COUNTRY OF ORIGIN INFLUENCE ON SERVICE EVALUATION – AN INSIGHT INTO CHINESE STUDENTS' CHOICE OF BRITISH HIGHER EDUCATION

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Abstract

This thesis aims to examine the country of origin effects on service evaluation by investigating Chinese students' evaluation of British higher education. How Chinese students evaluated Chinese higher education and other international higher education in general was also of interest to the study.

The methodology deployed in this study was McCracken's (1988) "The long interview". In addition, the focus group interview suggested by McCracken (1988) was used as the triangulated methodology.

This study can be classified into three parts. Part one of the study has identified the COO effects on the service evaluation. First of all, British COO image was generally perceived by Chinese students as positive. Secondly, whilst there was mixed positive and negative evidence, the study found that on balance Chinese COO image tended to be generally perceived as more negative than positive. Chinese students would like to use their COO image to infer the evaluation of British higher education services.

Part two of the study aims to evaluate the internal influences that can affect the magnitude of COO effects on service evaluation. The internal influences include a-priori service knowledge and vertical individualism. Chinese students' familiarity of British higher education is generally limited which will result in the strong COO effects in their evaluation of British higher education services. Additionally, Chinese students' familiarity of Chinese higher education is generally substantial. This will result in weak COO effects in their evaluation of Chinese higher education services. Moreover, the higher the level of the vertical individualism the students have, the more likely they will have favourable evaluation of British higher education and decide to go to the U.K for higher education.

Part three of the study has found that COO effects on service evaluation will be perceived as less important when other related service information cues are considered.

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Declaration

I declare that no part of this dissertation has been taken from existing published or unpublished material without due acknowledgement and that all secondary material used therein has been fully referenced.

List of Abbreviations

CETSCALE ·· Consumer Ethnocentrism Scale

CET-4 ··· College English Test- Band 4

CET-6 ··· College English Test- Band 6

CIE ··· Country Image Effects

COA ··· Country of Assembly

COD ··· Country of Design

COO ··· Country-of-Origin

CPC ··· Communist Party of China

Gaokao ·············The National Higher Education Entrance Examination (in China)

GCA ··· General Country Attributes

GDP ··· Gross Domestic Product

GSA ··· General Service Attributes

NBS ··· National Bureau of Statistics of China

NEEP ···················National Entrance Examination for Postgraduate (in China)

PRL ··· Privately Consumed Luxury

PRN ··· Privately Consumed Necessity

PSW ··· Post Study Work

PUL ··· Publicly Consumed Luxury

PUN ··· Publicly Consumed Necessity

SSA ··· Specific Service Attributes

USSR ··· The Union of Soviet Socialist Republics

Chapter One: Introduction

1.1 Background to the Research

Country-of-origin (COO) effects could be researched not only in the product setting but also in the service setting. Such effects cannot be ignored. Although there is an increasing trend in research into services, many of the service studies have mainly concentrated on the domestic context, not the international perspective (Fisk et al., 1993). It must be noted that there are fewer studies on the determinants of COO influence on services in the international markets. Javalgi et al. (2001) found that only 19 studies from top 25 marketing journals during 1980s to 2000s mentioned the relationship between general COO image and international context. From the mere 19 studies, most of the studies concerned the important COO effects in products with supplementary services (e.g. warrantee or guarantee). Merely six of them examined the COO effects on some core services (e.g. medical care or travel services) (Javalgi et al, 2001).

This thesis extends past literature on COO effects by exploring the conditions under which counter-stereotypic information leads to more positive or negative service and COO evaluations. Findings of product research stream showed that consumers are likely to have either positive or negative perceptions of countries based on stereotypic beliefs (Nagashima, 1970; Papadopoulos, 1993; Roth and Romeo, 1992). Hence, these stereotypes of countries can positively or negatively affect consumers' attitudes toward various countries' related products (Reierson, 1967; Schooler 1971; Johansson, et al. 1985; Papadopoulous, 1986; Smith, 1993; Baker and Michie, 1995; Kim 1995). One country can usually have a few representative products (e.g. Lenovo computers to China and Nokia mobile phones to Finland) (Darling and Kraft, 1977). The COO effects on consumer behaviour have resulted in consumers either positively or negatively evaluating products from different product categories (Piron, 2000). Additionally, there is evidence that the significance of country image to consumers has been increasing (e.g. Johansson *et, al.*1985). This thesis assumes that these perceptions that affect product evaluation can also be transferred to services evaluation.

This thesis focuses on COO effects in the context of service evaluation. It assumes

that some influences applied to the COO effects in product evaluation may also be applied to the service evaluation because they can serve as various influences that can affect the magnitude of COO effects. The category of services selected is higher education. The research is concerned with analysing Chinese students' choice of British higher education within the over arching literary base of COO studies. How COO effects can affect Chinese students' evaluation of British higher education service was examined. The Chinese students used in this study are Chinese who were born in the mainland China with Chinese nationality.

1.2 Conceptual Framework

McCracken (1988)'s Semi-structured Long Interviews were used as the methodological tools for the data collection. Additionally, the focus group interview suggested by McCracken (1988) was used as the triangulated methodology. This thesis uses the conceptual framework suggested by McCracken (1988) as shown in the figure 1.1. The research was conducted in four stages.
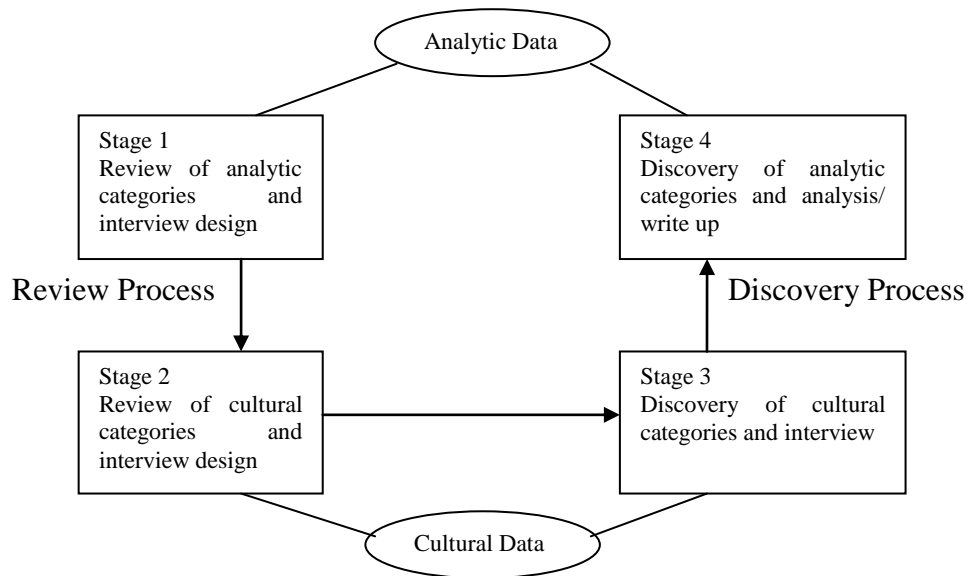
Figure 1.1: Four-Part Method of Enquiry (McCracken, 1988: 30)

The stage one refers to the review of literature from the studies of COO effects and the studies of the international higher education. Gaps in the literature were identified and initial knowledge was constructed at this stage. The second stage aims to use myself as an instrument of inquiry by taking advantage of my intimate acquaintance with my own knowledge and experience (McCracken, 1988) and my close

involvement in the evaluation of British higher education. The third stage can be seen as a data collection process which includes questionnaire construction and interview procedure. The interview procedure continued until the data collected was saturated. Finally, twenty-three long interviews along with three focus group interviews were conducted. The fourth stage refers to the data analysis. The data collected from the third stage was the main source of the information for the fourth stage. The data went through the refined McCracken (1988)'s five steps of analysis advocated by Herrington and Oliver (2000). The findings were therefore obtained.

1.3 Research Aim and Objectives

The present research aims to offer the first detailed study of the importance of COO influences in the service setting. The overall aim is to further the literature of COO influences with respect to the issue of service evaluation. Within the broader study, the research focuses in particular on the role of COO effects on specific service category; namely higher education. Chinese university students who planned to continue to study after graduation are focused. The study looks at an insight into their evaluation of British higher education. More specifically, the aim is to conduct a theoretical and constructivist study that intends to accomplish the research objectives below which can be classified into three parts.

Part One Objectives: examining the COO effects on service evaluation

In recent decades, significant attention has been paid to COO effects on consumers' product evaluation leaving the absence of in-depth research into COO effects on consumers' service evaluation. In order to develop upon the existing COO research looking at product evaluation, and to provide a framework for this study, it was decided to look at how two different COO images held by Chinese students influence their evaluation of two different higher education services. The initial objectives of this thesis are therefore:

1. To examine British COO image held by Chinese students
2. To examine Chinese COO image held by Chinese students
3. To examine Chinese students' evaluation of British higher education services based on their British COO image
4. To examine Chinese students' evaluation of Chinese higher education services based on their Chinese COO image

Part Two Objective: examining the internal influence of COO effects on service evaluation

It is noteworthy that there are some internal influences (e.g. consumers' personality traits of a-priori product knowledge, vertical individualism and ethnocentrism) that can be useful in understanding of COO effects in the product evaluation process (Shimp and Sharma, 1987; Sharma, et al. 1995; Waston and Wright, 2000; Javalgi and White, 2002; Ferguson, et al. 2008). For example, those who have high degree of a-priori product knowledge would less likely to use COO image to infer the quality of product (Han and Terpstra, 1988). In addition, those who are from low individualistic cultural countries often prefer their mother countries' products to other countries' products (Gurhan-Canli and Maheswaran, 2000b). Furthermore, people who are in high ethnocentrism will see buying foreign products as a moral problem rather than just an economic issue (Sharma, et al. 1995). The thesis assumes that COO effects on the evaluation of services are also affected by some internal influences, such as respondents' vertical individualistic value and consumer ethnocentric value. Therefore, part two of the study explores the internal influences of COO effects on service evaluation. Specifically, it aims:

5. To examine the internal influences of COO effects on the evaluation of British higher education services and Chinese higher education services.

Part Three Objective: exploring the external influence of COO effects on service evaluation

In addition, the literature also suggests that there are various external influences that can affect COO effects on consumers' product evaluation (e.g. price, availability, and quality) (Johansson et al. 1985; Eroglu and Machleit, 1988; Johansson, 1989; Wall et al. 1991; Leonidou et al. 2007). Therefore, it is appropriate to add a further research objective which is:

6. To examine the external influences of COO effects on the evaluation of British higher education services and Chinese higher education services.

1.4 Research Questions

Part One Research Questions:

According to part one objectives, the study caters for answering the following research questions:

1. How is British COO image generally perceived by Chinese students?
2. How is Chinese COO image generally perceived by Chinese students?
3. Does Chinese students' perception of British COO image influence their evaluation of British higher education services, and why?
4. Does Chinese students' perception of Chinese COO image influence their evaluation of Chinese higher education services, and why?

The respondents' perceived COO images were analysed by assessing three facets based on Parameswaran and Pisharodi (1994) including:

- "General Country Attributes" (GCA) of the U.K and China
- "General Service Attributes" (GSA) of the U.K and China
- "Specific Service Attributes" (SSA) namely, higher education service attributes of the U.K and China

Part Two Research Questions

The literature showed that a few influential variables work as internal influences and can significantly reinforce COO effects in the evaluation of products. They are hard to be changed within a short time. These internal influences come from consumers' personal attributes, such as consumers' a-priori familiarity of the products (Brucks, 1985; Johansson et al. 1985; Eroglu and Machleit, 1988; Han and Terpstra, 1988; Jaffe and Nebenzhal 1988; Johansson 1989; Wall, et al. 1991; Okechuku 1994; Lee and Ganesh 1999; Lin and Zhen 2005), consumers' vertical individualistic value (Gurhan-Canli and Maheswaran, 2000b; and Ferguson et al. 2008), and consumers' ethnocentric value (Shimp and Sharma, 1987; Sharma, et al. 1995; Waston and Wright, 2000; Javalgi and White, 2002; Ferguson, et al. 2008).

Accordingly, this study will find out whether some internal influences of COO effects also work in consumers' evaluation of services by setting the following research questions:

5. To what extent can Chinese students' a-priori familiarity of British higher education influence COO effects in their evaluation of British higher education services?

6. To what extent can Chinese students' a-priori familiarity of Chinese higher education influence COO effects in their evaluation of Chinese higher education services?

7. To what extent can Chinese students' vertical individualism influence COO effects in their evaluation of British higher education and Chinese higher education?

8. To what extent can Chinese students' consumer ethnocentrism influence COO effects in their evaluation of British higher education services and Chinese higher education services?

Particular attention has been paid to respondents' a-priori service familiarity, vertical individualistic value, and consumer ethnocentric value. A-priori service familiarity can be assessed by judging respondents' utterance from the interviews. In addition, respondents' vertical individualistic value was assessed by interview question topics based on Sivadas, et al. (2008)'s scales of vertical individualism dimension. What's more, respondents' consumer ethnocentric value was assessed by using Shimpa and Sharma (1987)'s Consumer Ethnocentrism Scale (CETSCALE) deployed in a qualitative manner.

The Part Three Research Questions

Past studies indicated that COO effects in the product evaluation became weak when other information cues are presented (Johansson et al. 1985; Eroglu and Machleit, 1988; Johansson, 1989; Wall et al. 1991; Leonidou et al. 2007). These studies are known as multi-cue studies. Accordingly, this study will find out whether COO effects will be diminished when other information cues are considered by consumers by setting the last research question as shown below:

9. To what extent can COO effects in Chinese students' evaluation of British higher education services be perceived as less important when other additional information cues are considered?

The external influences of COO effects in Chinese students' evaluation of British higher education services from the literature review of international higher education include:

- Academic reputation (e.g. Yao, 2004; Diaz and Krauss, 1996; Huang and Brown, 1996; Singh and Ninemeier, 2003; Chen 2007; Mazzarol 1998; and Mazzarol and Soutar, 2004);

- Entry requirement (e.g. Economist, 2005; Chen, 2007)

- Availability of courses in home country (e.g. Mazzarol and Soutar, 2002; Yao, 2004; Davidson and Wang, 2008);

- Influence of normative referents (e.g. Lawley and Perry, 1999; Pmipa, 2002, 2003, 2004; Economist, 2005; Chen and Zimitat, 2006; Mazzarol and Soutar, 2002);

- English acquisition (e.g. Malcolm, et al. 2004; Yao, 2004);

- Costs of studying overseas (e.g. Davidson and Wang, 2008; Chen, 2006, 2007; Yao, 2004; Chen and Zimitat, 2006); and

- Employment opportunities (e.g. Yao, 2004; Economist, 2005; Davidson and Wang, 2008)

- Country environment (e.g. Cubillo, et al. 2005, 2006; Srikatanyoo and Gnoth, 2002, Chen and Zimitat, 2006; Lawley and Perry, 1998; Kemp, et al. 1998; Yao, 2004; Davidson and Wang, 2008; Murphy, 1999; Son and Pearce, 2005; Wang and Davidson, 2008)

1.5 Research Structure

The relationship among the research aim and objectives and research question are shown in the table 1.1:

Table 1.1: Research Structure

Research Aim: To further the literature of COO effects with respect to the issue of service evaluation – an insight of Chinese students' evaluation of British higher education services		
	Research Objectives (RO)	**Research Questions (RQ)**
Part One	1. To examine British COO image held by Chinese students	1. How is British COO image generally perceived by Chinese students?
	2. To examine Chinese COO image held by Chinese students	2. How is Chinese COO image generally perceived by Chinese students?
	3. To examine Chinese students' evaluation of British higher education services based on their British COO image	3. Does Chinese Students' perception of British COO image influence their evaluation of British higher education services, and why?

	4. To examine Chinese students' evaluation of Chinese higher education services based on their Chinese COO image	4. Does Chinese students' perception of Chinese COO image influence their evaluation of Chinese higher education services, and why?
Part Two	5. To examine the internal influences of COO effects on the evaluation of British higher education services and Chinese higher education services (e.g. service familiarity, vertical individualistic value, consumer ethnocentric value)	5. To what extent can Chinese students' familiarity of British higher education influence COO effects in their evaluation of British higher education services?
		6. To what extent can Chinese students' familiarity of Chinese higher education influence COO effects in their evaluation of Chinese higher education services?
		7. To what extent can Chinese students' vertical individualism influence COO effects in their evaluation of British higher education and Chinese higher education?
		8. To what extent can Chinese students' consumer ethnocentrism influence COO effects in their evaluation of British higher education services and Chinese higher education services?
Part Three	6. To examine the external influences of COO effects in the evaluation of British higher education services and Chinese higher education services (e.g. academic reputation, entry requirement, availability of courses in home country, influence of normative referents, English acquisition, costs of studying overseas, employment opportunities and country environment)	9. To what extent can COO effects in Chinese students' evaluation of British higher education services be perceived as less important when other additional information cues are considered?

The structure of the thesis is shown in the table 1.2. The theoretical aspects of the research are presented in the first three chapters of the thesis. This chapter provides a brief introduction to the research questions and research background. Chapter two discusses the literature related to COO studies and international higher education studies. The third chapter and the fourth chapter refer to the preliminary study based on the conclusions from the literature review. The third chapter uses myself as an instrument of inquiry by taking advantage of the intimate acquaintance with my own culture. In the fourth chapter, a pilot study of three long interviews is provided. Chapter Five describe the methodology applied to the thesis. It advances my research philosophy. The difference between quantitative study and qualitative study has been explained. In addition, the chapter five contains the descriptions of interview design

and data collection process. Chapter Six is the research findings and analysis of the thesis and uses the refined McCracken (1988) five steps of analysis. The last chapter concludes with the summary of the research findings, the data findings to the theoretical implications, the research contributions, the managerial implications, the research limitations and the implications for future research.

Table 1.2: Structure of the Thesis

Chapter	Title	Major Contents
One	Introduction	- Establishes research background; - Introduces research aim and objectives and research questions.
Two	Literature Review	- Reviews the literature of COO studies - Reviews the literature of international higher education
Three	Preliminary Study: Personal Views and Experience	- Reviews personal views and experience - Refines the research problems by presenting research assumptions for main study
Four	Preliminary Study: the Pilot Study	- Conducts a pilot study - Refines the research problems by presenting research assumptions for main study
Five	Methodology	- Explains the constructivism, constructivist ontology, and constructivist epistemology used in the study - Describes the structure and procedure of the main study - Describes the data collection process
Six	Data Findings and Analysis	Provides the research findings and analysis from the data collected
Seven	Conclusion	Provides reflection on this study and the implications for future research

Chapter Two: Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

A literature review is a systematic, explicit and reproducible method of identifying, evaluating and interpreting an existing body of work produced by researchers, scholars and practitioners (Fink, 1998). McCracken (1988) sees a literature review as a kind of qualitative analysis which helps qualitative researchers to find out the conscious and unconscious assumptions of scholarly enterprises and determine how these assumptions inform the definition of problems and findings. This chapter presents a review of current literature in the area of COO effects and how students select foreign higher education services. It refers to the Stage One of the study as shown in the Figure 2.1. It will contribute to formulating the subsequent stages of this thesis.
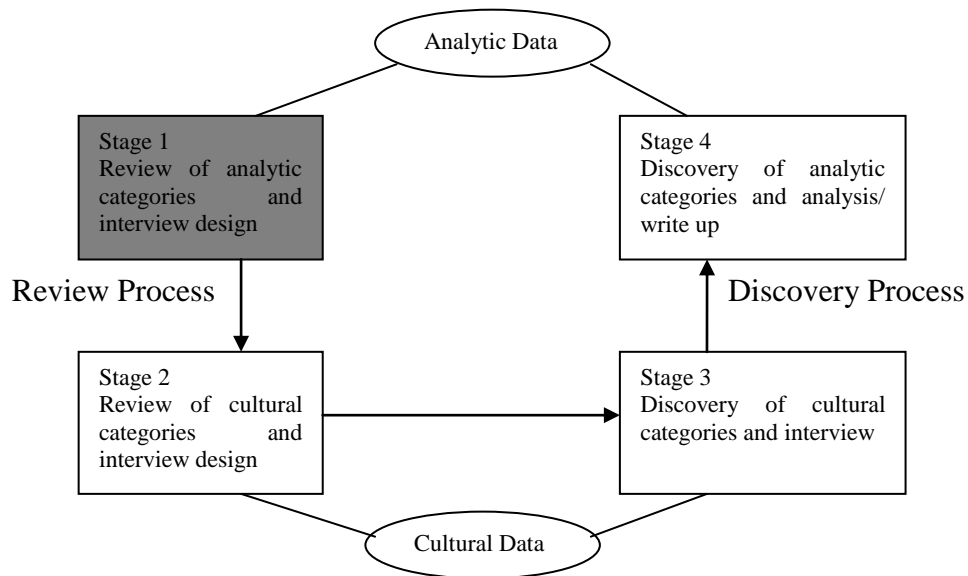
Figure 2.1: Stage 1 Review of Analytic Categories and Interview Design

This chapter is broken into two parts: that being a literature review of COO studies and a literature review of international higher education. The first part spans a large spectrum relating to the COO effect on consumers' product evaluation (section 2.2). It considers the definition of COO image, the measurement of COO image, models of COO stereotype change, and how to reduce the impact of negative COO effects. In addition, the four major streams of past COO research were reviewed. Gaps in the extant literature of COO study were addressed by this thesis. It was found that COO effects on service evaluation were under researched. Furthermore, past quantitative

COO studies showed a few validity and credibility problems which may lead to inaccurate results. The second part provides the literature review of international higher education services (section 2.3). It has reviewed the three important steps for international students selecting future higher education. These three steps include deciding to study abroad, selecting a host country and selecting a particular institution. The influences that can affect these three steps were provided. Gaps in extant literature of international higher education were also addressed. It was found that how Chinese students select British higher education has been under researched. At the end of this chapter, themes for current study emerged by focusing upon the gaps in the extant literature and aiming to produce managerial implications (section 2.4).

2.2 Literature Review of COO Studies

The increased level of international trade has given rise to the COO phenomena and its effects on consumers' buying behaviour. Like brand names, "made in" labels have various associations that can directly or indirectly influence consumers' product evaluation. It has been gradually noted by most international marketers when they are creating marketing strategy that COO serves saliently in consumers' overall product evaluation (Bilkey and Nes, 1982; Han and Terpstra, 1988). International marketers need to understand different COO images and whether they are holding positive or negative influences both to their own and competitors' products and services. Therefore, how a country image is formed in consumers' mind, and what form it takes, should be of concern to government, industry and individual firms. Managing country images correctly may lead to a nation's success in marketing its products or services in international markets (Balabanis et, all. 2002) and has provided much direction for research into COO effects. Many researchers have extensively investigated the subject resulting in many academic journal articles and conference presentations. COO effects today inform business decisions relating to global product, production, packaging and promotional strategies.

As developed countries are often seen to have positive COO associations, products "made in" developed countries are usually evaluated positively (Kim 1995). Nonetheless, COO effects can sometimes become an intangible barrier for brands from developing countries to enter international markets as consumers have bias toward imported products (Wang and Lamb, 1983). Therefore, how to efficiently and

effectively take advantage of positive COO associations and prevent negative COO associations is important. It has become a powerful method of brand appeal through advertising the COO associations in various product categories (Thakor and Lavack, 2003).

According to Morello (1984), "made in" labels can be traced back to 1918 when Germany was defeated in the First World War. "To punish German industry and to warn the European consumers of that time, German manufacturers were obliged to put on each product they exported 'made in Germany' labels (in English). Very soon it became a sign of quality" (Morello, 1984: 5). This is because that German products purchased by European consumers usually had high quality. Since then, more and more companies had been noting the importance of COO influence and popularly using cues to imply the COO associations by hinting the label of "made in" to enhance consumers' consideration (Bannister and Saunders, 1978; Chasin and Jaffe, 1979; and Nagashima, 1970). These COOs are usually developed countries because of their positive images. However, products made in developing countries which are associated with unfavourable images attempt to disguise the "made in" information by either hiding the COO information (Piron, 2000) or choosing a foreign brand name which sounds like being from a developed country (Thakor and Lavack, 2003; Leclerc et al. 1994).

COO studies attracted substantial attention by Business Schools since Dicher (1962, pp. 116) first claimed that "the little phrase 'made in…' can have a tremendous influence on the acceptance and success of product". Although there are many studies around COO area, it is still a controversial concept. This is because that past studies suffered from a variety of methodological problems such as poor conceptualisation, extensiveness of convenience samples, and lack of comparative perspectives (Papadopoulos, et al. 1990). In addition, COO effects in the context of service evaluation are under researched (Javalgi et al, 2001).

2.2.1   What is Country-of-Origin?

To better understand COO effects on perception and purchase intent, it is necessary to define the construct of COO. Although there is a general agreement in the literature that COO effects are real and strong in consumers' evaluation of and purchase intent

for products it is not clear exactly what country image means. The difficulty of defining products' COO is due to the complexity of more and more rising international companies and the development of hybrid products with parts from different countries (Baker and Michie, 1995; Baughn and Yaprak, 1993; Chao, 1993; Yaprak and Baughn, 1991). The definition of COO has become a controversial concept as it can be defined in many ways.

Firstly, COO can be defined as the country where a brand is located or the company's headquarters marketing their products (e.g. Johansson et al. 1985; Ozsomer and Cavusgil, 1991). Therefore, it can be a mother country for one company and belong to certain brands. For example, Samsung and Microsoft imply South Korea and the US origins respectively.

Secondly, many researchers suggested that COO should be viewed as a multi-dimensional construct in terms of one involving a hybrid of factors. In this school, they defined COO as the country of manufacture or assembly and attempted to take the additional influences into their consideration of COO studies (e.g. Bilkey and Nes, 1982; Cattin et al., 1982; Han and Terpstra 1988; Lee and Schaninger, 1996; Papadopoulos 1993; Samiee, 1994; Saeed, 1994; White, 1979; and Ahmed, et al. 2004). For example, Samsung is a Korean brand but some of its products or components are assembled in other countries like China. Therefore, the products assembled in China would be considered as "assembled in China" and those assembled in Korea would be denoted as "made in Korea". According to Samiee (1994: 581), "Country of manufacture pertains to firms that maintain a relatively large global network of operations or do business with a variety of suppliers." While, Roger et al. (1994) found that the location of manufacturing and assembly has almost no distinct difference when additional product information is available. Their study accounted for the availability of price and independent quality information and found no notable difference to customers' product evaluation between the concepts of "made in" and "assembled in".

Saeed (1994) defined COO as the country, which is traditionally named the home country that a brand is associated with. It could belong to a particular and specific country. For example, Sony belongs to Japan and Haier is a Chinese brand.

Nonetheless, the term of "brand origin" defined by Thakor and Kohli (1996) as the place, region or country where a brand is perceived to belong by its target consumers. Therefore, brand origin, which is perceived by the target consumers, does not necessarily equal to COO.

Country Images

Alba and Hutchinson (1997) found country image affect consumers behaviour significantly because of product complexity, time pressure, lack of motivation and incidental learning conditions. In general, an image of an object is comprised of the attributes ascribed to it via the categories in which it is classified. For instance, classes that relate to the image of a product can be its functional use, size packaging, price range, brand name, and certain physical, economic and social qualities. Less well known brands may be classified into groups of brands, such as specialists in style, those providing good value for the money or made-in a certain country (Lee and Ganesh, 1999). Unknown brands may just be ignored in the marketplace because their perception requires more effort on the part of consumers than brands with which the consumer is familiar. Therefore, the country images are influenced by the consumers' perception, country's economic level, and quality of its representative products which has comparative advantage. The image of a less favourite country may be highly influenced by the country category in which it is classified (Lee and Ganesh, 1999; Papadopoulos and Heslop 2002).

Nagashima (1970) is one of the first scholars who started to research the country image that consumers held. He defined country image as "the picture, the reputation, and the stereotype that businessmen and consumers attach to products of a specific country. This image is created by such variables as representative products, national characteristics, economic and political background, history, and traditions (Nagashima, 1970: 68)." Consequently, consumers sometimes can associate products with a particular COO because their country stereotypes in mind can facilitate consumers to classify products, develop product hierarchies and symbolise products' elements and characterise products' attributes (Papadopoulous, 1993).

As Roth and Romeo (1992: 477) suggested, a "consumer forms his/her understanding to a specific country based on his/her recognition of advantages and disadvantages of

manufactured and marketed products from a specific country in the past (Roth and Romeo, 1992: 447)."

In general, country image is a mixture of consumers' impressions and perceptions to the product value from a specific country (Bilkey and Nes, 1982; Han, 1989). Bilkey (1993: xix) defined COO image from the marketing prospective as "buyer's opinions regarding the relative qualities of goods and services produced in various countries". Additionally, Martin and Eroglu (1993: 193), defined country image as "the total of all descriptive, inferential and informational beliefs one has about a particular country".

2.2.2   Measurement of Country of Origin Image

COO image often has a measurable influence on consumer preference formation because "made in" labels typically serve as a cue in the product evaluation process. Specific product attributes based on perceptions of COO image are important (Bilkey and Ness, 1982). Nonetheless, the nature and direction of these effects varies significantly in the marketplace. Based on Nagashima (1970)'s findings, Han (1990) summarised six influences for measuring country image, which include:

● Advanced technology
● Prestige
● Workmanship
● Economy
● Serviceability

From the above, the serviceability is an additional factor to Nagashima (1970)'s findings. There is a unique pattern for such serviceability that it is rated higher for products of home-made or home branded than foreign made or foreign branded (Han and Qualls, 1985).

Then, Agarwal and Sikri (1996) concluded twenty-four influences and refined to fourteen influences thereafter to measuring the country image, and finally refined to at least three factors as the measuring dimension of the country image. These three factors are:

● Industry technology

- Prestige
- Price

Nonetheless, according to Martin and Eroglu (1993), past methods and tools for measuring country image were to some extent limited by only measuring the specific product image of a specific country only rather than the overall country image. Following this, Parameswaran and Pisharodi (1994) identified three facets of COO image from previous research which can be used in the measurement. These three facets are "general country attributes" (GCA), "general product attributes" (GPA) and "specific product attributes" (SPA). The authors claimed that different products with different attributes may lead to different COO images. Parameswaran and Pisharodi (1994) represented a step toward generalisability of COO measurement. The authors suggested that their construct of COO measurement can also be used for other product categories. The table 4.1 refers to the scale items for measuring COO image in Parameswaran and Pisharodi (1994)'s research. It must be noted that there are a few factors under the three facets of COO image. These factors were carefully designed according to the nature of Parameswaran and Pisharodi (1994)'s study by using only Germany and Korea as source countries and only cars and blenders as two product categories.

Table 2.1: List of Scale Items for Measuring COO Image (Parameswaran and Pisharodi, 1994)

GCA (General Country Attributes)	GPA (General Product Attributes)	SPA (Specific Product Attributes) e.g. Car
Friendly and likable	Unreasonably expensive	Good fuel economy
Artistic and creative	Luxury products	Exterior styling attractive
Well-educated	Meticulous workmanship	Workmanship good
Hard working	Imitations	Handles well
Technical education	Known mainly for industrial products	Little maintenance
Achieving high standards	Sold in many countries	Very comfortable
Raised standard of living	Not attractive	Difficult to get parts
Technical skills	Intensely advertised	Quality service
Similar political views	Frequent repairs	Made to last
Economically similar	Wide range of models	Overall excellent
Culturally similar	Long lasting	
Participates in international affairs	Advertising informative	
	Difficult to service	

	Cheaply put together	
	High technology	
	Good value	
	Easily available	
	Prestigious products	

According to Pereira et al. (2005), the three facets of COO measurement has high validity. They tested Parameswaran and Pisharodi (1994)'s COO measurement in cross-national samples. American automobiles and German automobiles are the product categories in Pereira et al. (2005)'s study. Graduate business students from Taiwan, China, and India were invited to the study. The result showed that the measurement can be usefully applied to measuring COO image of products entering certain Asian regions, like Taiwan and mainland China, but not India. The authors suggested that additional modifications are necessary to the measurement of COO image for some certain countries.

2.2.3 Effects of Country of Origin in Consumer Behaviour

COO effects relates to consumers' perceptions of quality for products made in a specific country (Bilkey and Ness, 1982; Han 1989; Chao 2001). It is also named as product country image and it has been regarded as one of the most important information cues for individuals who are exposed to an internationalised selection of products (Baker and Michie, 1995; Ahmed, 2002).

Past research studies indicated that COO information can influence people's purchase behaviour. For example, McDonald (1995) found that Chinese customers are often recognised to weigh a brand's COO heavily, but perceive a brand from foreign countries as a relatively favourable stimulus to consider when they are making purchasing decisions. This was certainly the case before the 1990s when the 'Reform and Opening-up' policy was just being implemented in China. Foreign products usually have symbolic value for Chinese consumers (Hui, et al. 2003; Zhou and Hui, 2003). From this point, it was suggested that developed countries, like the UK and the USA could have a relatively positive (or favourable) product evaluations based on their positive COO images, while developing countries like China and Brazil may have relatively negative product evaluations due to existing negative image (Kim, 1995). These attitudes result in a delicate relationship between COO image and

consumers' purchasing behaviours in terms of their willingness to purchase goods from a given country.

Substantial previous studies have provided statistical evidence of COO effects on consumers' product evaluations. When a COO cue of a product is presented, several direct and indirect effects will occur on product evaluations. Consumers in developed, affluent nations, for example, often express strong preferences for products that originate in their own country (Reierson, 1966 and 1967; Nagashima 1970; Hampton 1977; ; Schooler 1971; Gaedeke 1973; Chasin and Jaffe, 1979; Wang and Lamb, 1983; Erickson et al. 1984; Han and Terpstra 1988; Han 1989 and 1990; Hong and Wyer 1989; Cordell 1991; Lee et al. 1992; Chao 1993; Maheswaran 1994; Leclerc et al. 1994; Johansson et al. 1994, Kaynak et al. 1994, etc.). Therefore, 'Made in the USA' or 'Buy Canadian' labelling have been shown to be highly effective in persuading American and Canadian consumers to buy domestic rather than imported products (Reierson, 1996, 1967; Hong and Whyer, 1989; Liefeld 2004). In addition to home-manufactured goods, developed nation consumers also express a preference for imported products which originate in similarly developed nations as opposed to products manufactured in less developed countries.

With regard to developing nation consumers, they also appear to express a clear preference for goods originating in developed countries (Ahmed and d'Astous, 1995; Lantz and Leob 1996; Okechuku, 1994; Bruning, 1997; Chao 2001). As Kaynak et al. (2000, p.128) observed in their study of COO effects in Bangladesh "a developed country origin of a product was seen as an insurance on the product's quality and performance".

The more one looks into the meaning of COO, the more complex things get. Primarily, COO information could activate concepts and knowledge that influence consumers' understanding of other attribute information of the product (Hong and Wyer, 1989; Johansson, et al. 1985; Bozell-Ballup, 1996; Klein et al. 1998; and Paswan and Sharma, 2004).

Secondly, COO could become a heuristic basis for inferring a product's quality by ignoring or neglecting other information (e.g. Schooler, 1965; Nagashima, 1970;

Bilkey and Nes, 1982; Kaynak and Cavusgil, 1983; Eroglu and Machleit, 1989; and Han, 1990, etc.). From this point, COO effects can be seen as a heuristic procedure that enables consumers to save time by making inferences about the quality of products in a cognitive way (Maheswaran, 1994). Additionally, COO can not only be a cognitive cue providing an indicator of product quality but also an affective one with a symbolic and emotional meaning that related to identity, pride, and memories of consumers (Batra et al. 2000)   In line with this, Maheswaran (1994) claimed that the COO impacts on product evaluations decreases with consumers' ability to process information.

Thirdly, COO can moderate the influence of other product information on product evaluation (Johansson, et al. 1985). This is due to that COO may sometimes act as a mental image that influences consumers' interpretation of other product information (Li and Wyer, 1994). COO could affect the attention that should be paid to a product's other attribute information, and therefore influence the impact of other attribute information (Hong and Wyer, 1989).

Fourthly, COO could act as a product feature that may be used in the same way as other specific attributes of the product to arrive at the evaluation (e.g. Johansson et al., 1985; Wall et al., 1991; Johansson, 1989; Alba and Hutchinson, 1987, Ahmed et al., 1993, 1994, 1995, Roth and Romeo, 1992 and Agrawal and Kamakura, 1999, etc).

Fifthly, within each country COO effects have also been shown to vary significantly with age (Schooler, 1971), with gender (Schooler 1971; Dornoff et al. 1974), with education level (Schooler, 1971; Anderson and Cunningham, 1972; Wang 1978; Sohail 2003), and with income (Wang 1978). Schooler (1971) claimed that old people were likely to rate foreign products more highly than did young people. However, Wang (1978) found no such effect. Schooler (1971) and Dornoff et al. (1974) suggested that female consumers tended to evaluate foreign products higher in general than did male consumers. Nonetheless, Dornoff et al. (1974) were unable to prove such effect for products made in more developed countries. Many studies have found that more educated people tend to rate foreign products higher than those with a limited education (Schooler, 1971; Anderson & Cunningham, 1972; Dornoff et al. 1974; Wang, 1978; Sohail 2003). Moreover, the study by Wang (1978) also found that

people with high income tended to hold a more favourable attitude toward imported goods than did people with low income.

How to identify important consumer segments is vital for targeting marketing strategies. Brunning (1997) examined the relationships between COO effect, national loyalty, product choice and various demographic variables in consumers from different provinces of Canada. The study found that the respondents with low income, for example, unemployed workers, self employed, homemakers, retirees and labourers had the greatest extent of national loyalty, as opposed to the respondents with higher income, such as managers and professionals who had the lowest levels of national loyalty. Negative attitudes towards foreign products have also been found to vary according to consumers' socio-demographic and psychological characteristics (Wang and Lamb, 1983; Gurhan-Canil and Maheswaran, 2000; Sohail 2003).

2.2.4 Stereotypes and the COO Concept

A number of studies have been conducted which suggest that individual consumers have stereotypes of products produced in certain nations. Stereotyping is a universal concept which can be defined as "beliefs about the characteristics, attributes, and behaviours of certain groups" (Hilton and von Hippel, 1996, p. 240). This phenomenon has generally been referred to as product stereotyping and was first investigated and measured empirically by Schooler (1965)'s national stereotype studies. The general conclusion of these studies was that consumers have a set of preconceived attitudes, one of which is quality of products that are identified as being from certain countries of origin. In addition, research has shown change in attitudes toward foreign products. For instance, consumers have preconceived quality images of products based only on information pertaining to COO (Reierson 1967; Gaedeke, 1973; Khanna, 1986; Strutton et al. 1994; Ahmed et, al. 2002; Liefeld 2004).

According to Lee and Schaninger (1996), image of the object is behind much of the diversity, richness and unpredictability of the human experience. In marketing, as in other aspects of life, there is no end to the different interpretations which different observers give to the same objects. The importance of images has been well recognised for decades with regards not only to products and brands but also to producers, distributors, consumers, and everything else that comprises "marketing"

(Sohail 2004; Lee and Schaninger, 1996; Papadopoulos, 1993).

The literature suggests that image essentially represents a consumer's collection and judgment of products' intrinsic and extrinsic informational cues. Intrinsic cues can range from the components of products to the architectural design of a company's headquarters building and the physical appearance of a person (Knight and Calantone 2000). Additionally, extrinsic informational cues range from a product's price to a company's reputation and a person's name. Both the intrinsic and extrinsic informational cues can be used to evaluate product quality. For example, the most frequently used intrinsic cues for a bottle of wine can be taste, colour, smell, and vintage year. They are important indicators of quality to consumers who have prior product knowledge. Nonetheless, some consumers may not be good at judging subtle variations of taste, colour, smell and age. Therefore, they may rely on extrinsic informational cues like COO, price, package and the store image as indicators to evaluate the quality.

The effects of COO that indicate a tendency to evaluate products act as a role of a cognitive shortcut that can associate products to the broad network of culturally-shared national stereotypes with cognitive, affective and normative inferences (Obermiller and Spangenberg, 1989; Maheswaran, 1994; Verlegh and Steenkamp, 1999; Chattalas, 2008; and Ozretic-Dosen et al. 2007). COO image can be seen as a stereotype-driven attribute that associates products to emotional attitudes with particular countries in an affective process (Verlegh and Steenkamp, 1999). Samiee (1994) referred to this process as "country stereotype effect" since COO's similarity to the "stereotyping" of consumers is based on the race, gender and other attributes. Additionally, COO effects act as a normative process when consumers hold desirable behavioural norms in their purchasing process. Consumers' decision to purchase or not purchase one specific country's products means a vote in favour or against that country's policies, practices or action (Verlegh and Steenkamp, 1999). "When such norms exist regarding the correctness of purchases of products from specific nations, or of all non-domestic products for that matter, COO may affect purchase intentions directly, regardless of any product-related beliefs" (Chattalas, 2008, p. 58). In our modern society, consumers can reward "sympathetic" countries by buying their goods, but punish "antipathetic" countries by boycotting their

products (Smith, 1993). What's more, consumers' preference to purchase domestic products or foreign products is dependent on a moral level of their consumer ethnocentrism (Shimp and Sharma, 1987)

Reierson (1966) examined American consumers' perceived attitudes towards imported products with national stereotypes rather than their opinions about specific product categories. Respondents included 105 business administration students from Baylor University and 50 psychology students from Texas A & M University because the author aimed to acquire a "good cross selection of student opinions" (Reierson, 1966: 33). They were asked to rate their opinions of products from ten different source countries, which include

- USA
- Germany
- Japan
- France

- Canada
- Italy
- UK
- Sweden

- Belgium
- Denmark

The questionnaire was designed to evaluate the stereotypes by ranking products in general, products in classes and specific products from the above ten countries by using the terms of "high quality", "medium quality" or "low quality". The product categories selected include mechanical products, food products, and fashion merchandise. The findings of the research showed an obvious stereotyping existed in American consumers' mind. Such stereotyping effects on products "made in USA" were rated highest. In the end, the author concluded that consumers would have preconceived attitudes in terms of national stereotypes about foreign products rather than their opinions about the same products.

After one year, Reierson (1967) followed his former study of researching American consumers' attitudes towards foreign products by focusing on various forms of communication media which could influence the imported product image. The research aimed to examine various communication media that might change consumers' attitudes toward Italian products and Japanese products based on five selected experiments from approximately 1,000 questionnaires. The five experimental variables included film representation, magazine advertising and brochures,

publication distribution, and window display. He found that if the "prejudice of consumers toward a nation's product is not too intense; consumers' attitude may be made significantly more favourable by even slight exposure to communication and promotional devices" (p.386).

The stereotyping effects can be found in many other studies. For example, Schooler (1965) found that consumers rated products "made in" Guatemala and Mexico higher than products "made in" Costa Rica and El Salvador. Nagashima (1970) found that products of Germany were rated higher than products "made in" the UK, USA, Japan and France. After eight years, Nagashima (1977) reviewed his study and implemented the same research. The result showed that consumers' national stereotypes can be changed over time.

Gaedeke (1973) further investigated the research of stereotyping to cover product ranges from developing countries. He assessed American consumers' opinions towards general quality of products from developing countries and their domestic products. Gaedeke (1973) applied Likert's method of summated rating to 200 college students from marketing class for their opinions about the quality of products. These students were divided into two groups. The first group was asked to rate their opinions about the quality of products from developing countries in general, classes of products imported in large volume, and about specific product items. Additionally, respondents were asked their opinions about the imported products with some well-known US brands. The second group was asked to rate these same American branded products by hiding the COO information. The results showed that products "made in USA" were rated at the top in all product categories in all developing countries in this study. Therefore, the author suggested that COO information cannot generally influence consumers' evaluation of the branded products' quality.

Abdul-Malek (1975) made an empirical study to assess business management's attitudes toward trade contracts abroad. The study was based on the premise that such attitudes can influence the extent of management's export-orientation. A structured questionnaire was presented to 154 chief executives from manufacturing industries in Canada. Respondents were provided with five identical settings of differential scales for customer and intermediary groups from:

- Canada
- The US
- West Europe

- Latin America
- Asia
- Africa

Respondents were asked to describe customers and intermediaries in each setting by setting scale for each situation. Abdul-Malek (1975) found a clear preference to North Americans that were seen as better customers than foreign customers and distributors. In addition, the study also showed that different perceived socio-economic traits would result in differences in chief executives' perceptions toward trade contracts abroad. For example, exporters who held more experience were likely to be more in favour of foreign products than non-exporters.

Darling and Kraft (1977) investigated the impact of "made in" label on Finnish consumers' attitudes toward products from:

- Sweden
- West Germany
- The UK
- France

- The US
- Japan
- Russia

Most respondents were chosen from banks, retail, wholesale, and manufacturing companies. A few of respondents were from faculty personnel, students, and staff of Helsinki universities. A self-administered questionnaire was issued to 350 respondents and 303 returned with an 86.6 per cent usable response rate. The findings of their research supported their hypothesis that customers' knowledge of COO can influence their attitudes toward products from the target countries. They also found that additional variables like past experience or reputation should also be considered in foreign products evaluation. They concluded that "this ['made in'] label provides a great deal of information to consumers as a result of their past experience with representative national products, learned stereotypes and reputations of national products, and perhaps more general images of traditions and customs of foreign people" (Darling and Kraft, 1977: 520).

Bannister and Saunders (1978) investigated British consumers' attitudes toward domestic products and highly active products from developed countries in the UK market (e.g., Japan, USA, and West Germany). They modified Nagashima (1970)'s

semantic differential scales for their use of depth interviews and a pre-test designed in the study. Five measurements were used toward products of these countries in a total of 224 interviews which include reliability, value for money, appearance, availability and standard of workmanship. Bannister and Saunders (1978) utilised a representative profile of adult consumers in terms of age, sex and socio-economic groupings rather than students or businessmen as surrogates for consumers in general. Seven selected developed countries include:

- The UK
- France
- Italy
- Japan
- West Germany
- the US
- the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR)

Respondents were selected from West Yorkshire and Cheshire. These two areas had distinct differences in levels of immigration in that West Yorkshire was a high immigration area while Cheshire was an area of lower immigration. The results showed that there were statistically significant differences in these stereotypes. UK consumers had positive images of products made in West Germany, UK and Japan; mediocre images of products made in the USA, Italy and France; and very negative images of products made in the USSR. Besides, the study also found some potential differences in attitudes towards products that arose from the acculturation effects of living in areas of immigration. What's more, the segments of age and gender were found to be extremely significant due to the variance in attitudes towards specific COO whilst socioeconomic status has but occasional marginal significance. Finally, Bannister and Saunders (1978, p.569) concluded that "the information generated in the studies of the 'made in' concept has usefulness in measuring a nation's competitive strengths and weaknesses in relation to trading competitors."

White and Cundiff (1978) examined stereotyping influences by assessing the quality of industrial products. A sample totalling 480 industrial buyers from the National Association of Purchasing Management was utilised in the investigation (236 usable returned, 49 per cent). Product categories included:

- Industrial lift truck
- Metal working machine tool
- Dictation system

The selected source countries for the study included:

- The US
- Germany

- Japan
- Brazil

The results revealed that industrial buyers have significant different stereotypical views about different industrial products according to where they were made. In terms of perceived quality, products "made in" the US and Germany were both rated very high. Japanese products were rated relatively lower while products "made in" Brazil were rated lowest in the study. From their study, it can be seen that COO effects in terms of stereotypes are not only applied to assessing consuming products but also to industrial products.

Cattin et al. (1982) examined the perceptions of COO by industrial users. In their study, Nagashima (1970)'s questionnaire structure was utilised and mailed to 350 American (123 usable returned, 35 percent) and 425 French (97 useable returned, 23 percent) directors of purchasing. Based on a seven-point semantic differential scale from 20 sets of bi-polar dimensions, respondents were asked to rate products "made in" five developed countries, including:

- England
- France
- West Germany

- Japan
- The U.S

Additionally, respondents were asked to indicate their most, second, and least favourite COO from the given five countries when they had a product equal in price, quality, and styling. Although the English questionnaire was carefully translated into French, a "cross-cultural" response bias was identified in their study. The study found that consumers having similar cultural values were likely to have similar evaluations of "made in" stereotypes. His study also supported Nagashima (1970)'s "made in" stereotyping findings. Their study showed that West German products also enjoyed a very positive perception among American and French consumers whilst West German products enjoyed a favoured perception among Japanese consumers.

Khanna (1986) examined Indian business people's attitudes towards "made in" Asian companies including *South Korea, Taiwan, India and Japan* based on product attributes of *pricing, product, promotion and service*. Respondents were asked to rate how important they perceived a COO stereotype to a new customer versus a customer

with a long-term relationship. In the product evaluation process, greater COO effect was found on new customers than old customers. However, the author admitted that the company image may lead the result of the study to be inaccurate. The author admitted the problem of homogeneity of country images. In other words, a consumer's product evaluation process and perception of country stereotype might be affected by the company image (Khanna, 1986).

2.2.5   Models of COO Stereotype Change

As aforementioned, COO stereotypes can change with the time (Nagashima, 1978). Stereotypes modification is feasible. In reviewing the stereotyping literature, three possible models of stereotype change are identified:

- Bookkeeping model (Rothbart, 1981; Rumelhart and Norman, 1978),
- Conversion model (Rothbart 1981), and
- The subtyping model (Brewer, et al. 1981; Taylor, 1981).

Bookkeeping Model

The bookkeeping model which is also called as "fine-tune process" by Crocker and Weber (1983) portrays stereotype change as an incremental process in which any single piece of stereotype relevant information is noted and utilised to modify the existing stereotype. In the bookkeeping model, less disconfirming instances do not impose much impact on stereotype change. Stereotype change is time consuming which can only take place through an accumulation process of the disconfirming instances. Any disconfirming evidence will result in a minor modification and the structure of the stereotype is not affected by this model. A significant change in the stereotype will take place gradually by the accumulation of disconfirming evidence that deviates systematically from the original stereotype.

Conversional Model

The conversion model may occur when one or more extremely and dramatically disconfirming instances. Different from the bookkeeping model, it is not necessary to have accumulation of many instances to alter stereotypes in this model. A conversional model views stereotype change as a relatively more dramatic but less gradual process (Rothbart, 1981 cited by Crocker and Weber 1983). Crocker and

Weber (1983) views conversion model as an "all-or-none" process. According to this model, a change in stereotype beliefs can only take place when one or more members display attributes that are fundamentally contradictory to the overall stereotype. Proponents of this model believe that only the extreme inconsistencies can gain attention and elicit a stereotype change. Hence, they view that individuals are swayed by highly salient and critical instances. For example, one English professor's stereotype that Chinese are hard working may be revised drastically if one has a Chinese student who is extremely lazy. Therefore, information about one or more group members who highly deviate from the group's stereotype can lead to substantial changes in that stereotype.

Subtyping Model

For the subtyping model, one or more individual stereotypes that are distinctly different from the overall stereotypes exist and are treated as exceptional subtypes. These unrepresentative instances may not influence the overall stereotype. The subtyping model theorised stereotypes as hierarchical structures which evolve by means of experience (Brewer, et al., 1981 and Taylor, 1981 cited by both Crocker and Weber, 1983 and Lotz and Hu, 2001). Proponents of this model claimed that some subcategories of stereotype named as subtypes may be created when information about known members of a stereotype which are inconsistent with individuals' perception about the stereotype takes place. "If disconfirming information is concentrated in only a few of its members, they will be perceived to be highly disparate; therefore, they will be subtyped and dismissed as unrepresentative of the group, preventing change in stereotype beliefs" (Lotz and Hu: 110). Hence, only those subtypes that are regarded as representative of general stereotypes can result in stereotype change. In other words, if subtypes were viewed as exceptions or unrepresentative instances of the overall stereotype, the change in stereotype beliefs would not be thought to take place. These exceptional subtypes have little impact on the overall stereotype due to that the overall stereotype remains accurate for most circumstances.

In the example of Chinese people being hard working, the subtyping model predicts that the stereotype would become more differentiated, to include hard studying Chinese students plus a subcategory of Chinese students who are lazy. Only when

instances are too incongruent that they cannot be accepted by "fine tuning" established stereotypes, do subtypes develop. Therefore, the subtyping model indicates that the process of stereotype change is dependent upon the accumulation of unrepresentative instances of overall stereotype. In other words, were too many instances of lazy Chinese students found, the changing beliefs about the overall stereotype that Chinese people are hard working would result.

Crocker and Weber (1983) tested the above three models by implementing an experiment that manipulated the dispersion of inconsistent information. Subjects were presented with information about either a small or large sample of group members of inconsistent stereotype evidence in two situations: dispersed across many members or concentrated in a few members. The result supported the subtyping model due to that more stereotype change was produced in a dispersed situation than the concentrated situation. This assertion has also been confirmed by Johnston and Hewstone (1992). Additionally, according to Crocker and Weber (1983), whereas a subtyping model works in large sample conditions, the bookkeeping model may operate under some conditions such as very small samples. The conversion model of stereotype change may apply only under some certain conditions such as when individuals are highly uncertain of their stereotypes. However, according to Hewstone, et al. (1992), concentrated disconfirmers are more effective in the conversion model.

2.2.6   The Research for Reducing the Impact of Negative COO Effects

How to effectively minimise any negative COO influence and maximise positive COO influence is important to international marketers. In light of recent globalisation trends, companies usually base manufacturing plant location decisions on the cost of production. It is noteworthy that these "low cost" locations are often attached with negative COO stereotypes because they are usually from less developed countries (Tse and Lee, 1993). "The relationship between plant location decisions based upon labour cost and COO stereotype effects has diametrically opposing implications for the welfare of the firm" (Lotz and Hu, 2001: 106). As COO effects on the evaluation of one product are affected by its place of manufacture (Gurhan-Canli and Maheswaran, 2000 a), it is important to find ways to effectively reduce negative COO effects. From the literature, the solutions that can reduce the impact of negative COO effects include:

- Hiding negative COO information (Piron, 2000)

- Triggering stereotypes by choosing a foreign brand name (Leclerc, et al. 1994)

- Promotional strategies (Ettenson, et al. 1988 and Reierson, 1967)

- Diluting Negative COO Stereotypes (Lotz and Hu, 2001)

Hiding Negative COO Information

Piron (2000) found that as two different countries both come to have favourite impressions to consumers, only a relatively more favourite one has the impact. In addition, Piron (2000) pointed out that customers' purchase intentions to certain products can be higher when there is no related COO cue provided. This can be very important to marketers from developing countries like China, because their customers usually do not have very high negative perceptions to their country (Zhou and Hui, 2003). Hence, their customers may be more likely to buy competing goods with much more positive or no COO information. For example, brands like Haier and Lenovo are often discreet about their association with China, while Sony Ericsson and Toshiba very clearly communicates its Japanese linkage. This is due to that "a developed country origin of a product was seen as an insurance on the product's quality and performance" (Kaynak et al. 2000: 128).

Triggering Stereotypes by Choosing a Foreign Brand Name

Since people obtain most of the COO information through advertising (Narayana 1981), it is worthwhile to examine this concept from an advertising perspective. In advertising, COO image is often communicated through a foreign language (Head 1988). Advertisers in the US have been using European languages in more and more advertising campaigns (Ray et, al. 1991). Nonetheless, most research concerning the use of foreign language concentrates on social and cultural perspectives or on an information processing point of view. This is based largely on the premise that the foreign language portion of the ad can be understood by consumers (Domzal et, al. 1995; Liefeld 2004).

For example, Domzal et. al (1995: 99) claimed that foreign language is "unusual" in the advertisement. Consequently, it catches the attention of consumers and leads them to more elaborate processing of the advertisement, which results in better retrieval and memory regarding the message. Luna and Peracchio (1999) posited that first language

should be used in the advertisement due to the strength of conceptual level of first language and the different conceptual feature associated with a word between the first language and the foreign language.

Nonetheless, only a small number of people can speak or read a foreign language fluently. Therefore, it may be misleading if advertisers believe that foreign words in the advertisement are understood by their prospective buyers unless they use very simple vocabulary that can be known to a large number of consumers (Ray et, al. 1991; Luna and Peracchio 1999; Sohail 2004). Sometimes, foreign language is often used in the advertisement even though consumers may not understand it. For example, the restaurants in Chinatown in the U.K usually use Chinese characters to raise the image of Chinese dishes to many British consumers who do not even know the meaning of the Chinese characters. The rationale behind this approach is that the image of the language is separate from individual foreign words (Ray et, al. 1991). Thus, it seems that advertisers try to convey a certain meaning that is associated with the country rather than the meaning of the foreign word itself. In this context, it is not a matter of whether consumers understand the meaning or not. Rather, the goal is that consumers may associate the advertisement with the COO of the language. This notion can be understood through the linguistic explanation of borrowing that is done for the purpose of prestige or due to necessity (Ray, et al. 1991; Luna and Peracchio 1999; Papadopoulos and Heslop 2002). Necessity may arise, for example, if there is a new concept that does not exist in a certain language so that the term is borrowed from the originating culture or country.

The rationale behind the perceived prestige of a foreign language is that people associate the foreign language with the national characteristics and traditional products of the country it represents (Domzal et al. 1995). Thus, it has been speculated that foreign languages can be used much the same way as "made-in" labels to affect evaluation of products (Ray et, al. 1991; Luna and Peracchio 1999, Chao 2001). As a result, the use of foreign language derives its justification not just from being an attention-getting device but also from the notion that the foreign language is the indirect way of communicating the "made-in" concept. Consequently, the foreign language may be used as a proxy that triggers the image of its originating country. For example, Christian Dior uses the word "Parfum" in the advertisement to strengthen its

French origin associations (Thakor and Lavack, 2003; Papadopoulos and Heslop 2002). Besides linking language to enhance product's COO, companies also associate other national characteristics to emphasise COO (Chao 2001; Balabanis et, al. 2002; Thakr and Lavack, 2003; Sohail 204).

The research in the brand name area concerns itself with the effects of origin cues and this is particularly the case with "foreign branding" (Thakor and Lavack, 2003). For example, brands like Galanz, TCL, Haier, and Lenovo may all seem like foreign brands but are actually Chinese brands. In most cases, products under these Chinese brands are labelled by foreign names rather than Chinese characters even in the Chinese market. As a result, consumers in China who bought products from these brands at the very beginning may have assumed these brands were from foreign countries with high level of COO associations. After people really get involved in these brands and enjoy high quality of products, they would know more about these brands. In this case, the original potential negative COO associations had been easily alleviated.

According to Leclerc et al. (1994), perceptions of brand nationality can be manipulated via pronunciation and the French sounding products are better than other brand names because the French brand names were preferred to others. Harris et al. (1994)'s similar study found that English pronunciation could result in more favourable brand attitudes than French and German brand names. Nonetheless, their studies suggested that the pronunciation of brand names potentially play an important role in consumers' brand attitudes. Therefore, multinationals from emerging markets in particular the BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa) can find a method by choosing a proper brand name to build brand image and attract customers in the international market.

Promotional Strategies

As aforementioned, studies of Ettenson et al. (1988) and Reierson (1967) indicated that promotional strategies can reduce COO effects in product evaluation. Therefore, promotional strategies can be implemented in products with negative COO effects. Ettenson et al. (1988)'s study showed that COO effects become weak after the launching of a promotional campaign. Additionally, Reierson (1967: 386) claimed

that "if the prejudice of consumers toward a nation's products is not too intense, consumer attitudes may be made significantly more favourable by even slight exposure to communication and promotion devices".

Tse and Lee (1993) also found the importance of product experience in product evaluation that would further erode component origin effects. Assembly origin effects seemed to be magnified by the product experience (Tse and Lee, 1993). Therefore, the argument that promotional strategies by increasing product experience can reduce negative COO effects in product evaluation suggested by Ettenson et al. (1998) and Reierson (1967) was further supported.

In addition, Tse and Lee's (1993) study indicated that negative COO effects can be weakened when a strong brand cue was presented and / or consumers were having product experience. They designed two studies to investigate how to remove negative country images. The first study assessed the psychological mechanism consumers used when a COO is decomposed into country of component and country of assembly. Han (1989)'s two psychological mechanisms including halo effects and summary construct were used by Tse and Lee (1993) in their first study. Their second study extended the effect of decomposing COO in terms of country of component and country of assembly to the context of global brands and product experience.

The product category used by Tse and Lee (1993) was a *home stereo system* including a compact disc player, a tuner, and two speakers. This is because it is common for companies to have their production and assembly plants in two different countries (Japan and South Korea). The subjects consisted of university students who had good knowledge of stereo sound systems and were fond of these products. They were divided into six groups according to the following six cues presented (Tse and Lee, 1993: 30)

- Made in Japan
- Made in South Korea
- Components from Japan and Assembled in Japan
- Components from Japan and Assembled in South Korea
- Components from South Korea and Assembled in Japan

- Components from South Korea and Assembled in South Korea

The analysis of the first study showed that COO effects would not be magnified and consumers' confidence in product assessment would not change when COO information was decomposed because an insignificant difference between "made in Japan" and "components from Japan and assembly in Japan" was found. As Tse and Lee (1993: 25) argued:

> *"Subjects do not seem to differ either in their psychological mechanism they use or in their confidence in evaluating a product which is 'made in' a country versus a product which has its 'components from' and 'is assembled in' the same country".*

Nonetheless, the second study found that brand would exert a strong effect on consumers' product evaluation in a way that positive brand introduced will reduce the negative effects of unfavourable component origin and / or assembly origin.

Diluting Negative Country of Origin Stereotypes

Lotz and Hu (2001) implemented similar study to Crocker and Weber (1983) to empirically test whether subtyping and conversion models of stereotype change were applicable in diluting negative COO stereotypes. In their study, 103 subjects with various backgrounds, including both men and women aged 18 to 70 years old, were solicited through a survey conducted at a mall to evaluate the extent of change or dilution in negative COO stereotypes. The products used were 35 mm compact cameras made in South Korea and Taiwan. Product attributes presented to the subjects included: COO, sharpness, ease of use, and focusing.

They found that concentrated inconsistent attribute information would develop more COO stereotype change than dispersed inconsistent attribute information. In addition, "for the concentrated inconsistent attribute information condition, the perceived heterogeneous COO stereotype will produce greater change in stereotypic beliefs than the perceived homogeneous COO stereotype" (Lotz and Hu, 2001: 113).

2.2.7   Four Streams of COO Research

Kaynak, et al. (2000) classified COO studies into four schools, which include:

- Single-cue studies (Schooler, 1965; Nagashima, 1970; Schooler, 1971; Bilkey and Nes, 1982; Kaynak and Cavusgil, 1983; and Han, 1990)

- Multi-cue studies (Johansson et al., 1985; Eroglu and Machleit, 1989; Johansson, 1989; Wall et al., 1991; Leonidou, et al. 2006; Alba and Hutchinson, 1987; Ahmed and d'Astous 1993 and 1995; Ahmed et al., 1994; Roth and Romeo, 1992 and Agrawal and Kamakura, 1999)

- Conjoint (trade-off) Analysis (Akaah and Becherer, 1983 ; Ettenson et al., 1988; Lee et al., 1992 ; Akaah and Yaprak, 1993 ; Okechuku, 1994 ; Ferguson et al. 2008 and Klenosky et al., 1996)

- Environmental analysis (Wang and Lamb, 1983; Papadopoulos et al., 1990 ; Cordell, 1992)

A cue can be defined as a characteristic or dimension, external to a person that can be encoded and used to categorise a stimulus object (Schellinck, 1983). According to Bilkey and Nes (1982), the conflicting findings in past studies are due to the number of product information cues considered, that can be able to influence consumers' product evaluation.

Single-cue Studies

Most early studies tended to research COO effects as a single product cue on consumers' product evaluations. Researchers in this school considered the COO effects as the most important consideration in consumers' purchase decision making process. The results from single cue studies showed that consumers generally evaluate imported products coming from developed countries (e.g. the UK and the USA) in a positive light and negatively evaluate those products coming from lesser advanced countries (e.g. China and Brazil) (Schooler, 1965 and 1971; Wang and Lamb, 1983; Yavas and Alpay, 1986; Khachaturian and Morganosky, 1990; Hooley et al., 1988; Han, 1990; Ghadir, 1990; Cordell, 1991; Ahmed et al., 1994; Okechuku, 1994; and Kim, 1995). Under single-cue studies, authors often evaluate foreign brands relying on their stereotypes about the brands coming from particular countries.

Schooler (1965) conducted a single-cue study to investigate the COO effects in products evaluation. A random sample totalling 200 part-time students in Guatemala was selected in the study. The product categories used included juice and fabric. Respondents were divided into four different groups with products labelled as four different South American countries' products. The four countries were:

- El Salvador
- Costa Rica
- Guatemala
- Mexico

The results indicated that lower evaluations were given to products made from less developed countries. Schooler (1965) claimed that respondents were biased for products from those less developed countries among developing countries. For example, respondents in the study evaluated products made in El Salvador and Costa Rica as likely to be of less quality than Guatemalan and Mexican products. In the end, Schooler (1965) concluded that products' COO had an effect on consumers' opinions of the products.

In his follow-up research, Schooler (1971) examined the COO bias effects from a more broadly based random sample based on cloth, desk pen and simple goblet. Source countries selected included both developed and developing countries:

- The US
- West Germany
- Czechoslovakia
- Chile
- India
- Nigeria
- North America
- West Europe
- Asia
- Latin America
- Africa

The study indicated significant bias differences towards products of different COO and a hierarchy of COO bias effect was identified. What's more, the results showed that such effects appeared to exist to both national and regional labelling. For example, German products were evaluated as higher quality than products of Asia, India and Western Europe. Additionally, American products were rated higher than Indian and Western European products. The author concluded the following:

- Older consumers evaluated Asian, African, West German and North American products lower than younger consumers;
- Women rated foreign products higher than men;

- Consumers with a high educational level had stronger bias toward foreign products than those with a low level of education;

- Non-white consumers rated products from Africa, Latin America and India better than white consumers;

- White consumers rated the products of US and North America higher than non-white.

Nagashima (1970) used a semantic differential scale method to test the cross-cultural image of products "made in" American and Japanese businesses. There were 230 Minnesota businesses from the Minnesota Directory of manufacturers and 100 Tokyo businesses from the Tokyo Directory of Companies selected randomly. Source countries were:

- The US
- Japan
- Germany

- the UK
- France
- Italy

- Switzerland
- Canada

Respondents' opinions on products were recorded on a seven-point Likert scale from good (+ 3 points) to bad (- 3 points). The author found that Japanese and American businessmen had different "made in" stereotypes. Japanese businessmen gave their highest rating to "made in Germany" while American businessmen evaluated the American label as the best. Additionally, the "made in France" label was rated the lowest among the five countries. The results also showed that the image of "made in" was highly influenced by respondents' familiarity and availability of the products.

Nagashima (1977) repeated his former research of cross-cultural image of "made in" to test if there was any attitude change among Japanese businessmen. In this follow-up study, attitude change was identified among Japanese businessmen over the eight years. The results showed that the overall image of "made in USA" had suffered in the ways of price and value, service and engineering, advertising and reputation, design and style and consumer profile from 1969-75. As a result, the US was rated the lowest of the five countries in terms of careful workmanship. Nonetheless, the label of "made in" Japan, Germany, Britain and France had been greatly enhanced.

Bilkey and Nes (1982) examined past studies related to COO effects on product evaluation from 1965 to 1979, and found that COO cue has influences on product evaluation and consumers' purchase decision in manufacturing industry. COO serves as an important cue that helps consumers to infer product attributes. Nonetheless, their study showed that it was unsure that the COO influence on consumers' purchase decision can be applied to insurance and catering services industries.

Kaynak and Cavusgil (1983) developed a structured and self-administered questionnaire to identify consumers' quality perceptions varied across four product classes. The four product classes include:

- Electronic products
- Household goods
- Food products
- Fashion merchandise

The questionnaire was carried out in four cities in Canada, 197 consumers were asked to rank the quality and price of the four kinds of products from 25 different countries. Respondents' opinions were recorded on a five-point Likert scale from very poor to very good. Their results showed that consumers' attitudes toward products are varied according to the product classes. However, the study showed that COO can be viewed as a second variable, which has strong impact when consumers know less about a brand and its products.

Han (1990) conducted a study in the U.S. to examine the role of COO image in consumer choice behaviour. Three countries were chosen including the USA, Japan and South Korea. The study examined the effects of COO which can indicate a tendency to evaluate products from the following four aspects when consumers are not familiar with the country's products:

- The effects of COO stereotypes on a brand evaluation from various countries
- The effects of COO stereotypes on consumers' willingness to buy a brand from different countries
- The effects of COO stereotypes on consumers' attitudes toward products' specific attributes.
- The effects of COO stereotypes for a product category on different classes from the same country

Han (1990) measured country stereotypes according to five references, which include:

- Technological advancement
- Workmanship
- Prestige
- Price
- Service

Televisions and *cars* were assessed given "various domestic and foreign brands are relatively well known to consumers in the USA" (Han, 1990: 28-29). Two brands were selected from each product for each country. Consumers' brand attitudes were examined by two measurements: cognitive and affective. The data was collected by telephone interview from a sample of 116 random American residents from a Midwestern city. The finding demonstrated that if consumers were not familiar with a foreign brand they would have unfavourable inferences about that products' quality and hence would not have a strong willingness to buy that foreign brand. Moreover, Han (1990) showed that consumers' willingness to buy is associated with political, economic and cultural characteristics of the brand's COO. In addition, the study concluded that COO stereotypes were influenced by the similarity of political and cultural environment and belief systems between the product's COO and consumers' home countries.

Critiques of Single-cue Studies

Many authors criticised single-cue studies which assumed that COO information is the only informational cue considered by the consumers in their product evaluation process (e.g. Bilkey and Nes, 1982; Papadopoulous, 1986; Eroglu and Machleit, 1988). There are a few limitations of single-cue studies. Firstly, this stream of studies ignores the impact of other informational cues on consumer product evaluation. As a result, single-cue studies would create some internal and external validity doubts (Eroglu and Machleit, 1988). Secondly, single-cue has less consideration of factors of reliability (Eroglu and Machleit, 1988). The inadequate reliability issues and non-existent validity assessment might have lead to overstated or understated results. Thirdly, single-cue studies have methodological limitations. Respondents were usually asked to base their product evaluation on imaginary products rather than actual products which may easily produce different results (Bikey and Nes, 1982).

Multi-cue Studies

The concept of COO is not a simple uni-dimension and that its interaction with brand image and other marketing variables further complicates matters. The second group of researchers designed multi-cue studies in the way that considered COO as one of the variables amongst a variety of information consumers consider in their product evaluation process rather than the most important one as single cue studies (Johansson et al. 1985, Han and Terpstra 1988, Johansson 1989, and Ahmed et al. 1994). In short, they examined the COO effects in product evaluation in the presence of other cues.

Many researchers still agree with the importance of the COO cue. Nonetheless, in addition to the COO cue, they also included in their research some other information cues such as: products' brand name, colour, size, price, design, consumers' product familiarity, etc.

Intrinsic and Extrinsic Cues

Products' informational cues that can influence customers evaluation and are often divided into (Bikey and Nes, 1982; Han and Terpstra, 1988; Cordel, 1992):

- Intrinsic cues(i.e. the product's COO, taste, design, technology, performance and durability) and
- Extrinsic cues (i.e. price, brand reputation, and warranties) cues.

Intrinsic cues are tangible while extrinsic cues are intangible. In most circumstances, consumers base their product evaluation on both intrinsic and extrinsic cues. The relationship between intrinsic and extrinsic cues is that when consumers find themselves confused in terms of intrinsic cues, they will often use extrinsic cues as indirect indicators of perceived quality and risk mitigation in order to more effectively evaluate products (Gerstner, 1985; Olson and Jacoby, 1972). If consumers are judging a product with limited or no intrinsic cues, or they have limited familiarity with products of foreign origin, they would show a tendency to rely heavily on extrinsic cues (Han and Terpstra, 1988). For example, price may be easily used as an indicator of product quality when other information is lacking. Additionally, extrinsic cues can be partially controlled either by companies, for example in the case of guarantees, warranties, promotion, and brand reputation, or by some third parties, in circumstances such as product ratings and ISO standards ratings (Cordell, 1988). Therefore, customers would use COO to measure product quality at a time when they

have less knowledge about the product's class or brand's COO (Darling and Kraft, 1977; Kaynak and Cavusgil, 1983; Johansson et al., 1985; Eroglu and Machleit, 1989; Han, 1989 and 1990; Akaah and Yaprak, 1993).

Past multi-cues studies showed that the importance of COO effects in consumer product evaluation would diminish with the presence of other additional cues (Hastak and Hong, 1991; Johansson et al., 1985; Johansson and Nebenzhanl, 1986). COO can influence product evaluations not only by serving as an information cue, but also by moderating the influence of other product information cues on product evaluation (Verlegh, 2002). For instance, according to Szybillo and Jacoby (1974), when consumers are lacking information about one product they may depend on its brand name to perceive the quality; hence, a trusted brand name in consumers' product evaluation would result in brand loyalty. In such circumstances, the COO cue becomes less important than other information cues (Ettenson and Gaeth, 1991).

The COO cue becomes less important

Unlike single-cue studies, the findings in this stream showed that COO effects become less important in product evaluation with the presence of other information cues. Johansson et al. (1985) used an experimental methodology to determine the impact of COO effects on product evaluation when combined with other variables. They selected *automobiles* as the target product class with ten car models from Japan, the US and Germany.

Thirteen attributes were selected and evaluated, which included:
- price
- handling
- horsepower
- acceleration
- gas mileage
- driving comfort
- passenger comfort
- reliability
- durability
- workmanship
- styling
- colour selection

Graduate students from the US and Japan were used as convenience samples for the questionnaire. The respondents were asked to rate each of the car models on each attribute by considering the importance of each attribute. The results indicated that COO effects became relatively less important when a multi-cue approach was used.

The author concluded that "COO effects may be less significant than has generally been believed, and they may occur predominantly in relation to evaluation of specific attributes rather than overall evaluations" (Johansson et al. 1985: 395).

Therefore, Johansson et al. (1985) suggested that COO can only be used as a proxy for other information since familiarity or prior favourable or unfavourable experience with a brand may influence COO effects on evaluations. The more customers familiar with a product, the less likely they will rely on COO as a single cue in the evaluation of the product. Also, prior experience with a specific product category or brand from a specific country may colour other products or brands' evaluation from the same country.

Country of Design and Country of Assembly in Country of Origin Effects
Ahmed et al. (1994) investigated COO effects on purchasing managers' perceptions in terms of perceived quality, purchase value and product profiles. They divided COO effects into the influence of Country of Design (COD) and Country of Assembly (COA). The product categories used were fax machine, computer system and ball-point pens.

Canada and Mexico were selected as COD and COA along with another country. There were 13 countries selected in the study as the target locations for COD in terms of conception, design and engineering; and COA in terms of manufacturing and assembly of industrial products. The results indicated that the impact of COO is important in the aspect of COD in organisational purchasing and important in the aspect of COA in consumer purchasing. The findings showed that developed countries were evaluated generally higher than emerging industrialising countries. Yet, these countries were evaluated better in COA than COD. For example, respondents rated South Korea almost as excellent as France and Italy as a COA. Meanwhile, South Korea could be evaluated higher than Belgium as a COA and almost as excellent as a COD. Additionally, Ahmed et al (1994) suggested that consumers treat COD as a more important indicator of product quality and purchase value than the COA. Nonetheless, the significance of COD was dependent on product complexity. For example, the more complicated the product advanced technology, the more

perceived significance of design. Therefore, iPhones have been labelled as "Designed in California" and "Assembled in China".

The Product-Country Match and Mismatch

Roth and Romeo (1992) assessed the term of "fit" between COO and product categories. The authors claimed a framework for managing COO effects that matched products' four elements with the perceived COO images:

- Innovativeness
- Design
- Prestige
- Workmanship

The study aimed to identify which product category elements could be most frequently related to perceived COO stereotypes and the importance of these characteristics to various product categories. A random sample consisted of 99 graduate students from Ireland, 130 from Mexico, and 139 from the USA. Meanwhile, COO stereotypes were measured according to the characteristics of the product category. In their research, the selected product categories include:

- Beer
- Automobiles
- Leather shoes
- Crystal
- Bicycles
- Watches

For each characteristic, ten source countries were evaluated, which included:

- The UK
- Germany
- Hungary
- Ireland
- Japan
- South Korea
- Mexico
- Spain
- The U.S

Roth and Romeo (1992) found that consumers from the US, Ireland and Mexico were in favour of cars and watches "made in" Japan, Germany, and the USA because these countries were rated high in product categories characteristics. Additionally, their results indicated that the extent of match serves as an indicator of consumers' willingness to purchase imported products. For instance, consumers holding a negative image of a country would be less willing to purchase the products from that country. This is especially the case when consumers' negative country image is very strong and important to one product category.

Based on Bourne (1957)'s four dimensions of products which include:

- Publicly consumed luxury (e.g. convertible sport car)

- Publicly consumed necessity (e.g. sunglasses)

- Privately consumed luxury (home theatre system)

- Privately consumed necessity (toothbrush)

Piron (2000) conducted a study of the influences of COO on different product categories. From the results of his extensive questionnaires to 107 respondents, the author summarised that:

- The COO effect will be somewhat greater on privately consumed necessity (PRN) than on publicly consumed necessity (PUN)

- The COO effect will be quite greater on public consumed necessity (PUN,) than on privately consumed luxury (PRL)

- The COO effect will be slightly greater on privately consumed luxury (PRL) than on publicly consumed luxury (PUL).

In short, the COO effect on different products categories to customers should be:

PRN > PUN > PRL > PUL.

Familiarity to Products

Authors agreed that customers' knowledge about one brand can lead to various dimensions of attitudes toward that brand and hence have different influences on product evaluations and selections. Customers' product familiarity is from their past experiences with product categories. According to Johansson (1989), as the product class knowledge accumulates and the greater availability of different choices, the use of multiple cues will be promoted. As consumers successfully gain knowledge and experience with product categories to a certain level, they can develop an expertise in evaluating brands' attributes between product categories (Eroglu and Machleit, 1988). Therefore, the product's COO can only be one of the evaluative standards that influence customers' purchase behaviour.

Wall et al. (1991) also applied a multi-cue analysis for assessing the COO effects on product evaluation with other cues. The other cues selected by Wall et al. (1991) include:

- Brand name
- Value
- Price
- Likelihood to buy
- Purchase risk

The product categories used were *shirt, telephone and wallet* from:

- Canada

- the U.S

- South Korea

- Italy

- Taiwan

- Hong Kong

The results indicated that COO had related effects to the evaluation of product quality, but it seemed not to be significant when it came to assessing 'likely to buy'. Besides, "age, education, sex and perceptions of ability to judge products were related to consumers' ratings of quality, risk, value and likelihood of purchase especially when the product was more complex and difficult to judge" (Wall et al. 1991: 105).

Similar findings were found by many commentators in the product evaluation, such as Li and Wyer (1994, cited in Ferguson et al, 2008) who have confirmed that COO effects on products are dependent on individuals' motivation and previous knowledge and experience. They proposed that people are likely to use COO attributes as a signal of product quality when they have less knowledge about that service. Lee and Ganesh (1999) also found the importance of consumers' product familiarity which can influence the COO effects on their product evaluation. The study also found that overall country image affects the image of a country as a manufacturer of a particular product class. Therefore, individuals who do not have the ability or have less ability to correctly process the information on intrinsic cues (i.e. design, technology, and durability) tend to weigh heavily on the extrinsic cues (i.e. COO attributes, price, brand reputation, and supplement services) in their evaluation (Bilkey and Nes, 1982; and Cordel, 1992).

Conjoint (trade-off) Analysis

Conjoint analysis refers to an appropriate multivariate statistical method of analysis. This method is usually used to measure what combinations of the product attributes

are most preferred among COO and non-COO product attributes, and what trade-offs respondents are willing to make between different source countries. Therefore, conjoint analysis is appropriate for identifying which attributes are preferred and assessing the joint effects of COO information with other influences on the decision-making behaviour of consumers. In addition to COO attribute, price is frequently included as an additional attribute in most applications of conjoint analysis.

In the simplest conjoint analysis in which only two attributes vary (for example, only COO and price), respondents were asked to rate all the combinations of each product category from different source countries crossed with each price level according to preference. This data was then collected to produce a set of part worth for COO and a set for price.

COO researchers often use conjoint analysis to evaluate the real reasons hidden behind customers' purchase selection when comparing domestic and foreign brands. They used conjoint analysis to measure consumers' value and brand equity by focusing on consumers' actual purchase behaviours, that is to buy or not to buy brands from a specific country. In short, they see that customers participate in trade-offs from various intrinsic and extrinsic factors of a brand or a particular product (Ettenson et al., 1988). They created their understanding to the COO based on their recognition of advantages and disadvantages of the overall manufactured and marketed products from the target country in the previous experience (Roth and Romeo, 1992). The method was proposed as an alternative analysis to the attitude surveys used in COO research. Conjoint analysis can eliminate the identified limitations inherent in previous studies. According to the results of conjoint analysis, companies can design the related marketing strategies to cater for both domestic and foreign products.

Ettenson, et al. (1988) implemented conjoint analysis for assessing the COO effects in relation to a named "made in the USA" campaign. The product categories used were

ladies' blouses and men's dress shirts. COO effects on consumer decision making were examined and compared at the time before and after the launching of the campaign. Students from the University of Maryland were chosen for the pre-test and the post-test. The result showed a contradictory set of findings to previous studies. Their conjoint analysis demonstrated that COO effects were relatively small both before and after the "made in the USA" campaign. Ettenson, et al. (1988) concluded that some information cues of products like price and quality may have stronger effect on evaluations of products than COO cues.

Akaah and Yaprak (1993) used conjoint analysis to investigate the relative importance of the COO effects of products on consumers. Besides, they examined the effects of respondents' nationality and their familiarity of products. A convenience sample of 225 students from Ghana, Turkey and the USA was used for their study. The product category used was *automobile* "made in":

- The US
- Japan
- Germany

Seven attributes of *automobile* were used in the research, which include:

- Workmanship
- COO
- Reliability
- Driving comfort
- Styling
- Fuel economy

The results showed that the COO effects were relatively weak when it was presented among other product cues. The authors suggested that neither respondent nationality nor their product familiarity had a moderating influence on COO effects. This was the

reason why American consumers evaluated automobiles "made in West Germany" to be higher in overall quality than automobiles "made in the USA".

Okechuku (1994) also assessed the COO effects on consumers' product evaluation through conjoint analysis. The product categories used for the research include television sets and car radio. Analysis of each category was based on different group of attributes. Attributes of picture quality and warranty were for television sets while receiver quality and cassette player quality were for car radio. Besides, COO, brand name and price were additional attributes for both television sets and car radios. The source countries used for television sets in this study included:

- Japan
- The US
- The Netherlands
- South Korea

For car radios, the source countries selected include:

- Germany
- The US
- Canada
- Mexico

Target consumers were from:

- The US
- Canada
- Germany
- The Netherlands

The brands selected for *television set* included Sony, Samsung, Philips, and Zenith while Pioneer, Kraco, Kenwood and Blaupunkt, were chosen for *car radio*. Respondents were asked to rate performance of each attribute and rank an overall

performance in a performance preference evaluation by an attitudinal measurement. The results of the study demonstrated that the COO effects were significant in preference analysis for both television sets and car radios "made in" the source countries.

Additionally, the author found that consumers preferred made in their own country's products but not necessarily branded in their own country's products. Nonetheless, when products made domestically were not favourable or acceptable, consumers would select products made in developed countries overseas. What's more, Okechuku (1994) further supported Akaah and Yaprak (1993)'s conclusion that familiarity was a significant element in consumers' evaluations of unfavourable products. For instance, as American consumers had less familiarity with Canadian brands, they would evaluate and rank Canadian brands after the USA and Japan. So, the final results showed that emerging industrialised countries such as South Korea were evaluated less favourably as source countries.

Klenosky et al. (1996) applied conjoint analysis to assess the joint effects of COO cue with two other marketing influences including price-discount level and advertising intensity on Czech consumers' buying behaviour. The study was designed by crossing each possible level of each attribute, resulting in a 5 X 3 X 2 full-factorial design with a total set of 30 profiles:
- Five countries including Japan, Germany, U.S., Czech Republic, and Russia;
- Three attributes including COO, price discount level;
- Two product categories including colour TV sets and automobiles.

Approximately 50 students from the University of Economics in Prague were instructed to administer the questionnaires by using a drop off and pick up approach to six people each. There were 260 usable surveys returned. The questionnaire comprises four steps. Firstly, respondents were asked to assume that they were planning to buy TV sets or automobiles and rate each product description on a seven-point purchase intention scale from 1 "definitely would not buy" to 7

"definitely would buy". Then, information on various COO measures was collected. After, information on media habits and product ownership was collected. Finally, key demographic information was collected. The results showed that Czech consumers were sensitive to all of the three attributes, but products' COO information was the most sensitive attribute to them.

Environmental Analysis

In the COO studies, many concerns focus on the magnitude of the effect in the aspect of the environmental impact that could increase the reliance on COO (Cordell, 1992). The environment here refers to the external that controls or is controlled by one company's marketing system. The environmental analysis emphasises the various environmental factors that influence consumers in the process of their selection, purchase and ultimate consumption. The studies of the environmental impact usually focus on the supplier country's socio-economic and technological conditions. Hence, to MNCs, it is very important to understand how different environmental factors influence customers' perception of their brands.

Wang and Lamb (1983) examined the impact of selected environmental forces upon American consumers' willingness to purchase foreign products. The aim of their study was to assess potential variables regarding COO that consumers may use in the evaluation of foreign products. They analysed the environmental influences of foreign economies, politics, and cultures on American consumers' willingness to purchase foreign products. There were 36 countries grouped into three different levels of economic development, three different levels of political climate, and six different levels of culture. The same country did not appear in different environmental levels. Respondents were asked to rate their willingness to buy imported products from the 36 countries. The result showed a negative consumer bias toward imported products. Thus, Wang and Lamb (1983) concluded that COO effects became intangible barriers to enter new markets. They also suggested that consumers were particularly willing to purchase products made in Europe, Australia, or New Zealand which have developed

economies and a politically free environment.

Cordell (1992) examined COO preferences of American consumers. The purpose of the study was to investigate the consistency of their perceptions within country class and moderator effects of other extrinsic variables on COO. The study had following four hypotheses:

- Goods from industrialised countries are more preferable than those from less developed countries

- Consumers had more consistency of quality evaluation across products from less developed countries than industrialised countries.

- Consumers will be more concerned about COO when products from less developed countries with unfamiliar brand names.

- The higher the product performance risk is, the higher evaluation derogation of products from less developed countries will be

Each hypothesis was associated with the same three sets of questions including "country differences set", "product differences set", and "product choice set". The results showed that all hypothesises were supported under different environments. Nonetheless, the Cordell (1992) pointed out that the research was limited to those consumers who inadvertently seek the COO cue because origin marking is not always visible.

2.2.8 Influences that Encourage COO Effects on Product Evaluation

The influences that encourage COO effects on product evaluation include:

- Consumers' knowledge of the product and knowledge of the product's relevant COO (Darling and Kraft, 1977; Kaynak and Cavusgil, 1983; Bozell-Gallup, 1996; Klein et al. 1998; Paswan and Sharma, 2004; and Lin and Chen, 2006)

- Consumers' cultural orientation in terms of individualism (Gurhan-Canli and Maheswaran, 2000a; Triandis and Gelfand 1998: 119; Ferguson, et al. 2008)

- Consumer ethnocentrism (Shimp and Sharma, 1987; Sharma, et al. 1995; Watson and Wright, 2000; Javalgi and White, 2002; Ferguson, et al. 2008)

Consumers' Product Knowledge and Experience on Country of Origin

Many scholars like D'Astous and Ahmed (1999), Batra et al. (2000), and Kim and Chung (1997) all agree that the country image should be inextricably related and correlated with the levels of brand image. Nonetheless, Paswan and Sharma (2004) suggested that the exact nature of these two concepts is actually not unequivocal, because the notion of the relationship between COO and brand image has not been received much research attention. This argument is also agreed upon by Bozell-Gallup (1996) and Klein et al. (1998) whom challenged the weight given to COO effects in the products' evaluation process. They claimed that customers' knowledge of brands' original country is very important in the process of transition from COO image and brand image. If one brand's products cannot transfer its promise as customers expected from its COO image, negative attitudes and feelings towards the brand may result (Paswan and Sharma, 2004). These negative attitudes and feelings could easily in turn be delivered to related negative COO image. As these uncomfortable feelings accumulate by more and more people, one nation's COO image may then be pulled down as a whole.

Han (1990) claimed that COO effects may be conceptualised as two types: a halo effect or summary construct to consumers. According to Han (1990), the halo construct operates when consumers have neither prior knowledge nor experience of products made in a certain country, but they will still hold a certain image of that country as a source of products. Such image should be based on whatever knowledge consumers have about the country such as the country's political, economical and cultural characteristics. Therefore, consumers' perceptions towards the COO can influence their attitudes about products from a given country. In contrast, a summary construct assumes that COO stereotypes are based on consumers' experiences of those countries' products. The experience from others via information flows such as

word-of-mouth and mass media are important in forging the summary construct. By generalising these perceptions to attributes of unfamiliar products made in a given country, country image, in turn, affects consumers' attitudes toward the brand (Jaffe and Nebenzahl 2001; Crawford and Garland, 1988; Hong and Wyer 1989; Howard, 1989) or the specific product.

According to Jaffe and Nebenzahl (1989), without familiarity of a country's product, country image acts as a halo effect. As consumers' experience with products or brands coming from a certain country increases, a summary construct becomes more apparent. Han (1990) suggested this possibility in an empirical study that only partially confirmed the halo effect.

Johansson (1989) suggests that country image effects (CIE) serve as a summary of known product attributes, indicating that the higher familiarity, the stronger the influence of CIE. According to Lampert and Jaffe (1998), a dynamic process begins with country image as a halo effect when there is no familiarity with a country's products. As consumers gain experience with products of the country, they gain familiarity with the true attributes of these products. If only a few brands from the country are available, or when attributes of different brands stemming from the country are relatively uniform in certain key attributes, this information will revise the country image with respect to these attributes. From there on, country image will act as a summary effect for these and other brands. On the other hand, if products originating from the country are perceived as having wide variance with regard to most attributes, there will be no summary effect. When this occurs, CIE will be a less of an influencing factor in forming consumer perceptions (Jaffe and Nebenzahl 2001).

Lampert and Jaffe (1998) imply that consumers' country image changes over time owing to their experience with products made in the country. For example, the image of Japan was found to be lagging behind Western countries in early studies such as Lillis and Naranya (1974) and Nagashima (1970). In later studies it was found to be

ahead (Nagashima, 1977; Johansson and Nebenzahl 1986; Han and Terpstra 1988; Liefeld 2004).

A number of empirical studies also provide evidence regarding familiarity that have found a positive correlation between product familiarity and use of the made-in cue (Johansson et, al. 1985; Johansson and Nebenzahl 1986; Johansson, 1989). However, other researchers have tried to show that the use of the made-in cue is a tool of the interaction between familiarity and predictive value of this cue (Heimbach et, al. 1989; Eroglu and Machleit 1989). While a positive association was found between product familiarity and the made-in cue (Heimbach, et, al. 1989), the correlation coefficient was low. In another study, Knight and Calantone (2000) suggest a flexible model that includes both halo and summary components and this model was found to be superior to the halo and summary models. So, it could be concluded that there is some evidence that country image may act as a summary as well as a halo effect, and that both effects may operate simultaneously. Accordingly, Jaffe and Nebenzahl (2001) suggested a revision of the halo and summary models by merging the two independent and supposedly alternative models into a single unified multistage dynamic model.

In the first stage, prior to having meaningful experience, the image of a country acts as a halo in impacting beliefs about the expected attributes to products, which result in attitudes toward the brand or product. In the second stage, following purchase, experience serves to revise the knowledge about attributes of products that is followed by a revision of the country image. The more country image is based on actual experience, the more it becomes a summary as distinct from a halo effect. In the third stage, the revised country image serves to form expectations (beliefs) about product attributes (Jaffe and Nebenzahl 2001; Knight and Calantone 2000).

To summarise, the dynamic model presented above implies that over time the role of country image can transfer from a halo effect to a summary effect. Jaffe and

Nebenzahl (2001) claim that this dynamic model may provide a solution to the conflicting empirical evidence dilemma presented above. Studies conducted on products imported from newly exporting countries, such as Korea in Han's (1989) study, provide evidence for the initial halo effect. Studies conducted on durable products, such as TV sets made in the USA in Han (1989)'s study document the resultant summary effect. Studies that found neither halo nor summary effects, as in the case of Japan in Han's study, show evidence for the transition stage. Finally, studies that support simultaneously both halo and summary effect, as in the case of USA-made automobiles in Hans's study show that for high familiarity countries and complex products, experience does not erase the overall country image halo effect (Han 1989; Sohail, 2004).

All products, brand and country images are considered to have meaning only in relation to other products, brands and countries. Thus, for example, when Japan is perceived as a relatively high quality source for home electronic products we mean that such products are perceived to be of higher quality than those made in other, lower quality image countries. Similarly, when Italy is perceived to excel in shoe design, it is in relation to other countries that are viewed as less capable in this regard (Lim and O'Cass 2001).

Consumers' Individualistic Attribute

Customers' cultural difference has received substantial attention from international marketers. Hofstede (1980)'s ratings of four dimensions including "individualism", "collectivism", "power distance" and "uncertainty avoidance" showed that individuals from different countries were often structured and behaved differently to some extent. These differences are usually striking and easily influencing the COO effects in product evaluation. Some cultural attributes can affect people's willingness to purchase a product from a particular country because culture can be seen as "the result of human action" (Berthon, 1993: 11). In addition, researchers found that individualism dimension has both horizontal and vertical constructs (Singelis et al.,

1995; Triandis and Gelfand, 1998; Gurhan-Canli and Maheswaran, 2000b; Sivadas, et, al. 2008, etc.).

Those who are from low individualistic cultural countries often prefer their mother countries' products to other countries' even if other countries' products are better in quality (Gurhan-Canli and Maheswaran, 2000a). In low vertical individualism, "people emphasize the integrity of the in-group, are willing to sacrifice their personal goals for the sake of in-group goals, and support competitions of their in-groups with out-groups. If in-group authorities want them to act in ways that benefit the in-group, but are extremely distasteful to them, they submit to the will of these authorities" (Triandis and Gelfand 1998: 119).

Consumer Ethnocentrism

Ethnocentricity is a universal phenomenon. Sumner (1906: 13) defined it as "The view of things in which one's own group is the centre of everything, and all others scaled and rated with reference to it… Each group nourishes its own pride and vanity, boasts itself superior, exalts its own divinities and looks with contempt on outsiders". It helps to secure the survival of social tribes and their cultures and develops into groups' solidarity, pride, religious prejudice, racial discrimination, sectionalism, and patriotism (Murdock, 1931).

Pecotich et al. (1996) and Watson and Wright (2000) pointed out that consumers' willingness of buying products should be associated with ethnocentrism. Consumers with high ethnocentrism would like to protect the domestic product and economy and might refuse to accept the product imported from other countries. In brief, ethnocentrism has a negative influence on imported products (Chryssochoidis, et al., 2007).

Consumer ethnocentricity can be defined as: "The beliefs held by consumers about the appropriateness, indeed morality, of purchasing foreign-made products" (Shimp

and Sharma, 1987: 280). Shimp and Sharma (1987) suggested a widely accepted CETSCALE (Consumer Ethnocentric Tendencies Scale) to measure consumer ethnocentrism. The CETSCALE has 17 items to measure consumers' tendency to buy or not buy domestic and foreign products. Consumers' ethnocentrism effects can be expressed as the results from one's love and concerns for his or her mother country and the fear of losing the country's economic interests and increasing domestic unemployment from purchasing imported goods. This emotion will easily result in not purchasing imported products. Those highly ethnocentric consumers will see not buying imported products as a good, appropriate, and patriotic thing; buying foreign imports is very inappropriate and irresponsible. They appear to have high personal prejudice of foreign imports. It must be noted that individuals with higher levels of ethnocentrism usually have more favourable attitudes to products made from culturally similar countries in comparison to other countries (Lantz and Loeb, 1996). For example, Wang and Lamb (1983) reported a positive bias towards countries that have cultural similarities to the USA, which include Australia, New Zealand, and some European countries. What's more, ethnocentrists have even greater favourite attitudes to products from source nations that have political and economical similarities (Crawford and Lamb, 1981).

In addition, Ferguson et al (2008) found that consumers with high level of ethnocentrism do not only have high preferences to patriotic assistance due to the national economic flow but also have great preferences for the home country's services. Lantz and Loeb (1996: 376) also claimed "ethnocentrism is the term which has often been applied to the home buying portion of the COO effect". People who have a high level of ethnocentrism are more likely to reinforce the positive aspects of their mother country's products and discount foreign products' virtues (Rawwas et al., 1996). Some other researchers like Acharya and Elliott (2003) and Balabamis and Diamantopoulos (2004) found these people also have high preference to local products. However, the ethnocentric attributes make consumers in some countries prefer domestic over foreign products, while consumers in other countries generally

do not (Papadopoulos, et al. 1990; Darling and Kraft, 1977).

Nonetheless, it must be noted that the high consumer ethnocentrism could inevitably lead to an overestimation of domestic or local products as well as an underestimation of foreign products in terms of the product attributes and quality (Sharma et al., 1995). Therefore, consumer ethnocentrism may sometimes result in an inaccuracy of product evaluation. Building upon Nijssen and Herk's (2009) comment this may lead to animosity. An example of this could be the refusal by older Chinese people to buy Japanese products due to lingering World War II hostilities. They are even willing to pay more to buy some Chinese products that are undifferentiated from Japanese products.

2.2.9   COO Effects in the Service Context

According to Gummesson (2007), research service marketing had been under researched before the 1970s, gradually noted during the 1970s and ever-increasing since the 1980s. Contributions to services marketing were originally made from Nordic School researchers who argued that services indeed deserved new marketing frameworks, although previously established models and theories were partly applicable as well (Gronroos, 1991). As much of the first academic work was done in Scandinavia and Northern Europe, this services marketing management tradition is internationally known as the Nordic School of Services (e.g. Gronroos, 1990; Gummesson, 1987, 1991; Normann, 1984).

This inevitably leads to the assertion that COO influences could be researched not only in the product setting, but also in the service setting. Such influences cannot be ignored. Javalgi et al (2001) draws upon the assertion of Kotabe and Helsen (1998) that world trade in services had accounted for at least 25 percent of the value of global trade and had been growing much faster than the trade in products. Additionally, it should be noted that service exports have been growing faster than product exports (Moore, 1999). The service economy has become important in not only the economic

development of developed countries, but also developing countries (Firoz and Maghrabe, 1994).

Although the current trend is toward research on services, many of these service studies concentrate on the domestic context rather than the international perspective (Fisk et al., 1993). There are relatively fewer studies on the determinants of COO influence on services in the international markets. Javalgi et al. (2001, cited in Ferguson et al, 2008) found that only 19 studies from top 25 marketing journals during the 1980s to 2000s mentioned the relationship between COO image and international context. From the mere 19 studies, most of the studies are concerned with the important COO effects on products with supplementary services (e.g. warrantee or guarantee). Merely six of them examined the COO effects on some core services (e.g. medical care or travel services) (Javalgi et al, 2001, cited in Ferguson et al, 2008). Javalgi et al. (2001) summarised that most of the studies usually concluded that the COO influences could be researched not only in the service setting but also in the product setting. Besides core services and supplementary services, cross-national or cross-cultural services in relation to COO effects were also addressed by Javalgi et al. (2001), which are produced and consumed in individual countries.

COO Effects on Consumers' Service Evaluation

According to Gronroos (1982: 31), there are at least three basic characteristics that make the situation of service evaluation fundamentally different from product evaluation: "the service itself is physically intangible, it is an activity rather than a thing, and production and consumption are… simultaneous activities". Hence, such differences may result in different COO effects upon product evaluation and service evaluation.

Ferguson et al. (2008) draws upon the work of Ostrom and Iacobucci (1995) to argue that the services can be divided into two categories. The first one is experiential

service, which requires consumers to evaluate the service upon the experience of the service. While, the second one is credence service where consumers will still feel it is difficult to evaluate even after experiencing it. According to their findings, for different kinds of services, consumers may use service's different attributes as cues in their evaluation process, and the cue of COO should be only one of their purchase decision factors. In addition, COO effects might be different in different service categories because COO can affect different products more or less intensely (Ferguson et al, 2008 based on Roth and Romeo, 1992). Nonetheless, it seems hard to measure the intense of COO effects on different service categories as service itself is extremely diversified and it is hard to find any literature to classify or differentiate service categories.

Ferguson et al (2008) proposed two different models of COO effects that can influence consumers' service evaluation. The first one refers to the relationship between situational personal characteristics (motivation and ability) and the use of COO attributes. The second one refers to the relationship between individual characteristics (ethnocentric and individualistic attributes) and the COO preference. The authors used a qualitative research method rather than quantitative method that most COO researchers applied. They sampled four different stakeholders of a higher education service including high school students, employers who will employ future graduates, parents of high school students and educators. The higher education service used was in the West Africa involving Burkina Faso, Ghana, Ivory Coast, Mali, and Nigeria. There were 24 focus group interviews from 300 subjects in each nation's capital city conducted by a team of US researchers with local faculty collaborators.

In the first model, two important situational personal characteristics were discovered. They are consumers' motivation to evaluate and their ability to process information related to the service. By examining parents of high school students, Ferguson et al (2008) found that consumers that have high motivation in service evaluation, but will be less likely to be concerned with the COO effects in their evaluation process.

Nonetheless, consumers that have weak ability to process information in service evaluation will be more likely to be concerned with the COO effects in their evaluation process.

In Ferguson et al. (2008)'s second model, the relationship between individual characteristics and the COO preference is addressed. The two individual characteristics that include people's ethnocentrism attribute and individualistic attribute are linked to people's COO preference. Pecotich et al. (1996) first claimed that consumers' selection of service, such as airlines and banks, should be associated with notions of ethnocentrism. Ferguson et al (2008) supported this argument and found that people that have high preferences to patriotic services tend to wish to support the economies of their home nation. This group of people is usually high in ethnocentrism and hence has greater preferences for COO services. In addition, Ferguson et al (2008) pointed out the importance of some individuals' individualism attributes. In summary, Ferguson et al (2008)'s qualitative study showed that:

● Consumers that are high in ethnocentrism will be more likely to choose mother country COO service products than other countries', regardless of the quality;

● Consumers that are low in individualism will be more likely to choose mother country COO service products than other countries', regardless of the quality.

In short, those who are high in ethnocentrism and / or of low individualism usually choose mother country COO services. These people can be a group of customer segment. Therefore, if this potential customer segment can be a large part of total service consumers, service companies can use some cues, like intended brand personality or obvious brand names and promotions to communicate with this customer segment by strengthening such COO association.

2.2.10   Summary of Literature Review of COO Studies

From the literature review chapter of this thesis, it has been found that individuals have either positive or negative perceptions of countries based on stereotypic beliefs (Nagashima, 1970; Papadopoulos, 1993; Roth and Romeo, 1992). These positive or negative national stereotypes can positively or negatively affect consumers' attitudes toward products from those countries (Reierson, 1967; Schooler 1971; Johansson, et al. 1985; Papdopoulous, 1986; Smith, 1993; Baker and Michie, 1995; Kim 1995). Researchers are likely to call this phenomenon as country-of-origin (or COO) effects on product evaluation. Products' COO information has measurable effects on consumers' products preference formation and on their purchase decisions. In the context of product evaluation, consumers' COO stereotypes can be measured by using Parameswaran and Pisharodi (1994)'s three facet measurement including general country image, general product image, and specific product image. COO information therefore serves as a cue in product evaluation because specific product attributes are based on consumers' perceptions of COO stereotypes and on their familiarities with products from a particular country. Nonetheless, due to many other influences, COO effects have been shown to vary significantly in the marketplace. As an example, with regards to developed nation consumers, they often convey clear preferences for products that originate in their own country. Advertising campaigns used in the USA which promote domestic made products by using "made in the USA" labels has been demonstrated to be highly effective in persuading American consumers to purchase home made products (Reierson, 1967, 1996; Ettenson, et. al. 1988). Additionally, consumers in affluent countries also express a preference for foreign products that originate in similarly affluent countries as opposed to imported products from less developed countries. Consumers from developing countries also express strong preferences for products that originate in developed countries (Lantz and Leob, 1996; Okechuku, 1994).

From the marketing perspective, marketers usually take advantage of COO effects to reinforce their brand image by using "made in" labels (Greer, 1971; Nagashima 1977;

Darling and Kraft, 1977; Bannister and Saunders, 1978; Hooley et al. 1988; Ghadir, 1990; Peris et al., 1993; Baker and Michie, 1995). A hybrid factor of COO effects is sometimes used when a brand's ownership is from one country but "made in" and / or "assembled in" another country (Ettenson and Gaeth, 1991; Yaprak and Baughn, 1991; Chao, 1993; Baughn and Yaprak, 1993; Baker and Michie, 1995). In order to maximise marketing effectiveness, COO researchers suggest multiple ways for reducing the impact of negative COO effects. These methods can be: (i) hiding negative COO information (Piron, 2000); (ii) incongruent foreign brand and COO strategies (Leclerc, et al. 1994); (iii) promotional strategies (Ettenson, et al. 1998 and Reierson, 1967); (iv) magnifying effects of branding and product experience (Tse and Lee, 1993); and (v) diluting negative COO stereotypes (Lotz and Hu, 2001). Additionally, national stereotypes can be altered through the bookkeeping model (Rothbart, 1981; Rumelhart and Norman, 1978), conversion model (Rothbart 1981), and the subtyping model (Brewer, et al. 1981; Taylor, 1981).

COO studies can be categorised into four types including: single cue study, multi-cue study, Conjoint (trade-off) analysis, and environmental analysis (Kaynak, et al. 2000). Early COO studies use COO as the only single cue for evaluating products. (e.g. Schooler, 1965; Nagashima, 1970; Schooler, 1971; Bilkey and Nes, 1982; Kaynak and Cavusgil, 1983; Han, 1990, etc.). Multi-cue researchers argue that other informational cues can influence COO effects on product evaluation. They treat COO as one of the variables amongst a variety of information consumers consider in their product evaluation process rather than the only one as single cue studies. The COO cue becomes less important when other informational cues are presented (Johansson, et al. 1985). Conjoint analysis is used to measure what combinations of the product attributes are most preferred among COO and non-COO product attributes, and what trade-offs respondents are willing to make between different source countries. Besides COO attribute, price is found to be the most important additional attribute in applications of conjoint analysis. Environmental analysis is concerned with different environmental factors influencing consumers' perception of products. The

environmental influences are from economy, politics, and cultures of consumers' home countries (Wang and Lamb, 1983). In addition, the nature and direction of COO effects also vary significantly with: (i) consumers' demographic variables such as age, education, income (Schooler, 1971; Wall, et al. 1991); (ii) consumers' product knowledge and familiarity (Brucks, 1985; Johansson et al. 1985; Eroglu and Machleit, 1988; Han and Terpstra, 1988; Jaffe and Nebenzhal 1988; Johansson 1989; Wall, et al. 1991; Okechuku 1994; Lee and Ganesh 1999; Lin and Zhen 2005); (iii) consumers' ethnocentric attributes (Shimp and Sharma, 1987; Sharma, et al. 1995; Watson and Wright, 2000; Javalgi and White, 2002; Ferguson, et al. 2008); (iv) consumers' individualistic and collectivistic attributes (Ferguson et al. 2008); (v) consumers' cultural sensitivity (Sharma, et al. 1995; Javalgi and White, 2002), and; (vi) product categories.

2.2.11   Gaps in Extant Literature

COO Effects on Service Evaluation is Under Researched

The literature review has showed that past research has mainly focused on how COO cues are used by consumers to evaluate import products. Nonetheless, to date, only a few studies have investigated the influences of COO effects on the evaluation of service (Harrison-Walker, 1995; Shaffer and O'Hara, 1995; Bruning, 1997; Ruyter, et al. 1998; Javalgi et al. 2001; and Ferguson et al. 2008). Many authors all agree that the effect of COO on consumers' evaluations of foreign services is still under researched (Javalgi et al. 2001; Ferguson et al. 2008). The beginnings of this interest became apparent with the work of COO effects on consumers' product evaluation. This thesis aims to explore the COO effects on consumers' service evaluation. It thereafter should evolve to become a meaningful and significant area of research in the field of service context because service industry has been developing quickly in recent decades which should not be neglected. One of the examples can be the rising demand of the international higher education services in recent years. Therefore, the international students' evaluation of international higher education services should be examined. An in-depth literature review of students' choice of international higher

education services will be provided in the section 2.3.

Methodological Limitation of Past Studies

Drawbacks of Single-cue Research

Some methodological limitations of most previous COO studies must be noted (Bilkey and Nes, 1982 and Jaffee and Nebenzahl, 1984). A large amount of early COO studies were using COO as a single cue and the only information on which respondents based their product evaluation. Past research in terms of single-cue studies showed that COO information cue can largely affect product evaluation especially when COO is the only information presented (Schooler, 1965; Nagashima, 1970; Schooler, 1971; Bilkey and Nes, 1982; Kaynak and Cavusgil, 1983; Han, 1990). Nonetheless, ignoring other informational cues would inevitably result in too much weight given to the influence of COO effects on product evaluation (Bilkey and Nes, 1982). Such problems are confirmed by later multi-cue studies (Johansson et al., 1985; Eroglu and Machleit, 1989; Johansson, 1989; Wall et al., 1991; Leonidou, et al. 2006).

Country-of-origin Studies with Different Questionnaire Formats may not be Comparable

Additionally, the findings of many past studies were inappropriately compared explicitly or implicitly with those efforts of previous work (Jaffee and Nebenzahl, 1984). The literature review in this study can tell the most popular methodology used in the past studies. They usually used a semantic differential or Likert-type scale of quantitative research. It is noteworthy that these studies may not be comparable even if the scale items were the same (Jaffee and Nebenzahl, 1984). Jaffee and Nebenzahl (1984) classified questionnaire of past COO studies into two different formats. The first format requires respondents to rate given objects separately on the basis of a same set of descriptors (such as Darling and Kraft, 1977; Khanna, 1986; Papadopoulos, et al. 1990) as examples of the first format. While the second questionnaire format requires respondents to rate all objects simultaneously on the basis of different descriptor (such as Bannister and Saunders, 1978; Nagashima, 1970,

1977; Leonidou, et al. 2007; Essoussi and Merunka, 2007; Chowdhury and Ahmed, 2009). Jaffee and Nebenzahl (1984) evaluated these two questionnaire formats by measuring convergent and discriminant validity and reliability of the two questionnaire formats. The result showed that the first questionnaire format performed better than the second one in the aspect of consistency, but had low overall coefficients (poor reliability). The test-retest research by Jaffee and Nebenzahl (1984) demonstrated certain stability over time. However, as the test-retest correlation coefficients did not consider absolute differences between means of a distribution, the findings suggested that "the questionnaire formats are not equivalent" (Jaffee and Nebenzahl 1984: 469).

In the literature of COO effects research, it is found that some authors' methodology and findings had been pervasively used and compared which may result inappropriate findings. This is an especial case for Nagashima (1970)'s work. His questionnaire structure which refers to Jaffee and Nebenzahl (1984)'s second questionnaire format had been used, modified, or compared by other authors such as Bannister and Saunders (1978), Cattin et al (1982) and Han and Terpstra (1988). Nonetheless, according to Jaffee and Nebenzahl (1984), this may result in inaccurate findings because the two questionnaire formats are neither equivalent nor comparable because "if two image studies have different questionnaire formats, a comparison of the results may not be valid because of the difference in the format structures" (Jaffee and Nebenzahl, 1984: 463). Therefore, this thesis would apply qualitative methodology which can avoid the drawbacks of the quantitative method used in COO studies.

2.3 Literature Review of International Higher Education

In order to find out the "other related service information cues" in the above suggestion, reviewing the literature of international higher education selection is necessary. This section aims to find out all the influences that can affect international students' higher education selection process from the literature. It was found that the influence is varied and complicated.

Bennell and Pearce (1998) assessed the growth in international students studying in Australia, the U.K, and the U.S during 1975 to 1995. The number of international students recruited from Asia has grown significantly which accounted for 52% of the international students' population. In addition, European students accounted for the second highest growth rate and the second largest proportion of international students (42%). Moreover, the data suggested that the number of international students from other regions had either decreased (Africa) or remained stable at a low level (North and South America and Oceania).

Bennell and Pearch (1998) outlined a few reasons for the mobility of international students during 1975 to 1995. First of all, the influences leading to the rapid increase in the number of Asian students studying abroad included the limited places available in domestic universities, the adoption of aggressive human resource development strategies by governments and a high recognition of foreign higher education. Secondly, the high increase in the number of European students was largely due to the steadily increased volume of student flows among European member countries. Thirdly, the decline in African students was largely due to the decreased scholarships and the influence of the prolonged financial crisis. Fourthly, the financial crisis was also one of the main reasons which results in the stagnated or low enrolment levels of international students from South America. In addition, the generally well developed higher education system in South America and the language difference from other regions counteracted the demand of studying abroad.

Bennell and Pearch (1998) also assessed the growth of foreign students studying in their own countries for qualification from overseas validated courses provided by Australian universities and British universities. The results showed that these overseas validated courses were largely concentrated in Hong Kong, Malaysia, and Singapore during 1975 to 1995. These courses have been rapidly spreading to other regions such as the mainland China since 2004 when the "Interim Regulations on Sino-Foreign

Cooperative Programme" was launched (Zhao 2013). According to Pyvis and Chapman (2007), there are five main models that deliver the overseas validated courses including (1) twinning programmes, (2) franchised programmes, (3) moderated programmes, (4) offshore campuses, and (5) online programmes. One university may use a few of these models at the same time.

Based on the relevant literature before year 2000, Duan (1997: 103 -105) summarised 42 influences that can affect students' choice of study place as shown in the table 2.2:

Table 2.2: The influences that can affect students' choice of study destination

Prestige of studying overseas	To learn through 'practical application'	Lower perceived levels of racism
Limited place at domestic universities	The need for intermediate skills and technology	Financial assistance from sending country or receiving country
Ethnic or racial tension in domestic country	The hope for less stressful education system	Better facilities
Parents / friends influence	Ease of obtaining student visas	Flexibility of course
Availability of courses in home country	Culture of sending student overseas	Open society
Desire to learn another language	Reputation for quality education	Reasonable time to complete a course
No need to learn another language	Easy admission / more available places	English is the native language
Financial capacity of the student	Proximity	The wealth and power of host country
Better employment opportunity	Climate	Landscape, history, and local culture, general impression
Low reputation of domestic courses	Availability of working rights	Complete matriculation in host country
Emigration avenue	Better provision of information	Course Exemptions
To see the world; to seek adventure and enjoyment	Relative cost	Scholarships
Political condition in home country	Safe or stable environment	Fast response to applications
Unpopular majors offered in domestic country	Recognition of courses by home country	International relationship between two countries

The above influences from the literature should be appropriate at three distinct steps of the decision making process of higher education services. First, deciding to study abroad, and then selecting a host country, and, finally, a particular institution. These three steps are widely agreed by many authors such as Duan (1997), Pimpa (1999); Mazzarol and Soutar (2002); Chen and Zimitat (2006); Davidson and Wang (2008).

Johansson et al. (1994) examined the COO associations of individuals affect the purchasing decision making steps. The product selected was a tractor and the source country was Russian-made Belarus. The study was conducted at the critical time in 1990 when the breakup of the Soviet Union had already begun. Johansson et al. (1994) identified a few constructs that may affect the importance of COO in the purchasing decision-making stages including product familiarity, risk-taking attitude of the consumers using the product, and consumer ethnocentrism.

These findings are similar to the assumptions of this study. The service familiarity and consumer ethnocentrism may also affect the COO effects on students' evaluation of British higher education. It is also assumed that different students might be influenced by British COO image in different ways when they evaluate British higher education services. Furthermore, due to the psychic distance between China and the U.K, students may consider the perceived risk of studying in the U.K which can reduce the importance of COO in the evaluation of British higher education. Therefore, the weight of each of identified influences to service evaluation should be different at different decision-making steps.

2.3.1   Step One: Deciding to Study Abroad

In the first stage, students decide to study abroad rather than locally. At this stage, the "push" model claimed by McMahon (1992) are largely influencing students' decision. The "push" factors in "push" model can be seen as motives which encourage students to choose a foreign higher education. For example, Pyvis and Chapman (2007)

identified a few push factors for students from Malaysia deciding to study abroad. It was found that having foreign education was valued by Malaysian students as a passport to work with foreign companies operating in Malaysia. Additionally, the authors found that foreign education is also important for non-Malaysian students in Malaysia having a new identity and "expunging provincial outlooks" (Pyvis and Chapman, 2007: 235). Moreover, Pyvis and Chapman (2007) found that Malaysian students' desire to study abroad stems from their curiosity to explore the world and acquire new habits of thinking as well as new skills. Accordingly, the employment prospect, prestige of studying abroad and curiosity may also affect Chinese students who chose to study abroad. The push influences that encourage Chinese students to study abroad are shown as follows:

● Chinese government encourages students to study abroad

While the Chinese government encourages students to study abroad, it also encourages them to return when they finish their studies (Zhao, 2013). The example can be the Government-Sponsored Overseas Students Five-Year Program launched by the Ministry of Education and China Scholarship Council since 2007 (China News, 2006). According to the scheme, the Chinese government sends approximate 5,000 adequate students abroad and also encourages them to return to make contributions to the country after they graduate. Students who signed the agreement with the government will be awarded subsidies and also have to promise to return. In addition, the government also encourages those self-funded overseas Chinese students to return by giving them privileges of immigration to major cities such as Beijing and Shanghai which have a tight residency control policy. In addition, the government also provides streamlined procedures for selected graduates when entering or leaving China (Xinhua News 2007). Moreover, the Chinese government encourages overseas students to serve China from abroad (Zweig and Rosen, 2003) "For those planning to stay awhile abroad, incentives will be given for them to set up cooperation avenues with domestic partners in China." (Xinhua News 2007).

- Employment prospect

A few studies claimed that foreign studies and living experience may bring returning overseas Chinese students privilege in finding a good job (e.g. Zhao, 2013; Yao, 2004; Economist 2005). This has become a reason that many Chinese parents invest their whole family savings or even get loans to sponsor their children to go abroad. Nonetheless, such privilege has been questioned recently. Li (2013) pointed out a few reasons for many returning students difficulties in finding jobs. The primary reason should be their limited working experience. "Years of experience abroad distance them from the domestic market, and language skills and foreign diplomas do not compensate sufficiently" (Li, 2013: 2). The second reason is students and their parents' highly unrealistic expectations in terms of employment prospects in China (Li, 2013).

- An overall increase in the standard of living

An overall ascending life standard of Chinese people has led more and more families to send their children to study abroad (Zhao, 2013). The Chinese economy has been growing rapidly which results in an ever-increasing personal wealth and household income. As shown in the table 2.3, China's disposable annual income per capita has been greatly increased to 26,955 yuan (or 2,700 pounds) in January 2014 from 9421.6 yuan (or 600 pounds) in January 2005*. This means the purchasing power of Chinese people has greatly increased in the last decade. However, the figure has also indicated that not all the Chinese families can fund their children to study overseas. Only affluent families can afford the high expenses.

*Note: the exchange rate of GBP to CNY is about 1GBP = 10 CNY in 2014, but 1GBP =15.6 CNY in 2005.

Table 2.3: China Disposable Income Per Capita (Trading Economics, 2014)

Year	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
CNY	9421.6	10493	11759	13785	15780	17174.6	19109	21810	24565	26955

● Prestige of studying overseas

Reputation and prestige of studying overseas can be important sources of competitive advantage for British higher education. According to Bourke (2000), students who have intentions to study abroad often believe the quality of education can be higher in foreign countries with a prestigious education image. Yao (2004: 2) pointed out that for Chinese students "studying abroad was becoming fashionable and its scale was growing gradually after 1890s".

● Availability of educational opportunities in home countries

Limited places and study opportunities at domestic universities can be another reason for choosing to study abroad by Chinese students. This is a particular case in the late Qing Dynasty and in the Republic Era (1912-1949) (Yao, 2004). At that time, due to the lack of advanced technology and education, the Chinese government had to send students to the West to strengthen China. As a result, the knowledge brought back by foreign educated Chinese elites expanded Chinese people's views and accelerated China's own modernisation. In recent decades, because of the fierce competition among Chinese students, the limited places provided by domestic universities can hardly cater to the needs of large numbers of Chinese students applying. They have no choice but resort to foreign higher education services.

2.3.2   Step Two: Selecting a Host Country

Once students have decided to study abroad, they then enter into the second stage: selecting a host country as a study destination. In the second step, McMahon (1992)'s "pull" model will be activated. The image of the host country is particularly important in the decision making process. The pull influences in the pull model can attract students to a specific study destination. For example, Lawley and Perry (1998) identified 20 variables thought to influence Thai and Malaysian students' perceptions of overseas study destinations. The authors categorised these 20 variables into four underlying factors as shown in the table 2.4

Table 2.4 Influences that Affect Thai and Malaysian Students' Perception of Overseas Study Destinations (Lawley and Perry, 1998)

Factors	Influences that affect Thai and Malaysian students' Perception of Overseas Study Destinations
Course characteristics	Standard of courses
	Recognition of qualifications in home country
Country characteristics	Opinion of family
	Opinion of friends
	Opinion of agents
	Level of personal safety
	Potential to immigrate
	Lifestyle
Administrative processes	Ease of entry to university
	Ease of gaining a student visa
	Ease of gaining exemptions
	Ease of obtaining information
	Ability to legally work part-time
Costs	Comparative financial cost
	Climate
	Distance from home
	Presence of other home country students
	Time to complete a course
	Availability of scholarships
	Level of racial discrimination

The above influences may also apply to Chinese students who would like to go to the U.K for further study. Specifically, the literature has suggested some pull influences in terms of British country image, such as the following, may affect Chinese students' selection of British higher education:

● The academic reputation of British universities

British universities enjoy well-known academic reputation in the world which attracts Chinese students to come to the U.K (Zhao, 2013). According to the 2013 university ranking in the Times Higher Education, three of the top ten universities are British universities. They are University of Oxford (2nd), University of Cambridge (7th), and Imperial College London (10th). In addition, there are 31 British universities are on the list of the top 200 universities. In contrast, merely two universities from mainland

China can be found on such a list: Peking University (45th) and Tsinghua University (50th).

● English Speaking Country

As an English speaking country, the UK is an ideal place for Chinese students to study. According to Yao (2004), Chinese students select their destination countries upon the second language they had studied. Most Chinese students have had studied English for more than 10 years before going abroad as English is studied in primary school, high school and university. Consequently, the UK has taken advantages of this to attract Chinese students as they can at the same time improve their English when they are studying their higher education.

From the literature, climate was identified as a frequently cited reason for choice (Cubillo, et al. 2005; 2006; Srikatanyoo and Gnoth, 2002). It includes natural climate, study climate, cultural climate, economic climate, living climate, etc. The country represents the climate in which the service will be co-created. Due to the complexity of education service that is jointly co-created with a wide group of services, the climate will be made up of the country as a whole. Price (2003) claimed that social facilities in the host country is the key factor related to environmental conditions which affect students' choice because facilities can not only attract key research personnel, but also provide environments for advanced knowledge creation. Additionally, geographic proximity to the home country is an important feature of the overseas study environment (Kemp, *et al*.1998). Therefore, the students' perception about the destination country can affect the decision process. It is suggested that the fascinating scenery and excellent natural environment can attract Chinese students to the UK. The dimension of the country, its beauty, the historic background and the monuments contribute to a positive climate that may become the reason for Chinese students choosing the U.K.

- Environment and safety in the UK

Some studies have identified that the level of safety was found to contribute positively to a host country's overall attractiveness to international students (e.g. Duan 1997; Lawley, 1998). Personal safety is considered important to Chinese students. The secure and stable society and multicultural diversity may also make Chinese students long for life in the UK.

- Ease of obtaining the UK student visa

It must be noted that visa hassles have become a particularly important reason that hinders Chinese students entry into British universities in recent years. For example, the rule on proof of funds requiring at least £20,000 to be held in a bank account for at least six months before making a UK visa application has become a tough requirement for families who run businesses and may require the funds for cash flow (Economist, 2005). In addition, the increasing refusal rates and up to £781 visa extension application fee (in 2013) exacerbates this situation.

2.3.3 Step Three: Selecting a Particular Institution

In stage three, some additional "pull" factors will influence students looking for a particular institution. Quality of academic reputation and the level of market recognition have been highlighted in several studies (e.g. Yao, 2004; Diaz and Krauss, 1996; Huang and Brown, 1996; Singh and Ninemeier, 2003; Chen 2007; Mazzarol, 1998; Mazzarol and Soutar, 2004). According to Wagner and Fard (2009), for Malaysian students, the most important pull factors in this stage include the cost of education, value of education, degree (content and structure), family, friends and peers, physical aspect, facilities and resources, and institutional information. These pull factors may also apply to Chinese students. Example influences that can affect Chinese students' decision-making in step three are:

- Quality of British universities' reputation and market recognition
- Relative costs of study among different British universities
- Availability of facilities

- Ease of admission or more places

- Flexibility of course

- Scholarships

- Employment prospect

Zhao (2013) researched Chinese postgraduate taught business and management students' decision making model when choosing to study at British universities. The author reviewed extant literature and identified the four decision making stages including selecting the U.K as the host country, selecting a programme, selecting a British university, and selecting the city where the university is located. Table 2.5 has included all the influences that were identified by Zhao (2013)'s literature review.

Table 2.5: Influences on Chinese Students' Decision-making Process (Zhao, 2013)

Categories	Influences	Examples
Related influences to Chinese students' choice of the U.K as host country	Information channels	*The Internet* (Gomes and Murphy, 2003)
		Alumni networks and contacts (Binsardi and Ekwulugo, 2003)
		Word-of-mouth referral (Mazzarol and Soutar, 2001)
		Recruitment agents (Mazzarol and Soutar, 2002)
	Host country image	*English language as the first language* (Li, et al. 2009)
		high reputation for quality education (Lord and Dowson, 2002; Binsardi and Ekwulugo, 2003; Lowe, 2007; I-graduate survey, 2008; Li et al. 2009; Mazzarol and Soutar, 2001; Soo and Elliott, 2008)
		offshore programmes running overseas (Li, et al. 2009)
	Qualifications recognition by home country (Mazzarol and Soutar, 2001; Binsardi and Ekwulugo, 2003; Yang, 2007)	
	Influencers	*Parents, relatives and friends* (Mazzarol and Soutar, 2001; Pimpa, 2003)
	Cost issues	*Cost of living* (Mazzarol and Soutar 2001; Binsardi and Ekwulugo, 2003)
		Cost of studying (Binsardi and Ekwulugo, 2003; Yang, 2007)
		Ease of finding employment during and after study (Binsardi and Ekwulugo, 2003)
	Environment	*Safe place* (Lord and Dawson, 2002; Lowe, 2007; I-graduatesurvey, 2008）
	Social links	*Family or friends who had been studying or living in the host country* (Lord and Dawson, 2002)
	Ease of obtaining a visa and immigration opportunities (Chen, 2007 and Yang, 2007)	
	English language (Mazzarol and Soutar, 2001; Lord and Dawson, 2002; Rowan 2004;' Goldbart et al, 2005; Chen 2007; Yang 2007)	
Related influences to	University Image	*University ranking* (Lowe, 2007)

Chinese Students' Choice of a British University	Information channels	*Internet/world wide web, university prospectus, university league tables, educational institution, career advisor/ teacher, friend, former students, family, educational consultant/representative agency, educational fairs in home country, education fairs in the U.K and media* (Rowan, 2004)
	Campus Environment	*Safety on campus* (Binsardi and Ekwulugo, 2003; Rowan, 2004; I-graduate survey, 2008)
		The established international students' population in a campus (Lowe, 2007)
		Social life of a university and the academic atmosphere of a campus (Hunter-Jones and Warnaby, 2009)
	University Facilities	*Good study facilities, good care and support for overseas students, good accommodation, good sports facilities on campus, and good English language support* (Rowan, 2004)
		The quality of library facilities, the availability of quiet areas for self-study, the availability of computers, and campus security (Mortimer, 1997)
	Influencers	*Family* (Rowan, 2004)
		Friends (Lord and Dawson, 2002; I-graduate survey, 2008)
	Information of a course	*Course content, reputation of teaching quality, reputation of university, reputation of course, research rating of department, and universities league table position* (Rowan, 2004)
	Twinning programmes	*International joint programmes between British universities and Chinese universities* (British Councile, 2011)
Related Influences to Chinese Students' Choice of a Programme	Programme recognition by future employers (Mazzarol and Soutar, 2001; Binsardi and Ekwulugo, 2003)	
	The level of entry requirement to study a programme (Lowe, 2007; the I-graduate survey, 2008; Hunter-Jones and Warnaby, 2009)	
	Quality of an academic programme (Lowe, 2007; I-graduate survey, 2008; Hunter-Jones and Warnaby, 2009)	
Related Influences to Chinese Students' Choice Criteria of a Host City / town	Location in terms of ease of access for travel, proximity to major cities, etc. (Joseph and Joseph, 2000; Rowan, 2004; Chen, 2007; I-graduate survey, 2008)	
	Low cost of living (Mazzarol and Soutar, 2001; Yang, 2007; I-graduate survey, 2008)	
	Safe environment (Pimpa, 2003; Rowan, 2004; Hunter-Jones and Warnaby, 2009)	
	Job opportunities (Chen, 2007; Hunter-Jones and Warnaby, 2009)	

Zhao (2013) refined these influences into 14 factors along with 42 variables related to the four decision making stages (see the table 2.6). These factors and variables were examined by quantitative methodology. It was found that the order of the stages in the decision making process is different amongst the selected students choosing seven different British universities. Moreover, the findings showed that "the type ('red brick', 'plateglass', or 'post 1992') and location (in a big or small city) of a university have

statistically significant association relationships with the students' choice of a programme and of a university" Zhao (2013: 12).

Table 2.6: Factors and Variables related to the Four Decision-making Stages used by Zhao (2013)

Stages	Factors	Variables
Choosing the U.K as study destination	**Recommendation of the U.K**	Information given by any local university in China
		Recommendation given by my lectures in China
		Information given through British lecturer's presentation in China's universities
	Social Cultural and Life	Good social life
		Good reputation for cultural activities (i.e. historical cities/ towns)
	Country Attraction	UK's reputation for high quality education
		UK is a safe country
	Country Environment	The UK is a developed country
		Location of the UK (in relation to rest of Europe)
Choosing the Study Programme	**Recommendations of a Programme**	Personal recommendations given by lectures in China
		UK staff present information to me and / or my parents
		Information provided by my university in China
		Information given through a host university lecturers presentation in China's university
	Information Requirement of a Programme	Programme suitability to my career
		Social status (on completion of the degree)
		Programme recognition by future employers
	Programme Ranking and Employability	The programme quality ranking
		Percentage of graduates who get a job within 6 months after studying the programme
Choosing the University	**Recommendations of a university**	Information given by my local university in China
		Recommendation given by my lecturers in China
		Information given through Chinese authorised agencies
		Information given by British lecturer's presentation in China
	University Image	University's reputation for teaching
		University's history and current academic reputation
		University's research ranking
	Accommodations	University accommodation
		Good quality accommodation
		Cheap accommodation
	University Facilities and Location	University facilities (canteen, shop, bank)
		University's location (i.e. close to city centre)
		An international academic environment
		University library books, journals and articles, etc.
Choosing a City	**Recommendation of a city**	Information about the city given through my local university in China

or town where the selected university located		Recommendations given by my lecturers in China
		Information about the city given through Chinese authorised agencies
		Information given by British lecturer's presentation in China's universities
		Information from internet (i.e. university's website)
	City location and International	Social facilities (e.g. libraries, theatres, cinemas, transport)
		City location (within the U.K)
		International/ cosmopolitan environment
	City attraction	Good reputation for cultural activities (i.e. music, sports, etc.)
		Good social life (clubs, cinemas, restaurants etc.)

2.3.4   Culture Influences Decision-making Process

"People within a culture do not all have identical sets of artefacts, norms, values and assumptions. Within each culture there is a wide spread of these" (Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner, 1997: 24). Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner (1997) outlined seven dimensions of culture as shown in the table 2.7. According to these cultural dimensions, it was found that the cultures of China and the U.K are very different (Tromenaars and Hampden-Turner, 1997; Gutterman, 2010; McFarlin and Sweeney, 2011; and Balan and Vreja, 2013).

Table 2.7 The Comparison of Cultures between China and the U.K
(Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner, 1997; Gutterman, 2010; McFarlin and Sweeney, 2011; Balan and Vreja, 2013)

Categories	Cultural Dimensions with example countries	Explanation
(1) universalism versus particularism	Universalism (the U.K)	Greater attention is given to the laws, rules, values, and obligations than relationships among people
	Particularism (China)	Relationships among people are more important than rules, values, and obligations.
(2) individualism versus communitarianism	Individualism (the U.K)	People regard themselves primarily as individuals. Personal freedom and achievement are important
	Communitarianism (China)	People regard themselves primarily as part of a group. The group provides help and safety in exchange for loyalty.
(3) neutral versus emotional orientation	Neutral (the U.K)	People control their feelings and emotions and are less likely to express what they're thinking
	Emotional (China)	People would like to reveal how they are feeling
(4) specific versus diffuse	Specific (the U.K)	Personal lives and work are separated
	Diffuse (China)	Personal lives and work are involved and overlapped.

(5) achievement versus ascription	Achievement (the U.K)	People are judged on what they have accomplished or achieved, no matter who they are
	Ascription (China)	People are valued by who they are. Status is attributed by age, kinship, gender, and relationships (who do you know) and educational level.
(6) sequential time versus synchronous time orientation	Sequential time (the U.K)	Punctuality, planning and staying on schedule are important. People do one thing at a time
	Synchronous time orientation (China)	People work on several things at the same time.
(7) outer-directed versus inner-directed orientation	Outer-directed (China)	People would like to exert control over their environment
	Inner-directed orientation (the U.K)	People would like to be controlled by the environment

The above cultural differences can lead to "misunderstanding, poor interpersonal and inter-group relationships, inefficiency, and higher costs" (Rugman and Collinson, 2012: 140. In order to prevent the failure of marketing to Chinese students, marketers from British universities should enhance their cultural intelligence of Chinese culture. Hofstede (1997) suggested three phases of enhancing cultural intelligence including awareness, knowledge and skills. First of all, British marketers should appreciate and be aware of Chinese culture. Then, they would acquire the ability to identify certain symbols, rituals and taboos in Chinese culture. Finally, they should have the skills of using Chinese culture through practice. For example, British universities should avoid using number four in their marketing campaigns to Chinese market because four is unlucky and sounds similar to death. Instead, British universities can emphasise the colour of red and the number eight because red is believed to have auspicious meanings and eight represents wealth and fortune.

British universities engaging in recruiting students from China need to take into account the Chinese culture in which the target students are situated. Chinese students may require British higher education services different from other countries' students. Therefore, when marketing higher education services to Chinese students, British universities should establish structures and procedures that encompass both Chinese and British cultures in a balanced way. The cultural impact on the performance of

collaboration between British universities and Chinese universities can be significant, "despite the fact that clear cause and effect relationships are often difficult to identify precisely" (Rugman and Collinson, 2012: 151).

There is a high 'psychic distance' (Bridgewater and Egan, 2002 and Rugman and Collinson, 2012) between China and the U.K. The psychic distance in terms of political systems, level of economic development, level of education of the country, cultural distance, geographic distance and the existing relationships between China and the U.K may disturb Chinese students learning about and understanding the U.K and its higher education services. Therefore, the effective way of advertising British higher education in China may largely be different from the U.K. The data findings of this thesis will be meaningful because they will further the understanding and knowledge of future Sino-UK higher education collaborations.

Peng (2011) suggested that countries can be clustered with core sets of cultural values. The author suggested three influential sets of clusters as shown in the table 2.8. Ronan and Shenka (1985)'s findings were based on previous research such as Haire, et al. (1966), Sirota and Greenwood (1971), Ronen and Kraut (1977), Hofstede (1976, 1980), Griffeth, et al. (1980), Redding (1976) and Badawy (1979). Clusters of countries are complex and rooted in historical events, shared traditions, language, geography, economic development, and religion. In addition, House, et al. (2004) divided 62 societies into ten GLOBE (Global Leadership and Organisational Behaviour Effectiveness) clusters based on their cultural similarities. Moreover, Huntington (1996) grouped countries around the world into eight clusters according to the eight civilisations because a civilisation is "the highest cultural grouping of people and the broadest level of cultural identity people have" (Huntington 1996: 43).

Table 2.8: Cultural Clusters (Peng, 2011)

Country Clusters (Ronen and Shenka, 1985)	GLOBE Clusters (House, et al. 2004)	Civilisation Clusters (Huntington, 1996)
Anglo	Anglo	Western
Nordic	Nordic Europe	
Germanic	Germanic Europe	
Latin Europe	Latin Europe	
Israel	-	
Central and Eastern Europe	Eastern Europe	Slavic-Orthodox
Arabic	Middle East	Islamic
Near Eastern	-	-
India	Southern Asia	Hindu
Sub-Sahara Africa	Sub-Sahara Africa	African
Latin America	Latin America	Latin American
Brazil	-	
Far East	Confucian Asia	Confucian (Sinic)
Japan	-	Japanese

Countries from different clusters are largely different in cultural values while countries in the same clusters are quite similar (Ronan and Shenka 1985; Huntington 1996; House, et al. 2004; Peng, 2011). For example, according to Ronan and Shenka (1985), the far eastern country cluster includes Malaysia, Singapore, Hong Kong, Philippines, South Vietnam, Indonesia, Taiwan, and Thailand. In their later work Shenkar and Ronen (1987), the authors added P.R. of China into this country cluster. Therefore, the findings of some studies which surveyed or interviewed students in relation to the influences that affect their choice of foreign study from Malaysia (Duan, 1996; Lawley, 1998; Lawley and Perry 1998; Bourke, 2000; Pyvis and Chapman 2007; Wagner and Fard 2009), Singapore (Duan, 1996; Bourke, 2000), Hong Kong (Duan, 1996; Lawley, 1998; Chen 2007), Taiwan (i.e. Kemp et al. 1998; Chen and Zimitat 2006; Chen 2007), and Thailand (i.e. Lawley 1998; Lawley and Perry, 1998; Pimpa, 1999, 2000, 2002, 2003, 2004) may be meaningful to the present study. The influences to Asian students' choice of study destination are shown in the table 2.9. It is assumed that some of these influences may also apply to Chinese students' choice of study destination.

Table 2.9: The influences to Asian students' choice of study destination

Reference	Influences to the Choice of Studying Destination
Duan (1996)	See the table 2.2
Lawley (1998)	**Course and country** (standard of courses, recognition of qualifications, teaching facilities, opinion of family, opinion of friends, opinion of agents, safe place to study, way of life, and potential to immigrate) **Administrative processes** (entry to universities, student visa, exemptions, obtaining information, and legally work part time) **Costs** (comparative cost, racial discrimination, climate, distance from home, presence of other students, time to complete, and scholarships)
Layley and Perry (1998)	See the table 2.4
Kemp et al. (1998)	An overseas course is superior, gain an understanding of Western culture, domestic entry difficult, course not available domestically, and intend to migrate to study destination.
Bourke (2000)	*Factors influencing students' choice of host nation*: Home of favoured university, there on holidays, know someone who studied there, educational reputation is good, high status of studying there, offered a place, and to be educated through English *Factors influencing students' choice of institution*: Quality of courses, recognition of degree overseas, availability of courses, cost of education, entry requirements, learning/ teaching styles, and status of university in home country
Chen and Zimitat (2006)	English speaking countries, more valuable qualifications, the academic reputation, job prospects, developed country, western culture acquisition, climate, large choice of higher education institutions, personal safety, high achievement in academic research, influences of parents, influence of friends, influence of other family members, influence of teachers, influence of those who have studied overseas, cost of tuition fees, cost of living, time cost, and limited places in domestic universities.
Pyvis and Chapman (2007)	*Factors influencing Malaysian students' choice of studying abroad:* High recognition of international education in Malaysia *Factors influencing non-Malaysian students' choice of studying abroad:* Aid to procuring a new identity (expunging provincial outlooks in Malaysia), New ways of viewing the world, new habits of thinking and new skills and approaches.
Chen (2007)	*Country Environment* Academic quality, reputation of the degree, research/ technology/ business expertise, environment (safety/climate), economic (costs), political ties, immigration policies, geographic proximity, familial, influence/ ties, significant others, culture/ language *Institutional Characteristics* Reputation, faculty, economic (cost/ benefit), career plans/ mobility, location, financial

	aid scholarship, social capital, family influence, friends/ alumni, employers, application process
	City Characteristics Diversity, tolerance, no discrimination
Pimpa (1999, 2000, 2002, 2003, and 2004)	*Influence of Family* Finance, Information, Expectation, Competition, Persuasion *Influence of Peers and Student Recruitment Agencies* Information, persuasion, competition
Wagner and Fard (2009)	Cost of education, degree (content and structure), physical aspects, facilities and resources, value of education, institutional information, family, friends and peers

Nonetheless, it must be noted that the clusters of countries are dynamic and constantly evolving. "The cluster approach has relatively little to offer regarding differences among countries within one cluster" (Peng, 2011: p. 72). Certain differences among the countries in the same cluster always exist (Peng, 2011). In other words, the findings of the aforementioned studies cannot adequately answer the research questions of this study because Chinese students are to some extent different from international students from other Asian countries.

In addition, the U.K is clearly not in the same country cluster as China in any of these three cluster approaches. According to the table 2.8, the U.K belongs to the Anglo or Western cluster whereas China belongs to the cluster of Far East or Confucian Asia or Confucian (Sinic). As a result it can be suggested that this has important COO implications for Chinese students studying in the U.K. According to Bridgewater and Egan (2002), people from different countries usually have different understanding of (i) time, (ii) space, (iii) friendship and family, (iv) language, (v) education system, and (vi) symbols. These different understandings may result in a unique British COO image perceived by Chinese students which may affect their decision-making in selecting their study destination. Firstly, the length of study may be very important for female students because they have the early marriage pressure. In order to reduce such pressure, some females even hire boyfriends and bring them to see their parents. The

image of shorter length of studying a postgraduate course in the U.K than other countries may be important for female students in China.

Secondly, the possible uncomfortable geographic distance between China and the U.K may make some students who can afford foreign studies still chose to stay in China for higher education.

Thirdly, Chinese students' study decision-making process can largely be influenced by parents in terms of financial support available and/or by friends in terms of information provided. Additionally, filial piety, as one of the most important Chinese cultural values, requires the students to not to go far away from home for a long time. This may also result in students selecting to stay in China rather than go abroad for further higher education. Moreover, most students who chose to go abroad also prefer to return China after graduation.

Fourthly, the language difference may lead many students who have foreign language barriers chose to stay in China. However, as most Chinese students have been studying English for many years, those who have the intention to study abroad would usually like to choose English speaking countries such as the U.K.

Fifthly, Chinese students may not adapt to the British higher education system which is very different from Chinese universities. Therefore, running cooperative projects in China becomes necessary. The Chinese government encourages cooperative projects between Chinese higher education and foreign higher education in order to cater to the high demand of higher education in the country (Zhao, 2013). British universities should take advantage of this opportunity.

Sixthly, "Red means danger or stop in the U.K. It means good fortune in China." (Bridgewater and Egan, 2002: 25). This may to some extent explain why Chinese students are attracted by the 'red brick' universities (Zhao, 2013). Therefore, the 'red

brick' image of many British universities should be addressed while advertising to Chinese market.

2.3.5 Branding Studies on Service Sector and Brand Equity in International Higher Education

The principles of services branding are similar to products branding at the conceptual level (de Chernatony and Riley, 1999). Nonetheless, the execution of brand strategy is largely different between services and products because "service companies are less marketing-oriented than firms which are marketing physical goods (Gronroos, 2007: 588)". Moreover, there has been growing literature which conceptualises higher education as a service (Chen and Zimitat, 2006; Maringe and Carter, 2007; Mourad et al. 2011). International higher education has been increasingly regarded as marketing-oriented and sees students as consumers (Stewart and Felicetti, 1991; Chen 2008; Mazzarol and Soutar 2008; Mourad et al. 2011; Durkin, et al. 2012). As part of this view literature has begun to emerge which applies the principles of branding to higher education services (Curtis, et al. 2009; Mourad et al. 2011; Durkin, et al. 2012).

In the service sector, the company is the primary brand (de Chematony and Dall'Olmo Riley, 1999; Berry, 2000). For higher education services, the university is the primary brand. It is not easy to assess the quality of service before consumption due to its nature of intangibility, inseparability, heterogeneity and perishability (Bateson, 1977, 1979, 1995; Berry, 1980; Nicoulaud, 1988; de Chernatony and Riley, 1999; Gronroos, 2007). As students usually lack experience in advance of purchase, the perceived risk can be higher in foreign higher education selection than other services (Mourad, et al. 2011). In such circumstance, the brand image becomes important since it transfers a signal to consumers about the quality of service that will be delivered and can therefore reduce the attached potential risk (de Chernatony and McDonald, 1998). It can act as a risk reliever simplifying decision making process by providing distinctiveness (Erdem and Swait, 1998; Temple, 2006; Lockwood and

Hadd, 2007; Chen 2008). Thus, branding is of particular relevance to students' choice of higher education.

According to de Chernatony and McDonald (1998: 396), "brand equity is a multi-dimensional concept". There are two dimensions of a conceptualised brand, including needs (functionality) and personal expression needs (representation) (de Chernatony and WcWilliam, 1989 and de Chernatony, 1993). Consumers usually hold a distinguished image and added value for the brand. In relation to Chinese students' selection of British higher education, brand equity refers to the value of the brand not only to British higher education but also to Chinese students. For Chinese students, the added values aroused are the desirable attributes of having British higher education. These added values can satisfy students' performance needs and expression needs. Therefore, offering target Chinese students the information about the studying experience and high quality of British higher education in advance of purchase would lead to widespread recognition of brand equity in the Chinese market. British universities should understand potential Chinese students' perceptions, cater for their expectations, and properly position students and Chinese universities (Mourad, et al. 2011).

According to Keller (1993), brand equity has two dimensional constructs including brand awareness and brand image. For British universities, brand awareness is the perception of potential students recognising the brand as a member of British higher education. The brand awareness of British universities has been created by the influences that affect the evaluation of British higher education services (Kurz et al. 2008). Brand image is related to anything associated in potential students' memory of British universities (Aaker, 1991). The social image of British universities and their position in the international higher education market can impact on their brand images and therefore influence students' choice and evaluation.

Mourad et al. (2011) refined Vorhies (1997)'s determinants of brand equity into five

categories which apply to higher education services. They are consumer attributes, provider attributes, marketing activities, product attributes, and symbolic attributes. Each determinant of brand equity has a few influences as shown in the table 2.10.

Table 2.10 Determinants of Brand Equity to Higher Education
(Mourad et al. 2011)

Consumer attributes	Academic qualification	Motivations	Occupational interest
	Previous experience (Keller, 1993; Lockwood and Hadd, 2007)		
Provider attributes	Location (Booth, 1999; Scott, 2000; Chen 2008; Kurz et al. 2008)	Country of Origin	Size (Cheng and Tam, 1997; Kent et al. 1993; Scott, 2000; Smith and Ennew, 2000)
	History	Relationship between students / parents and faculty / staff (Scott, 2000; Chen, 2008)	
Marketing activities	All marketing activities	Word of mouth (Booth, 1999; Chen, 2008; Kent et al. 1993; Scott, 2000)	
Product attributes	Perceived quality (Cheng and Tam, 1997; Kent et al. 1993; Scott, 2000; Smith and Ennew, 2000; Kurz et al. 2008; Cheng, 2008)	Tuition fees (Booth, 1999; Keller, 1993; Chen, 2008)	Guarantees and after sales services (Vorhies, 1997; Kent et al. 1993)
	Availability of courses	Entry requirement	Employment prospect
Symbolic attributes	Brand personality and identity	Overall image and reputation of the university (Byron, 1995; Cheng and Tam, 1997; Keller, 1993; Kent et al. 1993; Scott, 2000; Smith and Ennew, 2000; Chen, 2008; Temple, 2006)	

Developing strong and positive British universities' brands is essential in the competitive environment of modern international higher education market. Strong services brands create consumers' trust in the invisible purchase and a promise of future satisfaction because they enable consumers to have better visualisation and understanding of services (Berry, 2000). Accordingly, strong universities create students' trust and a promise of high service quality.

Clearly given the positive influence of 'Western' brands on Chinese consumer behaviour, it therefore follows that Chinese student consumers may be influenced by the principles of service branding in their higher education choices. Building on the findings of cultivating service brand equity in Berry (2000), there are a few ways of establishing strong brands for British universities. First of all, creating branding distinctiveness is necessary. This can be done through adjusting the themes of the brand suggested by de Chernatony and Dall'Olmo Riley (1997) including legal instrument, logo, company, identity system, image in students' minds, personality, relationship, adding value, and evolving entity.

The second way of building strong brands is to communicate with students more effectively and providing higher education services better than other universities. British universities should invest in marketing communication to enhance Chinese students' awareness and understanding of the brand values (Gray, 2006). The third way is to reinforce students' experience by focusing on different market needs. As previously discussed, because of the different cultural values, the student market of the U.K is different from China. Such differences can lead to different student needs. In services branding practice, the front-line marketing staff of British universities to the market of China should be kept better informed about students' needs, Chinese culture, and market changes; thereby enabling British universities to serve students better than competitors (Gray, 2006).

2.3.6   Summary of Literature Review of International Higher Education

The influences that can affect international students' selection of higher education services can be grouped into eight categories as followings:

1.   Reputation

- Prestige of studying overseas (e.g. Bourke, 2000; Davidson and Wang, 2008; and Yao, 2004)
- Reputation for quality education (e.g. Yao, 2004; Diaz and Krauss, 1996; Huang

and Brown, 1996; Singh and Ninemeier, 2003; Chen 2007; Mazzarol 1998; and Mazzarol and Soutar, 2004)

- Recognition of courses by home (e.g. Economist, 2005)

2. **Ease of Obtaining Student Visas** (e.g. Economist, 2005; Chen, 2007)

3. **Availability of courses in home country**

- Limited places at domestic universities (e.g. Mazzarol and Soutar, 2002; Yao, 2004)
- Easy admission or more places (e.g. Yao, 2004)
- Difficulty of entering a home-based university (e.g. Davidson and Wang, 2008)
- Flexibility of course (e.g. Yao, 2004)

4. **Influence of normative referents**

- Family (e.g. Pmipa, 2 002; Pimpa, 2003; Pimpa, 2004; Economist, 2005; Chen and Zimitat, 2006; Mazzarol and Soutar, 2002)
- Friends (e.g. Pimpa, 2002; Chen and Zimitat, 2006; Mazzarol and Soutar, 2002)
- Education agents (e.g. Pimpa, 2002; Lawley and Perry, 1999)

5. **English Acquisition (e.g. Malcolm, et al. 2004; Yao, 2004)**

6. **Cost of studying overseas**

- Relative cost (e.g. Davidson and Wang, 2008; Chen, 2006; Yao, 2004; Chen and Zimitat, 2006)
- Scholarships (e.g. Chen, 2007)

7. **Employment opportunity**

- The prospect of gaining a competitive advantage in the job market (e.g. Yao, 2004; Economist, 2005; Davidson and Wang, 2008)

8. Country Environment

- Environment image in terms of Culture Proximity (e.g. Cubillo, et al. 2005, 2006; Srikatanyoo and Gnoth, 2002),

- Safety and quality of life (e.g. Chen and Zimitat, 2006; Lawley and Perry, 1998; Kemp, et al. 1998; Yao, 2004; Cubillo, et, al. 2006; Davidson and Wang, 2008),

- Social Facilities (e.g. Price, 2003)

- Image as a tourist destination (e.g. Murphy, 1999; Son and Pearce, 2005; Wang and Davidson, 2008).

- The wealth and power of host country (e.g. Davidson and Wang, 2008)

2.3.7   Gaps in Extant Literature

It was found that most international higher education studies were based on Australia as host country. Examples can be Harris and Jarrett (1990), Duan (1997), Kemp, et al. (1998), Lawley and Perry (1998), Pimpa (1999; 2000; 2002; 2003), Yao (2004), Son and Pearce (2005), Cubillo, et. al. (2005; 2006), Chen and Zimitat (2006), Wang and Davidson (2008), and so on. Very few studies can be found in relation to the UK as the choice of destination in international education, especially studies concerning Chinese students' selection of the U.K as a destination for studying.

Although many influences were identified from the literature, Duan (1997) asserted that these influences were inappropriate to generalise regarding influences upon student selection of a higher education destination. This is because students holding different socio-economic backgrounds may weigh each of these influences at different level (Duan, 1997). Therefore, influences affect the study choice made by international students from one country may not apply to those from other countries. For example, influences that can affect Chinese students' selection of British higher education may be different from the influences that can affect Japanese students. Considering the social change in China in recent decades, the literature has left a gap on how Chinese students in recent years evaluate British higher education services.

2.4 Emerging Themes from the Literature

This chapter has reviewed the literature with respect to the COO effects on consumers' product evaluation and higher education service choice. The gaps in extant literature were focused. The themes for current study were emerged from this chapter. The research aims to further the literature of COO effects with respect to the issue of service evaluation. In addition, it will look at an insight of Chinese students' evaluation of British higher education services. There are three steps to achieve the research aim. The study will be conducted in a qualitative method. First of all, the determinants of COO image suggested by Parameswaran and Pisharodi (1994) discussed in the section 2.2.1 could be used for examining the respondents' COO image. Secondly, the internal influences that can affect COO effects on service evaluation will be examined. The section 2.2.8 suggested that the internal influences include consumers' a-priori familiarity of the services, consumers' vertical individualistic value, and consumer ethnocentric value. A-priori service familiarity can be assessed by judging respondents' utterance from the interviews. In addition, respondents' vertical individualistic value will be assessed by interview question topics based on Sivadas, et al. (2008)'s scales of vertical individualism dimension. What's more, respondents' consumer ethnocentric value will be assessed by using Shimpa and Sharma (1987)'s Consumer Ethnocentrism Scale (CETSCALE) deployed in a qualitative manner. Thirdly, the external influence of COO effects will be examined. The section 2.3.6 has suggested many external influences that can affect students' choice of international higher education including: academic, entry requirement, availability of courses in home country, influence of normative referents, English acquisition, costs of studying overseas, employment opportunities, and country environment. These external influences were expected to be considered by Chinese students selecting their future higher education in the data collection process in the present study.

The above three steps can be seen as the three parts of the present research as explained in Chapter One. The next chapter will review my personal views and

experiences to the COO effects on service evaluation based on the findings identified in this chapter.

Chapter Three: Personal Views and Experience

3.1 Introduction

According to Creswell (1994), as a qualitative researcher, I am encouraged to acknowledge my own understandings and view of the world, and to communicate this clearly in the thesis. One of the most prominent ontological and epistemological advantages of qualitative research is to grasp respondents' point of view and values in advance of method, data collection and analysis. This chapter aims to use myself as an instrument of inquiry by taking advantage of the intimate acquaintance with my own culture (McCracken, 1988). McCracken (1988) named this stage as Review of Cultural Category which is concerned with the relationship between my own culture and my target study of interest (see figure 3.1). This thesis is based on the understanding of the cultural matters that inform the evaluation of services. It is by drawing on my understanding of how I see and experience British higher education that I can supplement and interpret the data I generate in the long interview methodological approach adopted in this study. As I am Chinese who grew up in China and the target respondents in data collection are Chinese students, I am working within Chinese culture that I am deeply familiar with. Hence the long interview can be used as a powerful methodological tool when used in conjunction with myself as instrument of inquiry.
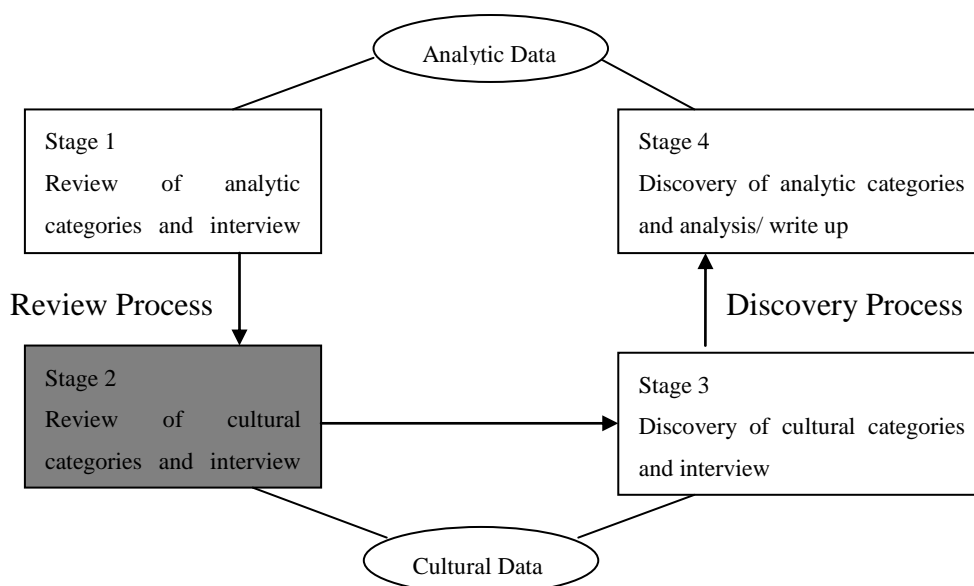
Figure 3.1: Stage 2 Review of Cultural Categories and Interview Design

The cultural categories I discuss include: British COO image, Chinese COO image, knowledge of British higher education services, knowledge of Chinese higher education services, individualism, consumer ethnocentrism, and other information cues considered when deciding about going to the U.K for higher education. These themes are consistent and build upon the themes discussed in the previous literature review chapter. The research objectives and research questions of the current study were based on these themes. They consist of the three parts of the study as illustrated in Chapter One.

In this chapter, it is necessary to divide my review of cultural categories into two parts including *before* and *after* I experienced British higher education services. Before I went to the U.K, I had fairly limited knowledge of its higher education services as they were, by definition, unavailable to me given that I lived in China.

3.2 Part One of the Study: COO Effects in the Evaluation of Services

Part one of the study aims to achieve the research objectives 1 to 4 by answering the research questions 1 to 4 as shown in the table 3.1. It focuses on the COO image of the U.K and China as perceived by Chinese students and how can such COO image influence their evaluation of British and Chinese higher education respectively.

Table 3.1: Research Objectives and Research Questions in Part One of the Study

Research Objectives (RO)	Research Questions (RQ)
1. To examine British COO image held by Chinese students	1. How is British COO image generally perceived by Chinese students?
2. To examine Chinese COO image held by Chinese students	2. How is Chinese COO image generally perceived by Chinese students?
3. To examine Chinese students' evaluation of British higher education services based on their British COO image	3. Does Chinese Students' perception of British COO image influence their evaluation of British higher education services, and why?

4. To examine Chinese students' evaluation of Chinese higher education services based on their Chinese COO image	4. Does Chinese students' perception of Chinese COO image influence their evaluation of Chinese higher education services, and why?

In this chapter, my perceived COO image of the U.K and China must be analysed first. This can be done by assessing the three facets based on Parameswaran and Pisharodi (1994) as discussed in Chapter Two. These three facets include:

- "General Country Attributes" (GCA) of the U.K and China
- "General Service Attributes" (GSA) of the U.K and China
- "Specific Service Attributes" (SPA) namely, higher education service attributes of the U.K and China

Perceived British COO Image

I have a combination of positive and negative views of the U.K, British services and its higher education services as shown in table 3.2. However, I tend to lean towards a positive attitude of British COO image despite some negative feelings. Nonetheless, I found that my understanding of how I see the U.K and British higher education has been changing in the last six years of being in the U.K.

Table 3.2: British COO Image in the Review of Cultural Category

Research Question	Cultural Category (Before going to the U.K)	Cultural Category (After going to the U.K)
1. How is British COO image generally perceived by Chinese students?	*Generally, British COO image was positive* General Country Attributes including: • Well-educated people • Friendly and likable people • High technical skills of people • High social welfare • High standard of living • High average income	*Generally, British COO image is positive* General Country Attributes including: • Well-educated people • Friendly and likable people • High technical skills of people • High social welfare • High average income • Good natural environment • Safe environment But there are two negative attributes: • Not hard-working people • Low efficiency of workers

	General Service Attributes including: • Services are well-known • Customer-oriented • High price • Not available in China But a negative attribute is: • Unreasonably expensive high price	General Service Attributes including: • Customer-oriented • Expensive • Well-known • Wide range of choices • fewer problems for consumers • Advertising is informative • High quality • High labour cost
	British higher education service attributes including: • Good academic reputation • High quality • Availability of facilities • Good employment prospects • High price of education and living	British higher education service attributes including: • Good academic reputation • High quality • Availability of facilities • Ease of admission • Flexibility of courses

General Country Attributes

Before I went to the U.K, my views of the U.K were positive. Such an image was gradually formed when I was studying English. I had been studying English for more than ten years, since I became a middle school student in 1996. All of my English textbooks were in British English. According to what I studied, all the attributes about the U.K are positive. In my mind, British people are well-educated, friendly and likable. They have high technical skills in the way that they do things. The country is rich, has high average income and high levels of social welfare. Accordingly, British people can enjoy a high standard of living.

After I went to the U.K, all my a-priori feelings were justified except for my perception of the British high standard of living. I found that shops usually open very late and close very early. British people are not hard-working compared with Chinese people. Moreover, I found that they are not efficient in doing things such as opening a bank account or booking appointments for medical services.

General Service Attributes

The British service sector is developed and well-known. The capital, London, is famous as the financial centre of Europe. British movies show that British services, especially customer services, are quite customer-oriented. Nonetheless, I perceived them as unreasonably expensive because of its high labour cost before I went to the U.K. Most services provided by the U.K are not available to Chinese consumers who stay in China. Therefore, I found it was difficult to evaluate how good or how bad British services were before I went to the U.K.

After I went to the U.K and worked part-time in the service sector, I still deem that British services are expensive albeit with a wider range of choices than I would experience in China. The high labour cost means that there are well trained employees delivering high quality services, with fewer problems and good value for the consumer. In my opinion, British service advertisements are carried out in an informative and effective manner.

General British higher education service attributes

Before going to the U.K, I felt that British higher education had the highest academic reputation in the world. My completion of British higher education could assure me good employment prospects. I am not from a rich family. Therefore, the price of British higher education and living in the U.K was high according to my family's financial situation. To my mind, however, a high price translates to high-quality services. With a high price, some facilities which were not available in Chinese universities would become available in British universities.

After going to the U.K for a few years, I could not see the good employment prospects I expected because there are increasing numbers of Chinese students coming to the U.K for higher education because of the ease of admission. I also found flexibility of the courses in British universities such as the seminar classes. In addition, students can choose a wider range of optional modules.

Chinese COO Image

I have a combination of positive and negative views of China, Chinese services and Chinese higher education services as shown in table 3.3. I believe that my Chinese COO image is in accordance to most Chinese students. I tend to have a positive image of Chinese COO in general, despite some negative feelings before and after going to the U.K. My general positive COO image is largely due to my strong patriotism. However, I found my views are changing with time spent in the U.K as I began to compare in my mind the two countries.

Table 3.3: Chinese COO Image in the Review of Cultural Category

Research Question	Cultural Category (Before going to the U.K)	Cultural Category (After going to the U.K)
2. How is Chinese COO image generally perceived by Chinese students?	*Chinese COO image was positive* General Country Attributes were all positive including: • Long History • Profound culture and traditions • Beautiful landscape • Hard-working people • Friendly and likable people • Fast developing economy • Rising living standard • High social stability	*Chinese COO image is positive* Positive General Country Attributes including: • Profound culture and traditions • Friendly and likable people • Fast developing economy • High social stability Negative General Country Attributes including: • Low social welfare • Low standard of living • Low average income • Polluted Positive General Service Attributes including: • Low price Negative General Country Attributes including: • Under-developed service sector • Services are not well-known by the world • Consumers experience many problems • Narrow range of services Positive Chinese higher education service attributes including: • High graduation rate
	General Service Attributes were all negative including: • Under-developed service sector • Services are not well-known by the world	

		• Low price
	Chinese higher education service attributes were all negative including:	Negative Chinese higher education service attributes including:
	• High entry requirement	• High entry requirement
	• Limited places	• Limited places
	• Under-developed in comparison to the Western higher education	• Under-developed in comparison to the Western higher education
	• Not well-known in comparison to the Western higher education	• Not well-known in comparison to the Western higher education
		• Poor facilities
		• Poor administration in examination system

General Country Attributes

China has a long history and profound cultural heritage. It is a country with 5,000 years of civilisation. I like and respect Chinese people as they are hard-working and friendly. China's economy has developed quickly in recent decades.

After going to the U.K, I increasingly compared China with other countries. Although my general Chinese COO image is still positive, I also found myself holding a few negative perspectives. Compared to some developed countries like the U.K, China has increasingly high Gross Domestic Product (GDP) each year, but the GDP per capita is still low. This implies that most Chinese people still have low social welfare, low standard of living and low average income. Moreover, in order to develop the economy, China has become polluted. The outcome and achievement of fast economic development has not been shared equally due to political corruption. As a result, only a few people become extremely rich while there is a large number of people who are remaining poor.

General Service Attributes

The Chinese service sector is still under-developed. It was not well-known before I went to the U.K. After going to the U.K, I found that Chinese services are at an extremely low price because of the low labour cost. Nonetheless, there may be many

problems experienced by consumers of Chinese services, in areas such as after sales services and provision of insurance services. Chinese services also present consumers with a limited range of choices. For example, mobile phone insurance, which is very popular in the U.K, is difficult to purchase in China.

Chinese higher education service attributes

In 2012, there were 9.15 million high school students and 1.8 million undergraduate students who applied to the over 3,000 higher education institutions in China. The expected average admission rate was 75 percent (Cheng and Ma, 2012). However, only a small number of students can be enrolled in perceived "good universities". There are only approximately 100 universities perceived as "good universities". They are either 985 project or 211 project universities. According to China's University and College Admission System (2013):

> *"Project 211 is a project which aims to strengthen approximately 100 key universities and colleges for the 21st century initiated in 1995 by China's Ministry of Education. The figure of 21 and 1 within the name 211 are from the abbreviation of the 21st century and approximately 100 universities respectively. China now has more than 2,000 standard institutions of higher education, and about 6 percent of them are 211 Project institutions."*

> *"Project 985 is a boosting project to promote the Chinese higher education system as called for by President Jiang Zemin at the 100th anniversary of Peking University on May 4, 1998. The objective is to develop, in cooperation with local government, several top universities to be world-leading."*

The National Higher Education Entrance Examination (also known as *Gaokao* in Chinese pinyin) and the National Entrance Examination for Postgraduate (NEEP, also known as *Kaoyan* in Chinese pinyin) are difficult for applicants to get enrolled in good universities. Therefore, not all the students who signed up for the exam will actually take part in the exam. For example, in 2012, 1.8 million students applied for

the NEEP, but actually only 1.656 million students actually participated in the exam and only 0.54 million students were eventually accepted (NBS 2013). Additionally, the exam system has problems such as corruption and regional discrimination. For example, the general entry requirements for students from Shandong, Hubei, and Hunan provinces are much higher than students from provinces like Hainan, Xinjiang, Tibet, and Qinghai. Nonetheless, it is still the most logical examination system to cater for the situation of China because there are always too many applicants for the limited places in Chinese higher educational institutions.

After going to the U.K, I compared Chinese higher education with British higher education and found that the Chinese higher education has the advantage of low price. The low price also means poor facilities for instance, but not limited to accommodation and the library. Chinese higher education has high graduation rates because of the poor administration of examinations. Tolerance of academic misconduct is popular especially in lower ranked Chinese universities.

COO Effects on Service Evaluation

The analysis of my changing perceived British COO image and Chinese COO image in the last section can help to answer the research question 3 and 4 as shown in table 3.4 below:

Table 3.4: COO Effects on Service Evaluation

Research Question	Cultural Category (Before going to the U.K)	Cultural Category (After going to the U.K)
3. Does Chinese Students' perception of British COO image influence their evaluation of British higher education services, and why?	My positive British COO image can largely lead to positive evaluation of British higher education.	My positive British COO image can partly lead to positive evaluation of British higher education.
4: Does Chinese students' perception of Chinese COO image influence their evaluation of Chinese higher education services, and why?	My general negative Chinese COO image can sometimes lead to negative evaluation of Chinese higher education.	My general negative Chinese COO image can sometimes lead to negative evaluation of Chinese higher education.

My evaluation of British higher education is always positive while my evaluation of Chinese higher education tends to be negative in most cases. The COO effects in my evaluation of both British higher education and Chinese higher education do exist. For example, my positive British COO image can result in positive evaluation of British higher education. I deemed that the well-educated attribute of British people is due to its excellent higher education. In addition, my image of low price of general Chinese services can also lead to low price of Chinese higher education services. Nonetheless, the magnitude of the COO effects in my evaluation of British higher education is different from the COO effects in my evaluation of Chinese higher education. In addition, such magnitude is changing given the time. This is due to the intrinsic influences especially the a-prior service familiarity and external influences of COO effects in my evaluation of services which will be discussed in the next sections.

3.3 Part Two of the Study: Internal Influences of COO Effects on Service Evaluation

Part two of the study aims to examine the internal influences of COO effects on the evaluation of British higher education services and Chinese higher education services. The literature review of COO study in Chapter Two suggested at least three internal influences. These internal influences come from consumers' personal attributes, such as consumers' a-priori familiarity of the products (Brucks, 1985; Lin and Zhen 2005), consumers' vertical individualistic value (Gurhan-Canli and Maheswaran, 2000a; and Ferguson et al. 2008), and consumers' ethnocentric value (Shimp and Sharma, 1987; Sharma, et al. 1995; Waston and Wright, 2000; Javalgi and White, 2002; Ferguson, et al. 2008). The research objectives and research questions in part two of the study are shown in the table 3.5. The sections 3.3.1 to 3.3.3 will discuss these three internal influences from my experience respectively.

Table 3.5: Research Objectives and Research Questions in Part Two of the Study

Research Objectives (RO)	Research Questions (RQ)
5. To examine the internal influences of COO effects on the evaluation of British higher education services and Chinese higher education services (e.g. service familiarity, vertical individualistic value, consumer ethnocentric value)	5. To what extent can Chinese students' familiarity of British higher education influence COO effects in their evaluation of British higher education services?
	6. To what extent can Chinese students' familiarity of Chinese higher education influence COO effects in their evaluation of Chinese higher education services?
	7. To what extent can Chinese students' vertical individualism influence COO effects in their evaluation of British higher education and Chinese higher education?
	8. To what extent can Chinese students' consumer ethnocentrism influence COO effects in their evaluation of British higher education services and Chinese higher education services?

3.3.1 Service Familiarity

Past studies indicated that customers' product familiarity can influence the importance of the COO information cue in the evaluation of products (Nagashima, 1970; Johansson et al. 1985; Johansson and Nebenzahl 1986; Eroglu and Machleit, 1988; Han and Terpstra, 1988; Jaffe and Nebenzhal 1989; Johansson 1989; Han, 1990; Cordell, 1992; Akaah and Yaprak, 1993; Lee and Ganesh, 1999; Paswan and Sharma 2004). Generally, the lower the level of familiarity of consumers with products, the stronger COO effects will be. In my opinion, service familiarity is also an important issue that can influence COO effects in the evaluation of services. The next two sections will explain how my a-priori service knowledge affects the importance of COO image in my evaluation of British higher education and Chinese higher education.

Knowledge of British Higher Education Services

The table 3.6 has shown my service familiarity change before and after I went to the U.K. Before going to the U.K, my positive British COO image can largely lead to me

to infer a positive evaluation of British higher education. In the process of evaluating British higher education, I had a lack of prior knowledge of British higher education. I did not have any experience based knowledge, but possessed certain subjective or perceived knowledge from my friends who had prior experience of British higher education. I also had more '*objective*' knowledge of British higher education from magazines and newspapers. Due to my limited knowledge of British higher education, my perceptions of British COO image became important in my evaluation of British higher education. I could infer positive evaluation of British higher education by my positive British COO image. This can be perceived as COO effects on service evaluation.

Table 3.6: Knowledge of British Higher Education in the Review of Cultural Category

Research Question	Cultural Category (Before going to the U.K)	Cultural Category (After going to the U.K)
5. To what extent can Chinese students' familiarity of British higher education influence COO effects in their evaluation of British higher education services?	I have limited prior knowledge of British higher education. Therefore I have: • No experience-based knowledge • Certain subjective or perceived knowledge • Certain objective knowledge	I have significant knowledge of British higher education. Therefore I have: • High experience-based knowledge • Higher level of subjective or perceive

After going to the U.K, such COO effects were gradually diminished because of my accumulated knowledge of British higher education. When evaluating British higher education, my increasing a-priori knowledge becomes increasingly important. In most cases my a-priori knowledge had become more important than the COO image when evaluating services.

Knowledge of Chinese Higher Education Services

As I never studied in a real Chinese higher institution, I do not have any experience based knowledge of Chinese higher education. Nonetheless, I always have high subjective or perceived knowledge of it because I am a Chinese who grew up in China and I understand Chinese higher education easily through the media, my friends who

were university or college students, my visits to Chinese universities and education agents. Consequently, I would like to rely on my prior knowledge in the evaluation process of Chinese higher education services. However, the COO effects on Chinese higher education services sometimes still exist especially when I did not have much prior service knowledge. My positive Chinese COO image can partly lead to positive evaluation of Chinese higher education services.

Table 3.7: Knowledge of Chinese Higher Education in the Review of Cultural Category

Research Question	Cultural Category (Before going to the U.K)	Cultural Category (After going to the U.K)
6. To what extent can Chinese students' familiarity of Chinese higher education influence COO effects in their evaluation of Chinese higher education services?	*Knowledge of Chinese Higher Education Services* I have high prior knowledge of Chinese higher education,. Therefore, I have • No experience-based knowledge • High subjective or perceived knowledge • High objective knowledge	*Knowledge of Chinese Higher Education Services* I have high prior knowledge of Chinese higher education. Therefore I have: • No experience-based knowledge, but • High subjective or perceived knowledge • High objective knowledge

3.3.2   Vertical Individualism

As discussed in Chapter Two, only the vertical dimension of individualism can be linked to COO effects on product evaluation (Gurhan-Canli and Maheswaran, 2000a) In addition, Singelis et al. (1995) suggested 14 scales of for evaluating the vertical individualism dimension. Nonetheless, only 7 scales were validated by Sivadas et al. (2008). Accordingly, the scales of vertical individualism dimension validated by Sivadas et al. (2008) from Singelis et al. (1995) were considered when I evaluated my vertical individualistic value (table 3.8). Moreover, the scale of "many social hierarchies in life" was added because it is an attribute of the vertical dimension of individualism (Hofested 2001; Singelis et al. 1995).

Table 3.8: Scales of Vertical Individualism Dimension (Sivadas et al. 2008: 203)

Scales of Vertical Individualism Dimension	Attributes
I enjoy working in situations involving competition with others	High Vertical Individualism
Competition is the law of nature	High Vertical Individualism
Without competition it is not possible to have a good society	High Vertical Individualism
I would do what would please my family, even if I detested that activity	Low Vertical Individualism
I usually sacrifice my self-interest for the benefit of my group	Low Vertical Individualism
I would sacrifice an activity that I enjoy very much if my family did not approve of it	Low Vertical Individualism
Children should feel honoured if their parents receive a distinguished award	Low Vertical Individualism

The table 3.9 has shown the dimension of my vertical individualism before and after I went to the U.K. Before going to the U.K, I had many hierarchies in my life, such as in my family, school, and the society around me. I really like competitions with others in a way of fairness, justice and harmony. Nonetheless, sometimes it seems hard to have competitions with others in China. In some extreme situations, friends may become enemies if we were involved in a competition. In order to maintain the relationship (also called as *guanxi*), we are likely to make concessions by various means to each other in a perceived competition. Therefore, I sometimes liked competition with others, but not always. In addition, I sometimes feel honoured to others' success and sometimes sacrifice my own benefits to promote others' interests. I only feel honoured and make sacrifice if the "others" are my family members or friends.

After going to the U.K, I still have many hierarchies especially at my part-time jobs. The profound cultural influence of British individualism has changed me from medium vertical individualism to high vertical individualism. I always like competitions in the U.K because the harmony can be kept as long as the competitions are in fair and just. In addition, I rarely feel honoured to others' success because it is none of my business. Interestingly, I found that many of my family members or friends in China always feel honoured to my success and achievements in the U.K,

especially my parents. I still make sacrifices for others only if they are my family members or friends.

Table 3.9: Vertical Individualism in the Review of Cultural Category

Research Question	Cultural Category (Before going to the U.K)	Cultural Category (After going to the U.K)
7. To what extent can Chinese students' cultural dimension of vertical individualism influence COO effects in their evaluation of British higher education?	*Medium vertical individualism* • Many hierarchies • Sometimes like competition • Sometimes feel honoured to others' success • Sometimes sacrifice for others	*High vertical individualism* • Many hierarchies • Always like competition • Rarely feel honoured to others' success • Sometimes sacrifice for others but not very often

From the above, it seems hard to see any linkage between my vertical individualistic value and COO effects in my evaluation of services. If there is high vertical individualism then according to literature, I should have strong COO effects. However, I think that although my vertical individualism is high currently, the influence of COO has become less important as I have accumulated knowledge and experience of U.K higher education in order to improve my evaluation of U.K higher education services.

3.3.3 Consumer Ethnocentrism

Shimp and Sharma (1987)'s CETSCALE was considered when I evaluated my consumer ethnocentrism. As discussed in the Chapter Two, there are 17 items in the original CETSCALE which was based on American consumers' ethnocentrism in the context of products. Nonetheless, I examined the 17 items in the context of services. I also converted the U.S into China and see American consumers as Chinese consumers (see table 3.10). It was found that I disagree with most of the items.

Table 3.10: CETSCALE (Shimp and Sharma 1987)

	Item
1	Chinese people should always buy Chinese-made services instead of imports
2	Only those services that are unavailable in China should be imported
3	Buy Chinese-made services. Keep China working
4	Chinese services, first, last, and foremost
5	Purchasing foreign services is un-Chinese
6	It is not right to purchase foreign services, because it puts Chinese out of jobs
7	A real Chinese should always buy Chinese services
8	We should purchase services provided in China instead of letting other countries get rich off us.
9	It is always best to purchase Chinese services
10	There should be very little trading or purchasing of services from other countries unless out of necessity.
11	Chinese should not buy foreign services, because this hurts Chinese business and causes unemployment
12	Curbs should be put on all imports.
13	It may cost me in the long-run but I prefer to support Chinese services.
14	Foreigners should not be allowed to put their services on our markets
15	Foreign services should be taxed heavily to reduce their entry into China
16	We should buy from foreign countries only those services that we cannot obtain within our own country.
17	Chinese consumers who purchase services in other countries are responsible for putting their fellow Chinese out of work.

My consumer ethnocentrism is weak because I do not particularly intend to buy Chinese or foreign made services in most cases (Table 3.11). For example I disagree with the item of "it is not right to purchase foreign services, because it puts Chinese people out of jobs". In my opinion, there is a large number of foreign services provided by Chinese workers. From this point, sometimes purchasing foreign services can create Chinese employment. I would like to buy services with comparatively low price and perceived high quality. Therefore, my consumer ethnocentric value can neither influence my evaluation of services nor the COO effects in my evaluation of services.

Table 3.11: Consumer Ethnocentrism in the Review of Cultural Category

Research Question	Cultural Category (Before going to the U.K)	Cultural Category (After going to the U.K)
8. To what extent can Chinese students' consumer ethnocentrism positively or negatively influence COO effects in their evaluation of British higher education services?	*Consumer Ethnocentrism* Weak consumer ethnocentrism: • No particular intention to buy Chinese made services	*Consumer Ethnocentrism* Weak consumer ethnocentrism: • No particular intention to buy Chinese made services

3.4 Part Three of the Study: External Influences of COO Influence on Service Evaluation

Part three of the study aims to examine the external influences of COO effects in the evaluation of British higher education services and Chinese higher education services. The external influences of COO effects in Chinese students' evaluation of British higher education services from the literature review of international higher education in the Chapter Two include:

- Academic reputation (e.g. Yao, 2004; Diaz and Krauss, 1996; Huang and Brown, 1996; Singh and Ninemeier, 2003; Chen 2007; Mazzarol 1998; and Mazzarol and Soutar, 2004);

- Entry requirement (e.g. Economist, 2005; Chen, 2007)

- Availability of courses in home country (e.g. Mazzarol and Soutar, 2002; Yao, 2004; Davidson and Wang, 2008);

- Influence of normative referents (e.g. Lawley and Perry, 1999; Pmipa, 2002, 2003, 2004; Economist, 2005; Chen and Zimitat, 2006; Mazzarol and Soutar, 2002);

- English acquisition (e.g. Malcolm, et al. 2004; Yao, 2004);

- Costs of studying overseas (e.g. Davidson and Wang, 2008; Chen, 2006, 2007; Yao, 2004; Chen and Zimitat, 2006); and

- Employment opportunities (e.g. Yao, 2004; Economist, 2005; Davidson and Wang, 2008)

- Country environment (e.g. Cubillo, et al. 2005, 2006; Srikatanyoo and Gnoth, 2002, Chen and Zimitat, 2006; Lawley and Perry, 1998; Kemp, et al. 1998; Yao, 2004; Davidson and Wang, 2008; Murphy, 1999; Son and Pearce, 2005; Wang and

Davidson, 2008)

In addition, Chapter Two also suggested three stages of students' decision making process when they select international higher education. These three stages are: first deciding to go abroad, then selecting a particular country, and selecting a particular institution. The importance of the aforementioned external influences of COO effects had been changing before and after I went to the U.K. Such difference is shown in the table 3.12.

Table 3.12: External Influences of COO Effects on Selecting International Higher Education

Research Question	Cultural Category (Before going to the U.K)	Cultural Category (After going to the U.K)
9. To what extent can COO effects in Chinese students' evaluation of British higher education services be perceived as less important when other additional information cues are considered?	*Other information cues considered:* Stage One: Deciding to going abroad • Prestige of studying abroad • Influence of parents • Cost of study overseas • Curiosity (to see the world; to seek adventure) • Culture of sending student overseas • High entry requirement in Chinese universities Stage Two: Selecting a particular country (The U.K) and institution (Manchester Metropolitan University) • Recognition of degree by home country • Family financial support available • Cost of study including tuition fee and living cost • The wealth and power of host country • Influence of parents • English language (the U.K is the birth place) • Perceived reasonableness of time to complete a course • Course exemptions • The ease of acquiring student visa • Possibility of emigration	*Other information cues considered:* Stage One: Deciding to going abroad • Recognition of degree by home country • Seeking independence • Prestige of studying abroad • Influence of parents • Cost of study overseas Step two: Selecting a particular country (the U.K) • Financial ability to support myself • Possibility of getting a part-time job • The ease of acquiring student visa • English language (No need to study another language) • Reasonable time to complete a course • Influence of parents Step three: Selecting a particular institution (University of Salford) • Location

	• Possibility of getting a part-time job	• Working experience
	• Employment prospects	• Cost of study including tuition fee and living cost
		• Scholarship
		• Employment perspective

Before Going to the U.K

Stage One: Deciding a study destination country

After I finished high school study, I found that I could not go to what I perceived as a good Chinese university for further study due to the high entry requirement. I had difficulty being admitted to good Chinese universities. Therefore, I had to choose to study abroad as there are more potential study opportunities in foreign countries. As my family could not afford the perceived extraordinarily high expense of studying abroad, we made the decision of where I went to study carefully. I decided to study in Xi'an Lighten Infobus International College (re-named as Xi'an TMC International College in 2004) as this was the most economical way of going abroad for study. The college was in Xi'an, China. As an independent Sino-Foreign cooperative college, it was founded by Xi'an Lighten Technology Company and Singapore TMC Education Corporation Ltd as a joint venture.

I studied a top-up course named International Business Management there. It was a three year course of the Higher National Diploma. The qualification was issued by University of Cambridge Local Examinations Syndicate. After I completed the course, I could go to a few cooperating foreign universities for further studies with course exemptions. The tuition fee was only 11,000 yuan (less than 800 pounds in 2003) per year and the accommodation fee was just 1,000 yuan (less than 70 pounds) per year.

Stage two: Choosing a study destination and particular institution

As the Higher Diploma could only be accepted by a few foreign institutions which cooperated with my college, I made the decision on a study destination and particular institution at the same time. Different institutions had different study periods. I

evaluated the various strengths and weaknesses of a range of higher education service providers in the U.K as depicted in the table 3.13. After this evaluation of service attributes I eventually chose Manchester Metropolitan University.

Table 3.13: Options of study destination and particular institution (before going to the U.K)

University	Destination	Study Period	Strengths	Weaknesses
Manchester Metropolitan University	The U.K	1 year	• Low total cost of study abroad • Reasonable time to complete a course • Course exemption • Reputation for high quality education • Ease of obtaining a student visa in short time • Having working rights during study • Degree offered is recognised in China	• Lower ranked than Deakin University and Monash University • Possibility of emigrating
University of East London	The U.K	1 year	• Low total cost of study abroad • Reasonable time to complete a course • Course exemption • Ease of obtaining a student visa • Having working rights during study • Degree offered is recognised in China	• Lower ranked than Manchester Metropolitan University • Possibility of emigrating
Georgian College	The U.S	1 year	• Low total cost of study abroad • Reasonable time to complete a course • Course exemption • Having working rights during study • Degree offered is recognised in China	• Most difficult to get a visa • Possibility of emigrating • Low level of personal safety
Deakin University	Australia	2 years	• Reputation for high quality education • Possibility of emigrating • Having working rights during study • Degree offered is recognised in China	• High total cost of study abroad • Unreasonable time to complete a course • Fewer course exemption • Difficult to get a student visa in short time • Proof of substantial funds required before a visa granted
Monash University	Australia	2.5 years	• Reputation for high quality education • Possibility of emigrating • Having working rights during study • Degree offered is recognised in China	• High total cost of study abroad • Unreasonable time to complete a course • Fewer course exemptions • Difficult to get a student visa in short time • Proof of substantial funds required

				before a visa granted
TMC College	Singapore	1 year	• Lowest total cost of study abroad • Reasonable time to complete a course • Course exemption • Possibility of emigrating	• Cultural Proximity • Having no working rights during study • Degree offered may not be recognised in China

As my family could only afford one year study abroad for me, Deakin University and Monash University were excluded in my consideration even they were ranked higher than other universities. Additionally, I didn't want to go to Singapore for my study due to the proximity of its culture to that of the Chinese.

I chose the U.K as a final decision because British COO image I held was better than American COO image. Such a positive image can largely result in my positive evaluation of British higher education. Although I did not have experience based knowledge of the U.K and its higher education, I had perceived knowledge of them from sources like my English textbooks, the Internet and people around me who had experience of British higher education. My understanding of the U.K and its higher education was fuzzy. It was my strong curiosity of the U.K and its higher education that motivated me to select the U.K as my study destination. Additionally, I chose Manchester Metropolitan University rather than University of East London because of the university ranking list which showed that the former university was higher ranked than the latter one.

After Going to the U.K

After I lived and studied in the U.K for a few years, my views of the country and its higher education had changed. I chose to continue to study after I finished my Bachelor degree in Manchester Metropolitan University. I chose the University of Salford as my study destination largely due to the scholarships provided and the low tuition fee. In addition, I would not like to move to other cities and give up my part-time job at the time. The money issue has always been important to me. I must

earn money by myself because I could not obtain any financial support from my parents. Nonetheless, my views of the U.K and its higher education did not change much before and after I studied my Ph.D course. The table above presents the difference of my cultural review at the time before and after I went to the U.K. The bullet points are the cultural categories identified by my self-evaluation.

3.5 Conclusion

According to my review of cultural categories, I found that my COO images of both the U.K and China have to some extent changed after I went to the U.K for a few years. My positive COO stereotypes of the U.K can no longer lead to positive or negative evaluation of British higher education services, because I have had extensive accumulated experience-based knowledge of the U.K, the services provided there as well as the higher education services provided. I can evaluate British higher education according to my studying and living experience in the U.K. The familiarity of the service can act as one of the internal influences of the COO effects on service evaluation.

The prior service familiarity refers to people's understanding, knowledge or experience of one country's GCA, GSA, and SSA. It acts as one of the internal influences of COO effects on service evaluation.

Additionally, I found my personality trait of vertical individualism was also changed from medium to high. Nonetheless, my attribute of consumer ethnocentrism does not change much. I still have low consumer ethnocentrism because I generally do not have a particular preference for purchasing foreign made or Chinese made products or services. My vertical individualistic value and consumer ethnocentric value cannot influence the COO effects in my evaluation of services.

What's more, when other information cues are considered, COO effects in my evaluation of services become weak. The importance of other information cues is

changing with my time being in the U.K. In order to construct a solid interview design, a pilot study became necessary which will be explained in the next chapter.

Chapter Four: Pilot Study

4.1 Introduction

The previous two chapters describe the theoretical development of the main study through the comprehensive review of existing literature and my personal views and experience. This chapter presents a pilot study that will lead to the main study. It contains two themes. The first theme deals with an empirical exploration of COO effects on Chinese students' evaluation of higher education services. The second theme examines the internal and external influences of COO effects.

As portrayed in Chapter One, the goal of this study is to discover COO effects on service evaluation. A pilot study was considered necessary in approaching this endeavour. It was unclear how the influencing factors identified in former quantitative studies might be relevant to the present qualitative study, because these studies had employed different sampling methods. It was necessary to gather some first-hand data to understand the nature of the service evaluation process and related influential factors currently operating within the present research context.

4.2 Aim and Objectives of the Pilot Study

The aim and objectives of the pilot study are influenced by the research aim and objectives discussed in Chapter One. In addition, the pilot study aimed to discover, in an overall sense, COO effects on service evaluation and the influences that can affect the COO effects. Whilst the researcher has piloted all the research questions, the most interesting points to emanate from the data at this early stage are discussed in this chapter, rather than each specific research question.

4.3 Research Procedure

The criteria used to select the respondent sample group for the pilot study were that they should be Chinese undergraduate students of Chinese origin from mainland China. A convenience sample of eight Chinese international students from the University of Salford was approached personally by me. Of the eight students

approached, four were found to be students from either Taiwan or Hong Kong, and they were excluded from the study because their Chinese culture cannot represent Mainland Chinese culture. The remaining four students were then asked to take part in the long interviews. They were given a copy of an invitation letter (Appendix 1), participant information sheet (Appendix 2) and a draft interview guide (Appendix 3).They were also informed that they would be asked the reasons why they came to the U.K for their higher education. As a result, they all agreed to participate, and three of them actually completed the interviews. The main reasons given for not participating was the time factor, possibly combined with a lack of interest later on. The background information of the three Chinese students is depicted in table 4.1. They represent in general the target population of the study.

Table 4.1: Descriptive Analysis of the Pilot Study

Respondent	Age	Gender	After came to the U.K			Note
			Course Selected	Institution	Duration in the U.K	
P1	22	Female	(Ma) International Business	University of Salford	1 Year	The student plans to go back to China for a permanent job
P2	31	Male	(Ma) International Business	University of Salford	10 Years	The student undertakes a part-time Ph.D course in the same institution.
P3	25	Female	(Ba) International Relation and Politics	University of Salford	5 Years	The student plans to continue to study in the U.K after graduation. Course and institution have not been decided.

Therefore, a total of three long interviews were organised at the university campus. At the beginning of each interview, students were each given an interview consent form (Appendix 4) which they were asked to sign. Each interview took about 120-150 minutes until the discussions were exhausted. English language was used in one interview while the other two interviews used Mandarin. All of the three interviews were audio recorded and then transcribed and translated by me.

At the time of the study, the length of their stay in the U.K ranged from 1 year to

nearly 10 years. They were all self-sponsored students. None were married. The courses they were studying include (MA) International Business and (BA) International Relations and Politics.

4.4 Data Findings and Analysis

The pilot study can supplement the findings of my own views and experience from the last chapter and assist to construct the questionnaire for use of the long interview method after the pilot stage of the research. The main themes to emanate from the pilot study will now be discussed.

A-priori Familiarity of COO image

It has been found the COO effects on evaluation of British higher education became weak after they came to the U.K. As the respondents in the pilot study had already been studying and living in the U.K for a few years, they were found to be fairly familiar with the context of the U.K along with its service sector and higher education. They have the experience-based knowledge of living in the U.K, consuming British services, and higher education services. The respondents claimed that they would like to rationally and objectively evaluate British higher education according to their experience and knowledge. Nonetheless, the respondents all admitted that they were likely to use their British COO image to infer the quality of British higher education services before they came to the U.K.

Before the respondents went to the U.K, the COO image of China perceived by all the respondents was very positive. Nonetheless, their Chinese COO image had been changing with the time spent in the U.K. Respondents were found to hold different Chinese COO image in the pilot study. P1 and P3 had negative Chinese COO image while P2 had positive COO image. They would like to make comparisons between China and the U.K after they came to the U.K. In the interviews, they were likely to point out the weakness of China, Chinese services and Chinese higher education services by referencing the U.K, British services and British higher education services.

They found that there were some attributes such as GCA, GSA, and SSA of China were weaker than the U.K. Consequently, they would discredit Chinese COO image. However, the interviews indicated that the COO effects on services evaluation in the context of China and Chinese higher education always existed before and after coming to the U.K.

P1 and P3 grew up in China and had been living and studying in China for quite a few years. The pilot study found that the COO effects on their evaluation of Chinese higher education services were weak relative to the COO effects on their evaluation of British higher education services. This is possibly due to respondents having very high familiarity of Chinese GCA, GSA, and SSA. Therefore, they could use their knowledge to evaluate Chinese higher education rather than use COO information to infer how good or how bad Chinese higher education services are. Comparatively, P2 had been in the U.K for about 10 years and had hardly stayed in China in recent years. He admitted that his knowledge of China and Chinese services became low, and therefore, may to some extent rely on his general Chinese COO image to evaluate Chinese higher education services.

Vertical Individualism

All the respondents in the pilot study were perceived to have to varying degrees of high levels of vertical individualism. Therefore, the data obtained can support the assertion that people who are attributed with high individualism would prefer to choose foreign higher education services. In addition, it has found that respondents' vertical individualism had been reinforced by their time being in the U.K. For example, the respondent P2 who had been in the U.K for ten years has demonstrated the highest vertical individualistic value in the pilot study. This may be due to the profound Western individualism influence on P2 given that he had resided in the U.K for a considerable amount of time. It can also be inferred that the longer the respondents resided in the U.K the more influential their vertical individualism

became with respect to their decision making of buying foreign services because P2 said that he would prefer to buy foreign services most of the time.

Ethnocentrism

It needs to be clear that I am viewing ethnocentrism as Chinese students who view China as their home country even though one has been in the U.K for ten years. All the respondents showed low levels of ethnocentrism, but their low ethnocentrism seemed unchanged with the time being in the U.K. The respondents generally did not have preference for buying Chinese made or foreign made products or services. Therefore, the data collected from the pilot study does not support the relationship between consumers' ethnocentrism and COO effects on service evaluation.

Other Informational Cues

The data collected from the pilot study supports the external influence of COO effects on service evaluation. When other information cues were considered in service evaluation, COO effects have been diminished. In a similar fashion to the theoretical underpinnings of Chapter Two and Three, the external influences identified included the following categories: reputation, entry requirement, influence of normative referents, English, cost of study, employment, and environment.

4.5 Limitations of the Pilot Study

It is worth noting that the data collected from the pilot study is not strong enough for achieving the research objectives or answering research questions as illustrated in Chapter One. This is due to the fact that the respondents have had the experience of living in the U.K, experience of British services and the experience of British higher education services. Within the limited time of the interviews in the pilot study, the respondents had to answer questions by recalling the moments when they were making decisions of going to the U.K for higher education. This is called retrospective evaluation which may make result in inaccurate or missing data (Lawley, 1998). In addition, the respondents may be affected by post-purchase dissonance in

this process (Murphy 1999; Chapman 1986; Maguire and Lay 1981). Such post-purchase dissonance may lead the respondents not to provide the real reasons of purchasing. The main data collection in this thesis would not adopt a retrospective data collection method because such method would result in inaccurate data. Nevertheless, the pilot study provides a chance for practicing interview procedures and suggested some basic ideas.

Comparatively, the data obtained from my own views and experience should be strong and should be much more accurate than those of the pilot study because I rigidly and dedicatedly invested a large amount of time in reviewing my experience and understanding of the concerned topics. My diary, photos and homemade videos which have recorded my living and studying experience before and after I came to the U.K further supported the data accuracy.

My review of the cultural category along with the pilot study was used to reflect the range of Chinese students' opinions and experiences. It could provide a useful starting point for the twenty-three long interviews and three focus group interviews in the next steps that involve unfamiliar categories and gave me a feel for how Chinese students think about the topic that the 23 long interviews would discuss.

4.6 Conclusion

The results of the pilot study mirror the findings of some former studies. The COO effects on service evaluation were identified. The internal influences of service familiarity can affect the COO effects. Nonetheless, in the pilot study, it is unlikely that students will fully describe the influences affecting the COO effects on service evaluation or the reasons for choosing to study abroad, choosing the U.K as a study destination, or choosing a particular university in the U.K. For example, the respondents may not want to admit that being unable to qualify for a place in their own domestic university was the key reason for choosing to study abroad.

To explore the dynamics in the process of decision making, the employment of more long interviews becomes very necessary. In addition, the participants in the pilot study were limited by recalling how they made decisions a few years ago, which may be affected by the post-purchase dissonance leaving little opportunity for me to seek later clarification. At the third stage of this thesis, the 23 long interviews along with 3 focus group interviews were conducted for further investigation. The major themes identified in this pilot study will be further used in the theoretical development of the study. The methodology will be described in the next chapter.

Chapter Five: Methodology

5.1 Introduction

Methodology refers to the approach that underpins research (Blaxter, 2001). At the heart of the issue of methodology applied in this thesis is the concept of paradigm within which assumptions were constructed. In the present study, a qualitative approach was preferred over the quantitative one. Qualitative paradigms are concerned with the collection and analysis of information in various forms, mainly as non-numeric as possible (Krauss, 2005). It enabled a view of the problem, solutions and potential dilemmas to be taken. It tends to focus on exploring in as much detail as possible and aims to achieve depth and breadth.

The "long interview" qualitative methodology claimed by McCracken (1988) was used in this thesis. It can be more efficient than ethnography because it does not entail long periods of time in an organisation, community, or in the company of a group. Unlike the focus group interview which needs several interviewees to discuss a number of topics, it is conducted between the researcher and one single interviewee. The long interview is concerned with individuals' mental world and allows the researcher to step into the mind of how individuals experience their life as they do themselves. It can develop an understanding of the respondents' 'world' so that the research might influence it, either independently or collaboratively. Admittedly, there is some limitation of entering a respondent's mental world. But such limitation did not matter following my ontological and epistemological paradigm. Additionally, the focus group interview suggested by McCracken (1988) was used as the triangulated methodology. The focus group interviews were necessary for the discussion of several prominent topics identified from the long interviews.

This chapter will explain the research philosophy in the section 5.2 at first. After the comparison of the positivism and collectivism, it was found that I posit at the constructivism continuum. Then, the four-stage method of inquiry advocated by McCracken (1988) will be explained in the section 5.3. In particular, the third stage

will be explained in detail in the section 5.4 which is the main section of this chapter (see figure 5.1).
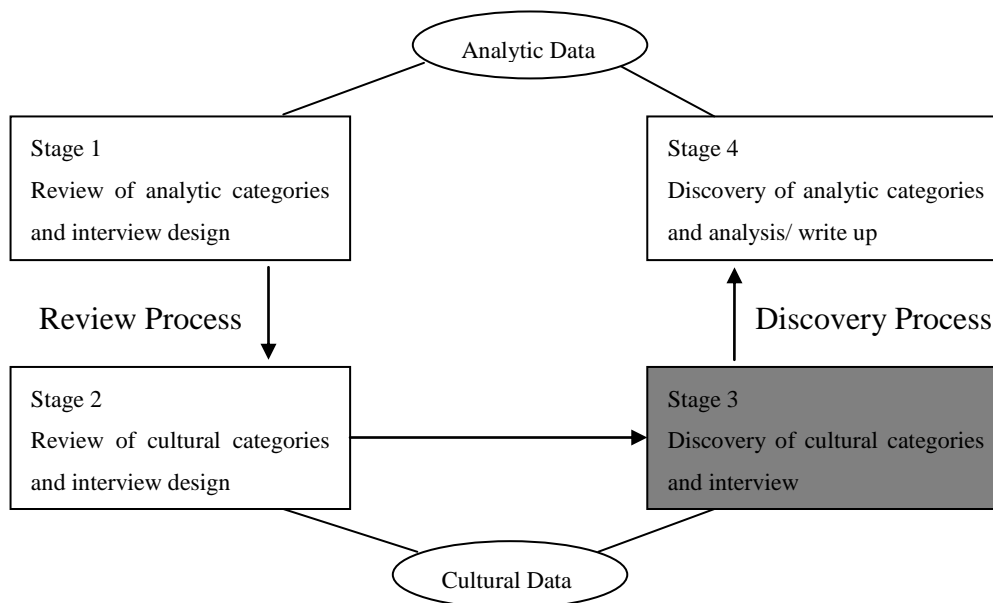
Figure 5.1: Stage 3 Discovery of Cultural Categories and Interview

5.2 Research Philosophy

Research philosophy refers to the way that the researcher thinks about the development of knowledge (Saunders et al. 2007). A paradigm can be defined as the "basic belief system or world view that guides the investigation" (Guba and Lincoln, 1994: 105). There are two different major philosophical paradigms in social science including positivism and constructivism. They are two opposite extremities in the continuum of paradigms which lie at the two ends of the research philosophy dimension (Morgan and Smircicch, 1980) which is shown in the table 5.1. In addition, the feature differences between positivism and constructivism are shown in the table 5.2. The ontology and epistemology of this thesis fit on this table where reality is seen as a social construct and I was about to understand how social reality is created.

Table 5.1: Typology of assumptions on a continuum of paradigms

	Positivism---Constructivism					
Ontology	Reality as a concrete structure	Reality as a concrete process	Reality as a contextual field of information	Reality as a realm of symbolic discourse	**Reality as a social construction (Present study)**	Reality as a projection of human imagination
Epistemology	To construct a positivist science	To construct systems, process, change	To map contexts	To understand patterns of symbolic discourse	**To understand how social reality is created (Present study)**	To obtain phenomenological insight revelation

Table 5.2: Feature differences between positivism and constructivism (Hussey and Hussey, 1997; Collis and Hussey, 2009)

Positivism	Constructivism
Quantitative by using large unit of analysis	Qualitative by using small unit analysis
Concerned with hypothesis testing	Concerned with generating theories
Data is highly objective and singular, separate from the researcher	Data is highly subjective and multiple, as seen by the participants
Reliability is relatively high	Reliability is relatively low
Validity is relatively low	Validity is relatively high
Researcher is independent of that being researched	Knowledge is co-created between the researcher and the participants

Positivism

Positivism is a term confined by August Comte (1798 – 1857) indicating 'a philosophy of strict empiricism – the only genuine or legitimate knowledge claims are those founded directly on experience (Schwandt, 2001: 199)'. In positivism, studies are objectively independent to their authors. The knowledge is formed and verified by tests of direct observations. Positivist research needs to be value free. Researchers' values cannot impact the research.

There is one single reality in positivism and that single reality should be objectively understood. Positivism is a socially closed system. The researchers in positivism usually have hypotheses or assumptions which will be scientifically measured. They are likely to use the philosophical stance of the natural scientist. Positivists are

'working with an observable social reality and that the end product of such research can be law-like generalizations similar to those produced by the physical and natural scientists' (Remenyi et al., 1998: 32). Therefore, their research hypotheses are based on the existing theories for further development of theories. In addition, as the objective social reality is always focused by positivism, 'the research is undertaken, as far as possible, in a value-free way' (Saunders, et al. 2007: 103). Positivism usually works from scientific principles that can analyse phenomena in terms of variables but the researcher is independent of that being researched. Therefore, research using positivism is usually highly structured with quantitative data.

Constructivism

Constructivism, sometimes named as interpretivism, is a more open system. In the social sciences, constructivism can be traced back to the earliest philosophical arguments over a rational foundation for knowledge. It is 'a particularly elusive term with different meanings depending on the discourse in which it is used' (Schwandt, 2001: 30).

In constructivism, authors form the knowledge through the meanings from the phenomena of interest. They collect the target data by interacting with the subjects of phenomena. Constructivists can be seen as anti-essentialists or anti-positivists who assume that we take to be self-evidents are actually the product of complicated discursive practice (Dezin and Lincoln, 1994). They are preoccupied with related concerns in reaction to the effort to develop a social science. Fuss (1989: 3) explained this as: "what is at stake for the constructionist are systems of representations, social and material practices, laws of discourses, and ideological effects. In short, constructions are concerned above all with the production and organization of differences, and they therefore reject the idea that any essential or natural givens precede the process of social determination".

According to Denzin and Lincoln (1994: 125), "constructivism means that human

beings do not find or discover knowledge so much as construct or make it". The authors added that constructivists "emphasize the pluralistic and plastic character of reality – pluralistic in the sense that reality is expressible in a variety of symbol and language systems; plastic in the sense that reality is stretched and shaped to fit purposeful acts of intentional human agents". Therefore, constructivists are active in the construction of knowledge to make sense of social experience.

The constructivists should recognise that their own values are an extremely important part of research process. They need to consider reflexively how their values impact upon the research process. In addition, there is no fixed yard stick from the study in constructivism.

This thesis has been influenced by constructivism. Therefore, constructivism was chosen as the research philosophy because I acted as a constructivist in the data collection and data analysis. The paradigm of constructivism was adopted in this thesis because of the ontological and epistemological assumptions and the nature of the research questions I was investigating.

5.2.1   Constructivist Ontology

Ontology simply means what is the nature of knowledge. It refers to what reality is and what exists in some world. Ontological constructivists believe that there is no one fixed social reality, reality is continually evolving and changing (Vasilachis de Gialdino, 2009). Reality therefore is a subjective phenomenon which is co-created between the researchers and the respondents, which can only be subjectively understood.

In general, this thesis is qualitative research which is based on the constructivist ontology that posits that there is no objective reality. Multiple realities exist by different people who hold different ontological assumptions of the perceived world. My theoretical lens plays a crucial role in selecting the research method because my

ontological assumptions which (are also known as the "underlying belief system") (Dobson, 2002: 2) underpins my use of qualitative methodology. Conducting research like "taking an insight into Chinese students evaluating British higher education services" necessarily needs to take the multiple realities into account. Different Chinese students impose the important influences on the issue of evaluating British higher education in an effort to construct different meanings which are from their cognitive systems. For example, when evaluating British higher education, some students may see the university ranking as the most important issue while some other students focus on the general cost of study in the U.K. Multiple realities exist by different Chinese students who hold different ontological assumptions when evaluating British higher education.

5.2.2   Constructivist Epistemology

Epistemology refers to the relationship we have with reality concerning how we come to know about what reality is (Guba and Lincoln, 1989). The epistemological relationship we hold with the reality is one which is an individual interpretation and of consequence deeply value laden. There is therefore no absolute truth. Individuals can only offer subjective interpretations of phenomena, given that constructivism argues against any objective measurement yardsticks. One person's interpretation is just as valid as another person interpretation. Thus there are multiple perceptions of multiple conceptualisations of reality.

According to the constructivist epistemology, the research refers to the meaning-making process. The complexity of meaning in evaluating British higher education has much to do with how meaning is attributed to different Chinese students. Erikson (1963) divided the importance of meanings into two types: common meanings and unique meanings. Common meanings are usually addressed by positivism while unique meanings are usually addressed by constructivism. One common meaning which applies to a group may also have a unique meaning to some group members. For instance, the trend of pursuing high level degrees in Chinese

society may have a unique meaning to some Chinese students who decide to study abroad in the future. Moreover, the trend of more and more Chinese families sending their adult children to study abroad may have a unique meaning to some families who select the U.K as the study destination. Therefore, critically understanding unique meanings are important for constructing the meaning process step by step with many influences.

In the interview process, respondents state subjective meanings of their life experience and attitudes toward evaluating foreign higher education services. These meanings were varied and multiple, which were formed through interaction with cultural norms that operate in their lives. As much as possible respondents' views led me to assess the COO effects on service evaluation rather than narrowing meanings into how Chinese students choose their further higher education.

The epistemological and ontological assumptions discussed above are consistent with my chosen methodology. The aim of this qualitative thesis is to understand the complex nature of British higher education from the point of view of Chinese students. Thus, I was expected not to have a priori conceptualization of the phenomenon because such conceptualization should emerge after I interviewed target participants of interest. `

Reasons for Using the Long Interview and Focus Group Interview
It is necessary to understand the construct the respondent uses as a basis for his or her opinions and beliefs about a particular matter or situation. Therefore, it is hard to imagine a study of COO influence on service evaluation that does not inquire into how people define COO, how they experience a service evaluation, and the silent assumptions that operate in every social situation which may impact how COO influences and non-COO influences practice. The long interviews triangulated with focus group interviews assist in building a deeper understanding of the organising ideas of COO influences and how these ideas enter into Chinese students' views of

British higher education. It also allows me to see how COO effects work as a constituent of the individuals' daily experience.

The major reasons for not using quantitative research methods by a large number of representative questionnaires are:

- "There is now some evidence to suggest that many overseas students, not least those from Southeast Asia, feel awkward about providing written responses to questions… (Jones, 1989: 36)".

- To advance knowledge in qualitative methods in relation to COO research.

- To gain a "deep" insight into consumer behaviour underpinning university choices that may not be accessible in quantitative methods.

- Identify possible "new" themes not surfaced in existing quantitative studies.

5.3 The Four-Stage Method

According to McCracken (1988), the core of the long interview is the four-stage method of inquiry which includes the following stages:

- Review of analytic categories (Literature Review from Chapter Two)

- Review of cultural categories (Personal Views and Experience and Pilot Studies from Chapter Three and Chapter Four)

- Discovery of cultural categories (Data Collection from Chapter Five, see figure 5.1)

- Discovery of analytical categories (Data Findings and Analysis from Chapter Six)

5.3.1 Stage One: Review of Analytic Categories (Chapter Two)

The first stage was named by McCracken (1988) as a review of analytic categories which was based on a review of literature in COO studies and international higher education. This stage has been completed in the Chapter Two. Gaps in the literature were identified and initial knowledge was constructed within this stage. The review of the analytic category refers to a process of exhaustively reviewing literature for

critical idea collection and to aid in the construction of an interview questionnaire for later stages. It not only provides a framework for the research of COO studies in the context of service evaluation, but also enables me to place my work in the context of what has been done in the literature of international higher education allowing comparisons to be made for the second stage.

5.3.2   Stage Two: Review of Cultural Categories (Chapter Three)

The second stage aims to use myself as an instrument of inquiry by taking advantage of the intimate acquaintance with my own knowledge and experience (McCracken, 1988) and my close involvement in the evaluation of British higher education. Therefore, it is concerned with the relationship between my own understanding and my target study of interest. The review of my personal views and experience becomes the way of breaking down the complexity of the research that informs me how to design the interviews for the next stage.

5.3.3   Stage Three: the Discovery of Cultural Categories (Chapter Five)

The third stage can be seen as a data collection process which includes questionnaire construction and interview procedure. Questionnaire construction in this study is semi-structured which has three parts including biographical questions, grand tour questions, and the main questions designed based in the previous stage (i.e. the review of culture category). The interview procedure continued until the data was sufficient enough to gain theoretical saturation (Glaser and Strauss 1967). Twenty-three long interviews along with three focus group interviews were conducted. Section 5.2 of this chapter will discuss the third stage in details.

5.3.4   Stage Four: the Discovery of Analytic Categories (Chapter Six)

Data analysis is the last stage of McCracken (1988)'s Long Interview Methodology. McCracken (1988) named this stage as Discovery of Analytic Categories. The data collection from the long interviews and focus groups are the main sources of the information. Although 'absolute rules' do not exist for qualitative data analyses, there

are two general guidelines to follow. First, the analytical method must serve to analyse the research questions generated at the very beginning of the study (Patton, 1990). Secondly, data analysis must contain explanation. According to Geertz (1973) and Dezin (1989), such data explanation is the first task in qualitative analysis, as the discipline and rigour of qualitative analysis depends on presenting solid explanatory data in such a way that others reading the material can understand and draw their own interpretations.

In accordance with these two guidelines, the presentation of data in this chapter consists of two parts; explanation and interpretation. This is achieved by directly quoting verbatim extracts from the students' responses in the interviews then commenting upon these remarks with reference to the extant literature.

Since the interviews were semi-constructed, a cross-case analytical procedure (Patton, 1990) is deemed as appropriate in presenting the data. This procedure requires that data not be reported on a group-by-group or informant-by-informant basis. Instead, the answers from different informants are grouped together in terms of common questions or central issues. Given the nature of the data, it is neither feasible nor appropriate to present it in a raw and unrefined manner, such as in transcript form. Instead, it has been subjected to analysis and organisation. To make data analysis serve the specified research purposes, student responses have been organised into three parts: COO effects on service evaluation, intrinsic influences of COO effects, and external influences of COO effects.

Specifically, the data would go through the refined McCracken (1988)'s five steps of analysis (Figure 5.2) advocated by Herrington and Oliver (2000). The first stage refers to the judgement and observation of utterance of the transcript. "The first stage treats each utterance in the interview transcript in its own terms ignoring its relationship to other aspects of the text. (McCracken 1988: 42)" The second stage is the stage of meta-observations. The transcripts would be evaluated by the priori categories which

were identified by the literature review in Chapter Two and my personal views and experience in Chapter Three. Observations were developed by these priori categories themselves. In addition, according to the evidence of the data new categories were fully examined. In the third stage, the draft data matrices were constructed. The relationships among the category were analysed. "The focus of attention has now shifted away from the transcript and toward the observations themselves" McCracken (1988: 42). It must be noted that the data matrices obtained in the third stage were in a fluid state and represented a first step at organising the data as I begun to develop isolated observations and their possible connectedness to other observations. This process was continued in the fourth stage. In addition, the fourth stage examined the observations in the third stage and refined the data matrices. This can also be seen as a process of data reduction and organisation. Therefore, the final data matrices were obtained. The fifth stage reviewed former stages and concluded the themes discovered from the data.

| **Stage One** |
| Judgment of individual utterances with little concern for their larger significance |

$\downarrow$

| **Stage Two** |
| Meta-observations where implications and possibilities of the data are examined more fully |

$\downarrow$

| **Stage Three** |
| Observations are developed in relation to other observations |

$\downarrow$

| **Stage Four** |
| Judgement of data and analysis, and identification of themes and their interrelationships |

$\downarrow$

| **Stage Five** |
| Review of the above four stages to form conclusions |

Figure 5.2: Data Analysis Process (Herrington and Oliver 2000: 13)

5.4 Data Collection

McCracken (1988) named the data collection process in the long interview as Discovery of Cultural Categories. Questionnaire construction and interview procedure are two major parts in this stage.

5.4.1   Questionnaire Construction

The questionnaire construction is McCracken (1988)'s terminology. The interview questions are in the semi-structured format to gain a qualitative understanding of the underlying reasons and motivations of customers' evaluation of services. The semi-structured approach allowed me to probe for in-depth information. It was consequently unrealistic to have a complete question list before the interviews. Indeed it was expected that on many occasions questions would arise from participants' responses. The purposes of this study do require some degree of planning for the interviews. These purposes are specific; they are: to find out the COO effects on service evaluation, and find out the intrinsic and external influences of COO effects on service evaluation. The questions accordingly should be focused on these purposes.

The long interviews and focus group interviews were designed to examine five areas:

1. The relationship between respondents' COO stereotypes and their evaluation of services in terms of the related COO (namely the COO effects on service evaluation).

2. The relationship between respondents' prior service familiarity in terms of the COO image and the COO effects on the evaluation of foreign country and home country services

3. The relationship between respondents' vertical individualistic orientation and the COO effects on the evaluation of foreign country and home country services.

4. The relationship between respondents' consumer ethnocentrism and the COO effects on the evaluation of foreign country and home country services.

5. The COO effects on service evaluation with the presence of other related service

information cues considered.

According to the above five areas, the questions set should be designed to understand the following:

1. Respondents' British COO image and Chinese COO image;

2. Respondents' evaluation of British higher education services and Chinese higher education services;

3. Respondents' prior familiarity of Chinese higher education and their prior familiarity of British higher education;

4. Respondents' vertical individualism;

5. Respondents' consumer ethnocentrism; and

6. Non-COO information considered in the evaluation of services.

It is noted here that the above would only serve as a guide for the interviews. The questions may or may not follow the order as presented. In reality, other questions were asked as prompts according to participants' responses during the interviews.

Biographical Questions

Questionnaire construction is an interview preparation process. Before the interview began in earnest, respondents were requested to answer a set of biographical questions. Answers to these biographical questions allow me to record each respondent's descriptive details. As McCraken (1988: 34) states:

> "Collecting these details in this way helps both to cue the interviewer to the biographical realities that will inform the respondent's subsequent testimony and to make sure that all of this material is readily at hand during analysis".

The information collected by the biographical questions included:

Biographical Questions
Today's Date:
Place:
Time:
Interviewer's Name:

Subject's Name:
Sex:
Birth Date:
Age:

Respondent's Education:
Highest level:
School:

After graduation, plan to continue to study in:
1. China   2. The UK   3. Other countries: _____

The university selected for further higher education is:

Other Information

Grand Tour Questions

The forthcoming questionnaire consists of unobtrusive and nondirective questions – which are also known as "grand-tour" questions (McCracken, 1988). The grand-tour questions are open-ended questions that could allow some scope for the respondents to set the direction of the interview. The grand-tour questions include

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Grand Tour Questions

1. Why did you choose to study in the current university?

2. How do you like or dislike your university life so far?

3. Why do you choose to continue to study after you graduate?

4. Could you describe the kinds of things that you need to do to get ready for your future higher education?

5. Where do you want to go with your life after you complete your future higher education?

Main Questions

The pre-planned interview topics outlined from previous chapters were used to form some predetermined interview questions. Some "floating prompts" (Spradley, 1979; Werner and Schoepfle, 1987; McCracken, 1988) were also used for further discovery of respondents' answers. The important categories from the COO literature review in the product settings include determinants of COO image the relationship between COO image and service evaluation, vertical individualism cultural dimension, and consumer ethnocentrism.

This thesis assumes that some internal influences and external influences can influence the magnitude of COO effects. Based on the literature review, the study can be divided into three parts as following:

● COO effects on service evaluation;

● Internal influences of COO effects on service evaluation; and

● External influences of COO effects on service evaluation

Part one of the study aims to evaluate whether COO effects existed on consumers' service evaluation. COO effects on service evaluation were expected to be found in part one of the study. If it had been found in the long interviews, part two and three of the study would evaluate the internal and external influences that can affect COO effects on service evaluation. Based upon the literature, the internal influence suggested includes respondents':

- Service familiarity

- Vertical individualism

- Consumer ethnocentrism

The external influence suggested includes:

- Reputation

- Entry requirement

- Availability of courses in home country

- Influence of normative referents

- English acquisition

- Cost of studying overseas

- Employment opportunity

- Country environment

Part One of the Study: COO Influences on Service Evaluation

First of all, the extent of both British COO image and Chinese COO image held by Chinese students should be assessed. The determinants of COO image in this thesis were based on Parameswaran and Pisharodi (1994)'s three facets of COO image in the product settings. According to their study, the COO image used to evaluate a specific product from a specific country consists of three elements: "General Country Attributes" (GCA), "General Product Attributes" (GPA) and "Specific Product Attributes" (SPA). These three elements were transferred to current study in the service context. The impact of COO image on consumers' service assessment can be judged in terms of three criteria. These are the extent to which Chinese students have:

1. "General Country Attributes" (GCA) of the U.K and China

2. "General Service Attributes" (GSA) of the U.K and China

3. "Specific Service Attributes" (SPA) namely, higher education service attributes of
   the U.K and China

The main questions in the part one of the study are shown in the table 5.3.

Table 5.3: Interview Question Topics (1)

Categories	Category Questions	Planned Prompts and Contrast Prompts
British Country-of-origin (COO) image held by Chinese students	Q1: What are your views of the U.K?	- Positive or negative? - Any examples? - Why?
	Q2: What are your views of the services provided by the U.K.?	- Positive or negative? - Any examples? - Why?
	Q3: What are your views of higher education services provided in the U.K.?	- Positive or negative? - Any examples? - Why?
Chinese COO image held by Chinese students	Q4: What are your views of China?	- Positive or negative? - Could you please compare your views of China with your views of the U.K.? - Any examples? - Why?
	Q5: What are your views of Chinese services?	- Positive or negative? - Could you please compare your views of Chinese services with your views of British services? - Any examples? - Why
	Q6: What are your views of Chinese higher education services?	- Positive or negative? - Could you please compare your views of Chinese higher education services with your views of British higher education services? - Any examples? - Why

the COO effects on evaluation of services	Q7: How do you think the image you hold of the U.K. would influence your evaluation of British higher education services?	- Why? - Any examples?
	Q8: How do you think the image you hold of China would influence your evaluation of Chinese higher education services?	- Positive or negative? - Why? - Any examples?
Vertical Individualism	Q9: Do you agree or disagree that you have many social hierarchies in your life? Such as in your family, school, your work place, and the society around you?	- Why? - Any examples?
	Q10: Do you agree or disagree to sacrifice your own benefits to promote others' interests?	- Why and why not? - Any examples?
Ethnocentrism	Q11: When you are buying a service, do you typically choose Chinese made or foreign made service?	- Why? - What are the differences between them? - Any examples?

As only the COO cue is presented in the part one of the study, it can also be seen as a single cue study which aims to evaluate the COO effects on service evaluation when the COO cue is the only presented information cue. In order to motivate respondents to only consider COO cue in part one of the study rather than many other information cues, the COO cue related information were addressed in each interview with relevant prompts.

Part Two of the Study: Internal Influences that can Affect COO Influences on Service Evaluation

Many studies have shown that products made in the UK are associated with positive COO images by consumers (Greer, 1971; Darling and Kraft, 1977; Bannister and Saunders, 1978; Ghadir, 1990; Baker and Michie, 1995; Hooley et al. 1988; Peris et al., 1993). Although Chinese students selected were expected as having a positive

evaluation of British higher education services, they may still not choose to purchase British higher education. The reasons are due to many influences that can affect their willingness to buy a specific service.

These influences can therefore directly or indirectly influence the COO effects on consumers' choice decision. In the part two of the study, the intrinsic influences were addressed in terms of Chinese students' personal traits that can influence COO effects. The literature showed that the following most influential variables can significantly facilitate or reinforce COO effects in the evaluation of products: vertical individualism (Gurhan-Canli and Maheswaran, 2000 a; and Ferguson et al. 2008), and consumer ethnocentrism (Shimp and Sharma, 1987; Sharma, et al. 1995; Waston and Wright, 2000; Javalgi and White, 2002; Ferguson, et al. 2008). These variables can not only be seen as influences that can affect consumers' willingness to buy but also serve as drivers of COO influences in service evaluation under the assumptions of this thesis.

Service Familiarity

A substantial number of past studies showed that customers' knowledge and experience of products plays an important role in the COO research because it can also influence the product evaluation (e.g. Brucks, 1985; Johansson et al. 1985; Eroglu and Machleit, 1988; Han and Terpstra, 1988; Jaffe and Nebenzhal 1988; Johansson 1989; Wall, et al. 1991; Okechuku 1994; Lee and Ganesh 1999; Lin and Zhen 2005). Such knowledge is dependent on consumers' memories or known knowledge (Brucks, 1985) or based on the awareness about the products purchased by consumers (Lin and Zhen 2005, cited in Lin and Chen 2006).

There are two procedures before they make the decision of buying or not buying a product. The first refers to the information search (Solomon, 1997) that resorting to relevant product information consuming relevant questions. Then, consumers would have information processing (Brucks, 1985). Product familiarity has a strong impact

on consumers' information processing procedures (Larkin et al., 1980). According to Lin and Chen (2006), when consumers search for products, they often depend on their product knowledge to evaluate, and such product knowledge could also influence their information search procedure. Additionally, Lin and Chen (2006) claimed that the level of consumers' product knowledge could not only influence their purchasing decisions but also influence their willingness to purchase indirectly.

Service familiarity refers to consumers' perception of how much they know (Park and Lessig, 1981) or the amount of what they have stored in their memory (Johnson and Russo, 1984) or the dimension of their past purchasing experience (Marks and Olson, 1981). Respondents' service familiarity can be assessed by not only the observation during the interviews but also the observation of the data obtained after the interviews. Through note-taking key observations appeared, a pattern of respondents' familiarity emerged. For example, how prompt they answered some questions and the amount of information they provided during the interviews can determine the degree of their service familiarity. The patterns of respondents' familiarity were then coded and labelled into the themes that have emerged, which were then systematically organised into categories. How service familiarity can affect the COO effects on the respondents' evaluation of higher education services would be addressed in the data analysis process.

Vertical Individualism

Individualism refers to the cultural dimension of one cultural group's shared values. It looks at individuals' understanding of what should be considered right or wrong behaviour in terms of interpersonal relationships. It has built a moral construct that employs within different cultures (Komarraju, et al. 2008). This construct can indicate differences of using COO cues in services evaluation between different cultures.

In addition, researchers found that the individualism dimension has both horizontal and vertical constructs (Singelis et al., 1995; Triandis and Gelfand, 1998;

Gurhan-Canli and Maheswaran, 2000a; Sivadas, 2008, etc.). The major difference between the horizontal and vertical constructs is the number of social hierarchies in people's lives. This has resulted in the difference between American individualism and Swedish individualism (Triandis, 1995) and the difference between Chinese low individualism and Indian low individualism (Sivadas, 2008). In the horizontal social relationship, an individual is more or less like others. There are not many social hierarchies in their life. In contrast, an individual in a vertical relationship is different from others within the social hierarchies. According to Gurhan-Canli and Maheswaran (2000 a), only the vertical dimension of individualism can result in COO effects rather than horizontal dimension.

High Vertical Individualism

According to Hofstede (1980), the individualistic culture was importantly and positively correlated with the significance of personal challenge, freedom, and time. Therefore, building on the theoretical framework of Hofstede (1980) it can be asserted that when evaluating services, individuals in high individualistic societies are often focusing on achieving personal desires over group wants, and giving importance to their own attitudes to direct actions with less pressure from group norms. In other words, they do not agree to sacrifice their own benefits to promote others' interests. Although individualists can be in several in-groups they have very weak associations with their in-groups; further, when there are too many constraints from in-group imposed on them, they will soon disassociate themselves from that in-group (Fadil, et al 2009). In high vertical individualism, "people often want to become distinguished and acquire status, and they do this in individual competitions with others. They are likely to say 'I want to be the best'. (Triandis and Gelfand, 1998: 119)"

Low Vertical Individualism

In contrast, a low individualistic society is reflected by the desire that the group's needs and wants are at least of equal importance or even more important than individuals (Love, 2007). Relationships between members of the group are very

important. In order to maintain these relationships, people may sometimes have to sacrifice some degree of personal cost for the enhanced welfare of the group. Accordingly, there may be pressure imposed by their families, friends and other social members to deliver duties and obligations. If it was necessary, individuals are expected to give up or ignore their own desires in exchange for what benefits the group. They are likely to have great interest in other members of their group and are willing to share their personal belongings and materials with others. Individuals often position themselves in relation to each other rather than each individualist building a strong personal sense of self.

In order to assess respondents' vertical individualistic orientation, a reduced version of the horizontal and vertical individualism scale designed by Sivadas, et al. (2008) was used. The authors consolidated the 32-item attitudinal scale made by Singelis et al. (1995) and reduced it to 14-items. This is because Sivadas, et al. (2008) found the original 32-item scale actually failed to prove to be particularly robust. Probst et al. (1999) also argued that the items could be developed and narrowed to improve reliability. The 14-item scale had been assessed by Sivadas, et al. (2008) to be superior to the full 32-item and Triandis and Gelfand (1998) 16-item scale. Nonetheless, as discussed previously, only the vertical dimension of individualism can link to COO effects on product evaluation (Gurhan-Canli and Maheswaran, 2000 a). Therefore, this thesis selected eight vertical items from Sivadas, et al. (2008) to form interview question topics for consumers' vertical individualism dimension. The other items from Sivadas, et al. (2008) are related to horizontal individualism dimension which should be excluded in the current study. The interview question topics include:

- Social hierarchies,
- Willingness to sacrifice own benefits to promote others' interests,
- Competition with others, and
- Feel honoured by others' success

Consumer Ethnocentrism

Consumer ethnocentricity is from someone's love and concern to his or her country (Sumner, 1906; Shimp and Sharma 1987; Sharma, et al. 1995; Lantz and Loeb 1996; Rawwas et al. 1996; Acharya and Elliott 2003; Balabamis and Diamantopoulos 2004). Therefore, it will result in the fear of losing control of the economic benefits as the consequence of the negative effects that imported products could bring to oneself. Sharma, et al. (1995) also point out that people who are in high ethnocentrism will see buying foreign products as a moral problem rather than just an economic issue. This will result in people still continuing to buy domestic products even in some extreme cases. If, for example, a consumer knows the quality or design of a domestic product is lower than that of an imported product, he or she may continue to buy domestic one. In contrast, individuals who are lacking in ethnocentrism or feel a very low sense of ethnocentrism usually place less emphasis on the COO of products. They may often evaluate foreign products by their own interest based on an objective opinion (Watson and Wright, 2000).

Pecotich et al. (1996) first claimed that consumers' selection of services, like airlines and banks, should be associated with ethnocentrism. Ferguson et al (2008) supported this argument and found that people that have high preferences to patriotic services tend to wish to support the economies of their home nation. This group of people is usually high in ethnocentrism and hence has great preferences for domestic services.

The Consumer Ethnocentrism Scale (CETSCALE) developed by Shimp and Sharma (1987) was used to assess Chinese students' ethnocentrism level in the above suggestions. There were seventeen items chosen by Shimp and Sharma (1987) to form CETSCALE because they satisfied the 0.5 reliability criterions. In order to make the result as accurate as possible, the scales from Shimpa and Sharma (1987), used to form interview question topics, were the four highest reliability criterions in the CETSCALE. These scales were all over .65 reliability criterion and the interview questions topics include:

- If it is right to purchase foreign services because it puts Chinese out of jobs

- Should a real Chinese person always buy Chinese-made services

- Should we buy Chinese services rather than foreign services instead of letting other countries get rich off of us

- Buying foreign services may hurt Chinese business and causes unemployment

Part Three of the Study: External Influences of COO Influence on Service Evaluation

Part three of this study examines the COO influences in the evaluation of British higher education at the presence of other further related informational cues considered rather than using COO as the single cue. Compared with the intrinsic influences used in part two of this study, the additional cues used in part three are external influences affecting Chinese students' willingness to buy British higher education services. Past multi-cue studies showed that COO effects in the product evaluation became weak when other informational cues are presented (Johansson et al. 1985; Eroglu and Machleit, 1988; Johansson, 1989; Wall et al. 1991; Leonidou et al. 2007). Accordingly, this part of the thesis assesses whether the similar results could be found in the context of service evaluation. Therefore, it assumes that in the service evaluation process COO information would become less important and the COO effects would be diluted when other information cues of the service are considered. As discussed in the Chapter Two, the literature review has suggested a few influences in the evaluation of international higher education that can affect COO effects on service evaluation. Additionally, more information cues may be considered by respondents during the interviews. The newly identified informational cues can therefore enrich current literature of international higher education.

The literature of international higher education also suggested the three steps for students selecting a foreign higher education service (Pimpa 1999, Mazzarol and Soutar 2002, Davidson and Wang 2008, and Chen 2006):

- Deciding to study abroad

- Selecting a host country; and

- Selecting a particular institution

Accordingly, the interview questions were constructed according to these three steps (see the table 5.4 below).

Table 5.4: Interview Question Topics (2)

External factors that can influence the COO effects	Q12: Which country do you choose as your further study destination?	
	Q13: Why don't you choose to study abroad? (if the answer to Q12 is China)	- Can you please give me any reasons why you decided to stay in China for your higher education?
	Q14: Why don't you choose to stay in China for your further education? (if the answer to Q12 is the not China.)	Can you please give me any reasons why you decided to go abroad?
	Q15: Why do you choose the U.K. as the destination rather than other countries? (if the answer to Q12 is the U.K.)	- Can you please give me any reasons why you decided to study in the U.K?
	Q16: Which British university do you select for your further study? (if the answer to Q12 is the U.K.)	- Why don't you choose other British universities? - Can you please give me any reasons why you decided to study in that university
	Q17: Why don't you choose the U.K. as the destination? (if the answer to Q12 is not China or the U.K.)	- Can you please give me any reasons for not choosing the U.K.?

5.4.2 Interview Procedure

Interviews were conducted until theoretical saturation was achieved (Glaser and Strauss 1967). Twenty-three long interviews and three focus group interviews were conducted that involved interaction between me and respondents, for the purpose of obtaining information from the respondents.

Interviews were conducted to probe the information based on the research aim and objectives as shown in Chapter One. In order to acquire adequate information, respondents must be knowledgeable in the area of the research topic. This can be confirmed through the informal dialogue with the potential respondents in the sample selection process. Moreover, in order to achieve the theoretical consistency, the constructed questionnaire was applied to both the long interviews and focus group interviews. Although some interview questions were predetermined, the order was sometimes modified. Therefore, the question wording may have been varied according to their responses at different stages of the interview.

Theoretical Sampling

Theoretical sampling claimed by Glaser and Strauss (1957) and Strauss and Corbin (1990) was used in this thesis. Respondents were selected on the basis of the theoretical needs of the study. The sampling population were Chinese students who were born in China and of Chinese nationality. The students were asked different questions according to their planned destination of future higher education services. Therefore, respondents were classified into three groups that chose to study in China, the UK, and other countries.

For the twenty-three long interviews,

- Eight respondents decided to study in China
- Eight respondents decided to study in the U.K.
- Seven respondents decided to study in other countries (two in the U.S; one in Canada; one in Ireland; and three in Australia).

For the three focus group interviews,

- Four respondents in the first focus group decided to study in China,
- Four respondents in the second focus group decided to study in the U.K,
- Three respondents in the third focus group decided to study in other countries.

Additionally, all of the respondents never had experience of British higher education before they participated in the interviews. Therefore, the data collected has prevented the retrospective evaluation of the pilot study and some international higher education studies, which were carried out after a decision of destination had already been made, and the students had already arrived in their selected destination country. All the respondents in the 23 long interviews were perceived to have high familiarity with Chinese higher education services and relatively low familiarity of British higher education services before the interviews were undertaken. Hence, the magnitude of COO effects on service evaluation can be assessed under the comparison of students' high and low level of a-priori service familiarity.

Research Ethics

The code of ethics was adhered to and respected at all times (see Appendix 6 for more details). I confirmed that I complied with the requirements of the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC). Therefore, the respondent's anonymity must be guaranteed. The study used anonymous quotations rather than respondents' real names to mark the data obtained. Respondents can only be identified by designators such as CN1, UK1, OTH1 in the long interviews and FG1a, FG2b, and FG3c in the focus groups (see table 5.5 and table 5.6). For example, FG1a means the respondent A in Focus Group 1. As a result, the data produced must be presented in a manner which faithfully represents the facts as they have been found (Hussey and Hussey 1997).

Table 5.5: Coded Names for the Long Interviews

Study destination in the future	Coded names used for the long interviews in the thesis
China	CN1, CN2, CN3, CN4, CN5, CN6, CN7, and CN8
The U.K	UK1, UK2, UK3, UK4, UK5, UK6, UK7, and UK8
Other countries	OTH1, OTH2, OTH3, OTH4, OTH5, OTH6, OTH7

Table 5.6: Coded Names for the Focus Group Interviews

Study destination in the future	Focus Group	Coded names used for the focus group interviews in the thesis
China	One	FG1a, FG1b, FG1c, and FG1d
The U.K	Two	FG2a, FG2b, FG2c, and FG2d
Other countries	Three	FG3a, FG3b, and FG3d

Respondents were recruited from Chinese universities including Xi'an University of Finance and Economies and Xi'an International Studies University because each university granted me the permission to recruit volunteers on the campus (Appendix 7 and 8). There were 323 Chinese students approached. They were given a copy of the invitation letter (Appendix 1), participant information sheet (Appendix 2) and a draft interview guide (Appendix 3). There had been 52 students who were interested in my study, but 18 students were excluded because they had not decided their future study destination yet. Therefore, 34 participants were selected. All the participants were guaranteed anonymity, and all responses were voluntary in the process of these interviews. All the interviewees accepted the request to allow the interview to be audio recorded by signing the consent form (Appendix 4) before the interview was conducted.

It is worthwhile to mention the language used in the interviews. I can speak both Mandarin and English. Nonetheless, most respondents chose to speak Mandarin in the long interviews because it is their first language and they could express their thoughts clearly. Only two students who planned to go to the U.K for higher education chose English for the long interviews, because they believed that the interview would be a good chance to practice their oral English. When they cannot use English to express their opinions clearly, they were allowed to use Chinese in the interview process. In addition, all the respondents chose to use Mandarin in the focus group interviews.

The data obtained was transcribed and translated verbatim by myself. Each interview lasted 120 to 150 minutes for the purposes of exhaustively exploring codes. The total word count for the transcripts of the twenty-three long interviews and three focus group interviews is approximately 260,000 words. The word count for the transcript of each interview is 8,000 to 12,000 words. The reason for not hiring a professional translator is largely due to its high cost. The estimated cost of translating the whole data by a professional translator should be around £13,000 at five pence per word which is far beyond my budget. In order to assure the accuracy of translation and the reliability of the transcripts, I always freely consulted a professional translator and a student translator introduced by one of my friends for guidance.

Twenty-three Long Interviews

The interviews took place at a mutually agreed upon time and place. During the interviews, refreshments were provided and short breaks were given as requested. To assure that reliable and valid data was obtained, the interviews applied techniques suggested by McCracken (1988), Mason (1996) and Flick (2006) as summarised below:

- Never lead the discussions or indirectly pose a question so that it shapes leading responses;
- Never force a response by forcing a respondent's thinking process or distorting reality;
- Always note respondent's body languages and utterance;
- Apply different ways to motivate respondents to discriminate carefully among the series of desirable options; and
- Never use complicated questions.

Focus Group Interviews as Triangulation

Solomon (1992: 585) defines the focus group as 'a qualitative research technique that gathers information for group interaction that is focused on a series of topics

introduced by a discussion leader or moderator'. A pragmatic rationale for using the focus group technique is that there are many advantages that make it one of the most appropriate methods for the study. These advantages, described by Langer (1987), Loudon and Bitta (1988), Hutton (1990), Dillon, et al. (1993) and Malhotra (1993), are summarised as follows:

1. Interviewing a group of Chinese students together will more likely lead to a wider range of information, insight and ideas than will individual responses secured privately.

2. Because the students' feelings are similar to those of others in the group, they tend to feel comfortable and therefore are more willing to openly express their ideas and feelings.

3. Since participants are not required to answer specific questions, their responses may be spontaneous and unconventional, and arguably, more likely to provide an accurate idea of their real views.

4. Focus group interviews allow close scrutiny of the data collection process, in that the observer can witness the session and it can be recorded for later analysis.

5. The flexibility in the topics covered and the depth with which they are treated have the advantage of giving participants the chance to reflect upon the comments made by other as well as those by themselves.

6. Since a number of participants are being interviewed at the same time, data collection and analysis proceeds relatively quickly. Compared to an individual interview such as the long interview, the focus group technique may be more effective in that it can generate more ideas or desired factors in a limited amount of time.

7. In some situations the security of being in a group may encourage more candour. This is especially true where other group members share some important characteristics.

The Number of Groups

According to Goldman and McDonald (1987), most academic issues can be addressed with no more than six focus groups while three may be adequate for triangulation. The qualitative researcher has drawn upon experience and intuition when making decisions regarding the number of different groups in the study, and statistical significance and sample size are irrelevant (Goldman and McDonald 1987). The basic rule in selecting respondents is to determine the type of individuals who are representative of the target population.

The Number of Participants in Each Focus Group

It was decided to have four volunteer participants in each focus group as there is widespread agreement in the literature that this is the optimal number of respondents. The focus group interviews conducted in this study are described as 'mini focus groups' which include three to four interviewees (Edmunds, 1999). With fewer participants, the advantages of the 'mini focus groups' include (Edmunds, 1999; Stewart, et al. 2007; Krueger and Cassey, 2009):

- More emphasis is given on the interview topics and less on pairing off the respondents
- Allow more opportunities for the researcher to conduct hands-on analysis
- Allow more opportunities for each respondent sharing insights and observations
- Low recruiting costs of time and energy

The Sample Selection for Focus Groups

Students asked to participate in the interviewing should best be representative, which in this case means they should be Chinese undergraduate students who have never studied in the U.K before the interview. Ideally, the sample should also include students of different gender, age, and study fields. In addition, it is prudent to exclude certain types of respondents whose involvement in the category may somehow diminish or distort the contributions of others. These students include repeat participants and those already well acquainted with one another or with the moderator.

The focus group technique requires that all participants be present at the time of the interview. It thus gives less flexibility to find an available sample than is the case when using the long interview technique. This might be seen as a weakness in using focus group interviews as a data collection method. This is also the reason why I deployed mini focus groups rather than traditional focus groups that usually invite more than four participants for each interview.

Upon receiving permission from the senior administrators of Xi'an International Studies University and Xi'an University of Finance and Economies, three groups of students were organised by the administrative officers at these two universities. Additionally, the Office of Academic Affairs in Xi'an International Studies University arranged a spare and comfortable classroom as the venue for the focus group interviews. The participants were asked to sit around a big table in the classroom. Refreshments were provided. Participants were welcomed and the purposes of the interview were explained before they signed the participant consent form (Appendix 4). They were guaranteed anonymity, and all responses were voluntary. Every participant was granted ¥20 (approximate £2) to cover their transportation costs.

The prepared question list served as a guideline for the interview. After respondents were introduced to each other, the general level of excitement over the interview topics arose in the group. In many occasions some respondents were likely to share their opinions urgently and actively within an arguable yet comfortable atmosphere. Therefore, points of view were acquired by audio recorded and note-taking analysis during the interview. The three focus group interviews also applied to the interview techniques suggested by McCracken (1988), Mason (1995) and Flick (2006) as outlined in the prior discussion of the twenty-three long interviews.

Limitations of Focus Group Interviews
It must be noted that traditional focus group interviews as a data collection method

has its weaknesses. First, according to Mason (1995) and Flick (2006), the opinions expressed by one respondent may influence those expressed by other respondents. Questions cannot be administered in such a way as to prevent one respondents' answers from influencing the answers of other respondents'. Secondly, compared to the long interviews, focus groups are difficult to moderate, and the quality of the results depends heavily on the skills of the moderator (Hutton 1990). Thirdly, the unstructured nature of the responses makes coding, analysis, and interpretation difficult, and consequently focus group data tends to be messy (Calo 1988). In conclusion, results of three focus group interviews are not representative of the general population and cannot be validly projected. They should be only considered as exploratory rather than conclusive.

Despite the above criticisms, focus group interviewing is a suitable method for acting as a triangulation in the present study due to its many advantages as previously discussed. The main drawback of mini focus groups refers to the limited range of total experience (Krueger and Casey, 2009). Nonetheless, such drawbacks were dealt with by the twenty-three long interviews which could extend the range.

Reasons for Applying Focus Group Interviews as Triangulation

As a triangulation technique, focus groups can provide a range of information to assist and supplement the primary method (Morgan and Spanish, 1984; Denzin, 1989; Morgan, 1997), such as the Long Interview methodology (McCracken, 1988). In this thesis, focus groups were the second step after the long interviews. There are a number of reasons for opting for focus groups. Firstly, "Focus groups can also be useful, particularly when respondents promise to be more forthcoming with the stimulus or the safety of a group of fellow respondents (McCraken, 1988: 28)". Secondly, focus groups are low-cost, convenient and efficient for acquiring information from a certain number of Chinese students, particularly where those Chinese students already belong to a group – as in the case of students choosing the same destination of further higher education services. Group discussions can provide

opportunities to observe a large amount of interaction among participants that reflects the similarities and differences in participants' opinions and experiences. Thirdly, in this thesis, the Chinese students involved (especially those who were about to go abroad) and I were compatible in the interests of the topic. We all wanted to know the influences that can affect the decisions-making process at different stages. Therefore, the knowledge had been co-created based on my constructivist ontology and epistemology.

In the interview procedure, focus groups and the long interviews were found to have both advantages and disadvantages. Nonetheless, focus groups' disadvantages can be dealt with by the advantages of the long interview. This matches the logic of triangulation methodology. For instance, more burden and control on the respondents in the long interviews would be released in focus groups in which I would like to give the control to the group and allow each informant to have more time for critical thinking before answering some questions. Also, the long interviews rather than focus groups are likely to give me the chance to grasp an in-depth understanding of individual respondents.

5.4.3   Reliability and Validity

The reliability and validity of the data obtained in this thesis is strengthened because it has met the qualitative criteria of credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability suggested by Lincoln and Guba (1985).

Credibility

First, as the researcher of this study, I can understand the phenomena of interest from the respondents' original data. Secondly, although many subjective views emerged from the interaction with respondents, I always avoided imposing my own understanding to their responses. The credibility was achieved by no less than two hours prolonged and sustained engagement in each long interview or focus group interview. The data obtained can demonstrate the logical chain of evidence.

Transferability

The results are not only transferable within the population within this study but also applicable beyond the bounds such as to the Chinese university students from other cities that plan to go to the U.K for higher education. This is because Chinese students from different universities have many similar attributes and the same shared Chinese culture.

Dependability

The interviews were audio recorded which has assured the thoroughness of data documentation. Therefore, the data collected is stable and consistent over time. In addition, as discussed in the previous section, the refined McCracken (1988)'s five stages of analysis advocated by Herrington and Oliver (2000) was used because of its high dependability.

Confirmability

Triangulation can act as an important technique for establishing confirmability (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). The methodology of the long interview and focus group interview drawing from the same paradigm were used to triangulate, which can effectively reduce bias in data sources.

In addition, this thesis has gone through two additional validity procedures within the qualitative lens and paradigm assumptions suggested by Creswell and Miller (2000). These three validity procedures include the audit trail, researcher reflexivity, and thick description. First of all, the example data matrices as shown in Appendix 9 provide clear audit trail. In addition, the study's internal validity is also enhanced through the use of a questionnaire. Secondly, the researcher reflexivity was achieved by my review of cultural categories which is illustrated in Chapter Three. Thirdly, thick description was achieved through the use of verbatim quotation in the commentary to illustrate the main arguments. As described by Lincoln and Guba (1985), it is a path

of acquiring external validity.

5.5 Conclusion

This chapter has explained the aspects of the research philosophy of this thesis, the four-stage method suggested by McCracken (1989), and how the data was collected. Following this, the next chapter will analyse the data collected. It refers to stage four of the method discovering analytic categories and analysis write up (McCracken 1989). It will include the data analysis of the 23 long interviews and the data analysis of the three focus group interviews. The difference between the findings from the long interviews and focus group interviews will be addressed at the end.

Chapter Six: Data Findings and Analysis

6.1 Introduction

The long interviews triangulated with focus group interviews can result in a wealth of knowledge which is less likely to emerge from an impersonal questionnaire. One of the primary reasons for the use of long interviews and focus group interviews rather than questionnaires is to explore a diverse set of responses. According to McCracken (1989), this chapter refers to Stage Four, discovery of cultural categories and analysis (Figure 6.1).

```
                              ⟨ Analytic Data ⟩

   ┌──────────────────────┐              ┌──────────────────────────┐
   │ Stage 1              │              │ Stage 4                  │
   │ Review of analytic   │              │ Discovery of analytic    │
   │ categories           │              │ categories               │
   │ and interview design │              │ and analysis/ write up   │
   └──────────────────────┘              └──────────────────────────┘
                │                                      ▲
   Review Process                              Discovery Process
                ▼                                      │
   ┌──────────────────────┐              ┌──────────────────────────┐
   │ Stage 2              │              │ Stage 3                  │
   │ Review of cultural   │─────────────▶│ Discovery    of  cultural│
   │ categories           │              │ categories and interview │
   │ and interview design │              │                          │
   └──────────────────────┘              └──────────────────────────┘

                              ⟨ Cultural Data ⟩
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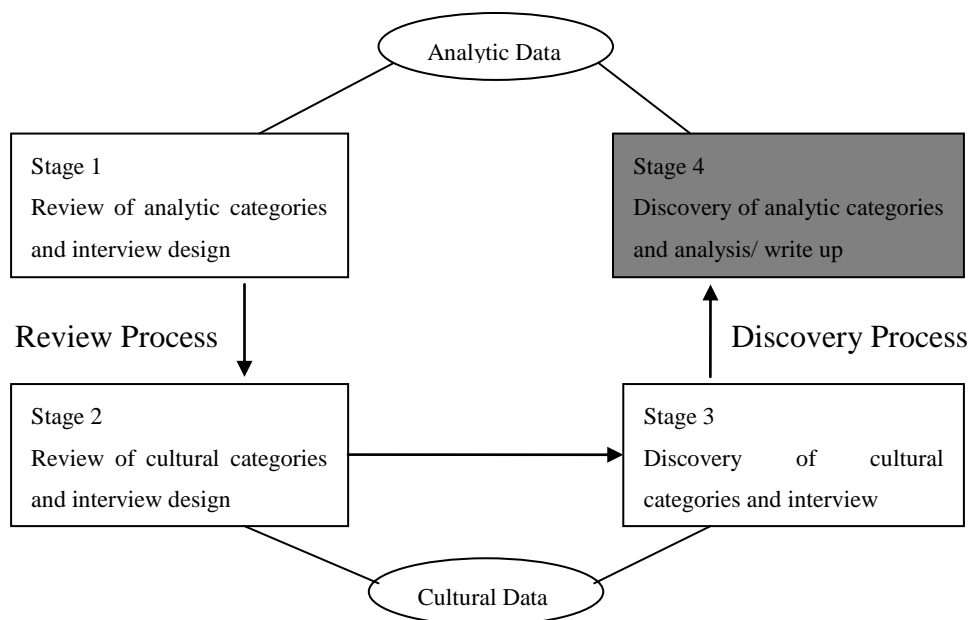
Figure 6.1: Stage 4 Discovery of Analytic Categories and Analysis

The sample data matrices of the long interviews are available in Appendix 9. Symbols were used for reducing large amounts of data into a smaller number of analytical units. There were 85 influences identified that can influence the five steps as shown in Appendix 7. In order to reduce large amount of data into smaller number of analytical units, symbols of (1), (2), (3), and (4) were used and written after each influence identified, thus indicating the four steps in their decision-making process as suggested in Figure 6.2. Examples are shown in the table 6.1.

Table 6.1: Examples of Coding by Symbols

Transcript	Coding by symbols	Expanded meaning
"Because I think to learn a language is a long-term career. Four years [of study in the university] is not enough. It's far from enough. If I really like this career, I would spend a lot of time on it" From UK1 (p.2)	Knowledge acquisition (1)	The influence of knowledge acquisition can influence the respondent's Step One (deciding to continue to study after graduation)
"Generally speaking, the academic reputation of overseas universities is much better than Chinese universities. This is an important reason I decided to go abroad for further study" from UK1 (p.27)	Better academic reputation in overseas university (2) From UK1 (p.27)	Better academic reputation in overseas university is a motive that can influence Step Two (deciding to study abroad)
"L: Have you ever considered Singapore as your study destination because they speak English? *R: No, it is an Asian Country, and Chinese dominant country. I hope I can go far away from China. I have a strong curiosity about a completely different country and the U.K is a good choice".* from UK1(p.30.	Different cultural environment (3) From UK1 (p. 30)	The influence of different cultural environment can influence the Step Three (selecting a host country), which means the respondent wants to choose a host country that has perceived different culture from China.

In addition, abbreviations were also used in the data analysis. Examples are shown in the table 6.2. The data was sorted in order to provide the basis for the last stage of writing up.

Table 6.2: Examples of Coding by Abbreviations

Transcript	Codes by Abbreviation	Meaning
"It is said that the air in the U.K is fresh and the roads are clean. There might not be many skyscrapers but old red-brick buildings are more attractive and good looking." From UK2 (p5).	<u>GCA-UK (pos.)</u> Good living environment	Good living environment is one of the positive General Country Attributes of the U.K

"The first impression of British services is the high price because the labour cost is high in the U.K." from UK2 (p.6)	GSA-UK (neg.) Expensive	British services are expensive is one of the negative general service attributes of the U.K
"The most important reason is due to the expansion of enrolment. Too many low quality students can study in the universities. The overall quality of university students is decreasing." From UK3 (p.13)	SSA-China (neg.) Enrolment expansion	The enrolment expansion is one of the negative attributes of Chinese higher education services
"In China, some students are likely to cheat in their assignments and exams, not all students. However, those who do not want to cheat may change their mind to cheat because many students cheat without punishment. Students do not worry about cheating, and then they tend to be lazy. In the U.K, academic cheating takes risk. Those who do not want to cheat will be confirmed to be hard-studying. Those who are likely to cheat will change their mind to be hard-studying because of the possible punishment of academic cheating. In my opinion, British higher education can produce more quality students than Chinese higher education." From UK3 (p.14-15)	British SSA > Chinese SSA Academic misconduct	The attributes of British higher education are preferred to those of Chinese higher education in terms of beating academic misconduct

6.2 The Long Interview

6.2.1   Findings in Part One of the Study: COO Influence on Service Evaluation

The following sections present the findings of the intensive study of the importance of COO image in Chinese students' evaluation of British higher education and Chinese higher education. These address the four issues of concern which aims to answer the research questions as presented in Chapter One:

1. British COO image held by Chinese students

2. Chinese COO image held by Chinese students

3. Chinese students' evaluation of British higher education services based on their British COO image

4. Chinese students' evaluation of Chinese higher education services based on their Chinese COO image

Based on the findings of Parameswaran and Pisharodi (1994), Chinese students' COO image consists of three facets including general country attributes (GCA), general service attributes (GSA), and specific service attributes (SSA), namely the service attributes of higher education. Hence, British COO image and Chinese COO image held by Chinese students were evaluated according to these three facets.

Positive British COO image

In the interview process, respondents' first images of the U.K, the services provided by the U.K and higher education services of the U.K were asked. As expected, no respondent held a purely positive or negative perceived British COO image. Some negative evidence was presented by most respondents who largely presented positive evidence, but on balance they tended to have positive British COO image. Most of the respondents had general positive British GCA, GSA, and SSA despite some negative evidence, but there was only one respondent who tended toward a general negative attitude of British GCA and another one respondent claimed general neutral views of British GCA. Therefore, it comes to the conclusion that Chinese students generally hold positive British COO image. Such a generally positive British COO image, consisting of British GCA, GSA, and SSA, will be discussed in detail in the next sections.

British General Country Attribute (GCA)

In general, respondents tended to have positive views of British GCA. Only one respondent explicitly claimed that the weight given to his negative views of British GCA is higher than those of his positive views. There were 26 positive attributes, 5 neutral attributes, and 17 negative attributes of British GCA identified from the

interviews (Table 6.3). These attributes could be classified into six categories including: political attributes, economical attributes, technological attributes, environmental attributes and other attributes.

Table 6.3: British General Country Attributes

British GCA	Positive			Negative		
Political Attribute	No political corruption	Influential to the world's development				
Economical Attributes	High standard of living	High levels of social welfare	High average income	Many economic problems	High unemployment rate	
	Developed country	Good economy	High GDP per capital			
Social / Cultural Attributes	Friendly and likable	Well-educated	Democratic	Not friendly or likable	Not hard working	Low efficiency
	Cultural heritage	Royal image	Freedom (e.g. speech, assembly, religion)	Open-minded	Bar culture	Stereotyped in doing things (bureaucratic)
	Glorious history	Equality	Football culture	Football hooliganism	Food not delicious	Arrogant
Technological Attributes	High Technical skills	Precise workmanship				
Environment	Safe environment	Good natural environment	Good weather	Low social safety	Poor weather	
	Good living environment					
Other Attributes	Historical buildings					

Particular opinions of British GCA expressed by most respondents were all positive including:

- Friendly and likable people
- High standard of living
- High levels of social welfare
- The U.K is a developed country

- Democratic
- Freedom
- Glorious history
- Royal Image

Several respondents presented evidence to suggest other positive views of the U.K including bar culture, high technical skills, precise workmanship, and historical buildings. Some respondents also noted the healthy natural environment of the U.K.

Different respondents held very different views towards some attributes. For example, some respondents noted that the U.K has a good economy, and that the country therefore has a high GDP per capita which means that the people can have a high standard of living, high levels of social welfare, a high average income and a safe environment. Furthermore, one respondent was a football fan of England, and holds a positive view of British football culture. Three other respondents presented evidence to express their negative opinions of England football hooliganism.

British General Service Attributes (GSA)

In general, respondents tended to have positive views of British GSA despite some negative evidence in relation to perceived high cost of living. In some interviews, the respondents felt it was difficult to provide their views of British services. This was especially the case when interviewing the respondents who chose to stay in China. It was largely due to their limited knowledge of British services as many respondents claimed that British services are seldom available in China. However, most of them could provide their perceived image of British services based on the word-of-mouth, media, and English publications.

There were ten positive attributes and six negative attributes of British GSA identified from the interviews as shown in the table 6.4. The most prominent attribute of the services provided by the U.K is the high price as the respondents felt that British services are expensive, for example:

"The high price of British services is the drawback….It is said that the taxi fee for a student from the airport to the student accommodations equals one month living fee in

China." From respondent OTH4 (p. 7)

Table 6.4 British General Service Attributes

British GSA							
Positive				**Negative**			
Well-known	Customer-oriented	High quality	Efficient	Expensive	Low level of safety	Seldom available in China	High labour cost
High competition among service companies	High safety	Reliable	Developed service industry	Low efficiency			
High technical skills	Good facilities available						

A few respondents explained that the generally high price of British services is largely due to the general high labour cost in the British service industry which will cause the higher prices. According to the BBC News (2013), the minimum wage in the U.K is £6.31 per hour for adults over 21 years old and £5.03 per hour for 18-to-20-year-olds (since October 2013). In comparison, the minimum wage in China is much lower. In China, each province or municipality sets its own minimum wage. In 2013, the minimum wage among these provinces and municipalities ranges from 7.5 to 15.2 yuan per hour which equals approximately £0.75 to £1.52 per hour (Chinagoabroad, 2013). In addition to the high cost of British services, one respondent presented evidence of low efficiency and low level of safety of British services such as opening a bank account in the U.K.

The high price of British services may become the reason why they are seldom available in China. Moreover, because of the perceived high price, many respondents indicated that British services should be of high quality. They presented evidence to suggest that British services are customer-oriented and reliable especially in the British insurance services. Some respondents noted high competition among British service companies, high technical skills and good available facilities result in the high

quality of British services and high efficiency. Moreover, there are five respondents claimed that British services are well-known and developed especially in its financial service sector.

British Specific Service Attributes (SSA)

All the respondents explicitly claimed their general positive evaluation of British higher education services. There were 22 positive attributes and 12 negative attributes of British SSA identified (see the table 6.5). On balance, the respondents who chose to go to the U.K provide much more positive attributes of British higher education than other respondents.

Table 6.5: British Specific Service Attributes

British SSA							
Positive				**Negative**			
High academic reputation	Availability of facilities	Flexibility of course	High quality	High cost of study	Inflexibility of course	Less scholarship opportunities	Short length of studying a course
Good examination system	Good looking buildings in campus	Good teaching technique	Rigid education (not tolerant to academic misconduct)	Commercialised	Decreasing recognition by Chinese market	Raised entry requirement	Too rigid education
Good natural environment in campus	Short length of studying a course	Sufficient funds available	Good academic environment	Low completion rate	Bureaucratic		
Freedom	Innovative	Good student accommodation	International partnership arrangements				
Developed							

The most prominent positive attributes are the high academic reputation and the high quality. Many respondents presented evidence to suggest the high quality of British higher education. They would like to use Chinese higher education services as reference to evaluate British higher education. For example, the sufficient funds for

academic research and university development in British universities can promote high academic reputation and high quality. However, Chinese universities usually have a limited budget for research and therefore have less academic contribution to the world than the U.K. Moreover, some respondents stated that there is a good academic environment in the U.K. Students can have freedom of speech in the class and innovative thinking is encouraged. Furthermore, some respondents appreciated the good student accommodations provided by British universities because students' freedom, privacy and safety are highly respected. Their freedom, privacy and safety are limited in China. For example:

"Students were highly administrated in the dormitory. There is no privacy with six students living a small room... We must live in the dormitory like jail because no one is allowed to go outside after 11.00.p.m. and there is no electricity from 11.00.p.m to 6.30.a.m. Moreover, the dormitory is not safe because there was always something going missing in the room, like your snacks, stationary, and so on. Others may use your personal computer without permission" From OTH7 (p.5)

The most prominent negative attribute of British higher education perceived by more than half of the respondents is its high cost. Some respondents stated that the total number of scholarships provided by British universities is generally fewer than other countries such as the U.S. In addition, three respondents noted the decreasing recognition of British higher education by the Chinese market *"because it is said that there are many counterfeit certificates produced each year"* (UK3, p.7). Moreover, one respondent viewed the entry requirement of British universities has been raised in recent years and one respondent implied that British higher education is bureaucratic in doing things. Furthermore, some respondents perceived the completion rate of British universities is too low. It is also noteworthy that a few respondents claimed that British higher education is commercialised for making money from international students. For example:

"British higher education has become a tool for making money from Chinese students and other international students. I can see that from many of my friends. It is very easy to go to the U.K to study, because they want to earn money from us." from UK3 (p.7)

Admittedly, Chinese students are very important to British higher education. As shown in the table 6.6, the number of students in British universities has decreased significantly in 2012 and 2013. This may be largely due to the high cost of studying at the university level. The government has allowed universities to charge domestic students tuition fees from £3,375 in 2011 to £9,000 in 2012 per year for undergraduate programmes.

Table 6.6: Number of Students in the U.K (Higher Education Statistics Agency, 2014)

Academic Year	Number of Students in Total	Change Since Last Year	Number of Undergraduate Students	Change Since Last Year	Number of Postgraduate Students	Change Since Last Year
2008/2009	2396050	3.9%	1859240	3.0%	536810	7.1%
2009/2010	2493415	4.1%	1914710	3.0%	578705	7,8%
2010/2011	2501295	0.3%	1912580	-0.1%	588720	1.7%
2011/2012	2496645	-0.2%	1928140	0.8%	568505	-3.4%
2012/2013	2340275	-6.3%	1803840	-6.4%	536440	-5.6%

Nonetheless, according to the table 6.7, the number of students coming from China has been ever-increasing in recent years. As the most important market, China should not be ignored by British higher education. Better understanding Chinese students' evaluation of British higher education by finding out the influences that can affect their decision making process becomes necessary.

Table 6.7: Top ten non-EU countries for student enrolments on higher education courses by location of higher education institution and country of domicile 2008/09 to 2012/13 (Higher Education Statistics Agency, 2013)

Country	Number of Students in 2008/2009	Number of Students in 2009/2010	Number of Student in 2010/2011	Number of Students in 2011/2012	Number of Students in 2012/2013
China	47035	56990	67325	78715	83790
India	34065	38500	39090	29900	22385
Nigeria	14380	16680	17585	17620	17395
United States	14345	15060	15555	16335	16235
Malaysia	12695	14060	13900	14545	15015
Hong Kong	9600	9945	10440	11335	13065
Saudi Arabia	5205	8340	10270	9860	9440
Pakistan	9610	9815	10185	8820	7185
Canada	5350	5575	5905	6115	6190
Thailand	4675	5505	5945	6235	6180
All Other	94355	100290	101915	103205	103100
Total all UK HEIs	251310	280760	298110	302680	299970

Some attributes of British higher education services perceived by the respondents are found to be both positive and negative, such as the short length of studying a postgraduate taught course in the U.K. For some respondents, they liked this attribute because it can save time and money for acquiring a degree. Nonetheless, for some of the other respondents, they did not believe that they could acquire adequate knowledge within the short study period. In addition, several respondents claimed that British higher education is rigid and that the examination system is good because of its much lower tolerance for academic misconduct than in Chinese higher education. However, some students deemed that British higher education is too rigid, so that it has a much higher dropout rate than in Chinese higher education.

Negative Chinese COO Image

In the interview process, respondents' first images of China, the services provided by China and Chinese higher education services were asked. The responses showed more negative attitudes than positive attitudes toward Chinese GCA, GSA and SSA in the interviews. Therefore, the general Chinese COO image perceived by Chinese students

tends to be negative. It was also found that the respondents who decided to go abroad provided much more negative views of Chinese GCA, GSA and SSA than those who chose to stay in China.

Negative Chinese General Country Attribute (GCA)

All the respondents provided quite a few both positive and negative views of Chinese GCA. On balance, more than half of the respondents held general negative views despite some positive evidence. Less than half of the respondents asserted their general positive attitude toward GCA of China. There were two respondents who expressed that their GCA of China was neutral. Chinese GCA identified can be classified into five categories including political attributes, economic attributes, social/cultural attributes, technological attributes, and environmental attributes. As shown in the table 6.8, there were 20 positive attributes and 38 negative attributes drawn from the twenty-three long interviews. The most prominent attributes suggested by most respondents include: a strong good economy, limited freedom, a large population, and *guanxi*.

Table 6.8 has demonstrated that different respondents have different views to certain attributes of China. The majority of the respondents stated that China currently has a good economy in general. The Chinese economy has been developing rapidly since 1978 when the Reform and Opening-up Policy was introduced by Deng Xiaoping. According to National Bureau of Statistics of China (NBS 2012), China's GDP in 2012 is 51.92 trillion yuan (or 8.22 trillion U.S dollars) which has surpassed Japan as the second largest economy in the world. There were nine respondents who noted the living standard in recent years because of the fast growing economy. In addition, the data suggested that Chinese people are hard working, efficient in doing things, in a thrifty, and patriotic way despite more evidence of the negative than the positive Chinese GCA was found in the interviews. The history has shown that the civilisation of China is over 5,000 years long leaving a huge amount of cultural heritage.

However, several respondents were worried about China in the near future because they saw the fast developing economy as an economic bubble. Some respondents described Chinese economy as a pyramid. In this economic pyramid, there are only a few rich people at the top, but most people are still poor staying at the bottom. The large economic gap between the rich and the poor and the regionally different economies across the country have caused social instability. The average income of Chinese people is still low compared with Westerners like British people. Moreover, some respondents presented evidence to indicate the poverty of Chinese rural areas. Therefore, China is still considered to be a developing country despite the rapidly-growing economy in recent decades. According to Fu (2011), many Chinese economic experts and government officials have also noted the economic bubble. In response to problems associated with a developing economy, the Chinese government has planned to end the worship of the almighty GDP. "Local governments should be responsible for not only GDP growth but also ecological environment, public service and people's livelihoods" (Fu, 2011).

In addition, a few respondents stated that the Reform and Opening-up has brought a few Western cultural values such as short-term orientation, materialism and high individualism which are gradually eroding some traditional Chinese cultural values like Confucianism, thriftiness, and a low expression of individualism.

Many respondents claimed *guanxi* as an important attribute of China. *Guanxi* refers to "a special relationship between a person who needs something and a person who has the ability to give something" (Osland, 1990: 8). It can be used positively or negatively to cope with difficulties. According to Fan (2002: 547), *guanxi* can be classified into different categories:

1. Relationship by birth or blood
   - Family
   - Kinships, in-laws
2. Relationship by nature

- Locality (from the same town or province)

- Classmate or alumni

- Teacher-student

- Co-worker: colleague or superior-subordinate

- Neighbour

- In the same profession

3. Relationship acquired by

- Acquaintance

- Knowing the same person (intermediary)

- Friend

- Sworn brotherhood

Some respondents presented evidence to express that *guanxi* can maintain harmony and produce high efficiency in the society while many other respondents claimed the intertwinement of *guanxi* and corruption which result in the low efficiency and unfair society. There are a lot of publications on Chinese *guanxi*. For example, *guanxi* impacts on business negotiation (Brunner and Taoka, 1977), business relationships (Arias, 1998), relationship marketing (Fock and Woo, 1988), business ethics (Lovett, et al. 1999), and political corruption (Yang, 1994; Fan, 2002)

Table 6.8: Chinese General Country Attributes

Chinese GCA	Positive			Negative		
Political Attribute	Influential to the world					
Economical Attributes	Good economy (fast developing economy)	Raised living standard		Poverty	Low standard of living	Low average income
				Large gap between the rich and the poor	Pyramid economy	Still a developing country

				Monopoly state-owned business	Economic bubble	High CPI (Consumer Price Index) rate
				Too cheap labour	Economy regionally different	High unemployment rate
Social / Cultural Attributes	Hard working people	Glorious history	Cultural heritage	Not well educated	Unethical trend	Materialism
	Strong patriotism	Confucianism	Thrifty	Decreased happiness of the people	Large population	Guanxi (causes unfair competition)
	High efficiency	Harmony	Collectivism	Lack of efficiency	Rising Western cultural attributes	Low food safety
	Guanxi (which leads to harmony)	Preservation		Unfair society	Hierarchical society	Impetuous (short tempered in doing things)
				Many social problems	Losing traditional Chinese culture	
Technological Attributes	High technical skills	Fast developing technology		Less technical skills	High ability to counterfeit	
Environmental Attributes	Good infrastructure			Polluted	Poor living environment	

Negative Chinese General Service Attributes (GSA)

Most of the respondents held negative views toward Chinese GSA, while only a few of them were satisfied. There were 9 positive attributes and 16 negative attributes of Chinese GSA identified as shown in table 6.9. Most prominent positive attributes of Chinese GSA include: reasonable price (low price), improving a lot in recent years. Nonetheless, some respondents argued that Chinese services were too cheap because of the low labour cost and therefore result in poor service quality. For examples:

"Chinese services are always cheap and usually of low quality. However, they are usually cheap enough that you would not like to make any complaints about its quality.

The best example is our higher education services." UK2 (p.27)

The most prominent negative Chinese GSA includes the fact that the country is under developed, not reliable, inefficient, and monopoly. For example:

"The service industry is under developed in China. Many people even do not have the consciousness of services. We only focus on products. We may think that some kinds of customer service, insurance services, and after sales services are a waste of money. Generally, we are poorer than British people. We have to use money smartly and are willing to take risks……99.99% Chinese do not buy property insurance. Most Chinese people travel by trains rather than by airplane, even if the train station is not safe and the train station is noisy and nasty. We don't care. What we care about is saving money." From CN4 (p.11)

Table 6.9: Chinese General Service Attributes

Chinese GSA							
Positive				**Negative**			
Reasonable price (low price)	Luxury services	Wide range of choices	Improving a lot in recent years	Frequent problems	Narrow range of choices	Not advertising informative	Hardly available
Hierarchical services (many different classes)	High efficiency	Fierce competition involved		Under developed	Too low price	Not reliable (cannot achieve commitment)	Low quality
				Quality level regionally different	Poor administration	Highly CPC controlled	Low safety
				Inefficient	Not well trained	Monopoly	Sometimes unethical

<u>*Negative Chinese Specific Service Attributes (SSA)*</u>

Most of the respondents held negative attitudes towards Chinese higher education, although a few of them held positive attitudes and only one held a more neutral

attitude. Six positive attributes and twenty negative Chinese SSA were identified as shown in the table 6.10. Some respondents held different views of availability of facilities, study atmosphere and library services in Chinese higher education. Most prominent attributes of Chinese higher education found in the interviews are all negative including: inflexibility of courses, tolerance of academic misconduct, less dedicated teachers, *guanxi*, and poor student accommodations. For examples:

"Students are always cheating. However, this is allowed silently…Plagiarism has become more and more prominent in Chinese higher education. This can also happen among the research among the teachers. It is quite often reported that some famous researcher's work is simply translation of some foreign research paper." from UK2 (p.19)

"Many universities' lecturers and professors are not well paid. They have to try to earn money outside the university…The university cannot treat them well. Therefore, they won't treat students well. Cheating is often ignored in most Chinese universities. This has led to a very high graduation rate. I dare to say that the graduation rate in any Chinese university is higher than 98%..... Academic cheating can always be found in Chinese universities. Many teachers just close their eyes to the cheating..... They don't want students to have re-sit exams or assignments because they don't want to have any extra work…The poor supervision can cause poor quality of students. Actually, many students do not deserve the degree." From UK3 (p.13-14)

Table 6.10: Chinese Specific Service Attributes

Chinese SSA							
Positive				**Negative**			
Low cost of study	Availability of facilities	Good study atmosphere	Fast developing and improving	Low academic reputation	Facilities not available	Inflexibility of course	Poor employment prospect
Good library				Under developed	Too high completion rate	Tolerant to academic	Guanxi

services						misconduct	
				Poor examination system	Poor student accommodation	Different service quality due to the different classes of the universities	Lack of good facilities
				Poor teaching technique	Poor study atmosphere	length of studying a degree too long	Commercialised
				Lack of innovation	Teachers are not dedicated	Lack of funds for research	Poor library services
				Corruption			

Comparison

Additionally, it was found that the respondents liked to make a comparisons between China and the U.K. In the interviews, they were likely to point out the weaknesses of China, Chinese services and Chinese higher education services by using the reference of the U.K, British services and British higher education services. They found that there were some attributes such as GCA, GSA, and SSA of China were weaker than the U.K. Consequently, they would discredit Chinese COO image.

COO Influence on Service Evaluation

Chinese students' perception of the British COO image can influence their evaluation of British higher education services. In addition, Chinese students' perception of Chinese COO image can influence their evaluation of Chinese higher education. COO influence on service evaluation was identified according to my observation during the interviews. It was found that none of the respondents had a purely positive or negative image of a country. However, when I was interviewing students, the respondents were more likely to keep providing a positive evaluation of a country's higher education services if their general image of that country is positive. They were unlikely to provide any negative comments of that country's higher education unless I asked them

if they had any negative views. However, in general, they still have a positive image of the country and positive evaluation of that country's higher education services. The similar phenomenon was also found when I interviewed the respondents who held a negative image of a country and therefore had a negative evaluation of that country's higher education services.

The COO effects on service evaluation were also illuminated by the data analysis. First of all, the positive British COO image held by Chinese students can largely result in positive evaluation of British higher education services. For example:

"The image of the U.K can positively influence my evaluation of British higher education services... I do not know much about the U.K, but all the things I know are positive, such as their well-educated people. As the higher education services are largely produced by people, I assume that their higher education services should be very good. The U.K is a developed country. Therefore, its higher education services should be quite developed." from respondent OTH3 (p.18)

Secondly, although the respondents generally held a positive British COO image because of the abundant positive views of the country, its services in general, and its higher education services, they still suggested only a few negative views as previously discussed. Their negative views of British GCA, GSA, and SSA could also result in negative evaluation of British higher education services. It is noteworthy that no respondent had a generally negative COO stereotype of the U.K. There are a few possible reasons for this result. Most English publications, such as English textbooks for students in China, present the positive attributes of the U.K so as to attract the readers' interests. Additionally, English teachers also usually present the positive attributes of the U.K to arouse students' interest in studying English. Furthermore, the image of the U.K presented in Chinese media is generally positive. As none of the respondents had ever been to the U.K before they participated in the current study, their general perceived image of the U.K was positive. Respondents all held only a

few negative views among their generally positive image of British COO. These negative views could result in certain negative evaluations of British higher education services. For example:

"British services are expensive so are British higher education services. They charge international students a lot for the tuition fee because of the high labour cost." from respondent UK6 (p.24)

Thirdly, the data suggests that the positive Chinese COO image held by Chinese students can result in positive evaluation of Chinese higher education services. In addition, from the data it seems apparent that the negative Chinese COO image held by Chinese students can also result in negative evaluation of Chinese higher education services. For example:

"Chinese services are always cheap and usually of low quality. However, they are usually cheap enough that you would not like to make any complaints about its quality. The best example is our higher education services." from respondent UK2 (p. 27)

Fourthly, it was found that the respondents' COO effects on Chinese higher education services were much weaker than their COO effects on British higher education services. It was also found that the respondents were likely to use their "perception of country image" when they were evaluating British higher education services. Nonetheless, the respondents did not need the "perception of country" when they were evaluating Chinese higher education services because the levels of familiarity of the two different higher education services are different.

6.2.2   Findings in Part Two of the Study: Internal Influences of COO Effects on Service Evaluation

The respondents showed different perceptions of COO effects on service evaluation in part one of the study. This is due to the intrinsic influences and extrinsic influences

that can either reduce or reinforce COO effects on service evaluation. As suggested by the literature review and my personal views and experience, the intrinsic influences assumed include respondents' priori familiarity of COO image, vertical individualistic attribute of personality, and consumer ethnocentrism. The a-priori familiarity of COO image and the respondents' vertical individualistic attribute of personality were found important and act as an internal influence of COO effects on service evaluation.

Priori Familiarity of COO image

According to Alba and Hutchinson (1987), product knowledge can be refined into two parts including consumers' expertise and familiarity with products. Therefore, consumers' product knowledge can affect the power of information cues in the product evaluation process (such as COO cue), because the increased familiarity can result in better developed knowledge structures or "schema" to the related products (Marks and Olsen 1981 cited in Rao and Monroe, 1988, p.254). Similar findings were obtained in this study as many respondents have presented their expertise and familiarity with international higher education services.

The respondents all implied that they were likely to use their British COO image to infer the quality of British higher education services because they did not have any experience-based knowledge of living in the U.K, consuming British services, or British higher education services. Therefore, the respondents' British COO image was important because their image of British GCA, GSA, and SSA could be used to infer the evaluation of British higher education services. Although the respondents had limited a-priori familiarity of British COO image, they could have certain knowledge about the U.K, British services, and British higher education services in various ways, including the internet, friends, television or films, tutors, books, English study, relatives, and education agents.

Nonetheless, as the respondents selected in the long interviews were Chinese students, they had very high familiarity of Chinese GCA, GSA, and SSA. Therefore, they could

use their experience-based knowledge to evaluate Chinese higher education rather than use COO information to infer how good or how bad Chinese higher education services are. The respondents' COO effects on the evaluation of Chinese higher education services were weak because they would like to evaluate Chinese higher education according to their experience in the past.

From the above it can be argued that the COO effects on the evaluation of British higher education are stronger than COO effects on the evaluation of Chinese higher education because the respondents are much more familiar to Chinese higher education than to British higher education. Therefore, the importance of consumers' a-priori familiarity of COO image in the COO effects on service evaluation was identified.

Brucks (1985) classified product knowledge into three main categories, which are subjective or perceived knowledge, objective knowledge and experience-based knowledge. Similar findings were obtained in the present study. As no respondent had experience-based knowledge of higher education, their subjective or perceived knowledge and objective knowledge became important in evaluating the services. Sometimes, it seems very difficult to differentiate the respondents' perceived knowledge from their objective knowledge. However, at other times, their perceived knowledge was obviously identified as they were not very confident with what they knew.

Vertical Individualism

From my personal views and experience in Chapter three, China is seen as a hierarchical society. This argument was supported by the findings of the long interviews. In addition, most of the respondents had high vertical individualism while only a few had medium vertical individualism and no one had low vertical individualism.

The study's data suggested that all respondents exhibited medium to high levels of vertical individualism. This is an interesting observation as in the last 30 years since the publication of Hofstede (1980) which showed low levels of Chinese individualism, my study demonstrates that Chinese students have become more individualistic. In addition, it was found that the One Child Policy in mainland China can produce the individualistic generation born in 1980s. Because of the fast development of the Chinese economy and the influence of globalisation, the increased exposure to Western culture has facilitated the trend of individualistic cultural values in Chinese people who were born in 1980s.

There was a tendency in the data for those students who provided higher rather than medium levels of individualism to choose to study overseas. Only a few respondents demonstrated medium vertical individualism and most of these students chose to stay in China for further study. The importance of vertical individualism in the COO effects on service evaluation was identified.

Ethnocentrism

The data has shown no evidence that Chinese students' consumer ethnocentrism would influence COO effects in their evaluation of British higher education and Chinese higher education. All the respondents showed low ethnocentrism attributes because no respondent would particularly buy Chinese made products or services. The respondents can be divided into three groups according to their attitude of buying Chinese or foreign made products and services. In the first group, there are 14 respondents who generally did not have a particular preference for buying Chinese made or foreign made products or services. In the second group, there were six respondents who claimed that they preferred foreign products or services because of the perceived high quality. In the third group, there were three respondents who asserted that they would specifically buy foreign made products or services. In addition, most of them indicated that they would still buy foreign made products or services even at the expense of Chinese employment or the Chinese economy. In each

of these three groups, students choosing to stay in China and choosing to go abroad were both found. Therefore, the importance of consumer ethnocentrism in the COO effects on service evaluation appears to have declined.

The data have suggested a few reasons for the Chinese students' low ethnocentrism. First of all, products or services' information of COO is sometimes less important than the information of brand name, availability, price, and quality. From this point, the argument that when other information cues were considered, COO information cues would become less important was supported.

Secondly, products or services made in China always have the competitive price advantage but the weakness of perceived low quality compared with those of foreign made. Therefore, foreign made products or services are more favoured by quality seekers because certain domestic products or services have encountered serious problems in recent years. Many respondents were concerned with the food product scandals such as melamine-contaminated milk, clenbuterol-contaminated pork, and gutter oil along with the transportation service scandals such serious express railway incidents in China. These scandals in recent years have left a negative image associated with home-made products for the respondents. For example:

"Foreign made products have higher quality than Chinese products. There are many problems with Chinese made products, such as the tainted milk, tainted pork, gutter oil, and so on. Only a few of Chinese made products are unethical and even harmful for the society. However, these are only a few Chinese made products that have greatly negatively influenced the image of 'made in China'. People tend to buy grocery made in foreign countries for the quality." From CN7 (p. 24).

Thirdly, it was found that respondents have obvious preferences for foreign made products in the high end category, but tend to have preference for Chinese made products in the low end category because of the low price. For example:

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"For the upper class products, like cars, computers, or DSL cameras or HD camcorders, those made in foreign countries are always preferred. I would like to pay the high price because of the high quality. For the lower class products, like a shower towel, or a toothbrush, Chinese made is preferred because of the good price and decent quality." from CN7 (p. 24)

Due to the perceived high labour cost of foreign services and low labour cost of Chinese services, most foreign services provided by foreign countries are seldom available in China. Even if there are some foreign brands or companies found in China, the services are provided by Chinese workers. Therefore, in most cases, Chinese consumers do not have many opportunities to buy foreign services provided by foreigners. For example:

"Foreign labour is much more expensive than Chinese labour… Normal Chinese customers can barely be served by them [foreigners] directly. In daily lives, we can only consume Chinese services. All in all, here is China, which is a Chinese service dominant society." from UK2 (p.29)

6.2.3　Findings in Part Three of the Study: External Influences of COO Effects on Service Evaluation

In addition to the COO cue, other informational cues were also considered in their evaluation of British higher education. These informational cues can be seen as external influences that can reduce the COO effects on service evaluation.

It must be noted that two possible results were obtained in the interviews: to purchase or not to purchase British higher education services. As aforementioned, all the respondents held positive British COO image which resulted in positive evaluation of British higher education services. Nonetheless, not all the respondents would purchase British higher education services because of their positive British COO image. The

positive evaluation of British higher education from the positive British COO image became less important when other informational cues were considered.

As demonstrated in the review of literature, there are a few steps that students go through when selecting international higher education. The external influences of COO effects on higher education services can be identified in these steps. According to the literature of international higher education, there are three steps which are (Pimpa 1999; Davidson and Wang 2008; Chen 2006; and Mazzarol and Soutar 2002):
- Deciding to study abroad
- Selecting a host country
- Selecting a particular institution.

These three steps were also found in the 23 long interviews. Additionally, some other steps were illuminated for Chinese students selecting future higher education. All the respondents in the long interviews had to go through four stages in their decision making process (figure 6.2 and table 6.11). First, they need to make a decision about whether to continue their studies after graduation. If they decided to continue to study after graduation, they would then decide the study destination, namely, in China or in a foreign country. After that, they would seek information salient to selecting a particular institution for their study. Finally, they would decide to go to work after they finish their future study.

Table 6.11: Decision Making Process of Chinese Students Choosing Future Higher Education

Stage 1 Deciding to Continue to Study after Graduation	Stage 2 Choosing a Study Destination			Stage 3 Selecting a Particular Institution		Stage 4 Go to work
	Deciding to Study in China	Deciding to Study Abroad	Selecting a Host Country	Selecting a particular institution in China	Selecting a particular institution in foreign country	

| **Step One**
Deciding to
continue to study
after graduation | → | **Step Two**
Deciding to study in
China or a particular
foreign country | → | **Step Three**
Selecting a particular
institution | → | **Step Four**
Going to work
after graduation |
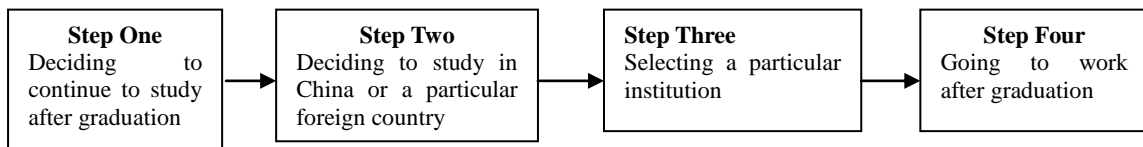
Figure 6.2: Decision Making Steps of Chinese Students for Future Higher Education

| **Step One**
Deciding to continue
to study after
graduation | → | **Step Two**
Deciding to
study in China | → | **Step Three**
Selecting a particular
institution | → | **Step Four**
Going to work
after graduation |
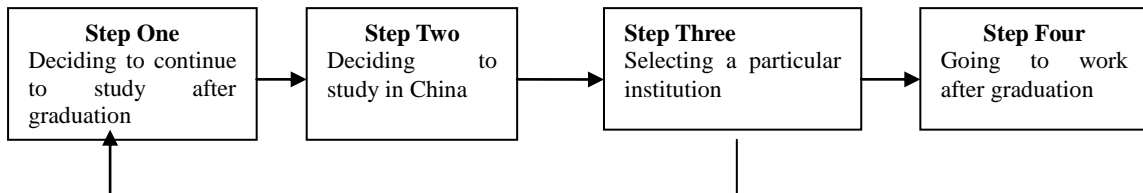
Figure 6.3: Decision Making Steps of Chinese Students who Decided to Study in China for Future Higher Education

Specifically, Chinese students who select to stay in China have to go through the steps as shown in Figure 6.3. Some of them may continue to study post-graduate in the future. For example, they may plan to continue into a Ph.D or a different master's course of study after they have acquired a first master degree. Therefore, their decision making process will move from step three back to step one then, and they will eventually attain the final step, namely going to work after graduation. Most of the respondents claimed that all their efforts towards higher education are for a better work prospect in the future. It is noteworthy that only a few of them declared that they may go abroad for further study after they finish their studies in China. Nonetheless, they did not have clear plans for their future study overseas because they said that it was still early to be concerned with the issue. All they needed to be concerned at the time of the interview was about their three years postgraduate study in China. Each stage is a category that contains various influences that can affect respondents' decisions.

Chinese students who chose to study abroad have to go through five steps as shown in figure 6.4. They are to some extent different to those who decided to stay in China for further higher education. In their first step, they also had to decide to continue to study after graduation. Then, they would decide to study abroad rather than stay in

China. After that, they would select a host country for their future study. The popular study destinations are all English speaking countries including the U.K, the U.S, Canada, Ireland and Australia. Selecting a particular institution in the selected host country is the next step after the decision of studying abroad. Some of the students have already planned to continue to study after their initial overseas studies. For example, some decided to study another postgraduate taught course while others decided to study a Ph.D course after they have acquired a master degree abroad. It must be noted that they planned to study abroad for a second master degree or a Ph.D degree. They were all adamant that they will not come back to China to study because they deemed that foreign higher education services are much better than Chinese higher education services. However, most of them planned to come back to China and find a job eventually. Only a few planned to emigrate and work in the host country they selected.
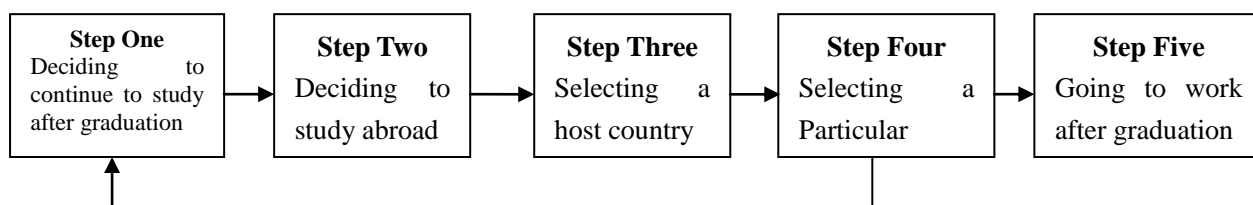
Figure 6.4: Decision Making Steps of Chinese Students Choosing to Go Abroad for Future Higher Education

In comparison with Zhao (2013)'s work, this study used qualitative research method that can explore new influences on Chinese students' decision making process. Similar findings were obtained in terms of the influences that affect students' choice of the host country and students' choice of a foreign university. Nonetheless, the data of this thesis does not reveal any obvious stage of selecting a programme or selecting the city where the chosen foreign university located.

Only a few students claimed the importance of the academic reputation of the programme selected in the selected overseas university. It can affect students' choice

of foreign universities. In addition, selecting the city or town where the chosen university located seems not very important because only one respondent had claimed the importance of the safety environment of the city where the selected university located while another respondent mentioned the importance of the city's weather and city image as a tourist destination. This finding is in line with the British council survey (2010) which investigated Chinese postgraduate taught business and management students' selection of a city where the chosen university located as an individual dimension. The factors listed in the survey were all not important to most Chinese students including the issues of safety (79% not important), friendly and welcoming (81% not important), capital city or major city (81% not important), cosmopolitan (85% not important), low living expenses (85% not important), good job prospects (87% not important), chosen institution is in this city (84% not important), fun and vibrant (92% not important), and presence of relatives or friends (79% not important). Therefore, for marketing to Chinese students, the emphasis should not be given to the city where British universities are. British universities should not focus on advertising the city located in their marketing campaigns to Chinese students. Instead, they should address other influences in selecting the U.K rather than other countries as a host country and selecting a specific university in the U.K.

The review of literature suggests further influences that may affect Chinese students selecting future higher education at different stages. Similar findings were obtained in this study. The influences can be divided into ten analytic categories: cost of study, curiosity, employment prospect, English language, entry requirement, environment, freedom, reputation, influence of normative reference and others. All the influences on Chinese students selecting future higher education will be explained in the next section according to the four stages as illustrated in Table 6.7.

Stage 1: Deciding to Continue to Study after Graduation

Table 6.12 has illustrated the identified decisive influences in the stage one. The

influences identified can be divided into the main influences and the peripheral influences based on the frequency of the usage by the respondents. Together influences can affect the decision of undertaking higher education in the future. The main influences are perceived as very important and often indicated by many respondents. The main influences include:

- Employment prospect,
- Acquisition of knowledge,
- The time cost of studying a course,
- Influence of normative referents (i.e. parents, relatives, friends, and education agents)

The peripheral influences are less important and sometimes indicated by only a few respondents. The peripheral influences include:

- Better studying environment,
- Seek self-achievement in life, and
- Academic reputation of Chinese university

Table 6.12: Influences of Chinese Students Choosing Future Higher Education

Categories of External Influences	Influences upon the decision to continue to study after graduation
Cost of Study	Time cost of studying a course
Curiosity	Acquisition of knowledge or study interest
Employment Prospect	Increases general employment prospects in China
	Increases employment prospect in China by the course studied
	Higher degree acquisition for better employment prospect
	The prospect of gaining a competitive advantage in job market
Influence of Normative Referents	Family's suggestion (parents or grandparents)
	Friends' suggestion
	Tutor' suggestion
	Influence of boyfriend or girlfriend
	Influence of boyfriend or girlfriend's parents
Reputation	Academic reputation of the course in the university studied in China (Course reputation)
Others	Seeking self-achievement in life
	Trend of acquiring a higher level degree

A) Employment Prospect

The most prominent influence on Chinese students' decision of undertaking a higher education is the improved employment prospect. They felt it would be difficult to find what they perceived as a good job after they graduate in China. Therefore, they decided to undertake further study for gaining some competitive advantages in the job market even if they actually did not like to study, for example:

"We also need to think about our future job and then prepare for it... We need to pass the CET-4 and CET-6 [College English Test- Band 4 and Band 6] to get a good profile on our CV. English is just a basic skill for finding a job. Actually, most jobs do not need English, but it has already become an entry requirement for most job vacancies. Beside CET, some students study accounting in their spare time and take part in different exams. What they really need is the certificate. We need various certificates to attract potential employers after we graduate. Most studies and certificates are unrelated with what we should study in a master course. But, we have to study no matter how much we dislike it. This is China. The competition in the job market is too fierce." From CN2 (p. 23)

"Studying for a master's degree is essential for finding a good job. I have to continue to study after I finish my bachelor course." From CN3 (p.24)

"Studying in university is all for finding a good job. As I could not find a good job with my bachelor degree I decided to continue to study for a master's degree. This has become a popular trend in Chinese universities" from CN4 (p.4).

In addition, most respondents have noted the trend of acquiring a higher degree in the society. This finding is in accordance with the literature of Chinese higher education. The table 6.13 has shown the changes in the number of student who took part in the

NEEP over the period from 2000 to 2013. The number of applicants has been ever-increasing from 15,500 applicants to 176,000 applicants (NBS 2013).

Table 6.13: Students Participating in the National Entrance Examination for Postgraduate (NBS 2013)

Year	Number of Applicants (in thousands)	Growth Rate of Application	Number of Acceptance	Acceptance Rate
2013	176	6.3%	53.9	30.6%
2012	165.6	9.6	51.7	31.2%
2011	151.1	7.9	49.5	32.8%
2010	140.6	12.8	47.4	33.7%
2009	124.6	3.8	44.9	36.2%
2008	120	-6.8	38.6	32.2%
2007	128.2	0.8	36.1	28.2%
2006	127.12	8.4	34.2	26.9%
2005	117.2	24	31	26.5%
2004	94.5	18.5	27.3	28.9%
2003	79.7	27.7	22	27.6%
2002	62.4	35.7	16.4	26.3%
2001	46	17.3	13.3	28.9%
2000	39.2	22.9	10.3	26.3%

As quite a few respondents indicated, it is hard to find a what they perceived as good job with a bachelor's degree. This is generally the case for some female graduates because of the perceived gender discrimination in some job markets (Woodhams, et al. 2009 and Jiang, et al. 2011). In order to gain competitive advantages in the job market, female graduates therefore decide to acquire a higher degree for better employment prospects. What's more, the employment prospect in China varied according to the course studied. For example, Respondent CN5 who was studying Indoor Environmental Engineering said that:

"The main reason is that for female graduates from this course it is hard to find a job. Before I made the decision to study for a master's degree, I found that no one could get a job contract before graduation. Even now, only two students found jobs. The jobs are at construction sites. The working conditions will be terrible. So, there is job

discrimination against females. Even those who can find jobs can hardly get good salary. In my class, half of the students decided to continue to study after graduation. And, I am one of them." From CN5 (p.3)

B) Academic Reputation of the Course in the University Studies in China

Some students said that an influence associated with a university's course reputation was its employment prospect. The student CN2 had her own unique reason for undertaking a higher education. Due to the low academic reputation of her course which is economics in her university, she felt that it is hard to find a job. Therefore, she decided to undertake a higher education in Xi'an Jiaotong University which is famed for economics.

"Because I could not find a job after I graduate..... my course [Economics] is not a good course in my university...We did not have strong academics in the School [of Humanities and Law] because our school is not known for Economics. As we are well-known for Spaceflight, Aviation, and Navigation, rather than Economics, the companies that came to our university for recruitment were all from scientific institutions... Of course, they would not consider us...We do not have good work prospects with just a bachelor's degree."

C) Acquisition of Knowledge

Many students admitted that inadequate academic qualifications had left them no choice but to seek further higher education. They would like to study more from universities when they are still young (before 30 years old). In addition, some students chose to undertake a university course based on interest. They just wanted to study more, for example:

UK1 (p. 2) who's subject was Business English said that: *"Because I think to learn a language is a long-term career, four years is not enough. It's far from enough. If I*

really like this career, I will spend a lot of time on it.”

“A master's degree is a necessity for finding a job. Continuing to study is passively required by the society. However, this is not more important than my interest in the subject. The most important reason is my interest” from CN4 (p.4).

A few students decided to undertake higher education because they want to seek self-achievement in life. For example, when asked UK1 why she wanted to study a Ph.D course in the future, she responded that:

“Ph.D means concentration in a field. I can have academic credentials to support myself or demonstrate my ability. So, a Ph.D can give people a good impression.” *from U.K 1 (p.29)*

D) Time Cost

Early marriage is important for females in China. Therefore, they will decide to continue to study immediately after they graduate rather than go back to school after a few years working. For most Chinese female students, if they choose to go to work after graduation, they are unlikely to pursue higher education in the future. For example:

“My mother feared that I won't find a husband if I study a Ph.D course. She said that having a good marriage is much more important; girls should get married early. This is a normal phenomenon in China.” *From UK 8 (p.8)*

E) Influence of normative referents

The influence of normative referents upon students' decisions to continue to study after graduation is important in the long interviews. A majority of students interviewed said that their parents influenced their decisions to undertake higher education. For example:

"My family's suggestion is to study for a Ph.D in Xi'an Jiaotong University (XJTU). My father really likes XJTU, because it is the best university in Shaanxi Province… They respect my own decision but still want me to stay in XJTU for a Ph.D following the academic career." from CN2 (p.32-33).

"I went back to my dormitory and decided to work after graduating. When I tried to find a job, I found it was even more difficult [than taking the NPEE (the National Postgraduate Entrance Examination)]. Additionally, my parents did not want me to work so early. Now, I have come back to the university and studied hard for the NPEE. It will be my second attempt and I hope I can pass it easily." From CN3 (p.4)

"I wish to have a Ph.D degree and then come back to China and run my own business. But my parents said it is not necessary for an entrepreneur to have a Ph.D degree. So, I won't go for a Ph.D, because it is not necessary for my future." From UK4 (p. 8)

Friends' suggestions and experience are also important. For example:

"I found that many of my other classmates tried so hard to find a job but failed. They attended many job fairs, but it seemed that no company wants students from our course. They were quite disappointed. Therefore, I did not want to waste my time and energy on finding a job." From CN5 (p.4)

It is noted that one respondent claimed the importance of her boyfriend and her boyfriend's parents' influence. For example:

"We are studying in the same course in Xi'an International Studies University. We just want to stick together…We made the decision at the same time. For a better life in the future, we have to continue to study" from CN6 (p.5 and 26).

"Both my parents and my boyfriend's parents encouraged us to continue to study. We also got support from our friends. They shared many test preparation materials for the NPEE which are quite useful" from CN6 (p.27)

At stage one, which is choosing to continue to study, students are most likely to be influenced by their parents and peer groups for the two main reasons. The first reason is simply the presence of Chinese culture, which places higher education in an extremely important position. It has long been a major ambition of most Chinese middle class families for their children to receive the qualification of higher education, regardless of the children's personal interests. It is well-known in China, that obtaining higher education is considered most important for a young adult. It is often the only way for many to obtain recognition in society and to find a good job. Chinese students are exposed to an environment in which one must study hard to succeed. Secondly, the students' decision to continue their studying after graduation is reinforced by the suggestions and advice from their friends or classmates..

Stage 2: Choosing a Study Destination

For most Chinese students, choosing a study destination is the next stage of the decision making chain. They have to choose staying in their home country or going overseas. Some Chinese students also need to consider selecting a host country if they have decided to study abroad. The influences identified from the long interviews that can affect students' decisions in choosing a study destination are shown in Table 6.9. In order to reduce large amounts of data into a smaller number of analytical units, symbols of (1), (2), and (3) were used, and written after each identified influence representing the according influence on respondents' decisions about studying in China (1), decision of studying abroad (2) and decision of selecting a host country (3).

It must be noted that some influences such as the "general cost of future study (living cost and tuition fee) (1) (2) (3)" can affect all the respondents in the long interviews when they were choosing a study destination. While, some influences such as the

"scholarship available in foreign university (2) (3)" can only affect those who chose to study abroad in their decisions of studying abroad and decision of selecting a host country. Further, some influence only works alone. For instance, the "time cost of learning a new language (3)" can only affect the decision of selecting a host country.

All of the important influences may be classified them into ten categories. The data suggest that some influences work in tandem in some decisions, i.e. the "time cost of learning a new language" under the category of Cost of Study and "English Speaking Country" under the category of English Language. Students who chose to study abroad were likely to choose English speaking countries as their host countries because they did not like to waste time on studying a new language.

Table 6.14: Influences of Chinese Students Choosing a Study Destination

Categories of External Factors	External influences of COO effects on service evaluation			
	Reasons for Studying in China (1)	**Reasons for Studying Abroad (2)**		**Reasons for Selecting a Host Country (3)**
Cost of Study	General cost of future study (living cost and tuition fee) (1) (2) (3)	Scholarship available in foreign university (2) (3)	Time cost of studying a course (2) (3)	Time cost of applying a foreign university and student visa (1) (2) (3)
	Time cost of learning a new language (3)			
Curiosity	Acquisition of foreign experience (to see the world, see adventure) (2) (3)	Seek Independence (2)		
Employment Prospect	Employment prospect in China (1) (2)	Employment prospect in foreign country (1) (2) (3)	Possibility of getting a part-time job in host country (3)	Recognition of qualification by job market (3)
	The prospect of gaining a competitive advantage in job market (3)	Recognition of the selected foreign institution by China (2)		
English Language	English Speaking Country (3)	English Acquisition (2) (3)	English accents (3)	
Entry Requirement	Ease of Admission to a Chinese university (e.g. applying a course in current university) (1)	Ease of obtaining a student visa (3)	Ease of obtaining a working visa in foreign country (1) (3)	Possibility of choosing a different subject of study (Course match) (2) (3)
	Difficulty of Admission to a foreign university (2)	Difficulty of admission to a Chinese university (e.g. applying other university) (3)		
Environment	**Natural Environment**	Weather (3)	Image as a tourist destination (3)	
	Study Environment	For better studying environment (2)		
	Cultural Environment	Foreign culture preferred (2)	Culture of sending students overseas (2)	Different cultural environment (2) (3)
	Economic Environment	Developed country (the wealth and power of host country) (3)		
	Living Environment	Safety environment of	General living	

		the selected country (3)	environment (1) (2) (3)	
Freedom	Freedom in the university (2) (3)	Seek freedom of religion (2) (3)		
Influence of Normative Referents	Family's suggestion (parents or grandparents) (1) (2) (3)	Parents' financial support available (1) (2) (3)	Friends' suggestion (1) (2) (3)	Friends' experience (3)
	Education agent' suggestion (3)	Tutor' suggestion (1) (2) (3)	Influence of parents' friends (2)	Influence of boyfriend or girlfriend (1)
	Influence of relatives (3)	Influence of school's advertisement (2) (3)	Informational support by the school (3)	
Reputation	**Past study in China**	Academic reputation of the university studied in China (University reputation) (2) (3)	Academic reputation of the course in the university studied in China (Course reputation) (1)	
	Future study abroad	Academic reputation of the selected host country in the future (Country's Higher Education reputation) (3)	Academic Reputation for Quality education of overseas universities (2)	
	Other reputation	Prestige of studying overseas (2)		
Others	Potential uncertainties and risk of going abroad (1)	Familiarity of a selected country (3)	Trend of going abroad for higher education (2)	Don't want to go far away from home (1)
	Past positive foreign experience (2) (3)	Past negative foreign experience (1)	Availability of course in China (1)	Social pressure of early marriage for Chinese women (2)
	Demographical attributes (country size, population of the host country) (3)	International partnership arrangements (1)	Possible to emigrate (3)	Cooperative programme between Chinese university and foreign university (3)
	Age of going abroad (not too early) (1)			

A) Cost of Study

Cost is one of the major differences between domestic and foreign universities, and

even among foreign universities. The cost of study can be classified into two types. The first is the financial cost of study. It includes the general cost of study, scholarships provided by a Chinese university, and scholarships available in foreign universities. Many studies have shown the importance of the financial cost of study for international students choosing their study destination (i.e. Pimpa 2004; Maringe and Carter, 2007; Yao, 2004; Chen and Zimitat, 2006; Chen, 2006; Davidson and Wang, 2008). The second type refers to the cost in terms of time, which includes the time necessary to study a course, to apply to a foreign university and a student visa, and the time required to learn another language. The importance of time when selecting a destination is evident in the results of this study but is not addressed in extant literature.

1. Financial Cost of Study

The cost of studying in the UK is an important influence on Chinese students' decisions. As the respondents were all found to be self-funded, the cost of British education and living expenses became a concern. They were looking for high perceived quality of education at a competitive cost or with a high scholarship. The U.K. has well-developed policies in the area of international education with many changes in policy and the introduction of new policies over past decades. The policy of full tuition fees for international students was introduced in 1979. This led to a great drop in numbers of foreign students at the beginning but slowly regained its market share (Moore 1989; Woodhall 1989; Harris 1995). According to Chandler (1989), policies regarding international students were coordinated by the British government via a round table of both government and industry representatives.

The general cost of study, including the tuition fee and living fee for future study, is the main reason for many respondents choosing to stay in China. Its influence lies in the fact that the choice of staying at home or going overseas largely depends upon the financial capacity of parents and relatives. It was found that going abroad may not necessarily be a 'better' choice than the option of staying at home because of the

perceived low price of Chinese higher education and high price of foreign higher education. Examples can be:

"They [referring to parents] have the money, but it is not good to ask. I don't want to put more burdens to them. If I were ten years old now, they should give me money. But, I have already grown up. I must be independent. I should not ask them for any money. Now, they don't give me any money and I don't ask them for any money. According to my own financial ability, I cannot go anywhere for further education and have to stay in China" from CN1 (p.32-33).

"British higher education is much more expensive than Chinese higher education. I think this is the only disadvantage. Most Chinese families cannot afford their children's foreign studies. They have no choice but to choose a domestic university or college. My tuition fee per year is about 6,000 yuan* and the accommodation fee is about 1,100 yuan per year. Other costs, like food and entertainment, is about 8,000 yuan per year" from CN3 (p. 15).

*Note: 1 pound approximately equals 10 yuan.

For those who choose to study abroad, they also had to be concerned about the general financial cost of study among different foreign countries. Some countries were perceived as expensive, such as the U.S, because of the long length of study, while the U.K was perceived as less expensive because the duration of a postgraduate taught course is normally one year. The time cost of study can be associated with the general financial cost of study. For example:

"As you know, completing a master's degree in the U.K requires only one year. I cannot only save the money but also the time for my future. In China, a master's degree requires three years. In the U.S or Australia, it requires two years or more. The U.K has the shortest length of study." UK2 (p.34):

In addition, the high cost of study can also encourage students to go to work rather than continue to study after they will have acquired a degree in the future. For example:

"I think it is not worth it to pay so much money to do academic research. I might as well save the money for my family and earn my own money after I graduate." (OTH 2, p.4).

There was a student in the interview who was awarded the scholarship from a Chinese university. This scholarship became the main reason that he decided to stay in China and study in a particular Chinese university. For example:

"Chinese higher education services are generally very cheap. As I said, my tuition fee in undergraduate course was less than 5000 yuan. This is a full tuition fee, but in the U.K, it must be very expensive. I dare say that most Chinese families cannot afford the high cost of studying in the U.K if there is no scholarship opportunity. Some Chinese families cannot even afford the cheap Chinese higher education, so how can they pay for foreign higher education?" from CN7 (p. 18).

Additionally, the scholarship opportunities available in foreign universities can also attract Chinese students to go abroad. This became the reason that the student UK4 chose to go to the University of Liverpool. UK4 (p.2, 4) said that:

"The original price was more than 12,000 GBP. Now I only need to pay about 6,000 GBP. So, my scholarship is about 6,000 GBP per year which is about 60,000 yuan… My parents suggested to go abroad in an economical way by taking advantage of the scholarship".

2. Time Cost
The duration of studying a course and course exemption are important for a few

respondents. Most respondents chose to study in the U.K because of the short length of a master course. However, some respondents did not believe that they could acquire sufficient knowledge within one year of study in the U.K. Therefore, they chose to go to the U.S or Australia because the length of studying a postgraduate taught course there normally lasts two to three years. In addition, the data seems to suggest that the length of studying is not a reason for respondents who decided to study in China which requires students to study three years.

The time cost of applying to a foreign university and student visa is important for three students who chose the U.K as the host country. They believed that the application process is simpler than applying to other countries such as the U.S. For example:

"I did not have much time for GRE and TOEFL if I chose the U.S as my destination, because I also need time to prepare for my final exams in my final year of my bachelor's degree. If I selected the U.S as my destination, I may not be able to go abroad after I finish my bachelor study in China. I may waste about one year waiting for the GRE and TOEFL and the complicated American visa application. British universities only need IELTS which is simpler than GRE and TOEFL. In addition, it is said that applying for a student visa for the U.K is quick" from UK2 (p.30)

B) Curiosity

1. Acquisition of foreign experience (to see the world, see adventure)

Studying abroad is seen providing a great opportunity for international students to satisfy their curiosity about other cultures. In this study, many respondents who chose to go abroad also want to see the world and seek adventure by going abroad. For example:

"Most of our tutors had foreign experience before. They are quite different from those tutors who do not have this experience. I really admired their experience and am

curious about foreign life. As my curiosity and interests accumulated, I made the decision of going abroad at the end of my third year" from UK2 (p. 30)

Acquiring foreign experience may not only be the only reason for going abroad to study or for choosing a specific host country. For example:

"The third reason is I love British culture. I have been fascinated by it since I was a little girl. I like its literature. I like the cultural environment. I want to explore this country more. I want to learn more about its history" from UK1 (p.29).

"I really love British culture, especially its aged red brick buildings. I like the glorious British history and I would like to know more about it" from UK2 (p. 33)".

"I am curious about what foreign countries are like, especially Western countries. I chose the U.K as my destination but this does not mean that I will only stay in the U.K when I study my master course. I will take the opportunity to travel around Europe" from UK5 (p.27).

2. <u>Seek Independence</u>

Some respondents want to go abroad simply because they want to be independent from their family. For example:

"At home, you can depend on your parents sometimes; you have a lot of friends that can help you. But in the U.K, you can only be depend on yourself" … "for us overseas students, our family wants to give us financial support. So, we don't have to worry too much about financial problems, but we are already adults and cannot depend on them too much" from UK 1 (p.2, 8).

"I do not want to be controlled by my parents. I want more freedom and independence.

So, I chose to study outside Shaanxi" from UK5 (p.2).

C) Employment Prospects

Most respondents were concerned with their employment prospects. According to the Economist (2005), the Chinese labour market does not put a large premium on having a foreign degree any longer because local work experience can count for more. In this study, it was found that students chose to stay in China for further higher education because they did not believe studying abroad could bring a competitive job advantage. For example:

"...more and more Chinese students are to go choosing abroad for further higher education. But it seems that they do not always have good job prospects. The competition in job market is too fierce. Most overseas Chinese students choose to come back to China for their permanent job after graduation...I read in the news recently. It is said that the initial salary for new graduates from abroad can be as low as 3,000 yuan per month. In other words, he or she cannot earn back the cost of their foreign studies.... Yes, he or she may have good job prospect in the future, but who knows? There are too many uncertainties in the future. He or she may only make 3,000 yuan per month forever and 3,000 yuan per month is nothing in some cities, like Beijing or Shanghai. You may not be able to meet the minimum living requirements there." (CN3,p. 23).

Just as CN3 said, most respondents who chose to study abroad said that they would come back to China after they finished their overseas study. It is, however, worth mentioning here the remarks of a few students regarding their negativity about their future job prospects. For them, overseas study became a necessity. For example:

"I have already found a company I can work for after I complete my study. What I really need before going to work is having foreign experience and a foreign degree" (OTH3, p.4)

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"I want to have a higher level qualification for my future career development. Simply speaking, it is for a good permanent job. Moreover, a foreign certificate is usually stronger than a Chinese one. So, I decided to go abroad for further study" from OTH5 (p.3)

"My future career is to be an English teacher. I should have some foreign experience to be competitive when finding a job in the future" from UK8 (p.25).

The possibility of finding a job in host country is also important for some respondents. Two different purposes for   working in the host country were identified in the long interviews. The first purpose is to reduce parents' financial burdens. Therefore, some students wanted to find a part-time job during the term. The following comments are pertinent in this regard:

"I will find a part-time job when I am studying. I am not from a rich family. That's why I am now working hard to save money. I know the money I earned so far is a trivial... I have eased my parents' burden to some extent" (UK3, p.28)

"That's why I chose the U.K as my destination as it only has a year study period. Studying in the U.K means saving money. The exchange rate of the British pound to Chinese RMB has decreased sharply in these years. Choosing the U.K as overseas study has become an economical choice. In order to release my family's financial burden, I will try to find a part-time job when I study in the U.K." (UK5, p.28).

Only a few respondents had the second purpose to find a permanent job in the host country and emigrate to the host country. Therefore, the ease of obtaining a working visa in the foreign country is important. None of them were found selecting the U.K as the host country. This may be due to the perceived difficulty of emigration to the U.K.

D) English Language

The data reflects that Chinese students particularly like to choose English speaking countries as their host country. All of the 15 participants who chose to go abroad in the long interviews had selected English speaking countries like the U.K, Australia, the U.S, Canada, and Ireland. The reasons for choosing English speaking countries are varied among the students. Some students said that they had learned English for many years and did not want to study another foreign language from the beginning. Some of the other students added that going abroad is to improve English skills. As a respondent stated:

"I don't want to study a third language. The country I selected must be an English speaking country because my course is translating. Also, it must be a developed country. Compared with other countries, the U.K is the origin of English. Therefore, I selected the U.K as the destination. The U.K had invaded many other English speaking countries. It was such a powerful country in the world. I'd like to go to a winning country" (UK, p. 29).

"It [the U.K] is the origin of English language. I have to choose an English speaking country because I have been studying English for more than ten years. I hope to improve my English ability. Therefore, the U.K is the best choice" from UK3 (p.27).

"It [the U.K] is an English speaking country. So, I do not need to study a third language from the very beginning. Moreover, I can improve my English ability after I go to the U.K" from UK5 (p.27)

"My father said going abroad is more important for acquiring English ability rather than knowledge about accounting and finance"… "I'd like to enhance my English ability. This is more important than learning a third language. Therefore, it must be an English speaking country" from OTH 3 (p.4, 29)

When asked why not go to some countries where English is the official or dominant language, such as some African countries, some students were laughing. They claimed the perceived poverty and risks are the main reason they did not want to go. The risks they perceived included diseases and low social security in those countries. In addition, some students said there is no good university in African countries. Comparatively, they believed that developed English speaking countries are rich in excellent higher education opportunities and safe environments.

"The reasons are obvious. The countries in Africa are poor and dangerous... The weather is too hot there. The environment in Africa is bad. Many of my friends and university classmates do not want to go to Africa even if they offer jobs with the annual salary at more than 200,000 yuan. Many African joint-ventured Chinese companies came to my university and recruited employees, but they could barely get anyone" from OTH3 (p.30).

"I don't want to learn a third language. This can also be a reason to stay in the U.K for future higher education. If the environment is poor, I would like to choose another country. The country for my higher education must be more developed than China and have better nature environment and safer climate than China. Otherwise, I would rather stay in China" from UK4 (p.37)

"The U.K is a developed country which means it has a stable society and a safe living environment" (UK5, p.27).

What's more, some respondents claimed the importance of English accents in their choice of host countries and they have different views of the different English accents. For example:

"British English sounds good. I don't like some English accents like Irish English. It

[the pronunciation] is a little bit strange" from UK5 (p.27)

Additionally, even for those respondents who had chosen to stay in China, five of them indicated that they may have the idea of going to English speaking countries for a Ph.D course or another master's course after they will complete their planned study in China. Nonetheless, they were not quite sure that they will study abroad because of the expected "uncertainties" in the future. They thought that it was still too early to make such plan.

E) Entry Requirement

The entry requirement is an important influence that can affect students' choice of study destination. Some respondents indicated that the ease of admission to their current university persuaded them to make the decision to stay in China.

"The course is available in my university and it is easy to get enrolled in the current university, it is not necessary to go abroad because I am familiar with everything around here." From CN7 (-.25)

Some students who demonstrated high academic performance are eligible to be recommended to their current studying university without any examination. CN2 was such a recommended student, as she said:

"Students are usually recommended to their own university because the university wants to retain good students. But students can also contact other universities and then be recommended to another university…My university tried to retain me. They didn't want me to go. My university did not have good master's applicants. Most of the applicants were from poorer universities... Therefore, they tried to retain good students within the university… In that academic year, top 16% students could have the right of being recommended. However, the top10% students were not allowed to be recommended to other universities. In other universities, the rule is different. For example, in Xiamen University, the top 3 students have the chance to be recommended

to another university. If the first student gave up the opportunity, the fourth student can then have the opportunity." From CN2 (p.4-5)

Nonetheless, some other students did not think it is easy to apply to a Chinese university. Therefore, they chose to go abroad. For example:

"*the National Postgraduate Entrance Examination (NPEE) is quite difficult and I don't want to undertake it. I prefer to prepare International English Language Testing System (IELTS) which is much easier than NPEE*"

For the students who decided to go abroad, the ease of obtaining a student visa became an important influence that could affect their choice of host countries. For example:

"*It is said that applying for an American student visa is more difficult than other countries' student visas. I don't want to take the risk. I heard that some of my friends' American student visa applications were rejected. It would be too cruel if I spent so much time preparing for TOEFL (Test of English as a Foreign Language) and the GRE (Graduate Record Examination) and then got rejected for visa.*" From UK8 (p. 27)

F) Environment

It seems that the environmental influences were not considered as an important issue when determining students' choice of staying in China. Only two students CN4 and CN5 claimed that they preferred a Chinese living environment and they didn't like to go far away from home. Therefore, they chose to study in China for higher education.

"*My parents asked me if I would like to go abroad for further study at the third year of bachelor. I refused their offer. This is largely due to the geographical distance. I don't like to go too far away my hometown for a long time… The main reason is that I*

don't want to go far away from Xi'an. I may not like the living conditions[in foreign countries]..." (CN4, p.32)

"I don't like going far away from my home. I am quite dependent on my family. I am not confident of taking care of myself if I go far away. I may not adapt [to] the new living conditions. For example, I went to the U.S during the summer vacation of my senior year in high school for travelling. My parents gave me this opportunity of a foreign experience. They hoped I would like foreign life and apply to foreign universities as a result of this experience. However, I found that I could not get used to the food there especially those fried foods. That is terrible. Although they are quite developed and have good living conditions, I found loneliness there. After 15 days of travelling the U.S, I decided not to go abroad for higher education because I could not get used to the food and I would be homesick." From CN5 (p.5)

However, the environmental differences were noted by most respondents who wanted to go abroad. The influences can be classified into four different facets:

1. *Natural Environment*

To a few respondents, the general natural environment of the host country is important. They said that going abroad is not just for studying but also for travelling. Therefore, the image of the host country as a tourist destination becomes important.

OTH2 (p.21) who chose the U.S as his study destination said that *"I chose Australia as an alternative option due to its beautiful and attractive landscape".* He didn't choose to go to Australia because of other reasons such as the country size and healthy atmosphere. As he said *"the aesthetic of the destination landscape is important to me when I choose the destination for study. The U.S has beautiful and attractive landscapes as well. Additionally, it has a larger population than Australia. Moreover, people have more freedom in the U.S in my opinion."*

"It [the U.K] has a good natural environment... I found it has an excellent

environment by the photos taken by my tutors and friends. As I said, I like to travel. This can be a good reason for selecting the U.K as my destination." From UK2 (p.33)

The weather of the host country was noted by a few students. But, it seems that this is not a very important reason for their choice of the host country. For example:

"It [the U.K] has an excellent natural environment, but I don't think it has a safe climate because of the recent chaos [referring to the UK riots in 2011]. However, the natural environment is not the vital factor that influenced my decision to go to the U.K" From UK1 (p.30)

"It is said that in the U.K it is always raining. I may not like its weather. However, I can make certain sacrifices because I generally love the country. It has a very positive image anyway." From UK 2 (p.33)

"It is said that weather in the U.K is good. The temperature is stable. It often rains but I don't mind the rain." From UK6 (p.32)

2. <u>Study Environment</u>

A few students said that they wanted to go abroad to study because they wanted to seek a better studying environment. They believed that a foreign university provided a better study environment is better than a Chinese university. The following is a representative example:

"My views of Chinese higher education services at the bachelor level are very good. Nonetheless, my views of Chinese higher education for a master and a Ph.D are negative…This can be one reason that I decided to go abroad for further higher education after I graduate. The academic study environment in China is not good." (OTH4, p.18)

3. Cultural Environment

Students said that they wanted to study in a country where they could learn something different, something they could not learn in China. This included living among different people. For instance, some students said they did not like to go a country where there are already many people from China residing there. Examples are:

"I enjoy that, especially working with people from different cultural backgrounds… I like that kind of environment. I know many people may be like to work with others having similarities with them. But I have to say it's better to get close to people who have different cultural backgrounds because I can learn more from them. It is a mutually beneficial environment." From UK1 (p.24)

"I need a different environment. If there are too many Chinese people, then why should I go abroad? I might as well to stay in China." (CN1, p.32)

"I don't want to go into an environment having too many Chinese. This is also a reason that I did not choose to study finance. There are too many Chinese students selecting the course of finance in the UCD (University of College Dublin). A teacher in UCD was asked how many Chinese students were there in Finance. The teacher responded that: more than half…" From OTH4 (p.34-35).

4. Living Environment

Safety is important for many respondents. The London riots in 2011 were noted by many students who want to go abroad. Examples can be:

"Before the London chaos, I thought the safety was excellent because all the news on-line was good. Now I question the safe climate due to the London riots. Anyway, it has been controlled... I do not have to worry too much about it. I am a very careful person and I can protect myself in any circumstance." From UK3 (p.27)

G) Freedom

Apart from the environmental issues, a few students saw foreign universities as much more relaxed places than Chinese universities. They expected that studying in a foreign university would be an interesting and enjoyable experience because of a freer atmosphere. A few students expressed this point as follows:

"More freedom is given to students in the U.K than students in China. Therefore, those hard-working students who really love to study should want to go abroad as there is more academic freedom" from UK8 (p.17).

"There were eight students sharing one dormitory. I don't like the dormitory because there is no privacy at all. They can be seen as prisons because the electricity was automatically cut punctually at 11.00.p.m to 7.p.m. The accommodation officer would check attendance at 10.30 p.m. If someone had been absent, he or she would be criticised badly the next day. The record would be kept until you graduate. People who are living there cannot have much freedom. Comparatively, more privacy and freedom are given to students who study in the U.S" (OTH2, p.20)

H) Influence of Normative Referents

Parents and friends are the most important normative referents that can affect the respondents' choice of study. According to Blaug and Woodhall (1980), 37 percent of international undergraduates in the U.K admitted that their parents and friends were their major source of information. Chapman (1981) found that the influence of parents and friends could be different especially when selecting domestically. Childers and Rao (1992) also found these two groups have different degrees of influence on the individuals' willingness to purchase. This is due to the two groups' different degrees of familiarity of the purchase. Therefore, the influence of family and friends were analysed separately, even though some earlier studies have grouped them as a single influence. The different degrees of familiarity of the relevant information in the decision making processes were also found in this study.

Parents' Influence

Pimpa (2004) concluded five kinds of influence from the family to the choice of staying at home or going abroad including finance, information, expectation, competition, and persuasion. According to Pimpa (2004), financial influence from family was rated most important. In relation to British higher education, because of the high tuition, Chinese families have become the major funding source for students' studies and thus are largely influential in the decision. In recent years, Chinese parents have been particularly conscious of students' study plans because "Parents don't want to pay for their children just to have a holiday" (Economist, 2005:1). In addition, parents' expectations of their children's higher education is high. Moreover, parents usually impose a competitive influence on their children. As foreign-made services have symbolic values because of its expensiveness (Hui, et al. 2003), rich Chinese parents can compete with others by showing off such a purchase. "*In China, people think those who have been foreign countries are somebody*" (CN1, p.34). Furthermore, parents have persuasion influence to students' choice. However, it was found that such influence in this study tended to be negative. For example:

"On the issue of going abroad for a master's degree, my mum does not approve. She rigorously denied my willingness to go abroad. As she said, a girl aged 22 years old should stay in China to find a good job and build up a family before 25 years. She wanted me to have a stable life. She thought there would be too many uncertainties in my future if I chose to go abroad" (UK8, p.26)

"My parents are quite worried about my future in the U.K as I've never studied in different places alone… My grandparents never want me to study abroad. My grandmother cried once hearing I had decided to go abroad to study." (UK8, p.7)

The respondents were asked whom they had consulted when choosing a country as their place of study. For students who chose to go abroad, parents' influence on the choice of going abroad for higher study is associated with the financial cost of

studying abroad. For respondents who chose to stay in China rather than going abroad, parents' influence was limited. The only identified influence for why they did not choose to go abroad was the parents' available financial support. There were only two respondents who claimed this influence:

"In my opinion, it is not worth paying so much money for going abroad. It is risky to me. There is a potential risk of going abroad…As you know, more and more Chinese students are choosing to go abroad for further higher education. But it seems that they do not always have good job prospects" CN3 (p.23).

"The tuition fee of my postgraduate course is 21,000 yuan for the three years. I do not have much financial pressure. My parents can support me. This must be much cheaper than studying abroad" CN5 (p.6).

Students can not only obtain the financial support from their parents but also receive some "mental support" from their relatives. UK5 (p.30) is such an example:

"My parents positively influenced my decision of studying abroad. They are the main influence as they support me financially. However, due to the limitation of financial support, it seems that I can only choose the U.K as my study destination because it has a short study period. However, I do not want to study long anyway. So, it does not matter. My relatives only support me studying abroad. That's it. I will be the only one who will have foreign experience in my family, so they cannot give me much advice of where I go and how I select a particular institution. What they can do is mentally support or financially support. Some of my relatives gave me red envelopes. There is not much money in the red envelopes which contains about 1000 to 2000 yuan, but this can reflect their mental support. They have great expectations for my future."

It seems that the role of the parents influencing the choice of a country and the choice of a particular institution is less important than the case in the decision of continuing

to study after graduation and the decision to study abroad. Students' responses prompt two possible explanations. First, their parents and senior relatives seem to have allowed their children a certain degree of 'freedom' in choosing their preferred host country and foreign institutions. Secondly, in making an informed choice, students would have had to acquire detailed knowledge about several major alternative countries like the US, the UK, Australia, and Canada, etc. They obtained the knowledge from their friends and other acquaintances like tutors, parents' friends, and education agents. Parents were often unable to provide such information to their adult children.

Lawley (1998) found that the opinion of family is considered important, especially if the parents had actually studied overseas before. However, it seems that none of the respondents' parents had foreign study experience. As the respondents were all born in 1980s, it can be deduced that their parents would have been born in 1950s or 1960s. Most of them cannot speak English and never ever went abroad. Therefore, parents' influence in the area of selecting a host country and selecting a particular institution would tend to be limited. Interestingly, this study has found that the parents' opinions on going abroad or selecting a host country were likely to be influenced by their normative referents. The word-of-mouth effects can greatly influence parents' opinions and consequently influence the students' choice.

Salaff (1981) found that the family head is usually important in all contractual matters. Confucianism has revealed a cultural bias towards patriarchy (Ma, 2011). Though Chinese culture is attributed as high Confucianism, Leung (2003) examined the status of women in China from the Mao era to the post-Mao era and found a transitional gender role and relations. According to Leung (2003), Chinese patriarchy still remained but has gradually been eroded in recent decades. In relation to the present study, not all of the respondents' fathers dominated family decision making. Some respondents stated that it was their mothers dominated decision making especially in the aspect of everyday household purchases. In the decision making of the adult

children's education, both parents' opinions were important to most respondents.

Friends' influence

Lawley (1993) who measured influence of friends separately from the influence of family found that the opinions of friends were most important in predicting the choice of destinations. Pimpa (2002) identified three major influencing types of peers and agents including information, competition and persuasion. According to Pimpa (2002)'s research on Thai students, the informational information was most important. Similar findings were also obtained in this study. The frequently requested information by most respondents refers to the living and education standards, costs of living, and employment prospect overseas. Additionally, it was found that such information usually acts in harmony with other influences pertaining to family to encourage a students' choice because the information from friends was found to be very convincing to family.

Education agents' influence

Education agents have been widely used by most universities marketing international education. They can play various roles from active marketing to simply processing applications. Similar to friends' influence, the influence from agencies was defined by Pimpa (2002) as information and persuasion. Students take into consideration of the same information as that of friends, such as costs of living and living standards, etc. However, the matter of information from education agents is different from the information provided by friends. Because of the commercial image of agents, most respondents did not purchase their services. Even those respondents who had used the services provided by education agents tended to have negative comments, for example:

"[They charged me] 12,000 yuan excluding the visa application fee and delivery fee. It is a waste of money... Rumour has it that some education agents do not even have any foreign experience." (UK8, p32)

Once the country destination has been confirmed, agents become much more important in persuading students to choose an institution and academic course, because agents are perceived as a knowledgeable source of information.

I) Reputation

Quality of academic reputation and the level of market recognition have been highlighted in several studies (e.g. Yao, 2004; Diaz and Krauss, 1996; Huang and Brown, 1996; Singh and Ninemeier, 2003; Chen 2007; Mazzarol and Soutar, 1998; Mazzarol and Soutar, 2004). According to Bourke (2000), students who have intentions to study abroad often believe the quality of education can be higher in foreign countries with a prestigious education image. Similar findings were also obtained in this study.

The respondents who chose to go abroad were particularly concerned about the reputation of the educational system in the host country. They were very keen on using various "rankings" to measure the academic reputation of the selected institutions. They said that the foreign universities have a reasonably good reputation for its higher education sector in that the degree offered by most foreign public universities are recognised in China. This recognition was a pre-eminent influence attracting them to study abroad. By comparison, degrees from some universities in China do not have high values because of the general poor employment prospect and the lower recognition in the job market. In addition, some students chose to go abroad because they simply did not like the Chinese higher education system. The following is such an example:

"I don't like the Chinese higher education system. I have tolerated it for quite a long time... the academic reputation of overseas universities is much better than Chinese universities. This is an important reason I decided to go abroad for further study. The qualification of foreign universities is more welcomed and recognised by China."
From UK1 (p.27)

It is interesting that the reason of going abroad for some students is due to the prestige of having foreign experience. Studying abroad can be seen as more prestigious than studying at home. Studying overseas is quite an expensive exercise. For example, spending an average of £12,000 to £15,000 on tuition fees plus £7,000 to £8,000 on living expenses each year is a substantial cost for most Chinese families. Studying overseas is still a rather exclusive activity which only wealthy families can afford. Overseas study is associated accordingly with status and pride. It is prestigious to have such qualifications and experience. However, only two respondents who chose to study in China claimed the prestige of studying overseas:

"In China, people think those who have been to foreign countries are somebody….For example, many rich families send their children who cannot pass the National College Entrance Examination [NCEE] abroad. So, they cannot study in a good Chinese university, but they want to have higher education. Therefore, they go abroad. One reason is for face; the other reason is for a way of acquiring higher education." From CN1 (p.34-35)

"We should not deny the fact that more and more families send their children abroad because Chinese families are getting rich these years. It has become prestigious to go abroad or to have foreign experience. The foreign experience can be travelling abroad for those middle age rich people or studying abroad for those young people who are from rich families. Most overseas students are from rich families. My family is not rich, so I cannot go." From CN6 (p. 23)

J) Other Influences

Some respondents were aware that many of their friends had gone overseas for their higher education, they simply wanted to follow this trend. Therefore, the desire to follow one's peer group may impose a strong influence upon the decision to go overseas and other related decisions. Apart from the trend, some respondents claimed

the importance of the image of the overseas Chinese graduates in the host country. For example:

"There are too many overseas Chinese graduates coming back to China each year. And the number is increasing. Many people do not have a good image of them, because many of them went abroad and studied abroad because they failed the National College Entrance Examination [NCEE] and couldn't find a good university to study in China. Therefore, they are considered to be poor students. In addition, many of overseas Chinese students cannot graduate. They come back to China without a certificate after wasting a large amount of money and time in foreign countries. We all know that and look down upon them. However, this case is not serious in the U.K but is very popular in countries like Australia and New Zealand" from UK4 (p.31)

Stage 3: Selecting a Particular Institution

The influences that can affect students' choice of a particular institution are illustrated in the table 6.15. These influences can be classified into six categories including cost, entry requirement, environment, normative referents, reputation and others. The following sections will discuss these six categories in details.

Table 6.15: Influences of Chinese Students Choosing a Particular Institution

Categories of External Factors	External influences of COO effects on service evaluation in Selecting a Particular Institution in China	
Cost	General cost of future study (living cost and tuition fee)	Scholarship available in foreign university
Environment	Weather of the city where selected university located	Environment in campus
	For better studying environment	Good facilities available
	General living environment	General image of the city where the selected university located
Employment Prospect	Employment prospect in China	Employment prospect in foreign country

English	English accents	
Influence of Normative Referents	Parents' financial support available	Friends' suggestion
	Influence of boyfriend or girlfriend`	Influence of boyfriend or girlfriend's parents
Reputation	Academic reputation of the university studied in China (University reputation)	Academic reputation of the course in the university studied in China (Course reputation)
	Academic reputation of the selected Chinese university for future study (University reputation)	Academic reputation of the course in the selected Chinese for future study (Course reputation)
Others	Seeking self-achievement in life	Don't want to go far away from home
	Familiarity of the university selected for future higher education	Places available in selected course of selected university
	Past positive experience of living and studying in a particular university	

A) Cost

Obviously, the tuition fees are varied among different institutions not only in China, but also in foreign countries. Generally speaking, foreign higher education is usually much more expensive than Chinese higher education. In addition, the living fees at the city where the selected university located are also very different. The data reflects that the cost of study is much more important to students who wanted to go abroad than those who chose to stay in China. The following comments are from the respondents who wanted to go abroad:

"As Edinburg is the capital of Scotland, the living cost there is high. Additionally, Scottish English has a strong accent. I may not fit the language environment. It is also said that Edinburg is extremely cold in winter. Warwick does not have these disadvantages. So, I selected Warwick." UK8 (p.29).

Students who chose to stay in China claimed the low cost of studying in China. The following are the example comments:

"The cost of living here [in Xi'an, China] is also very cheap….Studying a master course is not expensive." From CN6 (p.3)

"4,980 yuan per year was the tuition fee for my undergraduate course. I have full scholarship for my postgraduate course. I do not pay anything for to study except for the accommodation. My bachelor accommodation fee was 1,200 yuan per year while my master accommodation fee will be 800 yuan. It is quite cheap. Generally, studying in a first class Chinese university is cheap....Second class is a little bit more expensive, while the third class is much more expensive*. I mean the tuition fee. The student accommodation fee is all about the same. It is cheap but poor conditions...First class universities usually have much more government financial support than those second class or third class universities." From CN7 (p.7)

*Note: In China, more government subsidies are usually given to higher ranked universities. Therefore, the cost of studying in higher ranked universities is usually lower than the lower ranked university.

In the long interviews, CN7 is the only respondent who had acquired the scholarship from a Chinese university. It was also his current university at the time of the interview. The scholarship provided is the main reason that persuaded him to stay in China and to select the university. It seems that the rest of the students were not concerned about the possible scholarship opportunity in China. This may be because the general cost of studying in China is low. The money issue of studying a course in China is not a problem for most families. However, as studying abroad is an expensive activity, some respondents, especially for those whose families are not affluent, were attracted by the scholarships available in some foreign universities. For example:

"I had planned to go to Glasgow at that time because it offered a scholarship which was 20% off the tuition fee. In addition, the living fee was cheap in Glasgow." From UK2 (p.35)

B) Entry Requirement

Students' academic qualifications not only influence the choice of going abroad, but

also the choice of a particular country, since the admission requirements vary among host countries and different universities. For the respondents who chose to stay in China, they were likely to choose their current university for further higher education because it is easier than applying to other universities in China. In addition, their schools usually tried to retain top students. For most of the respondents who chose to go abroad, the ease of admission to a foreign university is important. Example comments are as follows:

"I am searching for the information about different universities' entry requirement. The result of my bachelor degree is not very good. I am quite worried about it." From UK3 (p.4)

"It [The ease of admission or more place available] is important. I am not a top student that can meet any British university's entry requirement. If you would like to suggest the University of Oxford or the University of Cambridge as good choices, I have to say sorry but they are too difficult for me. I have to apply universities according to my level." From UK4 (p.39)

However, there were a few students said that they would like to go to the "difficult universities" which have high entry requirement. For example:

"I'd like to choose a tough university, because the quality of students can be good. Then, I can have a good studying environment." From UK1 (p.32).

There were two respondents who chose the U.K as the study destination who said that they would like to apply for a master course which is different from their current bachelor course. The possibility of changing a study subject is important to them. However, not all British universities would allow them to do so. Therefore, they would apply to the universities in the U.K that would allow it:

"Besides Leeds, I also chose Newcastle, York, Glasgow, and Sheffield. I got four offers from these five universities. York rejected my application. I applied for the course of Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) in Newcastle, York, and Sheffield. The course of TESOL is my second consideration just in case I will be rejected when applying for a business course. As my bachelor course was English, I was confident about obtaining an offer of English related course in the U.K. However, I would rather prefer to study a business course. I applied for the course of International Marketing Management in Leeds and the course of Management in Glasgow. I got offers from both of them." From UK2 (p.34)

"I plan to convert my major into a computing subject. I must acquire the first class degree in order to apply to a good university." From UK4 (p.7)

C) Environment

1. Studying Environment

The studying environment of the selected university is very important to Chinese students. They would like to choose a university that has better studying environment than their current university. Some comments from respondents who chose to stay in their current university were:

"I enjoyed my university life here. Teachers are nice and students are hard working. The studying environment is good." From CN3 (p.25)

"The study environment is very good. Students around me are all hard working. This is because I am in a first class university. I know many students from other universities are actually idling their youth. They are always playing computer games and they will have a bad future." From CN7 (p.4)

Studying environment is a very important to the respondent CN8. She passed the NCEE in 2010 but still has been rejected by Beijing University because she failed the

interview examination. In the second year, she applied to Xi'an Jiaotong University (XJTU) which is lower ranked than Beijing University. According to the regulation, she had to take part in the NCEE again and the interview examination arranged by Xi'an Jiaotong University in the year next. This means that she had to invest a large amount of her time and energy. However, she believed it was worth it to try. She was accepted by XUTU because she had passed the NCEE and the interview examination. As she said:

"I decided to apply Beijing University because I really want to jump out of the poor study atmosphere." From CN8 (p.11)

"Studying in … was a shame because of the poor studying atmosphere. I really want to study in an excellent university which has an excellent studying atmosphere." From CN8 (p.9)

For students who chose to go abroad, the studying environment of the selected foreign university should also be important, but only two respondents choosing the U.K as the study destination claimed the importance of the studying environment. The respondents who chose to go to other countries did not mention it at all. Comments from these two students are as follows:

"The reputation (of the University of Nottingham) is important. It is a well-known university. It can be recognised not only by the U.K but also by China. I also considered the students' qualifications to be very high. So, if I go to this university, the environment should be good. I can make friends who have good personalities…I'd like to choose a tough university because the quality of students can be good. Then, I can have a good studying environment." From UK1 (p.31-32)

"I think the academic environment is more important. I could enjoy studying more." From UK4 (p.39)

2. Different Cultural Environment

For students who chose to go abroad, they would like to select an institution that does not have many Chinese students. The data has reflected that students would like to experience more foreign culture than Chinese culture when they are abroad. According to my understanding and experience, the reasons can also be that they would like to learn to be independent and have the opportunity to practice their English skills in a different cultural environment. Example comments are as follows:

"I want to go to an environment for study with less Chinese people. I really want to experience British culture by myself. I don't want to go to the U.K in vain." From UK4 (p.6)

"The University of Birmingham is not a bad choice, but there are too many Chinese students going there due to their intense advertisement in China every year." From OTH4 (p.34).

3. Natural Environment

The general image of the city where the selected university was located was of concern for some respondents. This finding is in line with other studies which see the tourist image of the host country or the city where the selected university located as an important influence on international students' choice of study (i.e. Murphy, 1999; Son and Pearce, 2005). Specifically, they were likely to be concerned about the weather of the city and whether the city is a tourist destination, for example:

"My tutor told me that Edinburgh is just too cold. I searched through the related information on the internet and found that I'd better go to Warwick which is located in the middle of England. I wouldn't like to go to a cold place. Edinburgh is beautiful and I can visit the city if I will I have a chance in the future. I would like to travel around the U.K before I graduate." (UK8, p.6)

"No, I haven't [selected the university for my Master course yet] because it is too early to make the decision. But I generally prefer to go to the West coast [of the U.S].There are many universities there and I shall like the life there because the cities there are quite prosperous." (OTH1, p.2)

D) Employment

The data indicated that students will consider their employment prospect in their choice of a particular institution in a foreign country. For example, the "possible working opportunities in the city where universities located is important" (from UK6, p33). However, no respondents who chose to study in their home country claimed the importance of employment prospect in selecting a university.

UK2 gave up the opportunity of 20% off the tuition fee to learn Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) provided by University of Glasgow and chose to study in the University of Leeds which gave her a place in International Marketing Management because as she said:

"I believe that the course of International Marketing Management can give me better opportunities in the future. The temptation of Leeds' offer is greater." From UK2 (p.35)

E) English Accents

The English accents of the city where the selected university was located of concern to two respondents UK3 and UK8. As UK3 (p.29) said: *"Universities are grouped according to their location such as England, Scotland, Northern Ireland, and Wales. I did not consider universities in Northern Ireland and Wales because of the accents. I prefer to choose England because of the range of choices, but universities in Scotland were likely to offer scholarships. Moreover, the entry requirement in Scottish universities is generally lower than England."*

F) Influence of Normative Referents

Some students claimed that their parents did not try to influence them very much in selecting a particular country. This is largely due to the fact that many Chinese parents do not have such knowledge or experience. Additionally, there is a fact that most Chinese parents who were born in 1950s or 1960s do not even know how to speak English. Therefore, they don't know how to help their children to apply for a student visa or select a particular overseas institution. Consequently, parents would leave this decision up to their children, although the matter was discussed very carefully together as family. Some other students noted that parents' available financial support can influence how they choose a particular institution in the selected host country because, as aforementioned, the tuition fee and living fee are varied among different universities. Good examples can be:

"I made the decision by myself. My parents just support my decision because they are not familiar with the U.K. I may consider my friends' suggestion but I may not accept all of what they said." From UK1 (p.33)

"For my future master's education, the only influence my family can have when selecting a particular institution is how much money they can provide." From UK4 (p.40)

In some cases, influence from friends may be quite strong because a student simply chooses whatever is recommended by others. The convenience of making a choice this way can be important for selecting a particular university. Not all students interviewed had actively bothered to seek information about as many universities as possible, since for some, this is simply 'not worth the effort'. The reason for some respondents who selected a particular university in China was simply that they happened to know some friends were also studying in that university or also planning to go to that university:

"I like this university and I have many friends here who decided to stay. I am familiar with every corner." From CN4 (p.6)

"I met my friend in Beijing University and borrowed a lot of books from her and she gave me advice. After I lived in Beijing University for a few days, I firmly decided to apply to Beijing University because I really love the study atmosphere there. With my friend's help, I attended a few lectures in Beijing University and collected some important studying material for the NCEE." From CN8 (p.11)

Friends' suggestion is also very important to the students' choice of an overseas university. This is especially the case if the friends had foreign experience before or are currently studying abroad. They become the information source that provides useful advice. For example:

"Family mainly supports me financially and psychologically at home, but friends are more important to provide information." From UK1 (p.3)

"Friends are always important. They cannot give me financial support but encouragement to make decisions. Some of my friends who have foreign experience can also give me advice. They are likely to choose the universities they studied in before. That's very interesting." From UK3 (p.31)

"My friends can be influential, but only those who are older than me and who are Master students in the U.K". From UK4 (p.40)

For both students who chose to go abroad or who chose to stay in China, the non-familial referents can also affect their choice of selecting a particular institution. They became the information source helping them to make the decision of selecting a host country and selecting a particular institution because these non-familial referents are experts having foreign experience. The respondent UK4 is such an example. He

selected to go to Xi'an Jiaotong Liverpool University for further higher education after high school. This university is a Sino-British joint ventured university which located in China. Students are required to study a bachelor course in China for the first two years and then go to the University of Liverpool for the other two years. They will be awarded the degree from the University of Liverpool. The consultants from the university can be influential in persuading potential students or students' parents to make the choice to go abroad and select a particular overseas institution. For example:

"I can tell you why I choose to study Xi'an Jiaotong Liverpool University. After Gaokao, My mum and I attended an advisory conference in Xi'an Jiaotong University. I got to know about Xi'an Jiaotong Liverpool University there. My mum was attracted by what the advisor from Xi'an Jiaotong Liverpool University said. After that conference, my mum asked her friends to go to Xi'an Jiaotong Liverpool University and have a look. The evaluation of their higher education services was very good. Then, we had no doubt about this university. Actually, I wanted to go to Sichuan University at that time and I didn't want to go abroad." From UK4 (p.35)

The long interviews revealed that students did not like the education agents. Some of them did not purchase the services from an education agent simply because of the high price, while the other students who purchased the services said that their services were inefficient. The following comments have illustrated this point:

"They [the education agent] are good at the beginning, but the services became worse and worse later on. They didn't take much responsibility later. They gave me a lot of information at the beginning which is very useful. However, I later found it is not hard to find the information I need. After the beginning stage, I need to [make] contact with the universities by myself. They cannot do anything for me if I have an enquiry about the university. If I asked them to do a job for me, they will take too long. I might as well deal with the problems by myself…[They charged me] 10,000 yuan.

The service includes the applying [for] British universities and applying [for] a student visa. However, it does not include the application fee of student visa…It is not worth so much money. And I am quite upset about it." From UK1 (p.33-34)

"I may ask education agents for some advice, but will not buy their services. I think I can handle them all. Moreover, their services are usually quite expensive…Different education agents have different rates which ranges from 10,000 to 30,000 yuan. They all said they have the relationship with British universities. They are likely to lie to me by saying that it is now very difficult to apply [for] a student visa, and very difficult to apply [for] British universities... However, they can give me guarantee of student visa application and British universities' offer. I am not stupid and I don't use them…It is not necessary. And their services are too expensive. I know I can bargain, but it is worthless. Many of my friends who have foreign experience persuade me not to use education agents. I would rather listen to my friends." From UK3 (p.31)

G) Reputation

The academic reputation of the selected university for future study has been noted by all the respondents. In addition, some respondents believed that the academic reputation of the selected course in the selected university is much more important than the general reputation of the selected university. They were likely to use university rankings and course rankings to measure the reputation. For example:

For respondents who chose to stay in China, although the ease of applying for a postgraduate course in the present university was noted, some of them still chose to apply to other universities in China. This is because they would like to go to a perceived "better university" with a higher academic reputation. They would like compare the academic reputation among different universities in China. For them, there was a difficulty of admission to those "better universities" because the current university always tries to retain good students. For those students who chose to go abroad, it is interesting that some of them linked the academic reputation of the

selected foreign university to the cost of study. For example:

"The most important factor should be the academic reputation. I can find good universities through different rankings. All the other factors like the cost of study, English accents, and temperature are in my second consideration... If I wanted to save money, I could choose to go to a lower ranked university. The tuition fee in lower ranked universities is cheaper than those of higher ranked. Also, lower ranked universities usually provide a 500 to 4000 pound scholarship... But the importance of saving money should give way to the academic reputation when I was choosing a British university." From UK8 (p.29).

Stage 4: Going to Work

Going to work is the next stage after students finish their study from the selected university. The influences of the students choosing a permanent job are shown in the table 6.16. It was found that their planned future job destinations were varied and can influence their choices in previous stages. For example, why some Chinese students chose to study abroad was because they wanted to emigrate to the host country and work there after graduation. However, only two respondents talked about this in the long interviews. Both of them selected Australia as the study destination because of the perceived ease of emigration. They indicated that it is difficult to emigrate to the U.K and this is also a reason that they did not choose to go to the U.K for higher education.

Table 6.16: Influences of Chinese Students Choosing a Permanent Job

Categories of External Factors	External influences of COO effects on service evaluation in Choosing a Permanent Job in the future	
Cost	General cost of future study (living cost and tuition fee)	
Employment Prospect	Employment prospect in China	Employment prospect in foreign country
Entry Requirement	Ease of obtaining a working visa in the foreign country	
Influence of Normative Referents	Family's influence	

Most respondents indicated that they will eventually come back after they finish their studies abroad. This is due to a few reasons. The first reason is the cultural differences. In the host country, they may not fit into the general living environment for the rest of their lives.

Secondly, the employment prospect in the host country has led to the decision of going back to home country. For example, the cancellation of the Post Study Work (PSW) policy since April 2012 requires many Chinese students to go back home after they finish studying in the U.K. This also becomes the reason that some students choose other countries rather than the U.K as the study destination. The following comments are drawn from the long interviews:

"I will definitely come back to China after I finish my master's degree. I cannot stay in the U.K. It is said that they are going to control the working permit policy. British citizens cannot find jobs, how can they provide jobs to Chinese? The U.K does not have good working prospects. So, I will come back." From UK4 (p.8)

For traditional parents in China, they are prepared to make great sacrifices for adult children's higher education. For instance, most Chinese parents paid the tuition fees and living fees for their children's higher education no matter if it is abroad or not. This is a high price even by the standards of some affluent Western families. In most cases, Chinese parents' sacrifice goes beyond financial support. In China, most students live with parents when they are off school, and it is not uncommon for parents to do most of the housework so that their children can have more time to study. Children, therefore, are under a lot of pressure to meet their parents' expectations.

Moreover, filial piety is important to Chinese students especially when their parents are retired. This is usually regarded as a traditional Chinese virtue under Confucianism. Mao and Chi (2011: 99) defined filial piety as "a prominent,

family-centred cultural value that adjusts children's attitudes and behaviours toward their parents to ensure parental well-being, has contributed toward keeping different generations connected and has led to an inherent sense of obligation for children to support their parents in the changing Chinese context". The demonstration of filial piety in China varies from family to family. One of the most important value is maintaining a close proximity to the elders so that they can pay attention to "parents' emotional and instrumental needs, being respectful and obedient in order to increase family harmony, and exhibiting supportive behaviours, such as expressing love and affection toward parents, providing financial support, meeting parents' housing needs, taking care of parents when they are sick, and even making sacrifices to ensure parental well-being" (Mao and Chi, 2011: 99). Therefore, adult children have to carefully consider their future job destination. Of course, parents can emigrate along with their children to the host country. Nonetheless, older parents may not adjust to cultural differences in the foreign country. For example, most Chinese elders do not even know how to speak English.

Some of the respondents preferred to work a few years after they graduate and then come back to China rather than come back immediately. They believe that the work experience in foreign countries can bring competitive advantage in the Chinese job market.

6.3 Focus Group Interviews

Most findings revealed in the long interviews were also found in the focus group interviews. Therefore, in this section, only the new findings are illustrated. In addition, some observation of the difference between the long interviews and the focus group interviews will be discussed.

6.3.1 Findings in Part One of the Study: COO Effects on Service Evaluation

COO effects on service evaluation were also found in the focus group interviews. These effects are similar to that of the COO image and product evaluation as

discussed in the literature review. British COO image was used by the respondents in their service evaluation as a stereotyping process which allows them to expect the likelihood of a service provided by the U.K having certain features. The importance of overall perceptions of the U.K influencing impressions of the higher education services from the U.K was identified. It was found that the respondents would evaluate a service more favourably if it has a favourable COO image. Most respondents admitted that the positive COO image associated with the UK could engender a general positive image of its higher education in their mind. Perceptions that they have of the higher education from the U.K, as well as their feelings of the British image, contribute to the COO effects on the evaluation of British higher education services.

When choosing a host country for higher education, many respondents emphasised the need for a foreign higher education to be 'famous' in order to inspire confidence in quality. "The country of origin indicates a status symbol" (FG3b: 20). This is why some respondents did not choose less developed countries as a study destination. Prevailing British COO image in the focus groups were credited with influencing a few negative perceptions of China's country image and vice versa. In addition, the respondents' evaluation of the higher education services originating in the U.K was sometimes credited with their sentiments towards Chinese higher education.

Sometimes, the respondents use the COO image to interpret other informational cues and, therefore, indirectly affect the overall service evaluation. However, the respondents appeared unconfident in their interpretation because the informational cues interpreted may be inaccurate.

The data showed that respondents' beliefs about the U.K or China and beliefs about British services or Chinese services were sometimes incongruent. This result is in line with Roth and Romeo (1992)'s "fit theory" between the product category and COO image. The focus group interviews also demonstrated that the quality perception of

the U.K and China varied across different service categories. For example, the general unfavourable Chinese image to some respondents may not necessarily penalise all Chinese services.

In the interviews, we discussed not only the higher education services provided by the U.K but also other services such as financial services (i.e. banking services, insurance services, and stock exchange services), transportation services (i.e. airline services), customer services, and after-sales-services. For some services, the respondents appeared to have strong COO effects on the evaluation process. For some other services, the COO effects were not very strong. This is largely due to the internal influences and external influences that can affect the COO effects on service evaluation. The internal influences are personal attributes belonging to the respondents themselves. The internal influences identified in this study include respondents' prior service knowledge, vertical individualism, and consumer ethnocentrism. The external influences are other informational cues rather than COO information that can affect the evaluation of services. Most of the external influences are attributes pertaining to the services, such as the cost of study, entry requirement, reputation, employment prospect of British higher education. In addition, the environment and the influence of normative referents are also external influences.

6.3.2 Findings in Part Two of the Study: Internal Influences of the COO Effects on Service Evaluation

Prior Knowledge to COO Effects

The importance of the respondents' prior knowledge to COO effects on service evaluation was identified. Judgements that the respondents make about the U.K, either through knowledge acquired from studying English or from having observed the country, converts to the overall evaluations of British higher education services. COO image sometimes serves as a signal for some respondents who had prior perceptions of the overall evaluation of the services provided by the U.K and thus they used these perceptions to infer the general evaluation of British higher education.

The interviews showed that most students who chose to stay in China had limited knowledge about the U.K, British services, and British higher education services. In contrast, those who decided to go abroad for higher education had a high level of knowledge. The respondents' service knowledge is dependent on their awareness of the service purchase intention. This finding is very similar to Lin and Zhen (2005)'s study which asserted that consumers' product knowledge is dependent on the consumers' awareness of products purchased.

In addition, these two groups of respondents who had different levels of a-priori service knowledge showed different COO effects. The data obtained in this study is in line with Hong and Wyer (1989)'s findings of the halo effects and the summary construct of the COO effects on product evaluation.

The halo effects and the summary construct are two cognitive processes. Halo effects emerged when there was insufficient knowledge about a service. The respondents would like to resort to COO image in the evaluation process. The COO image seemed likely to serve as a halo when the respondents were evaluating unfamiliar British higher education. This is particularly the case for respondents in Focus Group One. They were unfamiliar with British higher education compared with the respondents in Focus Group Two and Three. The COO image of the U.K serves as a "halo" that can directly influence their beliefs about the services provided by the U.K and indirectly influence the general evaluation of British higher education services through established beliefs. In other words, the country image in mind can trigger the respondents' feelings toward the mentioned services in the interview. For the respondents in Focus Group One, their British COO image could act as a heuristic to simplify the service evaluation process. Even if some external influences should be of concerned, they were not interested in the exploration because they thought that there was too much related information and they hardly had the time and patience to find out. They felt that the cost of evaluating other influences may greatly outweigh the

benefit. Simply speaking, "it is not necessary to particularly assess foreign education" (FG1c: 10).

Nonetheless, when some respondents were familiar with British higher education services, a summary construct model operated in which they inferred the U.K image from its service information. The U.K image then acted as a summary construct indirectly influencing service evaluation. The summary construct was seen in Focus Group Two because they planned to go to the U.K for higher education and they were quite familiar with British higher education services.

Vertical Individualism

As discussed in the literature review, consumers' dimension of the vertical individualism can affect COO effects on product evaluation. The higher of the vertical individualistic value the consumers have the more likely that the consumers would prefer foreign made products over own country's products (Curhan-Canli and Maheswaran 2000 a). Also, the lower the vertical individualistic value held by consumers the more likely that they would prefer to buy the home country's products (Curhan-Canli and Maheswaran 2000 a).

The impact of vertical individualism on COO was also found in this service research. The respondents from Focus Group One showed medium vertical individualism while the respondents from Focus Group Two and Three demonstrated high vertical individualism. This finding is congruent with what I expected. But the findings of this study are inconsistent with the general consensus in many previous studies that Chinese culture demonstrates low individualism. The one of the most influential cultural studies is Hofstede (1980) who conducted the research in 1970s at the time of China's Great Cultural Revolution.

Considering the social and political change in China over thirty years since the publication of Hofstede (1980), the proposition of low individualistic China is

questioned. Hofstede (1980) found that the national wealth can positively result in a country's individualistic value. In other words, the richer the country, the more likely it will be a high individualistic country. Therefore, due to the fast development of China, there might be a cultural transition from low individualism to high individualism in Chinese society.

CET to COO Effects

The low level of Chinese students' ethnocentrism was also found in the focus group interviews. Most respondents did not have particular interest in buying domestic or foreign made services. Although COO was usually used to infer the quality of services, only two respondents in Focus Group Three were concerned with the COO because they particularly would like to buy foreign services. These two respondents claimed that they preferred to support foreign made services such as foreign airline services and foreign hotel services in China because "foreign services have higher quality than Chinese services" (FG3c: 15).

When the discussion came to higher education services, the respondents were likely to have consensus. Foreign higher education services were often considered by the respondents as having better quality or being the 'genuine' one, compared with Chinese higher education services having lesser status in the world. This could be due to the prevalence of academic misconduct in Chinese universities, especially those lower ranked universities, resulting in the widespread mistrust of Chinese higher education services.

6.3.3 Findings in Part Three of the Study: External Influences of the COO Effects on Service Evaluation

Chinese students made their choice of host country on the basis of a process of acquisition, evaluation and integration of informational influences. The respondents took COO image into consideration when evaluating services in different circumstances. When the interview began, British COO and Chinese COO were the

only informational cues mentioned. COO effects on service evaluation were easily detected at this stage. However, as the interview continued, the relative importance of COO image on the evaluation of the higher education services diminished because other additional informational cues were gradually present.

Most respondents showed their very positive evaluation of British higher education but some still chose to go to other countries after the integration of external influences. This is because some other informational cues considered were more important than COO information in the service purchase decision process. The other informational cues became the external influence that can affect COO effects on service evaluation. In the presence of other external cues (such as reputation and cost), the impact of COO is weak. For the higher education services, the influence of COO was less pronounced in the presence of other information cues.

As might be anticipated, external influences, particularly the cost of study, curiosity, employment prospect, English language, entry requirement, environment, freedom, reputation, and the influence of normative references were claimed by most respondents in the focus group interviews. They acted as the key influences used in evaluating the higher education services provided by the U.K. This is unsurprising and is quite consistent with the findings from the long interviews as discussed previously. The respondents in the focus group interviews could not reach unanimous agreement regarding the relative importance of the external influences. When some informational cues were missing or cannot be easily assessed, then the respondents had a greater reliance on other informational cues. For example, the respondents who lacked information about British universities may rely on the university ranking list to infer the quality of higher education among different universities in the U.K.

6.3.4 Some Observations from the Long Interviews and Focus Group Interviews

<u>Social Desirability</u>

According to McCracken (1988, p.40), "once respondents have been brought within sight of the topic, they must be allowed to 'go' wherever they wish". The importance of "face" in Chinese culture was identified in the focus group interviews. There are two lays of the meaning of "face". First is to save others' "face". Sometimes, consensus was easily achieved during the focus group interviews. Although I specifically guided them to provide any different opinions to others' responses, they were likely to agree with what others said. It seemed that they did not want to argue with others simply because of the respect for others or save others' "face".

The second is to save the respondent's own "face". It was found that the respondents in the focus group interviews sometimes have a certain social desirability bias. Fisher (1993: 303) gave the definition of social desirability as "the basic human tendency to present oneself in the best possible light". For example, the respondents in Focus Group One rarely mentioned the influence of study cost such as the tuition fee as affecting the decision to undertake higher education in China rather than in a foreign country. When asked how they considered the cost factor when choosing to undertake higher education, some students said that they were certainly aware of it, but did not consider it in detail. The reason may be because the respondents were not willing to admit that the reason for not choosing to go abroad was largely due to the high cost of foreign study which their family could not afford. This may be due to that they did not want to lose face or be looked down upon by other students whom were not well known during the focus group interviews.

However, the importance of "face" was not very obviously found in the long interviews because the risk of social desirability bias was minimised by my Invitation Letter to Participants, Interview Guide, and Consent Form (see Appendix 1,2,3, and 4).

<u>Gender Difference</u>

The Chinese culture encourages girls and boys to take on different roles in society Lau (1989). Although role differentiation between genders is not emphasised to the degree it used to be, the cultural legacy still exists. It is therefore worth examining whether gender is an influence affecting student choices. The gender role orientation of Chinese adults is an important aspect of psycho-social development of the self. Additionally, more prominent gender differences exist in terms of value preferences and the way they interact with others. For example, men in China are more concerned about achievement and intelligence, while women tend to be more focussed on the interpersonal relationships and being well liked. Therefore, the gender difference may result in different COO effects on service evaluation. There were 16 male and 18 female students who participated in this study. However, the data showed no obvious evidence that males and females differ in the COO effects on service evaluation.

6.4 Conclusion

This chapter presents the analysis of the data containing 23 long interviews and three focus group interviews. As explained in the section 5.3.4 in last chapter, the data was analysed by using the refined McCracken (1988)'s five steps of analysis (figure 5.2) advocated by Herrington and Oliver (2000). The next chapter will summarise the data findings discussed in this chapter. Following this, next chapter will link the data findings in this chapter to the extant literature. In addition, the research contributions, the managerial implications, the research limitation and the implication for future studies will also be addressed.

Chapter Seven: Conclusion

7.1 Introduction

The last chapter provided the findings of the analysis of data collected for the study. This chapter will draw conclusions and managerial implications based on what has been found in the thesis. The summary of the findings regarding the research questions will be provided (section 7.2). Following these conclusions, the research contribution (section 7.3) and the managerial implications (section 7.4) will be discussed. Furthermore, the research limitations (section 7.5) will be highlighted and future study directions will be proposed (section 7.6).

7.2 Summary of the Study

In this study, Chinese university students had been interviewed to determine the influences they regarded as most relevant when choosing a study destination. Particular attention had been paid to the COO effects on the respondents' service evaluation of higher education. In the first part of the study when other informational cues were unlikely to be considered, leaving the COO informational cue alone, the COO effects on the evaluation of services became strong. This has been found at the beginning of most interviews when respondents were asked for their views of the U.K and China and then for their views of the higher education services provided by the U.K and China. Table 7.1 has illustrated the research findings of part one of the study. It was found that British COO image is generally perceived by Chinese students as positive. Nonetheless, Chinese COO image as generally perceived by Chinese students tends to be negative. The COO effects on service evaluation were found when Chinese students were evaluating British higher education, but not when they were evaluating Chinese higher education. The reasons for this outcome are largely due to the internal influences of COO effects which will be explained in part two of the study.

Table 7.1: Research Findings of Part One of the Study

Research Questions (RQ)	Research Findings
1. How is British COO image generally perceived by Chinese students?	1. British COO image is generally perceived by Chinese students as positive
2. How is Chinese COO image generally perceived by Chinese students?	2. Whilst there was mixed positive and negative evidence, the study found that on balance Chinese COO image tended to be generally perceived as more negative than positive
3. Does Chinese Students' perception of British COO image influence their evaluation of British higher education services, and why?	3. Yes, they do, because they do not know much about British higher education services and therefore would like to use the positive British COO image to infer the positive evaluation of British higher education services.
4. Does Chinese students' perception of Chinese COO image influence their evaluation of Chinese higher education services, and why?	4. No, they don't, because they would like to use their experience-based knowledge to evaluate Chinese higher education services rather than rely on the COO image to infer the quality of Chinese higher education services.

In the second part of the study, it was found that the respondents' a-priori service familiarity and vertical individualistic value act as the internal influences of COO effects on service evaluation (see table 7.2). The higher the degree of a-priori service familiarity the respondents had, the less likely they would use COO image to infer the quality of higher education services. In addition, the respondents who had higher vertical individualistic value are more likely to go abroad for higher education than those who had lower vertical individualistic value.

Table 7.2: Research Findings of Part Two of the Study

Research Questions (RQ)	Research Findings
5. To what extent can Chinese students' familiarity of British higher education influence COO effects in their evaluation of British higher education services?	5. Chinese students' familiarity of British higher education is generally limited which will result in the strong COO effects in their evaluation of British higher education services.
6. To what extent can Chinese students' familiarity of Chinese higher education influence COO effects in their evaluation of Chinese higher education services?	6. Chinese students' familiarity of Chinese higher education is generally substantial. This will result in weak COO effects in their evaluation of Chinese higher education services.

7. To what extent can Chinese students' vertical individualism influence COO effects in their evaluation of British higher education and Chinese higher education?	7. The higher the level of the vertical individualism the students have, the more likely they will have a favourable evaluation of British higher education and decide to go to the U.K for higher education. The lower the level the vertical individualism the students have, the more likely they will have a favourable evaluation of Chinese higher education and decide to stay in China for higher education.
8. To what extent can Chinese students' consumer ethnocentrism influence COO effects in their evaluation of British higher education services and Chinese higher education services?	8. Chinese students' consumer ethnocentrism does not influence COO effects in their evaluation of British higher education services and Chinese higher education services.

How COO image influenced the evaluation of services largely relies on the respondents' knowledge about the country and the evaluated services. All the respondents demonstrated high a-priori service familiarity of Chinese higher education because of their study experience in China. Therefore, they would like to use their experience-based examples to support their views of Chinese higher education services rather than use Chinese COO image to infer the quality of Chinese higher education. In addition, the respondents had different levels of a-priori service familiarity of foreign higher education. Most respondents who chose to study in China had low a-priority service familiarity of foreign higher education while those who chose to study abroad presented much higher a-priority service familiarity especially to the higher education of the host countries they selected. When the respondents were not familiar with foreign higher education, the perceived image of foreign higher education emerged which was based on the COO image they held. Such perceived image of foreign higher education would come to the evaluation of foreign higher education. It was found that some of their perceived image was inaccurate and the respondents were not quite confident of their evaluation of foreign higher education services.

The respondents showed medium to high level of vertical individualism in the interviews. No respondents showed very low levels of vertical individualism. This

may be due to "One Child Policy" in mainland China, fast development of the Chinese economy, the influence of globalisation, and the increased Western cultural exposure to Chinese society. The respondents who provided higher rather than medium levels of individualism were more likely to choose to study overseas.

The inspection of the data has revealed no evidence that the respondents' consumer ethnocentrism can affect the COO effects on their evaluation of services. All the respondents showed low ethnocentric personality because no respondent would particularly buy Chinese made services. As many respondents indicated, in China, most service providers are Chinese even though services are foreign registered brands. This is due to the perceived lower cost of Chinese labour compared with foreign labour. Therefore, the respondents did not have many opportunities to have foreign service experience in China.

In the third part of the study, as the interviews proceeded, more and more informational cues were considered by the respondents. The COO effects on the evaluation of British higher education became weak (see table 7.3). It was found that the importance of different influential information cues was varied among the respondents. They had different standards for evaluating British higher education services. For most of them, including those who chose to go to the U.K, the COO cue was not the most important element for evaluating the higher education services provided by the country. For example, the perceived high cost of studying in the U.K may lead some students who held very favourable image of the country to still choose Chinese higher education. In addition, female Chinese students are more likely to marry early. Therefore, a short period of study is desirable.

Table 7.3: Research Findings of Part Three of the study

Research Question	Research Findings
9. To what extent can COO effects in Chinese students' evaluation of British higher education services be perceived as less important when other additional information cues are considered?	9. COO effects on service evaluation will be perceived as less important when other related service information cues are considered

7.3 The Data Findings to the Theoretical Implications

The literature review in the Chapter Two has shown that past COO studies mainly focused on COO effects on consumers' evaluation of products rather than services (i.e. Dicher 1962; Nagashima, 1970; Bannister and Saunders, 1978; Chasin and Jaffe 1979; Bilkey and Nes, 1982; Wang and Lamb, 1983; Han and Terpstra, 1988; Papadopoulos et, al. 1990; Leclerc, et al. 1994; Kim, 1995; Piron, 2000; Thakor and Lavack, 2003, etc.). These studies were largely conducted in developed countries. The respondents selected were usually from developed countries rather than developing countries. The respondents were asked to evaluate products made from developed countries and developing countries. The respondents' domestically produced made products were usually included.

It must be noted that almost half of the COO studies reviewed in the Chapter Two focused on the consumers from the U.S and their views of American products and foreign products (i.e. Reierson, 1966 and 1967; Nagashima 1970; Hampton 1977; ; Schooler 1971; Gaedeke 1973; Chasin and Jaffe, 1979; Wang and Lamb, 1983; Erickson et al. 1984; Han and Terpstra 1988; Han 1989 and 1990; Hong and Wyer 1989; Cordell 1991; Lee et al. 1992; Chao 1993; Maheswaran 1994; Leclerc et al. 1994; Johansson et al. 1994, Kaynak et al. 1994, etc.). In addition, some COO studies examined other developed countries such as Canada (Kaynak and Cavusgil 1983; Heslop and Wall 1985; Wall et al. 1989; Wall et al. 1991, Bruning, 1997; Thakor and Pacheco 1997, etc.), and the U.K (Greer, 1971; Bannister and Saunders, 1978; Papadopoulos et al. 1990; Hooley et al. 1988, etc.). Only a few studies addressed the consumers from developing countries and the importance of the COO information in their evaluation of products or services (i.e. Zhang 1996; Bailey and Pineres, 1997, etc.). Therefore, this study has become a meaningful piece of work. It enriches the literature by looking at consumers from a developing country by evaluating domestic and foreign services. The sample respondents selected in this study were from China, a developing country, and both Chinese higher education services and British higher

education services were addressed. However, this has not been addressed by the extant literature.

Part one of the study has found the positive British COO image perceived by Chinese students. Such finding is in line with a few past COO studies which also suggested favourable British COO image (Bannister and Saunders 1978; Papadopoulos et al. 1990; Roth and Romeo, 1992; Baker and Michie 1995; Thakor and Pacheco, 1997, etc.). However, in these studies, the favourable British COO image was perceived by consumers from developed countries. Part one of the study also suggested slightly negative Chinese COO image perceived by Chinese students. This finding is quite different from the arguments evoked by public media such as the BBC News which claimed a rising Chinese nationalism (Grammaticas, 2009). The main reason might be for the sake of *mianzi* (save face) in the presence of the Western media. Therefore, Chinese people are usually motivated by a more nationalistic desire to show the positive perspective of China to foreign people (Zhou and Belk 2004). However, in this study as I am also Chinese, the respondents may have less anxiety in sharing their real feeling and understanding of China.

Part two of the study has evaluated the three possible internal influences of the COO effects on service evaluation including the respondents' a-priori knowledge of services, vertical individualistic value, and consumer ethnocentric value. Previous studies have indicated that consumers' a-priori product knowledge can influence the COO effects on product evaluation (Jaffe and Nebenzhal 1988; Han, 1989 and 1990; Johansson 1989; Heimbach, et, al. 1989; Bozell-Gallup 1996; Klein et al. 1998; Lampert and Jaffe 1998; Jaffe and Nebenzahl 2001). Similar findings were obtained in this study because the higher level of a-priori knowledge of the services the respondents held the less importance the COO information in their evaluation of services. In addition, the respondents' both subjective (perceived) knowledge and objective knowledge suggested by Brucks (1985) was found in this study. The respondents' knowledge obtained from published books was regarded by respondents

as objective knowledge in their eyes. They usually perceived this knowledge as accurate. The respondents' personal knowledge from their perspective tended to be subjective and less accurate. Therefore, the respondents usually presented less confidence in such knowledge. For the sake of *mianzi*, the respondents may like to provide subjective knowledge during the interview to show their ability.

Furthermore, it was found that those respondents who had high levels of a-priori knowledge of services also had high levels of a-priori knowledge of the COO. For example, the respondents who knew a lot about British higher education usually had high familiarity of the U.K in terms of its politics, economy, culture, technology, etc. This is a new finding to the COO study in the way that the respondents' familiarity of a country may also influence their evaluation of services from that country.

The importance of the respondents' vertical individualistic value in the COO effects on service evaluation was found in this study. This is consistent with the way that consumers evaluate products (Gurhan-Canli and Maheswaran 2000b). As Gurhan-Canli and Maheswaran (2000b) indicated, only the vertical rather than horizontal dimension of individualism can affect the COO effects on product evaluation. In this study, all the respondents' individualism was found in the vertical dimension. This may be due to the attribute of traditional Chinese culture respecting the social hierarchy (Chinese Culture Connection 1987; Fan 2000).

Previous studies suggested that consumers with high ethnocentrism would like to purchase domestic products rather than foreign products while consumers with low ethnocentrism would like to purchase foreign made products rather than home made products (Shimp and Sharma 1987; Lantz and Loeb 1996; Pecotich et al. 1996; Rawwas et al. 1996; Watson and Wright 2000; Chryssochoidis, et al. 2007). Nonetheless, in this study, all the respondents were found to have low level of consumer ethnocentrism when they were making decisions of purchasing services. As Papadopoulos et al. (1990) and Darling and Kraft (1997) indicated, the ethnocentric

attributes make consumers in some countries prefer domestic over foreign products, while consumers in other countries generally do not. In addition, "different patterns of consumer ethnocentrism existed in sub-cultural Chinese societies" (Hsu and Nien, 2008: 436). Therefore, the ethnocentric attribute is unlikely to make some consumers in China, such as the respondents sampled, prefer domestic over foreign offerings.

Part three of the study has identified many external influences that can affect the importance of COO information in Chinese students' evaluation of higher education. The external influences are the informational cues that can affect students' decision making process. These external influences can be classified into nine categories including cost, employment prospect, English language, entry requirement, normative referents, environment, freedom, curiosity, reputation, and others.

A) Cost

A few past studies also found the importance of cost in students' choice of higher education. Duan (1997) suggested a "cost and benefit theory" which assumes that influences affecting students' decisions are based on whether they considered the perceived 'costs' or 'benefits' of a decision-making. There are economic and non-economic costs and benefits in this theory. The economic costs identified by many studies include the general tuition fee and living fee (Lawley, 1994; Mazzarol and Soutar, 2002; Yao, 2004; Chen and Zimitat, 2006; Chen, 2006; Davidson and Wang, 2008;), scholarship (Chen, 2007), and visa application fee (Economist 2005).

Table 7.4: The Influence of Cost to COO Effects on the Evaluation of British Higher Education

Categories of External Influences	External influences of COO effects on service evaluation		
Cost	General cost of future study (living cost and tuition fee)	Scholarship available in foreign university	Time cost of studying a course
	Time cost of applying to a foreign university and for a student visa	Time cost of learning a new language	

In addition, as shown in table 7.4, this study has found the time cost as a non-economic cost. It includes the time cost of studying a course, the time cost of applying to a foreign university and for a student visa, and the time cost of learning a new language.

B) Employment Prospect

The employment prospect acting as an influence to students making a particular decision has been identified in a few studies (e.g. Yao, 2004; Economist, 2005; Davidson and Wang, 2008). However, these studies were only concerned with the employment prospect in the host country, such as the part-time job opportunities, during the study period and permanent jobs after graduation.

Table 7.5: The Influence of Employment Prospect to the COO Effects on the Evaluation of British Higher Education

Categories of External Influences	External influences of COO effects on service evaluation		
Employment Prospect	General employment prospects in China	Employment prospects in foreign country	Possibility of getting a part-time job in host country
	Recognition of qualification in the job market	Higher degree acquisition for better employment prospect	Employment prospects in China from the course studied
	The prospect of gaining a competitive advantage in job market	Recognition of the selected foreign institution in China	

In this study, as shown in table 7.5, the job opportunity in the home country after graduation is also important to Chinese students. Therefore, the recognition of qualification in the job market and recognition of selected foreign institutions in China are important. The "cost and benefit" theory works in the way that students have to "maximise the ratio of perceived benefits to perceived costs" (Duan 1997: 53). Many Chinese students would like to go back to China after they graduate because of the job availability and *guanxi* in China. Moreover, the filial piety of traditional

Chinese culture requires the adult children not go far away from old parents.

C) English language

Previous studies have shown that most international students are interested in English speaking countries (Malcolm, et al. 2004; Yao, 2004; Pyvis and Chapman 2006). This may be due to the importance of homogenous culture in selecting host countries (Cubillo, et al. 2005, 2006; Srikatanyoo and Gnoth, 2002) as the respondents selected by these studies were from developed English speaking countries. Nonetheless, this study considered the students from China; a developing country. The data has reflected the importance of English acquisition and English accents for selecting a host country. Some students may have preference for some English speaking countries' accents over the others.

In addition, some students selected English speaking countries because they have already studied English for many years and do not want to spend time studying another foreign language. They could also improve their English language ability if they choose English speaking countries. Therefore, English acquisition is important to them.

Moreover, the power and wealth of English speaking countries is important to the international students (Duan 1997). Similar findings were obtained in this study as the respondents would like to go to affluent countries and they are usually English speaking countries.

Table 7.6: The influence of English Language to the COO Effects on the Evaluation of British Higher Education

Categories of External Influences	External influences of COO effects on service evaluation		
English Language	English Speaking Country	English Acquisition	English accents

D) Entry requirement

The entry requirement has been noted by only a few studies (Lawley, 1998; Duan, 1997; Mazzarol and Soutar, 2002; Maringe and Carter 2007). These studies have only focused on the ease of obtaining a student visa and the ease of admission to foreign universities. They neglected the ease of admission to the universities in students' home countries. In this study, as shown in the table 7.7, the ease of admission to a Chinese university was also considered by many respondents. For some respondents, admission to a Chinese university was not difficult. Therefore, they would compare the perceived cost and benefits between studying in China and studying overseas when they were making decisions. However, for some other respondents, admission to a perceived good Chinese university was not easy. As a result, they chose to study abroad for more opportunities.

Table 7.7: The Influence of Entry Requirement to the COO Effects on the Evaluation of British Higher Education

Categories of External influences	External influences of COO effects on service evaluation		
Entry Requirement	Ease of sdmission to a Chinese university (e.g. applying for a course in current university)	Ease of obtaining a student visa	Ease of obtaining a working visa in foreign country
	Difficulty of admission to a foreign university	Difficulty of admission to a Chinese university (e.g. applying other university)	Possibility of choosing a different subject of study (Course match)

E) Normative Referents

Previous studies have shown that normative referents influencing students' choice of international higher education include family members (Pmipa, 2002, 2003, 2004; Economist, 2005; Chen and Zimitat, 2006; Mazzarol and Soutar, 2002), friends (e.g. Pimpa, 2002; Chen and Zimitat, 2006; Mazzarol and Soutar, 2002), and educational agents (e.g. Pimpa, 2002; Lawley and Perry, 1999). The importance of these

normative referents was also found in this study. In addition, as shown in Table 7.8, other normative referents were also important. They are students' tutors in school, parents' friends, boyfriend or girlfriend, boyfriend or girlfriend's parents, influence of a school's advertisements, and informational support by the school.

Table 7.8: The Influence of Normative Referents to the COO Effects on the Evaluation of British Higher Education

Categories of External Factors	External factors of COO effects on service evaluation		
Influence of Normative Referents	Family's suggestion (parents or grandparents)	Parents' available financial support	Friends' suggestion
	Friends' experience	Education agent's suggestion	Tutor' suggestion
	Influence of parents' friends	Influence from boyfriend or girlfriend`	Influence from boyfriend or girlfriend's parents
	Influence of relatives	Influence of school's advertisement	Informational support by the school

F) Environment

Many studies claimed that the host country as a tourist destination can attract international students' attention (e.g. Duan 1997; Murphy, 1999; Son and Pearce, 2005; Wang and Davidson 2008). In addition, the wealth and power of the host country and the perceived safe environment are also important (Duan 1997; Lawley, 1998). Moreover, Price (2003) claimed the impact of facilities on students' choice of foreign universities. Furthermore, the cultural proximity is important to some international students from developed countries selecting other developed countries as a study destination (Cubillo, et al. 2005, 2006; Srikatanyoo and Gnoth, 2002). These influences are also found in this study. In order to make a clear picture of the data findings, these environmental influences were classified into five types including natural environment, study environment, cultural environment, economic environment, and living environment (Table 7.9).

Table 7.9: The Influence of Environment to the COO Effects on the Evaluation of British Higher Education

Categories of External Influences	External influences of COO effects on service evaluation			
Environment	**Natural Environment**	Weather	Environment in campus	Image as a tourist destination
	Study Environment	For better studying environment	Good facilities available	
	Cultural Environment	Foreign culture preferred	Culture of sending students overseas	Different cultural environment
	Economic Environment	Developed country (the wealth and power of host country)		
	Living Environment	Safety environment of the selected country	General living environment	General image of the city where the selected university is located

G) Freedom

The influence of freedom is a new finding that can affect students' choice of studying overseas. There are two types of freedom as shown in Table 7.10. The respondents believed that more freedom would be given to students in foreign universities than in Chinese universities. In addition, some respondents believed that more freedom of religion will be granted in foreign countries.

Table 7.10: The Influence of Freedom to the COO Effects on the Evaluation of British Higher Education

Categories of External Factors	External factors of COO effects on service evaluation	
Freedom	Freedom in the university	Seek freedom of religion

H) Curiosity

The study has found the importance of curiosity in students' choice of international higher education (table 7.11). However, not many previous studies have found this

influence. The example studies concerned with the acquisition of foreign experience can be Lawley (1994), Duan (1997), and Mazzarol and Soutar (2002). In addition, this study has found the other two types of curiosity that motivates Chinese students who study abroad. As shown in Table 7.11, the new findings of curiosity are the acquisition of knowledge or study interest and seek independence.

Table 7.11: The Influence of Curiosity to the COO Effects on the Evaluation of British Higher Education

Categories of External Factors	External factors of COO effects on service evaluation		
Curiosity	Acquisition of foreign experience (to see the world, see adventure)	Acquisition of knowledge or study interest	Seek Independence

I) Reputation

The importance of reputation in students' choice of international higher education can be found in many studies. According to the previous studies, reputation can be classified into prestige of studying overseas (Bourke, 2000; Davidson and Wang, 2008; and Yao 2004), reputation for quality education in foreign universities (Diaz and Krauss, 1996; Huang and Brown, 1996; Mazzarol 1998; Singh and Ninemeier, 2003; Yao 2004; Mazzarol and Soutar, 2004; and Chen 2007). In this study, as shown in Table 7.12, in addition to the previous findings, the reputation of the university studied in China, academic reputation of the course in the university studied in China are also important.

Table 7.12: The Influence of Reputation to the COO Effects on the Evaluation of British Higher Education

Categories of External Factors	External factors of COO effects on service evaluation		
Reputation	Past study in China	Academic reputation of the university studied in China (University reputation)	Academic reputation of the course in the university studied in China (Course reputation)
	Future study in China	Academic reputation of the selected Chinese	

		university for future study (University reputation)	
	Future study abroad	Academic reputation of the selected host country in the future (Country's Higher Education reputation)	Academic Reputation for Quality education of overseas universities
	Other reputation	Prestige of studying overseas	

J) Others

Table 7.13 illustrated a few other external influences on the COO effects on the evaluation of British higher education. These influences are hard to be classified into the aforementioned categories. Some of these influences are new findings such as the social pressure of early marriage for Chinese women, a cooperative programme between the Chinese university and the foreign university, and demographical attributes of the host country.

Table 7.13: Other Influences to the COO Effects on the Evaluation of British Higher Education

Categories of External Factors	External factors of COO effects on service evaluation		
Others	Potential uncertainties and risk of going abroad	Seeking self-achievement in life	Familiarity of a selected country
	Trend of acquiring a higher level of degree	Trend of going abroad for higher education	Don't want to go far away from home
	Past positive foreign experience	Past negative foreign experience	Availability of course in China
	Past positive experience of living and studying in a particular university	Social pressure of early marriage for Chinese women	Cooperative programme between Chinese university and foreign university
	Possibility of emigration	Demographical attributes (country size, population of the host country)	

It must be noted that many previous studies usually evaluated international students

selecting countries other than the U.K as a study destination. Particularly, many previous studies were conducted in Australia looking at how international students selecting Australia as the study destination (i.e. Duan 1997; Lawley 1998; Lawley and Perry 1998; Kemp, et, al.1998; Murphy, 1999; Pimpa 199, 2000, 2002, 2003; Yao, 2004; Son and Pearce, 2005; Cubillo, et al 2005, 2006; Chen and Zimitat 2006; Wang and Davidson 2008, etc). The international students they selected were from Malaysia (i.e. Duan 1997, Lawley 1998; Lawley and Perry 1998; Bourke, 2000; Pyvis and Chapman 2007; Wagner and Fard 2009), Thailand (i.e. Lawley 1998; Lawley and Perry, 1998; Pimpa, 1999, 2000, 2002, 2003, 2004), Hong Kong (i.e. Duan 1997; Chen 2007), Taiwan (i.e. Kemp et al. 1998; Chen and Zimitat 2006; Chen 2007), Singapore (i.e. Bourke, 2000), and African countries (i.e. Maringe and Carter 2007).

This study, focusing on Chinese students selecting the U.K as study destination, is different from the aforementioned studies because the students from mainland China have some unique reasons for selecting their study destination. For example, the pressure of early marriage is one of the important reasons for some female students selecting the U.K as the host country since the length of studying a postgraduate taught course in the U.K is usually one year.

The literature of international higher education has suggested three distinct steps of the decision making process for students who want to study overseas (Pimpa, 1999; Mazzarol and Soutar, 2002; Chen 2006; Davidson and Wang 2008) as followings:
- Step One: Deciding to study abroad
- Step Two: Selecting a host country
- Step Three: Selecting a particular institution

The above steps were also found in this study. However, they may only apply to some respondents who plan to study overseas. This study has a unique research nature which is different from previous studies. First of all, not all the respondents planned to go abroad. Secondly, the data suggested that the respondents have to make decisions

on whether or not to continue to study after graduation. Thirdly, the respondents had to be concerned with their future work after they would have finished their studies. Therefore, in order to better present the external influences embedded in different steps of decision making, I designed the following stages which apply to all the respondents in this thesis:

- Stage One: Deciding to continue to study after graduation (New finding)
- Stage Two: Choosing a study destination
- Stage Three: Selecting a particular institution
- Stage Four: Going to work (New finding)

In the Stage Two, some of the respondents' study destination was China while the other respondents' study destinations were foreign countries. For those who chose to study abroad, they would undergo two sub-stages including deciding to study abroad and selecting a host country. These two sub-stages are similar to the Step One and Step Two of international students selecting international higher education as suggested by the extant literature (i.e. Pimpa, 1999; Mazzarol and Soutar, 2002; Chen 2006; Davidson and Wang 2008).

7.4 Research Contribution

This thesis has contributed to the COO studies by filling gaps of literature in a way not previously attempted. In addition, it has enriched the studies of international higher education by providing insight into Chinese students who evaluate British higher education. The major gaps in the extant literature of COO studies and the extent literature of international higher education in Chapter Two of this thesis were summarised in section 2.1.11 and section 2.3.5 as:

- COO effects on service evaluation is under researched
- Drawbacks of single-cue research and quantitative methodology of COO studies
- International students from China selecting the U.K as a study destination is under researched
- Post-purchase dissonance of qualitative studies

This thesis has contributed to the extant literature by addressing these gaps and weaknesses. First, the main research contribution is to enrich the COO studies from the perspective of service evaluation. COO effects on service evaluation rather than product evaluation were addressed. While the COO studies are growing in recent decades, little research has looked at COO effect in the context of consumers' service evaluation. This knowledge would assist service sectors to develop better marketing strategies to maintain and promote their positions in the international market.

Secondly, this study made a few advances over past studies regarding the methodology employed. In most of previous COO research, it has been criticised because they had some methodological limitations which may result in inaccurate data. These include the use of single COO information measures (Bilkey and Nes, 1982) and the inaccurate results obtained from the quantitative investigation (Bilkey and Nes, 1982 and Jaffee and Nebenzahl, 1984). The problem of single cue studies has been confirmed by this thesis. In part one of the study, Chinese students' positive British COO image can result in positive evaluation of British higher education. Nonetheless, the impact of COO influence diminished in part three of the study because other informational cues were also considered by the respondents.

In addition, the thesis also used the long interviews triangle with focus group interviews qualitative research design which is unusual in this field. Many previous COO studies which applied quantitative studies were based on other COO studies' findings which used a different questionnaire format. However, the validity and credibility of such approach were weak according to Jaffee and Nebenzahl (1984)'s empirical research. Therefore, the qualitative methodology using the long interviews, which triangulated with focus group interviews, was deployed. It can prevent the low validity and credibility drawback of quantitative methodology which had been used in most past COO studies. Therefore, this thesis makes a contribution to the qualitative literature on COO studies as it demonstrates the value of constructivist research in the

service evaluation process.

Thirdly, the international students selecting British universities as a study destination has been under researched in the literature of international higher education. Turning to the research on the choice of destination in international education, most studies were based on Australia as a host country (i.e. Harris and Jarrett (1990), Duan (1997), Kemp, et al. (1998), Lawley and Perry (1998), Pimpa (1999; 2000; 2002; 2003), Yao (2004), Son and Pearch (2005), Cubillo, et. al. (2005; 2006), Chen and Zimitat (2006), Wang and Davidson (2008), etc.). Only a few studies can be found in relation to the UK as the choice of destination in international education, especially how Chinese students select the U.K as a study destination. Therefore, this thesis can enrich the literature of COO studies from the perspective of service evaluation and the literature of international higher education by looking at Chinese students' evaluation of British higher education. In particular, the perceptions of prospective Chinese students in terms of how they look at British higher education can be used in the development of marketing strategies by both British universities and education agents.

Fourthly, there are problems with possible post-purchase dissonance in interviewing international students in previous international higher education studies (Murphy 1979; Chapman 1986; Maguire and Lay 1981). The post-purchase dissonance refers to an after purchase cognitive behaviour when the consumers were asked to evaluate their purchase decision before the purchase. This may lead to inaccurate results especially when the respondents were asked to make an evaluation of their purchase decision a few years ago. In some previous qualitative studies of international higher education such as Duan (1997), the respondents all had to recall the moment of making decisions of undertaking higher education, to study abroad, select a host country and select a particular institution a few years after they had already gone abroad. Some memory might be lost or cannot be picked up clearly in the interviews. In addition, the respondents' responses might be influenced by their changing understanding of international higher education. However, such problem cannot be

found in this study because the respondents were interviewed before they had studied abroad.

7.5 Managerial Implications

Service industries have received much less attention from previous studies than products. This is a particular case for the international higher education industry. While British higher education is developing in size, competition is becoming stronger. In addition, few studies have looked at how Chinese students select and evaluate British higher education services. While more and more Chinese students are going abroad for higher education, the study of international education is fragmented, with little research into how and why they select their future study destination.

China has become an especially important market for British universities because many students from China choose the U.K as a study destination. British universities relied heavily on the full fees paid by students from China to make up the losses incurred teaching British undergraduates because China provided approximately a quarter of the higher education market in the U.K (Economist, 2005). According to the report of Economist (2005), the number of overseas students soared to approximately 200,000. That brought in more than £1.25 billion a year in fees which accounted for 10% of British universities' total income. However, the applications for British universities in the academic year of 2005 to 2006 had dropped by 5.3%, whereas applications from China had surprisingly fallen by 25.8%.

Unless steps are taken to ensure the U.K. is still a competitive and attractive destination, the future of the British higher education industry may not be as effective as it can potentially be. The starting point in ensuring the U.K. as a competitive destination refers to advancing the knowledge of how and why international students choose destinations for education. This has been developed in this thesis. Such knowledge would be important to many of the stakeholders involved in British higher education. For example, policy makers from both source and host countries would

take advantage of the greater insight of why students choose study destinations as input to formulate policies (Smith, et. al. 1981).

The most important managerial implications of the research findings is that studying in the U.K has substantial long-term value for the international students from China because Chinese students generally have a positive evaluation of British higher education from their favourable image of the U.K. The stakeholders of British higher education that are in the fortunate position should boost such value as a promotional basis. A further practical implication for stakeholders of British higher education would be enhanced, more focussed information being provided by those actively involved in the recruitment of Chinese students. Part one of the study has shown that many Chinese students lack a-priori knowledge of British higher education services. Some Chinese students may have subjective or perceived knowledge. It has been found that such knowledge is usually inaccurate. In addition, the inaccurate knowledge may inevitably result in inaccurate evaluation of the British higher education by either questioning the status of British higher education or looking down on it. Therefore, the findings of this study have great implications for British universities, British government responsible for promoting British higher education and trade, Chinese universities, Chinese students and their parents. More accurate information could be provided to these stakeholders on the basis of the influences illuminated in this study as being influential in the evaluation of international higher education.

Managerial Implications to British Universities

As the U.K's favourable image has been projected onto its higher education services, British universities can promote the opportunity of successful market penetration and increase its market share from mainland China. In this case, the universities from the U.K with a favourable image perceived by Chinese students should devise strategies to accentuate their COO information. The marketing communication campaigns should stress the positive image of the U.K to Chinese students. Part one of the study

has suggested quite a few positive aspects of British COO image, such as the high standard of living, friendly and likable people, royal image, great cultural heritage and history, freedom, and good natural environment. Therefore, British universities should convey these attributes in their marketing communication campaigns in order to reinforce the positive image of the U.K perceived by Chinese students.

In addition, the reputation of the UK in relation to the provision of higher education services should be an important influence affecting Chinese students' international education flows. Many British universities and graduates are highly regarded by world standards. Part three of the study has suggested some positive attributes of British higher education, such as its good reputation and prestige over other countries' higher education, relative short length of studying a postgraduate taught course, the high quality of courses, excellent facilities, skilled scholars and teachers, freedom, high perceived safety on the campus and good quality student accommodation. These attributes should also be stressed by British universities because they are of most interest to Chinese students.

Managerial Implications to British Government Unit

The strong Chinese spending power should not be neglected by the British government. With China's economic reform and opening-up since 1978 and its accession to the WTO in 2001, a large number of Chinese families have become rich. Chinese students studying in the U.K do not only contribute to British universities, but also to the country's economy. Moreover, many Chinese students' wealthy parents could further contribute to the U.K's economy because the data suggested that the U.K has an image of being a tourist destination. Many parents would like to travel and visit the host country when their children are studying overseas.

The British government could attract Chinese students by securing the value of studying in the U.K. Firstly, the possible counterfeit university certificates prevailing in the Chinese job market indicates the urgency for protecting genuine degrees that

can produce premium value. Secondly, the data suggested that the cancellation of the PSW policy since April 2012 could erode the value of choosing the U.K as a studying destination. Many Chinese students would like to accumulate rich work experience before returning to China. Therefore, the relaunch of the PSW policy should be considered.

Managerial Implications to Chinese Universities

The rising demand of Chinese students in higher education over recent decades should be noted. Studying overseas becomes a solution to the problem of limited places provided by the universities in China. Therefore, Chinese universities should encourage their students to study abroad for more opportunities. In addition, this study has suggested many reasons why some excellent Chinese students do not to choose to study in China, such as limited freedom within the school and student accommodation, inflexibility of the courses, and the time cost of studying. These reasons should be noted by Chinese universities for retaining excellent students and enhancing their quality of services in the future.

Managerial Implications to Chinese Students

This study can be used as guidance for Chinese students who are interested in studying abroad. The four-stage decision making process in the Chapter Six can help them make decisions by looking at the informational cues under the nine categories of influences in each stage. In addition, the study has found that Chinese students' parents are usually lacking knowledge when selecting a host country and a particular institution. Therefore, this study becomes useful to them to acquire such knowledge and help their adult children to make decisions.

7.6 Research Limitations

There are a few limitations of the qualitative interviews. First of all, the interviews can sometimes cause confusion especially when the respondents lacked understanding of the meaning of interviewer's questions or conversely where the interviewer lacked

understanding of their answers during the interview (Wimmer and Dominick 1997). Such confusion occasionally took place in the data collection process which led to certain difficulties in the stage of data analysis.

Secondly, the data collection process was very time-consuming especially in focus group interviews. Due to the variations in the tone of voice and the need to detect who said what, transcribing the recordings of focus group interviews is much more time-consuming than equivalent recordings of the long interviews (Bryman, 2008). A focus group interview session lasting two and half hours can take up to 24 hours to transcribe, which is much longer than an equivalent long interview. Moreover, when I was concentrating on the verbal information during the interviews, I may miss some non-verbal signals such as facial expressions and body language.

Thirdly, a qualitative study has the drawback of difficulty of replication (Bryman, 2008). Since the interviews in this study were semi-structured and largely reliant upon my skills as an interviewer, it is hard to conduct a true replication. It is not possible to implement an absolute replication because there is no exact criterion to be followed. I am the only instrument of data collection, therefore, what had been observed and heard and also what I decided to address is in accordance with my predilections. The culture of the researcher can largely affect the data collection and data analysis process (McCracken, 1988; Bryman, 2008).

Fourthly, the questions and answers were sometimes provided spontaneously without any extended reflection during the interviews. Therefore, the synchronous character of qualitative research method may lead to certain data missing at the level of depth and detail (Wengraf, 2001). It became difficult to pick up the missing data after the interviews.

Fifthly, Due to the short time frame of the interviews, it was difficult to build real trust and empathy with some of the respondents. Passive listening or not listening to one

another may sometimes occur especially in the focus group interviews since some respondents were not interested in what others said or what others believed was important.

Sixthly, the interviews were conducted on a relatively small scale. It is difficult to draw definitive conclusions from only 23 long interviews and 3 focus group interviews for the wider population of Chinese students. Nonetheless, given the practical difficulties in approaching a randomised sample of the specific kind of students interviewed in the study, and the uncertainty that this specific kind of students would respond to a quantitative questionnaire, the method which I have applied could be the practical approach of focusing the research questions which I have pondered.

Seventhly, one of this study's main strengths – an insight into Chinese students' evaluation of British higher education –could also be perceived as a potential limitation, in that the findings cannot be generalised automatically to COO effects on the evaluation of other services. This study has been involved with only a limited number of COO themes and the sole service category of higher education. Whether a similar pattern of COO effects on the evaluation of other service categories is open to question. Consumers' attitudes toward services may be varied according to the service classes. The specific cultural, economic and social conditions facing Chinese students mean that it is perhaps not valid to draw too precise conclusions about COO effects with respect to the people from other countries' on the basis of Chinese findings alone.

Lastly, the interviews were conducted in a single location (Xi'an) in China with a sample composed uniquely of 20 to 28 years old students. Given the large size of Chinese higher institutions, the data findings are more representative of Chinese students from 211 project universities than students from non-211 project higher institutions. Project 211 is a project which aims to strengthen approximately 100 key

Chinese universities for the 21st century initiated in 1995 by China's Ministry of Education. The number of universities in the Project 211 account for approximate 6% of the over 2,000 higher institutions in China. Foreign universities are usually interested in these Chinese universities for possible collaboration because they are the first class universities in China.

7.7 Implications for Future Studies

This thesis is by its nature explanatory, but requires further examination through additional research. Future studies could extend this research to a wider sample of Chinese students, in addition to other service categories, and different time periods of Chinese students studying abroad.

7.7.1   COO Effects in the Evaluation of Other Service Categories

For a deeper understanding of COO effects on service evaluation, replicating the study in other service categories becomes necessary. Future COO studies can build on this thesis by considering different service categories as consumers' attitudes toward different services may be varied. In addition, future studies of international higher education can consider different source countries of international students and their different study destination. Moreover, further studies can investigate consumers from different countries rather than China with a view to their service evaluation. This would be of significant value both to academic research and to higher education sectors seeking to promote higher education services to particular market segments.

7.7.2   Is China in High Individualism?

This thesis arouses the reconsideration of the assumptions within the field of Chinese culture about how individualism is experienced by the emerging adult Chinese cohorts who were born in 1980s and 1990s. The result of this study showed medium to high individualistic values of the respondents. Such result has challenged the general consensus in the literature that Chinese culture is attributed as having low individualism.

It must be noted that many cultural studies conducted have included Hong Kong, Taiwan and Singapore as the sample countries while the P.R China was excluded (e.g. Hofstede, 1980; Chong, et al. 1983; Chinese Culture Connection, 1987; Shenkar and Ronen, 1987; Cragin, 1986). Although Chinese communities in the world are derived from a family with kinship, they may differ because they developed their own culture, economy and society independently (Huo and Randall, 1991). However, the proposition of a low individualistic China has been generally agreed by many authors when researching Chinese consumers' buying behaviour (Wang, et al. 2010), Chinese employees' work values (Jaw, et al. 2006), Chinese conflict management (Doucet and Jehn, 1997; Au, et al. 2001; Lin, 2009) and so on. These studies were based on Hofstede (1980)'s suggestions that Chinese culture is attributed as having low individualism because Hofstede (1980) is deemed as a 'super-classic' publication of culture studies (Baskerville, 2003 based on Durden & Ellis, 1993). Considering the social change in China over the thirty years since the 1980 publication of Hofstede (1980), the proposition of a low individualistic China is questioned.

Hofstede (1980) claimed that there is a positive relationship between the national wealth and the individualism continuum. The more wealthy the country the more likely it has high individualistic cultural value. Due to the rapid development of the Chinese economy in recent decades, whether or not China is high in individualism is questioned leaving a gap in the literature which future studies need to address.

7.7.3 Studies at Different Times

The development of Chinese overseas students has been under researched. Future studies can look at the structure of Chinese overseas students' population, their popular study destinations and status, as well as the associated changes of politics, economy, society, and technology at different time periods.

The development of China can be seen as an ongoing evolutionary process that has

undergone different eras based upon the gradual political and societal changes in Chinese history (Fan, 2000). The examples of the social movements and political reforms in China can be the Great Leap Forward (1958 to 1960), the Cultural Revolution (1966 to 1976), the Reform and Opening-up (since 1978), and WTO accession (in 2001). Accordingly, different generations with distinct cultural orientations are evident (Egri and Ralston, 2004). To better distinguish effects between generations in China. Yi, et al. (2010) defined the groups as following:

- Cultural Revolution Generation (born in the 1960s)

- Social Reform Generation (born in the 1970s)

- And Millennial Generation (born in the 1980s)

Young Chinese adults who were born in the 1980s are supposed to be the highly individualistic generation (Yi, et al. 2010). Those born in the 1970s or in the 1960s are in relatively low individualism as they experienced the Great Cultural Revolution and the beginning stage of 'Reform and Opening-up' in their childhood and adolescence.

The reasons of this differentiation are varied. First of all, Chinese society during the Cultural Revolution was extremely low individualistically orientated. According to the social ideology, people were not allowed to have any high individualistic value in most situations at that time (Hofstede, 1980). Therefore, the low individualistic value had been shaped in people born in the 1960s when they grew up. Secondly, those born in the 1970s underwent the initial stage of 'Reform and Opening-up' in their childhood and/ or adolescence when traditional low individualism was still dominate in China. Thirdly, the 'One Child Policy' produces the individualistic generation since the 1980s (Yi, et al. 2010) along with the high western cultural exposure experiences from later stages of 'Reform and Opening-up'. It is likely that even under the same contemporary Chinese cultural exposure experiences, those born in the 1960s and the 1970s, compared with to 1980s generation, because of their longer exposure experiences to former communist ideology and therefore conservatively score higher on values that are consistent with traditional Chinese culture such as low

individualism, and lower on western values such as high individualism.

Future studies can apply the qualitative research method to interview different age groups who had foreign study experience before. The aim of these studies is to acquire Chinese students' views of the international higher education at different time periods. The interested age groups can be those who were born in the 1960s, 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s. It might be difficult to approach an adequate sample that were born in 1950s or earlier because China had been isolated from Western influence throughout many years before 1978. There were unique challenges for Chinese people seeking foreign knowledge before 1978 because at that time "everything smelling educated, wealthy, developed, or Western was regarded as the enemy" (Straszheim, 2008: 157). Therefore, most of Chinese people born in the 1950s or earlier could hardly have the opportunity to go abroad for study when they were young. Nonetheless, it is still meaningful to examine their views of sending their children abroad for higher education because they are now the parents of those who were born in the 1980s to 1990s.

Moreover, comparative research of the change of historical flows of Chinese overseas students between different countries and different universities could be conducted. Such comparative research will be meaningful for further understanding Chinese students' evaluation of international higher education and might be useful for predicting future trends of the students' flows in international higher education.

7.74 Exploring Additional Pull factors

This thesis has found many push factors that encourage Chinese students to go abroad for further study. It also indicated quite a few pull factors that attract Chinese students to select the U.K as a study destination and to select a specific British university. The table 7.14 has shown all the illuminated pull factors in this study. These factors are withdrawn from the table 6.14 and 6.15 in the previous chapter.

Table 7.14: Pull Factors of Chinese Students Choosing a Study Destination

Categories of Pull Factors	Pull Factors			
Cost of Study	General cost of future study (living cost and tuition fee)	Scholarship available in a British university	Time cost of studying a course	
	Time cost of learning a new language	Scholarship available	Time cost of applying a university and student visa	
Curiosity	Acquisition of foreign experience in the U.K			
Employment Prospect	Employment prospect in the U.K	Possibility of getting a part-time job in the U.K	Recognition of qualification by job market	The prospect of gaining a competitive advantage in job market
English Language	English Speaking Country	English Acquisition	English accents	
Entry Requirement	Ease of obtaining a student visa	Ease of obtaining a working visa in the U.K	Possibility of choosing a different subject of study(Course match)	
Environment	**Natural Environment**	Weather	Image as a tourist destination	Environment in campus
	Cultural Environment	Different cultural environment		
	Economic Environment	Developed country (the wealth and power of the U.K)		
	Living Environment	Safety environment of the selected country	General living environment	
Freedom	Freedom in the university	Seek freedom of religion		
Reputation	Academic reputation of the U.K			
Others	Demographical attributes (country size, population of the U.K)	Places available in selected course of selected university		

Future research might use the findings of this study to evaluate how different British universities can effectively use these pull factors in the Chinese market. Additional pull factors can also be explored by researching British universities rather than Chinese students. It is assumed that the importance of different pull factors varies between different British universities because they have different cost of study, entry requirements, environment, and academic reputation. Moreover, quantitative research method can be used to further study these identified pull factors.

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Appendix

Appendix 1: Invitation Letter to Students for the Long Interview or Focus Group Interview

Dear Students,

My name is Lei Zhu. I am a Ph.D student in the Business School at the University of Salford. I am conducting a research study as part of the requirements of my degree in Business and Management, and I would like to invite you to participate.

The title of my study is: Country of Origin Effects on Service Evaluation – An Insight into Chinese Students' Choice of British Higher Education. The purpose of my study is to find out how Chinese students evaluate British higher education services. If you decide to participate, you will be asked to meet with me for an individual interview about this. The data collected from this interview will be used to complete my thesis, publication, and dissemination. Although you probably won't benefit directly from participating in this study, the result of this study will assist British universities better understand Chinese students like you and improve their services. Therefore, your participation is meaningful for the international higher education services in general.

Taking part in the study is your decision. You do not have to be in this study if you haven't decided your study destination in the future.

As an overseas student myself, I understand how valuable of your time is. Your participation is vital otherwise this research will be impossible to complete. Thank you for your consideration. If you would like to participate or have any questions about your rights as a research participant, please feel free to contact with me through the contact information below to discuss participating.

Best regards

Lei Zhu

Address: Flat 153, Matthias Court, Silk Street, Salford, Greater Manchester, the United Kingdom, M3 6JF

Phone number: 0044 (0) 7846677330

E-mail: zhulei_520@hotmail.com

Appendix 2:   Participant Information Sheet

In the interview process, you will be asked questions about the reasons that may influence your decision to choose your study destination.

The interview will take place at a mutually agreed upon time and place, and should last no more than two hours. In the process, refreshment will be provided and you can request a break at any time as you wish. The interview will be audio recorded so that I can accurately reflect on what has been discussed. To ensure a high quality study, I may involve other academics at the University of Salford in the data analysis process. Therefore, I may allow other academics at the University of Salford to have access to your data so as to complete the data analysis process. However, I will use random numbers rather your name to mark the data obtained from the interview. I promise I will not disclose the names of the individuals who have participate in this study, although I may use anonymised quotations (from interview transcripts) in publications and disseminations. Here, the publication and dissemination is broadly defined to include academic journals, e-journals, books, conference proceedings / presentations, practitioner journals, presentations, interviews, teaching, internet web sites and systems, and any other relevant form of dissemination as determined by the researcher.

The purposes of the biographical questions are for ascertaining your eligibility for the study. The biographical questions are necessary for matching you with specific groups such as your destinations of future higher education. Additionally, your information such as name, e-mail and telephone can help me to trace you back for further discussion if there is any possible uncertainty or mistake found afterward in the transcribing process. Your biographical data may be however used in publication and dissemination in an aggregated manner, for example as a necessary demographic analysis showing ages of respondents, gender etc, but this will be aggregated and will not risk identifying anyone who has taken part in the study , because I will not name

any respondent.

The data will largely be transcribed by myself and may hire a typist for additional assistance (If so, the typist will sign a confidentiality agreement). The findings of the study may be published or disseminated in an anonymised manner. In the transcribing process, respondents can only be identified by numbers like R1, R2, and R3, etc. rather than their real names. Besides, respondents' contact information is unknown. I can confirm that respondents will only be identified in publication and dissemination by code letters.

What's more important, all the data collected from respondents will be saved securely on password protected computer in a secure bag. When travelling my computer will be kept with me in a computer bag and all transcripts will be locked away. Last but not least, all of the data collected will be deleted permanently after 2 years of the final submission of the study

I would like to advise you that you can withdraw from this study without any reason. However, withdrawal is only possible before publication and dissemination has occurred.

Appendix 3: Draft Interview Guide

The leading theme for the interview is: "Your choice of further higher education services". All other sub-themes stem from this one focus and it is the key to my analysis of the interviews that I try to keep the main theme in mind at all times during the process.

In the interview process, you will be a source of my information. To make sure that I do not influence you, I am going to invite you to suggest to me as many reasons as you can think of for your answers. You are free to ask any questions at any time before and during and after the interview. The interview is intended to be semi-structured, therefore the interview provides framework with similar thematic questions.

Appendix 4: Participant Consent Form

Name of Participant: Sex: Male / Female

                                                               Date of Birth:

Researcher: Lei Zhu

I consent to participate in this study. I am satisfied with the instructions I have been given so far and I expect to have any further information requested regarding the study supplied to me at the end of the interview.

I have been informed that the anonymity of the data I provide will be safeguarded. I am free to ask any questions at any time before and during the study. I have been provided with a copy of this form and the participant information sheet. I have carefully read the Participant Information Sheet and agree with its content.

Data Protection: I agree to Mr. Lei Zhu and relevant academics from University of Salford processing data that I have supplied. I agree to the processing of such data for any purposes connected with the research project as outlined to me.

Name of participant: Signed   Date

Name of researcher: Lei Zhu   Signed   Date

Appendix 5: External factors of COO effects on service evaluation

Categories of External Factors	External factors of COO effects on service evaluation				
Cost	General cost of future study (living cost and tuition fee)	Scholarship provided by a Chinese university	Scholarship available in foreign university	Time cost of studying a course	Time cost of applying a foreign university and student visa
	Time cost of learning a new language				
Curiosity	Acquisition of foreign experience (to see the world, see adventure)	Acquisition of knowledge or study interest	Seek Independence	Acquisition of foreign language (not English)	
Employment Prospect	Employment prospect in China	Employment prospect in foreign country	Possibility of getting a part-time job in host country	Recognition of qualification by job market	Higher degree acquisition for better employment prospect
	Employment prospect in China by the course studied	The prospect of gaining a competitive advantage in job market	Recognition of the selected foreign institution by China	Recognition of the selected course studied in foreign universities by China	
English	English Speaking Country	English Acquisition	English accents		
Entry Requirement	Ease of Admission to a Chinese university (e.g. applying home university)	Ease of obtaining a student visa	Ease of obtaining a working visa in foreign country	Ease of Admission to a foreign university	Difficulty of Admission to a foreign university
	Difficulty of admission to a Chinese university (e.g. applying other university)	English requirement of admission to a country's universities	Possibility of choosing a different subject of study (Course match)		
Environment	**Natural Environment**	Weather	Environment in campus	Image as a tourist destination	

	Study Environment	For better studying environment			
	Cultural Environment	Foreign culture preferred	Culture of sending students overseas	Different cultural environment	Cultural proximity
	Economic Environment	Developed country (the wealth and power of host country)			
	Living Environment	Safety environment of the selected country	General living environment	Safety environment of the city where the selected university located	General city image of where the selected university located
Freedom	Freedom in the university	Freedom in the country	Seek freedom (want to be far away from home)		
Influence of Normative Referents	family's suggestion (parents or grandparents)	Parents' financial support available	Friends' suggestion	Friends' experience	Education agent' suggestion
	Tutor' suggestion	Influence of parents' friends	Influence of boyfriend or girlfriend`	Influence of boyfriend or girlfriend's parents	Influence of relatives
	Influence of school's advertisement	Informational support by the school			
Reputation	**Past study in China**	Academic reputation of the university studied in China (University reputation)	Academic reputation of the course in the university studied in China (Course reputation)		
	Future study in China	Academic reputation of	Academic reputation of the course		

		the selected Chinese university for future study (University reputation)	in the selected Chinese for future study (Course reputation)		
	Future study abroad	Academic reputation of the selected overseas university in the future (University reputation)	Academic reputation of the course selected in the selected overseas university in the future (Course reputation)	Academic reputation of the selected host country in the future (Country's Higher Education reputation)	Academic Reputation for Quality education of overseas universities
	Other reputation	Prestige of studying overseas	Prestige of living overseas		
Others	Potential uncertainties and risk of going abroad	Seeking self-achievement in life	Familiarity of a selected country	Uncertainties for future	Trend of acquiring a higher level of degree
	Trend of going abroad for higher education	Don't want to go far away from home	Social pressure for a higher degree	Familiarity of the university selected for future higher education	Past positive foreign experience
	Past negative foreign experience	Availability of course in China	Places available in selected course of selected university	Past positive experience of living and studying in a particular university	Social pressure of early marriage for Chinese women
	Poor image of Chinese students overseas	Continuous Academic Project	Possible to immigrate		

Appendix 6: Ethical Approval

1a.   Title of proposed research project

Country of Origin Effects on Service Evaluation – An Insight into Chinese Students' Choice of

British Higher Education

1b. Is this Project Purely literature based?

~~YES~~ **/ NO**   (delete as appropriate)

2.   Project focus

To further the literature of COO effects with respect to the issue of service evaluation.

COO effects can be explained as a kind of consumers' impressions and perceptions to the product value from a specific country (Bilkey and Nes, 1982; Han, 1989). People usually have "the picture, the reputation, and the stereotype that businessmen and consumers attach to products of a specific country. This image is created by such variables as representative products, national characteristics, economic and political background, history, and traditions (Nagashima, 1970: 68)." According to Papadopoulos (1993), country images can facilitate consumers to classify products, develop product hierarchies and symbolise products' elements and characterise products' attributes.

This project focuses on the internal and external factors which may influence COO effects on consumers' service evaluation. These factors which have been found in influencing COO effects on consumers' product evaluation are selected from the literature review and the review of Chinese cultural categories. Therefore, this project examines whether these factors can also be applied to COO effects on service evaluation. The service chosen is the international higher education service, especially British higher education service evaluated by Chinese university students. The internal factors include Chinese COO image, British COO image, Consumer Ethnocentrism, Vertical Individualism, and Vertical Collectivism. The external factors include: academic reputation, availability of courses in home country, English acquisition, country environment, costs of studying overseas, entry requirement, and employment opportunity.

3.   Project objectives

The study's objectives are to:
- Evaluate British COO image held by Chinese university students who have the intention to continue study after graduation from the aspects of general country image, general service image, and the image of British higher education services.
- Construct a multi-cue study by applying both external influences and internal influences to examine the COO effects on Chinese students' evaluation of British higher education services

4. Research strategy

(For example, outline of research methodology, what information/data collection strategies will you use, where will you recruit participants and what approach you intend to take to the analysis of information / data generated)

- Participants will be recruited in Chinese universities including: Xi'an University of Finance and Economies and Xi'an International Studies University. All the participants are students from these universities.

- Both the Long Interview and Focus Group methodology will be conducted as the main data collection strategy. The Long Interview is chosen as the methodology (McCracken, 1988). Additionally, triangulation as another important mode of improving data validity (Lincoln, 1985) is applied. Therefore, focus group methodology is used which is the triangulation methodology suggested by McCracken (1988).

- The long interviews will be the starting point for evaluating the prepared categories and exploring new categories. Focus group can then confirm any difference in perspectives across different categories of informants indentified in the long interviews. In the focus groups, Participants are going to be grouped into three types according to their selection of study destination including China, the U.K., and other countries.

- The data obtained will be transcribed verbatim and then analysed by myself. The data obtained from the Long Interview will be analysed according to McCracken (1988)'s five-stage process and the data from focus groups will be analysed according to qualitative principles outlined in Miles and Huberman (1984) and Morgan (1997).

- Before collecting data in China, a pilot study in the U.K using 3 long interviews will be undertaken. Participants are all Chinese students studying in the University of Salford.

5. What is the rationale which led to this project?

(For example, previous work – give references where appropriate. Any seminal works must be cited)

Findings of the product research stream showed that consumers are likely to have either positive or negative perceptions of countries based on stereotypic beliefs (Nagashima, 1970; Papadopoulos, 1993; Roth and Romeo, 1992). Hence, these stereotypes of countries can positively or negatively affect consumers' attitudes toward various countries' related products (Reierson, 1967; Schooler 1971; Johansson, et al. 1985; Papadopoulous, 1986; Smith, 1993; Baker and Michie, 1995; Kim 1995), especially one country's representative products (e.g. Lenovo computers to China and Nokia mobile phones to Finland) (Darling and Kraft, 1977). The COO effects on consumer behaviour have resulted in consumers either positively or negatively evaluating products from different product categories (Piron, 2000). Additionally, there is evidence that the significance of country image to consumers has been increasing (e.g. Johansson et, al.1985).

This study postulates that these perceptions that affect product evaluation can also be transferred to services evaluation. Moreover, relatively fewer studies can be found on the determinants of COO influence on services in the international markets. Javalgi et al. (2001) found that only 19 studies from top 25 marketing journals during 1980s to 2000s mentioned the relationship

between COO image and international context. From the mere 19 studies, most of the studies concerned the important COO effects in products with supplementary services (e.g. warrantee or guarantee). Merely six of them examined the COO effects on some core services (e.g. medical care or travel services) (Javalgi et al, 2001).

Turning to the study on the choice of destination in international education, most studies were based on Australia as host country, such as Harris and Jarrett (1990), Duan (1997), Kemp, et al. (1998), Lawley and Perry (1998), Pimpa (1999; 2000; 2002; 2003), Yao (2004), Son and Pearch (2005), Cubillo, et. al. (2005; 2006), Chen and Zimitat (2006), Wang and Davidson (2008), and so on. However, seldom studies can be found in relation to the UK as the choice of destination in international education.

6. **If you are going to work within a particular organisation do they have their own procedures for gaining ethical approval**
(For example, within a hospital or health centre?)
~~YES~~ **/ NO (**delete as appropriate)
If YES – what are these and how will you ensure you meet their requirements?

7. **Are you going to approach individuals to be involved in your research?**
YES/ ~~NO~~ (delete as appropriate)
If YES – please think about key issues – for example, how you will recruit people? How you will deal with issues of confidentiality / anonymity? Then make notes that cover the key issues linked to your study

- Each university will give the permission to the researcher to recruit volunteers in the interview
- Each interview will be audio recorded by digital recorder. The data will then be transferred into my computer and assigned to anonymised ID code. All of the data collected will be deleted permanently after 2 years of the submission of the study
- All respondents' personal identifiable data will be anonymised in the write up of the thesis.

8. **More specifically, how will you ensure you gain informed consent from anyone involved in the study?**

A consent form including the interview's purpose will be shown and signed by each interviewee before interviews taken place.

9. **How are you going to address any Data Protection issues?**

See notes for guidance which outline minimum standards for meeting Data Protection issues

Whilst the study asks respondents' personal details I can assure the panel that none of these details will be used in my thesis or any publication or dissemination in such a way as to either

directly or indirectly identify respondents. The study requires this information in order to meet a specific requirement of the long interview which stipulates the need for such biographical questions.

The purposes of biographical questions are screening eligibility and collecting contacts. The biographical questions are necessary for matching respondents with specific groups such as their destinations of future higher education. Additionally, respondents' information such as name, e-mail and telephone can help me to trace them back for further discussion if there is any possible uncertainty or mistake found afterward in the transcribing process.

The data may be however used in publication and dissemination in an aggregated manner, for example as a necessary demographic analysis showing ages of respondents, gender etc, but this will be aggregated and will not risk identifying anyone who has taken part in the study , because I will not name the respondents.

The data will largely be transcribed by myself and may hire a typist for additional assistance (If so, the typist will sign a confidentiality agreement). In the transcribing process, respondents can only be identified by numbers like R1, R2, and R3, etc. rather than their real names. I can confirm that respondents will only be identified in publication and dissemination by code letters.

What's more important, all the data collected from respondents will be saved securely on password protected computer in a secure bag. When travelling my computer will be kept with me in a computer bag and all transcripts will be locked away.

Last but not least, all of the data collected will be deleted permanently after 2 years of the final submission of the study

10.   Are there any other ethical issues that need to be considered? For example - research on animals or research involving people under the age of 18.

All the people involving in the research will be over age of 18

11.   (a) Does the project involve the use of ionising or other type of "radiation"
     YES / NO

(b) Is the use of radiation in this project over and above what would <u>normally</u> be expected (for example) in diagnostic imaging?
     YES / NO

(c) Does the project require the use of hazardous substances?
     YES / NO

(d) Does the project carry any risk of injury to the participants?

~~YES~~ / NO

(e) Does the project require participants to answer questions that may cause disquiet / or upset to them?
~~YES~~ / NO

If the answer to any of the questions 11(a)-(e) is YES, a risk assessment of the project is required and must be submitted with your application.

12.   How many subjects will be recruited/involved in the study/research?   What is the rationale behind this number?

> The interview numbers relies on the point at which no new information or themes are observed in the data. In order to achieve "saturation" of the information, it is estimated to have 27 interviews in this study.

13.   Please state which code of ethics has guided your approach (e.g. from Research Council, Professional Body etc).

Please note that in submitting this form you are confirming that you will comply with the requirements of this code. If not applicable please explain why.

> I confirm that I will comply with the requirements of the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC).

Remember that informed consent from research participants is crucial, therefore all documentation must use language that is readily understood by the target audience.

Projects that involve NHS patients, patients' records or NHS staff, will require ethical approval by the appropriate NHS Research Ethics Committee. The University Research Ethics Panel will require written confirmation that such approval has been granted. Where a project forms part of a larger, already approved, project, the approving REC should be informed about, and approve, the use of an additional co-researcher.

Appendix 7: Consent Letter given by Xi'an University of Finance and Economies

西 安 财 经 学 院

Xi'an University of Finance and Economies

Xi'an City, Shaanxi Province

710128 P.R. China

March 2011

To Whom It May Concern,

This is to certify that Mr. Lei Zhu had been granted the permission to recruit volunteer students in Xi'an University of Finance and Economies for his data collection in his doctoral research. The data will be collected by using long interviews and focus groups upon our students. The data collected will be used for the purposes of Mr. Lei Zhu's thesis named "Country of Origin Effects on Service Evaluation – An Insight into Chinese Students' Choice of British Higher Education", and may lead to other publications and disseminations. As Mr. Lei Zhu promised, the information gained must not identify any individuals taking part in the study and the selected students' anonymity must be strictly preserved. If you need any further information about this consent letter, please feel free to contact us.

Best regards

Office of Academic Affairs, XAUFE

Appendix 8: Consent Letter given by Xi'an International Studies University

西安外国语大学教务处

Office of Academic Affairs, XISU

Xian International Studies University
Chang'an District
Xi'an City, Shaanxi Province
710128 P.R. China

March 2011

To Whom It May Concern,

This is to certify that Mr. Lei Zhu had been granted the permission to recruit volunteer students in Xi'an International Studies University for his data collection in his doctoral research. The data will be collected by using long interviews and focus groups upon our students. The data collected will be used for the purposes of Mr. Lei Zhu's thesis named "Country of Origin Effects on Service Evaluation – An Insight into Chinese Students' Choice of British Higher Education", and may lead to other publications and disseminations. As Mr. Lei Zhu promised, the information gained must not identify any individuals taking part in the study and the selected students' anonymity must be strictly preserved. If you need any further information about this consent letter, please feel free to contact us.

Best regards.

Office of Academic Affairs, XISU

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Appendix 9: Sample Data Matrices

Part One of the Study - COO Effects on Service Evaluation

Note: Codes in blue or marked with the symbol ★ are the attributes I identified before I went to the U.K, while Codes in purple or marked with

● are the attributes I identified after I went to the U.K in my Review of Cultural Category. Words in red or *italic* are the open codes. The rest of

codes in black colour were withdrawn from the literature.

Positive British COO Image	CN1-8, UK1-8, OTH1-7	Positive Chinese COO Image	CN3; CN4; CN5; UK8; OTH4
Negative British COO Image		**Negative Chinese COO Image**	CN1; CN2; CN6; CN7; CN8; UK1; UK2; UK3; UK4; UK5; UK6; UK7; OTH1; OTH2; OTH3; OTH5; ; OTH6
GCA – U.K (Positive) CN1 (p.1); CN2 (p.7); CN3 (p.7); CN5 (p.8); CN6 (p.7); CN7 (p.8); CN8 (p.12); UK1 (p.2); UK2 (p.4); UK4 (p.11); UK5 (p.7, 8); UK6 (p.11); UK7 (p.6); UK8 (p.8); OTH2 (p.5); OTH3 (p.5, 6); OTH4 (p.5); OTH5 (p. 11, 12); OTH6 (p.4, 5); OTH7 (p.7)	**GCA – U.K (Negative)** CN4 (p.7) **GCA- U.K (Neutral)** UK3 (p.5)	**GCA- China (Positive)** CN3 (p.11); CN4 (p.12); CN5 (p.11); CN8 (p.19); UK1 (p.9); UK8 (p.13) OTH1 (p.13); OTH3 (p. 19) **GCA – China (Neutral)** UK2 (p.14) OTH4 (p. 9, 21)	**GCA – China (Negative)** CN1 (p.14); CN2 (p.14); CN6 (p.9); CN7 (p.14) UK3 (p.8); UK4(p.9, 18); UK5 (p.12); UK6 (p.15); UK7 (p.10, 13) OTH2 (p. 6); OTH6 (p.7); OTH7 (p.11)
Friendly and likable★● CN1 (p.11); CN5 (p.9) UK1 (p.4); UK3 (p.16); UK4 (p.23) UK5 (p.7); UK8 (p.10) OTH3 (p.13); OTH4 (p.5) OTH6 (p.4, 11); OTH7 (p.7)	Not friendly or likable CN3 (p.6)	Hard working and diligent CN7 (p.8)	Not well educated CN1 (p.12); CN2 (p.17); CN6 (p.9, 15) CN7 (p.15); CN8 (p.15) OTH1 (p.11); OTH4 (p. 22) OTH5 (p. 14)
Well educated CN2 (p.25); CN6 (p.14) OTH1 (p.6); OTH4 (p. 21) OTH5 (p. 10, 12, 13)	Not hard working OTH3 (p. 10)	High technical skills CN5 (p.14)	Less technical skills CN5 (p.8) UK3 (p.9)
High standard of living CN7 (p.7) UK2 (p.5); UK7 (p.6) OTH4 (p.14); OTH5 (p.11);OTH7 (p.12)	Low efficiency UK5 (p.7) OTH7 (p.12)	Glorious history● CN4 (p.13) UK1 (p.11, 12)	Poverty (low GDP per capita) CN3 (p.9); CN4 (p.11, 14, 20) CN5 (p.4); CN7 (p.8, 13, 15); CN8 (p.19); UK1 (p.13); UK2 (p.9, 13); UK6 (p.16); UK7 (p.15)

			OTH5 (p. 14, 15, 16); OTH6 (p.8)
High technical skills CN4 (p.11); CN5 (p.8, 9) OTH5 (p. 11)	*Sometimes too democratic* CN8 (p.15) OTH7 (p.12)	Culture heritage● UK2 (p.13) UK5 (p.11)	Low standard of living CN2 (p.17) OTH4 (p. 12)
High social welfare● CN3(p.7); CN4 (p.7, 11) CN6 (p.6); CN7 (p.8) UK2 (p.5, 9); UK5 (p.6) UK6 (p.12); UK7 (p.7); UK8 (p.8, 11) OTH5 (p. 11); OTH7 (p.12)	*Sometimes too much freedom given* CN8 (p.15)	Strong patriotism● CN6 (p.9, 10, 22) CN8 (p.19, 27) UK1 (p.12); UK3 (p.9) UK8 (p.13) OTH7 (p.8, 12, 16)	Low average income UK2 (p.8)
High average income● (rich people) UK2 (p.8, 9) CN5 (p.8 .9) UK6 (p.7, 25) OTH1 (p.7)	*Low social safety* CN4 (p.9) CN6 (p.6) UK3 (p.6) UK5 (p.6) UK8 (p.9) OTH6 (p.5)	Good Economy (Fast developing economy)● CN3 (p.11, 12); CN4 (p.12); CN5 (p.12); CN6 (p.10); CN7 (p.8, 13); CN8 (p.19) UK1 (p.9, 13); UK3 (p.8, 25); UK5 (p.11, 12); UK6 (p.16) UK7 (p.10, 33); UK8 (p.13) OTH1 (p.13); OTH3 (p.8, 10) OTH4 (p.11, 12, 14); OTH5 (p. 11) OTH6 (p.8, 9); OTH7 (p.11, 12)	Polluted CN1(p.2) CN5 (p.8, 9) CN7 (p.7) UK7 (p.33) OTH1 (p.12) OTH7 (p.15, 26)
Good natural environment CN1(p.2) CN3 (p.11); CN5 (p.9); CN7 (p.7) UK4(p.9); UK7 (p.6, 33) OTH1 (p.5); OTH6 (p.4)	*History enemy* OTH7 (p.8)	Raised living standard● CN3 (p.11); CN5 (p.12); CN7 (p.13) UK1 (p.10); UK3 (p.8) UK6 (p.16); UK7 (p.10, 22) OTH3 (p.8); OTH5 (p. 16)	Limited freedom (speech, assembling, and religion) CN2 (p.14, 16, 17, 18); CN3 (p.12) CN5 (p.13); CN7 (p.12); CN8 (p.21, 22) UK1 (p.14); UK2 (p.4, 14); UK4 (p.20); UK6 (p.17) UK7 (p.12); UK8 (p.18) OTH1 (p.13); OTH2 (p. 7, 15, 16); OTH5 (p. 16, 17)
Safety environment CN1 (p.17) UK6 (p.7)	*Many economy problems (decreasing economy)* CN4 (p.7, 9); CN6 (p.6, 11, 25) UK3 (p.6); UK5 (p.6); UK8 (p.9) OTH4 (p.4, 5); OTH6 (p.5); OTH7 (p.12)	Influential to the world● CN4 (p.12) UK1 (p.9)	Limited Democracy (lack of equality) CN3 (p.12); CN4 (p.14) UK1 (p.14); UK2 (p.24); UK3 (p.18); UK6 (p.15, 17) UK8 (p.9)
Culture inherit CN2 (p.10); CN7 (p.7); UK3 (p.6) OTH1 (p.6); OTH2 (p.5); OTH4 (p.4) OTH5 (p. 11)	*Stereotyped in doing things (bureaucratic)* UK4(p.10, 17); UK6 (p.8, 10) OTH1 (p.6); OTH3 (p.5)		Decreased happiness of the people CN3 (p.12); CN7 (p.7) UK3 (p.8); UK5 (p.11) UK6 (p.16); UK7 (p.25)
Royal image CN6 (p.6) UK7 (p.6) UK8 (p.8)	*Poor weather* CN1 (p.14) UK1 (p.4) OTH5 (p. 12)	Highly CPC controlled (mono-party political system with mono-party autocracy) CN4 (p.14); UK2 (p.12); UK8 (p.13)	Political corruption CN2 (p.14,15,16, 17); CN4 (p.13, 25) CN5 (p.11); CN6 (p.6, 10); CN7 (p.12, 20); UK1 (p.10, 13, 16); UK2 (p.24)

OTH4 (p.4, 5)	OTH6 (p.4)	OTH4 (p. 10) UK2 (p.12): We have a mono-party political system with mono-party autocracy. It is good for China at the moment, because we cannot find a better one. The multi-party system applied in the U.K or the U.S is good for them but not for China. We have too many people that may split the country if we apply multi-party political system. The reason is due to that Chinese people are not as united as westerners. Therefore, we need a combined strength which is a mono-arty political system in charge of the country.	UK3 (p.8, 9); UK4(p.9, 22) UK5 (p.11); UK6 (p.16) UK7 (p.10); UK8 (p.9) OTH3 (p.9); OTH4 (p.10, 11) OTH5 (p.15); OTH6 (p.7, 8)
Developed country CN3 (p.6, 7,12); CN4 (p.11); CN5 (p.8, 9); CN7 (p.10); CN8 (p.12, 13) UK1 (p.13); UK4(p.9, 12) UK6 (p.25); UK7 (p.7, 15, 32) OTH3 (p.6, 18); OTH4 (p.5, 14) OTH5 (p. 11); OTH6 (p.9) OTH7 (p.12, 14)	*People are not hard working* CN4 (p.7) CN7 (p.8) UK2 (p.5) OTH7 (p.12)	*Confucianism* CN1 (p.13) UK7 (p.11) CN8 (p.19) OTH6 (p.8, 12, 22)	*Highly CPC controlled* CN2 (p.14, 16, 17, 18); CN5 (p.12) CN6 (p.6); CN7 (p.12, 13); CN8 (p.22) UK1 (p.10); UK3 (p.9); UK4 (p.19, 20, 21, 23) UK5 (p.11); UK6 (p.15, 31); UK7 (p.12) OTH2 (p. 16, 17, 20); OTH3 (p.8); OTH5 (p. 17) OTH6 (p.8); OTH7 (p.14)
Precise workmanship OTH4 (p. 21) CN6 (p.14)	*War maker* CN4 (p.8) UK2 (p.5) UK8 (p.9)	*Thrifty* CN3 (p.13) CN4 (p.11) UK8 (p.11) OTH6 (p.22)	*Large gap between the rich and the poor* CN3 (p.11); CN7 (p.8, 13) UK3 (p.8); UK4 (p.23); UK6 (p.16, 18); UK7 (p.10); UK8 (p.13) OTH5 (p. 15); OTH6 (p.9)
Democratic CN3 (p.12); CN4 (p.20); CN6 (p.6) CN8 (p.14) UK1 (p.13, 14); UK3 (p.5); UK4(p.10) UK8 (p.9); OTH7 (p.8)	*Football hooliganism* CN4 (p.10) CN6 (p.7) UK3 (p.6)		*Pyramid economy* UK6 (p.18); UK7 (p.12) OTH6 (p.9)
Freedom (e.g. speech, assembling, religion) CN3 (p.12); CN 4 (p.20) CN6 (p.11); CN8 (p.14) UK1 (p.14); UK2 (p.4, 14); OTH7 (p.8)	*Food not delicious* UK1 (p.4) UK7 (p.7)		*Still a developing country* CN3 (p.7, 9, 12); CN4 (p.11) CN5 (p.9, 22); CN7 (p.8) UK1 (p.9); UK7 (p.15) OTH6 (p.9); OTH7 (p.14)
High efficiency	*Arrogant*	*High efficiency*	*Monopoly state-owned business*

CN8 (p.12,13)	*UK2 (p.5)* *UK5 (p.7, 8)*	CN2 (p.14) UK7 (p.8); OTH3 (p.9); OTH4 (p. 10)	CN2 (p.15, 18) OTH2 (p. 7)
Glorious history *CN2 (p.10); CN3 (p.7)* *CN4 (p.9); CN6 (p.7, 25)* *UK1 (p.3); UK2 (p.33)* *UK3 (p.5, 6); UK5 (p.6); UK6 (p.6)* *OTH2 (p.5); OTH5 (p.11)* *OTH6 (p.4, 6, 21); OTH7 (p.7)*	*Hierarchical society* *UK3 (p.6)*	*Harmony* *CN1 (p.13)* *UK2 (p.12); UK6 (p.24); UK8 (p.13)*	*Large population* *CN1 (p.12) ; CN3 (p.13)* *CN4 (p.14) ; CN5 (p.10, 15)* *CN6 (p.9, 10) ; CN7 (p.8, 15) ; CN8 (p.15, 19)* *UK1 (p.13) ; UK2 (p.6, 12); UK4 (p.22) ; UK8 (p.16)* *OTH4 (p. 19); OTH5 (p.13); OTH7 (p.12)*
Equality *CN4 (p.20)* *CN8 (p.13)* *UK8 (p.21)*	*High unemployment rate* *CN6 (p.6)* *UK4(p.8)* *UK8 (p.9)*	*Good infrastructure* *UK1 (p.11)*	*Guanxi (caused unfair competition)* *CN2 (p.15, 31, 32); CN4 (p.31); CN5 (p.19, 22)* *CN6 (p.17); CN7 (p.22); CN8 (p.12, 13)* *UK1 (p.13); UK2 (p.23); UK3 (p.17); UK4 (p.29)* *UK5 (p.11); UK6 (p.16, 24, 25); UK8 (p.20)* *OTH1 (p.21); OTH3 (p.9, 10); OTH5 (p. 3)*
Red-brick buildings *UK2 (p.5); UK3 (p.6); UK7 (p.6)* *OTH3 (p.5)*	*Conservative (neg)* *OTH5 (p. 11, 12)* *OTH6 (p.4)*	*More and more rich people emerged* *CN3 (p.10)*	*Economic bubble* *CN4 (p.13); CN6 (p.10); CN8 (p.19);* *UK4 (p.19); UK6 (p.16); UK8 (p.13) OTH7 (p.11)*
Good weather *CN2 (p.10)*	*High cost of living* *OTH1 (p.5)*		*High CPI (Consumer Price Index)* *CN8 (p.19) UK7 (p.10) UK8 (p.13) OTH7 (p.11)*
No political corruption *CN2 (p.17)* *UK8 (p.9)*			*Lack of faith or religion* *CN2 (p.16)* *CN8 (p.20, 21)* *UK4 (p.21, 23)* *UK6 (p.17)* *OTH1 (p.12, 13)* *OTH5 (p. 16)*
Influential to the world *CN4 (p.9)* *UK1 (p.4)* *UK6 (p.7)*		*Raised freedom* *UK3 (p.9)*	*Raising Western cultural attributes* *CN5 (p.13);* *UK1 (p.15); UK4 (p.19); UK8 (p.14)* *OTH5 (p.16); OTH6 (p.8); OTH7 (p.13)*
Good living environment *UK2 (p.5)*		*Guanxi* *UK5 (p.17); UK6 (p.24)* *OTH1 (p.21); OTH3 (p.11); OTH3 (p.21)*	*Poor weather* *CN1 (p.12)*
Open-minded *UK2 (p.5)*		*Preservation* *UK5 (p.23)* *OTH3 (p.5)* *OTH1 (p.11)*	*Poor living environment* *CN1 (p.12)*
Good economy	*GCA- U.K (Neutral)*		*Low food safety*

UK4(p.10) *UK7 (p.12)*	*Small country* *UK2 (p.8)* *OTH4 (p.6); OTH6 (p.6)*		*CN1 (p.14); CN7 (p.24)* *UK2 (p.12); UK3 (p.24); UK7 (p.30); UK8 (p.20)* *OTH7 (p.21)*
High GDP per capita *UK6 (p.25)*	*Culturally different* *CN6 (p.10); CN7 (p.13, 14)* *UK5 (p.12, 15); UK6 (p.17); UK8 (p.9)* *OTH1 (p.18); OTH3 (p.5, 11)* *OTH4 (p. 14); OTH7 (p.12)*	Fast developing technology CN7 (p.14) OTH4 (p. 13) OTH5 (p. 17)	*High technology of counterfeit or imitations* *CN1 (14)* *UK2 (p.17, 27); UK3 (p.9)* *UK5 (p.12); UK8 (p.24)*
Bar culture *UK7 (p.7)*	*Conservative* *CN5 (p.9); CN7 (p.19)* *UK8 (p.10)* *OTH1 (p.10); OTH3 (p.5)*	Collectivism OTH3 (p.9)	*Unfair society (lack of equality)* *CN2 (p.15, 18); CN4 (p.16, 25); CN7 (p.8, 13); CN8 (p.13)* *UK1 (p.13); UK6 (p.16, 17); UK7 (p.10)*
Football culture *CN4 (p.6)* *OTH5 (p. 12)*	*Economically different* *CN3 (p.11)* *UK7 (p.12)*		*Hierarchical society* *CN2 (p.15); CN6 (p.2, 15); CN7 (p.20)* *UK1 (p.13); UK2 (p.23); UK3 (p.17); UK4 (p.28)* *UK6 (p.27); UK7 (p.22); UK8 (p.18)* *OTH2 (p. 13); OTH3 (p. 20); OTH5 (p. 23)*
			Impetuous (short tempered in doing things) *CN2 (p.15) UK7 (p.11) OTH4 (p. 9, 12, 13) OTH5 (p. 3)*
			Manly social problems *CN3 (p.11)* *UK7 (p.10)*
			Losing traditional culture *CN4 (p.14, 15); CN8 (p.19)* *UK4 (p.19); UK7 (p.12); UK8 (p.14)* *OTH4 (p.12); OTH5 (p.16)*
			Lack of efficiency *CN8 (p.12, 14)*
			Unethical trend *CN8 (p.20, 21)* *UK4 (p.18, 19, 30); UK6 (p.16); UK8 (p.24)* *OTH1 (p.11, 12); OTH2 (p. 8)*
			Too cheap labour *UK1 (p.11); UK2 (p.13); UK6 (p.12)* *UK2(p.13): Additionally, the so-called "Strong Chinese Economy" is based on very cheap labour and cheap raw material and energy export. From the world's point of view, Chinese products must be cheap. We are actually looked*

			down upon by others.
			Economy regionally different *UK2 (p.13); UK5 (p.11)* *OTH7 (p.13)* *UK2 (p.13): Chinese local economies are quite different. After the big earthquake in 2008, some foreign economists questioned about Chinese future economy. However, our government declared that the earthquake won't hit Chinese economic growth. We aimed to keep 8% GDP growth rate and we did it, because of the geographical economic difference. The GDP contribution in Wenchuan was only 0.3%. If the earthquake took place in Shanghai, our GDP would go back a lot, because Shanghai accounted for 13% GDP contribution. They are same big cities with huge different economy. In other words, most Chinese cities are very poor while only a few are quite rich because the pace of economic development is different.*
			Low safety (earthquake, accidents) *UK4 (p.18)* *UK4 (p.18): The first Wenchuan earthquake in 2008 caused so many people died. But before the earthquake, China boosted its advanced earthquake prediction technology in the world. It was said that we could predict the earthquake very early. However, when the earthquake really came, the technology became in vain. The earthquake caused so many people died. After Wenchuan earthquake, we again lost so many lives in Yushu earthquake. The problem is we did not carefully conclude the experience. In these days, there was a report said we have exported our earthquake prediction technology to Chile. There are so many reporters boosted. That's ridiculous. We are not good at it but are happy about it. The second example can be the express railway. Before many people died, we boosted that we are best technology in the world.*
			Government not reliable *CN7 (p.12)* *UK4 (p.18, 20, 21)*

			Materialism *UK4 (p.20, 21); UK6 (p.17); UK7 (p.11)* *OTH2 (p. 8); OTH3 (p. 10)*
			High unemployment rate *OTH5 (p. 15)*
			Low social safety *OTH5 (p. 16)*
GSA –U.K (Positive) CN1 (p.9); CN2 (p.11); CN3 (p.7); CN4 (p.11); CN5 (p.10); CN6 (p.7); CN7 (p.10); CN8 (p.12) UK2 (p.8); UK3 (p.7); UK4(p.14); UK6 (p.13); UK7 (p.8); UK8 (p.11) OTH1 (p.8); OTH3 (p.7) OTH5 (p.13); OTH6 (p.5); OTH7 (p.9)	**GSA –U.K (Negative)**	**GSA – China (Positive)** CN3 (p.11) CN4 (p.15) CN5 (p.15) UK8 (p.14)	**GSA – China (Negative)** CN2 (p.21); CN6 (p.11, 12) CN7 (p.15); CN8 (p. 22) UK1 (p.16); UK2 (p.15); UK3 (p.9); UK5 (p.13); UK7 (p.13) OTH1 (p.14); OTH3 (p.11) OTH4 (p.15) OTH5 (p.18); OTH6 (p.7); OTH7 (p.13)
Well-known ★ ● UK2 (p.7) UK7 (p.8) OTH4 (p.6) OTH6 (p.5) OTH7 (p.10)	Expensive ★ CN3 (p.9); CN4 (p.18) CN5 (p.16); CN7 (p.17, 18) UK2 (p.6, 8); UK5 (p.14) UK6 (p.25) OTH1 (p.7, 17); OTH4 (p.7, 18) OTH6 (p.18); OTH7 (p.9)	Reasonable price (low price and low labour cost) CN3 (p.13); CN4 (p.18); CN5 (p.16) UK2 (p.6, 27); UK3 (p.10) UK5 (p.13); UK7 (p.13, 15) UK8 (p.14, 16, 23); OTH1 (p.8, 15, 24); OTH6 (p.18) OTH7 (p.9) UK2 (p.27): Chinese services are always cheap and usually low quality. However, they are usually cheap enough that you would not like to make any complaint about its quality	Frequent problems ● CN2 (p.12) CN4 (p.16)
Customer-oriented ● CN5 (p.10) UK2 (p.18); UK5 (p.9, 14)		Luxury services CN5 (p.15) OTH1 (p.16)	Narrow range of choices CN8 (p. 25) UK1 (p. 17)
High quality *CN1 (p.17) UK2 (p.15)* *OTH4 (p.6, 7); OTH6 (p.18)* *UK2 (p.15): I'd like to take the customer services of Chinese restaurants as an example. My mother always warns me*		Wide range of choices UK2 (p.17)	Not advertising informative OTH4 (p. 17); OTH5 (p. 18)

that: "don't argue with the waiter, waitress or the chef in any restaurant. Unless, they may spite to you dishes or do something bad to you that you can't see". The quality of service is determined by restaurant servants' mood rather than determined by the money you paid.			
Efficient: *CN1 (p.9); CN2 (p. 12) ; CN8 (p.17, 18)*	Narrow range of choices UK1 (p.7)	*Improving a lot in recent years* *CN2 (p.21); CN4 (p.15)* *CN5 (p.14, 15); CN7 (p.16)* *UK3 (p.11); OTH1 (p.15, 16)* *OTH4 (p. 16); OTH7 (p.13)*	Hardly available OTH7 (p.9) OTH7 (p.9): I was astonished about British insurance services. It seems that consumers can buy insurance for any purchase. Mobile phone insurance is the most popular one. I never heard or imagined this kind of services before. In China, this is not possible to be happening.
High competition among service companies *CN8 (p.17, 18)*		*Hierarchical services (many different classes)* *CN1 (p.16); CN5 (p.15); CN8 (p. 23)* *OTH1 (p.15); OTH3 (p. 11)*	Under-developed● CN3 (p.9, 10,13); CN4 (p.11, 17, 18); CN5 (p.16); CN8 (p 24) UK5 (p.14); UK6 (p.18); UK7 (p.16) OTH1 (p.17); OTH4 (p.15); OTH5 (p.18)
High safety *CN1 (p.17)*		*High efficiency* *UK2 (p.7); UK3 (p.10)*	Too low price (because of too low labour cost) UK4 (p.22) ; UK6 (p.12); UK7 (p.13)
Reliable *CN3 (p.9);* *CN8 (p. 24)* *UK2 (p.7, 18)* *UK5 (p.9)* *UK6 (p.12)* *UK7 (p.8)* *OTH2 (p. 9)*	Hardly available in China★ CN2 (p.22); CN3 (p.9); CN4 (p.18) CN7 (p.9); CN8 (p. 24) UK1 (p.8); UK2 (p.8); UK3 (p.7); UK4(p.16); UK5 (p.9); UK6 (p.11) UK8 (p.11) OTH1 (p.8); OTH3 (p.7); OTH4 (p.7)	*Fierce competition involved* *CN2 (p.21); CN5 (p.15)* *UK3 (p.10, 11); UK5 (p.13)* *UK7 (p.14); UK8 (p.15)*	*Not reliable (cannot achieve the commitment, e.g. insurance and after-sales services)* *CN1 (p. 16, 17); CN2 (p. 12, 13, 19, 20); CN3 (p.10)* *CN4 (p.18); CN5 (p.15); CN6 (p.11);* *CN7 (p.16); CN8 (p. 24)* *UK1 (p.16, 17, 18); UK2 (p.7, 16, 17, 18)* *UK3 (p.11, 12); UK4(p.16); UK6 (p.13); UK7 (p.8, 13, 14)* *UK8 (p.15, 17)* *OTH2 (p. 9); OTH4 (p. 17); OTH5 (p. 18); OTH7 (p.9, 13)*
Developed services *CN3 (p.10); CN5 (p.16)* *UK5 (p.14); UK7 (p.16)* *OTH1 (p.8)*	High labour cost CN4 (p.18); CN7 (p.17) UK2 (p.6) OTH1 (p.7); OTH7 (p.9)	*Good prospect* *UK6 (p.18); OTH4 (p. 15)*	*Low quality* *CN2 (p. 12, 19); CN8 (p. 22)* *UK1 (p.17); UK2 (p.15); UK3 (p.10)* *OTH1 (p.16); OTH6 (p.18)* *UK2 (p.15): I have some friends and relatives who are living in the U.K. According to what they said, British servants won't give customers poor services if their customers don't*

			like them. They are unlikely to bring personal attitudes to the services provide. This is a big problem in Chinese service industry. The reason of the problem is due to the poor quality of servants.
High technical skills *UK8 (p.11)*	*Low efficiency* *UK1 (p.5) UK2 (p.7)* *UK7 (p.7)*		*Quality level regionally different* *CN7 (p.16); CN8 (p. 23)* *UK6 (p.19) OTH3 (p. 11, 12); OTH7 (p.13)*
Good facilities available *CN7 (p.19) UK4(p.17); UK5 (p.10)* *UK6 (p.14); UK8 (p.11, 12)*	*Low safety* *UK1 (p.6)*		*Poor administration* *CN4 (p.17)*
			Highly CPC controlled *OTH4 (p. 15)*
			Low safety (e.g. train accident) *CN1 (p.15) UK1 (p.18); UK7 (p.15)*
			Inefficient *CN2 (p.12, 19) ; CN4 (p.16) UK1 (p. 17);UK2 (p.17) ; UK3 (p.11, 12) ; UK5 (p.13) UK7 (p.8) ; OTH1 (p.15)*
			Not well trained *CN4 (p.18); CN5 (p.16) UK1 (p. 17)' UK7 (p.13) OTH1 (p.17)*
			Monopoly *CN2 (p.19); CN4 (p.15); CN7 (p.15); CN8 (p.17, 22)* *UK3 (p.11); UK4(p.16, 17); UK8 (p.15)* *OTH2 (p. 8); OTH4 (p. 15); OTH5 (p. 18)*
			Sometimes unethical (e.g. money-oriented or monopoly services) *CN7 (p.24); CN8 (p. 23)* *UK2 (p.13, 15); UK3 (p.10, 12)* *UK7 (p.13); UK8 (p.11, 18)* *UK2 (p.15): They bent solely upon profits. The competition among them is fierce. Bank managers may attract customers by cheating them that services from other banks are poor. The competition cannot only be found among different banks but also among different cashiers within the same bank. I don't like the services provided by Chinese banks.*
SSA – U.K (Positive) CN 1 (p.10); CN 2 (p. 9); CN3 (p.10); CN4 (p.11); CN5 (p.10); CN6 (p.8)	**SSA – U.K (Negative)**	**SSA-China (Positive)** CN6 (p.12) CN7 (p.17)	**SSA – China (Negative)** CN1 (p.13, 21); CN2 (p. 22); CN3 (p.14) CN4 (p.19); CN8 (p. 25)

CN7 (p.11); CN8 (p.17) UK1 (p.8, 21); UK2 (p.11) UK3 (p.7); UK4 (p.16); UK5 (p.9); UK6 (p.14); UK7 (p.9); UK8 (p.12) OTH2 (p.6); OTH3 (p.7) OTH4 (p.9); OTH5 (p.14); OTH6 (p.6)		CN8 (p.19) UK2 (p.21) OTH4 (p. 21)	UK1 (p.18); UK2 (p.10); UK3 (p.13); UK4 (p.25) UK5 (p.14); UK6 (p.21); UK7 (p.16); UK8 (p.18) OTH1 (p.18); OTH3 (p.17); OTH5 (p.19, 20) OTH6 (p.9); OTH7 (p.14) **SSA- China (Neutral):** CN5 (p.16)
High academic reputation ★ ● CN3 (p.11) UK1 (p.21) UK2 (p.9) OTH4 (p. 8, 9) OTH7 (p.10)	High cost of study (expensive) CN1 (p.10); CN3 (p.15) CN4 (p.11, 12, 20); CN5 (p.10, 11); CN8 (p.18) UK1 (p.8); UK2 (p.10); UK3 (p.16); UK6 (p.14, 25) OTH1 (p.9); OTH4 (p. 8); OTH6 (p.11); OTH7 (p.15)		Low academic reputation (not well-known in the world) OTH7 (p.10)
	Inflexibility of Course *UK2 (p.10)*	Low cost of study (cheap) CN3 (p.15); CN4 (p.20); CN5 (p.6) CN7 (p.17) OTH4 (p. 20)	Facilities not available ● CN4 (p.19); CN5 (p.10); CN6 (p.13) UK2 (p.19) OTH3 (p.14); OTH4 (p.20); OTH7 (p.14)
Availability of facilities ★ ● CN4 (p.12); CN5 (p.10) UK1 (p.9) OTH3 (p.7)	*Short length of studying a course (Less knowledge acquired)* *CN2 (p.8)* *OTH4 (p.8); OTH6 (p.6, 21)*	Availability of facilities CN5 (p.17) CN8 (p.7)	Inflexibility of Course CN1 (p.11, 17, 26, 27) UK5 (p.10); UK7 (p.17) OTH1 (p.18, 19); OTH6 (p.7, 10)
Flexibility of course ● CN1 (p.11) UK6 (p.14) OTH5 (p. 14)	*Commercialised (becomes a tool for making money from international students)* *CN2 (p.8); CN8 (p.18) ;* *UK2 (p.7, 9, 10); UK3 (p.7); UK8 (p.12);* *OTH4 (p. 8)*	*Lack of good facilities* *CN4 (p.19)* *UK2 (p.19)* *OTH4 (p. 20)* *OTH7 (p.14)*	*Poor employment prospect* *CN3 (p.15); CN4 (p.19)* *OTH2 (p. 10)*
High quality ● CN 4 (p.20); CN7 (p.18) UK2 (p.11); UK6 (p.5, 14); OTH1 (p.9) OTH7 (p.15)	*Decreasing recognition by Chinese market* *CN2 (p. 9); UK2 (p.10); UK3 (p.7, 8)* *UK3 (p.7)* *The market recognition of British higher education is going down, because it is said that there are many counterfeit certificates produced each year.*		Under-developed ● CN6 (p.12) CN8 (p. 26) OTH3 (p. 17)
Well-known in the world *CN6 (p.8, 14); CN7 (p.9, 10)* *CN8 (p.14, 18)* *UK1 (p.21); UK2 (p.11)* *UK5 (p.7, 9, 27); UK7 (p.9); UK8 (p.12)*	*Raised entry requirement* *CN8 (p.18)*		Not well-known in the world ● CN6 (p.7) CN7 (p.9) UK2 (p.31); UK6 (p.20)

OTH1 (p.10); OTH6 (p.6)			
Good enrolling system *CN4 (p.19)*	*Too rigid education* *UK3 (p.18)*	*Good study atmosphere* *CN5 (p.17)*	Too high graduation rate UK3 (p.13, 14); UK5 (p.10); UK6 (p.22); UK8 (p.16) OTH2 (p. 10); OTH5 (p. 20)
Strong teaching resource *CN8 (p.18)*	*Low graduation rate* *UK8 (p.13)*	*Logical enrolling system* *CN8 (p.10)*	Tolerant to academic misconduct CN1 (p.17); CN2 (p.22, 23, 26, 27); CN3 (p.14, 15); CN5 (p.17); CN6 (p.12); CN8 (p. 25, 26) UK1 (p.19, 20, 21); UK2 (p.19, 20); UK3 (p.13, 14, 15, 16) UK6 (p.5, 22); UK7 (p.18, 19, 20); UK8 (p.16) OTH2 (p.10); OTH4 (p.10, 19, 28); OTH5 (p.20); OTH7 (p.11, 16) UK2 (p.19): Students are always cheating. However, this is allowed in silence. Teachers should know this, but they don't concern that much, unless a student is totally copying a piece of work from another student. Students can change the active sentences to passive sentences. It is quite simple. However, they may not really understand what the meaning behind. Moreover, they did not acquire the real knowledge by doing so. Plagiarism has become more and more popular in Chinese higher education. This can also happen among the researches among the teachers. It is quite often reported that some famous researcher's work is simply translation of some foreign research paper.
Good teaching technique *CN1 (p.11); CN7 (p.11)* *UK1 (p.8, 9); UK2 (p.11)* *UK5 (p.10); UK7 (p.9)* *OTH3 (p.7)*	*Bureaucratic* *UK6 (p.23)*	*Good library services* *UK1 (p.19)*	*Guanxi* *CN1 (p.22, 28); CN2 (p.6, 8,9); CN3 (p.24); CN5 (p.7, 19);* *CN6 (p.13); CN8 (p.6, 10, 25, 26)* *UK3 (p.17); UK5 (p.17); UK6 (p.24, 25)* *UK7 (p.20); UK8 (p.6, 26); OTH1 (p.21)* *OTH4 (p. 19); OTH5 (p. 32)*
Rigid education (not tolerant to academic misconduct) *CN2 (p.25); CN3 (p.14, 15); CN7 (p.4)* *UK1 (p.20); UK2 (p.21); UK3 (p.16)* *UK4 (p.27); UK5 (p.10); UK6 (p.5, 14)* *OTH3 (p.7); OTH7 (p.11)*	*Not advertisement informative* *OTH1 (p.10)*	*Fast developing and improving* *CN5 (p.19)* *CN6 (p.13)* *CN7 (p.17)*	*Poor examination system* *CN4 (p.19)* *UK1 (p.19)* *UK5 (p.15)* *OTH5 (p.19)*
Good natural environment in campus *CN3 (p.11) UK1 (p.14)* *UK5 (p.10) UK8 (p.12)*			*Poor student accommodation* *CN1 (p.19); CN2 (p.22); CN4 (p.19); CN5 (p.6) CN6 (p.13) ;* *CN7 (p.11) UK1 (p.19); UK6 (p.21, 22); UK7 (p.16)*

OTH7 (p.15)			OTH2 (p.20); OTH3 (p. 14) OTH4 (p. 20)' OTH5 (p. 20); OTH6 (p.12); OTH7 (p.5)
Short length of studying a Master course (Save time and money) *CN2 (p.8, 9)* *UK8 (p.27)*			*Different service quality due to the different classes of the universities* *CN3 (p.14); CN6 (p.10) OTH3 (p.1); OTH4 (p.19); OTH5 (p.20)*
Good enrolling system *CN8 (p.10)* *UK5 (p.10)*			*Poor teaching technique* *CN1 (p.11, 19); CN5 (p.17); CN7 (p.11)* *UK1 (p.8, 18); UK2 (p.11); UK3 (p.14); UK7 (p.9)* *OTH2 (p. 10); OTH4 (p. 18); OTH7 (p.17)*
Sufficient funds available *CN4 (p.12)*			*Poor study atmosphere* *CN8 (p.5)* *UK5 (p.15); UK8 (p.16)* *OTH4 (p. 18)*
Good academic environment *CN4 (p.12)*			*Too long length of studying a degree* *OTH6 (p.6); OTH7 (p.22)*
Freedom *Freedom of speech and critical thinking* *CN5 (p.10, 11)* *UK2 (p.11); UK6 (p.14)* *UK7 (p.9); UK8 (p.12)* *Freedom of living and studying in the campus* *UK4 (p.26)*			*Poor student enrolling system* *CN1 (p.17)* *UK5 (p.10, 15)*
High quality *CN5 (p.10, 11)*			*Corruption in campus* *CN1 (p.18, 19); CN8 (p.10) UK6 (p.24) OTH6 (p.10)*
Good student accommodation *CN 4 (p.20)*			*Less freedom atmosphere* *CN1 (p. 20, 26); CN5 (p.11); CN7(p. 5, 13);* *UK2 (p.19); UK7 (p.17)* *OTH2 (p. 20); OTH5 (p. 20); OTH7 (p.4, 5, 14, 24)*
Cooperative with other universities *CN8 (p.18)* *UK2 (p.11)*			*Teachers not dedicated* *CN2 (p. 11,22, 27, 28); CN3 (p.14); CN5 (p.16); CN8 (p.7)* *UK1 (p.18, 20); UK2 (p.5, 11); UK3 (p.3, 13, 14); UK5 (p.15, 16)* *Teachers not dedicated (have side jobs)* *UK1 (p.19); UK3 (p.13, 14); UK4(p.17, 27); UK6 (p.21)*

			OTH2 (p. 10) UK3 (p.13) many universities' lecturers and professors do not have enough income from the university. They have to try to earn money outside the university. Therefore, their focus is not teaching good students but to make money. The university cannot treat them well. Therefore, they won't treat students well. Academic cheats are usually allowed in most Chinese universities. This has led very high graduation rate. I dare to say that the graduation rate in any Chinese university is higher than 98%. This may not be possible in foreign universities, but has become a truth in China. Consequently, some of the students produced are low quality. The more important thing is the low quality students do not know they are low quality. They see themselves as somebody because they are degree holders. However, the job marketers are not stupid. The employers are unlikely to hire them.
Developed *CN8 (p.18, 26) UK2 (p.20) OTH3 (p. 17, 18)*			*Lack of funding* *CN2 (p.22); CN4 (p.19); CN5 (p.10) UK5 (p.15); UK6 (p.21)*
High recognition of British degree *UK1 (p.21)*			*Highly CPC controlled* *CN2 (p.27); CN7(p. 5)* *UK4 (p.25); UK8 (p.18)* *OTH6 (p.7); OTH7 (p.14)*
Innovative *UK2 (p.11) OTH2 (p. 11)*			*Low quality* *CN4 (p.19) UK6 (p.20)*
Good looking buildings in campus *UK3 (p.7)*			*Under-developed* *UK2 (p.20); UK3 (p.26)*
Dedicated *UK1 (p.20); UK2 (p.5)* *UK4(p.17); UK5 (p.16)*			*Corruption* *UK4 (p.24, 27)*
Good examination system *UK5 (p.15)*			*Lack of innovation* *UK4 (p.24); UK7 (p.9, 16)* *OTH2 (p.7, 11); OTH6 (p.10)*
Excellent library services *UK7 (p.36)*			*Poor library services* *UK7 (p.36); OTH2 (p. 21)*
			Commercialised for making money *OTH3 (p. 14)*