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**The Study Motivations and Life Adaptations of Student Migrants
from the New Southbound Policy Countries in Taiwan**

Hsien-Ming Lin

PhD Candidate in Political Science, National Sun Yat-sen University

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European Research Center on Contemporary Taiwan

*Eberhard Karls University, Tübingen
Keplerstraße 2
72074 Tuebingen*

*Ph.: +49 7071 29 72717
e-mail: ercct@uni-tuebingen.de*

Abstract

This study explores what motivated students from the countries involved in the New Southbound Policy to choose Taiwan as their destination for studying and considers the experiences of these students' life adaptation in Taiwan. In this study, the author applies the qualitative approach of the semi-structured interview to collect and analyze the data. This study recruited 19 students from the New Southbound Policy countries as the participants. This paper finds that academics and economics are two of the most important issues which entered into the students' considerations in deciding upon studying in Taiwan. Apart from Australia, New Zealand, Singapore, and a few other countries, most of the New Southbound Policy countries are still developing; as a result, the students were more concerned about the higher educational quality, the cost of the university tuition, and everyday life in Taiwan. The students were also concerned about receiving adequate grant money or scholarships from the Taiwanese government and the university. Moreover, the study finds that cultural and societal issues impact overseas Chinese students and foreign students differently. In general, students from the New Southbound Policy countries have adapted well in Taiwan. Even so, cultural differences, eating habits, and language learning are three important adaptation challenges for students who come from Islamic countries or who have insufficient Chinese language capacities. However, the study finds that social media use could help these students to conduct intercultural communication, expand interpersonal relationships with local Taiwanese students, and make it easier to manage their emotional issues. Social media experiences benefit students by helping them adapt to life in Taiwan during their educational sojourn.

Keywords: International Student, Life Adaptation, New Southbound Policy, Social Media, The Motivations of Studying Aboard

Introduction

The Ideas and Goals of the New Southbound Policy in Taiwan

After the DPP (Democratic Progressive Party) president Tsai Ing-wen took power in Taiwan in May 2016, she announced a regional strategic policy called the New Southbound

Policy. This policy was meant to facilitate bilateral ties and interactions with the countries in South and Southeast Asia as well as New Zealand and Australia. Following President Ting's policy ideas, Chih-Fang Huang, the director of the international department of the DPP revealed that the New Southbound Policy was designed to expand the diversity of relations with countries of the south and south-east Asian; the scope of the policy included the economy, society, culture, people, and so forth. Huang explained that central idea of the New Southbound Policy is "people-oriented" strategies of Taiwan. Huang indicated that, based on this idea of being people-oriented, the New Southbound Policy would strengthen mutual cooperation between the countries of South and Southeast Asia in the areas of technology, industry, talent, and education. The DPP government expects that this policy could help Taiwan reduce its economic dependence on mainland China and could moreover build "a sense of community" among the countries involved (Yang, 2016). Based on the core policy idea of People-oriented, the Ministry of Education announced a project called the "Three-Years Program of Talent Cultivation between Taiwan and New Southbound Policy countries." The policy goals are that from 2017 to 2020, the number of students from New Southbound Policy countries studying in Taiwan could grow 20% per year. Moreover, the DPP government expects to attract 58,000 students from south and southeast Asian countries by 2020 (Yang, 2017).

The Number of Student Migrants from New Southbound Policy Countries in Taiwan

Reviewing the statistical data in the past 10 years from 2007 to 2015, the number of degree-oriented students from the New Southbound countries has risen rapidly. In 2007, the number of degree-oriented students was 8,760; since 2007, the number of students has grown annually. In 2015, degree-oriented students from the New Southbound countries reached 19,747, meaning that the growth rate from 2007 to 2015 was 125.42% (Military of Education, 2017).

Nowadays, degree-oriented students from the New Southbound Policy countries are the most important source for Taiwan's international students. Of the 18 New Southbound policy countries, most students come from Malaysia, followed by Indonesia, India, Thailand, and Myanmar. The most popular disciplines for the degree-oriented students from the New Southbound Policy countries are business and management, engineering, humanities and communications studies. Environmental studies, transportation, social services, law, and mathematical studies are the five of the most unpopular disciplines for the students. The number of non-degree-oriented students from 2007 to 2016. In 2007, the number of non-degree-oriented students from the New Southbound Policy countries was 4,195, and in 2016 the number was 9,649. This represents a growth rate of 130% during this period. In 2016, most of the non-degree-oriented students came from Malaysia, which accounted for

35%, followed by Indonesia, Vietnam, Thailand, and Singapore (Military of Education, 2017).

According to the discussion above, the main goal of the New Southbound Policy student for studying in Taiwan is to obtain a degree; however, the numbers of both degree-oriented and the non-degree-oriented students have grown rapidly in the past ten years. In this regard, the policy effects of attracting students from the New Southbound Policy countries to Taiwan have been remarkable. The Ministry of Education has suggested that Taiwan has several advantages for attracting the international students. These include abundant scholarships, cheap tuition fees, the advanced quality of the academic research environment, an ideal environment for learning Chinese, the outstanding quality of higher education, a friendly and safe environment for living and learning, and so forth (Military of Education, 2009).

However, there are no studies exploring the motivations of students from the New Southbound Policy countries for deciding to study in Taiwan. There are also few studies that explore how students from the New Southbound Policy countries have adapted to learning and life in Taiwan. Furthermore, because social media plays an important role in peoples' everyday life in the contemporary era, this study also seeks to determine the role social media plays in the students' learning and adapting experiences in Taiwan.

The Motivations of the Student to Study Abroad, Life Adaptations, and Social Media Use

Theoretical Perspectives of International Students' Motivation for Studying Aboard

The push and pull theory is one prominent perspective that concerns the motivations and considerations of international students who make the decision to study abroad. The push and pull theory focus on describing how political, economic, and social factors of the home and host countries act upon each other and influence a student's decision to study internationally. Chen (2011) described several of these environmental factors. These include the economic factor, referring to differences in the economic development between the home and host country, and the trade or economic relations between the two. The educational factor refers to whether the government and the university provide sufficient scholarships, a quality learning environment, and the opportunity to earn admission. The political factor has to do with the political relations between the host and the home country. The cultural and language factor concerns whether the home and host country have similar cultural backgrounds and use the same language. The living environment factor includes the convenience of transportation, the safety of daily life, and the quality of the natural environment.

This paper employs the push and pull theory and identifies, based on the relevant studies, five crucial factors that may influence students from the New Southbound Policy

countries to decide whether they want to study in Taiwan. First is the academic factor. In this category, the student may consider the resources, qualities, and international rankings of institutions of higher education in Taiwan; the student would also consider the application procedures and the opportunity for getting the permission. Second is the economic factor. Students from the New Southbound Policy countries would even consider whether the government or the university in Taiwan would provide sufficient scholarships or grants, as well as the cost of living in Taiwan. Third is the political factor, students may be attracted by Taiwan's system of democracy and decide to study in Taiwan. Fourth is the cultural factor. The student may be attracted by Taiwan's Chinese cultural environment and Chinese language learning opportunities. Fifth is the social factor. This has to do with whether the students' decision to study abroad was influenced by others, such as family, friends, or educators (Knight, 2006; Ma, 2000; Szelényi, 2006).

Adaptation Issues and Social Media Use of International Students during Their Sojourn Experiences

Most of the international students may face several adaptation challenges while living in the host country. First of all, because of culture shock, a lack of knowledge about the culture, social norms, social values, and customs of the host country, a student may face difficulties in negotiating the cultural differences between the home and host country. Encountering these cultural differences may negatively affect the student, who might develop feelings of nostalgia, isolation, and loneliness (Ward, Bochner, & Furnham, 2001). Second, language shock, lacking ability in the language of the host country, is another prominent reason for adaptation difficulties. Most of the New Southbound Policy countries do not use Mandarin Chinese. The capacity to read, write, speak, and understand spoken Mandarin Chinese becomes a crucial issue influencing students' adaptation experiences in Taiwan (Brown, 2008). Third, communication shock, is related to the language proficiency of the international student. Lacking Mandarin Chinese abilities causes some difficulties in inter-cultural communication, potentially creating misunderstandings between international and local students (Holmes, 2004). A fourth adaptation challenge involves interpersonal issues. Several studies have demonstrated that international students have a limited number of interpersonal networks during their sojourn in the host country. A survey from Ward and colleagues (2001) show that just 17-29% of international students had built interpersonal relationships with local counterparts; about 45% of international students claimed that most of their friends came from the same country or the same ethnic background. Furthermore, 70% of international students stated that they did not have real and close friends while they studied abroad (Ward et al., 2001). A fifth challenge is that of emotional management. The relevant studies show that, generally, international students face more serious learning and living pressures while studying abroad. This would tend to make international students feel

anxious, lonely, helpless, isolated, sad, nostalgic, and other negative emotions (Sherry, Thomas, & Chui, 2010). Regardless of the culture, language, religion, or the life habits of the New Southbound Policy country a student comes, these elements will be different in some ways in Taiwan. Examining the life adaptation issues of students from the New Southbound Policy countries is one of central to the research questions of this study.

However, several studies have demonstrated that social media use may have some impact on international students' learning and adaptation experiences. Rui and Wang (2015) indicated that social media usage behaviors would have a positive effect for the international students because it allowed them to gather local information and make new interpersonal relationships in the host country. Rui and Wang claim that social media use could not only help international students expand their interpersonal networks but also facilitates students' adaptation to their life in the host country. Zhu (2012) found that social media provides the user with a platform for online identity performance and exchange. International students not only utilize social media platforms for performing their home country's cultural identity, but also for exchanging the ideas of different cultures with other different ethnic students in the host country. Social media has not only become a kind of online exchange and communication platform for the international students to present the identity of their home culture; but the International students also can negotiate cultural experiences and interpretations with other inter-ethnic students concerning aspects of their lives between home and host countries. Park (2016) believes that social media has become an important means for international students to conduct inter-cultural interaction, communication, and identity negotiation in their host countries. In this regard, social media has multiple meanings and purposes for international students during their time abroad. As a result, Pfister and Soliz (2011) suggest that the roles social media plays in the lives of international students merit further examination.

By examining the motivations and considerations that led students from the New Southbound Policy countries to choose Taiwan as their study abroad destination, this study seeks to understand which factors influenced this decision. In order to fill the research gap, this study also seeks to understand the learning and life adaptation experiences of students from the New Southbound Policy countries during their time in Taiwan. Finally, this study tries to determine the roles of social media in students' everyday lives while studying in Taiwan.

Method

The aim of the current study was to explore the study motivations and life adaptations of the student migrants from the New Southbound Policy countries in Taiwan. To accomplish this goal, a qualitative approach was adopted to conduct the data collection and

analysis. In a qualitative approach, in-depth interviews are a frequently used of method for collecting data; they are also regarded as an effective means of collecting the experiences, feelings, and daily practices of human beings, thereby assisting researchers in gaining a deep understanding and learning the respondents' feelings and construction of meaning in their daily practices. An in-depth qualitative interview can provide more opportunities in which the participants can conduct self-discourse to explain their different life experiences, according to their own language (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007).

The data was collected from June 2017 to April 2018. Both convenient and snowball sampling were employed in selecting the research respondents in this study. First, some New Southbound Policy countries student migrants in Taiwan, who were familiar with the researchers, were selected to participate in the interviews. Afterwards, they were asked to recommend other student migrants to be recruited as respondents. A total of 19 student migrants, who were studying in Taiwan, were interviewed in the present study (11 males, 8 females; 13 students are degree-oriented, and 6 students are non-degree oriented; however, 14 students are the overseas Chinese and 5 students are foreigner came from the New Southbound Policy countries. In the total 19 students, 6 of them came from Malaysia, 3 of them came from Vietnam, 2 of them came from Thailand, 1 of them came from India, 2 of them came from Philippines, another 2 of them came from Indonesia, and the remaining 3 of the students are came from Australia, New Zealand, and Singapore respectively. Moreover, 8 of the total students are undergraduate, 6 are the graduate students and 5 are the doctoral students).

The students determined the venue for the interviews; the venues included dormitories, student restaurants, and cafés. In addition, some of the students were interviewed via Skype, Line or Facebook (i.e., social media). The researchers used a pen coder to record the contents of each interview. The interviews lasted from 60 to 90 minutes each. After the interviews, the researchers transcribed the audio data into verbatim transcripts for analysis. Prior to data analysis, the code of verbatim transcript for every student was clearly defined, so that the excerpt of every student could be easily discovered in the result section. The code of every student composed of an English word and a number. The English word, namely 'S', represents the abbreviation for student. The number ranging from 1 to 19 means the first student to nineteen students in this study. Notably, the order of number was determined by the order of interview; for instance, S01 means the student who was the first one interviewed by the researchers, S19 was the last student interviewed by the researchers. This study employed the thematic analysis method to gather, sort, and analyze the data. First, the researchers read these verbatim transcripts repeatedly and in-depth. During the reading process, the researchers encoded and conceptualized the data; then the key concepts were generated from the data. Second, the concepts, which have similar attributes and contents, were categorized as the analysis themes with higher level concepts. Finally, the relationships

among the themes were established (Berg, 2009).

Three approaches were adopted to enhance the trustworthiness of the data analysis.

1. Intercoder reliability. Two researchers, who were involved in this study, coded the qualitative data independently. Codes, coding rules, and emerging concepts were discussed at regular intervals. The intercoder reliability of this study was .87, which means that the coding consistency was acceptable (Nowell, Norris, White, & Moules, 2017). All disagreements regarding codes and concepts were discussed to reach consensus among the researchers.
2. Respondents' confirmation. Both the verbatim transcripts and the preliminary results of this study were sent to the respondents via email. If needed, the respondents could correct any inappropriate content to ensure the completeness and accuracy of the information. The researchers accordingly revised the verbatim transcripts and the preliminary results based on the respondents' replies. In this study, no revisions were made because the respondents all agreed to the above information.
3. Peer briefing. Whether the collected data had achieved the theoretical saturation or not can be confirmed by peer debriefing. Therefore, the researchers invited research colleagues to regularly implement peer debriefings in which they could discuss and raise feedback for both the preliminary results and the data analysis process. For instance, the preliminary results only indicated the New Southbound countries student migrants' study motivations and adaptation experiences in Taiwan; however, through peer briefing, the researchers decided to collect more data to examine what are the role of social media play in the students' daily life practices, thereby comprehensively realizing their experience regarding student migrants' life adaptation issues of their sojourn life in Taiwan.

Result

The Motivations and Considerations of New Southbound Policy Country Students to Study in Taiwan

The Consideration of the Academic Factors

In this study, 14 of the international student informants (74%) indicated that Taiwan's good quality of higher education and the international ranking of its universities led them to study in Taiwan. This study also found that the academic factors were more attractive to students who came from South and Southeast Asia than those from Australia, New Zealand, and Singapore. Informant S3 came from India to study at the National University in the south of Taiwan. Sharing his motivations to study in Taiwan, he said:

At that time, I passed the IELTS with a 7.5; I also got an offer from the top universities in the UK and Australia. My major is related to technology, and some of the universities in Taiwan have good international reputations for teaching in this field. For this reason, I also submitted my applications to Taiwan's universities. I then got the admission offer and the full scholarship from the university where I study now. I think I was attracted by the university's good reputation and international ranking. (S3, interview data)

Informant S7 came from Malaysia and studied at the National University in Taipei with a major in communications. She explained the considerations that led to her decision by comparing the universities in Mainland China, Singapore, and Taiwan. She said:

I got my bachelor's degree in journalism from a university in Malaysia, and after that I considered getting a graduate degree in another Asian country. At that time, I just thought about where I wanted to go. China? Singapore or Taiwan? Then I thought Taiwan had a more open and friendly public media environment than China and Singapore. Moreover, communication studies at this Taiwanese university are well-ranked within Asia. As a result, I decided to come study in Taiwan. (S7, interview data)

However, the attractiveness of the academic factors to students from Australia, New Zealand, and Singapore was less influential. The informants S5 and S9 came from Singapore and Australia, respectively, and explained why they chose to study in Taiwan:

Actually, the academic factors or the international ranking of Taiwanese universities are not crucial considerations for us, because in Singapore and Australia, we have more famous top-ranking universities. (S9, interview data)

This study found that academic factors were more attractive for students from South and Southeast Asia than those from Australia, New Zealand, and Singapore. It is worth noting that the direction of international student migration traditionally runs from the global south to the global north. Students from developing countries study in developed countries in great part because the universities in the global north have better reputations and international rankings; by studying in developed countries, students not only gain the education experience but also accumulate cultural and social capital. Their study abroad experiences could help the students achieve vertical social mobility when they return to their home country.

However, the experiences of students from the New Southbound Policy countries in Taiwan are not similar to those of students who move from the global south to the global north. This study found that academic factors are more attractive to students from South and Southeast Asia than to students from the developed countries of Australia, New Zealand, and Singapore. However, these experiences of horizontal mobility in Taiwan and within the Asian regions also create positive effects for south and southeast Asian students, allowing them to accumulate cultural and social capital and enhancing the students' competitive abilities in the academic and job markets in both the home and host countries (Chan, 2013).

The Consideration of the Economic Factors

In this study, 17 informants (90%) indicated that the availability of sufficient scholarships and grants from the Taiwanese government and universities were among the most crucial factors influencing their decision to study in Taiwan. According to data from the "University Entrance Committee for Overseas Chinese Students," the Taiwanese government currently provides more than 10 types of scholarships and grants for overseas Chinese students who apply to study in Taiwan. These include "The Elite of Overseas Chinese Students' Scholarship," "The Overseas Chinese Students' Admission Scholarship" from the Ministry of Education, "The Overseas Chinese Students' Scholarship and Grant" from the Overseas Chinese Association, and "The Studying Hard Scholarship" from the Overseas Community Affairs Council. The scholarships from these organizations provide students between 5000 to 300,000 NT dollars every month or year (University Entrance Committee For Overseas Chinese Students, 2018). The Taiwanese government also provides the "Taiwanese Scholarship" of 30,000 NT dollars every month to degree-oriented foreign students. The scholarships are provided for four years for students seeking a bachelor's degree, two years for those seeking a graduate degree, and four years for a doctoral student (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2013). An international student has to spend approximately 78,447 to 240,637 NT dollars to live in Taiwan for a year (including tuition fees and the cost of living). If an international student can get a scholarship from the Taiwanese government, it could help the student cover most of the expenses while studying in Taiwan. Ma's survey shows that nearly 70% of international students in Taiwan received a scholarship from the Taiwanese government or a Taiwanese university, and approximately 90% of students from South and Southeast Asia have received a scholarship from Taiwanese government or university. For international students, and especially for students who come from South or Southeast Asia or developing countries, getting the scholarship from the Taiwanese government and university is the most influential factor to influencing their decision to study in Taiwan. Indeed, scholarships were one of the most important deciding factors for the informants participating in this study (Ma, 2014).

The Consideration of the Political Factors

Political factors are not among the most important considerations for international students. In this study, just 9 informants (47%) indicated that they decided to study in Taiwan because they were attracted by the democratic political system and the free society in Taiwan. The informant S6 came from Malaysia and studied Law at the National University in central Taiwan. He explained why political factors were among the reasons he decided to study in Taiwan:

I am really interested in the subject of law and politics; however, in my country, sometimes the political elites utilize their political power to influence the function of the law system. As a result, when I decided to study abroad, I wanted to choose a country in Asia which has a democratic political system and an independent law system. Taiwan was the first name came to my mind. That is why I am here. (S6, interview data)

Other students indicated that they were attracted by the open and friendly environment of the university, and, because of that environment, they chose to study in Taiwan. The informant S1 came from Vietnam to study at the private university in Taipei, she explained that:

In Vietnam, politics is still relatively closed and not free, and this also affects the atmosphere in the university. The professors and the students in the university cannot feel free to discuss and say things they want to say. They still have to consider the political issues. But Taiwan's political and university environment are quite open and free. For me, this is very attractive. (S1, interview data)

Based on the previous discussion, political factors are not a critical concern for most students to decide whether they want to study in Taiwan or not. However, for some students who came from non-democratic countries or non-free societies, the democratic political environment in Taiwan is still one of the factors that made Taiwan attractive as a study destination.

The Consideration of the Cultural Factors

The opportunity to learn the Chinese language is an important consideration for students making decisions about international study. However, this factor has a different significance for overseas Chinese students and foreign students. Broadly speaking, the overseas Chinese students are more likely to be attracted by the Chinese language learning opportunities in Taiwan than the foreign students. In this study, 14 informants were overseas

Chinese, and 12 of them (85%) indicated that they decided to study in Taiwan because of its comprehensive Chinese language-learning environment. The informant S13 came from Indonesia; he grew up in an overseas Chinese family and studied at a private university in the south of Taiwan.

When I was at home in Indonesia, my parents talked with me in Chinese, and that is why I can speak Chinese and read a little bit. When I discussed with my parents about my plan to study in other countries, they told me that mainland China and Taiwan offer Chinese language-learning environments. However, they indicated that in mainland China, the Chinese words have been modified, while Taiwan has maintained more traditional Chinese language characteristics and Chinese culture. As a result, they suggested that I study in Taiwan. (S13, interview data)

Of the five foreign student informants, however, there just one (20%) who indicated that she was motivated to study in Taiwan by its Chinese language-learning environment in Taiwan. The informant S1, from Australia, was the only participant who indicated that she came to study in Taiwan because of the Chinese language-learning environment.

In Australia, I had several years' experiences of learning Chinese; I took the Chinese courses at the Chinese language school in Australia. That school is organized by Taiwanese immigrants, and they taught us the traditional Chinese characteristic words. I think I was influenced by my previous Chinese language learning experience in choosing Taiwan for my study-abroad destination. (S1, interview data)

According to the explanation from S9, whether the foreign student has previous Chinese language-learning experiences or not is one of the critical factors influencing the choice to study in Taiwan. Ma's (2014) study found that foreign students who have higher Chinese language capacities are more likely to be attracted by the Chinese language-learning environment, and thereby have greater motivations to study in Taiwan. The same study also pointed out that overseas Chinese and foreign students with higher Chinese language abilities were more likely to be attracted to studying in Taiwan by cultural factors than were students with lower language abilities.

The Consideration of the Social Factors

In terms of social factors, this study sought to determine whether students from New Southbound Policy countries were influenced by reference groups when they made the decision to study abroad in Taiwan (Mazzarol & Soutar, 2002). This study found that

reference groups have more power to influence students from South and Southeast Asia than students coming from Australia and New Zealand. However, the reference groups having the most powerful influence on the overseas Chinese students came from southeast Asian countries. In this study, most of the overseas Chinese students from Malaysia indicated that their international study decisions were influenced by reference groups. The informants S7, S10, and S11 were all overseas Chinese students who came from Malaysia; they shared how their international study decisions were influenced by reference groups.

Actually, among our families, relatives, and the teachers at the private high school in Malaysia, several had study experiences in Taiwan. For example, our Chinese language teacher at school completed her bachelor's degree at Taiwan Normal University. As a result, when they knew we would like to go study aboard, they encouraged us to go to Taiwan. So, we came here because we were influenced by our teachers, immediate families, and other relatives. (S10, interview data)

Reference groups have an influence on students from Southeast Asia and especially on overseas Chinese students from Malaysia. A possible reason for this could be that, in the past several years, the majority of international students in Taiwan have come from Malaysia. In 2015, degree-oriented students from Malaysia accounted for more than 58% of the total number of degree-oriented international students. In fact, the number of students from Malaysia in 2015 was three times that of the students from Vietnam, the country contributing the second-largest number of international students. For a long time, a large number of overseas Chinese and foreign students from Malaysia have studied in Taiwan; this has resulted in an abundance of interpersonal alumni networks in Malaysia. These alumni networks have played a crucial role in helping other students determine whether they want to study in Taiwan.

“The Federation of Alumni Associations of Taiwan Universities, Malaysia,” established in 1974, has been in existence for more than 40 years. Every year, this alumni group has organized an educational fair to introducing the students to study in Taiwan and has also published a guide for studying in Taiwan. Additionally, the association has helped students buy cheaper flight tickets by negotiating with the airlines. The goals of the associations are not only bind the alumni together, but also to encourage more Malaysian students to study in Taiwan, and, even more, to facilitate mutual interaction between the universities and the governments of Malaysia and Taiwan. According to statistical data from the association, in 2003 there were 2000 teachers in the overseas Chinese private senior high school in Malaysia, and more than half of these teachers earned their degrees in Taiwan. The alumni networks and associations have played a critical part in helping students deciding to study in Taiwan (James-Maceachern & Yun, 2017).

Although reference groups have a powerful influence on the students from Malaysia, this factor is less powerful among students from Australia and New Zealand. This may be because studying abroad in Taiwan is not as popular or common a choice for students in Australia and New Zealand. International students from Australia, New Zealand, and other developed or western countries were fewer than 5000 in the 1990s; by 2008, the number of students from developed or Western countries reached 10 thousand. It is worth noting that in terms of international higher education, Taiwan is still seen as an emerging market. Taiwan is not a popular choice for students from developed and western countries. As a result, these countries do not have alumni networks, and therefore lack a reference group that might help students decide to study in Taiwan.

The New Southbound Policy Countries Students' Adaptation and Social Media Use in Taiwan

Sixteen informants (84%) indicated that they had good experiences related to learning, living, and adapting to life in Taiwan. The informants reported that the Taiwanese people are friendly and welcoming to international students, and the administrative departments of the university are active in helping students deal with the problems they encounter in Taiwan. These 16 informants have not faced any serious issues with adaptation. However, this study found that cultural and language differences are two factors which could cause some adaptation challenges for international students. In terms of cultural differences, variations in the eating habits between Taiwan and New Southbound Policy countries pose a challenge for some international students, who must adopt Taiwanese eating habits and cuisine in their everyday diet. Some students are influenced by religious considerations, requiring them to balance between their religious heritage and the new cuisine and eating style in Taiwan. The informant S17 came from Indonesia; his family is Muslim, and do not eat pork meat at home. He shares his experiences in regard to the challenges posed by adapting to a different cuisine in the initial months after his arrival in Taiwan:

Before coming to Taiwan, I did not have any idea about Taiwanese food or cuisine. My family in Indonesia is Muslim. Basically, we do not eat pork; however, in Taiwan, you eat pork almost every day and at every meal. This made it very inconvenient to find something to eat when I first arrived in Taiwan. Fortunately, my university is in Taipei, so I can more easily find something to eat than my friends who study in the rural areas in Taiwan. (S17 interview data)

In recent years, the Taiwanese government has promoted the “halal certification system,” encouraging restaurants and shops to meet the criteria of halal certification. This signifies that the restaurant can provide halal food to Muslim people, including international

students. More than 400 restaurants and shops have obtained the halal certificate in Taiwan; this could further help the Muslim students adapt to their study life in Taiwan more easily. In order to help international students easily find restaurants and shops that provide halal foods and products, several Indonesian students studying in the National Taiwan University of Science and Technology developed a cell-phone Halal.TW. This application provides users with information about more than 300 halal certified restaurants, shops, hotels, and prayer rooms in Taiwan; it has been downloaded more than 6000 times. The informant S17 indicates that using the HALAL TW application not only helps him find halal-certified restaurants and shops, but also makes the adaptation to student life in Taiwan easier (S17 interview data). Social media use, then, can create positive effects for international students, allowing them to adapt to their new life in the host country more easily (Theodosiou, 2016).

In addition to the issues of adapting to eating in Taiwan, some students from New Southbound Policy countries indicate that Chinese language learning and the insufficiency of the English courses at the universities also present obstacles to adaptation. The informant S3, from India, shared how Chinese became an adaptation challenges in daily life:

When I was in India, I had no Chinese language-learning experiences. I did not have any idea about Chinese when I arrived in Taiwan. However, in Taiwan, Chinese is everywhere, and if you do not have basic Chinese language abilities you encounter obstacles in communicating with others and face adaptation challenges in daily life, especially in the initial period after arrival. (S3, interview data)

The informants S4 and S18, from Thailand and the Philippines, indicated that the universities where they study do not have the English courses they need, because the course choices are limited (S14, S18 interview data). Toh's (2016) study also found that the failure of universities in Taiwan to provide sufficient English courses for international students has had a negative impact on recruiting and attracting international students to study in Taiwan.

The informants in this study indicated that social media use in their daily lives could help them deal with the adaptation challenges surrounding intercultural communication, interpersonal relationships, and emotional management. All of the informants (100%) reported that they use social media in everyday life. The informants S2 and S14 shared how their social media usage experiences assisted them in overcoming obstacles in intercultural communication and helped them to expand their interpersonal networks in Taiwan:

In Taiwan, my classmates are accustomed to utilizing Facebook and the LINE cellphone app to establish online platforms for discussing academic papers or homework. We will also use these social media platforms for gathering classmates to prepare the midterm and final exam together. Social media helps me meet and get to know more local and international students who take courses with me. Using social media allows me to meet new friends and expand my interpersonal networks in Taiwan. It is vital for me to use social media for maintaining close connections with my friends and classmates in Taiwan. (S2, interview data)

The informant S13 explains how social media use in everyday life helps him to get emotional support and reinforce attachments by frequently communicating with his family, friends, and girlfriend in the home country.

Almost every day, I use Facebook, Skype or LINE to communicate with my family and girlfriend in Indonesia. I utilize these social media platforms to share my studying life in Taiwan, and also to know their life situation in my home country. It is important to me that by doing this, I feel I am not alone. Although I am studying in Taiwan, by utilizing social media to maintain a high frequency of communication with them, it makes me feel like we are still together, and I get emotional support from them. (S13, interview data)

Social media plays the crucial role of helping students adapt to the host society and get emotional support and reinforce attachments while in Taiwan. The social media usage of students from the New Southbound Policy countries not only helps them to conduct intercultural communication with the local Taiwanese students and other international students by frequently using the social media to discuss academic work, but also allows them to meet new people and expand their interpersonal networks. By utilizing social media for maintaining close interactions and communications with family and friends in their home country, students get the emotional support and reinforce attachments online. Social media provides instant communication between students and their families, which helps users overcome the limitations of time and space involved in transnational communications. Although the students and their families and relatives are located in different places, social media creates an online space for users to exchange their feelings and emotions with each other, constructing a sense of “online togetherness.” For these reasons, social media usage has a positive effect for students from the New Southbound Policy countries, helping them adapt to life in Taiwan (Phua & Annie Jin, 2011; Rui & Wang, 2015; Schroeder, 2016).

Conclusion

Currently, the New Southbound Policy is the most important regional strategy undertaken by the Taiwanese government. The most prominent aspect of the policy idea is that it is “people-oriented.” The Taiwanese government aims to facilitate mutual interactions between the people of Taiwan and those of the New Southbound Policy countries. Attracting more students from south and southeast Asian countries, as well as Australia and New Zealand, to study in Taiwan is one of the most important goals of the government. However, few studies have explored the study experiences of New Southbound Policy students in Taiwan. In order to fill the research gap, this paper is the first to examine what motivates students from the New Southbound Policy countries to study in Taiwan. The paper also investigates the study and life adaptation experiences of these students during their time in Taiwan. The conclusions of the current study are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. The Main Research Findings of the study

Content and Explanation	Motivations to Study and Adaptation Issues	Explanations
The Motivations and Considerations of Deciding to Study Abroad in Taiwan	Academic Factors	The high quality of the educational environment in Taiwan is one of the positive academic factors that attracts students from the New Southbound Policy countries. However, this attractiveness factor is less compelling for students from Australia, New Zealand, and Singapore.
	Economic Factors	Whether students gain sufficient scholarship support from the Taiwanese government and their university is one of the crucial factors influencing their decision to study in Taiwan.
	Political Factors	Generally, political factors are not the students' greatest concern; however, the democratic political environment and free society in Taiwan may attract students who live in non-democratic countries to study in Taiwan.
	Cultural Factors	In general, overseas Chinese students are more likely to be attracted by

have to face the difficulties of adaptation issues during their sojourn in Taiwan. This study finds that social media use could have positive effects on the students' ability to adapt to their life in a new country, and these usage experiences could also help them to manage their emotions and get emotional support by frequently communicating with their families and relatives at home.

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