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**Student motivations for studying a Masters  
program in a foreign university: implications for  
marketing**

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Soovitan suunata kaitsmisele .....

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(kaasjuhendaja allkiri)

Kaitsmisele lubatud "..." a.

TÜ Pärnu kolledži ..... osakonna juhataja

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(osakonna juhataja nimi ja allkiri)

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## INTRODUCTION

Opened borders have made traveling for people much more easier than it was before. This has also led people to not just travel for tourism purposes but also to work and study abroad. Traveling for educational purposes is not a new concept, but has evolved over time. Foreign students also create a business environment in an educational organisation and in some cases are more valued, because they bring the assets for locals (Muthaly *et al.* 2013). These students also contribute not only to the university but also to the economy of their host country.

Universities are concentrating more and more on how to stand out and attract foreign students. Since international education has become a business market, universities need to provide their students the best possible education to enable them to compete in a growing worldwide labour market for highly skilled personnel. But marketing has also a crucial part in finding foreign students and making an image in the international business field in educational tourism. (Gatfield, Chen 2006; Wang 2008; Wilkins *et al.* 2012; Muthaly *et al.* 2013)

Students also realise the need for international experience to broaden their linguistic, cultural and social knowledge, which will make them more fit to the global job market. Now there is wide variety of different exchange student programs and universities from which to choose. There have also been numerous studies (Llewellyn-Smith, McCabe 2008; Tsai 2012; Lai, Gupta 2013), which have investigated student motivations to undertake an educational program abroad, together with the factors, which led them to select a particular program.

As mentioned education is a service that foreign students purchase, when they have decided to get an education abroad. Many customers demand specialised and in-depth

presentation of information to facilitate their decision-making process. In order to address their needs, proper levels of information needs to be accessible to the right consumer in order to initiate and generate a purchasing interest (Bieger and Laesser 2004). This has not yet been taken place in Pärnu College – foreign students have not been studied as a marketing target before and no direct feedback has been collected.

Since no information about foreign students has been collected, which could be used in marketing, the main objective of this study is to use the collected data about motivations for studying a Masters program in a foreign university and use it for improving marketing university internationally for potential foreign students. Marketing value is relevant for not only Pärnu College, but also for other universities and institutions that offer international curriculum programs.

Local lecturers who work with international students have also been interviewed and are asked 6 questions to get more information about College's side in organising foreign students' program and marketing it to the international market.

To give this paper practical value for marketing, as the title says, there are also references about marketing educational services and international study programs for foreign students. It also covers the market segment for Generation Y (born during the 1980s and early 1990s), who is distinctly different and has certain attributes that can be used in precise marketing. The study of motivation is the starting point for any effort to understand consumer behaviour, which is a dynamic and continuous process (Hsu, Cai, Li 2009: 293). Results of the 'push' and 'pull' factors model that is used to research student motivations is also used to make suggestions for marketing universities to foreign students. Author has also read numerous articles about marketing universities and international curriculums.

This research question is whether foreign students are influenced to study abroad by the destination's qualities or their personal inner characteristics and needs.

The main objective of this study is to use the collected data about motivations for taking a Master's program in a foreign university and use it in improving marketing University of Tartu Pärnu College to potential foreign students.

The research objectives are:

- to give an overview of educational tourism and motivations for studying abroad;
- to collect data from foreign students in University of Tartu Pärnu college;
- process and analyse collected data and make conclusions;
- use 'push' and 'pull' factors that foreign students in University of Tartu Pärnu College have noted and analyse how they can be implemented in marketing.

To work on research tasks there are numerous academic articles and other literature resources have been worked through to understand the topic and give objective overview of marketing educational tourism. Since marketing higher education is a field of its own, there are certain developed strategies and published articles on marketing education for foreign students. Most of the material about educational tourism and motivations for traveling for education has been collected from academic articles, but also for marketing a few books about tourism marketing have been used. The most well known authors are Yoon and Uysal, who came up with the push and pull framework for the first time, but also Kotler and Wang in marketing.

The study is divided into three chapters and starts with a table of contents, introduction and ends with summary, references and appendixes. The first chapter focuses on defining main concepts of educational tourism, helps to understand the motivations to study abroad and describes ways of marketing to possible foreign students. The second chapter concentrates on the research, data processing and data analysis. The third chapter is based on the results of the research and gives implications for new ways for marketing.

# **1. AN OVERVIEW OF EDUCATIONAL TOURISM, ITS MOTIVATIONS AND MARKETING**

## **1.1. Educational tourism**

Study abroad and tourism are interrelated in several ways, where the most obvious parallel between study abroad and tourism is that travel is a central component of each and neither study abroad nor tourism can exist without travel (Stone, Petrick 2013: 736). Traveling internationally for higher education is not a recent phenomenon, since students have been travelling internationally to study in countries not their own from 600 BC (Altbach, Kelly, Luyat 1993, referred via Gatfield, Chen 2006: 78). Over time, views of learning have evolved, and today many believe that learning is labour, not leisure (Werry 2008, referred via Stone, Petrick 2013: 732). Therefore as employers expect their future employees to have a wide variety of experience, then studying abroad also plays a crucial part in the work field. Getting good quality education is the beginning of creating a successful career, which motivates many people to travel for experiences and also for quality. The Global Student Mobility 2025 report (Banks *et al.* 2007) forces that the demand for international education will increase to 3,72 million in 2025. Need for international education is increasing in time and needs continuous developing.

Educational tourism can be divided into three main parts: general interest in education during tourism trips, educational tourism for elderly tourists and educational tourism for students (Hilaly, Abbas, Mohamed 2012:170). During this research the last, tourism for students has been studied and developed for marketing.

More and more employers around the world expect graduates to have a deep understanding of the social, political, economic and technological world in which we

live and to use their global awareness, understanding and knowledge to generate innovative business ideas, solve challenging social problems and create wealth. These expectations include globalizing the business curriculum, facilitating student and faculty exchanges, deepening student engagement with multinationals through internships and cooperative opportunities, strengthening cultural competencies, enriching campus internationalisation efforts and in some cases these measures have the potential to create an environment in which our students will live and work and thereby prepare them to be leaders in an ever-changing world. (Lai, Gupta 2013: 39)

Not only are exchanges of students and faculty becoming increasingly common, but also universities are striving to respond to the heavy demand of a rapidly globalising economy (Muthaly *et al.* 2013: 119).

Lam *et al.* (2011: 64) referred to Ankomah and Lawson (2002), who said that countries could become more successful if they were able to link both the education and tourism industries as avenues for international exchange and learning. The changes in the tourism and educational industries over the last two decades have seen the convergence of these two industries with educational facilitating mobility and learning becoming an important part of the tourist's experience (Lam *et al.* 2011: 64).

An educational tourist can be defined as 'a person who travels to an attraction destination and participates, formally or informally, in a learning experience available there' (Kelly and Brown 2004, referred via Llewellyn-Smith, McCabe 2008: 594). Davidson (2005: 36, referred via Cohen 2010: 27) noted, that like studying is considered as broadening the mind and view of life, many travellers imagine and experience travel as the route to "finding one's own place" outside the social, political and economic contradictions of life at home. An educational tourist not only has to choose a good university with suitable curriculum, but also has to consider the destination, which could have even bigger impact on the experience. It also shouldn't be mistaken that university and the destination together have to work towards creating welcoming and pleasant environment for international students.



Generation Y, also known as Millennials, are people with distinctive characteristics when compared to other generations. In the United States, Generation Y has been exposed almost since birth to very rapid technological advances, manifested by unprecedented and immediate access to information, multiple and new technologies, and perhaps the largest assortment of media channels in modern history (Johnson 2006). They are more diverse, tolerant and relatively affluent demographic group that seeks for personal growth and development opportunities from behind their domestic environment borders (Pope *et al.* 2014: 98). Behavioural beliefs about studying abroad will affect students' later intentions and lives.

Educational tourists can also be categorised into two segments: 'education first' and 'tourism first'. While 'education first' students may be primarily educational, and they may not view themselves as tourists, students participating in overseas study still have distinct tourism-related impacts and have specific tourist needs. In contrast, for the 'tourism first' segment, travel is the primary motivator and the educational or learning component is of secondary importance (Ritchie 2003; Kelly and Brown 2004, referred via Llewellyn-Smith, McCabe 2008: 594). Destination managers and universities have also failed to make the connection that educational choices may be influenced by tourism choices and *vice versa* (Weaver 2003, referred via Llewellyn-Smith, McCabe 2008: 594). The experience students are seeking for from the study abroad experience are influenced by many different push and pull factors, which give us the approach to understand the motivations for traveling for education. Motivations are multidimensional, need to be contextualised and are changing over time (Cohen 2010: 27). Taking these aspects in consideration, universities should try to think of aspects of local heritage that could be connected to the educational programs that they are offering. This way students who come to university only to study, would be encouraged to explore the foreign country they study in also outside the classroom. 'Tourism first' students are interested in the local heritage and experiencing local culture anyways and they could also be used to make 'education first' students be more interested in the tourism aspects that the local university and destination have to offer.

## 1.2. Motivations to study abroad

Motivations for traveling for education can be easily defined by push and pull method, where pull factors are directly or indirectly created by the destination and has a huge impact on whether the destination will be a popular place to travel to or not. While creating the pull factors also the push factors should be considered, since they give us the image, what target group is looking for or needs. The word ‘experience’ itself has been generally used in leisure and other industries ‘to describe the essence of what costumers are seeking and paying for’ (Cohen 2010: 27).

Generation Y college students’ motivations to study abroad are rooted in the desire for individual growth, which, combined with other motivation factors – gender, parents’ educational level, prior international experience, age and household income – drives the intent to study abroad (Pope *et al.* 2014: 97). The act of tourism offers complex experiences, memories and emotions related to places, and it is arguably this experience of place or self in place that the individual seeks (Morgan *et al.* 2010: 3, referred via Cohen 2010:27). An educational tourist not only has to choose a good university with suitable curriculum, but also has to consider the destination, which could have an even bigger impact on the experience. It also shouldn’t be mistaken that university and the destination together have to work towards creating a pleasant environment for international students.

A general conclusion can be drawn that the personal motives (push motives) and the view of the characteristics of the tourism destination (pull motives) determine perceptions. These motives together create a dynamic image of motivations, which is later seen as a multidimensional concept that explains tourists’ decision (Mohammad, Mat Som 2010: 42). This kind of interpretation of student motivation to get education abroad is considering both sides - the motivations that start from the beginning and make the student think about going abroad, but also the factors that make the student choose a certain destination and university.

The push-pull framework is commonly used in tourism as means for identifying underlying touristic motivations and visitation behaviour (e.g. Baloglu and Uysal

1996; Jurowski 1993; Kim *et al.* 2003; Prayag and Ryan 2011, referred via Phau, Lee and Quintal 2013). Certain reasons for travel may correspond to certain benefits that are to be valued and obtained at the destination site. Thus, marketers and destination promoters in tourism should keep in mind that most successful products are those which respond to a bundle of needs within a given market segment, and should give more marketing efforts to match destination's major attributes to the tourists' diverse psychological needs. (Mohammad, Mat Som 2010: 42)

A general conclusion can be drawn that the personal motives (push motives) and the view of the characteristics of the tourism destination (pull motives) determine perceptions. These motives interact in a dynamic and evolving context (Correia 2000, referred via Mohammad, Mat Som 2010: 42), and the tourist motivation is seen as a multidimensional concept that explains tourist decisions (McCabe 2000, referred via Mohammad, Mat Som 2010: 42). Motivations are measured in order to identify and segment types of tourists for the purpose of product development and market promotion (Smith, Costello, Muenchen 2010). As Smith *et al.* (2010) quoted Murray (1964) a motivation is an internal factor that arouses, directs, and integrates a person's behaviour. Crompton and McKay (1997, referred via Smith, Costello, Muenchen 2010) gave three main reasons for better understanding motivation: it is a key tool for designing offerings for customers, it is a direct link to customer satisfaction, and it is a crucial element in understanding a customer's decision making process.

Since tourism and traveling always relates to human beings and depends on their nature, it is difficult to investigate and understand why people travel and what their expectations are from certain places. In major studies, it is generally accepted that push and pull motivations have been primarily utilized in studies of tourist behaviour. The discoveries and issues undoubtedly play a useful role in attempting to understand a wide variety of needs and wants that can motivate and influence tourist behaviour. (Mohammad, Mat Som 2010: 42)

Chronologically, push factors precede pull factors in the travel decision-making process. Thus the need to go abroad for travel or study reasons precedes the decision-making process of where to go. (Smith, Costello, Muenchen 2010)

According to dividing motivation to travel into two domains: ‘push’ and ‘pull’, socio-psychological, internal and intangible ‘push’ forces motivate people to travel, while on the other hand, attributes that enable tourists to satisfy their unmet needs ‘pull’ them to a destination. The push factors predispose the person to travel, while the pull factors explain the destination choice. This has also been used in studies where international students are being studied in whom the decision to travel and the decision to study internationally are a result of a number of push forces. The selection of a host destination and university result from the influence of destination and university pull factors. Similarly, a student has to be first pushed to undertake the education exchange by internal forces, such as the need for social interaction, fun, and knowledge and is then pulled to select an exchange programme based on an evaluation of the attributes available at the host destination and the host university. (Llewellyn-Smith, McCabe 2008: 595)

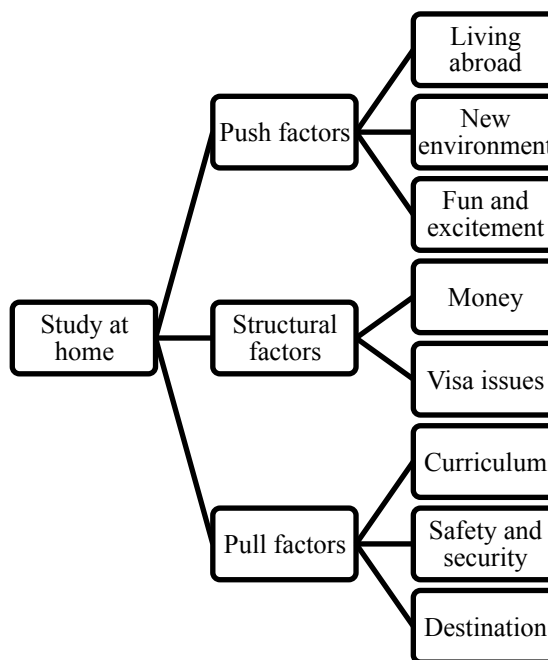
Motivations are measured in order to identify and segment types of tourists for the purpose of product development and market promotion. Motivation can be understood as an internal factor that arouses, directs and integrates a person’s behaviour . Crompton and McKay (1997, referred via Smith *et al.* 2010: 19) gave three main reasons for better understanding motivation: it is a key tool for designing offerings for customers, it is a direct link to customer satisfaction, and it is a crucial element in understanding a customer’s decision making process (Smith *et al.* 2010: 19).

Studies on study abroad programs have, on one hand, found that studying abroad is a good way to experience intercultural learning and to develop intercultural communicative competence. On the other hand, research into study abroad programs also finds that students studying abroad can achieve greater success in English acquisition. (Wilkinson 2002; Churchill & Dufon 2006, referred via Tsai 2012: 24)

McGroarty (2003, referred via Tsai 2012: 25) says that motivation to learn a second or foreign language can reside in one’s interaction with the host environment. And this is not only with learning languages, but also with learning anything really, especially learning something new abroad. According to Ushioda (2006: 157, referred via Tsai 2012: 25), ‘motivation is never simply in the hands of the motivated individual learner,

but is constructed and constrained through social relations with others”. Which shows us clearly that the destination and foreign environment for foreign students has a major impact on the study experience and the travel experience throughout the whole stay. Motivation is never simply in the hands of the motivated individual learner, but is constructed and constrained through social relations with others, which is also consistent with the tourism literature, which suggests that social interaction is one of the most influential push factors motivating people to travel. (Richardson, Fluker 2004: 8).

The decision-making process is also drawn in a figure, which is conducted based on making a decision on going to study in the United States of America (Eder, Smith, Pitts 2010: 245). The whole process that has also been researched in this paper can be seen in Figure 1, which has been conducted by the author using this certain research’s results.



**Figure 1.** Conceptual framework of the students’ decision-making process. (Based on Eder, Smith, Pitts 2010: 245)

In an article by Nyaupane, Paris and Teye (2010: 207) the results of two studies on study abroad student motivations by Kitsantas (2004, referred via Nyaupane *et al.* 2010: 207) and Weirs-Jenseen (2003, referred via Nyaupane *et al.* 2010: 207) can generally be grouped into four motivational categories including cross-cultural experience, academics, future careers and family heritage. In the same article there was a reference

to a backpackers study in Australia, where it was found that most individuals participate in a short-term study abroad in order to gain a broadened global awareness, to have social interactions and meet new people and to get away from normal life.

In addition to factors, such as cost, historical ties, institutional arrangements, level of socio-economic development, the destination or geographical preference can also be explained by students' motivation, experience and social ties, which has been conceptualized within the framework of tourist decision-making (Sirakaya *et al.* 2001, referred via Nyaupane *et al.* 2010: 206). Tourist motivation and attitude have been found to be influential factors in the destination selection process (Philips and Jang 2008). Several studies have attempted to examine changes in attitudes as a result of the interaction between tourists and hosts. However, how attitudes are formed and what factors play important roles in forming attitude toward the destinations have not been explored much in the tourism literature (Nyaupane *et al.* 2008). This understanding is even more lacking with respect to the large number of students who annually participate in various forms of study abroad programs (Nyaupane *et al.* 2010: 207). Women in general are more opened and ready to travel for education (Dessoff 2006). Women around the world are bound to work harder to be equal to men that can be also related to searching for more qualifications from abroad.

There is a normative belief in the study abroad field that an expanded view of the world can be achieved by spending a semester or a year in a foreign country. If this is true, then students who study abroad in countries with greater differences in social and cultural norms as compared to students' homes – i.e., when they are further removed from their comfort zones – may have proportionally greater opportunities for learning and personal growth. (Wells 2006: 121) Europe in general is very traditional and a popular study abroad destination, whereas Estonia is not so known in the world. This could be as a great 'pull' factor for students to choose rather unknown and untraditional study abroad destinations.

Experiencing different way of living allows students to obtain a different point of view. It also helps them to grow personally and become more open minded about different people and situations, they might deal in future. This figure shows well the complexity

of the decision-making process that students must go through before the final decision will be made. The whole process starts with students getting the thought at home to study. Next they go through factors that push them to leave home and travel for education. This is the phase, where they get the idea to go abroad. In this figure the example push factors have been chose from the study conducted by the author. Next there might be some aggravating aspects as visa and money. For example, some study abroad programs might be too expensive and students might struggle with the financial part, whereas in this study case non-European student does not qualify for a visa to enter Europe, he or she will not be able to take the study abroad program, no matter how strong the desire (Eder, Smith, Pitts 2010: 245). Finally, if they have passed all the previous steps, a destination needs to be chosen. Often the most important attributes that are being thought over are the university/college and the curriculum and also the destination's characteristics. In this figure these pull factors have also been chosen from the same study as push factors. Finally, if all the above has been worked through and considered the next step moving to the right in the figure is just going abroad to take the program.

### **1.3. Marketing university for possible foreign students**

Marketing is often associated with imaging, or in the case of some cities or rural regions, re-imaging. According to Kotler (1993) we are living in a time of 'place wars', in which places are competing for their economic survival with other places and regions not only in their own country but also throughout the world (Ritchie, Carr, Cooper 2003). And we are still living in this world, despite the fact that this was noted 20 years ago. Trade in education services is a fast growing global business following the trend of other service sectors (Naidoo, Wu 2011: 1117). Now, even though Pärnu College is not considered as a destination, this 'place wars' idea can also be used for marketing the university. Since it was said before that studying abroad is a growing business field, universities need to stand out and be aware of the needs and hopes of possible students to reach out to them.

Marketing higher education internationally is a global phenomenon. Increasing competitive practices calls for increasing market research especially in the area of

consumer behaviour and student motivations (Gatfield, Chen 2006: 77). On the demand side, students increasingly view international qualifications as a different asset that tends to command a premium in today's competitive job market (Naidoo, Wu 2011: 1118). Students are interested in getting higher education abroad more and more in time.

For most of the international curriculums foreign students have to pay for. Challenging the fierce competition, expressed by other public or private universities, attracting a certain segment of students and obtaining funds from the state budget and other private sector sources are goals for the higher education institution. These goals are met successfully only by understanding the marketing concept and the need to adopt it within educational services unit. (Mihaela, 2012)

Marketing in public service organizations is needed, because it leads not only to more efficient public services, but also to customer-focused services (Mitchell, 2005). This does not implement only locally, but also internationally, where the students could be even more selective about the university's reputation, curriculum and also the destination itself.

Attitudes and destination image play an important role in the destination choice of individuals. Understanding the process of attitude formation toward competing destinations for this specific tourist segment will contribute to a greater comprehension of an important part of the decision making process (Sirakaya *et al.* 2001, referred via Nyaupane, Paris, Teye 2010: 206). Consequently, it is important for universities to study their foreign students and their motivations and satisfaction with destination, local students and university.

Since the target of educational tourism marketing for international students target is located all over the world, the main way of marketing should be concentrated on Internet marketing. Internet marketing allows institutions to reach out to all of these students who have never heard of the destination or lives in a place where there are no organisations or events promoting educational programs in foreign universities.



The destination marketing system (DMS) on the Internet has been widely used as a distribution channel and marketing tool by destination marketing organisations (DMOs) at different levels (e.g. nation, region, city or other recognisable geographical entities) in the promotion and management of tourism destinations (Wang 2008: 55). Wang (2008: 56) believes that successful Internet marketing requires an articulated and systematic approach in understanding key factors supporting the management and implementation of the DMS from both business and technical perspectives.

According to Sweeney (2000, referred via Wang 2008: 56) the three complementary aspects of the Internet marketing for successful Internet marketing are website features, website-promotion strategies and customer relationship management (CRM) programmes. From a technical viewpoint, the development of a website entails three major tasks: Web design, website promotion, and website performance measurement.

Many consumers demand specialised and in-depth presentation of information to facilitate their decision-making. In order to address their needs, proper levels of information need to be accessible to the right consumers in order to initiate and generate a purchasing interest (Bieger and Laesser 2004).

Services, such as education, have several characteristics, which have made them very different from goods. These include intangibility, inseparability, perishability and variability. However, intangibility is a major distinguishing feature of services that applies particularly to education, where the specific nature of the service offering is difficult to define. Kinnel (1989) suggests that the following five variables are applicable to the marketing of educational services: product design (educational programs), pricing, distribution (availability and accessibility), communication and finally the environmental structure, which reflects the situation in a target market. (Muthaly, Lobo, Jen-Yuan 2013: 120)

Today's students want to be engaged in their learning experiences. They find one-way lectures, rote memorization, and regurgitation of isolated facts and terms tedious and boring. In addition, these passive learning methods do not facilitate the critical thinking and communication skills necessary to be successful in business. (Munoz, Huser 2008)

Communication is the human activity that links people together and creates relationships. It is the heart of meaning-making activities, not only in marketing, but also in a wide range of political, economic and psychological areas. It serves as a way to develop, organise and disseminate knowledge. For destinations, this interactive phase helps in building partnerships, and goes beyond the initial 'flirting stage' at the information level to the 'courting stage'. Partners' presence on the Web should be an engaging experience for the users, who demand new communication platforms. (Wang 2008)

Institutions that identify market segments can then target those segments that might best contribute to achieving the organisation's strategic objectives. Then, the product offering can be effectively positioned and an appropriate marketing mix developed-incorporating decisions on product characteristics, pricing, promotion and so on. This research showed that students with different nationality have different motivations and attitudes, which affect on their choice of destination. Institutions therefore might consider targeting specific nationalities and catering for their specific demands, thereby satisfying students' needs more precisely. Such a strategy should improve student satisfaction, thus improving student retention and word-of-mouth recommendations, both of which can contribute to the improved financial performance of an institution (Marine & Gibbs 2009, referred via Wilkins *et al.* 2012).

Many universities have simply taken the approach that the availability of the study abroad programs should be enough motivation to participate in them and that students will participate in them merely because these programs exist. Understanding intention to participate in study abroad programs is important for schools and administrators that are involved with such programs in order to design and market these programs effectively. Understanding, for example, that students are motivated to participate in such program because of future job prospects should lead to a more applied and job-oriented teaching method in these programs versus a purely theoretical approach. This would complement internship experiences the students may already have and would be one additional factor students can use to differentiate themselves in the job market. (Schnusenber, de Jong, Goel 2012: 338)

Strategic marketing planning for universities should analyse their past and current actions, review their mission and decide what activities should be conducted in the future. To achieve this goal is necessary to identify the strengths and weaknesses of their own already existing marketing, as well as opportunities and threats that educational organizations may face at a time. (Mihaela 2012)

As all this above stated the complexity of giving a meaning to a university's programs for foreign students from their own point of view, there should be a and in many cases there are separate departments for this kind of marketing and organising the foreign relations. But not only a random group of people, who just think what certain foreign students might want, need and be interested in, but also annually work out surveys and collect data from past and current students.

## **2. RESEARCH, PROCESSING AND ANALYSIS OF DATA**

### **2.1. Overview of the chosen research method**

The reason why this certain model has been used in the research is due to the fact that Yoon and Uysal (2005) explored the casual relationship of motivations, satisfaction and destination loyalty utilizing the constructs of push-pull theory. The researchers examined the affects of internal and external sources of motivations on satisfaction. External sources of motivation were represented by destination attributes (pull) and internal sources were those psychological forces or motivations (push). In this paper the model is used to find connections between educational tourist's inner needs and motivations to travel for education and destination's characteristics, which can also affect motivation and urge to go abroad.

The sample that is involved in this research is 24 current and already graduated foreign students from Pärnu College, which makes it the overall sample, because there are not too many students and all of them need to be involved in the research. The respondents were sent an e-mail with a link to the online questionnaire.

Developing a questionnaire is multidimensional and very complex operation. They have to be easily understood for the participants, but also easily convertible for the researcher to later decode the answers and analyse them statistically. In this survey questions have numerical values, but there are also open questions about students' origin and year of birth, which have to be decoded. There are also questions which request evaluation of certain motivational aspects, but also have open answer section, where students can have say in their satisfaction with school, destination and local students. They can also add their own personal motivational aspects, which have affected their decision to travel for education. For exact questionnaire, please see the Appendix 1.

The questionnaire was created online and was sent to all current foreign students in Pärnu College, but also to the already graduated foreign students, since the traveling motivations are being examined and current connectedness is not necessary.

## **2.2. Overview and objectives of the research**

The main objective of this research is to study international students in Pärnu College to find out their motivations that first pushed them to go study abroad and secondly what where the pull factors, that attracted them to Estonia as a study destination.

The model that has been used has chosen from a previous research conducted by Llewellyn-Smith and McCabe (2008) that has also studied international students and their motivations for studying abroad and destination's characteristics. The main reason for chosen push and pull research model is due to this model's versatility, that considers students' as educational tourists' complex needs and expectations starting from the need for travel or study reasons, following push and pull reasons during the decision making process of where to go. As it is mentioned above in the first chapter this model has and still is commonly used in tourism while identifying touristic motivations and visitation behaviour.

The sample that was involved in the research consists of international students that have already graduated from Pärnu College and foreign students that are currently studying in the college. There were 24 students, who got e-mail with a link to the online questionnaire. The first e-mail with a link to the questionnaire was sent out on March 17 and then 8 days later the remainder was sent out, which was 25<sup>th</sup> of March. By 5<sup>th</sup> of April 8 subjects out of 24 had filled the poll. Second reminder was sent out on April 7. In total there were 15 respondents that were used in the research.

Data was collected online via electronic survey in Google environment. At first there were 10 questionnaires filled in by April 17. Since the author was aware that this number is too small to draw conclusions, therefore some students who had not responded yet, they were contacted more personally and asked to fill in the questionnaire.

Electronic surveys have many advantages over other types of survey methodologies (Robson 2011, referred via McPeake, Bateson, O'Neill 2014: 24). For example they can be cheaper and less time consuming than others mentioned above. Electronic surveys can also reduce time and resources required, especially when handling large datasets and it also reduces the chance of human error affecting the results and improves the reliability of subsequent analysis (McPeake, Bateson, O'Neill 2014: 25).

Electronic survey, on the other hand, is not always the best way to conduct a questionnaire. Biggest problem is ensuring that the e-mail list is up-to-date and accurate. Many people may own more than one e-mail address and may not always check all the accounts they own. Often the surveys conducted are too long and people cancel halfway and leave the researcher with no answers at all.

To improve the response rate is wise to keep the survey as short as possible, questions as simple and easy to understand as possible and also the opportunity to not response to all of the questions, which leaves the respondent an opportunity to choose and researcher with little answers rather than no answers at all.

Since this study mainly consists of evaluating different aspects and motivation factors with numbers, a quantitative research method is used here to decode and analyse the results, but also qualitative method to analyse the interviews carried out among people in Pärnu College, who work with international students. Descriptive statistics including frequencies and averages were used to describe the sample and determine if differences existed in terms of demographic characteristics: age, sex and origin, but also by the fact if the destination was important for the student before they started looking for a foreign university.

In this questionnaire there are questions made based on the survey conducted by Llewellyn-Smith and McCabe (2008) to find out motivational factors to travel for education. The survey starts with a question with designating the importance of the study destination from 1 (not important at all) to 5 (very important). Other numbers like 2, 3 and 4 are valued as follows: 2 – not important, but couldn't be ignored, 3 – had some importance and 4 – important, but not priority. Then the author wants to know if

the student knew about University of Tartu or University of Tartu Pärnu College before choosing their destination. This question is relevant to make connections between pull factors by the reputation of the university. If the answer is yes, then university and college are interested in the source of their information due to the marketing.

Next 2 sections in the questionnaire where the audience is asked to estimate the push factors and then pull factors. The factors were chosen from the Llewellyn-Smith and McCabe (2008) article where they conducted a similar survey to find out what made students who completed an international exchange program at an Australian university to go and study there. The push factors were chosen to the questionnaire from the Llewellyn-Smith and McCabe (2008) article and they are as follows: I chose to study abroad because I wanted to travel, opportunity for fun and excitement, the social experience of living independently in a different country, to be challenged in a new environment, learning about and experiencing different culture, opportunity to interact with local respondents. There is also one open section for the respondents to note their own push factor that was not asked yet, but played a big part in their decision making process.

There is the same case with pull factors, which were partly chosen from the same article as push factors, but questions which describe the nature or local people and their culture were taken from Visitestonia.com homepage, where the wording to describe locals and their culture is conducted by professionals. For example, the pull factors that are asked to be marked by their importance in the questionnaire are as follows: small country on the north-eastern edge of EU sounded exotic, the tourist and cultural attractions in Estonia, low cost of travel to and within Estonia, Estonians are known as being good at speaking English, often German, Finnish, Russian and also Swedish, safety and security, suitability of the curriculum. In this section there is also an open section to note the pull factor that was not asked yet, but had important role in respondents' decision making process. They are also asked to mark these open sections, where they mark their of push and pull factors, that were important in their decision making process.

There are also questions with an open comment section to specify the satisfaction evaluation with the University, Estonia and Pärnu. This is due to the fact that only quantitative evaluation would not tell us much about the real reasons that made the student satisfied or dissatisfied. For example, they can evaluate their satisfaction rate from 1 (very dissatisfied) to 5 (very satisfied). Other numbers like 2, 3 and 4 are explained as follows: 2 – not happy with, 3 – not disturbed, but not satisfied either, 4 – satisfied, but something seems to be missing. If the respondent is dissatisfied with something and chooses the mark as 1 or 2, then it doesn't tell us the real reason, which is essential to improve foreign students satisfaction with their studies and stay abroad. Since we have promised the respondents anonymity and provided open comment sections, they can freely let us know what is the reason for their dissatisfaction, so that University could make improvements. But not only to specify the negative satisfaction, but also to comment very satisfied feelings about the university and their study destinations, which would let us know what we are doing well already and what is being appreciated.

In the end of the questionnaire there are also little more personal questions about respondents. For example the age, but this has not been asked directly, but their birth year is asked, which may not be as straightforward and uncomfortable for the respondents. The survey is also interested in where the respondents come from, which gives an overview of the variety of different nationalities that study in the College. Also different nations and areas all over the world have very different cultures, which make the push and pull factors with different values and also different aspects that make people satisfied or dissatisfied with the university and the destination. Therefore, respondents' origin is a very important aspect while later analyzing and in the interpretation of the results. Respondents have also been given an opportunity to see the analyzed results. The only purpose for asking for their e-mail is guaranteed for feedback and if they are not interested in analyzed results, they are not obligated to leave their e-mail.

To understand the satisfaction and importance of different push and pull factors are measured with strength scale from 1 to 5, where with importance 1 is the least important



and 5 is the most important, while with the satisfaction 1 is very dissatisfied and 5 is very satisfied. The average rate was calculated, but also the answers were scaled out which were rated the most with the highest rate and also the answers, that were rated the most with the lowest rate.

As an example to explain the high importance of curriculum choice over destination it is already known for the College that they choose Pärnu College just because of the Wellness & Spa curriculum, which is also the most popular one among foreign students.

The author also did her marketing practice in Pärnu College, where she was working on College's current marketing strategies and trying to come up with new ways of marketing College. Since the author has previous experience in working in Pärnu College, she got the access to the international students' e-mails. The schedule is complicated by the communication between the paper author and administrators of the international students contacts and then also the students themselves.

For the used quantitative research method, the sample is too small and at the same time is noted as narrowing circumstance of the study. The small percentage of answered questionnaires might come from the fact that most of the current foreign students are in the middle of graduation and exams process right at the time when this study was held. Not thinking through the exact time and not taking the exams and graduation period in consideration during planning the research schedule was authors' big setback. All the figures in this paper have conducted by the author.

The results were firstly decoded and organised by questions. Then based on the literature, research question and main objectives different results were compared and reflected in the figures. Different figures helped the author to analyse the results and see relationships between results and motivational aspects, also to see the differences.

### **2.3. Results and analysis**

In three weeks, which was from March 17 until April 5, 10 students answered to the questionnaire. First the demographic indicators - ten out of 15 respondents were female, where all of which were from different countries. The noted origins were Belarus,

Canada, United States of America, Cameroon, France, Russia, Ukraine, Serbia, Nigeria, Nepal, India and Latvia. The youngest student who responded was 22 years old and the oldest was 42 years old. Other ages that were also noted were 23, 24, 26, 28, 29, 32, and 34. 13 students out of 15 do belong to the Generation Y. One student is from the previous generation group and 1 respondent did not note their age.

They were also asked if they had heard of University of Tartu and/or Pärnu College before they chose Estonia as their study destination. To this question 9 out of 10 answered 'Yes'. Four of the students, who had heard of University of Tartu and/or Pärnu College before said they got their information from the Internet. One student said they got the hint from their family and one respondent had heard about the University from Haaga-Helia University of Applied Sciences, which is also University of Tartu partner institution. One student had had previous connections with University of Tartu.

The importance of destination was evaluated from 1 (not important at all) to 5 (very important) with average of 3,8, where the highest, 5, was chosen 5 times and for one student the destination was not important at all. 13 students out of 15 chose the curriculum as more important than the destination. There was one student who chose destination as more important and one student who left this question unanswered. This result is justified already by the fact, that it is already known that the students mainly come to Pärnu College because of the Wellness & Spa curriculum. 1 student said that the destination was more important and 1 student had not answered to this question.

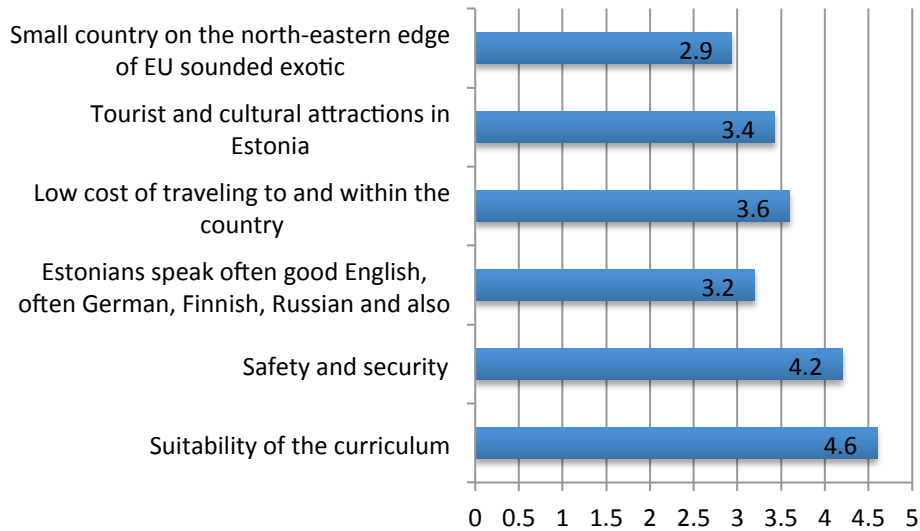
First motivational aspects were asked evaluated such as 'push' factors: reason to travel, opportunity for fun and excitement, the social experience of living independently in a different country, to be challenged in a new environment, learning about and experiencing Estonian culture, opportunity to interact with local respondents.



**Figure 2.** Most important and least important values for push factors.

There were 6 push factors that respondents were asked to evaluate from 1 (not important at all) and 5 (very important) (see Figure 2). The most important factor that pushed students to study abroad was ‘The social experience of living independently in a different country’, with the average result of 3,9, while the least important by the average was the opportunity to interact with local respondents with the average result of 3,2. Two factors that were most often chosen as very important were the social experience of living independently in a different country and to be challenged in a new environment. Reason for the same importance of these two factors can be the fact that they have very similar meaning. Respondents might not have seen the difference in the part where one factors was emphasizing on the social experience. Fun and excitement was factor that was chosen 5 times as the most important, while had not been chosen as not important at all, which means that all the students that answered to the questionnaire consider fun and excitement as very important reason why they want to travel for education. Learning about Estonian culture and interest in interacting with local respondents had almost the same frequency in very important and not important at all values, which means these two factors are quite neutral and secondary reasons for push

factors. This is only in human nature to experience different things and meet people they would not find in their natural environment.



**Figure 3.** Average values for pull factors.

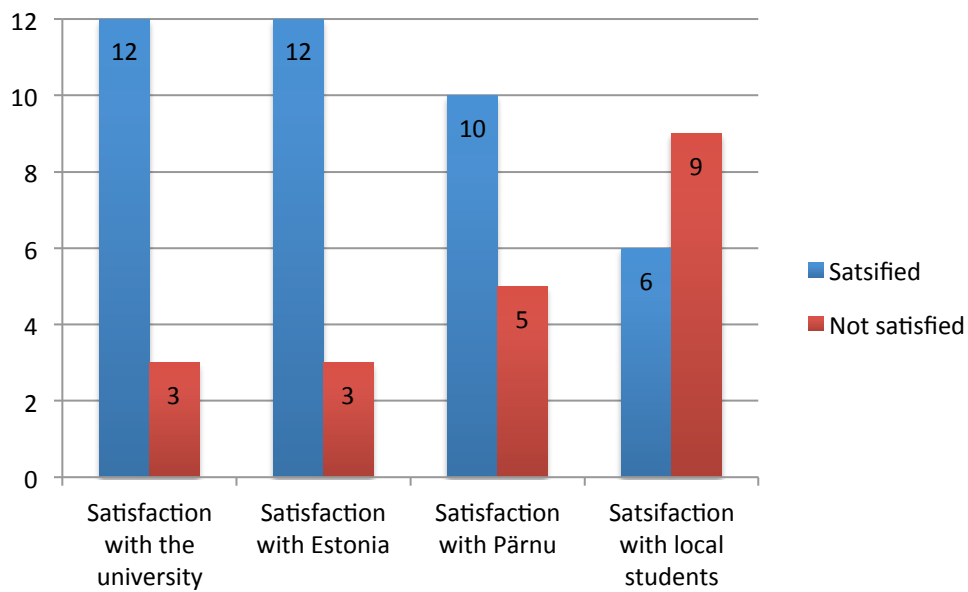
There were 6 pull factors to be evaluated that attracted students from the destinations' side to go abroad and seek for foreign experiences (see Figure 3). The factor that was evaluated the most highly as very important was 'Suitability of the curriculum', which is also already justified and clear that Wellness and Spa Service Design curriculum is indeed the main reason why foreign students precisely choose Pärnu college for their studies. Secondly, Estonia is seen through foreign students' eyes as a safe and secure country and also value this quality. This may appear due to the fact that most of the students come from really big countries and compared to those, Estonia is really small with small population and indeed quiet. While comparing the average results then the lowest average had Estonia as an exotic country with 2,9. The highest average values got the curriculum (4,6), safety and security (4,2) and tourist and cultural attractions in Estonia (3,5). In push factors students said that important were fun and excitement and the will to travel, therefore cultural and tourist attractions do connect with these 2 push factors.

It is also important to not look for the motivations, but the satisfaction with the destination and the University itself to make improvements and know the good that has

already been done (see Figure 4). Since the marks from 1 to 3 are interpreted as ‘not satisfied’, ‘not happy with’ and ‘not disturbed, but not satisfied either’ then there is only 4 and 5 considered as satisfied and therefore students were the most satisfied with the University, then equally Estonia as a country and Pärnu, where the college is situated. Local respondents were evaluated with the lowest marks in the satisfaction section. Respondents had also commented this section, to give more accurate overview of what they think of the situation. Mark 1 is understood as very dissatisfied, 2 – not happy with and 3 – not disturbed, but not satisfied either.

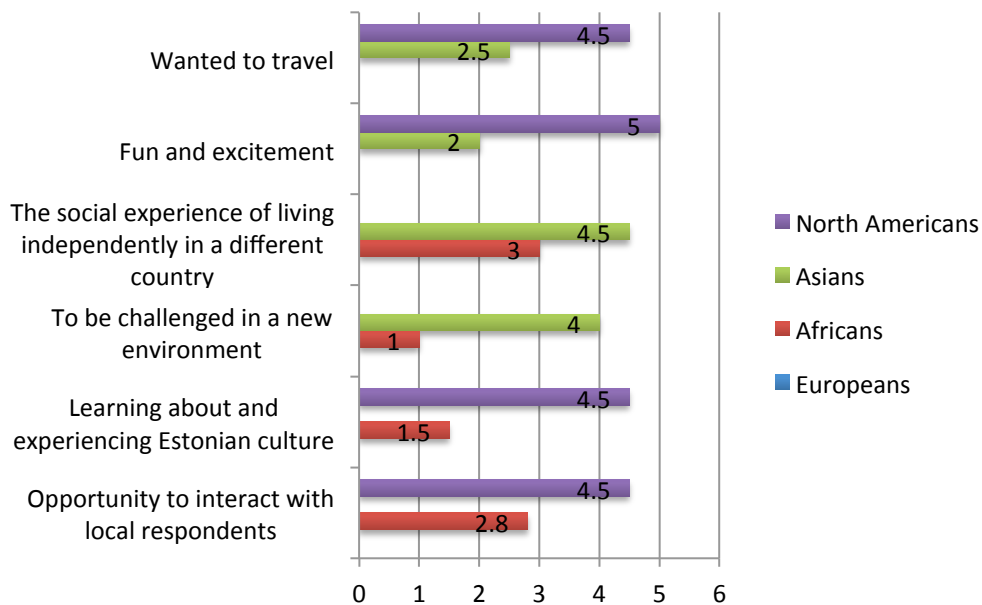
Values were calculated by the marks’ frequency. Satisfaction is very good with university and Estonia in general. Little lower satisfaction was with Pärnu and students also commented this answer with Pärnu being cosy and small, but on the other hand it is a bit too quiet for young people. This may also be connected with the next dissatisfaction with local students. 9 students out of 15 are not satisfied with local respondents. Difficulties in communication between local students and international students has been actual topic for some time now. One respondent in this survey had described the communication with local students as they should be encouraged greatly to be friendlier and more open. They were also described as segregated and only speaking among other Estonians and sort of keeping distant from foreigners. The main reason might be Estonians’ natural characteristic feature, when they are not so open to foreigners and often are afraid to speak English.

During authors training period, there are improvements and programs to be planned about how to involve international students in events in Pärnu College that take place among local students.



**Figure 4.** Satisfaction's and dissatisfactions' highes and lowest results with averages.

Since foreign students in Pärnu College come from different countries across the world, their origin should also be taken in consideration while looking at different motivations for traveling for education (see Figure 5).



**Figure 5.** Highest and lowest average values for push factors estimated by students' origin.

By the first look at the figure, it can be seen that North Americans have evaluated most of the factors much highly than students with other origins. African students have had most lowest values for push factors. Asians are the ethnic group who value challenging themselves more highly than others while Europeans do not even stand out compared to North Americans, Asians and Africans. This might come from the fact that Estonia is in Europe and not so different from other European countries as North American, Asian and African countries differ from each other.

As comparing pull factors by their importance to students differed by origin, the curriculum was evaluated almost equally, same thing with safety and security. Africans did not value Estonians fluency in different languages as an important pull factor, while other students did. Low cost of traveling to and within was the most important attraction for North Americans, while Europeans did not consider it as important. Again Africans did not think highly of tourist and cultural attractions as others. They only seemed to be interested by this category in the studies and safety. Estonia sounded the most exotic to North Americans and least exotic to Europeans and Africans, while Asians were right in the middle. The most important factors for all the students even while separated by origin were the curriculum and safety and security. North Americans evaluated all the pull factors much more highly than students from other parts of the World (see Table 1).

**Table 1.** Pull factors' average values compared by students' origin.

	Suitability of the curriculum	Safety and security	Estonians fluency in languages	Low cost of traveling to and within the country	Tourist and cultural attractions in Estonia	Estonia as exotic country
Europeans	4.5	4	3.5	3.3	3.4	2.5
Africans	5	4.5	2	3.5	2.5	2.5
Asians	4	4.5	3	4	4	3
North Americans	5	4.5	3.5	4.5	4.5	5

On the other hand, evaluating importance of the destination before choosing the studying location, this was marked average with 4 (important, but not priority). This shows that the main reason that current and already graduated students from Pärnu College choose this educational institution for their studies mainly for the curriculum,

but the high rating in this question to evaluate the importance of the destination shows, that this also played a role in the decision making process.

Even though the communication with local students has not run by the easiest path for foreigners, in general they are pleased with the College and the destination. They also commented positively on the working staff and apart from few small things that are strange and unusual for them, they said to be satisfied with their choice and with the general experience. Perhaps the more satisfying parts of the exchange experience, such as safety and security, the social experiences to live in a different environment and the opportunities to travel, influenced respondents' evaluation of overall satisfaction with destination and university.

The results that came from few questions asked from College personnel during author's training in College shows that lecturers are aware of the fact that local students and foreigners do not have the closest relations, yet no one in particular has not turned to the College with this concern to ask help for improvements. One interviewee expressed his personal belief, that since international students are also given an opportunity to join the local Student Council, then the situation would improve, but so far none of the international students have shown interest in this project.

Asking about the excursions and outings, students are often moving around the country with reference to the studies and they really enjoy it. Since the curriculum is about Spa & Wellness they are often visiting many different spa hotels around the country. They have always expressed high satisfaction and excitement over these trips. In the beginning of their studies, College also has been organising instructive orientating in Pärnu, where they have to study the whole academic year.

Communicating in different languages has not been a problem for students. All the lecturers said that foreign students have had an opportunity to take a course in Estonian language and this opportunity has not been left unused. Students also learn the local language on their own and have great practice in College to communicate with lecturers. Hereby local students outside the academic environment could also play crucial role in language learning process.



Marketing specialist in Pärnu College is communicating regularly with international students and asks about pros and cons in College. These conversations have given the marketing specialist good ideas and improvements to use in marketing in general. They also take foreign students' ideas and opinion in consideration in improving and changing Facebook page for College.

Changes and ideas to be applied have been different. First, the lunch brakes for locals students and internationals used to be at different times and this excluded students to even see each other during the brakes, not to mention interaction between one and other. They are also hoping for involving at least one international student in Student Council's work. In long term, shared dormitory is planned, where students can live together and spend more time together outside the academic environment. Since this is an ambitious and big financial expense, for a little College with a small budget, this is not a dream that can be put into practice during the next few years.

Enriching students' learning experience, they have an opportunity to take courses in Tartu as well, but according to the interviews with personnel not many of them have used this opportunity.

### **3. IMPLICATIONS FOR MARKETING**

This research question was whether foreign students are more influenced to study abroad by the destination's qualities or their personal inner characteristics and needs. The results showed that personal push factors, such as learning about and experiencing local culture, social experience of living in a different environment, opportunity to interact with local students and challenging new environment outweighed destination's characteristic features. Therefore it can be said, that foreign students in Pärnu College consider their own personal needs and motivational push factors more important than what the destination has to offer. Students' main motivational reason to take exchange program is education, which supports the work of Mazzarol and Soutar (2002), who suggested that students are first motivated to undertake study overseas, which later then leads to their selection of the host country and host university.

Currently has Pärnu College conducted and been part in multiple researches, for example "Higher education graduates study" and "Study on the Functioning of the curricula". These studies have been held among local students and the main aim has been to evaluate the curriculums' current state, where the respondents in the survey were students and lecturers. Obtained results were used to create preconditions for improvements in curriculums. Indirectly, this can also be interpreted as an important part in creating marketing strategies to evaluate the current situation and quality in higher education services and use the results in marketing.

Currently this has been the only official survey conducted among international students, but they are being interviewed regularly to get local respondents', over all living conditions and satisfaction with the curriculum feedback. This is the most important and due to the small amount of foreign students, also the most effective way of collecting

feedback. Interviewing personally students can not only express their satisfaction, but also talk more freely and express their selves about studies and maybe even personal topics. This kind of trust and personal communication may soften other small shortages. This is a big and an important advantage in Pärnu College that international students group is small enough for program manager to have personal enough relationship with students and make them feel appreciated and ease the homesickness or maybe in some cases even the loneliness.

This personal approach is a good way to stand out in marketing and to personalise international curriculum program. As it was said in the theoretical part of this paper, motivation is never simply in the hands of the motivated individual learner, but is constructed and constrained through social relations with others, which is also consistent with the tourism literature, which suggests that social interaction is one of the most influential push factors motivating people to travel. Generation Y students recognize the benefits of fulfilling their own potential, enhancing their experiences, and seeking individual growth, and that study abroad might help them achieve those objects. And due to the results of this study majority of international students do belong in Generation Y. Opportunity to interact with local students was highly important push factor for foreign students to undertake an educational program abroad. However, there was some dissatisfaction with the amount of contact with local students. This finding is consistent with other studies from Europe, where the lack of interaction with local students was a significant issue (Sultana, Smith 2011; Yue, Le 2012). Therefore, college should really emphasise more human relations and improve the communication between local students and international students to create unique marketing image. A study conducted by the same author (Kodanik 2013), few months before starting this research, local students were taken in consideration and asked how interested they are in communicating and improving relations with international students. The results showed that despite the low level of communication between foreigners and locals in College, local students are interested in improving the relations, but noted with 54,05%, that College should intervene in this process (Kodanik 2013: 17). Since international students who come to Pärnu College, or the future students who will choose Pärnu College will not only make this decision based on the curriculum, but also the string

support project. This may also have an impact on students, who have been thinking about going abroad for higher education, but has not yet had the courage.

Generally, it is not important only to enlarge the amount of international students studying in Pärnu College, but also to give an extraordinary value to this program and their personal experiences. Like studying is considered as broadening the mind and view of life, it has been found that ‘many travellers imagine and experience travel as the route to “finding one’s own place” outside the social, political and economic contradictions of life at home. Therefore, it is important to focus on experience and expertise while marketing educational institution to foreign markets. Students’ experiences that they take back home with them do not only create a vision of Pärnu College in this student’s mind, who has graduated, but also the potential future students, who will get their information from previous graduates.

While talking to personnel in Pärnu College, who works with international students and Spa and Wellness program said that the curriculum is an academic program and is not to be modified by students opinion. On the other hand, they do not have to remove or replace anything major, but they could add small things to the program that would be attractive for students looking for Wellness and Spa Service Design and Management curriculum. For example while having a talk with one student on Wellness and Spa program she mentioned that she and her course mates do miss more practical lessons that include wellness and spa treatments. As it came out from the survey that majority of international students currently studying in Pärnu College are women. From the literature it is known that women are more likely than men to actually study abroad. But it could also come from the program itself. Therefore working out some more practical treatment workshops, in additional to already existing ones this could be used very efficiently in marketing.

The more educated and conscious the student, the harder it is to offer them something innovative and interesting, but on the other hand they are also more open-minded and tolerant than any other marketing target groups. They are ready step out from their comfort zone, to see and experience new and challenging, thus marketing the college

the plan should not concentrate too much on international customs, but bring out the precise characteristic features of Pärnu, Estonia and University of Tartu Pärnu College.

College is also taking part in different international education fairs and is also cooperating with student exchange programs with other universities they collaborate with. In marketing it is really important advantage to have already created strong relations with other universities, to sustain and develop them, which can be considered as an aid to reach out to the potential future students. In this field Pärnu College has an advantage that comes from being University of Tartu College. A lot of work is already been done in marketing by the main institution in Tartu and Pärnu College is privileged to be part in this old and quite well known University.

There are also summer universities and other additional courses held for short-term students, who seek for additional experiences, but in the end may end up taking a whole program abroad, after visiting College for just a summer university.

Another aspect that simplifies the marketing process is the fact that potential foreign students that College is trying to reach to are from generation Y, who are grown up in an entertainment and with fast spreading information environment. Generation Y is strongly influenced by the Internet and all the controversial and unknown topics are now know and therefore much more easily accepted and understood. Therefore, College can mainly use Internet to market themselves and accost the potential students.

Successful Web-marketing as described above entails three major tasks: Web design, website promotion and website performance measurement. The only thing that is not currently being done is the website performance measurement. In order to make appropriate changes and improvements, it should be known if and how much the marketing information is being read and clicked on. Even a separate research could be suggested to know if the information on the website is sufficient and appropriate and if students can find all the needed information. Changes and improvements could be planned and a new web design should be organised according to the research results.

While making changes in web site and also at education fairs, this research results, most highly evaluated push and pull motivational factors could be use, such as safe and

secure and small exotic country on North-Eastern edge of EU image. More illustrative materials about Estonian culture and local people could also be used. Maybe even a video about local life and culture. University of Tartu has already created similar video and Pärnu College also has a video on the web site, but it has comments from current student, who is describing the situation and her own opinion. This is also good and informal, but something that exposes more language, shows the destination and tourism attractions as well. Current local students and international students could be involved in creating marketing video or also local celebrities that student could later see and recognise when they have chosen the destination and college. Promotional advertisement should repeat to reinforce the benefits and information about the service that is being offered. This way the video will also have an aftershock for the international students studying in Pärnu.

People these days are really attached to technology and they already do join online brand communities, where they discuss products and services, which during the decision making process influence the intentions and behaviour. One of the most popular communities online today is Facebook, where people follow and subscribe to their favourite goods and services. Here has Pärnu College already made their move by creating Pärnu College community page, but administrator of this page should encourage current students to comment and post pictures, videos and statuses on this page to stand out and reach to other Facebook users, who also might be interested in studying abroad in the future.

It is necessary to position College in the market to increase the attractiveness of college to students. Estonia in general is not crowded marketplace, but positioning college helps to see what other educational institutions have done to market themselves for international markets and perhaps there is something to takeover or learn from others. To position college in the market understanding students' choice criteria, which has done in this paper enables to find other educational institutions similar to Pärnu College. For example safety and security is not as important for students with African origin as it is for students from North America, who also evaluated the suitability of the curriculum with substantially higher importance than students from Europe or Africa. Low cost of

traveling to and within the country seemed to be more important pull factor for Europeans and North Americans, while African students did not consider it as important pull factor as Estonians being fluent in languages, destination's exotic sound and cultural and tourist attractions in the destination. These different determinants separated by the importance for each student group by origin, different approach in marketing should be used as well.

College could also use a separate department with professional personnel, who are with special skill and education in organising the foreign relations not only in marketing, but also between local students and foreign students. Their everyday work and purposes are to work towards improvements among international students experience in social life and also in academic environment. At the moment, there are people, who do really good job with international students and have great contact with them, but they also have other commitments in other fields, which might distract their consistency and eagerness.

## **SUMMARY**

Traveling for education and work is not a new concept. This movement has evolved over time and still is, which has created a business environment with market for universities that need to provide their students the best possible education and experiences. First creating an environment that offers international students all they need with the best quality is hard enough, but then it also has to have relevant marketing strategy.

Students who travel for education are considered as tourists and are known as educational tourists, who are defined as people who travel to an attraction destination and participates, formally or informally, in a learning experience available there. Like studying is considered as broadening the mind and view of life, many travellers imagine and experience travel as the route to “finding one’s own place” outside the social, political and economic contradictions of life at home. An educational tourist not only has to choose the best university with suitable curriculum, but also has to consider the destination, which could have even bigger impact on the experience. Therefore, methodological framework conducted and first acknowledged by Yoon and Uysal is the best tool to understand students’ motivations for traveling to Estonia and to University of Tartu Pärnu College.

The main objective of this research is to study international students in Pärnu College to find out their motivations that first pushed them to go study abroad and secondly what where the pull factors, that attracted them to Estonia as a study destination. The main structure of the study and questionnaire was conducted based on an earlier survey held in Australia by Llewellyn-Smith and McCabe (2008), who studied international students in University of Australia. The research method was chosen from the same study and



has been used for a long time in understanding tourists' expectations and needs, but also motivations for traveling.

The sample consists of all the current and past international students who have already graduated. The overall sample was 24 students, 15 responded to the questionnaire, which was sent to them through e-mail in an online questionnaire.

The questionnaire had few demographic questions, but also push and pull motivation factors, which were asked to evaluate as the most important and the least important. Also satisfaction with local students, college and destination were evaluated. This research has quantitative data results and a mixed method of data analyse has been used. Also the sample is limited and does not allow to do any generalisations.

Services, such as education, have several characteristics, which have made them very different from other goods. On the other hand, intangibility is a major distinguishing feature of services that applies particularly to education, where the specific nature of the service offering is difficult to define. Therefore, understanding students' choice criteria helps to work on complement the shortcomings and make other improvements in international program. Also while creating sustainable international marketing plan understanding target group choice criteria has a crucial role.

Study results showed that most of the students have chosen Pärnu College for their studies due to the suitability of the curriculum. It also showed foreign students lower satisfaction with local students compared to the satisfaction with college and destination in general. When students were asked to evaluate the most important and least important push and pull motivation factors, which made them take higher education abroad, they considered Estonia as safe and secure destination and Estonians to be fluent in foreign languages. Factors that pushed them away from home were needs to be challenged in a different environment and socially manage to live in a foreign country. Before going abroad they also felt the need to learn about Estonian culture and interact with local people.

Author made numerous implications in marketing for international market, such as emphasising more on human relations between local students and foreigners, to have

professional and separate department for international students' relations and marketing, creating a video about local culture and people, which came out to be an important push factor for foreign students and also use value judgements separated by students' origin in marketing. Students from Africa, Europe and North America had different values they considered as important features.

All things considered, students with different origin do have different values and characteristic features they are seeking from the destination and also from the personal perspective. While marketing Pärnu College on international market, it is vital to know students' criteria to personalise marketing plan for different target groups. Author also found close relationship between emotional experiences and successful marketing, therefore Pärnu College has some work to do in order to help international and local students to interact and work towards better relations.

This paper has marketing value for Pärnu College, but also helps to understand what foreign students in college are searching for in higher education in Pärnu and which emotional factors have pushed them to study in Estonia. These results help people, who work with international students to emphasise on the right topics to improve the quality of students' stay and academic knowledge. Also does this paper have value for not only University of Tartu Pärnu College, but also all the other universities and institutions that offer or want to offer programs for international students.

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## **Appendix 1. Questionnaire. A Study about foreign students in Pärnu College**

Dear Masters students!

I am current student in Pärnu College. I have conducted this study to get better understanding of Your motivations and expectations that made You choose Estonia and Pärnu College as your studies destination. These results will be used as recommendations for better international university marketing.

If you have any questions or proposals about this study, I am very interested of Your ideas! Please let me know on my e-mail: kodanik5@ut.ee

Your confidentiality is guaranteed, even if You e-mail me about any questions or proposals.

**How important the destination was when You decided to go studying abroad?**

Not important at all 1 2 3 4 5 Very important

**Before You chose your studies destination – had you heard about University of Tartu/or University of Tartu Pärnu College?**

Yes/No

If yes, will you please specify the source of Your information

**Estimate the PUSH factors, which made you choose your studies destination abroad. Where 1 is the least important and 5 is the most important.**

	Not important at all				Very important
I chose to study abroad because I wanted to travel	1	2	3	4	5
Opportunity for fun and excitement	1	2	3	4	5
The social experience of living independently in a different country	1	2	3	4	5
To be challenged in a new environment	1	2	3	4	5
Learning about and experiencing Estonian culture	1	2	3	4	5
Opportunity to interact with local respondents	1	2	3	4	5
Other:	1	2	3	4	5



**Before you came to Estonia, you probably did some research. Which of the PULL factors affected your choice on coming to Estonia? 1 is the least important and 5 is the most important factor.**

	Not important at all				Very important
Small country on the north-eastern edge of the EU sounded exotic	1	2	3	4	5
The tourist and cultural attractions	1	2	3	4	5
Low cost of travel to and within Estonia	1	2	3	4	5
Estonians are known as being good at speaking good English often German Finnish, Russian and also Swedish	1	2	3	4	5
Safety and Security	1	2	3	4	5
Suitability of the curriculum	1	2	3	4	5
Other:	1	2	3	4	5

### Questions about satisfaction

	Very dissatisfied				Very satisfied	Comment:
How satisfied are you with University?	1	2	3	4	5	
How satisfied are you with Pärnu?	1	2	3	4	5	
How satisfied are you with interaction with local students?	1	2	3	4	5	

**Please note Your year of birth**

...

**Please note Your gender**

Male/Female

**Where do You come from**

**If you want to get information about my studies, which will also be my final paper topic and will be continued, please leave me your e-mail address below.**

Your e-mail address will only be used to send you additional information.

# KOKKUVÕTE

## ÜLIÕPILASTE MOTIVATSIOON MAGISTRI ÕPINGUTE SOORITAMISEKS VÄLISÜLIKOO LIS: TULEMUSTE RAKENDAMINE TURUNDUSES

Kadri Kodanik

Reisimine hariduse ja töö tõttu ei ole uus kontseptsioon. See liikumine on arenenud ajajooksul ja teeb seda siiani, mis on loonud ärikeskkonnana ülikoolide turu, kes peavad peavad oma tudengitele pakkuma parima võimaliku hariduse ja kogemuse. Esalt keskkonna loomine, mis pakuks rahvusvahelistele tudengitele kõikke, mida nad vajavad ja seda parima kvaliteediga, on piisavalt keeruline, kuid lisaks peab sellel olema ka asjakohane turundusstrateegia.

Üliõpilasi, kes reisivad hariduslikel eesmärkidel, mõistetakse kui turiste ja täpsemalt kui haridusturiste. Haridusturiste defineeritakse kui inimesi, kes atraktiivsesse sihtkohta ja osalevad formaalselt ja mitteformaalselt seelses õppimiskogemuses. Kuna õppimist mõistetakse kui silmaringi ja eluvaate laiendamist, paljud reisijad näevad ja kogevad reisimist kui teekonda, kus leida iseenda koht väljaspool kodustest sotsiaalsetest, poliitilistest ja majanduslikest piiridest. Haridusturist ei pea valima mitte ainult parima ülikooli sobivaima õppekavaga, vaid samuti arvestama sihtkoha iseärasusi, mis võivad üldist õpikogemust tugevalt mõjutada. Seetõttu, metoodiline raamistik, mille esalt võtsid vastu ja mida tunnustasid Yoon ja Uysal, on parim vahend, millega mõista üliõpilaste motiveeritust reisida Eestisse ja õppida Tartu Ülikooli Pärnu kolledžis.

Töö peamiseks eesmärgiks on uurida rahvusvahelisi tudengeid Pärnu kolledžis ja leida motivaatoreid, mis neid esalt välismaale lükkasid ja teiseks mis olid need tõmbetegurid, mis neid Eesti kui sihtkoha juures huvitasid. Uuringu struktuur on peamiselt ülesehitatud varasemal uuringul, mille viisid Austraalias läbi Llewellyn-Smith ja McCabe (2008), kes uurisid rahvusvahelisi tudengeid Austraalia Ülikoolis. Uuringumeetod valiti samast uuringust ning seda on kasutatud pikka aega mõistmaks turistide ootusi ja vajadusi, kuid samuti ka motivaatoreid reisimiseks.

Valim koosneb kõigist praegustest ja varasemalt lõpetanud rahvusvahelistest tudengitest. Kogu valim oli 24 tudengit ja lõpuks laekus 15 vastatud ankeeti, mis saadeti neile elektroonselt e-postile.

Et jõuda lõputöö eesmärgini, autor seadis tööle peamised ülesanded:

- Anda ülevaade haridusturismist, motiveeritusest sellele ja kuidas ülikooli rahvusvaheliselt turundada;
- Koguda andmeid Tartu Ülikooli Pärnu kolledži rahvusvahelistelt tudengitelt;
- Töötlemata ja analüüsima saadud tulemusi ja tegema järeldusi;
- Kasutades tõuke- ja tõmbetegureid, mida Tartu Ülikooli Pärnu kolledži rahvusvahelised tudengid on hinnanud ja soovitama neid rakenduslikult kolledži rahvusvaheliseks turundamiseks.

Uurimisülesannete täitmiseks on kasutatud arvukalt teadusartikleid ja ka teisi kirjanduslike allikatega on tehtud tööd, et mõista töö teemat ja anda objektiivne ülevaade haridusturismi turundamisest. Kuna kõrghariduse turundamine on omaette äriturg, siis on juba arendatud strateegiaid ja avaldatud artikleid ülikoolide turundamisest välistudengitele.

Erinevat päritolu tudengitel ka erinevad väärtushinnagud sihtkoha omadustele ja ka isiklikele vajadustele. Turundades Pärnu kolledžit rahvusvahelisel turul on väga oluline teada tudengite kriteeriume ja arvamust, et isikupärastada turundusplaani erinevatele sihtrühmadele. Autor leidis ka ihedat seotust emotsionaalsete kogemuste ja eduka turundamise vahel, seega Pärnu kolledžil on vaja teha tööd, et aidata rahvusvaheliste ja kohalike tudengite suhtluse ergutamisele kaasa.

Sellel lõputööl on turundusalane väärtus, kuid need tulemused aitavad ka inimesi, kes töötavad rahvusvaheliste tudengitega, rõhuma oma töös õigetele teemadele, mis parandaksid tudengite aega sihtkohas ja akadeemilisi teadmisi. Samuti ei ole selle töö väärtus oluline mitte ainult Tartu Ülikooli Pärnu kolledžile, vaid ka kõigile teistele ülikoolidele ja institutsioonidele, kes pakuvad või soovivad pakkuda programme ja õppekavasid rahvusvahelistele üliõpilastele.

## **Lihtlitsents lõputöö reprodutseerimiseks ja lõputöö üldsusele kättesaadavaks tegemiseks**

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Pärnus, **20.05.2014**