions from the interview with the managers of the go-studying-abroad agency can be found in Appendix 2.

1.3.2. Quantitative Research

Quantitative research aims at explaining a social event or certain phenomena by collecting numerical data, such as number of males and females in a group or the proportion of respondents who say “strongly agree” or “strongly

disagree”. The structured questionnaires would be used when collecting data, different survey methods like personal interviews survey, telephone survey, postal survey and even mail survey is sometimes needed. However, it has low flexibility in data collection. Then the acquired data needs pre-coding, comparing and statistical analysis to check similarities and differences. (Muijs 2004, 1; Ghauri & Gronhaug 2005, 109-129.)

The main purpose of the quantitative research method is to focus on results testing and verification. A questionnaire is made to be filled by the Chinese students who are studying in Kymenlaakso University of Applied Sciences. The main objective of the questionnaire is to prove the importance of Chinese go-studying-abroad agencies in Chinese markets. Different questions are asked, such as what are the main ways they used to come to study in Finland, the number of Chinese students who used the go-studying-abroad agencies, the reasons why they chose go-studying-abroad agencies and how satisfied they are with the services provided by go-studying-abroad agencies. The questionnaire can be found in Appendix 3.

In addition, an email research regarding different go-studying-abroad agencies in 4 different provinces has been conducted by using the quantitative research method. The same research questions were sent to the email address of different agencies who provide help with the application to the Finnish Universities. Different research questions were asked, for instance, which Finnish universities they recommend, whether Kymenlaakso University of Applied Sciences is a good choice for studying and how much money do they charge as service fees.

1.3.3. Benchmarking

Robert Damelio (1995, 1) defined “Benchmarking as, an improvement process used to discover and incorporate best practices into operation. Benchmarking is the preferred process used to identify and understand the elements of superior or world-class performance in a particular work process.”

Benchmarking is used as a strategy to learn. Besides, the cooperation between Lahti University of Applied Sciences and Huaxiang go-studying-abroad agency and Henan Yiming go-studying-abroad agency with foreign universities could be taken as a model to analyze the processes of cooperation in practice, ways of building relationship, benefits of such cooperation relationship. The main benchmarking analysis would be based on person to person interviews and also the analysis of the results of the conducted interviews in order to make suitable cooperation proposals for the Kymenlaakso University of Applied Sciences with Chinese go-studying-abroad agencies.

2. ANALYSIS OF CHINESE OVERSEAS STUDENTS

Nowadays studying abroad is more and more accepted by Chinese students and their parents. Choosing a foreign country to study could be a life changing experience from our point of view and also one of the most rewarding and valuable investments into their children's future from the long term development perspective.

2.1. Why Chinese students choose to study abroad.

The main reasons making Chinese students go studying abroad could be classified as 5 factors, namely:

One reason is to escape domestic pressures. In China, students have to go through The National Higher Education Entrance Examination if they want to go to the best domestic universities

However, *“acceptance rate for students from Beijing, Shanghai, Shandong and Henan who applied for universities of the first-ranking category were only 20.1%, 18%, 7.1% and 3.5% respectively in 2010”* according to the information on the Wikipedia in 2011. which means that large number of students are forced to go abroad for studying. In other words, studying abroad offered them a chance to choose the ideal major and universities

Besides, Chinese students also get much social pressure from their families or their parents, who are desperate for them to be successful.

Another main reason is to learn the language. Studying abroad is the best and also the most effective way to learn a foreign language. Living in a foreign cultural environment, trying to master the language and being surrounded by the language in the daily basis, Chinese students consider it to be the quickest way to learn languages. (Vistawide n.d.)

Third most important reason is to receive the advanced higher education system. Only 10 Mainland Chinese universities are ranked in the top 500 most recognized and well-known universities in the world (Huang, n.d.). So many Chinese students and parents are attracted by the foreign advanced higher education system, which focuses more on students' active participation, research abilities, innovation and creativity.

Enhancing employment opportunities is the fourth most important reason. Students who have studied abroad are considered to be self-motivated, independent, willing to embrace challenges, and able to cope with diverse problems and situations in the eyes of most multinational employers. Meanwhile, experience of studying in a foreign country provides more attractiveness or competitiveness compared with other job applicants. (Vistawide n.d.)

The last but not least reason is to avoid competition in employment. The heated competition of labour market in China makes young Chinese people choose higher education after they graduate from the domestic university in order to improve their competitiveness. In this way, choosing to study abroad would be the best solution.

There are also many other factors influencing Chinese students' decisions of studying abroad. For instance, studying abroad offers chances to travel and meet international friends, or even expand the students' worldview and help them learn more about themselves. (Vistawide n.d.)

2.2. Main groups of the studying overseas students

In 2010, a survey report regarding Chinese students' intentions to study abroad was released by Beijing International Education Institute (BIEI), which is one of the most known educational institutions in China. The survey had a high coverage with approximately as many as 6000 university and middle school students and as well as their parents in 13 major cities of China.

Table 1, shows the proportion of different groups who are interested in studying abroad according to the results of the survey. The groups cover students from the primary school to the doctoral degree students. From the table it is seen that "High School students" and "University students" are the two main groups who are interested in studying in foreign countries. As high as 60% of the "University students are willing to study abroad and the total number of "High School students" who are interested in studying in foreign countries equal to 23%. Therefore, more than 80% of the Chinese who are planning to study abroad are from the groups of "University students" and "High School students"

Besides, "Master degree students" constitute about 10%, ranking as the third group of Chinese overseas students. Furthermore, about 3% of middle school students favour the idea of studying in foreign countries. The rest of the groups, e.g. "Primary School students", "Specialized Middle School students" and "Polytechnic students" show very little interest in studying abroad.

Table 1 The proportion of different groups who are planning to study abroad (Beijing International Education Institute 2010)

	percentage
Primary School students	0.2
Junior Middle School students	3.0

Specialized Middle school students	0.8
High School students	22.7
Polytechnic students	0.8
Universtity students	59.3
Master degree students	9.7
Doctor degree students	0.6
Others	3

2.3. The target studying countries

Figure 1 indicates the countries where the respondents would like to study. We could draw a conclusion that the most favoured countries are the United State, the United Kingdom, Australia, Canada, Singapore and France. But the top three listed countries dominate the majority of the markets. At the same time, it has become a trend that more and more students are interested in going to European countries to study. For instance, the countries like Germany, France, the Netherlands and Switzerland are quite popular. (People's daily online 2010.)

In the academic year of 2009-2010, the number of Chinese students enrolled in the U.S. of higher educational institutions increased by 30% compared with 2008 from 98,000 to the total number of 128,000. (People's daily online 2010.)

Also the newest figures from the Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) of United Kingdom reported that 47,035 students from China registered in the academic year of 2008-2009 and Chinese students constitute 19% of the total non-European international students in UK's higher educational institutions. (HESA 2010, People's daily online 2010).

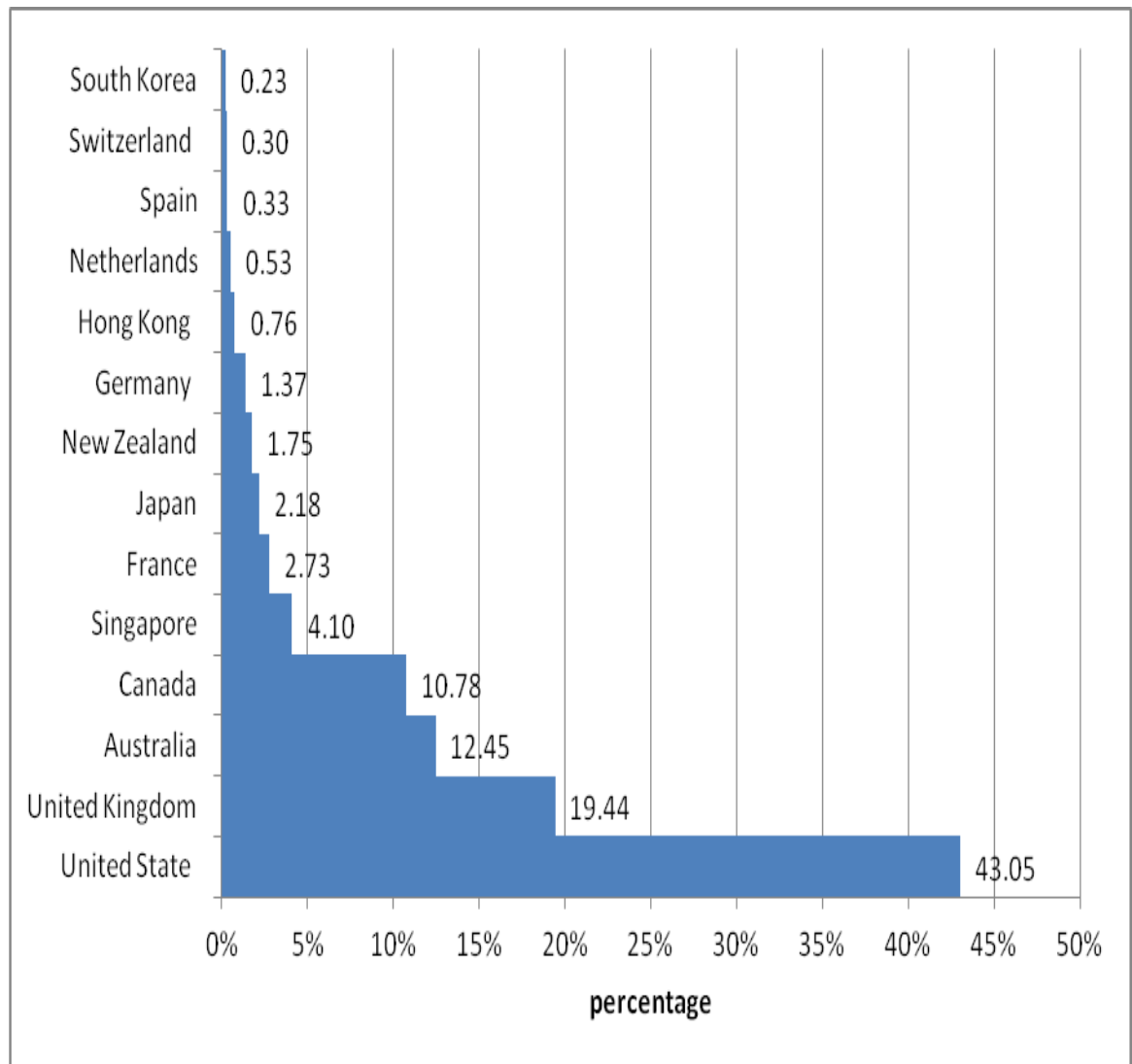


Figure 1 Target countries (Beijing International Education Institute 2010)

2.4. Factors influencing the choice of the countries

Once students are determined to study in a foreign country, then comes the question, which country would they choose as their foreign studying destination. It is a careful and cautious decision to make, since many factors need to be taken into consideration.

According to the survey conducted by Beijing International Education Institute in 2010(BIEI), the survey indicated various factors that would influence Chinese students' decisions of which country they would choose as their destination. The most important factor was "the Quality of education of the country", the

second most important factor was “the cultural atmosphere in the country”. The third most important factor was the “studying abroad tuition fees of the country”. It means that affordable tuition fees, good education quality and flexible pathways are the most important attractions for Chinese overseas student.

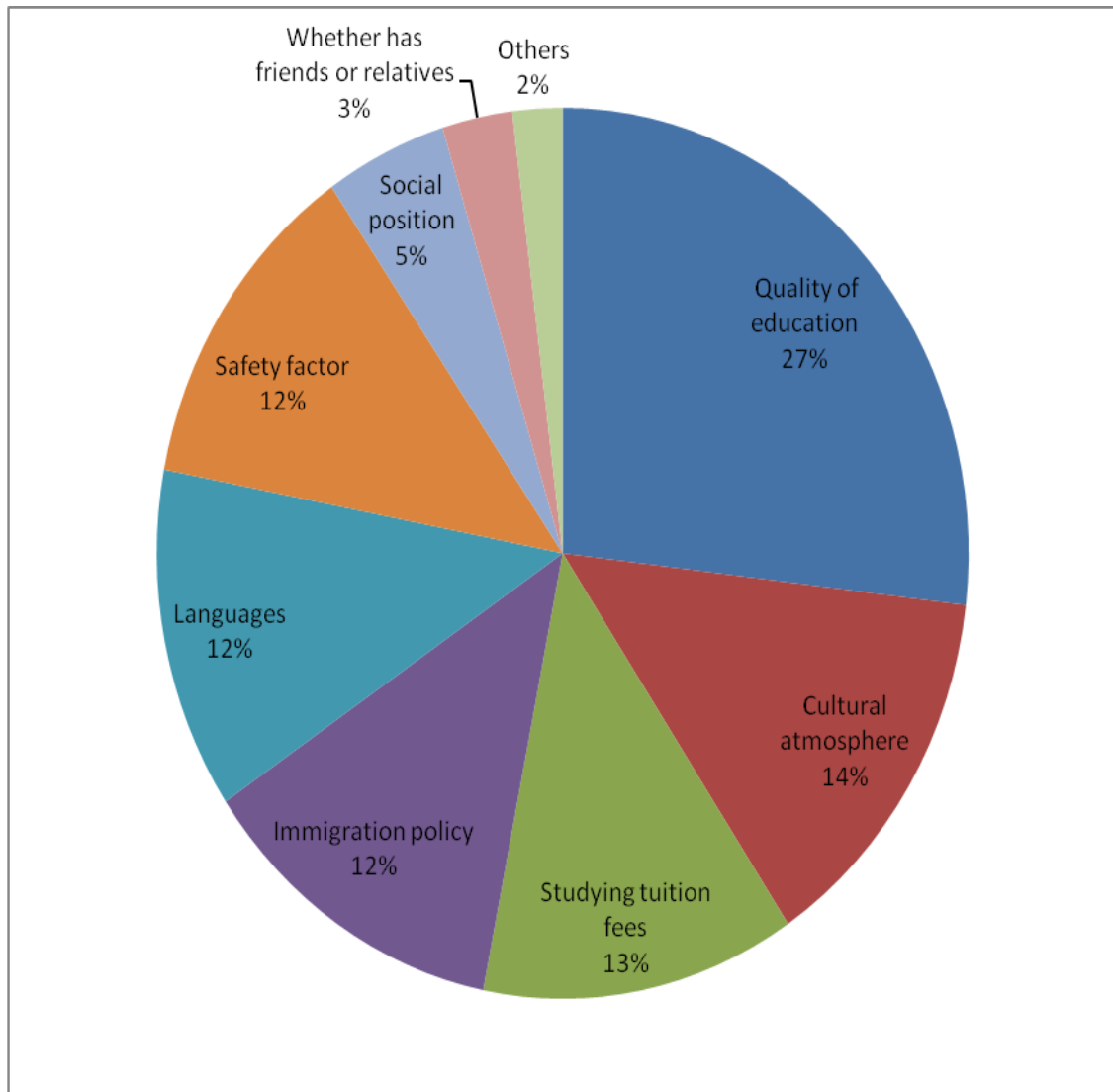


Figure 2 The factors influencing the choice of the target countries (Beijing International Education Institute 2010)

Other factors such as the “Immigration Policy” refer to the chances of staying in the foreign countries and applying for a job after graduation. “National language of the country”, shows that English speaking countries were more preferred by Chinese overseas students. “Social position” and factors related to “friends or

relatives in the foreign country” are also being considered more and more important when making decisions about studying abroad.

2.5. Factors influencing the choice of the universities

During the research conducted by BIDI respondents were asked what factors they would take into consideration when choosing a foreign university. Figure 3 shows the answers. From figure 3 we could draw the conclusion that “ Major ranking and “ Employment prospects” are the most popular factors that affect the Chinese students’ final decisions, constituting about 36% and 31% respectively. The popularity or the image of the university is also one factor that influencing students’ decisions, accounting for 13% of the total. However, the amount of students who first of all take the tuition fees into consideration is only 12%, which shows that students are more rational when thinking about which university they choose. They put more concerned about their future employment regarding the majors they choose .

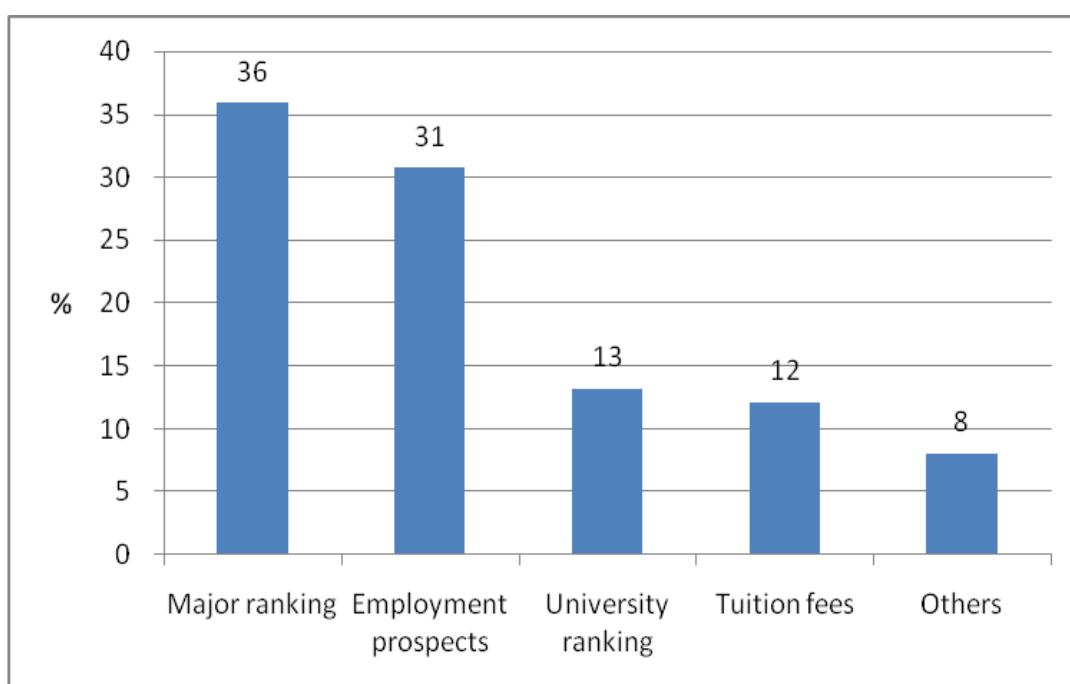


Figure 3 The factors influencing the choice of universities(Beijing International Education Institute 2010)

2.6. The composition of Chinese overseas students by sectors

According to the survey of Beijing International Education Institute (BIEI) the major of Business Science, including finance and accounting, marketing and business administration was the most favoured by Chinese students and their parents and nearly 30% of the Chinese students had chosen it. The second most popular major was Science with 18% of Chinese students votes. Engineering as the third most favoured major by Chinese students with 17%. The other majors like Medical, Social Science, and Humanities are favoured by small percentages of Chinese students. (People's daily online 2010)

2.7. The main ways of getting information about studying in a foreign country

According to the research from BIDI, Internet and newspapers are the most important sources of information for the students and their parents when inquiring about studying abroad. To be more detailed, approximately 29% of the respondents choose "Newspapers" as the way of getting information and as high as 35% of the respondents choose "Internet" or "Search Engine" as the main method of collecting information related to studying abroad. Therefore, "Internet" is more favoured by the college or university students. In addition, about 9% of the Chinese students choose "School posters, Advertisement and Education seminars" as a way to collect information about studying overseas. (Beijing International Education Institute 2010.).

However, the final decision making power was in the parents hands since they are the ones paying for the tuition fees and living expenses. According to the research parents who are around 40-55 years old favour traditional ways of collecting information more, e.g. "Newspapers", "Friends recommendation" and "Go-studying-abroad agency". "Friends recommendation" and "go-studying abroad agency" respectively accounted for 13% and 11% according to the research results. Besides, parents are more willing to choose the go-studying-abroad agencies which their friends recommended or have used themselves. (Liuxue 86, 2010)

Generally speaking, the ways of getting overseas studying information were different among Chinese students and their parent. Chinese students were more dependent on “Internet and Search Engine” as the main sources. But their parents relied more on “ Newspapers”, “Friends Recommendations” and “Education Agencies” (Beijing International Education Institute 2010).

3. WHAT IS A GO-STUDYING-ABROAD AGENCY

Agency is a kind of intermediary institution, which aims at seeking and arranging the services and goods for customers to choose and decide instead of directly offering a specific one (Baidu Baike n.d.). Go-studying-abroad agency is also one type of intermediary service institution, approved by the Chinese government and provides important information or services for students who want to study abroad through cooperation with foreign universities, education departments or other educational institutions.

According to the “Regulations of Study Abroad Intermediary Service Institution” released in July 1999 by the Chinese Ministry of Education a go-studying-abroad agency should meet the following conditions:

- 1) A go-studying-abroad agency should be a branch of educational institution industry.
- 2) A go-studying-abroad agency must have the professional personnel who are engaged in educational services and are familiar with the relevant studying abroad policies.
- 3) A go-studying-abroad agency should have an established stable cooperation and exchange relations with foreign educational institutions.
- 4) A go-studying-abroad agency should have the necessary funds to ensure the students’ legitimate rights and interests when agency breaches contracts.

From these 4 conditions, we could draw a conclusion that in China the go-studying-abroad agency is a unique educational service institution, which requires a relatively high standard qualification of employees and solid

capital requirements. For instance, the go-studying-abroad agency must have the professional staff who are familiar with different foreign languages, law, accounting and educational skills. Furthermore, the owner of the go-studying-abroad agency should also possess certain economic grounds to put 500 000 to 1 million Yuan to the bank as a deposit mainly to ensure students' legitimate rights and interests .(Shuobo 2009.)

About 68 go-studying-abroad agencies from 11 provinces in China got the qualifications from the Chinese Ministry of Education on the 1st October 2000 (Shuobo 2009). Up to now the total number of go-studying-abroad agencies registered has increased to 398 according to the research in 2008. (Chinese Ministry of Education 2008).

The competition between different go-studying-abroad agencies is getting intense. Different go-studying-abroad agencies provide more services as added value to attract more customers and increase the competitiveness in the market. Furthermore, many go-studying-abroad agencies started to put more emphasis on the services related to one country as their business competence.

According to the state regulations, the main target groups of go-studying-abroad agencies are those Chinese citizens who have completed their senior secondary or higher education and intend to study abroad at their own expenses.

The fundamental services provided by go-studying-abroad agencies include the following (Shuobo 2009):

- 1) Information. Consulting services for students who are interested in studying abroad. For instance, many people would ask questions like quality of education, cultural atmosphere, studying tuition fees and immigration policy in certain countries.
- 2) University application services. Go-studying-abroad agencies would help students to have a better understanding of the universities, including the available majors and application requirements. After having decided which

university they would apply to, go-studying-abroad agencies would further offer assistance with the application materials, such as personal statement and applications papers, translation and application process.

- 3) Visa services. So after the students get the offer from a university, go-studying agencies also provide services related to visa application. It includes visa application materials and visa interview trainings.
- 4) Extended services are also provided to help students adapt to life abroad faster, e.g. pick up services from the country of destination airport and accommodation arrangements.

3.1. Go-studying-abroad agencies services chart

Figure 4 is made based on a website information of a Chinese go-studying-abroad agency named Sichuan Huaxiang International Service Co. Ltd. (Sichuan Huaxiang International Service Co. Ltd 2011)

The figure shows the services processes provided by go-studying-abroad agencies. Firstly, go-studying-abroad agency would offer consulting services to the customers for free, they would answer customers' questions by giving the short introductions about the countries, universities, majors, tuitions fees and living expenses that customers are interested in. Then they would ask more about the customers' personal information, such as previous education background, English language skills, family financial situations, country preferences and other questions in order to put forward the basic foreign universities application proposals. If the students and their parents are satisfied with the agency, they would go to next step of signing the business contract and at the same time, the contract fees and application fees need to be paid to the go-studying-abroad agency.

After signing the business contract, the go-studying-abroad agency would give the students a handbook, including the country introduction, the ranking lists of universities, colleges as well as their websites, the available majors, tuitions fees and living expenses information for students to check and compare with the universities' websites to obtain more information. Besides, the go-studying-

abroad agency would also make a list of universities and majors that suits the students as the professional recommendations. Then students could discuss with their parents which 3 to 5 universities and majors they would apply to as the final decisions. After this, the first part of services fees needs to be paid to the go-studying-abroad agency as a guarantee in order to continue with further.

After receiving the first part of the services fee from the customers, the go-studying-abroad agency would start with the preparations of university application materials and documents according to the university admission requirements, such as filling in different kinds of application papers, translating the documents into English, writing personal statements and collecting recommendation letters. Then they would send all these required documents to the universities by posts or online when everything needed is ready. At the same time, the go-studying-abroad agency is also responsible for providing entrance examination trainings, which includes teaching mathematics, practicing speaking English, English reading, academic writing and also interviews simulations. The main purpose of this training is to increase acceptance rate of the agency.

When the students have taken the entrance examination, there are two possible outcomes, either the students are accepted by the university or they are rejected. The ones who have been accepted need to pay the other part of service fees to the go-studying-abroad agency. The second part of the services fee includes visa application services, booking flight ticket and even apartment arrangements. However, the foreign country airport pick up service is not included in the agency service fees, students need to pay extra if they want to have this specific service. But the ones who are rejected would start with a new round of university applications until they are accepted by the foreign university.

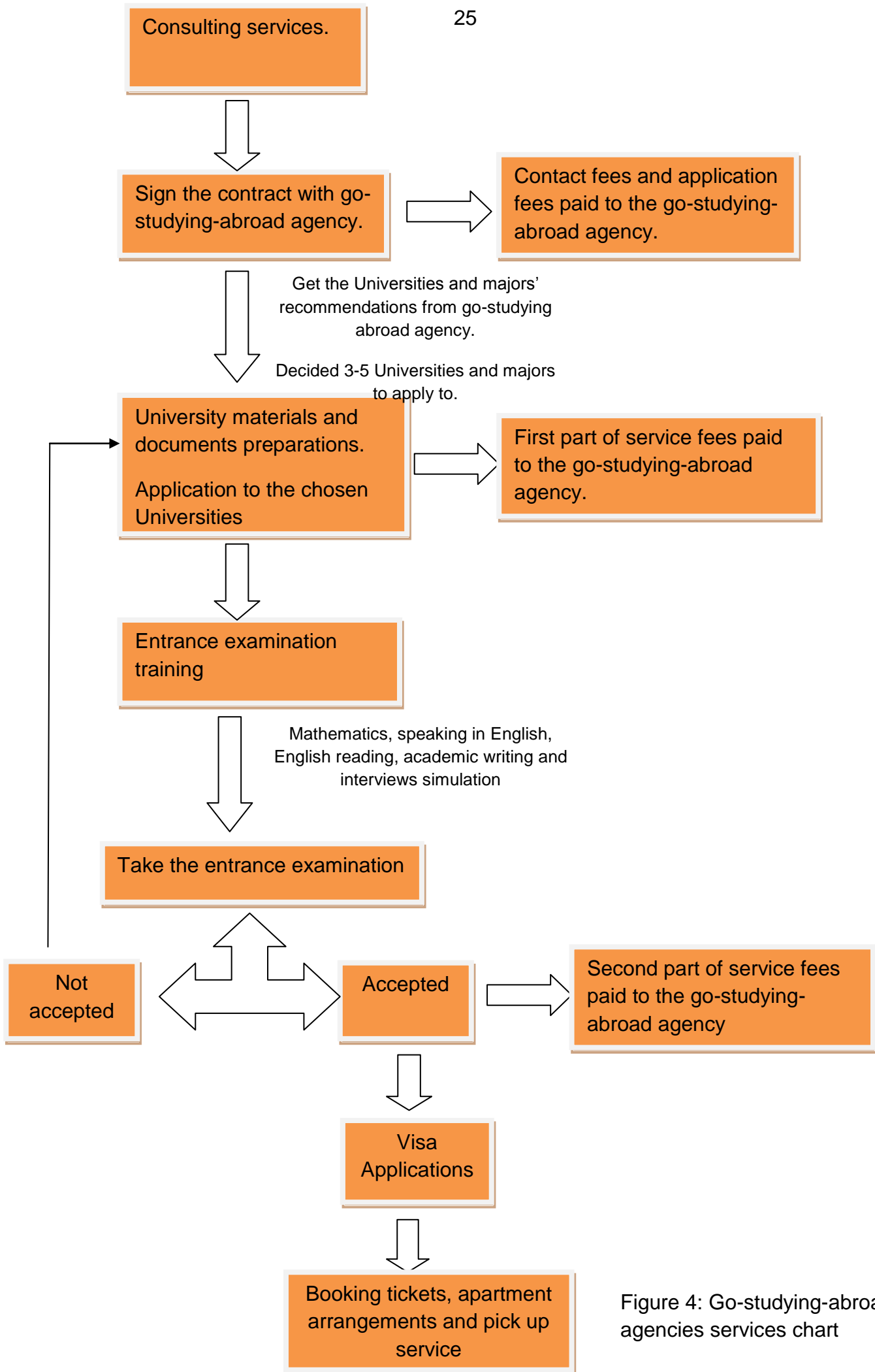


Figure 4: Go-studying-abroad agencies services chart

3.2. The roles of go-studying-abroad agencies

According to incomplete statistics, around 80% of students have gone abroad for studying through go-studying-abroad agencies. Nowadays, the role of go-studying-abroad agencies is becoming more important especially with the increasing amount of people who intend to study abroad. (Shuobo 2009.)

The importance of go-studying-abroad agencies can be divided into 4 different sections; as follows:

1) Providing extensive information.

Information consultation as one of the services provided to Chinese students, because the majority of Chinese students might not be able to process the detailed information about foreign educational institutions or the peculiarities of studying life abroad. Besides, it takes long time and efforts to collect important and valuable information from internet, universities and educational institutions. However, the information get from the internet can be very limited and subjective.

Choosing a go-studying-abroad agency students could get updated and detailed information, because the agencies has the professional information collection system based on long-time working experience and close cooperation relationship with foreign universities, educational departments or other educational institutions. Furthermore, go-studying-abroad agencies also collect feedback from the students who are studying abroad already. For instance, go-studying-abroad agencies could offer valuable information in the first place, such as the university of the best business major, university where a student has better chances to be accepted and which schools are easier to apply for scholarships. (Chinese economic information 2005.)

2) Providing professional suggestions

Large amount of students might get confused when they are choosing the countries, universities and majors for studying abroad. Mainly because of a lack of enough understanding of universities majors and their personal situations.

However, many employees in these go-studying-abroad agencies are former overseas students, who returned home and are more familiar with different countries' studying policies and education situations. They could design unique overseas study plans and recommend different universities and majors based on students' interests, future development and financial background. (Shuobo 2009.)

3) Providing efficient and effective application processes

Go-studying-abroad agencies make the application processes more efficient and more effective and save students' time and money.

Foreign country universities application processes are complicated and time-consuming if you are applying by yourself. Different application materials would be needed according to the universities admission requirements. Some students might make mistakes in the key process due to the lack of application experience.

Some students who are planning to enter higher educational institutions in foreign countries might not reach the English level to complete personal statements by themselves. They might face some language problems during university and visa application processes. (Shenxian 2005.)

Therefore, a go-studying-abroad agency could be compared to an experienced person who helps you and makes your application process easier and clearer.

4) Increasing the possibility of achieving success

Go-studying-abroad agencies would also improve foreign universities and visa application success possibilities.

For the Chinese students who intend to study abroad but have English skills, go-studying abroad agencies offer special English language training to improve the English languages skills in order to pass university entrance examinations. Some students go abroad to study through certain educational programs between foreign educational institutions and go-studying-abroad agencies.

3.3. The comparisons of three different go-studying-abroad agencies.

3.3.1. Go-studying-abroad agencies introductions

Three different go-studying-abroad agencies are chosen for the purposes of comparing their similarities and differences based on their company websites. The first go-studying-abroad agency is Hubei Education service centre for scholarly exchange company which is located in Wuhan, the capital city of Hubei province. Hubei education service centre for scholarly exchange company was established in January of 2000 and is belong to Hubei province Ministry of Education. In addition, it is also the first go-studying-abroad agency that received the standard certificate from the national Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Public Security and State Administration for Industry and Commerce. The Hubei education service center for scholarly exchange company promotes itself on the website as “ *the company that has professional level and high professional ethics, good service attitude, good senior consultant team, which could provide unique and considerate universities applications and Visa services for different age groups of students.*” (Hubei education service centre for scholarly exchange 2009.)

The second go-studying-abroad agency is Sichuan Huaxiang International Service Co. Ltd, which is located in Chengdu, the capital city of Sichuan Province. The main reason we chose this go-studying-abroad agency is because Chengdu is very large and presents a potential market for promoting KyUAS. According to the results of the survey for the Chinese students who are

studying in Kymenlaakso University of Applied Sciences there are 3 people coming from Sichuan Province

The third go-studying-abroad agency is Henan Yiming Education Services Co., Ltd, which is located in Zhengzhou, the capital city of Henan province. It was founded in 1995 and is one of the first batches of self-funded overseas education services institutions with legal qualifications certificated jointly by the Ministry of National Education and the Ministry of Public Security. At present, Yiming has eight business departments, including Canada department, U.S. Department, UK department, O.Z. Department, Northern Europe department, Japan Department, France department as well as Comprehensive department and three administrative departments consisting of office, marketing department and financial department. Henan Yiming Education Services Co., Ltd is most famous for its “Three in One Service mode” which includes three main services, “language training, Visa obtaining and overseas after-services” which helped the company gain great reputation and became the market leader in Zhengzhou. (Henan Yiming Overseas Education Services Co., Ltd 2011.)

Table 2 shown the comparisons of similarities and differences of these three go-studying-abroad agencies on the basis of their websites in order to provide a general understanding of the agencies business in Chinese markets.

Table 2 Website comparisons of three Chinese go-studying abroad agencies

Name	Hubei educational service centre for scholarly exchange Co.	Sichuan Huaxiang International Service Co. Ltd	Henan Yiming Overseas Education Services Co., Ltd.
Geographic Location	Wuhan, Hubei Province	Chengdu, Sichuan Province	Zhengzhou, Henan Province
Company website	http://www.hblx.cn/	http://www.schuaxiang.cn/	http://www.yimingedu.com/
Website impression general	Clear structure, fresh and informative	Clear, simple and comfortable	Very informative, many extensive details but very unclear and confusing
Website languages	Chinese only	Chinese mainly, only company introduction is in English	Chinese mainly, only company introduction is in English
Website information categories	Cover page Company introduction Company announcements Target countries Apply online Studying abroad news Frequently asked questions Studying abroad life Contact information	Cover page Company introduction Company news Target countries Studying abroad processes Successful cases Frequently asked questions Studying abroad life Contact information	Cover page Company introduction Company news Target countries Universities and colleges ranking lists Universities and colleges admission information Successful cases experiences Go studying abroad handbook Popular majors Scholarship applications Go-studying abroad plans

			<p>Visa application processes and guidelines</p> <p>Languages tests preparations</p> <p>Packaging lists before leaving</p> <p>Studying abroad life</p> <p>Website online assistances</p> <p>Contact information</p>
Customer services ways	Telephones, email, fax, application online, website and office	Telephones, email, qq online, website and office	Telephone. Email, qq online, fax, website and office
Target countries	<p>-Europe:</p> <p>Germany, France, Finland, Sweden, Norway, Italy and Britain</p> <p>-North America:</p> <p>Canada and the United States</p> <p>-Asia:</p> <p>South Korea, Malaysia, Japan and Singapore</p> <p>- Oceania:</p> <p>Australia and New Zealand</p>	<p>Mainly focus on the</p> <p>- Northern Europe</p> <p>Finland, Sweden, Norway and Denmark.</p> <p>The other countries like:</p> <p>Britain, the Netherlands, Canada, Australia, Switzerland and Singapore.</p>	<p>-Europe:</p> <p>Germany, France, Spain, Italy, the Netherlands, Belgium, Finland, Sweden, Norway, Denmark, Ireland and Britain.</p> <p>-North America:</p> <p>Canada and the United States</p> <p>-Asia:</p> <p>South Korea, Malaysia, Japan, Singapore and Russia.</p> <p>-Oceania:</p> <p>Australia and New Zealand</p>
Target country information	<p>Countries introductions</p> <p>Countries competitive</p>	<p>Countries introductions</p> <p>Countries competitive advantages</p>	<p>Countries introductions</p> <p>Countries competitive advantages</p>

	<p>advantages</p> <p>Universities and colleges lists</p> <p>Annual fees and living expenses</p>	<p>Universities and colleges lists and introductions</p> <p>Majors introductions</p> <p>Admissions requirements</p> <p>Application documents</p> <p>Annual fees and living expenses</p>	<p>Countries cultures and educations information</p> <p>Universities and colleges lists and introductions</p> <p>Universities and colleges recommendations</p> <p>Majors introductions</p> <p>Scholarship application</p> <p>Immigration policies</p>
Main services	<p>Professional consulting services</p> <p>Provides all around go-studying abroad application services</p> <p>Expanded and extensive educational and cultural exchange programs</p> <p>Multinational languages training courses provided before going abroad.</p> <p>Organize summer and winter camping activities for students</p>	<p>Consulting services</p> <p>Universities and major recommendations</p> <p>Application materials preparations.</p> <p>Documents translation</p> <p>Language training for IELTS</p> <p>Application for the entrance exams</p> <p>Languages training for entrance exams</p> <p>Got the offer</p> <p>Visa application documents</p> <p>Pick-up services</p> <p>Apartment arrangements</p> <p>Insurances</p>	<p>Consulting services</p> <p>Universities and major recommendations</p> <p>Application plans</p> <p>Application documents preparations</p> <p>Documents translation</p> <p>Language training for IELTS</p> <p>Application for the entrance exams</p> <p>Visa applications</p> <p>Flight tickets booking</p> <p>Insurances</p> <p>University enrolment</p>
Service fees	Not available on the website	35000RMB (3500 Euros)	Not available on the website

Table 2 shows the general comparisons of three different go-studying-abroad agencies. By checking the comparisons we could find more detailed information such as their services similarities and differences, the most frequently targeted studying countries, the level of average services fees and others as well, which served as important criteria to evaluate the selection of agencies that KyUAS might cooperate with in the future.

1) Geographic location

The three go-studying-abroad agencies listed in the table are located in Hubei Province, Sichuan Province and Henan Province, which are the three of top 10 biggest population provinces in China according to the Sixth National Population Census of the People's Republic of China in 2010. Henan province with the total population of 94 023 567, ranked as the third biggest population province in China right after Guangdong and Shandong provinces. Sichuan Province ranked fourth with the total number of 80 418 200 and Hubei Province ranked as ninth with the total population of 57 237 740.(National Bureau of Statistics of China 2010). As capital cities of these three provinces, Wuhan, Chengdu and Zhengzhou are developed economic, cultural political and educational centers. In such conditions, the students in these provinces feel more pressure connected with the difficulties at the university entrances examinations. The colleges and universities' graduates have to face more tough and severe job hunting situation. Therefore, the students and graduates need to find ways to receive the advanced higher education and as well as enhance their competitiveness when applying for a job. In addition, the business markets in these highly populated provinces are well developed since the market demand is strong.

2) Websites impression

All the three go-studying-abroad agencies have built the company websites to provide more information to the customers. But different websites also give people different general impressions about their companies and services.

The website of Hubei Educational Service Centre for Scholarly Exchange Company is very clear and well organized by listing the main service categories on the top, which is easy and convenient for users to find the most important information. In addition, the most often used search tools by students are put on the cover page of the website, which includes flight tickets search, currency exchange, Visa application documents, university and college lists, world map, world weather and diploma authentication systems. Furthermore, the company website used some pictures such as students' studying life abroad to make the website more vivid. Finally, the green colour of the website gives people fresh feeling. However, the only website language is Chinese. We think it would be good to have English version of the website as well, since it is one way to attract foreign university partners through the website.

The website of Sichuan Huaxiang International Service Co. Ltd is simple and easy. The most important news and information are put on the cover page of the website, which is easy to see and seems to be very user friendly. 5 pictures about the foreign countries are showing on the home page to make it more visual.

The website uses the white as background colour, which gives people a simple and comfortable feeling, we think it would be more attractive and interesting if the website was more colourful. Website languages are Chinese and English, but only the company introduction is showed in English.

By comparision, Henan Yiming Overseas Education Services Co., Ltd contains much information on its cover page but the information is showed in an unclear and confusing way, thus it is hard or takes a long time to catch the most important news and information. The structure of the website is quite massy, too many words and pictures are put on the front page, which gives people a crowed and uncomfortable feeling. The good advantage of this go-studying abroad agency is that the website is very informative and includes many considerate details which the other two agencies do not have. We think it would works better if the structure of the website was more clear, only the most important information could be placed on the front page and other extra details could be gathered in a sector, to be found through a link on the front page. The

website language is both Chinese and English, but English language version is very limited and only the company introduction is shown in English.

3) Website information categories

By comparing these three go-studying-abroad agencies' websites, we could find the similarities applied to the website information categories. All these three go-studying-abroad agencies have website cover page, company introduction, company news or announcements, the main target countries, frequently asked questions, pictures of the students who are studying abroad, successful application cases as well as company contact information.

The different thing is that Sichuan Huaxiang International Service Co., Ltd has included description of the studying abroad application processes on its website, which gives customers a clear idea about the application process. Henan Yiming Overseas Education Services Co., Ltd includes more information about the foreign universities and colleges ranking lists and admission information, scholarship applications, the popular majors and even the packaging lists before leaving.

In our opinion, sometimes the extra information is a big plus for the website. However, sometimes, too much unnecessary information only makes the website massy and confusing since it is not possible to include everything into the limited space of a company website

4) Access to customer services

Access to customer services means how easy and convenient could customers access the company. Nowadays, it is more and more recognized as an important element in the go-studying-abroad agency business. The most frequently used customer service media are through telephone, emails, website and visiting the company offices. In addition, the social media is also being used more and more nowadays. For instance, the agency usually has its own MSN account and QQ number, which allows the customers to contact the go-studying-abroad agency online.

5) Target countries

Usually the size of the go-studying-abroad agency determines the amount of agency's target countries. For instance, the agencies of Hubei educational service centre for scholarly exchange Company and Henan Yiming Overseas Education Service Co., Ltd have targeted much more countries than the Sichuan Huaxiang International Service Co., Ltd. On the other hand, there are many go-studying-abroad agencies which target only a few specific countries as their marketing strategies to increase its application success and also its market competitiveness. For instance, the go-studying-abroad agency of Sichuan Huaxiang International Service Co., Ltd mainly emphasises targeting of Northern European countries, such as Finland, Sweden, Norway and Denmark. In this way, when the company's popularity has increased, the company begins to increase the number of its target countries little by little.

Besides the lists of target countries, all these three go-studying-abroad agencies have put the countries introductions, countries' competitive advantages, countries universities and college lists, annual fees and living expenses on their websites, which gives the students an opportunity to compare and decide which country and which university they want to apply to. However, these countries introductions and countries competitive advantages could be rather subjective and not very reliable since it is mainly written by its go-studying-abroad agency and advantages are usually being overstated to attract more customers.

The Henan Yiming Overseas Education Service Co., Ltd has also put more information about Universities and colleges' recommendations, description of universities' majors, immigration policies and scholarship application processes, which could be seen as a way to influence customers' decision making. The universities and colleges they recommend are often the ones that they have business cooperation with.

6) Go-studying-abroad agencies services

The most common services provided by these three go-studying-abroad agencies are extensive consulting services. They would give a short introduction about the country or universities or majors that the students are interested in. Based on students' English language skills and financial situation of the family, the agency would offer some universities and majors recommendations for students and their parents to choose and decide. University application materials preparation is also one of the main services provided by the go-studying-abroad agencies. English language training for IELTS and entrance exams is one of the main reasons that drives Chinese student choose go-studying-abroad agency, they believe they could have the higher possibility of passing the entrance exam with the help of the agency. Visa application service is one of the main attractions that saves students' time. In addition, some go-studying-abroad agencies have provided extra services to meet customer demands and achieve customer satisfaction since quite many Chinese students think it would be quite necessary to have such extra services as, booking of flight tickets, buying insurances, picking up from the airport in the foreign countries, apartment arrangements and even the university courses enrolment. In this case, the agencies of Sichuan Huaxiang International Service Co., Ltd and Henan Yiming Overseas Education Service Co., Ltd are offering such kind of extra services, but they also charge extra prices since it is not included in the agency service fees.

The agency of Hubei educational service centre for scholarly exchange Company also provided some other services, such as educational and cultural exchange programs for the people who want to be the exchange students in a foreign country for a fixed time. Besides, organizing summer and winter camping activities for students also creates competitive advantages compared with other go-studying-abroad agencies.

7) Service fees

The service fees charged by the go-studying-abroad agency vary from one to another. From the agency websites, we could know that the service fee of the Sichuan Huaxiang International Service Co., Ltd is about 35000RMB, which equals to 3500 Euros. The service fees of Hubei educational service centre for

scholarly exchange Company and Henan Yiming Overseas Education Service Co., Ltd are not shown on the website, but by interviewing the students who have used these two agencies, we get the results they were charged as 1500 Euros and 3000 Euros respectively.

4. RESULTS OF THE CHINESE KYUAS DEGREE STUDENTS SURVEY

4.1. Survey introduction

The purpose of this quantitative research survey is to find out general information about the Chinese go-studying-abroad agencies by asking the Chinese students who are studying in Kymenlaakso University of Applied Sciences to fill in the questionnaire. Based on the results of the survey, general conclusions are drawn regarding the importance of the Chinese go-studying-abroad agency, the advantages of using go-studying-abroad agency, the main factors that influenced people's decisions when they came to Finland, the target age groups of the students, when and where to promote Kymenlaakso University of Applied Sciences to attract more potential degree students.

All of the questionnaire respondents are Chinese students who are still studying in the business campus of the Kymenlaakso University of Applied Sciences, the ones who have already graduated are not included in this survey. This survey took place in April of 2011 and all together there were 24 responses. The total number of Chinese students registered in the Business department of KyUAS is 26, but there are two people who are not included in the survey since we have not received their answers up to now. However, the results of the survey still could represent the majority of the Chinese students' opinion. Personal interview survey method was used when giving out the questionnaires to respondents and also difficult questions were explained during the interviews.

The questionnaire consists of 15 questions as you could see from Appendix 1 and it takes about 5 minutes to complete all the questions. In this questionnaire, question 1 is about the time when the students planed to come to Finland for studying. Question 2 is about what factors that have influenced the

respondents' choice of studies in Finland and respondents could choose more than one answer. Question 3 is about the main ways that were used to come to study in Finland. For the students who have applied to Kymenlaakso University by themselves as well the ones who came here through University cooperation programs could go directly to the question No. 9. Questions 4-8 were designed for those who came to Kymenlaakso University of Applied Sciences through Chinese go-studying-abroad agencies. The questions 4-8 consist of the questions like the reasons to choose Chinese go-studying-abroad agencies, the services they bought from go-studying-abroad agencies, the amount of service fees they paid as well as attitude statement questions concerning the customer satisfaction rate. Questions 9-10 are open ended questions where students could give their opinions and suggestions about the cooperation between KyUAS and Chinese go-studying-abroad agency. Question 11 is about most suitable way to promote KyUAS from the respondents' point of view. Question 12 is about the disadvantages of using go-studying abroad agency or in other words, why people do not choose to use go-studying-abroad agency. Questions 13-15 are about respondents' background information, such as their gender, age group and the provinces the respondents come from, which helps the KyUAS to know their students age groups and main target cities that the university could promote or advertise to attract more students in.

4.2. General survey analysis and conclusions

The number of females much outweigh the number of males

There were 24 respondents who answered the questionnaires. Among all of these respondents, the number of males is 7, which equals to less than 1/4 of the total number. But the number of females is 17, making more than 3/4 of the total respondents.

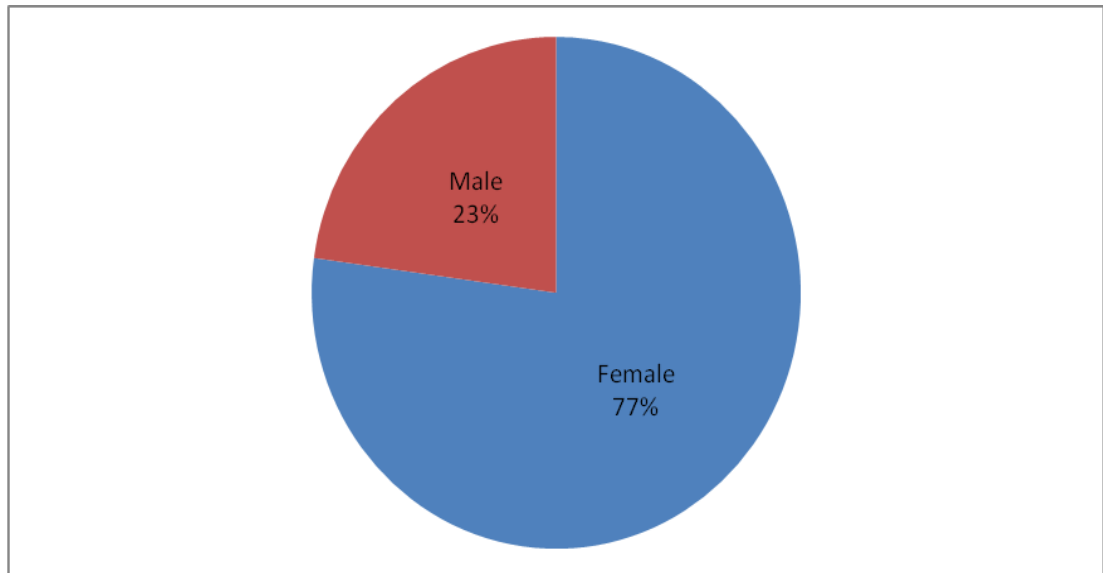


Figure 5 Gender of the KyUAS Chinese students

Segmentation of respondents according to the age distribution

In the survey, the respondents are classified into three different age groups, which are 1) 20-22, 2) 23-25, 3) 26-28 years. The age groups of the respondents are based on the data that we got from the survey since the youngest respondent is 20 and the oldest one is 28. The different age groups of the respondents help to get to know the KyUAS target age groups.

From figure 6, we could know that the most numerous age group is the one of students who are from 20 to 25 years old. The number of respondents who are around 20-22 is 11 and the number of respondents who are around 23-25 is 10. But the number of respondents who are more than 26 years old is only 3.

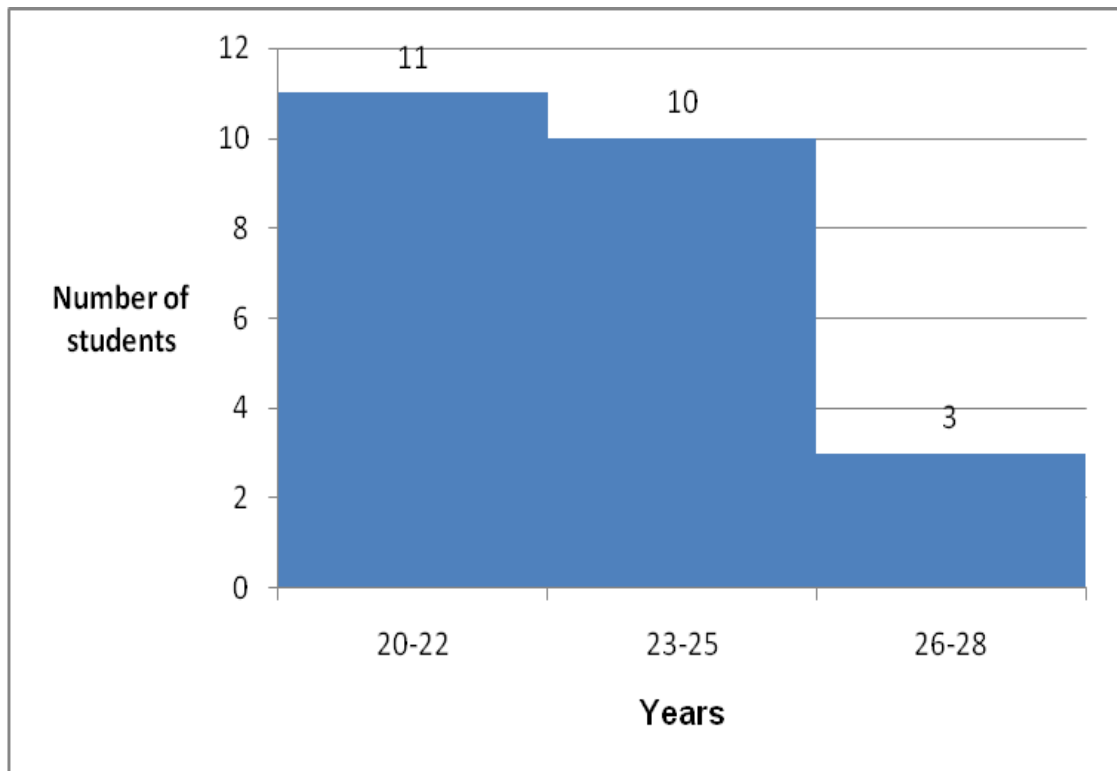


Figure 6 Age distribution of the KyUAS Chinese students

Most students planned to come to study in Finland during university time or after they graduated from high school

Figure 7 gives a clear picture about the time when the respondents had the intention to come to study in Finland. In the survey, the data are classified into five different segments, namely, during high school, when graduated from high school, during university, when graduated from university and during working. From results we could know that the majority of the respondents planned to come to study in Finland during their university time and when they graduated from high school. Besides, those who are around 20 -25 years old are usually just graduated from high school or studying in their universities.

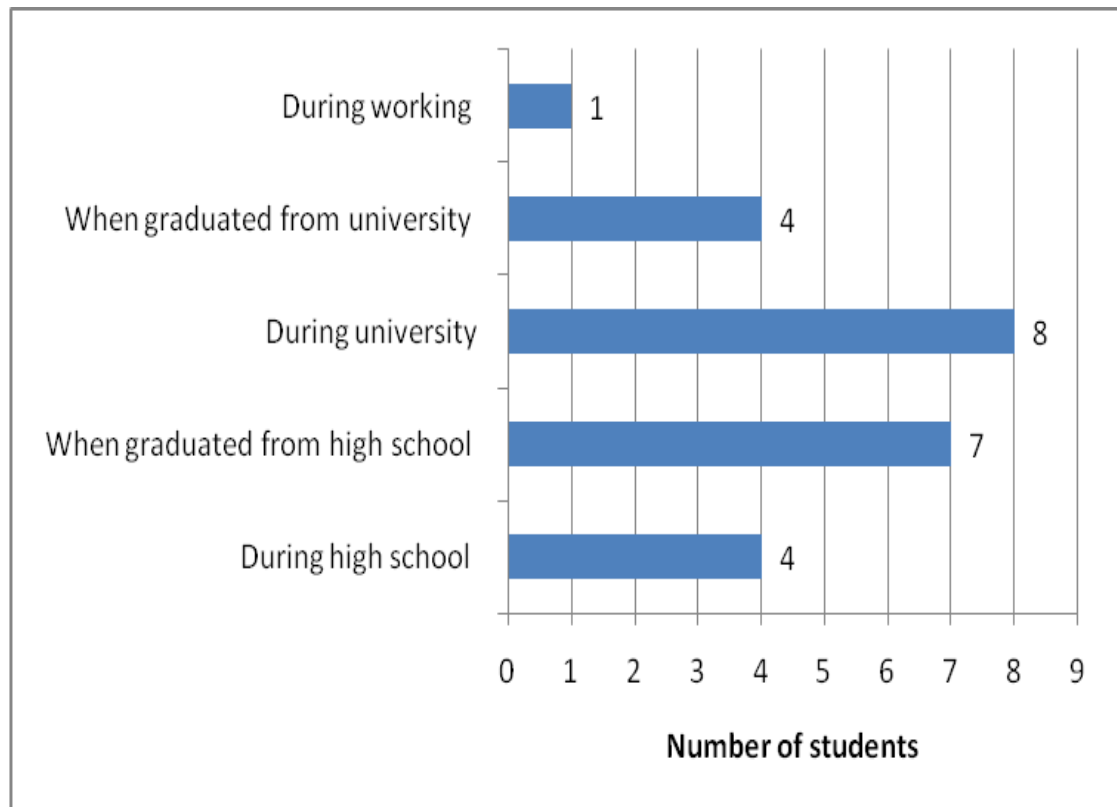


Figure 7 When did you plan to come to study in Finland

Reasons of coming to study in Finland

Figure 8 shows the main factors that influenced the respondents' decisions when they were deciding to come to study in Finland. This was a multiple choice question, where respondents could choose more than one answer. When analyzing the results of the survey, number of votes is used to calculate how many times each alternatives was chosen. It is seen that the most attractive factor is "Free tuition fees in Finland", which got the highest votes of 19 respondents. About 12 voted for "Advanced higher education system in Finland". The third most relevant factor is "Personal preference" and "Universities cooperation programs of joint degree with Jinhua College. Most of the respondents who chose "Personal preference" expressed that the image of Finland as a clean, peaceful and the home country of Santa Clause has rooted in their mind for a long time. 6 respondents come to Finland because of Friends recommendations. 5 respondents came to study in Finland for the purpose of enhancing future employment. 3 respondents chose to escape from the

domestic pressures of National Higher Education Entrance examinations and only 2 respondents chose Finland because they have Family members here.

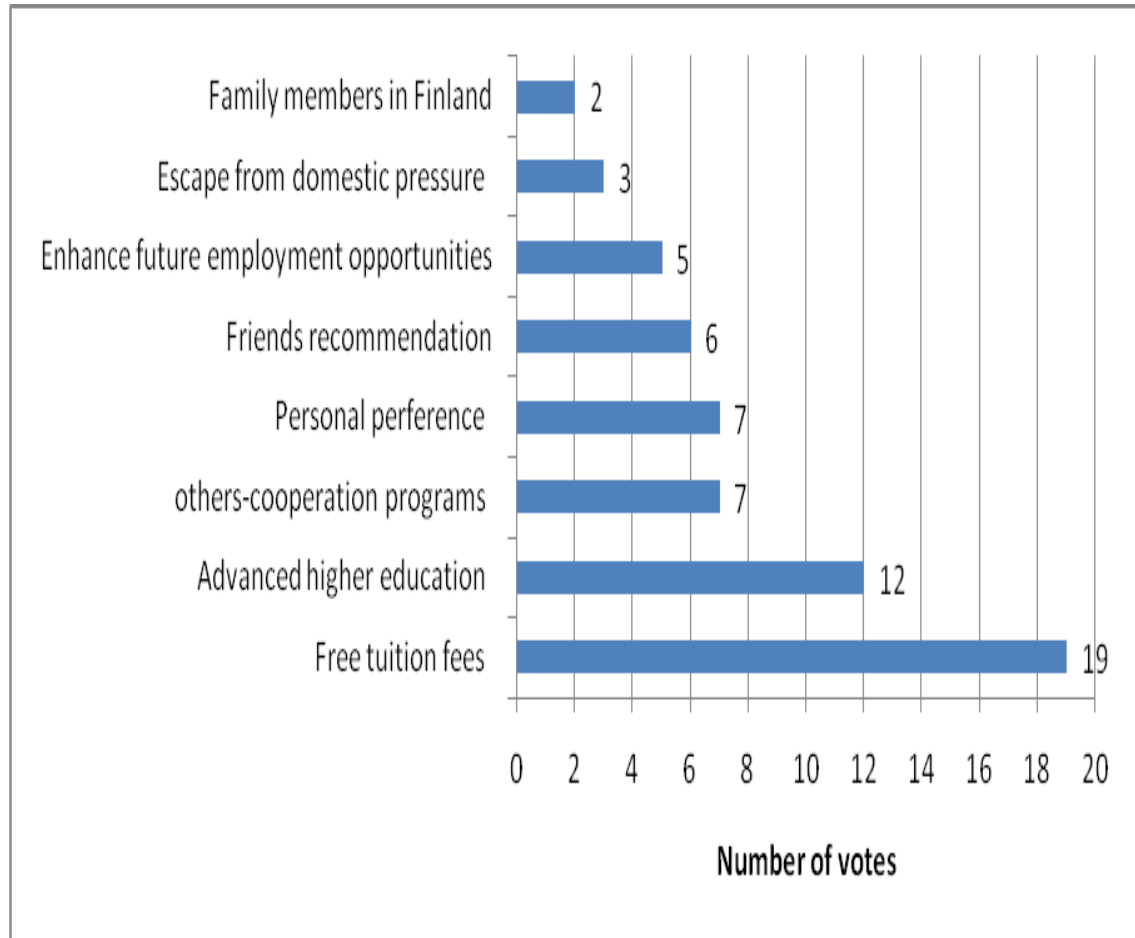


Figure 8 What factors influenced you when you chose to study in Finland

The majority of Chinese students come from Medium Developed regions

Figure 9 indicates what province of China the respondents come from. According to the results of the survey, these 24 KyUAS Chinese students come from 11 different provinces of China. According to the newest Human Development Index, different provinces of China are classified into 3 levels, which are based on the regional economic and comprehensive social development. The 3 levels are “Developed Regions”, “Medium Developed Regions” and “Developing Regions”. However only Beijing and Shanghai belong to the Developed Regions. The provinces like Tianjin; Zhejiang; Jiangsu; Guangdong; Liaoning; Shandong; Hebei; Fujian and Jilin are included in the Medium Developed Regions. The rest of provinces such as Heilongjiang; Chongqing; Shanxi; Inner Mongolia; Hainan; Hubei; Hunan; Shaanxi; Henan;,

Xinjiang; Guangxi; Jiangxi; Sichuan; Ningxia; Anhui; Qinghai; Gansu; Yunnan; Guizhou; Tibet belong to Developing Regions.(Baidu 2011)

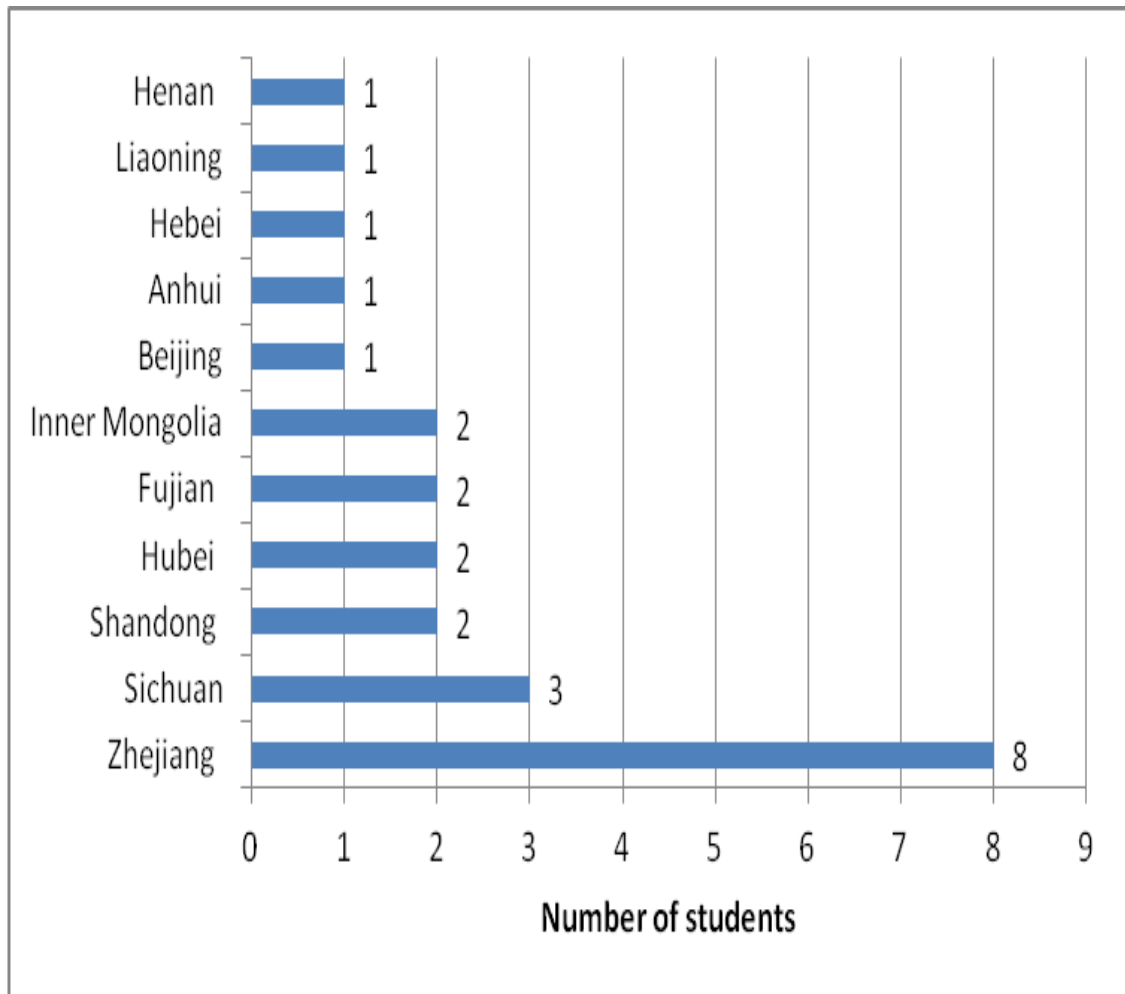


Figure 9 The provinces KyUAS Chinese students come from

There are 8 students who come from Zhejiang Province because of the joint degree program between KyUAS and Jinhua college. Then 3 respondents are coming from Sichuan Province, which takes about 1/8 of the total KyUAS Chinese students. It is also one of the reasons why we choose a go-studying-abroad agency from Sichuan as an example to compare in Chapter 3. The number of the respondents from Hubei province, Fujian Province and Inner Mongolia is 2 from each. The other provinces like Anhui, Hebei, Liaoning and Henan are represented here by 1 student. There is only 1 student from Beijing studying in KyUAS at the moment.

Apparently, the majority of the KyUAS Chinese students are coming from Medium Developed Regions and Developing Regions, where the economic

development is not very high and majority of the people living in these regions belong to the middle class income families and a little more than average income families. It also explains why the free tuition fees is the biggest attraction for these 24 KyUAS Chinese students. On the other hand , there is only 1 student coming from the Developed Region of Beijing, which means that the free tuition fees as well as the KyUAS image attraction for the students in these Developed Regions like Beijing and Shanghai are not very high compared with the other less developed provinces.

More than half of students used go-studying abroad agency to come to Finland

In this survey, 14 respondents out of 24 used the go-studying abroad-agency services when they applied to the Kymenlaakso University of Applied Sciences, which shows the important role of go-studying-abroad agency in Chinese markets. 8 respondents came to Finland for studying through the Universities cooperation program, which takes about 30% of the total numbers. At the same time, only 2 respondents applied the Kymenlaakso University of Applied Sciences by themselves. From the results, we could draw a conclusion that using the go-studying-abroad agency for applying to foreign universities is the most popular way in China nowadays.

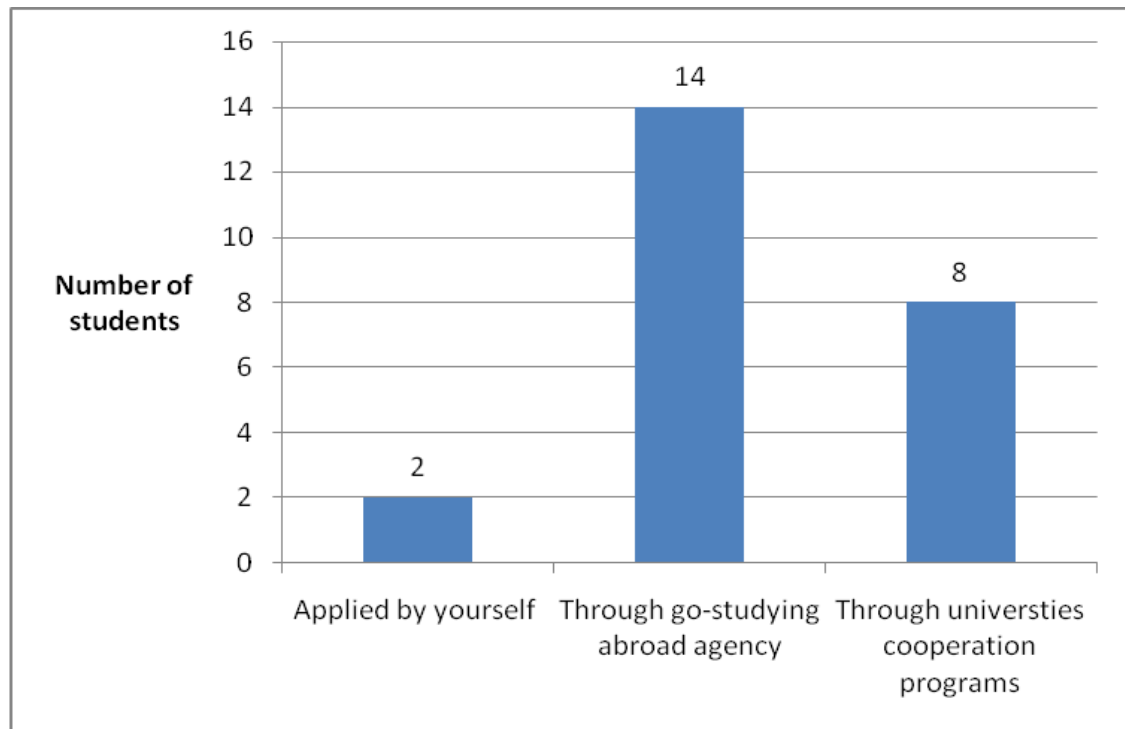


Figure 10 The main methods used to come to study in Finland

Reasons to use go-studying-abroad agency.

When we asked the 14 students who have used the go-studying-abroad agency about the factors influencing their decision to use agency, we received the following answers (Figure 11).

During the personal interview, 8 out of 14 respondents stated that application processes are too complicated to do by themselves so they used go-studying-abroad agency, which also gives an idea to Kymenlaakso University of Applied Sciences that application processes should be clearly explained on the university website since complicated application process is the main barrier for the students. “ Increase application success possibility” and “ parents ideas” both got 7 votes from the respondents. Moreover, 6 out of 14 respondents chose to use go-studying-abroad agency because of “ professional and adequate information” and “ entrance examination training” are provided. Only 3 respondents chose “ efficient application processes” and “ extensive services provided”. While only 1 person voted for the “ unique and suitable application materials prepared”

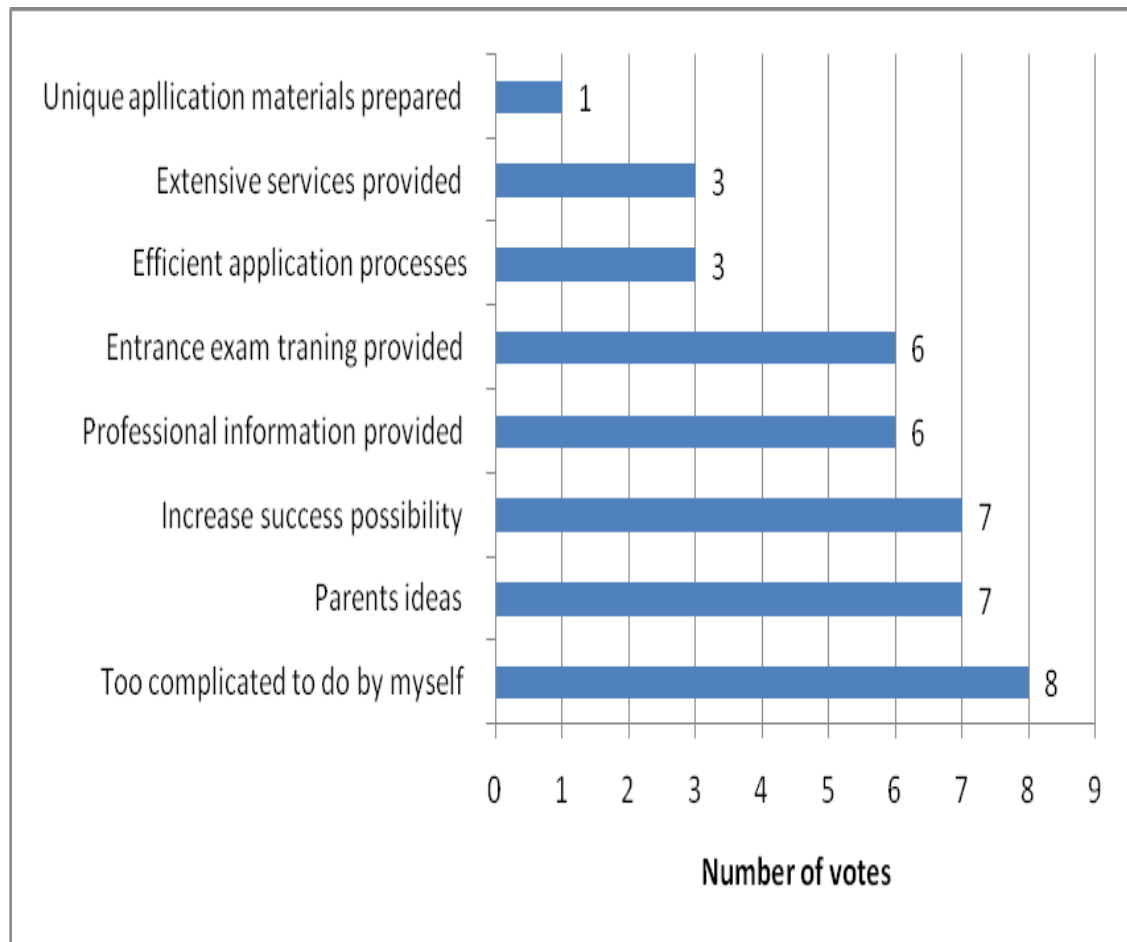


Figure 11 Why did you choose to use go-studying-abroad agency

Services used by the students

Figure 12 illustrates the main services used by the 14 respondents. The survey is also used for testing and verification of the go-studying-abroad agency's services. We could see that the most commonly used service is University application materials preparation and only 1 respondent did not use this service. Informational consulting service got 10 votes out of 14. Both University entrance examination training and visa application service were used by 9 respondents. 6 out of 14 respondents claim that they have used the extension services such as picking up from the airport, but they had to pay extra money for this kind of extension services since it was not included in the original service fees. English language training service was only used by 3 respondents since the most of respondents thought language training provided by go-studying-abroad agency was not professional but expensive.

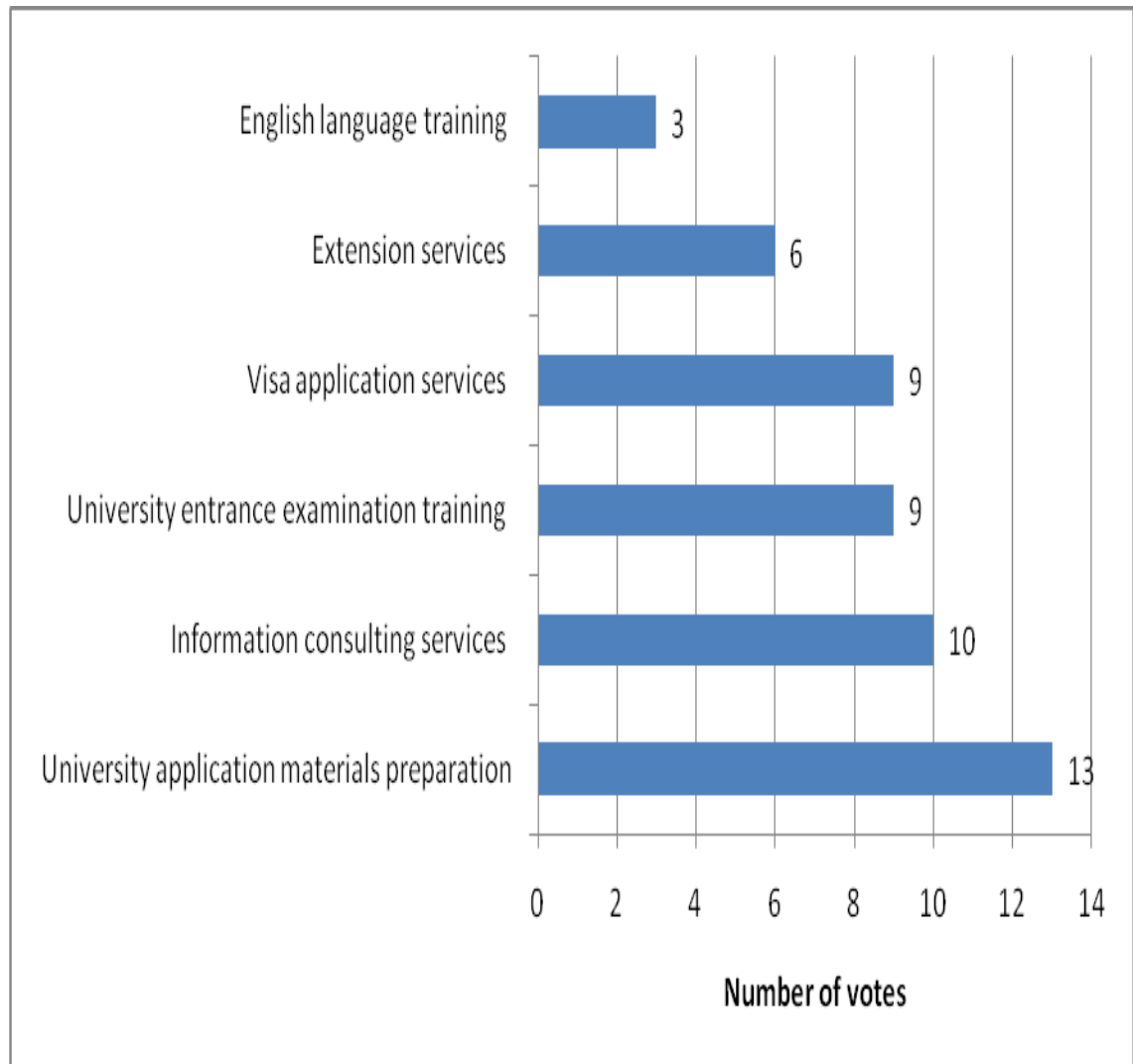


Figure 12 What kind of services did you buy from go-studying-abroad agency.

The amount of service fees charged by go-studying-broad agency was different from one to another. The factors of different regional economic development, competitions among different go-studying-abroad agencies in the same areas and the quality of the services might lead to different service fees. However, the average service fees paid by the respondents was ranging from 15000 RMB (1500 Euros) to 30000RMB (3000 Euros). The lowest services fee was 13000RMB, since the respondent only used the service of “ University application materials preparation

Service fees charged by go-studying-abroad agency is “expensive”

Respondents were also asked to give their opinion regarding the service fees they paid compared with the services they got by giving a number from 1 to 7, where 1 refers to “ Very cheap “ and number 7 refers to “ Very expensive”. In general, Figure 13 shows the results. Only 2 out of 14 respondents thought the service fee was cheap and only 1 respondent said the fee she paid for the services she received was reasonable, neither cheap nor expensive. But the rest 11, respondents thought the service fee charged by go-studying-abroad agencies were expensive. 4 people chose very expensive, 4 people chose rather expensive and 3 people chose quite expensive. Besides, Figure 13 could show customer satisfaction with the services provided by go-studying-abroad agency. Therefore, we could conclude that nearly 80% of the respondents were not satisfied with the service fee they paid. They also believe that they were overcharged.

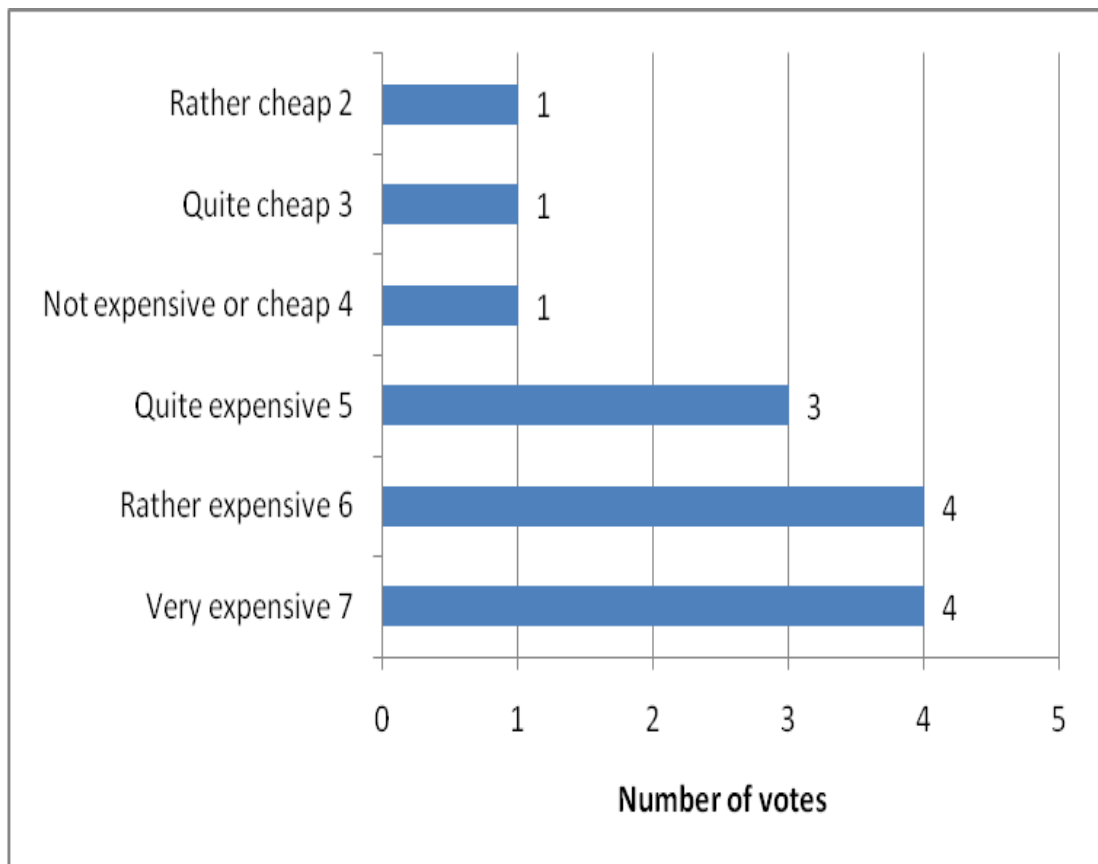


Figure 13 What do you think about the fees you paid for the services you got.

Agencies influenced the students' decisions

Table 3 illustrates respondents' opinions about these 4 statements by showing the average grade of these 14 respondents. 5 alternatives are given to the respondents to choose, number 1 refers to "Totally disagree with the statement, while number 5 means " Totally agree". Therefore, number 3 is the middle number, standing for " Neither agree nor disagree".

From Table 3 we could see that the average grade of the first statement is 2.8, which means that the majority of people thought that not enough information was provided before they made decisions. While, the average grade for the second and third statement is more than 3, which tells most of the people did agree that go-studying-abroad agency's services were useful and they have been influenced by the go-studying-abroad agency. However, when it comes to the statement " I am ready to recommend the go-studying-abroad agency to my friends" , the average grade is only a little bit above 2, thus, they somewhat disagree with the statement, So the majority of people would not recommend the go-studying-abroad agency to their friends. Generally speaking, the satisfaction rate of the respondents is not very high and go-studying-abroad agency might lose quite many potential customers.

Table 3 The average grade of agreement/disagreement with the statement given by the 14 respondents

	Mean
Go-studying-abroad agency offered enough information before I made the decision.	2.8
Go-studying-abroad agency has influenced my decisions.	3.3
The services provided by go-studying-abroad agency are useful.	3.1
I am ready to recommend the go-studying-abroad agency to my friends.	2.2

Table 4 shows respondents' opinions about the statement "go-studying abroad-agency offered enough information before I made the decision" by giving a number from 1 to 5. Number 1 refers to "Totally disagree" and number 5 refers to "Totally agree". Only 1 respondent chose totally disagree, but 4 respondents chose somewhat disagree, so all together there are 5 people who chose disagree, which accounts for 36% of the total. About 7 respondents out of 14 chose neither agree nor disagree, accounting for the half of the total. The rest of 14% of respondents chose agree, they think that go-studying-abroad agency has offered them enough information before they made their decisions about the universities to apply to. So in general, the majority of the respondents show a negative attitude towards this statement or we could say most respondents do not have a stand, they are not sure how to assess whether enough information was provided.

Table 4 Go-studying-abroad agency offered enough information before I made the decision

	Number of votes	Percentage
Totally disagree	1	7
Somewhat disagree	4	29
Neither agree nor disagree	7	50
Somewhat agree	1	7
Totally agree	1	7
Total	14	100

Table 5 indicates the results of how many respondents have been influenced by the go-studying-abroad agency. According to the results of the survey, 7 respondents said that they have been influenced, which accounts for 50%. 4

respondents said they were not influenced by the go-studying abroad agency, which takes about 20% of the total. While, 3 people chose neither agree nor disagree. Generally speaking, half of the respondents have admitted that go-studying-abroad agency's recommendations have affected their final decisions.

Table 5 Go-studying-abroad agency has influenced my decision

	Number of votes	Percentage
Totally disagree	2	14
Somewhat disagree	2	14
Neither agree nor disagree	3	21
Somewhat agree	4	29
Totally agree	3	21
Total	14	100

Table 6 serves as a key indicator of customer satisfaction with the services provided by go-studying-abroad agency. We can see that 36% of the respondents gave negative feedback about the services they got. About 20% of the respondents gave neutral answers. However, approximately 43% of respondents stated that the services they received from the go-studying-abroad agency were useful.

Table 6 The services provided by go-studying-abroad agency were useful.

	Number of votes	Percentage
Totally disagree	1	7
Somewhat disagree	4	29
Neither agree nor disagree	3	21
Somewhat agree	5	36
Totally agree	1	7
Total	14	100

From Table 7 we can see that 8 out of 14 respondents said they would not recommend the go-studying abroad agency to their friends, which accounts for nearly 60% of the total. At the same time, 5 people chose neither agree nor disagree. However, the person who chose to recommend go-studying-abroad agency to his friend, only takes a small amount of percentage (7%). Therefore, we could draw the conclusion that the majority of the respondents agree that the services provided by the agencies were useful but they would not recommend the agency to their friends.

Table 7 I am ready to recommend the go-studying-abroad agency to my friends.

	Number of votes	Percentage
Totally disagree	4	29
Somewhat disagree	4	29
Neither agree nor disagree	5	36
Somewhat agree	1	7

Totally agree	0	0
Total	14	100

Reasons to not use go-studying-abroad agency

Figure 14 shows the main reasons that would affect people when deciding not to use go-studying-abroad agency. Out of the 24 respondents, 14 people claimed that high service fees might make them not choose go-studying-abroad agency, which takes about 60% of the respondents' opinion. They felt that the prices charged by go-studying-abroad agency are too high, the quality of the services received does not correspond to the prices they paid. As one of the respondents wrote in the questionnaire " I do not like go-studying-abroad agency, they always ask for more money but do few things even after I have paid the service fees. When the person picked me up from the airport, he even asked more money from me for renting the car although I have paid the "pick-up service fees" to the go-studying-abroad agency". " I believe I could do it myself" got second highest number of votes-13 votes. For many respondents, the most weighty reason that influenced them to choose go-studying-abroad agency was because they thought it was too complicated to apply by themselves. However, quite many respondents say that they would prefer to apply by themselves if they have known the application process earlier. About 6 respondents said that they do not trust go-studying-abroad agency very much and they think the services offered by go-studying abroad agency are unprofessional.

Therefore, we could conclude that high service fees is the biggest barrier stops students from choosing go-studying-abroad agency. So price resetting for the go-studying-abroad agency is very necessary if they want to attract more customers in the future.

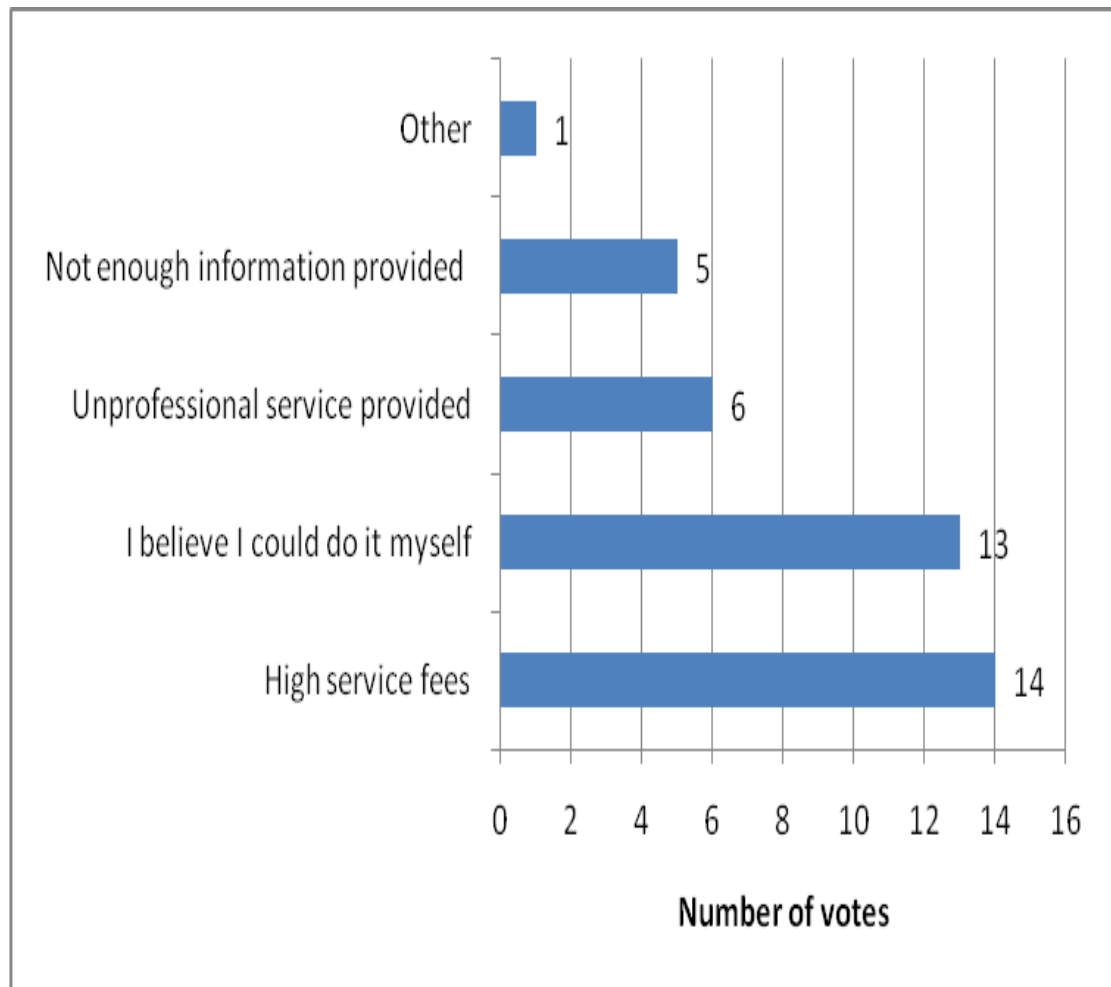


Figure 14 What factors would influence you not to use go-studying-abroad agency

How to promote Kymenlaakso University of Applied Sciences

The purpose of this question is to find out what would be the most suitable way to promote the popularity of Kymenlaakso University of Applied Sciences in Chinese market according to the respondents' point of view. There are 5 main promoting tools as the alternatives, namely, "Newspaper", "Internet", "Go-studying-abroad agency" and "Education seminar". The "Other" is to be used when respondents give new promoting ideas but no respondents gave other ideas.

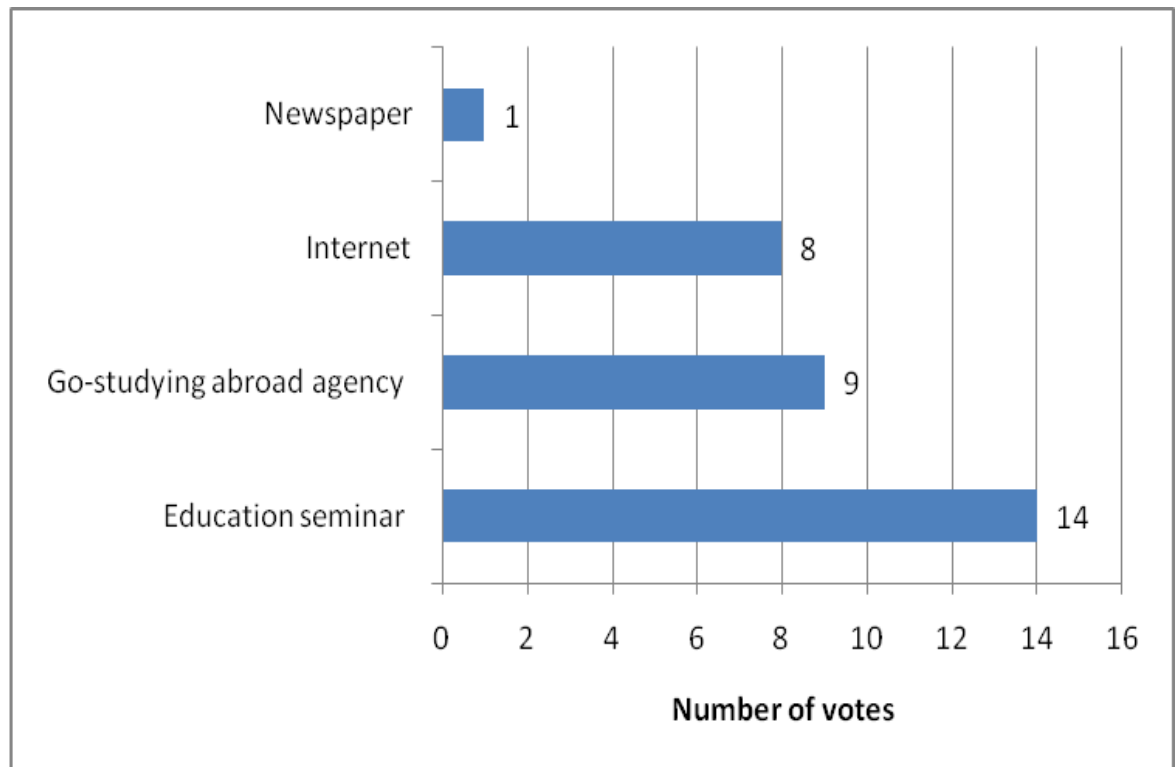


Figure 15 The most suitable way to promote KyUAS in Chinese market.

It is seen from Figure 15 that 14 out of 24 respondents chose “ Education seminar” as the most suitable way to market KyUAS. In this case, “Education seminar” refers to the “ Education fairs”, where presentations about the universities’ facilities, courses or programs or teaching resources are given by a universities’ representative, helping the students to get to know more about the universities. More important is that education fairs offer the students and their parents a chance to communicate with different universities’ representatives from different countries face to face. Furthermore, it could also be regarded as a unique exhibition, where students’ artworks or inventions could be presented to the participants. Nowadays, education fairs have become a very significant way of marketing promotion utilized by many foreign universities.

These 14 respondents believe that participating in the Education seminar would help Kymenlaakso University of Applied Sciences to build a positive image and reach the targeted students or even find the potential partners, because those who go to the education seminars are the students who are willing to go to study in foreign countries and go-studying-abroad agencies who are acting as intermediaries between students and foreign universities. In addition, Kymenlaakso University of Applied Sciences could also check promoting

strategies used by the competitors by participating in the education seminars. Learn from them if the competitors' promoting strategies are better. However, it is clear that the costs of participating in education seminars are also extremely high compared with the other promoting tools: a stand place in education seminar needs to be bought, university introduction materials, small gifts for people, the staffs costs, flight tickets and hotel living expenses. But high costs of participating in the education seminars might lead to a high rate of return. But since no survey has been conducted concerning the costs, it is not clear whether costs would outweigh the benefits or not, So no direct conclusions could be made. But one thing is sure that Kymenlaakso University of Applied Sciences would have to take many things into consideration beforehand if KyUAS decides to participate in the education seminars in China.

The second most popular promoting tool is through the go-studying-abroad agency, which got 9 votes from the respondents. It also shows the importance for Kymenlaakso University of Applied Sciences to build cooperation with Chinese go-studying-abroad agencies. Then "Internet" got 8 votes, which is only 1 vote less than " Go-studying-abroad agency " . Promoting through the internet is very important for those who are determined to apply to a university by themselves. Only 1 out of 24 respondents chose promote KyUAS through the newspaper. Apparently, "Newspapers" is not favoured by the majority of the respondents since most of people think it is old fashioned and it would not work well along with such advanced technological media.

4.3. Analysis of ideas and opinions about cooperation

Based on the lists of respondents' ideas and opinions about the cooperation between Kymenlaakso University of Applied Sciences and Chinese go-studying-abroad agency in Appendix 4, we can see that about 13 people gave their comments, which included 8 positive comments and 5 negative comments in total.

The majority of the respondents stated that it is a good idea to establish cooperation with Chinese go-studying-abroad agency as a marketing strategy for promoting school image . The term of "win-win project" has been mentioned

quite a few times by different respondents during the survey. They believe that it is a good way to promote the KyUAS to wider public areas and increase the students' awareness about KyUAS. Besides, go-studying-abroad agencies are more familiar with the Chinese markets, they have their own markets and know how to attract students' attention. So the KyUAS could benefit a lot through this cooperation. At the same time, Chinese go-studying-abroad agencies could make more money by helping more students to apply to Finnish Universities. In addition, building cooperation relationship with Finnish Universities is also one way to increase its competitiveness by showing the agency's professionalism.

The cooperation is also beneficial for Chinese applicants since the cooperation provides the middle income level families with an opportunity to send their children to study in Finland and receive advanced higher education. Especially, free tuition fees as one of the most attractive factors attracts more and more students during these few years. What is more, students could get more information, e.g. about Finland, the studying life, courses and languages even before they come to Finland. Furthermore, with the help of cooperation between KyUAS and Chinese go-studying-abroad agency students could come to study in Finland with less troubles and would have a clearer idea about what they want to achieve in their studies.

However, still some respondents said they did not support the idea of the cooperation between KyUAS and Chinese go-studying-abroad agency very much. As one respondent answered,

“There will be very few people to ask about KyUAS and i do not think the Chinese go-studying-abroad agency would like to cooperate with KyUAS because of the low popularity of the KyUAS in China”. He added that “Nowadays the most ideal places for overseas studying are the United States, the United Kingdom and Australia. So most go-studying-abroad agencies would like to establish cooperation programs with the universities in those countries. And also the total number of students choosing to study in Finland is much lower compared with the number of students in the United State or the United Kingdom.”

Some people did not favour the cooperation because they believe the images or services provided by the go-studying-abroad agencies are not reliable or professional. One respondent said “I usually believe that the ones who establish co operations with go-studying-abroad agencies are those who could not get enough students or the ones with bad university images. The world top universities, such as Cambridge University or Harvard University, never promote their universities through the cooperation with go-studying-abroad agencies”. Therefore, building up the relationship with the go-studying-abroad agency would affect or even lower the image of the KyUAS

Some respondents had the concerns about the quality of the students. They admitted that the KyUAS might attract more students through the cooperation with Chinese go-studying-abroad agencies, but the quality of the students could not be guaranteed. But they might have forgotten that all the students need to pass entrance examinations in order to be accepted to KyUAS. So the quality of students could be guaranteed in that way.

4.4. Analysis of the suggestions for the cooperation

Different suggestions were put forward by the respondents during the survey. Eight suggestions are as follows:

1) Cooperate with a small size go-studying-abroad agency in the starting stage.

3 respondents suggested that KyUAS should not cooperate with very big go-studying-abroad agencies at the beginning. Instead, a small size go-studying-abroad agencies are more recommended by the majority of the respondents. Especially the ones, who are mainly focusing on Northern European countries or Scandinavian Countries. as the application areas for the students. Because the agencies who are focusing on Northern European countries are more familiar with the universities, colleges, education policies, application processes and most important thing is that they would take the cooperation with KyUAS more seriously.

However, big go-studying-abroad agencies could be set as a future objective when the popularity and customers awareness towards the Kymenlaakso University of Applied Science has reached a certain level, then the KyUAS could take the cooperation with bigger size of go-studying-abroad agencies into consideration.

- 2) Have a good selection of go-studying-abroad agencies that KyUAS might cooperate with in the future.

Making a good selection of the go-studying-abroad agencies should always be the first and foremost important thing to do from the KyUAS' point of view, since the chosen go-studying-abroad agency would directly affect the processes as well as the results of the cooperation. Only a responsible, ethically behaving and qualified go-studying-abroad agency could be chosen as a partner.

- 3) Offer some kind of support to go-studying-abroad agencies by giving presentations.

As one respondent has put it a contact person of the KyUAS could offer some support to the go-studying-abroad agencies in order to attract more students and maintain the relationship with the partner. For instance, the main contact person could give some presentations about the country, university, student life, courses and study options for the Chinese students and their parents once a year or twice a year. In this way, both go-studying-abroad agencies and KyUAS could benefit from the activity. The go-studying-abroad agencies could get more potential customers and the KyUAS could use the go-studying abroad agency's premises and resources for promoting school to reach as many potential applicants as possible.

- 4) Inspections are needed during the cooperation with the Chinese go-studying-abroad agency.

More than 3 respondents have mentioned that inspections of the cooperation with go-studying-abroad agencies are needed from time to time. The purpose of

the inspection is to make the cooperation more visible, clear and keep its development.

- 5) Cooperation terms and responsibilities are needed to be listed clearly from the both points' of view

Cooperation terms and responsibilities need to be agreed by both KyUAS and the go-studying-abroad agencies before taking the actual cooperation into implementation. For instance, a go-studying-abroad agency could take care of the following tasks: booking the rooms for presentations and entrance exams, local travelling, promoting the presentation sessions, informing potential applicants about the KyUAS' international programmes. Then KyUAS need to give the presentations in the named places which are organized by the go-studying-abroad agency once or twice a year. Only in this way the cooperation can be smooth and effective.

- 6) Do not depend on go-studying-abroad agencies too much.

The KyUAS should not depend on go-studying-abroad agencies too much, since establishing cooperation with go-studying-abroad agencies is only one way to promote and attract potential degree students, but students apply to the foreign universities through the agency is only a small part of the total overseas students. However there are also many students who applied by themselves or through the educational programs. So KyUAS should also enhance other promoting medias. Such as internet advertising for those who apply by themselves.

- 7) Collecting feedback from the coming Chinese students to evaluate performance of the go-studying-abroad agency in cooperated.

Collecting feedback from the students coming through the go-studying-abroad agencies could be regarded as one of the assessment tools to evaluate the performance of the cooperation between KyUAS and go-studying-abroad agencies. The feedback could be used as guidelines for further improvement or as a sign for changing cooperation partners.

8) Effective communication is needed to reduce misunderstanding .

Successful cooperation means effective communication between the two parts. In order to avoid the misunderstanding the go-studying-abroad agencies in cooperation with KyUAS should have staffs who are fluent and experienced in English language.

5. INTERVIEWS WITH CONTACT PERSON OF LAUAS AND MANAGERS OF CHINESE AGENCIES

5.1. Interviews introduction

The purpose of the interviews with the contact person of Lahti University of Applied Sciences and managers of the Chinese go-studying-abroad agencies helps to get an in-depth understanding of the cooperation between the Finnish University of Applied Sciences and Chinese go-studying-abroad agencies in practice. Based on the results of the interviews, appropriate marketing strategy could be carried out as development plans for the Kymenlaakso University of Applied Sciences to establish the cooperation with Chinese go-studying-abroad agencies in order to attract more potential applicants. For instance, what would be the most suitable cooperation method for KyUAS when establishing cooperation programs, what would be the responsibilities from two parties' point of view and what would be a qualified business partner from KyUAS' perspective.

Two different interview questionnaires were made, one is designed for the contact person of Lahti University of Applied Sciences, Maija Romo, while another questionnaire is made for two different go-studying-abroad agencies: Huaxiang International Service Co. Ltd and Yiming Overseas Education Service Co., Ltd. Both of the questionnaires can be found in Appendix 1 and Appendix 2.

The questionnaire for the contact person of Lahti University of Applied Science consists of 10 questions. All the questions are open ended questions, taking about 30 minutes to finish. The survey took place at the beginning of June 2011. E-mail was used to receive the answers since Maija Romo was busy. Besides, conducting the survey through E-mail survey is less time consuming and more convenient for the busy people like her.

In this questionnaire, question 1 is about when and how Lahti UAS started the cooperation with one of the Chinese go-studying-abroad agencies named Sichuan Huaxiang Service Co., Ltd, which gives us a general idea about the background information of this cooperation and how long the cooperation has lasted up to now. Question 2 is related to the cooperation of the Lahti UAS and Sichuan Huaxiang go-studying-abroad agency in practice, which is also one of the most important questions because it would give a very clear picture about the way they actually conduct the cooperation programs. More important is that it could be a good example for Kymenlaakso University of Applied Sciences to learn and benchmark. Questions 3-5 ask about benefits of Lahti UAS and Sichuan Huaxiang go-studying-abroad agency could get from the contact person's of Lahti UAS point of view. Question 6 is about challenges that took place during the cooperation. Lahti UAS' future perspectives in regards of cooperation with more Chinese go-studying-abroad agencies are asked in questions 7 and 8. Questions 9 and 10 are related to the criteria and the main concerns that Lahti UAS would take into consideration when establishing cooperation programs with new partners. This information would serve as a piece of advice when KyUAS is looking for potential cooperation partners in the future.

The other questionnaire is designed for interviews with two different Chinese go-studying-abroad agencies. Two people are interviewed to get deep and detailed information regarding the cooperation. The first person we interviewed was Xun Yang, who is the general manager as well as the founder of the Huaxiang International Service Co., Ltd. This agency has conducted the cooperation with Lahti University of Applied Sciences for many years and the cooperation is quite successful. The other person we interviewed was Pei Wang, one of the Managers from Yiming Overseas Education Services Co., Ltd. She

has many years of cooperation experience with the universities of the United States, the United Kingdom, Canada, Austria, Denmark, Poland, Ireland, the Netherlands and Hungary. This questionnaire consists of 15 questions in total, which takes approximately 40-50 minutes to complete. Face to face interview with Xun Yang allowed us to have more flexibility in information collection regarding the cooperation with Lahti University of Applied Sciences. Many questions out of the questionnaires were also asked during the interview. But the interview with Pei Wang was conducted online through the internet due to different geographical locations. Two interviews took place in June 2011. The results of these two interviews were analyzed together with the results received from Maija Romo in order to have a better understanding and put forward proposals for the cooperation between Kymenlaakso University of Applied Sciences and Chinese go-studying-abroad agencies.

In this survey, questions 1-4 present the background information of the company, e.g. what the Sichuan Huaxiang go-studying-abroad agency's business is in general and their main services, which help to test and verify the theoretical information we have collected in Chapter 3. Other questions like how the company promotes itself to attract more customers and why the company mainly focuses on the Northern European countries are also asked to obtain a deeper understanding. Question 5 asks about the cooperation processes with Lahti University of Applied Sciences from the Sichuan Huaxiang go-studying-abroad agency's point of view. Questions 6-10 are related to the advantages of the cooperation programs from both agency and Lahti UAS' points of view. Question 11 talks about the problems that occurred during the cooperation time. Questions 12 and 13 are related to the future perspective of the cooperation from the Huaxiang go-studying-abroad agency's point of view. Question 14 asks about the factors Sichuan Huaxiang go-studying-abroad agency would take into consideration when cooperating with a new Finnish University of Applied Sciences as partner, which also gives the Kymenlaakso University of Applied Sciences some clues about the criteria Chinese go-studying-abroad agencies normally have when looking for potential partners. The last question is about Huaxiang go-studying-abroad agency's measurement of its customers' satisfaction in order to attract more potential customers.

5.2. Analysis of interviews' results and conclusions

The results of the interviews are compared, combined and analyzed from five different perspectives, which are the following:

- a) Main marketing tools used by Chinese go-studying-abroad agencies
- b) Customer satisfaction evaluation methods
- c) Benefits of cooperation for the foreign universities
- d) Benefits of cooperation for the go-studying abroad agencies
- e) Selection criteria of potential cooperation partners

5.2.1. Marketing promotion tools

According to the interviews' results, six different marketing tools were utilized by the interviewed go-studying-abroad agencies to build and enhance the company's image and access more potential customers. Six promotion tools are as follows:

- 1) Both of the two interviewed go-studying-abroad agencies have claimed that their companies have taken the full use of the media, which means putting the advertisement in the local newspapers and television programs to promote the popularity of the company as well as target the company's study abroad programs to potential customers. (Yang & Wang 2011)
- 2) Both go-studying-abroad agencies have realized that with the increasing number of the internet users, promoting the company through internet is more and more important. Therefore, they have set up their internet webpage and put the company's links or short introductions in different educational networks to increase the company websites' traffic. (Yang & Wang 2011)
- 3) Building relationships with Chinese local universities and middle school is also one of the main marketing tools used by these two go-studying-abroad agencies, by giving presentations about the company's cooperating foreign

universities and study programs in these schools. This allows them to get access to the target group, which are high school graduates and university students. (Yang & Wang 2011)

- 4) The traditional go-studying-abroad agencies' promotion activity of holding education seminars is still playing an important role nowadays, mentioned by two of the interviewed go-studying-abroad agencies. Usually, the company would invite the Finnish university representatives to come to the education seminars and give a public presentation about the country and study options for potential applicants and their parents, which gives both parties an opportunity to communicate face to face. (Yang & Wang 2011)
- 5) For Henan Yiming Oversea Education Services Co., LTD, setting up English language training schools, which offers the ACT and SAT courses, is also one way to attract potential customers. Because the ones who are studying in these courses are the potential customers who would use the same company for university application later on. (Wang 2011)
- 6) Organizing summer camps abroad or exchange programs between Chinese and foreign universities is also one of promotion strategies to attract potential customers since it is a good chance for students to get to know more about the universities, culture and living conditions in the other country. (Wang 2011)

5.2.2. Customer satisfaction evaluation methods

Based on the interviews' results different go-studying-abroad agencies have different ways to collect feedback from customers regarding the customer satisfaction.

As one of the interviewed go-studying-abroad agencies stated during the interview *Although our company does not have customer satisfaction questionnaires to collect feedback, we do have very clear and strict evaluation rules to do self evaluation or contact customers in face to face meetings or via phone.*(Yang 2011)

Customer satisfaction is evaluated from the following perspectives:

1. Have the studying plans formulated by the consultant met the students' expectations and corresponded to with the students' actual situations?
2. Have the consultants answered all the customers' questions effectively and efficiently?
3. Have the consultants submitted the foreign universities application documents and VISA application materials in time?

The interviewed company mentioned why they follow strict evaluation rules because they know the importance of the customer satisfaction for the consulting business like the go-studying-abroad agency business. "Usually a satisfied customer would recommend the services to his or her friends or family, who often turn out to be our new customers. Besides, according to our marketing research, acquiring new customers through friends or family recommendation is the highest efficiency way of marketing." as she put during the interview. (Yang 2011)

The other interviewed go-studying-abroad agency chose to use the suggestions box or even set up the complaints hotlines to collect feedback, where customers could put forward their advice and complaints 24 hours a day. (Wang 2011)

5.2.3. Benefits of cooperation for the foreign universities

According to the three different interviews' results, we could draw the conclusion that Finnish universities or foreign universities enjoy five benefits from the cooperation with Chinese go-studying-abroad agencies.

- 1) The Chinese go-studying-abroad agency helps with image promotion in China.

As the Xun Yang from the Huaxiang go-studying-abroad agency stated "We would use some international logos or symbols like Nokia, Angry Birds and Santa Clause to strengthen people's impressions towards Finland as the first

step to arise people's awareness about Finnish Universities. Since not many students really know something about Finland or Finnish Universities." Therefore, letting them know the country is also very important. (Yang 2011)

She continued that "We would use the advertisement to promote Finnish universities' image and popularity. For examples, we could put large space of the university and major introduction on company websites or local newspapers. What is more, our go-studying-abroad agency also works together with the cooperated Finnish Universities and CIMO (Centre for International Mobility Organization) organizing education fairs from time to time to let more people know about Finland and Finnish education. Giving the speeches in Chinese universities and senior high schools and inviting some foreign university partners to give the presentations during the exhibitions or education fairs are also good ways to increase students' awareness of Finnish education." The same ideas were given by another go-studying-abroad agency. (Yang & Wang 2011)

The Chinese go-studying-abroad agencies know the skills and "tricks" of how to recommend the universities to students. For example, Pei Wang from Yiming go-studying abroad agency said that "Nowadays, the universities are divided into U class and H class. U class universities are known as universities for research and H class universities are known as vocational and technological universities (study in the Netherlands 2011). So when recommending different universities to the students, we usually emphasise on different factors. For instance, when recommending the U class universities, we would focus more on the world universities ranking. However, when recommending the universities from the Nordic countries, especially the H class universities like Finnish University of Applied Sciences, it is not a good idea to refer to the universities ranking lists. Instead, we would talk more about the courses and let the students realize the practical applicability." (Wang 2011). While Xun Yang mentioned that she uses some research data from authority education institutions or books to explain the characteristics of Finnish education. For instance, "Finnish education ranked NO.1 worldwide" (Yang 2011)

2) The go-studying-abroad agencies help to build deeper cooperation

relationship with Chinese universities and Middle schools.

Go-studying-abroad agencies would help Finnish universities to establish a deeper cooperation relationship with Chinese local universities and Middle schools by using their company's networks. For instance, the agency would act as an intermediary to put different cooperation into practice, such as visiting lectures between Finnish universities and Chinese universities, students' exchange and co-operated research projects for the purposes of enhancing the academic and cultural communication. (Yang 2011)

- 3) The go-studying-abroad agencies help Finnish universities to organize educational fairs and seminars

The go-studying-abroad agencies help the Finnish universities to participate in educational fairs or to hold educational seminars in Chinese market. They also take care of making hotel reservations for Finnish universities' representatives and booking rooms for the presentations, putting the advertisement in the local newspapers and website to inform the students and their parents about the presentation time. Besides, they provide technical equipment, computer and projector, which makes everything much more convenient and easier, answered by Maija Romo.

- 4) The go-studying-abroad agencies help to attract more applicants.

Both of the interviewed go-studying-abroad agencies said that they provide consulting services and recommend students who meet the Finnish universities' admission criteria to their cooperated Finnish universities partners. Therefore, the Finnish universities could get more applicants and have more possibility of choosing excellent students. Also, they could receive more financial benefits either from the students' tuition fees or from the national educational departments. Besides, the cooperation with Chinese go-studying-abroad agencies offers foreign universities a chance to meet their potential applicants face to face when they are giving the presentation, which helps the foreign universities to have a better understanding of these applicants rather than just from the application papers and documents. (Yang & Wang 2011)

- 5) The cooperation with the Chinese go-studying-abroad agencies motivates to be more international.

The cooperation with the Chinese go-studying-abroad agencies motivates the Finnish universities to be more international, market orientated and become more global. (Yang & Wang 2011)

5.2.4. Benefits of cooperation for the go-studying-abroad agencies

By comparing and analyzing the interviews' results, we could draw the conclusions that Chinese go-studying-abroad agencies could acquire 5 different advantages through the cooperation with foreign universities, namely:

- 1) Acquiring more accurate and detailed information through the cooperation

"Through the cooperation with Finnish Universities, our go-studying abroad agency could acquire more accurate and detailed information about admission requirements, which provides competitive advantages compared with other competitors when offering the services to the customers. From the long-term perspective, it would also strengthen the company's development strategies in North European countries." answered by Pei Wang.

- 2) Helping to build Chinese go-studying-abroad agencies' image and reputation through the cooperation

Both of the go-studying-abroad agencies have admitted that foreign universities help the go-studying-abroad agencies to attract more students by giving the presentation, which makes their companies professional and reliable and increases the go-studying-abroad agencies' image and reputation. The presentations given by the contact person of foreign universities help the students to acquire detailed and better understanding of the education and studying life abroad. (Yang & Wang 2011)

3) Helping with the VISA application process through the cooperation

As Pei Wang mentioned in the interview Nordic countries are known as sign back countries, which means that the Finnish Embassy in China is not eligible to approve the students' Visas, instead the Visa application documents need to be sent back to the Finnish immigration office in its home country for the approval. Then the Finnish immigration office would give the results back to the Finnish Embassy in China. So if there are any problems happened in the immigration office, the foreign universities could help to solve the problems, which much increase the Visa application success possibilities. (Wang 2011)

4) Offering good services to the Chinese students through the cooperation

According to the cooperation methods, usually the foreign universities are responsible for picking up the students from airport and arranging the room accommodation when the students arrive to the foreign countries. Therefore, it is convenient for both the Chinese students and go-studying-abroad agencies. Since it is less trouble for the go-studying-abroad agency to look for someone else to do this job. (Yang & Wang 2011)

5) Receiving more service fees through the cooperation

The go-studying-abroad agency could receive more service fees from the customers by attracting more applicants. (Yang & Wang 2011)

5.2.5. Selection criteria of potential cooperation partners

Selection criteria of potential partners from the Chinese go-studying-abroad agencies' perspective

There are 4 different factors that a go-studying-abroad agency would take into considerations when establishing cooperation with a new foreign university. The 4 factors are as follows:

1) Universities recognized by the People's Republic of China Ministry of Education.

The first important factor that both interviewed go-studying-abroad agencies taken into consideration is whether the degrees of the foreign universities are approved and accepted by national Ministry of Education. All the names of the recognized universities could be found from the website named "Jiaoyu shewai jianguan xinxi wang". For instance, there are altogether 41 recognized Finnish universities, including 16 universities and 25 Finnish Polytechnics. So the new business cooperation partner must be recognized by the Chinese government. (Yang & Wang 2011)

2) Good studying environment

The second most important factor is that the new university partner has good studying environment which is beneficial for students' studying and their future development. It means that a university must have highly qualified professors, good courses, numerous various studying reference materials, high technology facilities, innovative teaching methods, good attitude to the international students and multinational studying environment, which allows the students to take the full use for their stay in the country. (Yang & Wang 2011)

3) Safe and stable country environment

The country factor is an non-ignorable factor when the go-studying-abroad agencies take cooperation partners into consideration. A foreign country for studying must be safe and stable. It would be good if the Chinese students could have internship possibilities or work opportunities when they graduate. One of the interviewed agencies gave such information. (Wang 2011)

4) The mode of cooperation with Finnish universities

The last but not least factor that the Chinese go-studying-abroad agencies takes into consideration is the cooperation mode with a potential partner. They need to negotiate with university about what assistance they could provide to

contribute to image promotion in the Chinese market. For example, a go-studying-abroad agency could invite their cooperating Finnish universities come to the educational seminars twice a year and give presentations about the country, universities, studying possibilities and studying life in Finland. (Yang 2011)

Selection criteria of potential partners from the Finnish universities' perspective

According to the interview with the contact person of Lahti University of Applied Sciences that the most important factor that Lahti University of Applied Sciences takes into consideration when choosing new cooperation partners are trust and good communication. Besides, as the contact person of Lahti University of Applied Sciences mentioned during the interview "They have to know the offices and staff very well in order to build mutual trust. In addition, a new partner must be reliable and work ethically."(Romo 2011)

6. MARKET RESEARCH OF THE CHINESE GO-STUDYING-ABROAD AGENCIES

6.1. Market research introduction

A market research of the Chinese go-studying-abroad agencies in 4 different provinces has been conducted during May - July of 2011. The 4 provinces are Beijing, Shanghai, Sichuan and Henan. This market research allows us to obtain general information on the number of the Chinese go-studying-abroad agencies who are actually offering application services to Finnish universities, their target markets, specify application processes, set up service fees, present main communication methods with their customers, customers satisfaction rate and the reliability of the information they provided.

In order to conduct this market research, a personal story(Table 8) was made up describing the reason for acquiring more information about the studying in Finland and different questions we would like to know from these go-studying-

abroad agencies. The same personal story was sent to the E-mail address of different go-studying-abroad agencies.

Table 8 The personal story designed for the market research

Hei,

My name is Jiang Pan and I have just graduated from high school this year. But I did not do well at the University Entrance Examination this year and I do not want to spend another more year preparing for the examination. My friend told me that Finland is a good option for studying abroad.

Personally I would prefer to study Business in a Finnish university and my family supports me. My level of English is pretty good, normally I got 120 to 130 out of 150 in the English examinations. However, mathematics is my weak point.

I want to ask some general information about studying in Finland since I don't have any friends who are actually studying there.

So how is Finland as a country for studying?

Are there many students choosing to study in Finland now?

How much does a Finnish university charge as annual tuition fee ?

How much is an average annual living expenses?

Are there any good Business universities in Finland?

Could you give a list of Finnish Universities that I could apply to?

What Finnish universities you would recommend?

Do you recommend Kymenlaakso University of Applied Sciences?

Has your go-studying-abroad agency established any cooperation programs with any Finnish universities?

How much service fees would you charge if I choose your go-studying-abroad agency to help me to apply to a Finnish university?

What is the application process?

Do I need to take IELTS examination and how many scores do I need to get in order to apply to a Finnish university?

How long would it take to apply and get a place from a Finnish university?

If everything goes well, how fast can I enter a Finnish university?

I am looking forward to hearing from you as soon as possible.

Regards

Jiang Pan

6.2. Number of go-studying-abroad agencies covering Finland as a target country

According to the list of the Chinese go-studying-abroad agencies which have already registered and received standard certificates from China International Education online (2011) there are 77 go-studying-abroad agencies in Beijing, 14 go-studying-abroad agencies in Shanghai, 17 go-studying-abroad agencies in Henan and 11 go-studying-abroad agencies in Sichuan. However, not all of these go-studying-abroad agencies have Finland as their target country. Different research methods have been used to check how many go-studying-abroad agencies offer services on application to Finnish universities. First, we went through these agencies' websites to see if Finland has been listed in their target country. If it was not shown, we sent emails or called them directly. After the research, we got the results that there are 13 go-studying-abroad agencies in Beijing, 6 go-studying-abroad agencies in Shanghai, 4 go-studying-abroad agencies in Henan and 3 go-studying-abroad agencies in Sichuan. All of them list Finland as their target country and provide application services to the Finnish universities. Table 9 displays the main findings in a clear way. The list of the go-studying-abroad agencies offering Finnish universities application services in these 4 provinces could be found in Table 10.

Table 9 Quantitative comparison of Chinese go-studying-abroad agencies in 4 provinces

	Beijing	Shanghai	Henan	Sichuan
The total number of go-studying-abroad agencies	77	14	17	11
The total number of go-studying-abroad agencies cover Finland as target country	13	6	4	3

Table 10 List of go-studying-abroad agencies offering Finnish universities application services (China International Education Online, 2011)

Cities and provinces	List of go-studying-abroad agencies
Beijing	1) 中国对外友好合作服务中心 http://www.youhao.net.cn/liuxue/ 2) 北京澳际教育咨询有限公司 http://www.globeedu.com/ 3) 北京丰禾意象教育咨询有限公司 http://www.exedu.cn/ 4) 北京帆之都教育信息咨询有限公司 http://www.fanzhidu.com/ 5) 北京嘉华世达国际教育交流有限公司 http://www.chivast.com/ 6) 北京金东方国际教育文化交流中心 http://www.eedu.com.cn/ 7) 北京金吉列出国留学咨询服务有限公司 http://www.jjl.cn/ 8) 北京龙马中外企业家服务有限公司 http://www.dhedu.com/

9) 北京世纪伯乐留学咨询服务有限公司

<http://www.bole.me/>

10) 北京万极咨询有限公司

<http://www.wanjiedu.com/>

11) 北京五洲通留学咨询服务有限公司

<http://www.uptong.com/>

12) 北京新东方前途出国咨询有限公司

<http://liuxue.xdf.cn/publish/portal58/>

13) 河中出国留学

<http://www.welltrend.com.cn/>

Shanghai

1) 上海东方出国留学有限公司

http://www.yesliuxue.net/SinglePage_6563791.aspx

2) 北欧之星教育咨询公司

<http://www.studyadviser.com/>

3) 上海华申国际

<http://www.huashen-edu.com/>

4) 上海同济留学事务所

<http://www.stsaa.com/ctemp.asp?country=finland&mode=College>

5) 上海外服新通国际教育咨询服务有限公司

<http://www.igo.cn/index.shtml>

6) 上海教科留学服务有限公司

<http://www.sispc-sh.com/>

Henan

1) 河南财经学院国际文化教育交流中心

<http://www.hnufelx.com/>

2) 河南省教育国际交流服务有限公司

<http://www.iees.cn/Article/about/aboutus.html>

3) 郑州教育对外交流服务中心

<http://www.study-in-europe.com.cn/aboutus.aspx>

4) 河南一鸣出国留学服务有限公司

<http://www.yimingedu.com/>

Sichuan

1) 四川省狄邦出国事务服务有限公司

http://www.liuxue.net/news/urls/news/liuxue_news_17240.shtml

2) 成都星华出国服务有限公司

http://www.liuxue.net/news/urls/news/liuxue_news_17239.shtml

3) 四川省华翔出国事务有限公司

<http://www.schuaxiang.cn/Chinese/index.aspx>

6.3. Analysis of market research and conclusions

6.3.1. Email as a communication tool

Based on the personal story that we made and the list of the go-studying-abroad agencies providing Finnish universities application services, we sent 22 emails to different Chinese go-studying-abroad agencies. 2 out of 24 Chinese go-studying-abroad agencies put invalid emails addresses on their websites, therefore, only 22 emails have been sent successfully. The content of the email was the story we made up. The replies to the emails were very slow and disappointing. From Table 11 we can see that, we received only 9 answers which equals to around 40% of the total. Among the 9 replies, only 3 answered some questions asked in the E-mail, the rest 6 replies said that we need to contact them by phone or visit them in their office, which accounts for 27%. However, as much as 60% of the go-studying-abroad agencies did not reply to our emails even up to now.

From Table 11, we could draw a conclusion that E-mail is not the most effective communication tool used by the Chinese go-studying-abroad agencies, which might be one reason to explain why the email-reply rate is so low. Instead,

phone calls and visiting the office in person are more commonly used in the business of Chinese go-studying-abroad agencies.

Table 11 The results of email research

	Number	Percentage
Replies	9	41
-Questions answered	3	14
-“Call us or visit us”	6	27
No Replies	13	59
Total	22	100

6.3.2. Reliability of the information provided

According to the information obtained through the emails and phone calls, we consider the majority of the information provided by the Chinese go-studying-abroad agencies on studying in Finland, students' living expenses, the application requirements and processes to be quite reliable. During the market research, almost all the go-studying-abroad agencies said that “Finland is a small and tuition free country, where there are not many Chinese students”. The data on living expenses in Finland provided by different go-studying-abroad agencies are quite similar, namely, ranging from 5000 Euros to 8000 Euros per year. However, only one go-studying-abroad agency gave a much lower figure (4000 Euros to 5000 Euros per year). Besides, most of the go-studying-abroad agencies have informed that the application requirements in regards of language test was 5.5 as the minimum score in IELTS and usually school starts every year in autumn and spring.

However, only one go-studying abroad agency has mentioned differences between the Finnish Universities and Finnish Universities of Applied Sciences and go-studying-abroad agency was very honest to say that most of the Chinese students are suggested to apply to Finnish Universities of Applied Sciences to increase the probability of successful applications. The rest of go-studying-abroad agencies did not mention any existing differences, which might give potential applicants a false impression.

6.3.3. Different attitudes towards KyUAS as a recommended university

Different go-studying-abroad agencies show different attitudes when answering the question if Kymenlaakso University of Applied Sciences is recommended to potential applicants. However, based on the information collected by emails, phone calls and websites Chinese go-studying-abroad agencies' attitudes could be summarized into 4 categories. They are as follows:

1) Kymenlaakso University of Applied Sciences is recommended

During the market research, we could see that many go-studying-abroad agencies willingly to recommend KyUAS to their students, usually the list of the recommended Finnish Universities and Finnish University of Applied Sciences is put on their company websites for applicants to check and choose, and there KyUAS is one of them. Figure 16 is an example from Beijing Fengheyixiang Education Consulting Ltd ([北京丰禾意象教育咨询有限公司](#)). Kymenlaakso University of Applied Sciences is listed on the first one. Besides, brief introductions about the country, universities, majors and even immigration policies are also placed on the website to provide more detailed information.

· 北欧美术动漫专业高中生直通车 · 北欧美术动漫专业高中生直通车 · 北欧美术动漫专业高中生直通车 · 2011北欧留学

首页 → 北欧留学 → 院校推荐 → 芬兰院校推荐

· 芬兰城门理工大学	08/06/2010 12:06:44
· 于韦斯屈莱大学	08/06/2010 12:05:56
· 赫尔辛基商学院	08/06/2010 12:04:52
· 西贝柳斯学院	08/06/2010 12:03:59
· 坦佩雷理工学院	08/06/2010 12:03:09
· 赫尔辛基理工大学	08/06/2010 12:02:21
· 赫尔辛基大学	08/06/2010 12:01:13
· 芬兰城门理工大学	08/06/2010 12:00:21
· 土尔库大学	08/06/2010 11:57:08
· 瓦萨大学	08/06/2010 11:56:15
· 海门理工大学	08/06/2010 11:54:54
· 奥卢大学	08/06/2010 11:42:23
· 中博滕理工学院	08/06/2010 11:41:33
· 约恩苏大学	08/06/2010 11:34:11
· 库奥皮奥大学	08/06/2010 11:31:44
· 土尔库财经学院	08/06/2010 11:30:10
· 赫尔辛基艺术与设计大学	08/06/2010 11:25:01
· 经济与工商管理学院	08/06/2010 10:58:33
· 坦佩雷理工大学	08/06/2010 10:56:26
· 于韦斯屈来理工大学	08/06/2010 10:55:30
· 土尔库理工学院	08/06/2010 10:52:49
· 坦佩雷大学	08/06/2010 10:38:54

1/1 1 1

Figure 16 An example of recommended Finnish universities

2) Kymenlaakso University of Applied Sciences is not recommended

There are some Chinese go-studying-abroad agencies that showed negative attitude towards KyUAS and clearly stated in the phone calls that they would not recommend KyUAS to their applicants. Instead, they more willingly suggest universities and the ones, such as Haaga-Helia University of Applied Sciences, Lahti University of Applied Sciences, Helsinki Metropolia University of Applied Sciences and Arcada University of Applied Sciences.

Furthermore, according to the phone call interview with one go-studying-abroad agency, their employee said that “these recommended universities provide better financial support to the foreign students when they are doing their basic and specialization training, which is also one of the advantages compared with other small or not recommended Finnish Universities of Applied Sciences.”

The other reason is that Helsinki is more international, students have more opportunities to find a job and also learn to get along with people from all over the world. Therefore, they would prefer to send their students to a big, multinational city like Helsinki rather than small cities.

3) All the Finnish Universities of Applied Sciences are equal

The percentage of those go-studying-abroad agencies did not make clear lists of recommended Finnish universities is quite high. The main reason for that was “all the Finnish universities of Applied Sciences are equal since all the teaching facilities, teaching materials, standard of teaching are quite similar. Besides, Finnish system of education is really flexible, which means that students are not bound with one school. Instead, they could transfer their credits to study in a different educational institution or choose to go on exchange to a foreign country and study in a different environment.”

Therefore, It does not make much difference for go-studying-abroad agencies about which University of Applied Sciences to suggest.

4) “The Netherlands is a better option for studying abroad”

During the research, more than one Chinese go-studying-abroad agency tried to convince us that the Netherlands is a better option for studying abroad compared with studying in Finland. They compared the Netherlands and Finland from 4 different perspectives: tuition fees, living expenses, universities popularity and level of development.

As one of the interviewees mentioned Even though at the moment there are no tuition fees in Finland, the living expenses is much more higher than in the Netherlands. If you choose to study in the Netherlands, the tuition fee is approximately 2000 Euros per year and living expenses range from 4000 Euros to 5000 Euros. Therefore. The costs of studying in the Netherlands are almost the same as the expenses in Finland, sometimes, it is even cheaper than choosing to study in Finland.

The respondent added that *The universities in the Netherlands have good reputation all over the world thanks to professional teaching and most of the universities are ranked among universities. Last but not least is that the Netherlands has a good location in the Western Europe with a great access to the countries like Germany, France, Belgium and the United Kingdom. Compared with Finland, the Netherlands is more international and more open and students could have the chance to meet people from all around the world.*

6.3.4. Difference in service fees

The question about the amount of service fees charged for applying to Finnish universities was asked during the market research. The answers differed from each other. Nearly half of the interviewed go-studying-abroad agencies said they usually charge 15000 RMB to 18000 RMB per applicant, which is equal to 1500 Euros to 1800 Euros per person. However, some go-studying-abroad agencies asked for much higher service fees, from 30000 RMB to 35000 RMB (3000 Euros to 3500 Euros) per applicant ,which is double price or even more. Therefore, we could draw a conclusion that the service fees charged by go-studying-abroad agencies differ a lot.

7. PROPOSALS FOR THE MOST SUITABLE COOPERATION DEVELOPMENT

The proposals for the most suitable cooperation development includes four main topics, which are the follows:

- a) The selection of go-studying-abroad agencies for potential cooperation.
- b) The tasks and responsibilities of each party.
- c) The time of promoting KyUAS in the Chinese market
- d) The location of KyUAS entrance examination.

7.1. The selection of go-studying-abroad agencies for potential cooperation

We suggest that Kymenlaasko University of Applied Sciences could select the go-studying-abroad agencies from the Medium Developed Regions and Developing Regions as potential cooperation partners. According to the survey more than 95% of the total Chinese degree students in KyUAS are coming from the Medium Developed Regions and Developing Regions, which means KyUAS attracts the students from these regions. The target group are students from middle income families, since no tuition fees is the main attraction for them. In addition, the number of the go-studying-abroad agencies covering Finland as their target country in these less developed regions is limited, therefore, establishing cooperation relationship with one agency in these regions allows KyUAS to reach many potential students and acquire a good market share.

7.2. Responsibilities of KyUAS in the cooperation

- 1) Provide the Chinese go-studying-abroad agencies in cooperation with the latest information

Kymenlaasko University of Applied Sciences should inform the cooperating Chinese go-studying-abroad agencies about the latest data regarding new international programs, majors and admission requirements and the places to find these information. For instance, all the educational information about Finland can be found in a website of <www.admissions.fi>. In this way, KyUAS could communicate with the cooperating go-studying-abroad agencies on a regular basis and go-studying-abroad agencies could also acquire more accurate and detailed information, which could help the cooperation to go smoothly and successfully.

- 2) Give public presentations

A representative of Kymenlaakso University of Applied Sciences should take the responsibility of participating in educational seminars organized by the cooperating Chinese go-studying-abroad agencies and giving public

presentations about Finland, studying options and studying in KyUAS and living in Finland.

3) Help with the students' visa applications

Nordic countries are known as sign back countries, which means that the Finnish Embassy in China is not eligible for approving the students' visas, instead visa application documents need to be sent back to the Finnish immigration office in its home country for approval. After that Finnish immigration office would give the results back to the Finnish Embassy in China. So it would make a big difference if Kymenlaakso University of Applied Sciences could give some assistance in case of problems or questions. This could increase visa application success cases. It is a win-win situation for both the cooperating go-studying-abroad agencies as well as KyUAS.

4) Offer services to help students adjust to studying and living in Kouvola

Kymenlaakso University of Applied Sciences could also take a good care of the students when they arrive and help them to adjust to studies and living in Kouvola. For instance, KyUAS could help them to apply for accommodation, open bank accounts and get a society security number from the police office. In this way, it brings benefits to the Chinese go-studying-abroad agencies, KyUAS as well as students. The main thing is that KyUAS takes care of these matters already, but it is unknown to most of Chinese go-studying-abroad agencies, therefore, there should be a better communication between the agencies to let them know for the agencies to inform Chinese students.

7.3. Responsibilities of the Chinese agencies in the cooperation

1) Promote the image of Kymenlaakso University of Applied Sciences

The first responsibility of the cooperating go-studying-abroad agency is to promote the image of Kymenlaakso University of Applied Sciences. There are different promotion tools that could be utilized by the go-studying-abroad

agencies. Local newspapers, internet and presentations in middle schools and local universities are the most typical promotion tools used by them nowadays. For example, the go-studying-abroad agencies could put the advertisements in the local newspapers to promote the image and popularity of KyUAS by stating the studying options, programs and benefits that Chinese students could get from those. Or the go-studying-abroad agencies could put large space of the university and major introduction on company websites. Moreover, giving presentations in the local universities and high schools could also increase the students' awareness of KyUAS. However, the usage of promotion tools by the go-studying-abroad agencies is not limited or specified in the contract, allowing them to have more flexibility.

2) Arrange the time and place for public presentations

The second most important responsibility of the cooperating go-studying-abroad agencies is to arrange the time and place for public presentations, including the following small duties: making hotel reservations for the representatives of KyUAS, booking rooms for presentation and putting the advertisement in the local newspapers and website to inform the applicants and their parents about the presentation time in advance and also providing the technical equipment, a computer and a projector.

3) Attract more applicants for KyUAS

The third responsibility of the cooperating go-studying-abroad agencies is to assist the Kymenlaakso University of Applied Sciences in attracting more applicants by providing the consulting services and recommending the students who meet the KyUAS admission criteria to apply to KyUAS. Therefore, KyUAS could get more applicants and have more possibilities of choosing the best ones.

7.4. The time of promoting KyUAS in the Chinese market

Based on the results of the survey concerning Chinese KyUAS degree students the majority of students belong to the age group of 20-25 and they are usually high school graduates or university students. We suggest that the best time to promote KyUAS is summer, around June to August. Since this is the time that all high school students have finished their University and College Entrance Examinations and the ones who did not do well start to think about going to foreign countries for further education. In addition, many university students also begin to think about going to foreign countries to get better education during this time. Therefore, it is very necessary for KyUAS to use this time to advertise, promote, and give public presentations to increase students' awareness of KyUAS.

7.5. The locations of KyUAS entrance examination

In respect of the locations of KyUAS entrance examinations, we suggest the exams to be held in the big cities like Beijing or Shanghai, where students could travel from their hometown easily. Besides, it is also much easier to organize and arrange the entrance examination rooms and accommodation both for the students as well as the representatives of KyUAS.

8. CONCLUSIONS

The main objective of the thesis was to put forward a development proposal for the Kymenlaakso University of Applied Sciences in order to establish cooperation with Chinese go-studying-abroad agencies for the purpose of increasing the competitiveness of KyUAS in the Chinese market and attracting more Chinese students for the International Business and Design Programmes. A Chinese go-studying-abroad agency is a unique educational service institution, which provides information consulting services, university application services, visa application services and extensive services like accommodation arrangements and flight tickets booking. The role of go-studying-abroad agency

is very important, since nearly 80% of students have gone abroad by using the go-studying abroad agency.

In order to reach the research objective, we have designed 10 sub questions and all these research questions have been answered in the thesis. The go-studying-abroad agencies business roles in China were explained as well as the cooperation between a Finnish University of Applied Sciences and a Chinese go-studying abroad agency were analyzed, the benefits of the cooperation and factors needed when selecting new cooperation partners were specified.

Based on the research questions, we have done a theoretical research on the macro-environmental analysis of Chinese overseas students. The main findings are that the main group of the overseas studying students are university students and the target studying countries are those whose native languages are English. The United States receives the largest percentage of students. Education quality and major ranking are the main factors that influence applicants' decisions on the choices of university they apply to. The main ways of getting information about studying in a foreign country are through the internet and newspapers.

A quantitative research was carried out revealing the number of the Chinese students who are studying in KyUAS at the moment. Most of Chinese students are 20-25 years old and most of them are high school graduates or the university students coming from Medium Developed Regions in China. The main reason that attracted them to study in KyUAS is no tuition fee. The majority of the students have admitted that the services provided by go-studying-abroad agencies were useful and go-studying-abroad agencies' suggestions have influenced their decisions. Around 60% of the Chinese students have used go-studying-abroad agencies to come to study in KyUAS. The majority of students think that the most suitable way to promote KyUAS in the Chinese market is through participating in educational seminars and cooperation with go-studying-abroad agencies.

Three qualitative interviews were carried out including Lahti University of Applied Sciences and two different go-studying abroad agencies. The main

marketing promotion tools used by the go-studying-abroad agencies in order to increase their images were newspaper advertisements, internet advertisements and educational seminars. Besides, foreign universities could benefit a lot from the cooperation, for example, go-studying-abroad agencies could help with university image promotion, participating in educational fairs and seminars and in attracting potential applicants. Meanwhile, Chinese go-studying-abroad agencies could also benefit from the cooperation, for instance, foreign universities could help the agencies to build their image and reputation by giving public presentations.

In addition, an individual market research revealing the big picture of the Chinese go-studying-abroad agencies in four different provinces was carried out. There are only 26 out of 119 go-studying abroad agencies that actually cover Finland as their target country and provide Finnish universities application services. The main communication tools used by the go-studying-abroad agencies and their customers are phones calls or visiting the offices. Besides, different agencies have different attitudes towards KyUAS when asking if they recommend students to go to study in KyUAS. Also the service fees charged by the go-studying-abroad agencies differed a lot depending on the agency and location.

Finally, development proposals are presented including detailed suggestions on how to put the cooperation into practice. KyUAS should select the go-studying-abroad agencies mainly from Medium Developed Regions in China. During the cooperation, KyUAS should inform the go-studying-abroad agencies of the latest information and communicate with them on a regular basis and give public presentations in China. At the same time, Chinese go-studying-abroad agencies should promote the image of KyUAS, arrange the time and place for the public presentations and attract more applicant for KyUAS. The best time to promote KyUAS in China is from June to August and the best places for holding entrance examinations are in the big cities like Beijing and Shanghai.

9. SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER STUDIES

The suggestions are written for the person who wants to research this subject further or provide more detailed cooperation proposals. We suggest the person could conduct a market research in a larger number of provinces in China in order to have a better understanding of go-studying-abroad agencies in different cities for the purpose of putting forward a list of suitable go-studying-abroad agencies. In this way, Kymenlaakso University of Applied Sciences could evaluate and select the best ones from these go-studying-abroad agencies lists as potential partners for cooperation.

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Interview questions for the contact person of Lahti University of Applied Sciences

1. When and how Lahti University of Applied Sciences started cooperation with the go-studying-abroad agency named Sichuan Huaxiang International Service Co. Ltd?
2. What is the cooperation with the Sichuan Huaxiang International Service Co. Ltd like in practice?
3. What benefits Lahti University of Applied Sciences gets from the cooperation with Huaxiang go-studying-abroad agency?
4. What business assistances Lahti University of Applied Sciences would offer to Huaxiang go-studying-abroad agency?
5. What benefits Huaxiang go-studying-abroad agency gets from the cooperation with Lahti University of Applied Sciences?
6. Were there any challenges during the cooperation? If yes, what were they and how the problems were solved?
7. What are the future perspectives of the cooperation with Huaxiang go-studying-abroad agency?
8. Does Lahti University of Applied Sciences have plans for establishing cooperation with more go-studying-abroad agencies in China?
9. What factors Lahti University of Applied Sciences takes into consideration when establishing cooperation with a new go-studying-abroad agency?
10. What are the main concerns when building cooperation relationship with a new go-studying-abroad agency?

Interview questions for the go-studying-abroad agencies

1. What is your go-studying-abroad agency's business in general?
2. What are the main services provided to the customers?
Are there any new services coming? If yes, what kind of services?
3. Why the company is mainly focusing on the Northern European countries?
What make it different from the other competitors?
4. What are the marketing tools used by the company to promote company image in order to attract more potential customers?
5. Has the company established any cooperation with Finnish universities? If yes, what is the cooperation like in practice?
6. What benefits Finnish universities gets from the cooperation with your go-studying-abroad agency?
7. How does the go-studying-abroad agency promote the image of the Finnish universities in order to raise its awareness?
8. What assistance your go-studying-abroad agency can offer to a Finnish university?
9. What benefits your go-studying-abroad agency gets from the cooperation with Finnish university?
10. Are there any problems occurring during the cooperation? If yes, what are they and how are they solved?
11. What are the future perspectives of the cooperation with Finnish universities?
12. Does the company plan to establish cooperation with more Finnish Universities?

13. What factors the company takes into consideration when establishing cooperation with a new Finnish university?

14. How does the company evaluate customer satisfaction?

Interview questions for the Chinese KyUAS degree students

1. When did you plan to come to study in Finland?
 - 1) During high school
 - 2) When graduated from High school
 - 3) During university
 - 4) When graduated from University
 - 5) While working

2. What factors influenced your decision to study in Finland? (You can choose more than one answer)
 - 1) Personal preference.
 - 2) Friends recommendation
 - 3) Family members in Finland
 - 4) No tuition fees in Finland
 - 5) Hope to enhance future employment opportunities
 - 6) Advanced higher education system in Finland
 - 7) Wish to escape from domestic pressure of National Higher Education Entrance Examination
 - 8) Other, what_____?

3. What method you used to come to study in Finland?
 - 1) Applied to the University by yourself. (Go to Question 9)
 - 2) Through a go-studying abroad agency. (Go to Question 4)
 - 3) Through the Universities' cooperation programs.(Go to Question 9)

4. Why did you choose to use a go-studying abroad agency? (You can choose more than one answer)
 - 1) It was my parents idea.
 - 2) To increase success possibility.
 - 3) For professional and adequate information provided by the agency

- 4) Access to unique and suitable application materials prepared by the agency
- 5) Efficient application process arranged by the agency
- 6) Entrance exam training provided by the agency
- 7) Application processes are too complicated to do by myself.
- 8) Extensive services provided by the agency
- 9) Other, what _____?

5. What kind of services you bought from the go-studying abroad agency? (You can choose more than one answer)

- 1) Information consulting services
- 2) English language training
- 3) University application materials preparation
- 4) University entrance examination training
- 5) Visa application services
- 6) Extension services. E.g. picking up from airport/ accommodation application
- 7) Other, what _____?

6. How much did you pay for the services provided by the go-studying abroad agency?

7. Which alternative from 1 to 7 describes your opinion concerning the following statement?

What do you think about the fees you paid compared with the services you got?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
	Very Cheap						Very expensive

8. Which alternative from 1 to 5 describes best your opinion concerning the following statements?

Totally	Totally				
	disagree			agree	
	1	2	3	4	5
8.1. Go-studying-abroad agency offered enough information before I made the decision?					
8.2. Go-studying-abroad agency has influenced my decisions?					
8.3. The services provided by the go-studying-abroad agency were useful?					
8.4. I am ready to recommend the go-studying abroad agency to my friends?					

9. What is your opinion on cooperation between KyUAS and Chinese go-studying-abroad agencies?

10. What are your suggestions for the cooperation between KyUAS and Chinese go-studying-abroad agencies?

11. In your opinion, which would be the most suitable way to promote KyUAS in the Chinese market?

- 1) Newspapers
- 2) Through Internet
- 3) Educational seminar
- 4) Go-studying-abroad agencies.
- 5) Others, what _____?

12. If you did not use go-studying abroad agency, why? (You can choose more than one answer)

- 1) High services fees
- 2) Not enough information provided.
- 3) Unprofessional services provided.
- 4) I believed I could do it myself.
- 5) Other, what _____?

Background information

13. Your gender?

- 1) Male
- 2) Female

14. Age _____

15. Which province of China do you come from?

Thank you very much for your answers.

Respondents' ideas and opinions about the cooperation between Kymenlaakso University of Applied Sciences and Chinese go-studying-abroad agencies.

The positive comments list

1. It is good for KyUAS to establish cooperation with Chinese go-studying-abroad agencies, since it would be a win-win situation for both parts.
From the KyUAS' point of view, KyUAS could attract more Chinese students. From the Chinese go-studying-abroad agencies' point of view, cooperation with Finnish universities would make it more professional.
2. I think it is a good idea to introduce KyUAS to a wider public areas to attract more students. Go-studying-abroad agencies could also get benefits from the cooperation. So it is a win-win project.
3. It is a good idea to promote the reputation of KyUAS in the Chinese market and also a good way to increase the Chinese students' awareness of the school. It is a way to allow KyUAS to reach as many potential students as possible
Besides, it provides the middle income level families with an opportunity to send their children to the study abroad.
4. It sounds quite nice, because KyUAS could get more Chinese students, besides, students can come to study in KyUAS with less complicated processes and troubles.
5. The cooperation between KyUAS and Chinese go-studying-abroad agencies could allow the students and the university to get to know each other better.
6. It should be a good chance for the Chinese students who want to study abroad, especially in Finland .
7. The cooperation between KyUAS and a Chinese go-studying-abroad agency

may increase the number of incoming students.

8. The cooperation would make the application process more effective.

The negative comments list

1. There will be very few people asking about KyUAS and i do not think Chinese go-studying-abroad agencies would like to cooperate with KyUAS due to the low popularity of the school.
2. There is no need to cooperate with Chinese go-studying-abroad agencies because of bad reputation of Chinese go-studying-abroad agencies. That would lower KyUAS' image and reputation if cooperation relationship is built.
3. I do not think it is needed to establish cooperation with Chinese go-studying-abroad agencies. From my own experience, applying to a Finnish university is not that complicated after.
4. I do not like Chinese go-studying-abroad agencies. I did not know I could apply to a university by myself before I came to Finland. Go-studying abroad-agency always wants more money but does little even after you have paid the service fees.
5. I usually believe that the ones who establish cooperation with go-studying-abroad agencies are those who could not get enough students or the ones with bad university image. The world top universities, such as Cambridge University or Harvard University, never promote their universities through the cooperation with go-studying-abroad agencies.

Respondents' suggestions for the cooperation between Kymenlaakso University of Applied Sciences and Chinese go-studying-abroad agencies.

The suggestions list

1. KyUAS could offer some support to Chinese go-studying-abroad agencies, such as , the universty contact person could give presentations about the university or courses for the go-studying-abroad agency to build a reliable and good relationship.
2. Giving more information about KyUAS, studying life in Kouvola, languages studies.
3. Do not cooperate with big go-studying-abroad agencies at the begining. KyUAS could start with some small go-studying-abroad agencies, which mainly focus on Scandinavian countries. Since they would be more familiar with the universities and application processes and also take the cooperation with KyUAS more seriously.
4. Have a good selection of the go-studying-abroad agencies, KyUAS could establish cooperation with the ones who are mainly focusing on the Northern European countries. Then they would value the cooperation more and give bigger space on their websites to introduce and promote KyUAS.
5. Have a good selection of the go-studying-abroad agencies to cooperate with in the future. The go-studying-abroad agencies must be responsible, have a good image, ethically behaving and value the cooperation relationship with KyUAS.
Monitoring and making the cooperation process more visible and clear.
Inspections of the cooperation with the go-studying-abroad agencies is needed from time to time.
6. Do not depend on the go-studying-abroad agencies too much, there must be a main contact person in the agency from KyUAS to inspect the application

processes from time to time to make sure everything goes well.

7. Collecting feedback from the students who come to Finland through the cooperated go-studying-abroad agencies about the good and bad things, then put forward suggestions for improving the cooperation or find new go-studying-abroad agency partners.
8. Clear details about the amount of the service fees charged from the students to make sure no overcharges or unclear fees take place during the cooperation.