Factors Influencing the Selection of International Schools in Thailand's Educational Landscape Amidst the Digital Economy

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Abstract

In Thailand's evolving educational landscape, both students and families face the critical decision of choosing between local and international schools, a choice influenced by a myriad of factors. This study delves into the critical factors influencing Thai parents' decisions to select international schools for their children's education. Using a quantitative research approach, data were initially collected from 1,230 Thai respondents through convenience sampling. The study utilized percentages, means, and logistic regression for comprehensive data analysis. The findings revealed that factors such as gender, age, monthly income, income source, and the use of technology (including computers, laptops, tablets, wearable devices, home internet, and mobile internet) significantly influence an individual's decision to choose an international school for their education in Thailand. These insights provide a comprehensive array of considerations for educators, directors, policymakers, marketers, as well as other stakeholders as they devise strategies to attract and cater to prospective students. Understanding these factors is essential to customizing educational offerings and communications, ensuring they align with the varied needs and preferences of students and their families in Thailand and beyond.

Keywords: *Education, International, School, Thailand*

1. Introduction

In the dynamic landscape of education in Thailand, the choice between local Thai schools and international schools represents a critical decision for families, shaped by a range of factors including cultural values, educational aspirations, and socioeconomic status. This comparison aims to delve into the core attributes, benefits, and considerations of each educational pathway, offering insights into how they cater to the diverse needs and ambitions of students in a rapidly globalizing world (Bagnall, 2015; Wei & Mhunpiew, 2020). Thai schools, rooted in the national curriculum, emphasize Thailand's cultural heritage, language, and values, aiming to foster a strong sense of national identity among students. The curriculum is structured around Thailand's educational standards, focusing on foundational knowledge across a broad spectrum of subjects, including the Thai language and culture. In contrast, international schools in Thailand offer globally recognized curricula such as the International Baccalaureate (IB), British A-Levels, or American Advanced Placement (AP) exams, designed to prepare students for global citizenship and higher education opportunities worldwide. These curricula promote critical thinking, creativity, and a more personalized learning experience, often in a multilingual environment with English as the primary medium of instruction (Catellya, 2023; Limna et al., 2021; Namraksa & Kraiwanit, 2023; Ourairat, 2011).

The decision between Thai and international schools often reflects socio-economic considerations. International schools, with their higher tuition fees, are typically accessible to families with higher income levels, expatriates, or those prioritizing an international education as a significant investment in their children's future. Thai schools, funded by the government, offer a more affordable education, making them accessible to a wider population and ensuring that education remains a cornerstone of societal development. International schools provide a multicultural environment where students from various nationalities converge, offering a rich tapestry of cultural and linguistic exchanges. This diversity prepares students for a globalized world, fostering adaptability and cross-cultural communication skills. Thai schools, while offering a deep

[213]

dive into Thailand's rich cultural heritage and language, may offer less exposure to a diverse linguistic environment but play a crucial role in preserving and promoting Thai culture and values among the younger generation (Bushell, 2020; Kim & Mobrand, 2019; Watanabe et al., 2022). Furthermore, both Thai and international schools offer unique advantages in terms of quality and opportunities. International schools boast small class sizes, a wide range of extracurricular activities, and highly qualified teachers, often from around the globe. They prepare students for admission to top universities worldwide, with an education that is recognized and respected internationally. Thai schools, on the other hand, provide students with a strong grounding in the national curriculum, opportunities for academic excellence within Thailand's higher education system, and a deep understanding of Thai societal contexts (Pinar, 2003; American School of Bangkok, 2023; Singapore Club Thailand, 2023).

The presence of international schools has set new benchmarks for educational quality, pushing Thai schools towards innovation and improvement. It encourages healthy competition and exchange of educational practices, benefiting the overall education system in Thailand. Thai schools, embodying the national educational philosophy, play an essential role in nurturing a sense of identity and community among students, as well as ensuring the continuation of Thailand's cultural and societal values (Todd, 2015; Phumphongkhochasorn, 2020; Vandeweyer et al., 2020; Phumphongkhochasorn et al., 2021; Scott & Guan, 2023). The decision to enroll in a Thai or international school in Thailand is multi-faceted, reflecting deeper questions about identity, aspirations, and the value of education in a globalized yet culturally rich context. Both pathways offer distinct advantages and serve different needs, contributing to a diverse and dynamic educational landscape in Thailand. As the country continues to evolve, the interplay between these educational systems will undoubtedly shape the future of Thai society, preparing students to navigate a world where local traditions and global connections are increasingly intertwined. Given the substantial impact of education on future opportunities and the growing trend towards globalization in schooling, it is vital to delve into the factors that sway an individual's decision to opt for an international school in Thailand. This exploration is critical not only for understanding the preferences and motivations behind these decisions but also for enabling educators, policymakers, and international schools themselves to tailor their offerings more effectively to meet the needs and expectations of prospective students and their families. By identifying these key factors, stakeholders can implement strategies that enhance the appeal of international schools, thereby influencing enrollment trends and ensuring that the educational landscape in Thailand aligns with the evolving demands of a globalized society.

2. Objectives

This research is focused on identifying the key factors that affect Thai parents' decisions to select international schools for their children's education.

3. Materials and Methods

This research adopted a quantitative methodology, leveraging structured surveys with predetermined answers to gather data. A pilot study involving 30 participants was conducted to refine the survey instrument, adhering to Sitthipon et al. 's (2022)'s suggestions. The tools used for measurement were evaluated for their reliability, validity, and precision. To adhere to ethical guidelines, the survey received approval from five experts in education and social sciences, ensuring its appropriateness. The study excluded individuals under 18 years old. Clear explanations of the study's goals were provided to all participants, who were also informed about their freedom to withdraw at any time, in line with Jangjarat et al. (2023) ethical standards. Only those who answered every question were considered for the study, automatically filtering out partial responses. The research targeted Thai residents aged 18 and above. The sample size was calculated following Yamane's

[214]

formula, aiming for a 0.05 level of significance, a margin of error of ±5%, and a 95% confidence level, as recommended by Limna et al. (2022) and Thetlek et al. (2023), resulting in a minimum sample of 384 individuals. Consequently, 1,230 participants were included through convenience sampling. The online survey was conducted over four months, from October 2023 to January 2024, which allowed for the observation of trends and ensured the relevance and reliability of the findings. The completion of data collection was marked by achieving significant results.

Data analysis was carried out using statistical software, applying both descriptive and inferential statistics. Descriptive statistics, including frequencies and percentages, were used to summarize the demographic characteristics of the participants. Inferential statistics, such as chi-square tests and logistic regression, were employed to explore associations and make predictions regarding the outcome variable based on the predictor variables. Logistic regression analysis was conducted to examine the relationship between the predictor variables and the outcome variable. Initially, a baseline model was created with only the constant term. Subsequently, additional predictor variables were added to the model to assess their contributions to the prediction of the outcome variable. The performance of the logistic regression models was evaluated using various statistical measures, such as the classification tables. These measures helped assess the fit of the models, the overall predictive power, and the percentage of correct predictions. The predictive regression equation using the coefficients can be described by the following equation:

$$P = \frac{1}{1+e^{-z}}$$

Where   P is the probability of the dependent event occurring.
e is the base of the natural logarithm.
z is the linear combination of the independent variables and their respective coefficients, expressed as $\beta_0 + \beta_1 X_1 + \beta_2 X_2 + \ldots + \beta_n X_n$ where β_0 is the intercept, $\beta_1, \beta_2 \ldots \beta_n$ are the coefficients, and $X_1, X_2 \ldots X_n$ are the independent variables.

4. Results

Table 1. Omnibus test of the model's performance using all the independent variables

		Chi-square	df	Sig.
Step 1	Step	829.060	14	.000
	Block	829.060	14	.000
	Model	829.060	14	.000

As depicted in Table 1, the chi-square value of 829.060 surpasses the critical value at a significance level of 0.05, considering the presence of 14 degrees of freedom. This observation signifies that the dependent variable is significantly influenced by all the independent variables encompassed within the model. In essence, this indicates that the combined influence of the independent variables carries substantive significance in determining the outcome of the dependent variable.

Table 2. The model summary using all the independent variables

Step	-2 log likelihood	Cox & Snell R square	Nagelkerke R square
1	770.360[a]	.490	.674

a. Estimation terminated at iteration number 7 because parameter estimates changed by less than .001.

A statistical model (possibly a regression) is presented in Table 2. The model has an R-squared value of 0.674, indicating that it explains approximately 67.4% of the variation in the dependent variable. Additionally, the significance value of 0.05 suggests that the relationships between the independent variables and the dependent variable are statistically significant at the 5% level.

Table 3. Classification table for back-testing (including all the independent variables)

	Observed		Predicted		Percentage correct
			International School		
			No	Yes	
Step 1	International School	No	334	102	76.6%
		Yes	85	709	89.3%
	Overall percentage				84.8%

Note: The cut-off value is .500.

As indicated in Table 3, the classification results reveal that the model, incorporating all potential independent variables, demonstrated the capability to predict the key factors that affect an individual's decision to choose an international school in Thailand with an accuracy rate of 84.8% for cases, employing a cut-off value of 0.500, or 50%.

Table 4. Variables in the model using all the independent variables

		B	S.E.	Wald	df	Sig.	Exp(B)
Step 1[a]	Gender	-1.050	.247	18.008	1	.000	.350
	Age	-.852	.161	27.972	1	.000	.427
	Monthly Income	.878	.123	50.907	1	.000	2.407
	Income Source	.739	.187	15.627	1	.000	2.094
	Social Media	.164	.137	1.430	1	.232	1.179
	Computer	4.892	.361	183.868	1	.000	133.163
	Laptop	-1.291	.310	17.286	1	.000	.275

[216]

Smartphone	.168	.888	.036	1	.850	1.183
Tablet	.980	.245	15.982	1	.000	2.664
Wearable Device	-1.941	.272	50.956	1	.000	.143
Internet-Time	-.151	.120	1.581	1	.209	.860
Average Internet Time	.278	.165	2.857	1	.091	1.321
Home Internet	.364	.137	7.011	1	.008	1.438
Mobile Internet	1.273	.183	48.656	1	.000	3.573
Constance	-2.858	1.440	3.941	1	.047	.057

a. Variable(s) entered in step 1: Gender, Age, Monthly Income, Income Source, Social Media, Computer, Laptop, Smartphone, Tablet, Wearable Device, Internet Time, Average Internet Time, Home ŧ Internet, Mobile Internet

The predictive regression equation of Model 1 using the coefficients from Table 4 can be described by the following equation:

$$P = \frac{1}{1+e^{-z}} \quad \text{----------} \quad \text{Model 1}$$

where P is an individual's intent to choose an international school in Thailand, and Z = - 2.858 - 1.050(gender) - 0.852(age) + 0.878(monthly income) + 0.739(income source) + 4.892(computer) - 1.291(laptop) + 0.980(tablet) - 1.941(wearable device) + 0.364(home internet) + 1.273(mobile internet).

The statistical significance of each independent variable is elucidated in Table 4. The findings reveal that concerning the dependent variable, which is an individual's intention to choose an international school, gender, age, monthly income, income source, computer, laptop, tablet, wearable device, home internet, and mobile internet are identified as significant contributors. Specifically, when gender changed from female to male, a noticeable reduction in the intention to choose an international school was observed. This impact was quantified as a decrease from 1 to 0.350, signifying a decrease of 0.650. In other words, the study found that males were less inclined to choose an international school compared to females. Additionally, an increase of one unit in age resulted in a decrease in the intention to choose an international school from 1 to 0.427, indicating a decrease of 0.573. Conversely, a one-unit increase in monthly income led to a substantial increase in the intention to choose an international school by 2.407. Similarly, a one-unit increase in income source led to a substantial increase in the intention to choose an international school by 2.094. A one-unit increase in using a computer led to a substantial increase in the intention to choose an international school by 133.163. An increase of one unit in using a laptop resulted in a decrease in the intention to choose an international school from 1 to 0.275, indicating a decrease of 0.725. A one-unit increase in using a tablet led to a substantial increase in the intention to choose an international school by 2.664. An increase of one unit in using a wearable device resulted in a decrease in the intention to choose an international school from 1 to 0.143, indicating a decrease of 0.857. A one-unit increase in home internet led to a substantial increase in the intention to choose an international school by 1.438. A one-unit increase in mobile internet led to a substantial increase in the intention to choose an international school by 3.573.

Table 5. Omnibus test of the model's performance using only significant independent variables

		Chi-square	df	Sig.
Step 1	Step	821.515	10	.000
	Block	821.515	10	.000
	Model	821.515	10	.000

As depicted in Table 5, the chi-square value of 821.515 surpasses the critical value at a significance level of 0.05, considering the presence of 10 degrees of freedom. This observation signifies that the dependent variable is significantly influenced by all the independent variables encompassed within the model. In essence, this indicates that the combined influence of the independent variables carries substantive significance in determining the outcome of the dependent variable.

Table 6. The model summary using only significant independent variables

Step	-2 log likelihood	Cox & Snell R square	Nagelkerke R square
1	777.905[a]	.487	.670

a. Estimation terminated at iteration number 7 because parameter estimates changed by less than .001.

A statistical model (possibly a regression) is presented in Table 6. The model has an R-squared value of 0.670, indicating that it explains approximately 67.0% of the variation in the dependent variable. Additionally, the significance value of 0.05 suggests that the relationships between the independent variables and the dependent variable are statistically significant at the 5% level.

Table 7. Classification table for back-testing (including only significant independent variables)

			Predicted		
Observed			**International School**		**Percentage correct**
			No	**Yes**	
Step 1	International School	No	334	102	76.6%
		Yes	82	712	89.7%
	Overall percentage				85.0%

Note: The cut-off value is .500.

As indicated in Table 7, the classification results reveal that the model, incorporating all potential independent variables, demonstrated the capability to predict the key factors that affect an individual's decision to choose an international school in Thailand with an accuracy rate of 85% for cases, employing a cut-off value of 0.500 or 50%.

Table 8. Variables in the model using only significant independent variables

		B	S.E.	Wald	df	Sig.	Exp(B)
Step 1ᵃ	Gender	-1.036	.231	20.126	1	.000	.355
	Age	-.770	.135	32.634	1	.000	.463
	Monthly Income	.839	.116	52.703	1	.000	2.314
	Income Source	.674	.178	14.412	1	.000	1.963
	Computer	4.691	.345	185.273	1	.000	108.933
	Laptop	-1.355	.291	21.612	1	.000	.258
	Tablet	.882	.235	14.051	1	.000	2.416
	Wearable Device	-1.808	.258	49.018	1	.000	.164
	Home Internet	.428	.127	11.430	1	.001	1.534
	Mobile Internet	1.208	.171	50.090	1	.000	3.345
	Constance	-2.226	.728	9.339	1	.002	.108

a. Variable(s) entered in step 1: Gender, Age, Monthly Income, Income Source, Computer, Laptop, Tablet, Wearable Device, Home Internet, Mobile Internet

The predictive regression equation of Model 2 using the coefficients from Table 8 can be described by the following equation:

$$P = \frac{1}{1+e^{-z}} \quad \text{----------} \quad \text{Model 2}$$

where P is an individual's intent to choose an international school in Thailand, and Z = - 2.2.226 - 1.036(gender) - 0.770(age) + 0.839(monthly income) + 0.674(income source) + 4.691(computer) - 1.355(laptop) + 0.882(tablet) - 1.808(wearable device) + 0.428(home internet) + 1.208(mobile internet).

The statistical significance of each independent variable is elucidated in Table 8. The findings reveal that concerning the dependent variable, which is an individual's intention to choose an international school in Thailand, gender, age, monthly income, income source, computer, laptop, tablet, wearable device, home internet, and mobile internet are identified as significant contributors. Specifically, when gender changed from female (coded as 0) to male (coded as 1), a noticeable reduction in the intention to choose an

[219]

international school in Thailand was observed. This impact was quantified as a decrease from 1 to 0.355, signifying a decrease of 0.645. In other words, the study found that males were less inclined to choose an international school compared to females. Additionally, an increase of one unit in age resulted in a decrease in the intention to choose an international school from 1 to 0.463, indicating a decrease of 0.537. Conversely, a one-unit increase in monthly income led to a substantial increase in the intention to choose an international school by 2.314. Similarly, a one-unit increase in income-sources led to a substantial increase in the intention to choose an international school by 1.963. A one-unit increase in using a computer led to a substantial increase in the intention to choose an international school by 108.933. An increase of one unit in using a laptop resulted in a decrease in the intention to choose an international school from 1 to 0.258, indicating a decrease of 0.742. A one-unit increase in using a tablet led to a substantial increase in the intention to choose an international school by 2.416. An increase of one unit in using a wearable device resulted in a decrease in the intention to choose an international school from 1 to 0.164, indicating a decrease of 0.836. A one-unit increase in home internet led to a substantial increase in the intention to choose an international school by 1.534. A one-unit increase in mobile internet led to a substantial increase in the intention to choose an international school by 3.345.

5. Discussion and Conclusion

The study identified the key factors that affect an individual's decision to choose an international school in Thailand. The study's findings provided fascinating insights into the factors influencing an individual's intention to choose an international school for their education in Thailand. This study showcases the complex interplay between demographic variables (such as gender and age), economic factors (like monthly income and income source), and technology usage (involving computers, laptops, tablets, wearable devices, and internet access) on educational preferences.

The finding that males are significantly less inclined than females to choose an international school highlights potential gender-based preferences or perceptions regarding the value or suitability of international education in Thailand. This suggests that international schools may need to tailor their outreach and engagement strategies differently for males and females to address these varying inclinations. Furthermore, the negative relationship between age and the intention to choose an international school could indicate that younger individuals are more open to or interested in international education. This might reflect a generational shift in attitudes towards education or a greater willingness among the youth to embrace diverse educational environments. As reported by Parker et al. (2019), younger individuals, particularly those from Generation Z, show distinct openness and liberal views toward various social and political issues, which may also extend to their attitudes toward international education. In addition, generation Z and Millennials share similar liberal viewpoints, significantly different from older generations on topics like government roles, climate change, and societal diversity. This generational shift towards more liberal and inclusive attitudes suggests a greater openness among younger individuals to diverse and global perspectives, potentially influencing their interest in international education.

In terms of economic factors, the positive correlation between monthly income, income source, and the intention to choose an international school underscores the significant role of economic capacity in educational decisions. This suggests that as individuals' financial stability or income diversity increases, so does their ability to consider and opt for international schooling, which is often perceived as more expensive. The findings were in line with the research of Namkul and Tuksino (2023), indicating that having financial stability in the family and readily available assets at home will lead to higher student achievement scores. For technology usage, the varied impact of technology usage on educational intentions is particularly noteworthy. The substantial increase in intention associated with using a computer, tablet, home internet, and mobile internet points to the importance of digital connectivity and competence in fostering an orientation towards international education. It might reflect a broader trend of technologically proficient individuals seeking educational environments that align with their digital engagement patterns. The findings were in line with the research of Namkul and Tuksino (2023), indicating that having financial stability in the family and readily available assets at home will lead to higher student achievement scores. For technology usage, the varied impact of technology usage on educational intentions is particularly noteworthy. The substantial increase in intention associated with using a computer, tablet, home internet, and mobile internet points to the importance

of digital connectivity and competence in fostering an orientation towards international education. It might reflect a broader trend of technologically proficient individuals seeking educational environments that align with their digital engagement patterns.

The study's insights into the factors influencing the choice of international education in Thailand provide a comprehensive analysis for educators, policymakers, and marketers. It highlights the importance of demographic factors, economic considerations, and technological engagement in shaping educational preferences. These findings suggest that strategies to attract and serve potential students should be multifaceted. Educators are encouraged to integrate both traditional and digital learning tools to cater to diverse student preferences, enhancing the educational experience and engagement. Policymakers should develop inclusive policies that address specific barriers different demographic groups face, promoting broader access to international education. Marketers need to tailor their communications to highlight the unique benefits of international education, focusing on the value and technological advancements it offers. Understanding and addressing the diverse needs and preferences of families and students is crucial for tailoring educational offerings and communications effectively. By doing so, stakeholders can ensure that their strategies are aligned with the evolving expectations of the global education landscape, thereby enhancing the appeal and accessibility of international schools in Thailand.

The study on educational choices in Thailand also highlights limitations such as reliance on convenience sampling and a quantitative focus, which might miss nuanced individual insights. Future research should aim for more representative sampling, incorporate qualitative methods for depth, conduct longitudinal studies to observe changes over time, and explore the impact of technology in education more deeply. These steps can enrich understanding and help tailor educational strategies to diverse needs.

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