

University of Economics, Prague
International Business



**Marketing campaign for students from
Azerbaijan to study in Czech Republic**

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Declaration:

I hereby declare that I am the sole author of the thesis entitled “Marketing campaign for students from Azerbaijan to study in Czech Republic “. I duly marked out all quotations. The used literature and sources are stated in the attached list of references.

In Prague on

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Viktoriya Lebedeva

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Introduction

Nowadays almost each field or factor in the world is somehow interconnected with each other. And being left out of the system is no longer an indicator of power or independence, but more likely it is putting perceptible boundaries on yourself and limiting the space for development.

The field of education is not an exception, it is also a part of the scheme which is so called “globalization”. In general, the goal of this motion is to have an opportunity to exchange the knowledge and experience throughout the world. The process of internationalization of education system has started quite a significant time ago and has been in a constant development since then. The universities started to open for students from other countries, what resulted in benefiting to various fields such as economic situation in the host country, expansion of opportunities for foreign students, and many others.

This thesis is mainly focused on attracting more students from Azerbaijan to the Czech Republic. The reader may ask himself / herself a question: Why? What is the purpose of this project?

There are many factors playing crucial role in identifying the response and which need to be taken into consideration, therefore it is not possible to point out a straightforward answer at this moment. In the beginning of this paper will be provided an information regarding the globalization in education, its influence on other significant sectors and what valuable input it can bring to the society. Both benefits and risks of this process will be mentioned. Hereafter, the history of internationalization of universities will be shortly described, as well as how the mobility of students was developed, what kind of programs have been established in order to support the system, current trends, and so on.

The next part of this research will be covered by exploring various theories and identifying different tools which will be used onwards in analyzing the data in the practical part. It includes such concepts as “student recruitment strategy”, “student as a customer”. Furthermore, this section will examine the stages of decision-making process for student and distinguish what kind of push / pull factors are existent on the global level.

After briefly describing the structure of education system in the Czech Republic, there will be a start of the practical part which consists of analyzing a survey conducted on this matter. As a

basis for the survey pattern and further analysis, has been used the information obtained from the theories provided in the first part of this paper.

The main goal of this research is to identify the space for improvement for easing the process of students from Azerbaijan coming to study to the Czech Republic, diminishing the potential barriers, and using all data gathered while ascertaining the marketing methods of targeting the potential future incoming students.

1. Impact of globalization in education

What is the simple meaning of globalization? Essentially it is the way how people, organizations, governments interact and integrate worldwide by spreading goods and ideas. This process is happening in various fields, such as economic, political, social, and others. The first idea of globalization came to prominence in the 1980s and the term was coined by Harvard economist Theodor Levitt (Feder, 2006).

It is hard to present a clear and unified definition of the term “globalization of education” which is recognized throughout the world claiming this process appeared relatively recently. Another reason for it being not firmly defined is that the system of high and postgraduate education refers to humanistic systems and its functioning is dependent mostly on the behavior and attitude of people.

However, in this case we are talking about the steps of process of forming a worldwide unified educational system. The main goal lays in erasing the differences between these systems. Also, internationally oriented programs help to develop cross-cultural understanding and worldview self-reflection (Budden, Baraya, Juban, 2005). The field of education is an active participant in the process of standardization, universal integration and convergence between different countries of the world. With the help of multilingualism and mobility of the world’s population in terms of information, the natural process of convergence of national educational systems occurs. “More universities are making commitments to expand their global exposures, so students can participate in a global society” (Ray & Ryder, 1995).

Education is considered as one of the main indicators of a development in all civilized countries of the world. Countries and governments are competing not just based on the quantity of goods or the quality of services – they rival with public value systems and the education system.

As the Philippine teacher E.A.Aberin mentions, globalization promises a “new synthesis” of national and world values of education. It also applies on upbringing, the ways and basic principles of which are constantly modifying. As a result, it will lead to the enlargement of the ability of person to master new and diverse spiritual riches. By analyzing this transformation, the American scientist R.Henvey spoke about the escalation in the upbringing process from the

“worldview perspective” in the form of a wide and open view on a diverse society, respect for any “images of the world” (Dzurinsky, A.N., 2017).

In terms of globalization in education, there are significant changes occurring in the group and individual consciousness of people. It brings the tough competition of civilization models which helps to increase the pace of development of world pedagogy and culture. However, the rivalry starts appearing in other more economically-oriented areas.

Europe, as well as the entire world community, is trying to overcome the effects of the global economic and financial crisis which brought also negative social consequences. This situation led to the point where the strategic management of education system, especially of universities, is required. In the first place, these strategies started to form the universities which have well-known brands, later on the process was widely spread to all higher education institutions.

What can be considered as a support for educational system on the organizational level?

International organizations such as the International Union of Transnational Education, the International Association of Educational Assessments, UNESCO, the International Association of Universities, the International Network of Quality Assurance Organizations in Higher Education, and others, take a real part in the development and formulation of national policies in various areas of education of participating States. (UNESCO, 2018).

UNESCO should be pointed out from the above mentioned list, as it is considered to be the main organization which has the most significant influence on education. The institution is leading in the sphere of comparative pedagogical research, the subject of which is: the content of education, the principles and methods of teaching, pedagogical innovations and so on. The major orientation of UNESCO is aimed at:

- Creating conditions for expanding the cooperation of people in the field of education, science, and culture.
- Trying to involve more countries in preparing the legal framework for international integration in education.
- Predicting possible effective ways of integration and development.
- Collection and systematization of state reports on the state of education for each year.
- Promotion of approved and adopted conventions and recommendations.

Mass start of globalization of education was firstly noticeable with the Bologna process. It is a procedure of bringing together and harmonizing the educational systems of European countries in order to create a single European higher education area. The official date of the starting point in Bologna process is known as 19th June 1999. It is the time when the ministers from 29 European governments adopted the declaration “European Higher Education Area” (History, *Ehea*). It is also simply known as Bologna Declaration named after the city where the conference happened. The Bologna Process is not a closed project but is also opened for other countries. The Czech Republic was one of the founding joiners in 1999, from the other side Azerbaijan became a member in 2005. Currently there are 48 participating countries (“Members”, 2016). The Bologna Declaration includes seven key factors, which should be briefly listed in this term paper as they represent the basement for current worldwide education system and define the importance of cooperation and globalization in this sphere in general (The Bologna Process revisited, 2015).

- The system of comparable degrees should be accepted as its goal lays in the provision of employment opportunities for European citizens by the introduction of a diploma supplement. Consequently, this leads to an improvement of the international competitiveness of the European system of higher education.
- Education system is divided in two cycles: undergraduate - lasts minimum about three years, and graduate - consists of master’s or doctor’s degree.
- Credit system came into force. This scheme supports the mobility of students by re-calculating credits of labor-intensiveness. As a basis is adopted the system called ECTS (European Credit Transfer System) which created an accumulative method capable of working within the framework of the concept of “lifelong learning”.
- The emphasis is put on developing the student mobility, the mobility of academics and other administrative staff. The standards for transnational education are set.
- Development of comparable criteria and methodologies by promoting European cooperation in quality assurance.
- Implementation of intra-university education quality control systems. Students and employers are involved in an external evaluation of universities.
- The necessary European views in higher education are being promoted.

1.1. Benefits and risks of internationalization of higher education

In every situation there may be existing both beneficial and risky sides, and the process of “globalization in education” is not an exception.

Globalization provides great opportunities of having common base of knowledge, technologies, values, norms of behavior, and also of developing each person’s potential on different levels, including individuals, organizations, social groups and the community overall – in different countries and different cultures. Study abroad is considered as a critical component in higher education as it helps promoting intellectual, cultural, and personal growth (Boronico, Christie & Boronico, Jess, 2010). Other benefits could be indicated as an increase of effectiveness in the satisfaction of local needs and economic growth, creation of favorable terms for international understanding, development of multi-channel contacts and interaction, as well as encouraging contributions from different cultures in the development of relations between countries.

Cooperating and accepting cultural differences helps to develop critical thinking to move past cultural biases (White, D.S. & Griffith, D., 1998).

Many countries feel like the globalization is inevitable, therefore many initiatives were manifested. Significant efforts have been made in order to adapt to this process and be able to apply the opportunities laid down in it on the development of society and individuals.

One of the main positive moments in internationalization of higher education is that the number of possibilities and future opportunities for any regular student are increasing. Study programs are “complementary means to offer a rounded education, by allowing participating business students to gain international exposure” (Ortiz, 2004, p.264). More representative offices, branches, respective universities are being established in different parts of the world. Constantly improving information technologies are also contributing to this process by providing the possibility of receiving online any necessary information, having the chance to participate remotely in conferences, webinars, having access to world libraries, scientific articles. The possibility of receiving the education distantly, while being present in any part of the world, came into the real life. Students can attend a full course and individual disciplines (modules) without having the necessity to change their location. Universities are more likely to implement new pedagogic methods by modernizing business curriculums and strengthening international learning for

students which is a new era of instruction of business education. Twenty first century is a dynamic process, and as a matter of fact internationalization of business curriculums is no longer just an option, but a necessary step towards achieving the global vision of their students (Altbach, 2002).

This widens the perspectives of fresh school graduates and provides them with a chance to start a completely new stage in life by moving to a different country, choose from enormous number of various study programs, get to know a new culture, and many other possibilities, substantially to increase their horizons. Generally saying, the mobility of students and teachers is increasing retroactively with the globalization. Furthermore, the positive effects of internationalization include the inflow of financial and material resources in the field of education, for example, an increase in the level of wages for teachers who are attracted to branches of foreign universities. Regarding the education system itself, it is important to mention the exchange of modern training programs, quality assurance systems, and an improvement of the acquisition of foreign language. This system is leading to the creation of a qualified educated labor force which will later on contribute in the world's economy and basic level of life.

What about the risks? Regardless all the positive aspects listed before, lately, part of the world's community is expressing more and more concerns regarding the possibility of the negative side of globalization. Many various public movements were initiated with the aim of confronting the threats caused by this global process by voting against establishing a single model for social reorganization. The slogan of the Mexican Zapatistas "a world in which many worlds fit" is often used to defend diversity (Olesen, T, 2004). It can be more seen in developing countries because of a high pressure from developed countries and growing gap between rich and poor parts of the world. The negative consequences may occur in different forms such as political, economic, and cultural colonization.

Furthermore, the unfavorable impact can be seen in fundamental changes which occur in the direction and the quality of the educational process. The value orientations and motivations for teachers and students are being restructured based on the fact that the market mentality is prevailing and penetrating the education system. The German-American philosopher and sociologist, Herbert Marcuse, mentioned that due to the modification of consumer values into the base of social integration, the effect of closing the cultural space is happening, therefore there is a

loss of the spiritual dimension. All these aspects are leading to the outcome of creating a type of “one-dimensional person” which can be described as a shallow person without any willingness to learn something in order to grow (Rudenko, V.A., 2012).

2. Internationalization of universities

Throughout all history of development of universities, the international cooperation and integration have been the main characteristic features of academic and research activities. The evolution of science was not limited by geographical or national boundaries. The values which serve the interests of true knowledge and critical thinking such as intellectual freedom, teacher and student autonomy were universal for the entire society. The universities have been always composed of people, who are representatives of various cultures and nationalities. However, in recent year, the reciprocity between universities located in different parts of the world has become even more important.

After observing the last two decades, we can conclude that the universities are no longer able to exist separately – “in a vacuum” – they must go international (Altbach, P., Reisberg, L., Rumbley, L., 2009). Only by fulfilling this condition they will have the chance of being competitive and attractive to potential future students. Nevertheless, each university should as well build up their own internationalization strategy. All its specifics should be considered, such as national and regional characteristics, demonstrating its advantages and positive sides in the educational services market. Many types of methods of developing the internationalization strategies are existent. A university usually chooses the one which suits its mission and sets goals which are heavily dependent on the status of the university. Certainly, there are already existent some prestigious universities which created their own high-level status in the world. As an example, can be taken such universities as Oxford or Cambridge. Their strategy consists of maintaining everything possible in order to keep up their achieved position of a “global players” in the market of education. Other type of universities which are less titled tend to occupy high places in international rating lists (Middlehurst, R., 2007, c. 27-33).

Therefore, based on all the information obtained, it can be said that the main task of universities is to find a perfect balance between preserving their own academic traditions and the need for international cooperation which is necessary to strengthen their position in the context of globalization. Only a carefully thought-out development strategy of the university, taking into account all current trends and taking advantage of a particular university, can contribute to its further success in the educational market.

2.1. Mobility of students

The most popular form of internationalization of higher education is the mobility of students, the enhancing number of students who are receiving education abroad, through the provision of scholarships and the implementation of academic exchange programs, as well as programs aimed at creating institutional partnerships in higher education (Altbach, P., Knight, J., 2007).

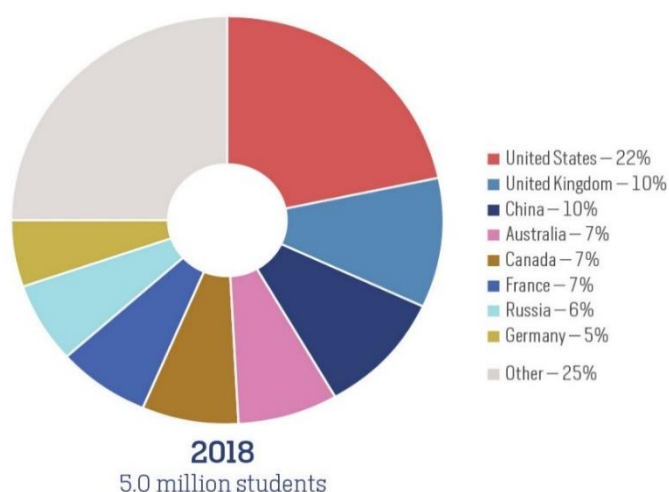
The mobility of students can be motivated by different state and regional programs. The most prominent program for a short-term period is “Erasmus”. It came into force in 1987 as a European Union student exchange program (87/327/EEC, 1987). One of the main parts of this program is that students are not obliged to pay extra tuition fees to the university where they are applying for an exchange, however the duration of the study should be at least 3 months or in case if it is an internship – at least 2 months (European Commission, 2015).

Since English language is dominant nowadays as a common international language, such countries as the United States, the United Kingdom, Canada, Australia are becoming the number one destination for foreign students (Study International Staff, 2018).

Many European countries have inflow of students from their former colonies. As an example, can be provided the fact that major part of young people from the countries of Latin America are eager to receive their diploma in the universities of Canada or USA (Vorobiev, A.E., Roman A.T., 2012).

As can be seen by the following chart the first place of being the most popular destination for foreign students in the year 2018 is taken by the United States (22%), the second and the third positions belong to the United Kingdom and China as both countries have the same percentage (10%) (Institute of International Education, 2019).

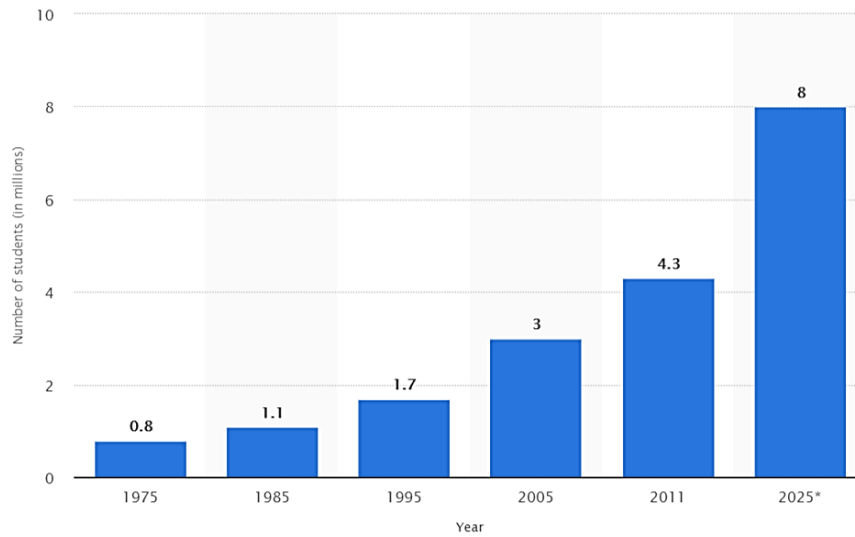
Figure 1. Top host countries for foreign students in 2018



1. Source: Institute of International Education, 2019, *Current Infographics*, [online], available at: <https://www.iie.org/en/Research-and-Insights/Project-Atlas/Explore-Data/Current-Infographics>

Over the past 40 years, the rate of growth of student mobility flows has exceeded the rate of spread of higher education itself. According to UNESCO, the level of international mobility has increased over the past 30 years by 300% (Saginova, O.B.). The current number of students who are going abroad for higher education is about 5 million. The quantity is increasing with each year, therefore the predictions for the future are quite high, and about 8 million students in foreign countries are expected in 2025 (Statista).

Figure 2. Growth of student mobility, 1975 - 2025

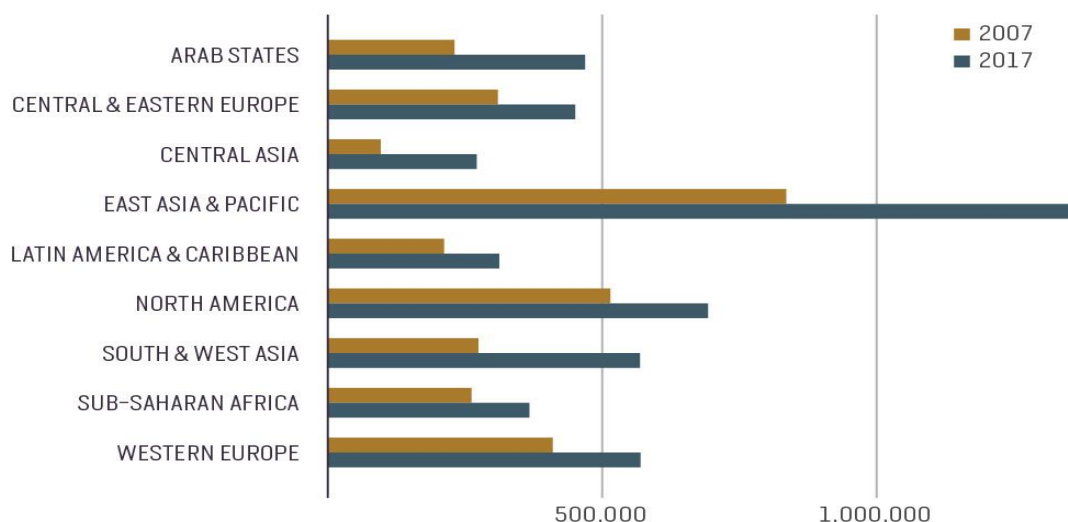


2. Source: Statista, *Number of internationally mobile students in the world from 1975 to 2025*, [online], available at: <https://www.statista.com/statistics/296766/internationally-bile-students-in-the-world/>

Nevertheless, by exploring it from different side, which countries tend to have the highest outbound international mobility? For a better understanding, the below provided table consists of the information gathered from the year 2007 and 2017, therefore it is possible, along with getting an answer to the previous question, to compare the data and identify the trends.

The highest outbound mobility is determined in East Asia & Pacific, and it remains on the top throughout the whole period, furthermore it rose significantly, almost doubled. Then it is followed by North America, Western Europe and South & West Asia which also increased (UNESCO).

Figure 3. Outbound International Mobility by Region, 2007 & 2017



3. Source: UNESCO, [online]

3. Tools for analysis

3.1. Student recruitment strategies

We live in the world in which competition is becoming increasingly ruthless. The number of different educational institutions is constantly growing. It is very important for universities to have special student recruitment strategies to attract and interact with applicants. In an international and dynamically developing academic environment, the effectiveness of these tactics is helpful not just in the terms of success of enrollment and retention of students but also for brand awareness. As the executive director of enrolment services and university registration at the University of Toronto in Canada, Richard Levin, quoted: “Messages must be consistent and clear and authentic” (Whitehead, F., 2012). The modern marketing tools should not just attract the possible candidates but motivate them for further actions. Many experts suppose that the key factor to successful strategy is “thinking like a student”, however as in any marketing strategy there should be present some plan based on main questions such as “what you communicate”, “to whom you are communicating”, and “how”.

The message the educational organizations are usually trying to provide is concerning the advantages of the concrete universities and for what benefits or future possibilities it should be

chosen. The benefits listed can be such as a high quantity of various educational programs, extensive history of the university, rich student life, outstanding achievements of the graduates, and others. After clearly establishing the message it is necessary to edit it based on the target groups selected since each category requires an individual approach whether they are schoolchildren, fresh graduates, exchange students, career counselors, parents, or others. While defining the target groups it is also essential to understand their inner motivation and the channels by which they can be reached.

Based on the research conducted in 2013 by Lukosius V. and Festervand T. the segments which usually have the most chance to participate in studying abroad are (Lukosius, V., Festervand, T., 2013).

1. Upper division /graduate students (older and more mature)
2. General education students (have a requirement to complete a curriculum of basic education)
3. Female students (male tend to be half of the rate participation (Lucas, 2009))
4. Junior/community/college students (this segment offers potential for virtual and study abroad class)
5. Students who are majoring in subject to be taught

The chairman of the admissions office of the Massachusetts University of Technology, Dean Shmil, mentions that in the current world of information progress technologies, the efforts are mostly aimed at establishing a website which presents a clear image of what the university is and the atmosphere of being a student there (Whitehead, F., 2012).

Paid advertising in online media is one of the most straightforward ways that helps to accelerate the process of attracting students nowadays. Based on the information provided in the Pew Research Center report, the social medias where people tend to be more active are the following: Facebook and YouTube are dominant, Instagram is specifically popular for people aged 18-24, and LinkedIn plays a big role as well (about 90% of its users also use Facebook) (Smith, A., Anderson, M., 2018).

For many educational institutions the main aspiration of student recruitment strategies is being the most wanted, having long-term survival which means avoiding getting into crisis. Certainly,

being prosperous is considered as one of the main goals as well. For the ones that are beginners – it is a push for a successful start. Regardless of the loud names, in case if there are none thoroughly constructed strategies, universities can turn the wrong way.

3.2. “Student as customer” concept

Nowadays the “student-as-customer” metaphor is becoming more and more popular as the relations throughout the world are becoming a lot business related. The term revealed itself from the constructive work of Kolter and Levy in 1969 (Laing, C., Gregory, K., 2016). The idea of such a concept evolved from a simple discussion in which was brought up a question: what if the firms may use the customer or consumer-oriented strategy, why it is not applicable in other institutions, especially in the field of higher education (Brigham, S.E, 1993, 42-48). Despite the promises that this tactic makes the education process more straightforward and profitable as it is aimed directly at the needs and requirements of “customers-students”, the negative sides may still exceed. The main problem is that the students are not treated anymore as long-term members of the educational organization, they become alienated by this metaphor and consequently referred as an external part which should be courted and attracted (Douglas, M., 1986).

3.3. Students’ decision-making process

An extremely important role for understanding the essence and nature of decisions is played by the identification of factors which influence the process of their development and adoption. Since decision-making depends both on the personality of the decision maker, his or her psychological characteristics, and on the objective conditions in which he or she is located, all factors by which the process is influenced can be divided in two big groups: personal (subjective), and situational (objective) (Vinkenburgh C.J., Koopman P.L., Jansen P.G.W., 2001).

For many fresh graduates it is very important to have a detailed information about the university they are planning to get in, possible future career prospects, perspectives and opportunities after

graduation. Therefore, the method of decision-making is becoming a complex interactive process (Chapman, 1986; Maringe, 2006).

Models of student behavior occurred in the 1980s. The foundation for them was received from models of general consumer behavior and models of decision-making. In 1982 by Jackson and Hanson & Litten were proposed models consistent of three phases. The main factors by which they were divided are: preferences, exclusion, assessment (Jackson, A.G., 1982). The difference between these two models is that the Hanson & Litten model is furthermore differed between 5 more processes: the willingness to get in university and the actual start of decision-making process; the obtaining of information; final registration and acceptance.

As other examples can be provided the Schiffman & Kanuk model (2007), Kotler & Keller model (2009), and others (Maniu, I., Maniu, G.C., 2014).

Based on many researches, especially on the one conducted by Hossler, student choice tends to fall into one of following categories: economical, sociological, or combined (Hossler, Don & Gallagher, Karen, 1987). The economic model is providing a suggestion that future candidates are making their decision based on the cost-efficiency, nevertheless the status-attainment (sociological) model puts more pressure on individual factors such as influence of people in your surroundings, the level of previous academic performance, stimulation received from close people or relatives. Combined model is basically a mix of components both from the economic and sociological models, it consists of different stages.

3.4. Push and pull factors influencing student decision to study abroad

Receiving education abroad is a significant investment of various components such as time, effort, money. Regardless of these costs, the student is still eager to study abroad. What could be the most important push and pull factors towards obtaining the foreign education?

A lack of access or availability of educational opportunities in less developed countries, the level of economic wealth and technological development, to what extent the home country is involved in the world economy and various other similar factors may push the student to seek for better opportunities and chances overseas (McMahon, M.E., 1992).

With the help of the research conducted by Mazzarol, Kemp and Savery in 1997, six main factors that influence the final student selection of a foreign country have been detected. Knowledge and awareness were pointed as the first one. This factor is driven by the accessibility, reliability, and ease of obtaining the information from different resources. As a second factor comes the degree of personal recommendations which can be received from relatives, friends, acquaintances. Certainly, one of the factors is regarded as a cost coefficient which includes tuition fees, living and travel expenses, social costs, etc. Following two factors are environment and geographic proximity. The eventual determinant is about the connections the person has in the host country (family, friends), namely “social links” (Mazzarol, T., Kemp, S., Savery, L., 1997).

The “social links” which include interpersonal dynamics and relationships alongside with effectiveness of learning approaches also pass alongside with effectiveness of learning approaches for inherent part of student’s well-being and academic achievements in another research (Baker & Siryk, 1999).

In Dickson and Segars analysis the main factor is shown as the requirement of new technology-enabled teaching environment (Dickson, G.W., Segars, A., 1999).

There have been plenty of researches held with the outcome that cost-related factor is playing the leading role in students’ decision making. The following statements can be highlighted: the cost-real or perceived-of study abroad programs are having a great influence on students’ decision to study abroad (Bakalis, S., Joiner, T., 2004), lack of funding can be a strong pull factor of not going (Doyle, S., 2009), cost and location are two key program attributes (Jong, P., Schnusenberg, O., Goel, L., 2010).

The main tool which is going to be used in this research as a basis for survey is Ivy’s 7Ps. This marketization tool includes 7 main factors which should be considered while promoting the main product. In this case it is University.

1. Product – programs of university are structured as a mixture of two strategies: being developed and adjusted towards a given segment group or other way around, the segment towards which an existing program would be appealing should be found.
2. Price – major subject of concern based on the financial situation. Also depends on the opportunities achievable after graduation such as: career progress, salary level.

3. Premium – location-related, important features could be such as: accommodation possibilities, size and modernization of the class, technologically equipped, etc.
4. Promotion – an important factor in any marketing campaign. The goal is to make people aware of the product.
5. People – play a crucial role in application process as well as in a teaching environment. Administrative people are an important asset as they are the first representatives who possible candidates are getting in touch with. The approach and level of erudition of professor are essential as they are key element of the program.
6. Prospectus – informational material used to provide a more detailed insight in the program. Can be presented as brochures, hard copy of the prospectus, direct mail, etc.
7. Prominence – rankings, accreditation, validation and other evaluation bodies are influencing the mind of possible candidates as they represent the level of quality of the selected program/university.

4. Czech Republic's statistics

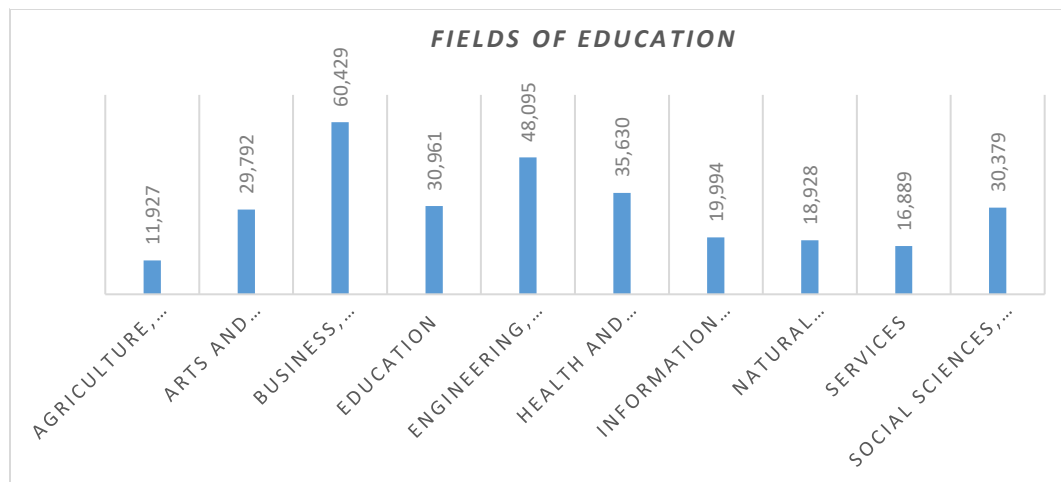
4.1. Inbound mobility of international students

Based on previously mentioned analysis and reports the international mobility of students is increasing with each year and according to the statistical predictions the growth is going to continue. Czech Republic is not an exception in this trend. Currently it is a host country for about over 43,000 international students which is recorded as the highest number of inbound mobility for Czech Republic so far. Since 2014, Czech Republic has been listed on the 12th most popular destination for Erasmus students in Europe (Study in Europe, Czech Republic). One of the main benefits of studying in the Czech Republic may be its geographical location which allows student to gain vibrant cultural experience and discover fascinating history and lower cost of living in comparison with other Western European countries.

4.2. Education system

The number of universities in Czech Republic is 66 and they are divided as followed: public universities – 26, private universities – 38, state universities – 2. In 2017 the total number of students was about 300 thousand and about 15 percent of it was covered by international students (Czech Statistical Office, 2018). Majority of students are attending full-time study programs as the number of them is 3,6 times higher than the total of students who are enrolled in distance and combined studies. Bachelor programs have the highest number of students, then come Master programs and the minority is taking part in Doctoral study programs (Czech Statistical Office, 2018). Most study programs are taught in Czech language, nevertheless students can find many programs taught completely in English, also there is a possibility to study in French, German, and other languages. In terms of fields of education, Czech Republic has a diverse range of programs. The first three places are held respectively by business, administration and law ($\approx 60,4$ thous.); engineering, manufacturing and construction (≈ 48 thous.); health and welfare ($\approx 35,6$ thous.) (Czech Statistical Office, 2018).

Figure 4. Fields of Education in Czech Republic



4. Source: Czech Statistical Office, 2018, *Statistical Yearbook of the Czech Republic – 2018, Education*, [online].

5. Methodology

5.1. Aim of the project

The project will be mainly focused on researching the following questions:

- How Azerbaijani graduates or students choose a study abroad university/program?
- What would be a target segment more likely to choose to study in Czech Republic?
- What are the main push and pull factors influencing their decision making?
- How to make Czech universities more appealing to Azerbaijani students?

5.2. Research methodology

This project is based on the primary research consisting of both types of data: quantitative and qualitative. It includes survey which took place throughout March 2019. The survey questions are formed on Ivy's 7Ps marketing mix (program, price, premium, promotion, people, prospectus, prominence). Online survey was posted in various social networks along with special groups for students from Azerbaijan, and it collected 174 responses. Participants were asked to answer questions about their attitude towards studying abroad and what factors could play a big role in their decision-making process. The survey consists of different type of questions, such as single/multiple choice, open-ended, Likert scale.

The survey conducted is based on a non-probability sampling method as there is no assurance that each population element has a non-zero chance of being chosen and it was not possible to know the probability that each population element will be chosen. Furthermore, the sample is voluntary since it was filled in by people who self-select into the survey of one's own free will.

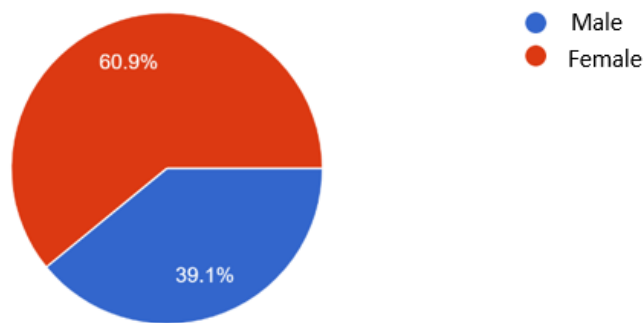
6. Analysis of data

6.1. Sample

The survey has been filled in by 174 respondents of different gender, from various age groups, social classes.

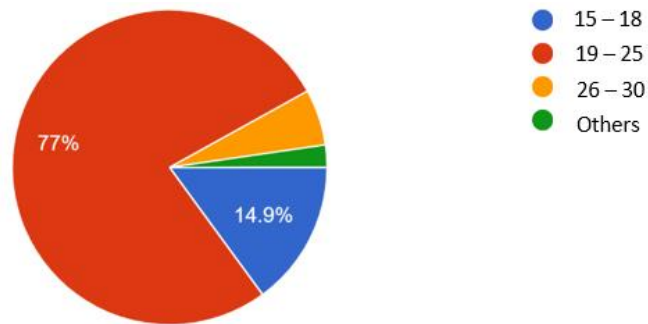
Women covered 60.9 percent of survey by amounting to 106 responses, the percentage of respondent men is 39.1 percent (68 responses).

Figure 5. Gender



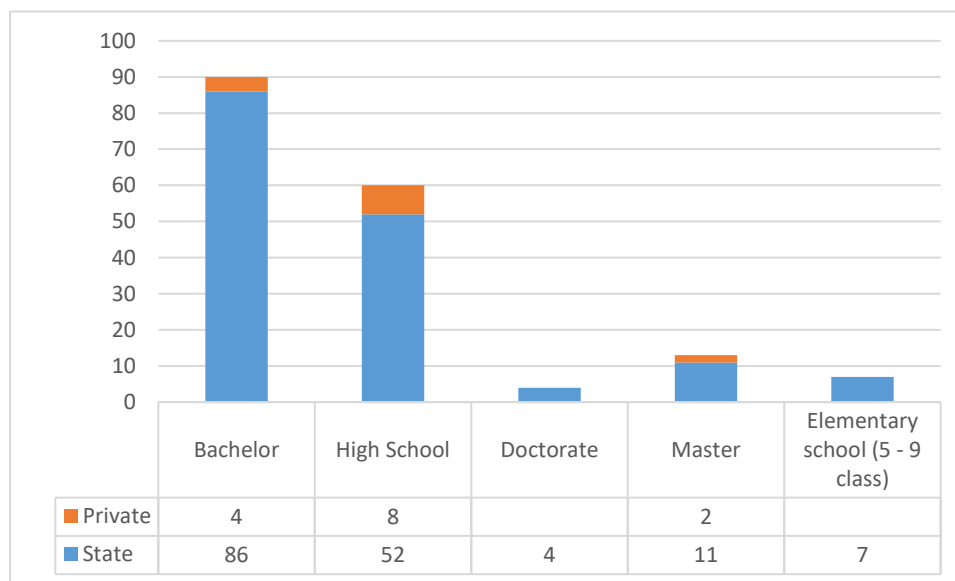
Age groups in the survey were created based on the assumption that majority of possible students or people interested in studying any type of program are fluctuating in the range of 15 – 30 and people falling out of these boundaries are covered by the category called “others”. Significant part of the respondents falls into the age group of 19 – 25 by covering 77 percent (134 responses) of total answerers, 14.9 percent includes people aged 15 – 18 (26 responses), the rest is from the age categories of 26 – 30 and others which are respectively 5.7 percent (10 responses) and 2.3 percent (4 responses).

Figure 6. Age



Most of the respondents (51.7 percent = 90 responses) have bachelor's degree as the highest education degree achieved. On the second place there are people who recently graduated from high school and they account to 34.5 percent (60 responses). The last 13.8 percent include pupils who finished the elementary school (5 – 9 class) and people with master's or doctorate's degree, the numbers are respectively as follows: 4 percent (7 responses), 7.5 percent (13 responses), 2.3 percent (4 responses). Almost all answered people are or were enrolled in a state school (92 percent = 160 responses), there is significantly lower number of students from private schools – 8 percent (14 responses).

Figure 7. Highest finished degree



By combining all information about respondents' characteristics, can be determined what kind of fractions have been attracted. The largest group encompasses women aged in the range of 19 – 25 who graduated from bachelor's degree from state universities (resulted in 51 responses = 29.3 percent). On the second place is the group consisting of men aged 19 – 25, who likewise finished their bachelor at state university (resulted in 27 responses = 15.5 percent). The subsequent profiles comprise both gender (almost at the same level) in the age range of 19 – 25 who finished state high school: women → 18 responses = 10.3 percent, men → 16 responses = 9.2 percent. There are also other minor groups with a share lower than 5 percent.

6.2. Attitude towards studying abroad

In this section will be analyzed the approach of Azerbaijani people to studying abroad, what programs appeared to be most appealing to them, which factors are usually taken into account while choosing country for studies, and if they would consider education specifically in the Czech Republic.

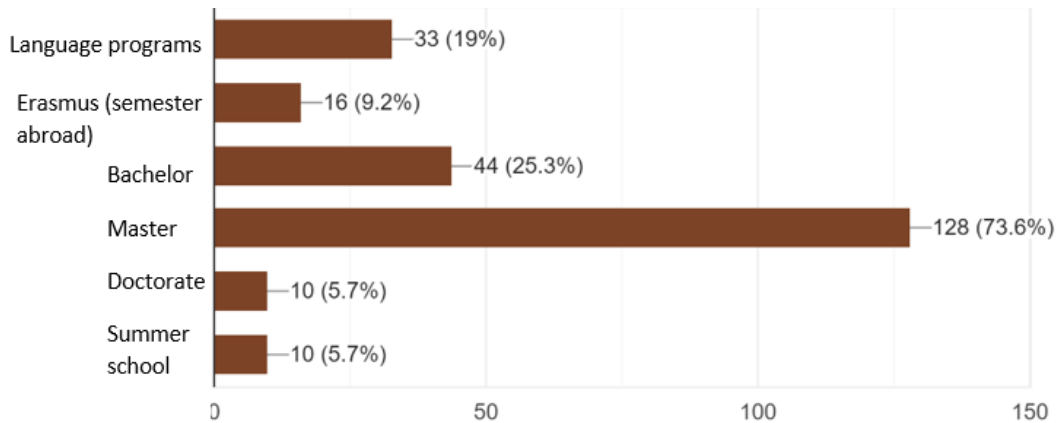
Study abroad – yes or no?

The first question was provided to obtain a general understanding if the person is interested in studying abroad. 75 percent of total respondents (130 responses) indicated their interest in education in foreign countries by choosing the answer “yes”, 24 percent (42 responses) were still dubious, and the few ticked the answer “no” (1 percent = 2 responses).

Programs (multiple-choice)

The most interest from various education programs listed in the survey was gained by master program – 73.6 percent (128 responses). The respondents have also been showing their concernment in such programs as bachelor (25.3 percent = 44 responses), language programs (19 percent = 33 responses). The following programs have been chosen to a smaller extent (less than 10 percent of total responses) – Erasmus/semester abroad (9.2 percent = 16 responses), Doctorate (5.7 percent = 10 responses), summer schools (5.7 percent = 10).

Figure 8. Programs



Factors while choosing country abroad

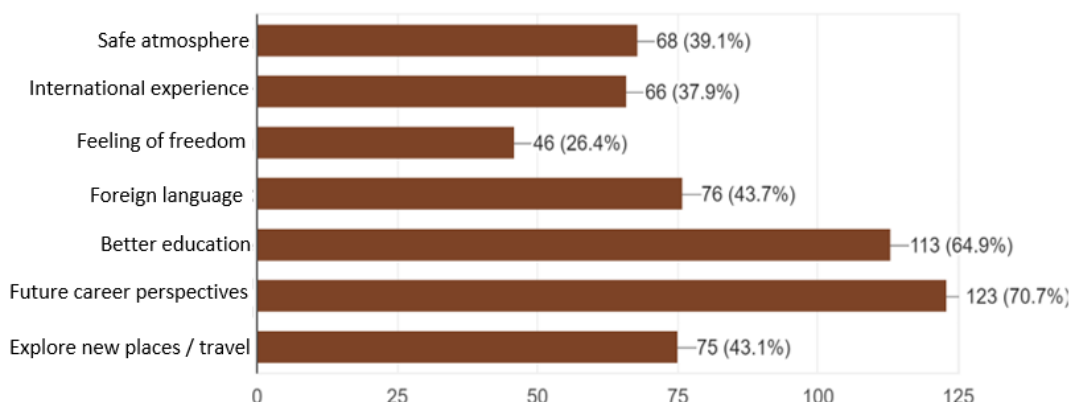
There was provided one query with 4 possible answers, each included a broad variety of determinants which will be analyzed in a different question. The answerers were asked to classify the following factors based on their priorities (1 = the most important, 4 = the least important).

Under the assumption that the distances between each number are equal (e.g. distance between 1 and 2 = distance between 3 and 4), for each factor has been calculated a mean in order to have the possibility of comparing the factors and define their importance.

Based on the calculation done the most important factor appeared to be 'country', which is followed by 'money'. On the third place is indicated 'school' and the last spot is taken by 'accommodation'.

In this part the respondents were asked to determine the factors they are seeking for while choosing a country to study abroad. Of the 174 people who were surveyed, 123 claimed that future career perspectives and better education are most important criteria, 123 (70.7 percent) and 113 (64.9 percent) respectively. About 43 – 44 percent of those surveyed were of the opinion that foreign language and willingness to explore new places / travel are crucial. A smaller number of respondents chose safe atmosphere (39.1 percent = 68 responses), international experience (37.9 percent = 66 responses) and feeling of freedom (26.4 percent = 46 responses).

Figure 9. Factors while choosing country abroad



Czech Republic as a country for education?

The final question of this section was inquiring if the person would have any interest in studying specifically in the Czech Republic and if not, there was a possibility to specify the reasons in the following open-ended question. More than half of respondents (56.9 percent = 99 responses) indicated a positive response, 24.1 percent were unsure and the rest (19 percent = 33 responses) replied negatively. There were no negative answers related to choosing the Czech Republic connected with the unwillingness to study abroad.

In the Figure 10 could be found the main points of the feedback provided according to the desire to study in Czech Republic. It is divided based on the replies received in previous question.

Based on the open-ended question's responses can be summed up that the main factors pushing the answer to 'no' are usually the level of quality of education and unawareness of education system in the Czech Republic in general.

Figure 10. Responses for open-ended question regarding choosing Czech Republic as a country for studying

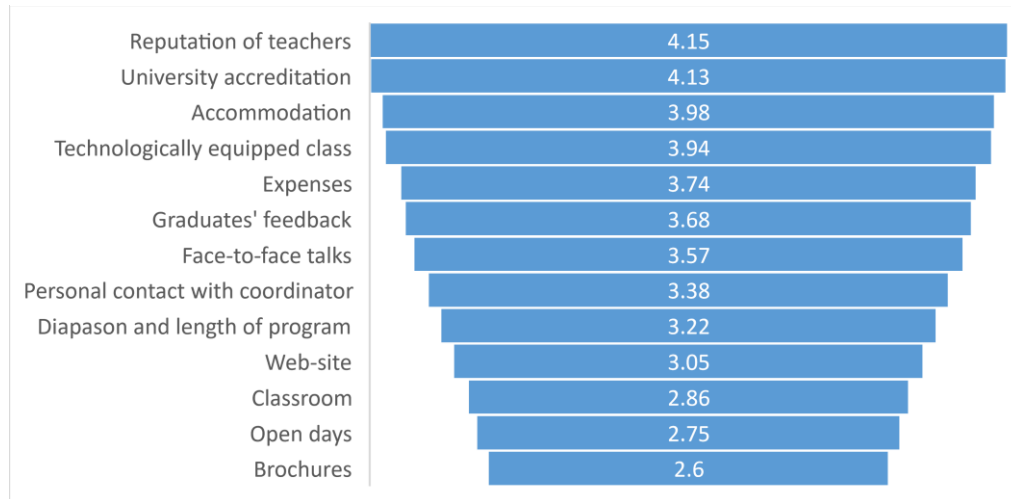
Would like to study in Czech Republic?	Responses
Yes	Not easy to get a residence permit after graduation
Don't know	Not aware of Czech's education system
No	Education is not at the highest level, hostility towards foreigners, inhospitable curator of the program, compulsory subjects of the program forcing to learn the Czech language and the history of communism, presented rather one-sidedly, lower in rankings in the field of economics and finance compare to other countries such as England, America, doesn't offer as many prospects as other European countries

Determinants (multiple-choice)

This paragraph is going to include a more detailed information about the determinants which influence the decision-making process of going to study abroad. The question provided a list of various possible factors, each of them had a range consisting of 6 numbers (highest is 5, lowest is 0). By using the same calculation method of defining a mean, the following results have been derived.

On the top of the most important components appeared to be reputation of teachers (85 responses for the highest value) and university accreditation (77 responses for the highest value). They are followed by such factors as: accommodation accessibility, technologically equipped class, expenses, graduates' feedback, face-to-face talks. The following determinants have the mean in the range of 3 – 3.5: personal contact with coordinator, diapason and length of program, web-site. The rest could be considered as not or slightly important factors – classroom size, open days, brochures.

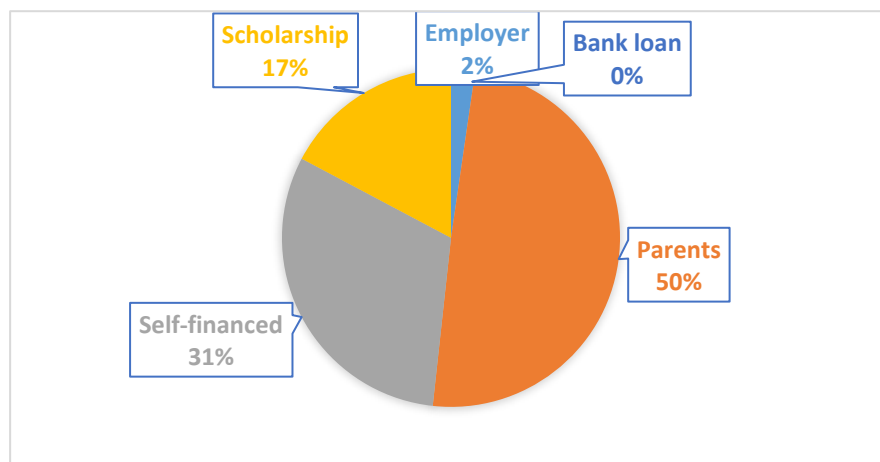
Figure 11. Determinants influencing the decision-making process of going to study abroad



Financing

On account of many theories provided in the theoretical part regarding cost-related factor playing the leading role in student's decision making, in the survey was included a question about the main source of financing. Half of the people who were surveyed, claimed that their main financial support will be parents, on the second place goes self-financing (31 percent), a smaller number of respondents indicated their financial source as scholarship (17 percent) and just a minority chose employer (2 percent). The option of bank loan has not been ticked by anyone.

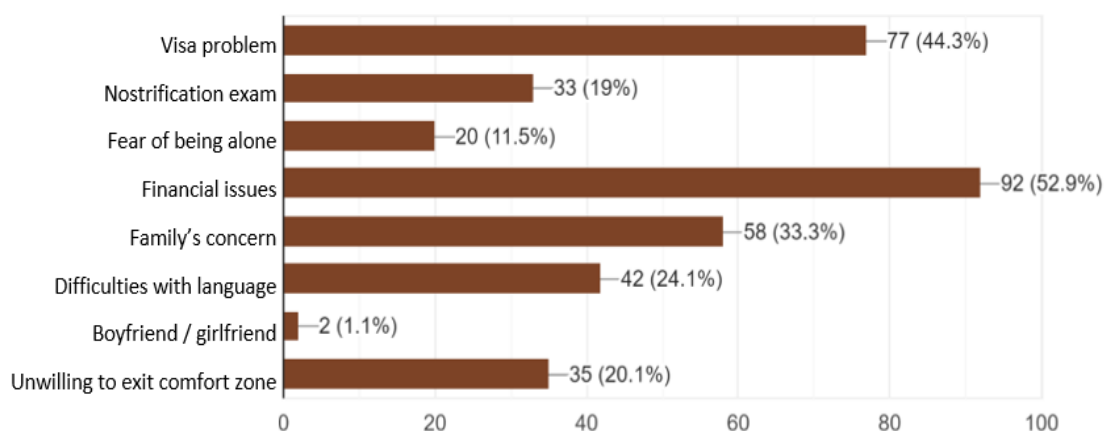
Figure 12. Main source of financing



Potential barriers (multiple-choice)

Slightly more than half of the respondents (53 percent) claimed that the main possible barrier of going to study abroad would be financial difficulties, 44 percent believed visa problems may complicate the process, 33 percent also ticked ‘family’s concern’, 24 percent has disquietude about the possible discomfort with foreign language. About 20 percent chose unwillingness to exit comfort zone and nostrification exams. 11.5 percent has the fear of being alone, minority (1 percent) was concerned about the relationship status being a barrier.

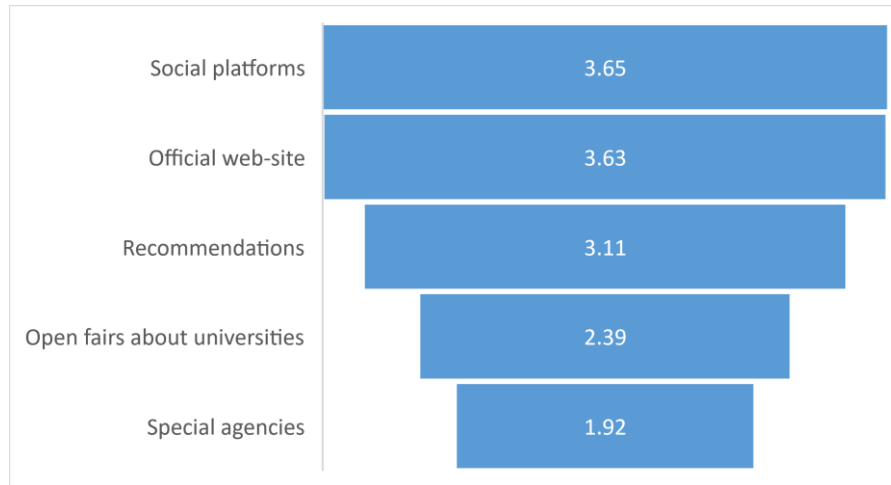
Figure 13. Potential barriers for going to study abroad



6.3. Main sources of obtaining information about studying abroad

In this section will be observed the most used sources by potential students for receiving information about universities abroad. The method of mean calculation has been implemented in analyzing this data. The most important source is indicated as social platforms and official website which are staying almost at the same level by the mean number, 3.65 and 3.63 respectively. Recommendations from family / friends / acquaintance are also considered as an important channel of information with the mean amounted to 3.11. A small number of respondents expressed their interest in open fairs about universities and special agencies.

Figure 14. Sources of obtaining information about universities abroad

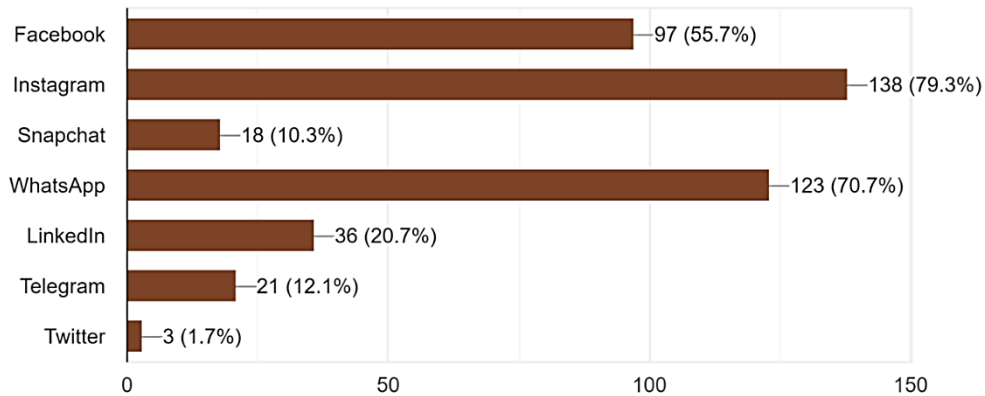


6.4. Most used social platforms

By taking into consideration that in the previous question social platforms have been identified as the most significant factor in receiving information regarding universities abroad, it is important to analyze which social applications are used most frequently.

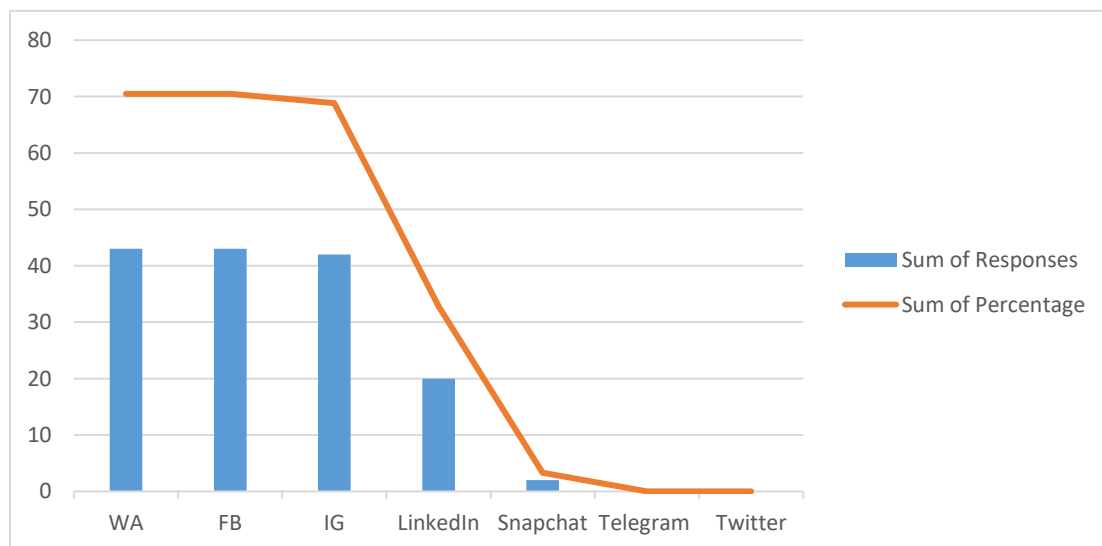
Instagram is indicated as the most popular social platform by amounting to 79.3 percent of total responses. 70.7 percent of those surveyed are using WhatsApp more frequent than other apps, then it is followed by Facebook which was ticked by 55.7 percent of overall respondents. A smaller number of answerers pointed out such social platforms as LinkedIn, Telegram, Snapchat, and Twitter, which are respectively 20.7 percent, 12.1 percent, 10.3 percent, and 1.7 percent.

Figure 16. Social platforms



If observing only the responses of the people who chose social platforms as the most important source (by ticking 5 – the highest number) the data slightly changes. The first place is shared by such applications as WhatsApp, Facebook, Instagram which have approximately the same value. 32 percent of this particular group chose LinkedIn, Snapchat was ticked by minority (3.3 percent). Telegram and Twitter have zero of responses.

Figure 15. Social platforms #2



7. Results of the research

After analyzing the data obtained from the survey, it is important to firstly ask why people from Azerbaijan would like to study abroad in the first place. Two major factors should be mentioned: seeking for future career opportunities and better education. Such an outcome also proves the theory of McMahon, in which it is stated that a lack of availability of educational opportunities and prospective chances in the future may be a significant push factors for students to look for better potential abroad. It can be also detected in the ranking of the most important determinants, where on the first places are disposed such factors as reputation of teachers and accreditation of university. However, from the other side, based on the open-ended answers, people tend not to find the fulfillment of this criteria in the Czech Republic. Some of the respondents made such a negative statement based on the accreditation or ranking level in comparison with other countries, such as England, America, etc. Nevertheless, the other part of those who were surveyed have not been sure or underestimated the level of education system on the grounds of lack of information regarding any programs or the system in general.

Majority of the respondents are looking for master programs abroad despite of the highest finished degree. Based on the obtained information that the main concerns of going to study abroad for students from Azerbaijan are finance and sociological-related factors such as family's concern or unwillingness to exit comfort zone, can be derived an assumption that the selection of programs is mainly focused on Master in order for the person to have time to become more financially stable and mature. It also should be mentioned that people in Azerbaijan are usually graduating from high school at the age of 16.

With the help of the idea of categories in Hossler's theory can be formed 3 target group, where each would need a special approach to meet the expectations of potential students and suggestions for development.

- Economical and bureaucratic – finance related, connection of cost-efficiency to future opportunities, problems with attaining visa. Mostly targeted on more mature students in the age range of 19+ from state schools.

- Sociological – individual factors such as influence of people in the surroundings, concern of family, fear of being alone. High-school pupils and fresh students aged 15 – 18 can be considered as the most affected.
- Combined – both previously mentioned factors are playing the same role.

In the beginning of this section has been mentioned that people from Azerbaijan lack the information regarding the education system in the Czech Republic, therefore there logically comes the following question: where and how do they usually get this information in general?

By deriving the data from the survey, social platforms and web-site are considered as the main sources. From social platforms the ones to which should be paid the most attention are: Facebook, Instagram, and WhatsApp.

8. Suggestions for improvement

On purpose of providing more specific suggestions for improvement, this section will be divided in several parts based on the field or determinant of potential problem.

Finance

The proposals will be more aimed not at the students financed by parents but at the other half who chose self-financing, scholarship and employer as the main source of funding.

One of the suggestions is to provide more opportunities to gain a scholarship at the universities in the Czech Republic, grant accommodation financial aid, etc. Nevertheless, even if the university is already providing such kind of opportunities, it is usually not so visible for the potential applicants. The universities could also offer a discount on the tuition fee based on the previous academic performance or outstanding results in specific types of exams.

Another proposal presented in this part combines the self-financing and employer-dependent factors. There could be established a special society at the university which will take care of students in the field of employment. The main goal of this community will be to have a wide specter of sources where to find a student job, therefore it will be able to provide a scholar with options based on his/her priorities. Other advantages of this possible society may be the provision

of help of how to properly structure your CV or how to behave during the interviews and confront different probable tactics.

The last but not least suggestion concerning finances is to decrease the tuition fee to a certain extent with the condition that after graduation the student will work for a certain time in some company in the Czech Republic which has partnership with the university, however he/she will receive adequately lower salary. This option will also provide an assurance of employment after graduation which is a highly valued factor in the terms of finance and visa issues.

Sociological

As has been already mentioned before, people in Azerbaijan usually finish school at the age of 16 – 17, therefore it could be a difficult step in their life to start university life completely alone in a foreign country. As an option the universities of the Czech Republic may provide the possibility of a host family for their potential underage students. Another way is to establish a Buddy System (a person is assigned for an incoming student to help to settle in) or if it is already existent (e.g. at VŠE, University of Economics, Prague) – make it more structured and reliable.

As the recommendations are also playing a substantial role, universities may create a special section on their web-site containing volunteered contacts of graduates from that school who can be reached in order to receive some information about the program, university, etc. Furthermore, there can be included a feedback as recorded videos/in the written form of current/ex-students or a video-tour of the university showing the environment, classrooms, etc.

Language

Based on the responses the foreign language criteria appeared as a moderately important determinant both in the factors of going to study abroad and potential barriers. In order to improve the situation, the universities may provide a special one-year program of English/Czech language or create a partnership agreement with some institutions which are specializing in this field.

Lack of information

Almost in all previously mentioned parts the lack of information was noted as an obstacle. By taking into consideration the data obtained from the survey, the first suggestion is to focus on

social platforms and web-site. For example, universities may generate advertising in Facebook and Instagram and create special groups for applicants in WhatsApp. As for the web-site, there should be provided visible sections with clear information regarding such important factors as the accreditation of the university, financing benefits (scholarship), buddy system/host families (if applicable), accommodation opportunities (if there is any support from the side of universities), feedback from students, promotion videos, and others.

It would be also a prosperous proposal for Czech universities to participate in some open fairs in Azerbaijan, where Azerbaijani people will have the opportunity to talk face-to-face to the representatives of some program or university and discuss the main points.

Conclusion

The main goal of this research includes detecting the main push and pull factors for decision-making process for students from Azerbaijan while choosing a country and an university to study abroad. The next step is to develop specific fields based on the findings in order to make Czech Republic more attractive for Azerbaijani students.

Coming back to the question which was brought up in the introduction: why this topic should be considered important? What are the advantages of attracting students from Azerbaijan to the Czech Republic, is it beneficial for both sides, or?

After going through the theoretical part, the reader would have had a better insight in the general field of globalization of education. When analyzing the transformation of the education system, how would the people from the previous century respond, if they were asked a simple question such as describing the main goal of education and its presence in everyday life. Very likely the answer would be quite simple – to provide knowledge, what else? However, nowadays it cannot be depicted so easily. The globalized education system is a mixture of plenty processes and features from various spheres. In some countries it can be considered as a very influential factor on the economical situation. The topic of tolerance is playing a substantial role in the modern world, therefore it is crucial for people to acquaint themselves with other cultures, traditions, state of minds, etc. Mobility of students which is a key element of internationalization of universities, is a splendid way towards reaching this objective. Nevertheless, there are still some debates regarding the positive and negative effects of globalization, as well as concerning various tactics of targeting potential students, for example, treating them like customers of product, which in this case is the education. From the side of the Czech Republic, it will be beneficial to acquire a new market in the field of internationalized education. One of the possible positive outcomes can be an increased number of educated people which will transform in the future in the qualified labor force.

Let's now observe this research from the side of the students from Azerbaijan. As every person who is looking for self-development in order not to become a “one dimensional person”, people from Azerbaijan are mainly focused on expanding their horizons by seeking for better opportunities in terms of education and career perspectives. As can be seen from the results of the

survey, majority of respondents indicated their interest and willingness in studying specifically in the Czech Republic. Subsequently, the main push and pull determinants in the decision-making process have been pointed out. The most retaining factors are financial issues, lack of information regarding education system in the Czech Republic, and sociological elements. By defining the most essential target student groups, a range of suggestions with the aim of improving and encouraging students from Azerbaijan to choose the Czech Republic as a final destination for foreign education and overall experience has been proposed.

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Annexes

Appendix A – Copy of Survey Questionnaire (English)

1. Gender
 - Male
 - Female
2. Age
 - 15 – 18
 - 19 – 25
 - 26 – 30
 - Other
3. Highest finished degree
 - Elementary school (5 – 9 grade)
 - High school
 - Bachelor's degree
 - Master's degree
 - Doctorate
4. Type of school
 - State
 - Private
5. You are situated in
 - Capital (Baku)
 - Other regions
6. Are you considering studying abroad?
 - Yes
 - No
 - Not sure yet
7. What program/s you'd be looking for?
 - Language programs
 - Erasmus (semester abroad)
 - Bachelor
 - Master
 - Doctorate
 - Summer school
8. Factors when choosing a country for abroad program
 - Safe atmosphere

- International experience
- Feeling of freedom
- Foreign language
- Better education
- Future career perspectives
- Explore new places / travelling

9. Would you like to study in Czech Republic?

- Yes
- No
- Don't know

10. If you have chosen no in the previous question or you are already studying abroad, please specify the reasons: (open – ended)

11. Most significant determinants while choosing school/university abroad (scale 0 – 5)

- Range and length of programs
- Costs (tuition fees, for living, etc....)
- Accommodation accessibility
- Technology-enabled teaching environment
- Class size / appearance
- Open days where you can obtain necessary information
- Being in personal contact with the coordinator
- Face-to-face conversations
- Email brochures and booklets
- University ranking and accreditation
- Web-site attractiveness
- Reviews and memories of graduates
- Reputation of academic staff

12. What would be your main financial support?

- Self-financed
- Parents
- Employer
- Scholarship
- Bank loan

13. Possible barriers

- Visa problem
- Nostrification exams
- Fear of being alone
- Financial issues
- Family's concern
- Difficulties with language
- Boyfriend / girlfriend

- Unwilling to exit comfort zone
14. Where do you usually get most information about study abroad? (scale 0 – 5)
- Open fairs about universities
 - Special agencies
 - Family / friends / acquaintance recommendation
 - Official web-site
 - Social platforms
15. Most used social platforms?
- Facebook
 - Instagram
 - Snapchat
 - WhatsApp
 - LinkedIn
 - Telegram
 - Twitter
16. Rank the factors based on the priorities: (1 = the highest, 4 = the lowest)
- Country
 - School
 - Money
 - Accommodation
17. Do you have any suggestions of improving the possibility of studying abroad from Azerbaijan / increasing the interest in studying in the Czech Republic? (open – ended)