

MAPPING INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS' EXPECTATIONS FROM THE CY HOSPITALITY AND TOURISM HIGHER EDUCATION: AN EARLY DROPOUT INDICATOR

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Abstract

Purpose – The study examined international students' expectations when studying hospitality and tourism related programs in private colleges in Cyprus, in order to determine any relation between pre-purchased expectations and college dropout intentions.

Design / Methodology / Approach – A sequential, mixed-methods approach was first implemented through a qualitative exploration of a purposeful sample, where 24 new international students participated in three different focus groups. Secondly, a survey method based on the Qualtrics market research concept, tested the hypotheses of the study and assisted in the development of the International Students' Expectation Risk Assessment Matrix (ISERAM). The questionnaires were administered face-to-face to 324 new international students.

Findings – The ISERAM analysis classified international students' expectations in relation to dropout intentions in a mixture of psychographic, behavioural and demographic consuming factors. The ISERAM as a model, may indicate a future student learning engagement or disengagement with academic success or college dropout, respectively. The Interpersonal Expectations were revealed as the most influential and high risk factor to a college dropout, altering the importance of the interpersonal and subjective nature of the self-definitional needs. Furthermore, the behavioral expectations (implicit and explicit-based expectations) specify students' personal desire for monetary, work experience gains and industry reputation based benefits from internships rather than the program's accreditation, quality and academic standards. **Originality** – The ISERAM classifies international students' expectations from a low to extremely high risk, assisting private colleges to foresee possible dropout intentions for better organizational planning and academic sustainable development.

Keywords Students' expectations, hospitality and tourism studies, interpersonal expectations, explicit or implicit expectations, Cyprus studies

INTRODUCTION

Millennials seems to be more willing than ever to travel abroad for studies in order to pursue personal agendas or career advancement, experience new cultures and lifestyles, and develop unique personal or professional competencies (Cho and Morris 2015; Costello 2015; Curtis and Ledgerwood 2017; Soto 2015; Armoo and Neequaye 2014). Due to this international market trend of the rising demand for studies abroad, the international higher education arena has become highly competitive, rendering

international students an important source of revenue for the prospective host country (Alfattal 2017; USADC 2016). This monetary colouring of international studies calls for a comprehensive understanding of what marketing information and how private colleges stimulate international students' expectations in order to eliminate any future college dropout intentions. Important operating variables such as the international academic reputation of a bachelor's degree, the way private colleges stimulate and raise international students' expectations for the sake of competitiveness, and the possibility that international students over time have developed personal agendas and unrealistic expectations from the host country and colleges call for investigation as they may have become an early and silent student dropout indicator. Recent studies examined comprehensively the post-purchase experience and satisfaction level of international students in relation to their expectations from hospitality and tourism management-related studies, or other auxiliary elements such as summer internships, career choices or potentials (Ezeuduji et al. 2017; Farmaki 2016; Kim and Park 2013; Lee and Chao 2013; Robinson, Ruhanen and Breakey 2015; Zopiatis and Theocharous 2013; Alonso-Almeida et al. 2015).

However, a major lack in literature has been observed concerning what information and how pre-purchase expectations of international students are stimulated by small private colleges (Alfattal 2017; Bohman 2014; Borghi, Mainardes and Silva 2017; Jillapalli and Jillapalli 2014). The studies of Alfattal (2017) and East (2013) support that at an operational level an in-depth knowledge of the marketing and promotional information that influences international students to select a college is critical. Such awareness could assist in capitalizing on factors that drive student satisfaction as well as in countermining those factors widening the gap between expectations and the experienced reality during studies. The study of what marketing and promotional information affects and shapes international students' expectations falls within the marketing research and calls for a scientific market research inquiry (Alfattal 2017; Saiti, Papa and Brown 2017; Kotler and Keller 2015; Ahmad, 2015). The current research inquiry extends the literature in enhancing understanding of how marketing and promotional information used by colleges stimulates international students' expectations in selecting a hospitality and tourism management program and to study in private colleges in Cyprus. For this purpose, the Qualtrics marketing research concept was adapted, as it allows a market researcher to collect data from consumers concerning their expectations from a product or a service prior to actual purchase (Smith 2018). The Qualtrics market research concept builds on exploring seven elements: consumers' Explicit and Implicit Expectations, Static and Dynamic Performance Expectations, and Technological, Interpersonal and Situational Expectations. Following, this research paper is structured as follow. First, a review of the literature on international students' expectations sets the baseline upon which the conceptual framework was summarized. Then, a comprehensive explanation of the employed research methods is presented, followed by a thorough analysis and discussion of the findings. Last, study limitations and the future orientation of the study is presented.

1. LITERATURE REVIEW

1.1. Static Performance Expectations

Chen (2007), Chen and Zimitat (2006), and McMahon (1992) reveal that international students' expectations are highly affected by the reputation and the quality of the educational system in the host country. In many cases the serious weaknesses of the educational system in the home country may force students to pursue their studies abroad, and more specifically to countries with better economies and stronger reputation in the particular fields of their studies (Chen and Zimitat 2006). Pimpa (2005) specifies that international students with a major drive to study abroad are highly influenced by the educational system's reputation, which is expressed through the quality criteria used in selecting a particular program choice. In such cases, the program choice is based on the university's international image, and popularity for its quality standards (Pimpa 2005) and the availability of scholarships are the most influential drivers in their choices (McMahon 1992).

1.2. Interpersonal, Explicit and Implicit Expectations

However, particular attention should be paid to the suggestions of Su et al. (2016) who clarify that international students' expectations are expressed mainly through self-definitional needs that reflect a desire for further personal and professional pursuit or growth. According to the findings of Borghi et al. (2016), Headar, Elaref and Yacout (2013), Parahoo, Harvey and Tamim (2013) and Bonaldo and Pereira (2016), self-definitional needs are affected by various cultural, psychographic, behavioral and demographic factors. In their findings, Borghi et al. (2016) support the argument that in many cases international students' expectations reflect personal ideas and subjective views of what may happen upon registration in a program, predictions and personal thoughts of how things should be during studies, or personal and peer knowledge and experience from utilizing similar services. Consequently, the individual's tacit cognition influences the post-purchase experience, the service quality perception and the evaluation of a utilized educational service (Mainardes, Alves, and Raposo 2013). The common understanding of what constitutes a study abroad along with students' expectations from a program or service quality may vary drastically according to the students' personal agendas, priorities and career aspirations (Anastasiou and Koumi 2018; Garbati and Rothschild 2016).

Furthermore, the pivotal marketing and promotional messages used by private colleges to highlight specific benefits to be gained from hospitality and tourism studies in the host country, in relation to a student's personal agenda, may overshadow the actual purpose of studying abroad. The acquisition of innovative academic and advanced professional skills may become of secondary substance in the program's promotion, turning out to be too complicated to communicate the actual meaning of the purpose and the outcome from studies abroad. This is happening due to the provision of insufficient, limited or well-controlled information by the colleges as international students, most of the times, lack relevant decision-making experience, mature judgment and good reflection regarding future career prospects or expectations from studies abroad (Anastasiou and Koumis 2018). Beyond the official announcement and warranty of the program's accreditation

by D.I.P.A.E. (2018), which can be found on its official website, no warranty exists about the reliability of all other exchanged marketing or promotional information about the program's quality, the various supportive services, the local living standards, or the social and cultural acceptance and openness of the host country (Chen 2007).

1.3. Dynamic Performance and Situational Expectations

Considering the influence and the impact of the above factors, Dowell, Morrison and Heffernan (2015) suggest that colleges should proactively work carefully on their marketing and promotion message communication and tactics. The authors believe in a productive outcome that results from assisting International students to gain a realistic and objective idea of student life in the host country; this can be achieved through the provision of detailed, authenticated and reliable information about the program, the supportive services and the local lifestyle, prior to their application for and registration in a program. This requires from colleges a non-opportunistic approach and to invest in a long-run profitable relationship where marketing and promotional information will be used as an effective induction training material as to what will follow during studies (Dowell, Morrison and Heffernan 2015; Abratt and Kleyn 2012). This cognitive induction will assist International students to become aware and gain an objective understanding; hence, the first emotional and psychological bonds between International students and the college will be formed (Heffernan et al. 2018).

Prugsamatz et al. (2006) underlines as an example the case of Asian students and the importance they pay to an International support network in the host country when selecting a program of study. Due to this, many colleges in order to attract Asian students emphasize marketing and promotion-wise messages related to an international network and to its effectiveness in the host country. However, Asian students may feel high levels of dissatisfaction and frustration when they experience the gap between expectations and reality and the absence of such a service, leading to poor academic response and high dropout rates. Asian students' dropout rates are becoming very threatening (Prugsamatz et al. 2006), particularly for the small Cypriot educational industry where 90% of international students come mainly from Asia and Africa (EMN 2012). High dropout rates among international students have serious economic impact on private colleges and the Cypriot economy in general.

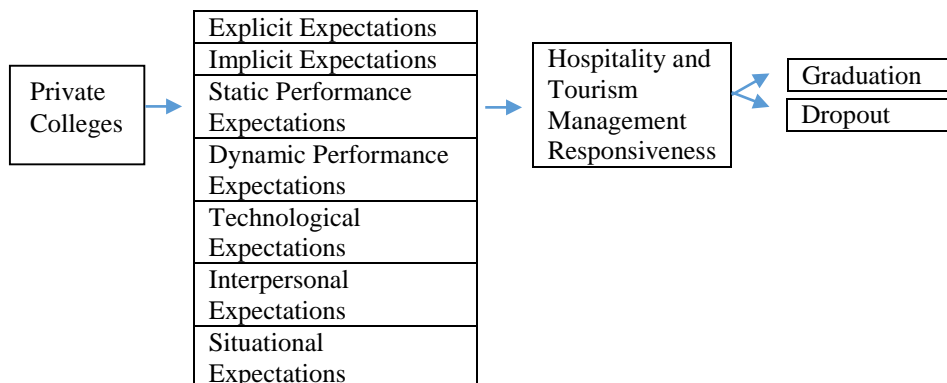
This confirms the findings of Prugsamatz et al. (2006) who reveal Asia to be a main student incubator for studies abroad. In their research, concerning service quality promises used by universities and colleges, they emphasize the necessity to understand international students' behavior and their actual expectations from international studies. Withdrawal and dropout intentions may lead private colleges to a serious academic and operational failure with a twofold implication. The first implication is related to the unsuccessful completion of a bachelors' degree, resulting in much lower graduation rates for international students and an academic failure. The second implication is related to the college's overall profitability and its inability to sustain the quality standards of the provided services, which is the ultimate business goal.

Prugsamatz et al. (2006) strongly acknowledge the lack of research in understanding how service-related promises may affect international students studying abroad. Although various thematic areas have been covered in the literature, such as the factors influencing students' program choice, students' decision-making process and the availability of information channels as well as insights on international students' expectations from hospitality and tourism management-related studies are evolving. Literature has a plethora of empirical studies that deal basically with International students' post-purchase experiences and various auxiliary elements (Ezeuduji et al. 2017; Farmaki 2016; Kim and Park 2013; Lee and Chao 2013; Prugsamatz et al. 2006; Robinson, Ruhanen and Breakey 2016; Zopiatis and Theocharous 2013). Also, extensive research has been conducted on factors and sources and completeness of information provided to students (Anastasiou and Koumis 2018) as well as on cross-cultural values and well-known educational brands (Prugsamatz et al. 2006). Hence, the majority of studies deal basically with the British, American, New Zealandia and Australian universities (EMN 2012). Contrary to the young educational industry, the aforementioned global educational centers are mature markets with educational institutions dating centuries of sustainable development in the educational arena. The aim of this study is to extend the body of literature on examining and mapping the marketing and promotional information used by private colleges to stimulate international students' expectations and particularly International students at the pre-purchase stage, for hospitality and tourism management studies in Cyprus.

2. BACKGROUND / CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

The conceptual framework (Figure 1) in the current study posits private colleges as stimulating international students' expectations for hospitality and tourism management studies in Cyprus, resulting in graduation or college dropout. In the current study, international students are considered to be customers due to the economic transaction involved, as students buy via the exchange of money a particular educational service from profit-aiming private colleges (Alfattal 2017; USADC 2016; Watjatrakul 2014;). Accordingly, the student-as-a-customer approach dictates the necessity for an extensive market research in order to understand the marketing and promotional information that stimulates students' expectations at the pre-purchase stage. Such information is encrypted in the marketing and promotional messages sent to prospective customers via agents, social media or the website, and it may impact the students' satisfaction level in the post-purchase experience (Smith 2018). Information used and exchanged at the pre-purchase stage creates, consciously or not, expectations that affect students in various and subjective ways, leading to graduation or college dropout. For example, students may use it for comparison or as a reference point in evaluating a private college's program quality and supportive service responsiveness compared to personal expectations (Watjatrakul 2014).

Figure 1: **Conceptual Framework**



Private colleges, in this study, are defined as those non-university, higher education institutions that offer accredited bachelor's degrees according to the academic standards set by the Cyprus Agency of Quality Assurance and Accreditation in Higher Education (CYQAA). CYQAA is responsible for the quality assurance standards of higher education in Cyprus, including hospitality and tourism-related specializations. The study focuses on international students coming from non-EU Member States and pursuing a hospitality and tourism-related bachelor's degree. The research is timely for the Cypriot higher education arena due to national and International competition and the continuous growth over the past years (Nachmias, Walmsleyb and Orphanidou 2017).

Cyprus is a higher education destination, and more particularly the number of private colleges offering hospitality and tourism-related programs is still growing (Nachmias et al. 2017), yet certain challenges are being faced in the quality assurance and organizational development process (CYQAA 2018). Cyprus has a relatively short experience as a global educational center, as its first public university was established in 1992 and the first public university that offers hospitality and tourism studies was established in 2007 (EMN 2012). Hospitality and tourism-related programs were primarily the basic educational product developed and offered by profit-aiming and private-owned colleges (EMN 2012). This evidence may be justified by the fact that Cyprus over the previous decades developed a strong image as a tourist destination at an International level (Nachmias et al. 2017).

In order to encrypt the marketing and promotional information used by private colleges the Qualtrics market research concept was selected. Table 1 provides a list of definitions of the seven adapted types of customer expectations examined in the current study. The Qualtrics market research concept offered a multifaceted opportunity to investigate international students' expectations through the diversified lenses of seven different types of customer expectations, serving a twofold purpose. First, it allowed to understand what kind of expectations and how pre-purchase-shaped expectations may lead international students to high college dropout intentions. Second, it assisted in widening the cognitive horizon and gaining a comprehensive understanding of how marketing info used by private colleges may lead international students to academic success. Consequently, marketing-related information collected directly from newcomers, international students, will help in better understand the actual expectations, shaped at

the pre-purchase stage, from the hospitality and tourism management studies in Cypriot colleges. Thus, college dropout high-risk expectations could be conceptualized and contextualized, allowing college administrators to undertake corrective actions and sustain academic success.

Table 1: Study's Adapted Definitions of the Qualtrics' Seven Types of Expectations

Type of Expectation	Definition
Explicit	Expectations created by marketing-related information used by colleges in order to promote and communicate a particular message about the college, such as programs of studies, provided services, lifestyle, student privileges, etc.
Implicit	Expectations that potential international students have shaped, based on their personal interpretation of the marketing information they receive from colleges.
Static Performance	International students' expectations addressing the relationship between studying abroad performance and quality in terms of college ease of accessibility, academic performance responsiveness, educational supportive services, on-campus college life, course scheduling, modern teaching, etc.
Dynamic Performance	Expectations reflecting future developments/achievements evolving from the benefits gained during international studies – e.g. career advancement, networking, alumni support services, high future income, transferred to other Western countries, etc.
Technological / Technical	Expectations related to the implementation aspects of a program of study such as technological infrastructure to deliver the courses, technical–professional competencies and skills to be developed, studying skills, etc.
Situational	Possible factors influencing the latitude of expected performance versus the expected satisfaction such as international recognition/reputation of the college, host country's cultural openness, direct career relevance, etc.
Interpersonal	International students' expectations that represent the acquisition of professional skills, work in the industry, personal agendas and aspirations, personal understanding of what studies abroad means, financial worries, etc.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The aim of this study was to explore marketing related information used by private colleges to stimulate international students' expectations at the pre-purchase stage, and, thus, to determine any relation between International students' expectations and college dropout intentions. To do so, a sequential, mixed-methods approach was followed to obtain a more meaningful, comprehensive and balanced analysis of the collected data (Berman 2017). Usually, this is used in management situations for problem-solving testing and effective decision-making (Creswell 2013; Creswell and Plano Clark 2011; Johnson and Onwuegbuzie 2004).

3.1. Phase one

Rooted in the heart of marketing research, an exploratory focus group case study was organized to explore the international students' expectations from hospitality and tourism higher education in Cyprus. Since the aim of the research was to co-create new knowledge through the interaction between the researcher and the international students, the constructivist tradition infused the social learning interaction (Lincoln and Guba 2013). Using the themes emerging from the literature, the Qualtrics marketing research conceptual framework set the baseline upon which a focus group discussion guide was prepared. The focus group guide was followed in order to introduce to all students the seven elements of the concept and to initiate group discussion (Carey and Asbury 2016). The seven main constructs were explored, and sub-topics were used in probing further ideas or discussion points, simultaneously supporting effective brainstorming (Silverman 2016). The aim was to generate information on collective views, and hence to discover emerging meanings, lying behind participants' views (Carey and Asbury 2016) about the information responsible for stimulating students' expectations. The aim was to discover themes or patterns related to the seven categories that could be used at a later stage in the questionnaire design. For all three evaluation focus group interviews, a convenience sampling approach was used in selecting participants. In every focus group eight newcomer international students were selected, from all four districts and through local student unions. The participants signed an informed consent form clarifying the purpose and objectives of the study (Stage and Manning 2016) as well as how personal anonymity and confidentiality would be secured (Carey and Asbury 2016). An mp4 voice recording was used as the primary technique to record each focus group discussion; thus, notetaking helped at a later stage to pay particular attention to various details, enhancing information transcription and interpretation reliability (Stage and Manning 2016). Patterns and research variables, according to the emerging codes and themes, were categorized and displayed under the appropriate categories of the questionnaire (Silverman 2016).

3.2. Phase two

3.2.1. Hypothesis testing

In the current study, the importance of fulfilling International students' expectations was hypothesized in order to test the relationship between the students' expectations and the students' dropout intentions. Subsequently, it could be determined if the effects of fulfilling or not International students' expectations lead to severe consequences regarding International students' psychological stance and dropout intentions. This interrelationship is presented in a conceptual model in Figure 2. Seven hypotheses were developed to test the findings and the impact of the Qualtrics seven components in shaping International students' expectations at the pre-purchase stage:

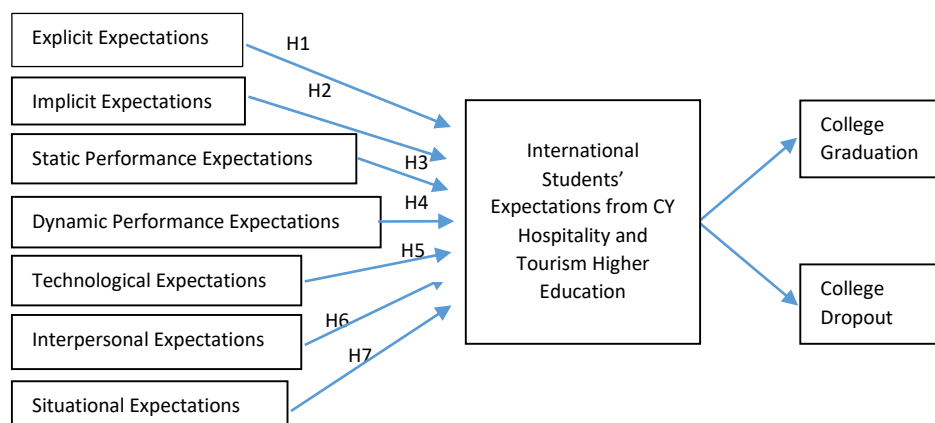
- H1: Explicit-based marketing information creates expectations with severe effect on International students' dropout intentions
- H2: Implicit-based marketing information creates expectations with severe effect on International students' dropout intentions
- H3: Static performance-based marketing information creates expectations with severe effect on International students' dropout intentions

- H4: Dynamic performance-related marketing information creates expectations with severe effect on International students' dropout intentions
- H5: Technological-based marketing information creates expectations with severe effect on International students' dropout intentions
- H6: Interpersonal-based marketing information creates expectations with severe effect on International students' dropout intentions
- H7: Situational-related marketing information creates expectations with severe effect on International students' dropout intentions

3.3. Data collection, processing, and analysis method

To test the above hypotheses, the survey method was used to collect the needed information, through face-to-face interviewer-administered questionnaires. The questions were developed according to the themes and concepts emerging from the literature review and the analysis of the findings from the focus groups. Closed-ended questions were included, and in assessing participants' responses, a Likert-type scale measurement method was used in order to compare two important research variables: the importance of an expectation versus its consequence on dropout intentions. The comparison of the two factors was made to help in determining high risk factors that could lead to high dropout intentions. The importance variable (1 implies low importance while 5 implies extremely important) represents the influence of a factor on an International student's expectation when selecting a college for studies. The consequence variable (1 implies low academic performance while 5 implies college dropout) represents the disappointment level and dropout intentions developed by an International student when a gap between expectations and reality is experienced. The importance and the consequence variables were used to create the International Students' Expectation Risk Assessment Matrix (ISERAM).

Figure 2: Conceptual research model



The Matrix was used to define the level of dropout intentions by considering the category of expectation importance against the category of disappointment consequence severity. From a statistical perspective, the level of risk was calculated as the value of the expectation importance variable multiplied by the consequence severity on dropout intentions. The findings from the survey helped in assessing the high risk expectations and in mapping the roadway towards ISERAM. In doing so, a purposive sampling approach was used to collect data. The students were selected on the basis of being newcomers, commencing studies at any private college in Cyprus for the first time, and studying in a hospitality and tourism-related program. Prior to the commencement of the research, a pilot study was performed to refine the questions and secure the questionnaires' appropriateness, accuracy, reliability and validity (Yin 2017). The content of the questionnaires was tested with 20 students in order to ensure that all participants would face no problems in answering the questions and fulfilling the objectives of the study. The pilot study revealed no significant issues and the official questionnaire was produced.

After the questionnaire design process and the pilot study was completed, the questionnaires were handed out to International students during the academic year 2017/2018. The purposive sampling approach was followed to collect the needed data. The survey was distributed to the International students, studying in five districts of Cyprus. Of the 450 questionnaires distributed, 373 were recovered. After discounting 49 incomplete or invalid copies, 324 were found to be consistent and valid, giving an effective recovery rate of 82.8%. Numerical codes were issued for all responses in order to be used for computer analysis using EXCEL and SPSS software. The analysis of the findings took place in two stages. In the first stage, the aim was to map the International students' expectations through the ISERAM. This would afford an opportunity to identify high risk expectations that are related to dropout intentions. Hence, in the second stage a statistical analysis was conducted in order to test the hypotheses of the study.

4. FINDINGS

4.1. Demographics

Table 2 summarizes key findings of the respondents' demographic and background. From the final 324 respondents, there is a slight over-representation of the male population at 61% (n=197) compared to 39% (n=127) of the female population. The majority of the participants (69%; n=223) falls within the first two age groups of 18–23 and 24–29 years old. Only 51% (n=168) of the newcomers are high school graduates, whereas 34% (n=111) of participants are bachelor's or higher diploma graduates. The findings showed as well that 76% (n= 246) of respondents have a family member (up to a second-degree relative) who studied or worked in Cyprus in the past. Concerning participants' families' study levels, the majority of participants' parents (55%) and first-degree relatives (58%) seems to be high school graduates only. When it comes to the parents' professions, 24% of participants' parents work for the local government, 22% in the agriculture sector, and only 16% in the service sector with which the selected program of study is actually related.

Table 2: International Students Demographic and Decision Stimulators

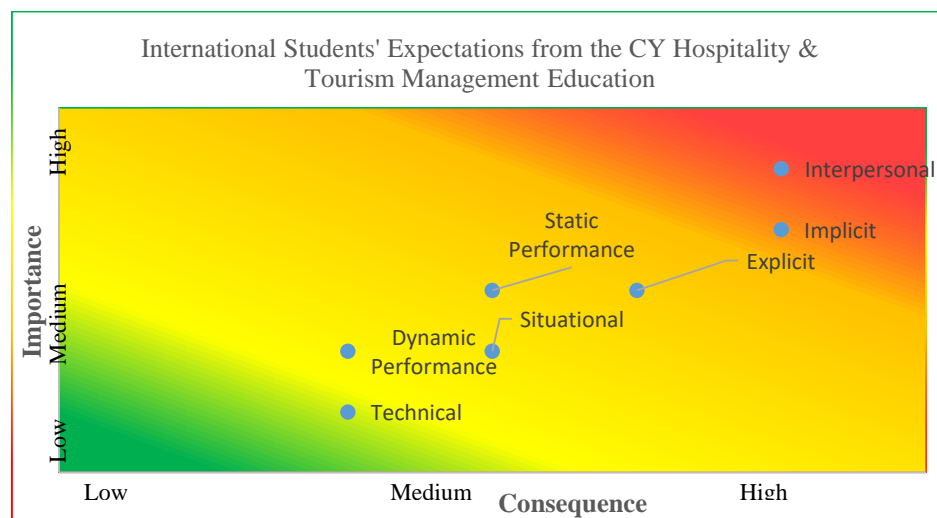
Age	n	%	Economic Status	N	%
18 – 23	138	44%	Low	168	52%
24 – 29	85	27%	Moderate	87	27%
30 – 35	66	21%	Very Good	53	16%
36 – 41	21	4%	High	16	5%
42 <	14	4%			
Gender	n	%	Personal Status	N	%
Male	196	60%	Married	78	24%
Female	128	40%	Single	246	76%
Location	n	%	Prior studies	n	%
City	90	28%	Bachelor's	73	24%
Country Site	106	33%	HND	38	12%
Seaside	54	17%	Diploma	24	7%
Mount. Area	72	22%	Certificate	21	6%
			High Sch. Leav. C	168	51%
Financial ability to cover all fees needed for a four year programme of study.			Financial ability to cover all living expenses needed for a four year programme of study.		
<25%	84	26%	<25%	50	15%
25%	77	24%	25%	124	62%
50%	128	40%	50%	83	13%
75%	24	7%	75%	46	7%
100%	11	3%	100%	21	3%
How urgent is it, to do your internship or to get your first job in order to maintain an income?			What was your main drive to choose a bachelor's degree at a CY private college?		
Immediately	0	0%	Work & Study	134	42%
in 3 months	28	9%	Industry's reputation	66	21%
in 6 months	52	16%	Reputation of studies	53	16%
in 9 months	101	31%	Easy admissions	50	15%
in a year	143	44%	Move/other/country	21	6%

The study levels and the above demographics of the families are reflected as well in the economic status of the families as 78% (n=255) of the participants reported a low to moderate economic status for their respective families. The findings from the quantitative survey uncover another tendency related to the financial ability of the participants to fully support financially their studies during a 4-year program of study. Fifty per cent (n=161) and 81% (n=261) of the participants respectively stated that they can fully support their tuition fees and living expenses during the first year of their

studies. From this emerges the necessity for a good internship placement upon the completion of the first academic year. This is evidenced by the high number of student responses (91%; n=296) indicating the need for an internship upon the completion of the first academic year. This is reflected as well in the high percentage (78%; n=253) of International students' responses who selected Cyprus for the opportunity offered to work and study as well as for the easy admissions' reputation.

4.2. International Students' Expectation Risk Assessment Matrix (ISERAM)

Figure 3: International Students' Expectation Risk Assessment Matrix



ISERAM

The quantitative analysis of the findings was completed in two parts. During the first part the two important survey variables were compared: the importance of expectation as opposed to its consequence on dropout intentions. The aim was to classify from low to high risk all marketing and promotion-related information used by colleges to stimulate International students' interest, and, hence to discover which marketing and promotion-related information used may lead to high dropout intentions. This effort is illustrated in Figure 3. The ISERAM revealed the majority of Interpersonal-based Expectations to dominate the high risk factors area on the matrix and be characterized as of extremely high risk. The Implicit and Explicit-based Expectations are ranked as of high risk, followed by Static Performance Expectations. The findings classify Situational Expectations as of moderate risk, leaving the Dynamic Performance Expectations along with the Technological and Technical expectations at the low-risk level.

A further analysis of the ISERAM showed that the extremely high risk factors are related to psychographic-based expectations. This profiles the extremely high risk expectations of the students to be driven actually only by their personal understanding and subjective beliefs, opinions and aspirations regarding the meaning of study and work abroad.

Therefore, the findings reveal the significance of short-term financial gains from summer internships or part-time jobs rather than the long-term and painful skill development process. Such purchasing and consuming attitudes seem to value more opportunistic and individualized approaches to selecting a program to study abroad. Hence, the personal desire to escape the tyranny of routine in the home country leads to various and serious misconceptions related to the freedom that a person may experience when living abroad. Thus, the ISERAM indicates the social immaturity of a student along with the social and personal skills needed to adapt to local social and cultural habits, and stresses the possibility for an International student to show high dropout intentions in the host country upon completion of their first academic year.

Therefore, the ISERAM revealed behavioral-based expectations (Implicit and Explicit-based) to be positioned as of high risk. International students display a highly libertarian individualized buying behavioral pattern when making a purchase decision about hospitality and tourism management-related studies in Cyprus. The behavioral expectations showed a grouping pattern concentrated on personal desire for monetary and work experience based benefits and gains, followed by a necessity to differentiate personal lifestyle in the host country. It seems that intentionally they are driven mainly by factors other than academic ones when a purchase decision is made, such as the combination of study and work, which may itself have positive outcomes. As a result, college dropout turns out to be the logical sequence, the pathway and the consequence from failing in the fulfilment of personal agendas and plans.

Table 3: Descriptive statistics: Mean and SD test

Expectations	Mean	Standard Deviation
Explicit Expectations	3.17	0.56
Implicit Expectations	3.34	0.79
Static Performance Expectations	2.01	0.47
Dynamic Performance Expectations	1.36	0.32
Technological and Technical Expectations	1.01	0.35
Situational Expectations	1.56	0.41
Interpersonal Expectations	3.78	0.73

4.3. Statistical analysis

Following the development of the ISERAM, descriptive statistics were performed, in the form of means and sample standard deviation tests, in order to examine data variation concerning students' responses in the context of the seven elements under investigation. Table 1 summarizes, overall, International students' responses to the seven expectation variables that influence their personal expectations. The low standard deviation is clustered closely around the sample population mean and the normality of the collected data was examined by performing the Shapiro–Wilk test of normality. The goal was to decide the type of the parametric or non-parametric tests to be used in order to compare the variables of the study. According to the results, the answer distributions were not

parametric ($p < 0.05$). All responses were non-normal and the Mann–Whitney U, Kruskal–Wallis and Wilcoxon tests were performed.

The Mann–Whitney test was applied to all Implicit-based Expectations, to examine responses on the basis of students' homeland residency, in cities or urban area. The statistical analysis showed that students in urban areas seem to be influenced differently and at a much higher level than students who reside in cities. Considering that the Mann–Whitney test is a non-parametric test examining the differences in the median, the mean values were also analyzed in order to distinguish the direction of the calculated differences in the students' responses (see Table 2). In Table 3, the descriptive statistical analysis reveals that urban residency is higher on the scale for all statements in all cases. The use of the Kruskal–Wallis test, regarding differentiation in participants' responses, pinpointed Implicit and Interpersonal Expectations to be statistically significant.

Table 4: Mann–Whitney test for differences in students' Implicit Expectations between city and urban residency in the home country

	Mann–Whitney	p-value
Explicit Expectations	94.500	0.021
Implicit Expectations	91.000	0.010
Static Performance Expectations	89.500	0.007
Dynamic Performance Expectations	82.500	0.005
Technological and Technical Expectations	91.500	0.011
Situational Expectations	92.000	0.012
Interpersonal Expectations	93.000	0.013

Additionally, a chi-square test and a cross-tabulation indicated that this tendency was mainly due to the majority of participants coming from urban areas. Similarly, when the Kruskal–Wallis test was implemented to detect any differences in the responses between the two genders, beyond the Implicit and Interpersonal Expectations, the Explicit-based marketing information was pinpointed. After performing a chi-square and a cross-tabulation, this difference was found to be basically due to the higher responses of participants with family members or peers who have prior experience with International studies.

The Kruskal–Wallis test was performed as well in order to determine from the Implicit-based Expectations any differences according to the financial ability of International students to cover full fees for a 4-year program of study along with the living expenses. The test revealed a significant 63% ($n=204$) of participants report that they are able to accommodate financial obligations for only 1 year. Then, a further study of the collected data, using the chi-square and cross-tabulation, indicated that this high percentage was basically due to participants' low family incomes. Therefore, using participant family income as a grouping variable, a chi-square was used to examine nominal data and the Mann–Whitney test was performed to examine the ordinal data related to the Interpersonal Expectations. Significant differences were found concerning the

participants' urgency to do an internship or to get a job within the first 6 months of their arrival in the host country ($p < 0.05$).

Table 5: Descriptive statistics for the statements indicating differences in the responses among students living in city or urban area in their home country

		Statistic	S Error
Explicit Expectations	City	3.71	0.199
	Urban	4.96	0.163
Implicit Expectations	City	3.51	0.165
	Urban	4.32	0.198
Static Performance Expectations	City	3.43	0.217
	Urban	4.32	0.124
Dynamic Performance Expectations	City	3.51	0.227
	Urban	4.42	0.234
Technological and Technical Expectations	City	3.99	0.219
	Urban	5.04	0.082
Situational Expectations	City	3.83	0.213
	Urban	4.68	0.239
Interpersonal Expectations	City	2.87	0.237
	Urban	3.91	0.392

Similarly, the frequencies of the responses related to the Explicit-based Expectations were analyzed to determine any possible frequencies. The specific frequencies were reviewed using box plots to determine if the Explicit-based Expectations were significant for dropout intentions using both nominal and ordinal data. When ordinal data was examined using the Kruskal–Wallis test, two important frequencies were found to be significant ($p < 0.05$). The frequencies were related to the websites' (68%, $n=220$) and social media content (81%, $n=262$). Also, a chi-square test was performed to determine the involved ordinal variables' significance. Three statements were found to be significant ($p < 0.05$): the easy accessibility to good jobs (87%, $n=282$), the excellent quality internships (93%, $n=302$) and the fun student lifestyle (72%, $n=233$). Lastly, the grouping variables, Static Performance Expectations, Dynamic Performance Expectations, Technological and Technical Expectations, and Situational Expectations were tested. The nominal and ordinal data were tested using chi-square Kruskal–Wallis, respectively. The examination revealed that both nominal and ordinal data were not affected, and no significant differences were found.

4.4. Hypothesis and reliability analysis

A reliability analysis of the seven elements influencing International students' expectations from hospitality and tourism higher education in Cyprus showed Cronbach's α (Table 4) ranging from 0.63 to 0.86. Of these factors, the Interpersonal

(3.78) the Implicit (3.34) and the Explicit-based Expectations (3.17) showed the highest mean, whereas Static Performance (2.01), Situational (1.56), Dynamic Performance (1.36), and Technological and Technical Expectations (1.01) showed the lowest mean. Therefore, to analyze the correlation between the seven factors affecting students' expectations and college dropout intentions a linear equation modelling was established. The latent independent variables were Interpersonal Expectations (ξ_1), Explicit Expectations (ξ_2), Implicit Expectations (ξ_3), Static Performance Expectations (ξ_4), Situational Expectations (ξ_5), Dynamic Performance Expectations (ξ_6), and Technological and Technical Expectations with college dropout (η_1) and graduation (η_2) as the latent dependent variables.

Table 6: College dropout and graduation intentions reliability analysis

Expectations	Mean	Cronbach's α
Explicit Expectations	3.17	0.81
Implicit Expectations	3.34	0.84
Static Performance Expectations	2.01	0.77
Dynamic Performance Expectations	1.36	0.69
Technological and Technical Expectations	1.01	0.63
Situational Expectations	1.56	0.74
Interpersonal Expectations	3.78	0.86

The analysis of the linear structural equation model, through the LISREL8.52 software, concerning college dropout intentions and graduation are illustrated in Table 5. The numbers among the dependent and independent variables illustrate path coefficients, whereas those in parentheses represent the t-values of coefficients. The analysis of the observed variables within the structural model of the students' expectations revealed their impact on college dropout and graduation. They were found to have significant factor loadings particularly for the dependent variables, Interpersonal, Implicit and Explicit Expectations. The coefficients were ranged between 0.71 and 0.90, suggesting a favorable fitness range. The t-values of measures were greater than 1.97, with the exception of Technological and Technical Expectations and Dynamic Performance and Situational Expectations. No negative error variance or significant error variances were found, indicating a favorable model fitness. Thus, the model fit indices (χ^2 ratio = 2.45; RMSEA = 0.09; NFI = 0.96; AGFI = 0.91) showed that the model fits the data, considering as well that the values of the fit measures met ideal standards (PGFI = 0.65; PNFI = 0.76; RMR = 0.06). In addition, an internal structural fitness analysis was performed to investigate the significance of the parameter value and the latent variables along with the reliability of the perspective indicators (Table 5). The reliability factor ranged between 0.61 and 0.82. The latent variables were ranged between 0.71 and 0.90. All were at an acceptable level.

The findings of path coefficients between individual latent variables showed that Interpersonal, Implicit and Explicit-based Expectations have significant impact and the biggest influence on dropout intentions and graduation (H1, H2 and H6 are supported). Although Technological and Technical, and Dynamic Performance and Situational

Expectations have significant positive influence on graduation, no positive association was found with dropout intentions. Then, hypotheses H3, H4, H5 and H7 are rejected.

Table 7: Internal structural fitness analysis: Significance of the parameter value, individual and latent variables

Latent Variable	Observed Variable	Parameter Value (Estimated)	Reliability (Individual Item)	Reliability (Latent Variable)
	Explicit Expec.	0.84	0.73	
	Implicit Expec.	0.87	0.76	
College Dropout	Static Performance Expec.	0.78	0.65	0.82
College Graduation	Dynamic Performance Expec.	0.73	0.63	0.67
	Technological and Technical Expec.	0.71	0.61	
	Situational Expec.	0.74	0.68	
	Interpersonal Expec.	0.90	0.82	

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

This study aimed to map and examine International students' expectations related to college dropout intentions in hospitality and tourism higher education in Cyprus. To this end, a sequential research design was conducted during the academic year 2017/2018. This study contributes to the literature by fulfilling a gap concerning what kind of marketing-related information is used by private or public colleges, at the pre-purchase stage, in order to stimulate International students' expectations. The majority of existing studies examined mainly the post-purchase experience of International students or other auxiliary elements such as summer internships, career choices or potentials (Ezeuduji et al. 2017; Farmaki 2016; and Kim and Park 2013; Lee and Chao 2013; Robinson, Ruhanen and Breakey 2016; Zopiatis and Theocharous 2013). This contribution was seen in approaching International students' expectations as a seven-dimensional variable that is related and impacts students' college dropout or graduation. The findings from the ISERAM analysis classified International students' expectations in relation to dropout intentions in a mixture of psychographic and behavioral consuming factors, highly influenced by demographic characteristics. The consuming behavior positions International students' expectations from inelastic to extremely elastic emotional buying and dropout behavior. Thus, the psycho-behavioral and demographic analysis, as a pathway, may predict future student learning engagement or disengagement with academic success and graduation or college dropout, respectively.

The findings of the study are in accordance with existing studies that examined post-purchase experience related to the quality or other various auxiliary elements of a hospitality and tourism management program (Ezeuduji et al. 2017; Farmaki 2016; Kim and Park 2013; Lee and Chao 2013; Prugsamatz et al. 2006; Robinson, Ruhanen and Breakey 2016; Zopiatis and Theocharous 2013). The contribution of the study to the literature is as follows. First, the Interpersonal Expectations revealed important insight related to the high dropout rates of International students. This can be added to the conclusions of Su et al. (2016) who determined that International students' expectations reflect mainly self-definitional needs. Such needs are highly diversified and extremely subjective, influencing International students in unpredictable ways. Borghi et al. (2016) saw this kind of needs as very subjective, expressing only a personal point of view, which depends solely on personal agendas (Anastasiou and Koumis 2018). This is evidenced as well by the responses concerning the importance of good quality and financially rewarding internships or jobs and their financial ability to support their 4-year program of study. In both cases, the reputation of the hospitality and tourism industry abroad seems to be more influential for International students than the colleges' reputations.

The identified Interpersonal Expectations in ISERAM are related to the students' psychographic consuming patterns. The self-definitional needs of a student in relation to their family's past experience and expectations (Morgan 2014) seem to create a confusion judgment point concerning the type and the variety of the expectations from hospitality and tourism studies in Cyprus (Nachmias et al. 2017). The psychographic pattern is expressed through personal agendas, subjective expectations, and aspirations regarding the meaning of work and study abroad. Thus, participants acknowledge the significance of the short-term financial gains from summer internships or part-time jobs rather than the long-term and painful professional and skill development process. Such a psychographic pattern eases the psychological process of dropping out from college. This is due to opportunistic buying behavior of International students infused with the personal desire to escape the tyranny of routine in the home country. Consequently, serious misconceptions related to financial or ethical obligations and responsibilities and issues of personal independence and freedom are enhanced by the students' social immaturity. Even the whole concept of international studies, which is based on the necessity to employ social and personal skills in order to adapt to the local society and anticipate cultural implications, stresses the possibility for an International student to show high dropout intentions in the host country upon the completion of their first academic year.

Second, the ISERAM analysis portrays high risk factors to be related to students' behavioral consuming patterns. The behavioral expectations (Implicit and Explicit-based) specify a personal desire for monetary and work experience-based benefits and gains from internships or jobs rather than the program's accreditation, quality and academic standards. Students, intentionally, are driven mainly by factors other than academic ones when such a purchase decision is made. As a result, college dropout is the logical outcome from failing in the fulfilment of personal agendas and plans. These results are similar to previous studies' that disclose that International students' expectations turn out to be too difficult and complicated to be fulfilled due to the unique character of education (Alfattal 2017; Prugsamatz et al. 2006) and its long-term nature (Mainardes et al. 2013).

Third, the Interpersonal, Implicit and Explicit-based Expectations emerge as a mixture of psychographic and behavioral consuming patterns that allow no limits for International students to develop organizational citizenship and feelings of oneness with the chosen study program (Heffernan et al. 2018). As a result, information downplays, rumours or stigmas from negative experiences will impede with severity the students' emotional attachment towards graduation, leading to college dropout (Xiao and Lee 2014). Such a psychological and behavioral stance produces a weak emotional engagement and apathy towards the studies, as the main motivations are the cost-related factors such as the low tuition fees and living expenses. Even in the case of a good quality internship, International students define it as a momentary benefit rather than a process of acquiring professional competencies for future career advancements, easing college dropout.

Therefore, the findings of this study reveal that in order to eliminate students' dropout intentions, all demographic, psychographic and behavioral information should be examined thoroughly by private colleges in Cyprus. This should take place using a non-opportunistic approach, aiming at a long-run profitable marketing relationship for mutual benefit. This requires the development of internal and external information collection mechanisms in order to understand in-depth the driving marketing information that stimulates International students' expectations (Dowel et al. 2015). For example, integrated marketing communications, as an external information collection mechanism, could be used as an effective induction training tool as to what will follow in the host country during studies. By following this approach, an indirect learning approach may engage students in a process of gaining a more realistic and objective idea of the student life through the provision of detailed, authenticated and reliable information about the program, the supportive services and the local lifestyle, prior to their application for and registration in a program (Dowel et al. 2015). Accordingly, in the program admission process an internal information collection mechanism should focus on an extensive examination of the International students' personal and agent generic profiles. At all operational levels, the particular demographic characteristics and psycho-behavioral consuming patterns should be examined for anticipation, framing simultaneously the borders of an early and silent dropout predictor/indicator.

The study had several limitations, providing an opportunity for further research on improving international students' admission quality and eliminating dropout intentions in public or private higher education colleges. First, the findings of the study concerned a sample of only international students pursuing a bachelor's in hospitality and tourism management along with the fact that the study was limited to the Cypriot higher education market only. Second, no other program choices were examined, such as business administration, marketing, human resource management, etc.

Testing the international students' expectations from studies abroad and particularly from a micro-educational destination, through the lenses of an interdisciplinary approach, at a cross-national or international level could help private or public colleges in consistently profiling the demographic, psychographic, and behavioral consuming factors that link emotional buying and dropout behaviour. Such a challenge recommends and orients a future two-dimensional research investigation. The first dimension concerns further research on the topic and could focus on developing a model for private

or public colleges' marketing intelligence systems that facilitates effectively and proactively utilizing the demographic, psychographic, and behavioral consuming profiles of international students. The second dimension concerns future research in enlightening international students' personal drives and agendas. By gaining a comprehensive understanding of their self-definitional needs, this could assist private and public colleges' stakeholders in building common agendas for mutual benefit.

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