A Framework to Manage International Students as Educational Visitor at a City University

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***Abstract*: - South Africa is fast becoming the preferred destination by international students across the African continent to further their education. The decision making process of these students are influenced by a number of push factors to leave their home country, as well as pull factors to enroll within a new country. These pull factors are an interplay of factors between the host country, city and university, and how well they can satisfy the needs of an international student as potential visitor. The objective of this quantitative study was to develop a framework to manage international students at the largest residential university in South Africa. After conducting an extensive literature review and an empirical study at Tshwane University of Technology a framework was formulated to reposition the City of Tshwane as a first class education destination. This framework will help destinations to attract students from Africa countries and beyond, help boost tourism activities within the destination, and will improve the marketability of Cities as destinations of learning.**

Keywords: **International students; Educational visitors; Educational tourism; City of learning.**

I. INTRODUCTION

The rising number of international students, now more than 4.5 million globally (ICEF Monitor, 2014a) is a catalyst that can be used to develop the tourism and educational sectors of host countries. This tourism niche is abundantly rich in prosperity for countries with better understanding of international students' need and how to fulfill their expectations together with enhancement of their overall experience during their stay. In return, it is yielding economic dividends for destinations that acknowledge the potential of students as international visitors. This explains why leading countries, such as the USA, UK, Canada and Australia have been managing educational tourism niche (students and activities surrounding their stay) with top quality administrative plan. Analyses of estimated revenues generated from educational tourism niche – the United States of America generated over R286bn, and it created several thousands of jobs (NAFSA, 2015), about R45bn in revenue and supported 70,000 jobs in London (London First & PwC 2015), it provided more than 130,000 full time jobs and generated over R154bn in income for the Australian economy (The Department of Education and Training, 2015), and, over R80bn revenue and created 81,000 jobs for Canada in 2010 (Kunin, 2012).

In South Africa, international students' arrival is increasing year after year. According to Donaldson and Gatsinzi (2005) there were 47 000 international students in South Africa as at 2005, this increases to 60 600 in 2008 (van Wyk, 2009) and 75 093 in 2015 (Statistics SA, 2016). International students' are a unique category of tourist whose presence in a study destination is characterised by substantial expenditure (Vickers & Bekhradnia, 2007). Since their presence is known to improve visits to tourism attractions (Engberg, 2009) as well as increase tourism and non-tourism activities within the host destination as propounded by Pawlak (2013), a similar situation may be the outcome of their presence at a destination – including South Africa and the City of Tshwane (COT).

The potential for host destinations with adequate plans for attracting international students' is pronounced, however this requires that a structure be put in place to appropriately deliver a good return for investment on foreign students. This is evident as countries with policies for attracting and retaining international students (Becker & Kolster, 2012) are leading the way in this tourism niche. Given the significant growth of international students' numbers to the COT, having a framework, will improve the COT's chances of attracting more students and secure positive benefits from their presence. According to Acha-Anyi (2016), there were about 6 412 international students in just two of the COT based universities. Taking into consideration that Statistics SA (2016) puts international students in South Africa at 75 093 students.

The COT hosts several private colleges, but also four of the twenty-five public universities in South Africa. Three of these four are the largest universities in South Africa and include Tshwane University of Technology - TUT (60 000 students), University of Pretoria - UP (38 934 students), University of South Africa - UNISA (300 000 distance education students), as well as the Sefalko Makgatho Health Sciences University that was established in 2015 with approximately 4000 students. These student numbers perhaps explains why about 8% of the country's international students reside in the COT, or those studying by distance might travel to COT at some point during their studies. In light of this, the COT amongst other things needs to be able to link education and tourism industries as opportunities for international exchange and learning as expected of an ideal tourism destination (Lam, Ariffin & Ahmad, 2011). This may require that people in charge of this tourism niche at the host destination understand international students needs (Mpinganjira, 2009) and other requirements for educational visitors' management. The needs of international students include push and pull factors. Destination manager needs knowledge and insights into the

motivational factors pushing international students outside their various countries, as well as the attracting factors pulling them to destinations.

Problem statement and study objectives

More than a decade ago, Donaldson and Gatsinzi (2005) put forward that the number of international students in South Africa was about 47,000 and the authors suggest for better attention to manage international students and identified the potential to boost the South Africa tourism numbers. Another study acknowledges the absence of a clear policy on the attraction and management of international students in South Africa (Aloyo and Wentzel, 2011). As indicated before, the number of international students in South Africa has exceeded 75,000 (Statistics SA, 2016) and there is still an absence of a tangible framework to manage the presence of these students. In addition to the above, there is a shortage of academic research on education tourism and issues relating to international students' management in South Africa, let alone in the COT. A few available studies examined international students as tourists, and the reasons for choosing South Africa, as well as the impact of their expenditure on South Africa's economy (Donaldson & Gatsinzi, 2005; Mpinganjira, 2011; Aloyo & Wentzel, 2011). Acha-Anyi (2016) conducted a study on managing international students' tourism but this study predominantly considered international students' experiences and the benefits of their spending in the host city. However, there is a gap in our knowledge with regard to factors pushing international students out of their countries, and, more importantly, factors pulling them to the COT and TUT as the actual place to study in South Africa. In light of the above, this study seeks to develop a framework for managing educational visitors in the COT through the following objectives: (i) to review literature on factors pushing and pulling international students away from their countries of origin/residences to destinations respectively, (ii) to highlight the stakeholders in educational tourism at the destination (iii) to present the research data on factors influencing international students to the COT and TUT and (iv) to recommend a sustainable tourism framework for managing international students at TUT.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

According to Ritchie, Carr and Cooper (2003), the recognised educational related visitors are: (i) the 'tourism first' and (ii) the 'education first'. On the one hand, the tourism first is visitors whose primary motivation is tourism; however, purposeful learning comes in as a component of what will be done during the journey. On the other hand, the education first is visitors whose primary motivation for travelling is learning. In some way though, this category of visitors find themselves involving in tourism activities as either part of lifestyle or as part of what they must study. For instance, students of tourism and leisure, culture and language will nonetheless visit places and partake in excursion travels as part of their study. In what has been described as part of lifestyle, Michael, Armstrong and King (2004); Heung and Leong (2006) put forward that international students do participate in tourism activities. In this regard, their presence at the destination leads to increase activities within their host community (Pawlak, 2013) and increases tourists visit to the host destination (Engberg, 2009). This study considers the second category, that is – the education first - as international students and their presence needs a framework to manage it for the purpose of realising the benefits that come with it.

An international student is referred to as someone who pursues all or part of his/her higher education experience in a country other than his/her home country (Kishun, 2008). Occasionally, an international student is referred to as foreign or overseas student (Huang, 2008), especially when one considers the cross-border mobility which has been linked with other international visitors by Hall (2008). As with other tourism niches, international students existence rests on the basis that there are push factors (the absence of what international students desire within their home countries) influencing their travel to destinations that are adequately equipped with pull factors (the existence of factors whose absence is responsible for them travelling out in the first instance).

Push and pull factors influencing international students

Whenever international students' mobility is discussed, the push-and-pull models are usually adopted (Mazzarol & Soutar, 2002; Peyton, 2005; Nghia 2015). The push factors - these refer to educational and non-educational-related factors that influence international students' motivation to migrate to another country (Adekalu & Oludeyi, 2013). Findings from most research studies corroborate that international students are pushed out of their home/residential countries due to the absence of all or most of the following: quality higher education, intended course or qualification, good career opportunities, adequate security, improved quality of lives and the like (Hazen & Alberts, 2006; Yang, 2007). Table 1 is a summary of particular studies on the push and pull factors. According to Butcher and McGrath (2004) some international students made a choice of a destination due to availability of enough avenues and places to spend their wealth. Therefore, another important push factor that is not prominent is the desire by an international student to express ego by making show-off of affluence among peer groups.

As soon as students decide to travel to study abroad, the next task is the selection of a destination (Mazzarol & Soutar, 2002). At this point, students engage in screening of available options as there may be more than a single destination on their minds. This is one area where the quality and amount of pull factors available at destinations amongst other attributes come to the advantage for specific destinations. Factors pulling international students to destinations vary from one student to another (Hazen & Alberts, 2006); thus explaining the diverse expectations from international students about amenities they wish to find and be able to access at the destination. While push factors are associated with the absence of educational-related features and tourism related amenities as previously

indicated, pull factors are related to the availability of most of the missing features in students' home countries.

Table 1: Selected studies on factors that push out of home countries and pull them to the host countries

Reference	Push factors identified
Keteku (2007)	• Poor quality of education system at home • Underfunding of education leading to total incapacity to deliver • Protracted strikes that prolong students stay than it ought to be • Political uneasiness which pushes most academics out thereby leaving the education system to suffer shortage of academic staff
Chen (2007)	• The volatile political atmosphere • A poor educational system • Poor social capital • The absence of desired future career
Mazzarol and Soutar (2002)	• The perception that study abroad is better than local study • Limited chances and possibility of entering the local university • The desire to understand the "West" • The intention to migrate in the future
Lu, Movando and Qiu (2009)	• Poor international ranking of the University • Poor quality of teaching • The desire to work or live abroad
Singh (2011)	• The lack of suitable opportunity at home • The desire to experience another country's life and culture • Positioning (moving at one education stage to be well positioned for a later stage of education or employment).
Reference	**Pull factors identified**
Kavakas (2013)	• Better experience of living in the host country
Chew, Ismail and Eam (2010)	• Affordable tuition fees charged • The reputation of institutions • Similar socio-cultural ideas and values
Bhati and Anderson (2012)	• Lower cost of living • Improved safety and security
Becker and Kolster (2012)	• The costs of higher education and living in a country • Governance/policy on higher education and institutions • Safety levels within the country (crime rate, racial discrimination) • Level of development of internationalisation of a country e.g., number of international students, availability and their diversity • Immigration opportunities/regulations during and after study • Mutual recognition of degrees/qualifications (by the host country and the domestic country • Availability of financial aid, travel expenses and living costs
Mazzarol and Soutar (2002)	• Mutual political interests in both student's home country and destination • Similarities in cultural ideals of both countries (source and host)
Ho, Li, Cooper and Holmes (2007)	• Quality education and good rating of the educational institution • Appreciable safety and attitude of host city towards international

Pull factors include but not limited to having interesting culture, affordable standard of living, socio-economic status of the host country, better opportunity to improve career prospects and improve immigration opportunities (Nghia, 2015). According to Chen (2007) the pull factors are used to attract students to specific host country. Given that push factors is associated with absence of facilities from the home country and pull factors is about the availability of facilities at the destination, it is important to recognise those (stakeholders) who are responsible for providing these factors at both the origin and destination of international students. Educational tourism like other tourism niches depends on stakeholders' cooperation.

Destination stakeholders

Adequate planning along with a proper outlining of stakeholders' roles in tourism as specified by Hall (2008) are needed for this niche to avoid situations where stakeholders' interest would suffer; thus leading to unwillingness to continue with the union by any stakeholder who feels cheated or feels that the dividends accruing do not correspond with contributions made and expectations placed therein. Examining international students' management from the destination perspective, the major stakeholders in educational tourism at the destination are: international students, the host university and the host community (community as a place and as people). Discussing cost and benefits effects of education tourism from the destination point of view, Ankomah and Larsson (2000); ICEF Monitor (2014b) recognise the following stakeholders' (i) international students, (ii) host country's government (at the national, provincial and municipality levels), and, (iii) the host community and, (iii) the host university. Of course, given that most of the universities in South Africa are government owned, this automatically makes government a vital stakeholder in view of the many roles played by the government in development of tourism. In view of the fact that international students have been discussed, the remaining three stakeholders' from the destination point of view is discussed next.

Government (of the host country, province and municipality)

The roles government plays in the development of tourism include but not limited to planning, coordination, regulation, legislation and promotion of tourism. Government also stimulates tourism by providing financial incentives such as low interest loans in order to encourage local investors and attract foreign investment amongst other roles. Sinha (2005) succinctly describes the tourism industry as one that is developed and managed by government. However, in educational tourism, apart from all the above mentioned roles of the government which is also obtainable therein, the government also formulate and regulate policy and policy instruments necessary for the administration of this tourism niche. This is evident in Becker and Kolster (2012), therein; policies used by leading countries in the administration of this tourism niche were discussed. Given that education tourism management entails the attraction, management and retention of international students, and – all these require that

infrastructure be adequately in place, the interest of local students and other indigenes be protected, laws are made and relevant government departments work together for success, the role and support of the government in education tourism cannot be overemphasised. The government will most certainly lead the way in the adoption of policies that will match available resources (Dredge & Jenkins, 2007), and best deliver expectations.

The host city/community

Tourism requires the participation of people in the host community, and when this people fail to support tourism it will be difficult and, in fact, almost impossible to sustain tourism in such a community (Dixit, 2014). Host community's participation either as the product/services or as people is vital to tourism growth (Hall, 2008). On what constitutes a community in this study, the host community represents the entire people and places in the COT. On the one hand, the COT as a place is regarded as a hub for business tourism, science, technology and knowledge industries (Tshwane Tourism Directory, 2012) in South Africa. Acha-Anyi describes the COT as a municipality with numerous vibrant communities and a population of about 2.9 million residents. Also the COT as a place is home to TUT, UP, UNISA, and, Sefalko Makgatho Health Sciences University, Ga Rankuwa. On the other hand, the role of the COT as a people is similar to that of other tourism niche. For instance, the community accommodates visitors (international students) and interact with them (Dixit, 2014), invite them to participate in local events (UNEP, 2014), community provides goods and service needed for day-to-day livelihood (Gautam, 2006). The aforementioned justify reasons why the presence of visitors benefits the host community economically and socio-culturally. The presence of international students will definitely lead to increase in activities (Pawlak, 2013). Furthermore, effort in providing the additional goods and services for international students around the host community leads to employment creation for the locals (Gautam, 2006).

The host university

Given that international students are primarily at the destination to study, identifying with a university that will provide education – as the main service needed by international students is important. Be it for infrastructure, services or as part of a support structure, education tourism at the destination needs all the above mentioned stakeholders for the success and for efficient management of education visitors at the destination. The results obtained from a previous empirical study on international students at TUT (Adediran, 2017) shows that the host university has the following roles in this union: ensuring quality education via availability of vibrant programmes leading to international students' realising their desire to acquire quality degrees, providing bursaries to cushion the financial burden/to reward exceptional students, conducting short term courses to promote language proficiency for students from non-English speaking countries, providing supports for students to carry out internships programmes, providing accommodation/assisting in securing reliable apartment, providing assistance for international students to settle down and cope with socio-cultural-related challenges, guaranteeing their safety, special support for smooth integration into their new environment, creating a platform for uniting students from the same countries, and partnerships with local and foreign institutions and companies for improved learning and research experiences amongst other things.

III. METHODOLOGY

The research instrument used for data collection was an online respondent-completed questionnaire. The questionnaire comprises questions designed with checklists, five-point Likert scales, ranking scales, multiple options and open-ended queries. After certifying the appropriateness of the questionnaire via a pilot study, the proper administration of questionnaire started from the 15th of January 2017. Based on the data received from TUT international office, there are 1 505 registered. Electronic questionnaires were sent to the entire 1 505 population and 325 responses were received in return. The main reason for selecting TUT among the four universities earlier mentioned is due to convenience in obtaining relevant permission such as access to the data base containing international students email addresses, ethical clearances and compliance by the management of these universities to allow their names to be mentioned and other information about them shared. However, 325 responses is a proportionate sample given Jennings (2010) position that, when N =1 505, n can be 320 on a 95% level of confidence. Given N as the population, and n as the adequate sample size for a known population. Data collection ended on the 12th of March 2017. Data was analysed with Statistical Package for Social Sciences SPSS and the following results were obtained.

IV. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Relying on Hassan and Shanewaz (2014), that the knowledge of respondents' demographic characteristics helps in tourism planning and it assists in projection of what respondents will need and their behavioural patterns for the future, this study included the respondents' demographic information for similar purposes. Table 2, shows respondents demographic characteristics.

As indicated in Table 2, 54.6% of the valid responses received were male while 45.4% were female. The table also shows that the majority (42.1%) of the respondents were between the ages of 21 – 25, followed by 22.7% respondents for the age group 26-30 years of age. This concurs with a similar study by Cross (2006) which pegs international student's average age at 24 years. Most of the students enrolled for an undergraduate diploma (47.2%), for degree B-Tech (31.9%) and 11.8% for a Masters and Doctorate degree (9.1%). It is also clear that 60% of the respondents enrolled for a 3 – 4 year degree, while 32.6% enrolled for a 1 – 2 year qualification.

Table 2: Result on respondents socio-demographic characteristics

Gender	(N)	(%)		Age group	(N)	(%)
Male	177	54.6		20 and younger	41	12.8
Female	147	45.4		21 – 25	135	42.1
Total	324	100		26 – 30	73	22.7
				31 – 35	37	11.5
				36 above	35	10.9
				Total	321	100
Qualification enrolled	(N)	(%)		Duration of studies	(N)	(%)
National Diploma	151	47.2		1 – 2 year	106	32.6
B-Tech (4th year)	102	31.9		3 – 4 year	195	60.0
Masters & MBA	38	11.8		5 – 6 year	21	6.5
Doctorate	29	9.1		7 year above	3	0.9
Total	320	100		Total	325	100
Who is paying for tuition fee	(N)	(%)		Who is paying your living expenses	(N)	(%)
My parent(s)	160	50.6		My parent(s)	163	50.6
Myself	99	31.3		Myself	117	36.3
Government of my country/state	33	10.4		Government of my country/state	28	8.7
TUT scholarship	7	2.3		My spouse	5	1.6
My employer in my country	6	1.9		My employer in my country	3	0.9
My employer in South Africa	5	1.6		TUT scholarship	3	0.9
My spouse	3	0.9		My employer in South Africa	2	0.7
National Research Foundation	3	1.0		National Research Foundation	1	0.3
Total	316	100		Total	322	100

The respondents also indicated that their tuition fees are either paid for by their parents (50.6%) or by the respondents themselves (31.3%) or the government of their home country (10.4%). A similar picture transpired in terms of living costs, where parents are paying for living expenses (50.6%), followed by the students (36.3%) or the government of their home countries (8.7%). These results are similar to other international studies (Butcher and McGrath, 2004) that international students and their parents are often steady sources of income for both the university in terms of tuition fees as well as local businesses in terms of living expenses.

Table 3: Factors influencing decision to study in (i) the country (ii) the city (iii) and the University

Respondents responses to factors influential their decision to come to SA	**Mean**	**Std dev**
Internationally recognized universities	3.90	1.204
Availability of adequate infrastructure for leisure and related activities	3.74	1.281
Opportunity to migrate to choice destination	3.20	1.294
Weather conditions	2.99	1.255
Proximity to my country of origin/residence	2.97	1.362
Cultural diversity	2.93	1.191
South Africans are peace loving people	2.76	1.237
Safety/security of lives and properties	2.34	1.315
Respondents responses to factors influential their decision to come to the City of Tshwane		
Quality educational facilities	3.73	0.726
Attractiveness of the COT	3.62	0.808
Commendable wireless networks	3.55	0.914
Quality local transport services	3.53	0.938
Quality public health care services	3.51	0.781
Adequate facilities for memorable recreation experiences	3.47	0.831
The City is clean	3.37	0.952
The City offers attractions of international repute	3.31	0.884
Affordable cost of living	3.27	0.917
Quality night life for regular enjoyment	3.22	0.839
It is safe to move freely at all times in the City	2.52	1.131
Respondents responses to factors influential to their selection of TUT		
Quality of education offered by TUT	3.92	1.132
Availability of my intended course of study	3.84	1.339
Good Educational support in place for international students at TUT	3.42	1.318
Low tuition fees	3.41	1.323
TUT is the only university that accepted my application	3.12	1.446
Affordable cost of living in the City of Tshwane	2.73	1.249
Quality of sporting facilities	2.44	1.276
Scholarship offered by TUT	2.31	1.367
Bursary was given to me by my country/employer to study only at TUT	1.97	1.247

(n=309)

Table 3 presents the result on factors influential to international students coming to South Africa. These factors are; availability of internationally recognised universities (3.90), availability of adequate infrastructure for leisure (3.74), and opportunity to migrate to the selected destination at (3.20). The remaining factors, though, important but did not

record up to the average 3.00 – are therefore regarded as less influential to this present crop of respondents, but it is interesting to note that safety and security was not ranked as high as one would expect in a country that are often in the news for the wrong reasons. From the research, it seems like a number of destination factors seems to be important for international students. Educational facilities (3.73), attractiveness (3.62), WiFi (3.55), transport (3.53) and health facilities (3.51) are ranked as very important for the students. It is also evident from the research that quality of life factors, such as recreation (3.47), cleanliness (3.37), attractions (3.31) and cost of living (3.27) are important to the students. In terms of the university experience, quality of education offered by TUT at (3.92), availability of respondents' intended courses/qualifications (3.84), educational support (3.42), low tuition fees (3.41) and TUT is the only university that accepted respondents' application for admission (3.12) were ranked as important.

Table 4: Recommendations for improved quality of life and learning experience

Recommendations for the City of Tshwane	Frequency (N)	Percentage (%)
Improve cleanliness	236	24.90
Improve security that would guarantee 24hours movement	235	24.84
Improve library and educational support facilities	173	18.27
Improve Wi-Fi (wireless networks) services	170	17.95
Improve beautification of the surroundings	133	14.04
Recommendations for the University	Frequency (N)	Percentage (%)
Improved response to international students complaints	232	31.52
Improved social amenities such as restaurants and for leisure	161	21.88
Accommodation for international students within the campus	159	21.60
Improved the quality of teaching	107	14.54
Improved library facilities	76	10.32
Improved transport infrastructure	1	0.14

Aside respondents' perceptions on some important variables considered significant to international students existence at the destination, it is also imperative to obtain respondents recommendations on areas they would like to see improvement that could enhance their overall experience. Given the variance in international students' demographic characteristics, this in turn influences their wants and desires for infrastructure, this study obtained the views of respondents on areas they would like the host to improve regarding infrastructure provision and service delivery. Table 4 depicts some vital recommendations given by the respondents for an improved experience in both the host city and university.

When asked how the city and the university can improve the overall experiences, it is interesting to note that the factors in Table 4 are similar to the factors regarded as important as indicated in Table 3. Overall the percentages are not extremely high but still notable. Factors such as improved cleanliness of the surroundings (24.9%); improved security/guarantee 24 hours' movement around the COT (24.84%); improved library and educational support facilities (18.27%); improve Wi-Fi services (17.95%); and, improve beautification of the surroundings (14.04%) were highlighted as important. Respondents' recommendation to improve on learning experience at TUT, recommendations made are improved response to international students' educational and non-educational complaints (31.52%); improved social amenities such as restaurants and for leisure centres (21.88%); providing more decent accommodation for international students within the campus environs (21.60%); improved the quality of teaching (14.54%); and improved library facilities (10.32%).

V. RECOMMENDATIONS

Given the sources this study adopted in obtaining information on factors pushing and pulling international students out of country of origin to study destination (literature and the empirical study), the framework for managing international students (figure 1) is based on these two sources of information. This framework illustrates three phases that are significant in international students sojourning. According to figure 1, Phase I begins at countries of origin/residence and contains the push factors (**see** table 1), and stakeholders' involvement (Figure 2). Phase II occurs at the destination and entails the pull factors and stakeholders' involvement. Finally, Phase III occurs at global level and comprises the results/outcomes that are expected when phase I and phase II combine effectively. This recommended framework for managing international students' at TUT is an improvement on the usual push and pull model (**see** Mazzarol and Soutar, 2002) that has been a template for most of the studies on the educational tourism niche. Taking into consideration the variations in students' desire to go abroad for study, and the need to periodically examine whether international students are satisfied with services and infrastructure available at the host city amongst other things, it is furthermore recommended that: Factors pulling international students toward the COT and TUT be updated periodically and be addressed with corresponding services and infrastructure. International students recommendations for both the COT and TUT be implemented. This will provide better services for the current students whilst addressing the expectations of the potential students. As indicated in Figure 2, the push-and-pull factors create expectations and will influence experiences. It is therefore important that the stakeholders at all levels should be working together to create a conducive environment that will attract international students and also provide an excellent learning experience for them. Finally, this study is recommended for destinations that are developing in educational tourism niche.

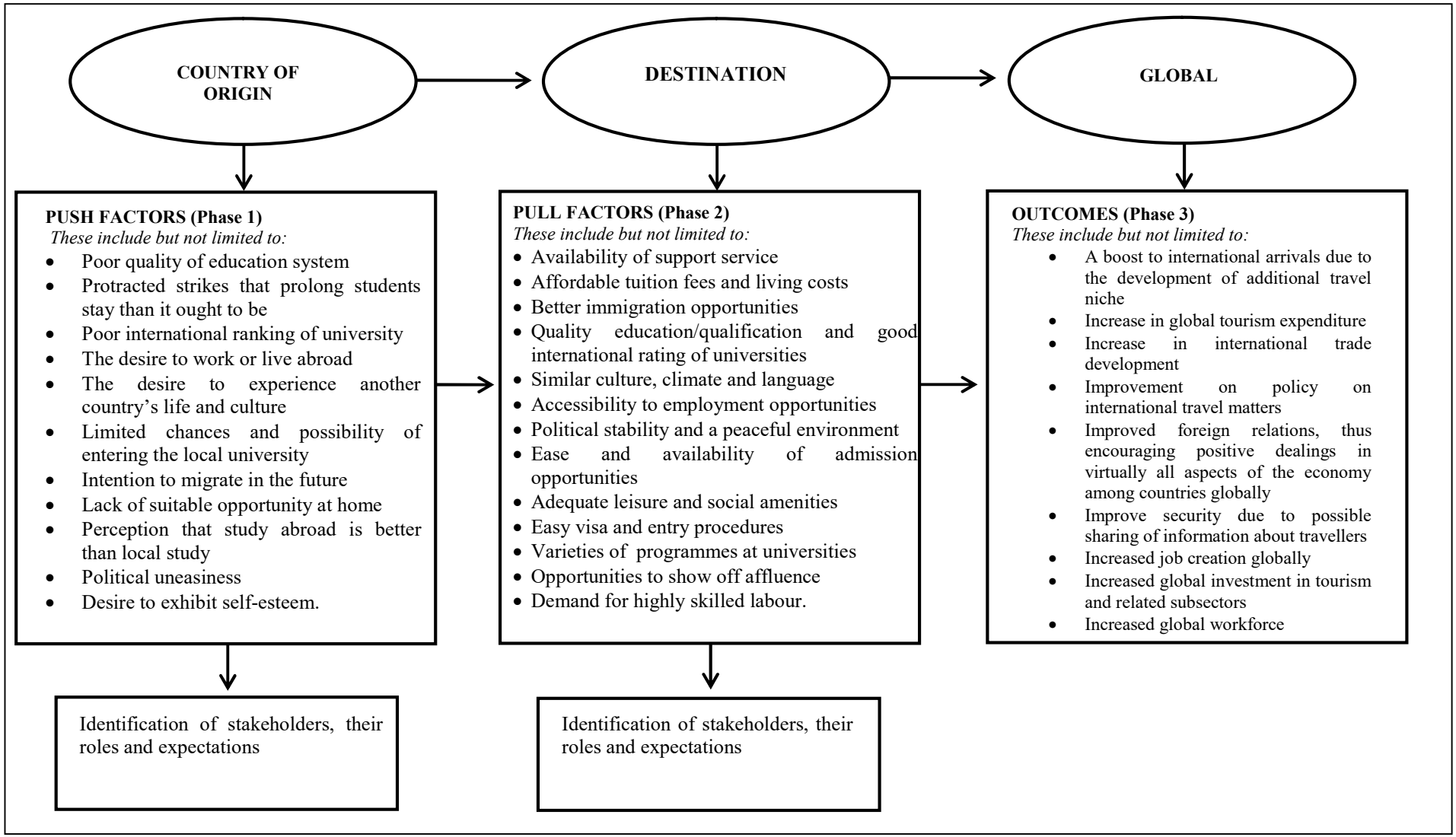

Figure 1: A sustainable framework for managing international students at Tshwane University of Technology: Based on push and pull model by Mazzarol and Soutar (2002)

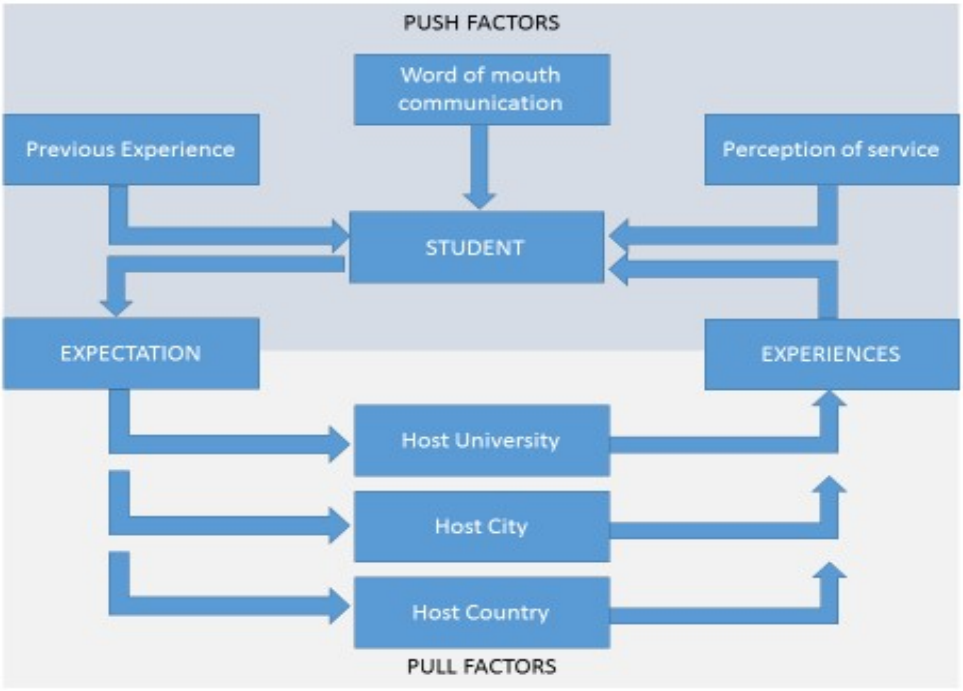

Figure 2: Push factors creating expectations and pull factors creating experiences

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