



Extending the Visitor Economy Framework to International Student Mobility: Evidence from a Global Student Consultancy in Bangladesh

Rafiqul Bari Lasker^{1*}, Ágnes Nóra Raffay-Danyi²

¹Department of Tourism, Faculty of Business and Economics, University of Pannonia, Veszprém, Hungary; ²Department of Tourism, Faculty of Business and Economics, University of Pannonia, Veszprém, Hungary

*Corresponding author: Rafiqul Bari Lasker, Department of Tourism, Faculty of Business and Economics, University of Pannonia, Veszprém, Hungary. Email: rakiblasker500@gmail.com

Abstract

The visitor economy increasingly encompasses forms of temporary mobility beyond conventional tourism, yet international student mobility remains comparatively underrepresented despite its economic, social, cultural, and knowledge-based contributions to destinations. Previous visitor economy research has focused mainly on leisure, business, and event visitors, while international education research has rarely examined student mobility through a visitor economy lens. This study aims to extend the visitor economy framework to international student mobility by examining the intermediary role of Optimum Consultancy Inc. (OCI), Bangladesh, and asks how consultancy activities shape mobility, visitor experience, and stakeholder coordination. The study uses a qualitative single-case study design based on semi-structured online interviews with 20 participants across five stakeholder groups, supported by secondary academic and documentary sources and analysed through analytical generalisation and conceptual mapping. The findings show that OCI performs strategic intermediary functions by reducing information asymmetry and perceived risk, coordinating administrative and stakeholder flows, interpreting complex institutional information, and co-creating visitor experiences before physical travel. The analysis further identifies consultancy services as intangible attractions and positions consultancy firms as actors that extend visitor management beyond destination boundaries and into pre-mobility processes. The study contributes theoretically by integrating visitor economy, experience economy, visitor management, stakeholder, and international student mobility perspectives into an extended framework. Practically, the framework offers guidance for education consultancies, higher education institutions, destination managers, and policymakers seeking to improve international student experiences and strengthen the economic and social value of educational mobility.

Keywords: Visitor Economy, Experience Economy, International Student Mobility, Education Tourism, Global Student Consultancy, Bangladesh

Introduction

International mobility has expanded beyond leisure and business travel as globalisation, digitalisation, higher-education internationalisation, and labour mobility have diversified cross-border movement. The visitor economy provides a broader framework for understanding this



change because visitors generate economic, social, cultural, and knowledge-based value across sectors and institutions (OECD, 2020)

International students are an increasingly important mobile population within this broader system. They generate sustained expenditure through tuition, accommodation, transport, food, healthcare, leisure, and retail, while also contributing to knowledge exchange, innovation, cultural diversity, and skilled migration (OECD, 2022; Alpek et al., 2022; Mendoza-Jiménez et al., 2026). Research on international student mobility has examined economic, spatial, motivational, and place-related dimensions (Alpek et al., 2022; Curtis & Ledgerwood, 2018; Kritz, 2015; Netz et al., 2025), while studies of education agents have highlighted their roles in recruitment, applications, trust, quality assurance, and student support (Feng & Horta, 2021; Xu & Miller, 2021; Yang et al., 2022).

However, an important knowledge gap remains: international student mobility has rarely been examined through visitor economy theory, and the intermediary role of student consultancies in shaping visitor journeys before physical arrival remains insufficiently conceptualised. Existing visitor management perspectives also focus mainly on physical visitor flows, leaving informational, procedural, and stakeholder-coordination flows comparatively underexplored. (Feng & Horta, 2021; Brooks et al., 2024).

To address this gap, the study aims to extend the visitor economy framework to international student mobility by examining the intermediary role of global student consultancies. Accordingly, the study addresses four research questions: RQ1, how can visitor economy concepts be extended to international student mobility? RQ2, what intermediary functions do global student consultancies perform within visitor economy systems? RQ3, how do consultancy activities influence visitor experience, mobility coordination, interpretation, and stakeholder integration across the student journey? RQ4, how can evidence from Optimum Consultancy Inc. (OCI) inform an extended visitor economy framework?

Methodologically, the study adopts a qualitative single-case study of Optimum Consultancy Inc. (OCI), Bangladesh. Primary data comprise semi-structured online interviews with 20 participants across five stakeholder groups like consultancy management and advisors, international-relations representative, international students, and university representatives supported by academic and documentary sources; the analysis uses analytical generalisation and conceptual mapping.

The study is significant because it connects visitor economy scholarship with international education research and identifies student consultancies as strategic intermediaries that can influence mobility and experience formation before travel. The proposed framework may therefore support education consultancies, higher education institutions, destination managers, and policymakers in coordinating international student mobility and enhancing its economic and social value.

In this article, the term visitor economy refers to the wider system through which temporary visitors generate value across tourism and non-tourism sectors, while international student mobility refers to cross-border educational movement involving extended residence and engagement with host institutions and communities. International student consultancy refers to intermediary services that assist prospective students with information, university selection, applications, visa processes, preparation, and related mobility support.

The article is organised as follows. Section 2 reviews the visitor economy, international student mobility, education agents, experience economy, visitor management, and stakeholder collaboration literature. Section 3 presents the conceptual framework and methodology. Section 4 reports the findings and develops the extended framework. Section 5 discusses the findings in relation to prior theory, Section 6 outlines the theoretical contributions, and Section 7 concludes with implications, limitations, and directions for future research.

Literature Review

The concept of the visitor economy represents one of the most significant paradigm shifts in contemporary tourism research. Traditional tourism frameworks have historically defined tourism as the temporary movement of individuals outside their usual place of residence for leisure, business, or other purposes without engaging in permanent employment at the

destination (United Nations & World Tourism Organization, 2010). While this definition has provided a robust statistical and policy foundation for decades, it has become increasingly insufficient for explaining the complexity of modern human mobility. Contemporary travel patterns encompass educational exchange, medical treatment, digital nomadism, business relocation, cultural exchange, temporary employment, and international volunteering, all of which generate substantial economic and social impacts that extend beyond conventional tourism industries (OECD, 2020). (Albrecht & Raymond, 2021).

The visitor economy emerged as a broader conceptual framework to address these limitations by recognising that the economic contribution of visitors extends beyond traditional tourism sectors. Rather than focusing solely on hotels, restaurants, and attractions, the visitor economy encompasses all industries, institutions, and stakeholders that benefit directly or indirectly from temporary visitors. These include higher education institutions, retail businesses, transport providers, financial services, healthcare organisations, cultural institutions, government agencies, and technology platforms (OECD, 2020; Albrecht & Raymond, 2021). Consequently, the visitor economy adopts a systems perspective in which multiple actors collaborate to create, deliver, and sustain visitor experiences. (Albrecht & Raymond, 2021; Font et al., 2021).

From a systems theory perspective, destinations function as interconnected networks composed of infrastructure, institutions, governance structures, businesses, communities, and visitors (Hall, 2008). Within such systems, value creation does not occur independently but emerges through continuous interactions among stakeholders. Visitor experiences are therefore influenced not only by destination attributes but also by the quality of coordination among service providers before, during, and after travel.

This systemic understanding has important implications for visitor economy management. Rather than treating tourism as an isolated industry, destinations increasingly recognise that visitor satisfaction depends upon integrated governance, cross-sector collaboration, and coordinated service delivery. Such an approach aligns with contemporary destination management philosophies that emphasise stakeholder engagement, collaborative governance, and network management (Fyall et al., 2012).

However, despite this broader perspective, much of the visitor economy literature continues to concentrate on geographically bounded destinations and physically observable tourism experiences. Educational mobility remains relatively underrepresented despite its considerable economic significance. International students consume accommodation, transportation, food services, entertainment, telecommunications, healthcare, banking, and retail products over extended periods, making them major contributors to local economies. Their exclusion from mainstream visitor economy scholarship therefore represents an important conceptual limitation.

International student mobility has become one of the defining characteristics of global higher education during the twenty-first century. The internationalisation of universities, expanding middle-class populations in emerging economies, advances in digital communication, and increasing demand for globally recognised qualifications have collectively stimulated unprecedented levels of cross-border educational mobility (Altbach & Knight, 2007; Brooks et al., 2024; Netz et al., 2025).

Unlike conventional tourists, international students undertake journeys characterised by long-term residence, educational participation, cultural adaptation, and sustained engagement with host communities. Consequently, their contribution extends beyond immediate visitor expenditure. International students generate tuition revenue, stimulate housing markets, create employment opportunities, support local businesses, contribute to innovation ecosystems, and frequently transition into skilled labour markets following graduation (OECD, 2022). In other words, international students may simultaneously appear in different roles in the destination, such as learners and temporary residents, often workers, migrants, visitors, and may also become members of local communities. International students can be analytically understood as long-stay, education-motivated temporary mobile populations whose activities overlap with, but are not identical to, conventional visitor categories. (Mendoza-Jiménez et al., 2026; Dos Santos et al., 2024).

The economic contribution of international education has become increasingly significant in major destination countries. International students contribute substantially to host economies through education-related expenditure and associated local consumption, with the United Kingdom providing a documented example of this contribution (Universities UK International, 2023; OECD, 2022). Nevertheless, despite these substantial contributions, international students are frequently examined through educational or migration perspectives rather than visitor economy frameworks.

Viewing international students as visitors does not diminish their educational identity rather, it recognises that their mobility simultaneously produces tourism-related, educational, cultural, and economic outcomes. This broader interpretation aligns with the visitor economy's emphasis on temporary mobility regardless of travel motivation. Consequently, international student mobility represents an important extension of visitor economy theory rather than an exception to it.

There is extensive research on international student mobility, examining primarily the decision-making process from economic (Alpek et al., 2022; Sohaee, 2023; Mendoza-Jiménez et al., 2026), spatial (Kritz, 2015; Beech, 2019; Waters & Brooks, 2022) and motivational aspects (Curtis & Ledgerwood, 2018; Netz et al., 2025) assess three distinct dimensions of place (origin and destination) in relation to international student mobility, including the physical characteristics of place, the meanings and valuations of place and social inequalities associated with place. Of these aspects, physical characteristics of the destination have key relevance to understanding international students within the framework of visitor economy.

Education agents were established primarily as organisations to gain economic benefits from connecting global students and overseas universities. However, their role encompasses a wide range of activities beyond merely creating a bridge between prospective students and universities (Feng & Horta, 2021; Xu & Miller, 2021; Yang et al., 2022), therefore education consultancy better describes their operations. Education consultancies act as intermediaries providing assistance with recruitment processes, university and visa application, building trust, handling conflicts of interest, quality assurance and regulation (Feng & Horta, 2021; Xu & Miller, 2021). The support consultancies offer in most cases cover a longer time span of the student mobility cycle, starting with addressing pre-departure expectations, transition, adjustment, post-arrival support and longer-term outcomes.

The emergence of the experience economy has fundamentally transformed understanding of value creation within tourism and service industries. Pine and Gilmore (1999) argue that economies have evolved from commodities to goods, services, and ultimately experiences, where consumers seek memorable and emotionally meaningful interactions rather than merely functional outcomes. Within tourism, experiences are increasingly recognised as the primary source of destination competitiveness. Visitors evaluate destinations not solely through physical attractions but also through emotions, social interactions, authenticity, learning, and personal transformation. This experiential perspective has encouraged researchers to examine visitor journeys holistically rather than focusing exclusively on on-site activities. (Eletxigerra et al., 2021; Rather et al., 2022).

Prahalad and Ramaswamy's (2004) theory of value co-creation further extends this perspective by arguing that value emerges collaboratively through interactions between organisations and consumers. Visitors are no longer passive recipients of services but active participants who shape their own experiences through engagement, communication, and decision-making. Applying these theories to international student consultancy reveals important conceptual insights. The educational journey begins months, and often years, before students physically arrive at their destination. During this period, consultancy firms influence expectations, reduce uncertainty, provide emotional reassurance, and facilitate informed decision-making. Consequently, significant components of the visitor experience are co-created before travel occurs. (Eletxigerra et al., 2021; Font et al., 2021).

This pre-travel experience includes university selection, destination evaluation, financial planning, visa preparation, accommodation arrangements, and intercultural orientation. Each interaction contributes to visitor perceptions and satisfaction, illustrating that experience creation extends beyond destinations themselves to include intermediary organisations.

Furthermore, consultancy firms continuously adapt services to individual student aspirations, financial capacity, academic background, and career objectives. Such personalisation reflects contemporary service-dominant logic (Vargo & Lusch, 2008), which views organisations not as producers of value but as facilitators of collaborative value creation.

Visitor management traditionally focuses on regulating movement within destinations to maximise visitor satisfaction while protecting environmental and cultural resources (Mason, 2015). Common management practices include crowd control, visitor dispersion, reservation systems, queue management, interpretation services, and infrastructure planning. Two key visitor management activities consultancies undertake are mobility coordination and interpretation. The underlying principles of visitor management extend beyond physical environments. At its core, visitor management seeks to coordinate movement efficiently while reducing uncertainty and improving visitor experiences. (Albrecht & Raymond, 2021).

International student consultancy demonstrates similar characteristics despite operating outside traditional tourism settings. Consultancies can be understood as mobility-enabling intermediaries. While universities, qualifications, employment opportunities and destination lifestyles may attract students, consultancies interpret, package and increase access to those attraction attributes. Consultancies to some extent manage physical mobility flows by assisting the movement between origin and destination, they play a more significant role in managing information flows, they coordinate informational and administrative flows involving university applications, documentation, visa processing, financial verification. Furthermore, consultancies manage stakeholder coordination flows, including communication with multiple stakeholders (prospective students, families, universities, authorities). (Feng & Horta, 2021; Xu & Miller, 2021).

Understanding consultancy as visitor flow management expands the applicability of visitor management theory beyond destinations and illustrates its relevance for broader mobility systems. Beyond managing mobility flow, interpretation has long been recognised as a fundamental component of visitor experience. Tilden (1957) argued that interpretation should reveal meanings rather than merely communicate information, enabling visitors to establish deeper intellectual and emotional connections with destinations. Moscardo (1996) expanded this perspective through the concept of mindful visitors, suggesting that effective interpretation encourages learning, engagement, and meaningful participation.

Within international education consultancy, interpretation performs a similarly important function. Students frequently encounter unfamiliar academic systems, immigration regulations, financial documentation requirements, scholarship opportunities, and cultural expectations. Consultancy firms therefore act as knowledge interpreters rather than simply information providers. Interpretive activities include explaining admission criteria, translating institutional policies, clarifying visa regulations, managing expectations, and preparing students for cultural adaptation. These functions reduce perceived risk while enhancing confidence throughout the mobility process.

Trust becomes central within this interpretive relationship. International education represents a high-risk decision involving significant financial investment, emotional commitment, and career consequences. Students consequently rely heavily upon trusted intermediaries capable of providing credible, accurate, and personalised guidance. Consultancy firms therefore create value not only through administrative support but also through trust-building and uncertainty reduction.

Visitor economies operate through complex stakeholder networks rather than isolated organisations. Freeman's (1984) Stakeholder Theory argues that organisational success depends upon effectively balancing relationships among diverse stakeholder groups. Similarly, destination management literature emphasises collaborative governance involving governments, businesses, educational institutions, communities, and visitors (Fyall et al., 2012). Global student consultancy represents a particularly complex stakeholder environment involving students, families, universities, immigration authorities, scholarship providers, financial institutions, airlines, accommodation providers, alumni networks, and employers. (Brooks et al., 2024; Font et al., 2021).

OCI operates within this network by coordinating communication, aligning stakeholder expectations, facilitating information exchange, and managing institutional relationships. Rather than creating value independently, consultancy firms enable collaborative value creation across interconnected organisations. This network perspective reinforces the argument that consultancy firms function as strategic intermediaries within visitor economy ecosystems. Despite significant advances in visitor economy scholarship, several theoretical gaps remain.

First, existing visitor economy research remains predominantly tourism-centric, focusing on leisure destinations while largely overlooking international education mobility. Second, studies examining international students typically adopt educational, migration, or internationalisation perspectives without integrating visitor economy theory. Third, the strategic role of intermediary organisations particularly global student consultancies has received limited scholarly attention despite their growing influence on international mobility decisions. Fourth, existing visitor management frameworks primarily address physical visitor flows rather than informational and procedural mobility systems. Finally, limited research has explored how consultancy firms contribute to experience co-creation before visitors physically arrive at destinations.

Addressing these gaps requires extending visitor economy theory beyond traditional tourism contexts and recognising international student consultancy as an essential intermediary within contemporary mobility systems. This study responds to that need by proposing a conceptual framework that integrates visitor economy theory with international student mobility through evidence from Optimum Consultancy Inc., Bangladesh.

Methods

This study proposes an extended visitor economy framework that conceptualises international student consultancy firms as strategic intermediaries within contemporary visitor economy systems. While existing visitor economy literature predominantly positions destinations, attractions, accommodation providers, and transportation services as the principal actors responsible for visitor experiences (Hall, 2008; Fyall et al., 2012). This research argues that intermediary organisations significantly influence visitor decision-making long before physical travel begins.

The conceptual model developed in this study integrates four complementary theoretical perspectives: (1) Visitor Economy Systems Theory, (2) Experience Economy Theory, (3) Visitor Management Theory, and (4) theories on International Student Mobility. Collectively, these perspectives explain how consultancy organisations facilitate international mobility by connecting multiple institutional actors while simultaneously reducing uncertainty, co-creating experiences, and coordinating physical mobility, information and stakeholder coordination flows. (Brooks et al., 2024; Font et al., 2021).

The framework positions international student consultancy as the central coordinating actor linking four principal stakeholder groups, prospective students and their families, higher education institutions, regulatory authorities (including immigration and visa agencies), and destination communities. Consultancy firms facilitate interactions among these stakeholders by providing information, administrative support, cultural interpretation, risk management, and process coordination. (Feng & Horta, 2021; Xu & Miller, 2021; Brooks et al., 2024).

Unlike conventional destination management organisations (DMOs), whose responsibilities generally commence after destination selection, global student consultancies influence the visitor experience during the earliest stages of mobility. Consequently, visitor experience creation is conceptualised as beginning with information acquisition rather than merely physical arrival. This perspective extends visitor economy theory by recognising that meaningful visitor experiences originate through cognitive, emotional, and administrative interactions occurring well before travel.

Research Design

This study employs a qualitative single-case study design, consistent with Yin's (2018) methodological framework for investigating contemporary phenomena within their real-life contexts. Case study research is particularly appropriate when the boundaries between the phenomenon under investigation and its surrounding environment are not clearly

distinguishable. The phenomenon examined in this research the contribution of global student consultancy to visitor economy management cannot be separated from its institutional, social, educational, and regulatory environment. Consequently, a case study approach facilitates holistic understanding while preserving contextual complexity.

Single-case studies are especially appropriate when investigating emerging theoretical concepts or underexplored research domains. Since few previous studies have conceptualised education consultancies within visitor economy theory, the present research seeks analytical rather than statistical generalisation. The objective is therefore to contribute to theoretical development by extending existing conceptual frameworks rather than producing findings intended for broad population generalisation. The study follows an explanatory case study design, seeking to understand how and why consultancy organisations contribute to visitor economy systems through their intermediary functions.

Case Selection

Optimum Consultancy Inc. (OCI), Bangladesh, was purposively selected as the empirical case for several reasons. First, OCI represents an established global student consultancy with partnerships involving universities across multiple international destinations, including Australia, Canada, Malaysia, the United Kingdom, several European countries, and other major education markets. This international engagement provides an appropriate setting for examining cross-border mobility processes.

Second, OCI performs a comprehensive range of consultancy activities extending beyond student recruitment. These include educational counselling, university selection, admission processing, documentation, visa assistance, pre-departure orientation, accommodation guidance, and post-arrival support. Such diversity enables comprehensive examination of consultancy functions across the entire visitor journey.

Third, Bangladesh has experienced substantial growth in international student mobility during the past decade. Increasing educational aspirations, demographic change, expanding middle-class incomes, and global employment opportunities have significantly increased demand for overseas higher education. Consequently, Bangladeshi student consultancies have become influential actors connecting domestic educational demand with international higher education markets.

Finally, OCI provides a theoretically informative case because its activities reflect many characteristics associated with visitor economy management, including visitor attraction, mobility facilitation, stakeholder coordination, information interpretation, and experience creation.

Data Sources

The study relied primarily on qualitative interview data supported by secondary documentary and academic sources. Primary data were collected through semi-structured online interviews with stakeholders directly involved in, or affected by, international student mobility and the activities of Optimum Consultancy Inc. (OCI), Bangladesh. The use of semi-structured interviews enabled the researcher to maintain consistency across the respondent groups while allowing participants to describe their experiences, perceptions, and interpretations in their own words.

Secondary data comprise peer-reviewed journal articles, academic books, international policy reports, government publications, and institutional documents relating to visitor economy, tourism management, international education, experience economy, stakeholder theory, destination management, and international student mobility.

Participant

A total of 20 participants were interviewed, ensuring representation from different roles and experiences.

a) Managing Director

b) Student Advisors those work directly with students, helping with applications, cultural adaptation, and academic placement.

c) International Relation person who is responsible for partnerships with universities in different countries.

d) Students who have used the agency's services and interacted with foreign academic systems.

e) University representatives.

These stakeholder groups were selected because they occupy different positions within the international student mobility process and therefore provide complementary perspectives on the consultancy's intermediary functions.

Participants were selected purposively according to their relevance to the research phenomenon. Purposive selection was appropriate because the study sought information-rich participants with direct knowledge of international student mobility, consultancy operations, university partnerships, or students' experiences of foreign academic systems.

The sample consisted of 20 participants across five stakeholder groups. The inclusion of multiple stakeholder perspectives was intended to reduce dependence on a single organisational perspective and to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the consultancy's intermediary role. Consultancy personnel provided organisational and operational perspectives, students provided experiential perspectives, and university representatives provided an institutional and partnership perspective.

Interview

The interviews were conducted online. The interview format was considered appropriate because the research involved participants located across different institutional and geographical contexts. Participants were informed about the purpose of the study and the academic use of the information provided. The interview process encouraged participants to provide examples from their professional or personal experiences rather than limiting responses to predetermined categories.

Managing Director

1. How would you describe the role of your consultancy in facilitating international student mobility?
2. In your view, does the consultancy perform functions beyond traditional student recruitment and application processing? If yes, what are they?
3. How does your organisation influence students' decisions regarding universities and destination countries?
4. How does the consultancy manage the student journey from initial enquiry through application, visa processing, departure, and post-arrival support?
5. How does your organisation reduce uncertainty and perceived risks associated with studying abroad?
6. How important are university partnerships and international institutional relationships to the consultancy's ability to facilitate student mobility?
7. How does the consultancy coordinate different stakeholders, such as students, universities, parents, visa authorities, and other service providers?
8. How does your organisation contribute to students' cultural and academic preparation before they travel?
9. Do you consider international students to be part of the broader visitor economy of destination countries? Why or why not?
10. In your opinion, can student consultancies be considered strategic intermediaries within the visitor economy? Why?

Student Advisors

1. What are the most common concerns students have when they first approach the consultancy?
2. How do you help students select an appropriate university and destination country?
3. How do you explain complex academic, visa, financial, and institutional information to students?
4. How do you help students manage uncertainty and anxiety about studying abroad?
5. How do you prepare students for cultural and academic differences before departure?
6. How involved are students in making decisions about their university, programme, and destination?

7. How does your interaction with students influence their expectations about their future destination?
8. What kinds of support do you provide when students face difficulties during the application or visa process?
9. How do you maintain communication with students after they arrive in the destination country?
10. From your experience, how does consultancy support influence the overall international student experience?

International Relations

1. What is the role of the consultancy in developing relationships with international universities?
2. How are university partnerships established and maintained?
3. How does the consultancy communicate students' needs and expectations to partner universities?
4. What types of information are exchanged between the consultancy and international universities?
5. How does the consultancy coordinate with universities during the application and admission process?
6. What challenges arise when coordinating with universities from different countries and institutional cultures?
7. How do international partnerships influence students' choice of destination and university?
8. How does collaboration with universities contribute to a smoother student mobility process?
9. In your experience, how do consultancy, universities, and students jointly create value?
10. Do you think education consultancies play a role similar to intermediary or destination-management organisations in international student mobility? Why?

International Students

Before choosing the destination

1. How did you first decide to study abroad?
2. What factors influenced your choice of university and destination country?
3. What role did the consultancy play in your decision-making?
4. What information did you receive from the consultancy before making your decision?

During application and preparation

1. How did the consultancy help you understand university admission requirements?
2. How did the consultancy help you with visa, financial, and documentation requirements?
3. How did the consultancy help you prepare for cultural and academic differences?
4. Did the consultancy reduce your uncertainty or concerns about studying abroad? How?

During and after arrival

1. How well did your expectations before departure match your actual experience after arriving?
2. Did the consultancy provide any support after you arrived in the destination country?

University Representatives

1. What role does your university expect education consultancies to play in international student recruitment and mobility?
2. How does your university collaborate with student consultancies?
3. How do consultancies contribute to students' understanding of your university and destination?
4. How effective are consultancies in communicating university requirements and policies to prospective students?
5. How does the consultancy help manage communication between students and the university?
6. From your perspective, how do consultancies influence students' expectations before arrival?
7. How does the consultancy contribute to students' academic and cultural preparedness?

8. What challenges have you experienced when working with international student consultancies?
9. In your experience, do consultancies contribute to the overall international student experience beyond recruitment?
10. Do you consider education consultancies important stakeholders within the broader visitor economy and international student mobility system? Why?

Analysis

Data analysis follows analytical generalisation, consistent with Yin's (2018) approach to qualitative case study research. Rather than statistically testing hypotheses, analytical generalisation compares empirical observations with existing theoretical constructs to identify conceptual extensions and theoretical refinement.

The analysis proceeds through four sequential stages.

Stage One: Identification of Core Visitor Economy Concepts

The first stage identifies fundamental concepts within visitor economy literature, including visitor attraction, visitor management, visitor flow coordination, stakeholder collaboration, interpretation, experience economy, and value co-creation. These concepts establish the analytical lens through which consultancy activities are examined.

Stage Two: Mapping Consultancy Activities

The second stage systematically maps consultancy functions performed by OCI against visitor economy concepts. Examples include:

- Educational counselling → Experience co-creation
- University promotion → Visitor attraction
- Application management → Visitor flow management
- Visa guidance → Risk management
- Pre-departure orientation → Visitor interpretation
- Post-arrival support → Visitor experience continuity

This mapping enables direct comparison between consultancy activities and established visitor economy theory.

Stage Three: Conceptual Integration

The third stage integrates empirical observations into a broader conceptual framework explaining how consultancy organisations facilitate visitor economy development. Rather than treating consultancy services as isolated administrative functions, the analysis interprets them as interconnected processes contributing to visitor mobility systems.

Stage Four: Theoretical Extension

Finally, the study develops an extended visitor economy framework incorporating international student consultancy as an intermediary institution. This stage represents the principal theoretical contribution of the research by demonstrating that visitor economy management extends beyond destination boundaries to include organisations shaping visitor experiences before travel occurs.

Findings

Strategic Visitor Economy Intermediary

The empirical findings indicate that Optimum Consultancy Inc. (OCI) performs a far more comprehensive role than that of a conventional education consultancy. Rather than functioning solely as an administrative facilitator responsible for processing applications and documentation, OCI operates as a strategic intermediary that coordinates multiple actors, manages visitor expectations, and facilitates international mobility throughout the visitor lifecycle. This finding supports the argument that global student consultancies should be recognised as integral components of the visitor economy rather than peripheral educational service providers (Figure 1).

Traditional visitor economy frameworks conceptualise destinations as interconnected systems composed of attractions, accommodation providers, transportation services, government agencies, local communities, and tourism businesses (Hall, 2008; Fyall et al., 2012). However,

the findings from OCI demonstrate that international student mobility introduces an additional category of intermediary organisations that perform many functions traditionally associated with destination management organisations (DMOs). OCI coordinates relationships among prospective students, parents, universities, visa authorities, financial institutions, accommodation providers, and destination communities. Consequently, the consultancy functions as a network coordinator within a broader visitor economy ecosystem.

This intermediary role is particularly important because international education involves substantially higher levels of uncertainty than conventional tourism. Students invest considerable financial resources, make long-term career decisions, and relocate to unfamiliar cultural environments. Under such circumstances, consultancy organisations reduce perceived risks by providing accurate information, interpreting institutional requirements, and coordinating administrative procedures. Their contribution therefore extends beyond service delivery to include trust creation and uncertainty management, both of which are fundamental components of visitor economy development.

From the perspective of Stakeholder Theory (Freeman, 1984), OCI creates value by aligning the interests of multiple stakeholder groups rather than prioritising a single organisational objective. Students seek educational quality and career opportunities, universities pursue international recruitment objectives, governments require compliance with immigration regulations and destination communities benefit from the economic and cultural contributions generated by international students. OCI functions as the intermediary institution that facilitates collaboration among these diverse stakeholders.

This finding also aligns with Service-Dominant Logic (Vargo & Lusch, 2008), which argues that organisations do not independently produce value but instead facilitate collaborative value creation. Rather than delivering a finished service, OCI enables students to co-create their international education experience through continuous interaction, consultation, and decision-making. Therefore, the findings suggest that consultancy firms should be conceptualised as strategic visitor economy institutions operating within knowledge-intensive mobility systems.

Reinterpreting the Student Journey as an Extended Visitor Lifecycle

A major finding of this study is that the international student journey closely resembles an extended visitor lifecycle rather than a simple educational transition. Existing visitor management literature generally conceptualises visitor experiences through stages such as pre-visit, travel, on-site experience, departure, and post-visit evaluation (Mason, 2015). However, empirical evidence from OCI demonstrates that these stages can be meaningfully adapted to international student mobility. The visitor experience begins long before physical travel occurs. Students initially engage in extensive information searching concerning universities, destination countries, tuition costs, visa requirements, scholarship opportunities, employment prospects, accommodation, and cultural environments.

OCI plays a central role during this phase by filtering information, identifying suitable educational opportunities, and reducing cognitive overload. Instead of allowing students to navigate fragmented digital information independently, consultancy professionals curate and personalise knowledge according to individual academic profiles and career aspirations.

This stage illustrates Pine and Gilmore's (1999) argument that experiences begin before consumption. Expectations formed during the pre-travel period significantly influence subsequent visitor satisfaction. Consequently, consultancy interactions represent the first stage of visitor experience creation.

Planning: Collaborative Decision-Making

During the planning stage, students compare educational institutions, destination countries, programme quality, living costs, immigration opportunities, and employment outcomes. Rather than acting as passive advisors, OCI consultants participate actively in collaborative decision-making processes. This supports Prahalad and Ramaswamy's (2004) theory of value co-creation, which argues that consumers actively participate in creating their own experiences. Decision-making therefore becomes a jointly constructed process involving students, parents, consultants, universities, and regulatory institutions. The consultancy transforms complex institutional information into practical knowledge that facilitates informed visitor decisions.

Processing: Visitor Flow Management

The processing phase involves application preparation, document verification, university admission, visa processing, financial compliance, health requirements, and travel planning. From a visitor economy perspective, this stage represents visitor flow management operating within administrative rather than merely physical environments. Traditional tourism management seeks to optimise visitor movement through attractions, airports, transport systems, and destinations. In contrast, OCI manages informational flows by coordinating documentation, deadlines, communication, and stakeholder interactions. This finding extends Mason's (2015) visitor management framework by demonstrating that visitor flows include procedural mobility in addition to physical movement.

Transition: Mobility Realisation

Transition refers to the period during which students physically relocate to destination countries. Although OCI does not directly control international travel infrastructure, the organisation significantly influences transition quality through pre-departure orientation, travel preparation, accommodation guidance, and intercultural advice. Consequently, successful transition depends not only upon transportation systems but also upon the quality of pre-travel preparation. This reinforces the proposition that visitor economy management begins before arrival at destinations.

Post-Arrival: Long-Term Visitor Experience

Unlike conventional tourism, international student mobility continues for several years after arrival. Students continue interacting with universities, local communities, employers, accommodation providers, healthcare services, transportation networks, and cultural institutions. OCI maintains communication during this stage through ongoing student support, demonstrating that consultancy relationships frequently extend beyond physical mobility. This prolonged engagement illustrates an important distinction between tourism visitors and educational visitors while simultaneously supporting their inclusion within the visitor economy framework.

Consultancy Services as Intangible Visitor Attractions

One of the most significant theoretical contributions emerging from this research is the conceptualisation of consultancy services as intangible visitor attractions. Traditional tourism literature defines attractions primarily as physical places that motivate travel (Gunn, 1972). However, Leiper's (1990) attraction system theory suggests that attractions derive meaning through informational markers rather than merely physical characteristics alone. Empirical evidence from OCI indicates that consultancy services themselves function as attractions because they reduce uncertainty, enhance confidence, and increase the perceived probability of successful international study. Students frequently select consultancy organisations based on:

- organisational reputation
- university partnerships
- previous student success
- consultant expertise
- transparency
- personalised guidance
- post-arrival support

These characteristics motivate engagement before destination selection occurs. Consequently, consultancy organisations become destinations of trust where prospective students seek reassurance before committing to international mobility. This finding extends attraction theory beyond geographical spaces toward knowledge-intensive service environments. Universities themselves also function as symbolic attractions whose attractiveness depends upon rankings, employability, reputation, research excellence, and graduate outcomes. OCI strengthens these symbolic attractions by interpreting institutional information and translating abstract indicators into meaningful educational opportunities.

Consultancy as Visitor Flow Management

Visitor flow management traditionally seeks to balance visitor satisfaction with destination sustainability by coordinating movement across physical spaces. The findings suggest that similar management principles operate within educational consultancy. OCI coordinates multiple sequential processes including:

- initial consultation
- programme selection
- documentation
- university communication
- visa application
- financial verification
- travel preparation
- post-arrival assistance

Each stage depends upon successful completion of previous stages. Consequently, consultancy work resembles supply chain management within visitor economies. Delays, communication failures, inaccurate documentation, or procedural errors generate visitor dissatisfaction comparable to congestion within tourism destinations. This demonstrates that visitor management principles remain applicable even when visitor flows occur through administrative processes rather than geographical movement.

Interpretation as Knowledge Mediation

Interpretation emerged as one of OCI's most strategically important functions. Following Tilden (1957), interpretation reveals meaning rather than simply transmitting information. Students frequently encounter unfamiliar concepts including:

- credit systems
- university regulations
- visa legislation
- scholarship eligibility
- accommodation contracts
- healthcare systems
- employment rights
- cultural expectations

OCI interprets these complex institutional environments by translating technical information into understandable guidance. This interpretive function contributes directly to visitor confidence, decision quality, and satisfaction. Furthermore, interpretation supports intercultural adaptation by preparing students for social, academic, and professional environments within destination countries. Consequently, consultancy interpretation functions similarly to heritage interpretation within tourism, facilitating understanding rather than merely providing information.

Value Co-Creation Across the Visitor Economy

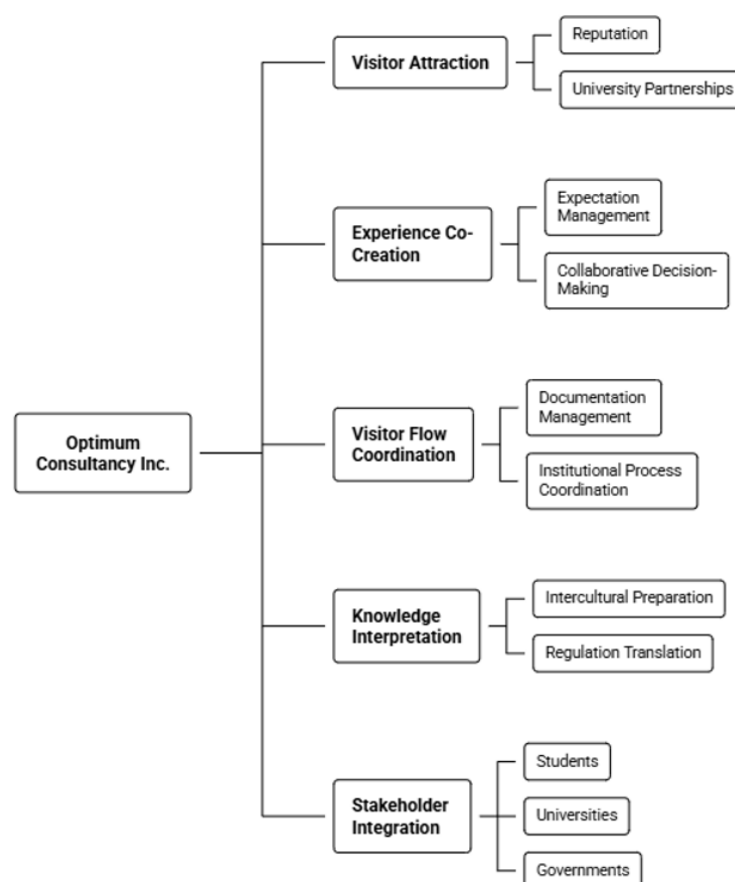
The findings consistently demonstrate that value creation within international student consultancy is collaborative. Students actively participate by defining educational objectives, evaluating alternatives, providing documentation, and making final decisions. Synthesising these findings enables the development of an extended visitor economy framework. The proposed framework positions consultancy firms as strategic intermediaries responsible for five interconnected functions:

- i. Visitor Attraction
 - Influencing destination and university choice.
 - Building trust and reducing uncertainty.
- ii. Experience Co-Creation
 - Personalising educational journeys.
 - Managing expectations.
 - Supporting collaborative decision-making.
- iii. Visitor Flow Coordination
 - Managing documentation.

- Coordinating institutional processes.
- Monitoring mobility progression.
- iv. Knowledge Interpretation
 - Explaining institutional complexity.
 - Supporting intercultural preparation.
 - Translating regulations into practical guidance.
- v. Stakeholder Integration

Connecting students, universities, governments, financial institutions, and destination communities within a coordinated visitor economy ecosystem. This framework extends existing visitor economy theory by demonstrating that visitor management begins before travel, operates through intermediary organisations, and continues throughout long-term educational mobility. Accordingly, international student consultancy should be recognised as an integral component of destination development rather than merely an educational recruitment service.

Figure 1: Optimum Consultancy Inc. as a Strategic Visitor Economy Intermediary



Discussion

The discussion begins by relating the findings to the study's research questions and to the visitor economy literature. The results support the broader view that visitor economies encompass multiple forms of temporary mobility and show how international student mobility can be examined as a long-stay component of destination value creation. Empirical studies have also shown that international students can generate tourism-related and regional economic effects, supporting the relevance of treating student mobility as part of a broader visitor economy (Pereira López et al., 2016; Jarvis, 2020; OECD, 2022).

To address the research problem, the study examined how consultancy activities operate across the student journey before, during, and after mobility. The findings show that OCI performs intermediary functions involving information interpretation, mobility coordination, stakeholder integration, risk reduction, and experience co-creation. This intermediary role is consistent with research showing that education agents and brokers connect students, families,

institutions, and destination systems across the mobility process (Collins, 2012; Feng & Horta, 2021; Luk, 2024).

A central result is that OCI operates as a strategic visitor economy intermediary rather than solely as an administrative education agent. It coordinates students, families, universities, visa authorities, financial institutions, accommodation providers, and other stakeholders. The networked character of this role is consistent with international student mobility research, which emphasises the importance of multiple actors and relationships in shaping mobility pathways (Collins, 2012; Luk, 2024).

An important finding is that consultancy services can be understood as intangible attractions such as trust, reputation, expertise, institutional partnerships, and personalised guidance influence prospective students before they select a destination. This extends attraction theory beyond physical places toward knowledge-intensive and relational service environments. This interpretation extends Leiper's (1990) attraction-system perspective, while research on international student recruitment also shows that agents can influence prospective students' understandings of destinations and institutional opportunities (Feng & Horta, 2021; Beech, 2019).

The study also revealed a notable conceptual outcome which is the attraction role of consultancy services emerged from their ability to reduce uncertainty and increase confidence rather than from a physical resource. Because the study did not originally treat consultancy firms as geographical attractions, this interpretation represents an important extension of the attraction perspective rather than a claim about a statistically unexpected effect.

The findings support previous research on experience economy and value co-creation. Consistent with Pine and Gilmore (1999) and Prahalad and Ramaswamy (2004), the evidence indicates that experience formation begins during information search and consultation and is co-created through interaction among students, consultancies, universities, and other stakeholders. Evidence on pre-travel value co-creation similarly demonstrates that experience formation can occur during information search and travel planning before physical arrival (Eletxigerra et al., 2021), while research on student agency reinforces the active role of students in shaping international education experiences (Inouye et al., 2023).

The findings do not identify a direct contradiction of the established visitor economy, experience economy, or visitor management perspectives used in this study. Instead, they extend these perspectives by showing that visitor flows can include informational, procedural, and administrative processes in addition to physical movement.

One explanation for these findings is the high uncertainty associated with international education decisions. Students make substantial financial, academic, and personal commitments, so consultancy interpretation and coordination can reduce information asymmetry and perceived risk while aligning the expectations of multiple stakeholders. This interpretation is consistent with research identifying information asymmetry and intermediary dependence as important features of international student recruitment and brokerage (Feng & Horta, 2021; Xu & Miller, 2021; Luk, 2024).

The findings should nevertheless be interpreted cautiously. The study uses a purposively selected single case, a sample of 20 participants, online interviews, and qualitative analytical generalisation; therefore, the framework should be understood as a conceptual extension rather than evidence of statistical generalisation to all education consultancies or destinations. This cautious interpretation is consistent with the logic of analytical generalisation in case study research (Yin, 2018).

The findings have implications for theory, practice, and policy. Theoretically, they extend visitor economy and visitor management scholarship by incorporating international student mobility and pre-arrival intermediary functions. Practically and for policy, consultancies, universities, destination managers, and regulators should consider information quality, stakeholder coordination, intercultural preparation, and post-arrival support as parts of the visitor experience. Future research should test the framework across multiple consultancies and destinations, compare student and institutional perspectives, and investigate the economic and experiential effects of consultancy-mediated mobility using mixed or longitudinal methods.

This study contributes to visitor economy in several important ways. First, it expands the conceptual boundaries of the visitor economy by incorporating international student mobility into existing theoretical frameworks. Previous studies have predominantly concentrated on leisure tourism, business travel, and event participation, whereas educational mobility has largely remained within higher education research. By conceptualising international students as long-stay visitors, this research bridges tourism studies and international education literature.

Second, the study introduces global student consultancy as a strategic visitor economy intermediary. Existing visitor economy frameworks acknowledge destinations, attractions, accommodation providers, and transportation systems but rarely consider organisations responsible for facilitating visitor mobility before travel. The proposed framework demonstrates that consultancy firms influence visitor attraction, visitor management, interpretation, and experience co-creation, thereby occupying a central position within contemporary visitor economy ecosystems.

Third, the research extends visitor attraction theory by introducing the concept of intangible attractions. Consultancy organisations attract prospective visitors through trust, expertise, credibility, and perceived success rather than through physical resources. This conceptual extension may have broader relevance for other knowledge-intensive service industries, including healthcare facilitation, migration consultancy, and international business advisory services.

Fourth, the study advances visitor management theory by demonstrating that visitor flows encompass informational, procedural, and administrative mobility in addition to physical movement. This broader interpretation reflects the increasingly digital and knowledge-intensive nature of contemporary international mobility.

Finally, the proposed Visitor Economy Framework for International Student Consultancy integrates systems theory, stakeholder theory, experience economy, service-dominant logic, attraction theory, and interpretation theory into a unified conceptual model. This integration provides a foundation for future theoretical development within visitor economy research.

Conclusion

This study set out to extend the visitor economy framework to international student mobility by examining the intermediary role of Optimum Consultancy Inc. in Bangladesh. The findings show that international student consultancy is not merely an administrative support service but a strategic actor that facilitates mobility, interprets information, coordinates stakeholders, and contributes to experience formation before and after physical travel.

By conceptualising international students as long-stay visitors and consultancy firms as visitor economy intermediaries, the study broadens the theoretical scope of visitor economy research beyond its traditional tourism orientation. The proposed framework demonstrates that visitor attraction, visitor management, knowledge interpretation, stakeholder integration, and experience co-creation can operate through interconnected educational and mobility networks.

The study contributes to tourism and international education by identifying consultancy firms as strategic intermediaries and by extending attraction and visitor management concepts to informational, procedural, and pre-arrival processes. These contributions have practical and policy relevance for consultancies, universities, destination managers, and regulators seeking to improve student preparation, coordination, and visitor experience while strengthening the economic and social value of educational mobility.

The study is subject to limitations arising from its qualitative single-case design, purposive sample, online interviews, and reliance on analytical generalisation. These limitations mean that the framework should not be interpreted as statistically generalisable to all consultancies or destinations. Future research should replicate the study across multiple countries and consultancy organisations, examine longitudinal student experiences, and test the proposed relationships using comparative, mixed-method, or quantitative designs. Ultimately, international student mobility offers a valuable avenue for further development of visitor economy theory as education, knowledge exchange, cultural interaction, and temporary mobility become increasingly interconnected.

Ethics approval

Not required.

Competing interests

All the authors declare that there are no conflicts of interest.

Funding

This study received no external funding.

Underlying data

Derived data supporting the findings of this study are available from the corresponding author on request.

Declaration of artificial intelligence use

This statement simply clarifies that AI tools like ChatGPT were used solely as writing assistants during the manuscript preparation. The AI helped refine grammar, improve sentence structure, summarize key findings, and organize complex academic content for better readability. It was not used for data collection, data analysis, interpreting results, or drawing scientific conclusions. All AI-suggested text was critically reviewed by the authors, who take full responsibility for the final contents, arguments, and integrity of the publication.

How to cite

Lasker, R. B., & Raffay-Danyi, Ágnes N. (2026). Extending the Visitor Economy Framework to International Student Mobility: Evidence from a Global Student Consultancy in Bangladesh. *Journal of Society Innovation and Development*, 8(1), 464–482. <https://doi.org/10.63924/jsid.v8i1.336>

References

- Albrecht, J. N., & Raymond, E. (2021). National destination pledges: Visitor management through emotional engagement, commitment and interpretation. *Tourism Management Perspectives*, 40, 100894. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tmp.2021.100894>
- Alpek, L. B., Császár, Z. M., Tóth, Á. D., & Czimre, K. (2022). Impacts of the international students' consumption expenditures on the national economy in Hungary, 2020. *Regional Statistics*, 12(4), 176–199. <https://doi.org/10.15196/RS120408>
- Altbach, P. G., & Knight, J. (2007). The internationalization of higher education: Motivations and realities. *Journal of Studies in International Education*, 11(3–4), 290–305. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1028315307303542>
- Beech, S. E. (2019). The geographies of international student mobility: Spaces, places and decision-making. Palgrave Macmillan. <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-13-7442-5>
- Brooks, R., Courtois, A., Faas, D., Jayadeva, S., & Beech, S. (2024). International student mobility within Europe: Responding to contemporary challenges. *Higher Education*, 88(5), 1663–1672. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10734-024-01222-0>
- Collins, F. L. (2012). Organizing student mobility: Education agents and student migration to New Zealand. *Pacific Affairs*, 85(1), 137–160. <https://doi.org/10.5509/2012851137>
- Curtis, T., & Ledgerwood, J. R. (2018). Students' motivations, perceived benefits and constraints towards study abroad and other international education opportunities. *Journal of International Education in Business*, 11(1), 63–78. <https://doi.org/10.1108/JIEB-01-2017-0002>
- Dos Santos, L. M., Lo, H. F., & Kwee, C. T. T. (2024). Australia as the destination for study abroad: International students' mobility. *Heliyon*, 10(23), e39741. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.heliyon.2024.e39741>

- Eletxigerra, A., Barrutia, J. M., & Echebarria, C. (2021). Tourist expertise and pre-travel value co-creation: Task-related processes and beyond. *Tourism Management Perspectives*, 37, 100772. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tmp.2020.100772>
- Feng, S., & Horta, H. (2021). Brokers of international student mobility: The roles and processes of education agents in China. *European Journal of Education*, 56(2), 248–264. <https://doi.org/10.1111/ejed.12442>
- Font, X., English, R., Gkritzali, A., & Tian, W. S. (2021). Value co-creation in sustainable tourism: A service-dominant logic approach. *Tourism Management*, 82, 104200. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tourman.2020.104200>
- Freeman, R. E. (1984). *Strategic management: A stakeholder approach*. Pitman.
- Fyall, A., Garrod, B., & Wang, Y. (Eds.). (2012). *Destination collaboration: A critical review of theoretical approaches to a multi-dimensional phenomenon*. Routledge.
- Gunn, C. A. (1972). *Vacationscape: Designing tourist regions*. Bureau of Business Research, University of Texas at Austin.
- Hall, C. M. (2008). *Tourism planning: Policies, processes and relationships* (2nd ed.). Pearson Education.
- Inouye, K., Lee, S., & Oldac, Y. I. (2023). A systematic review of student agency in international higher education. *Higher Education*, 86(4), 891–911. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10734-022-00952-3>
- Jarvis, J. (2020). ‘Study in Estonia’: The strategic implications of hosting international students on Estonia’s tourism economy. *Journal of Baltic Studies*, 51(2), 261–274. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01629778.2018.1439847>
- Kritz, M. (2015). International student mobility and tertiary education capacity in Africa. *International Migration*, 53(1), 29–49. <https://doi.org/10.1111/imig.12053>
- Leiper, N. (1990). Tourist attraction systems. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 17(3), 367–384. [https://doi.org/10.1016/0160-7383\(90\)90004-B](https://doi.org/10.1016/0160-7383(90)90004-B)
- Luk, S. H. (2024). Education-migration brokers, international student mobilities and digital transformations in pre- and post-pandemic times. *Geography Compass*, 18(1), e12730. <https://doi.org/10.1111/gec3.12730>
- Mason, P. (2015). *Tourism impacts, planning and management* (3rd ed.). Routledge.
- Mendoza-Jiménez, J., García-Rodríguez, F. J., & García-González, C. G. (2026). International student mobility and its impact on destination countries. *Fudan Journal of the Humanities and Social Sciences*, 19, 277–302. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s40647-025-00450-7>
- Moscardo, G. (1996). Mindful visitors: Heritage and tourism. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 23(2), 376–397. [https://doi.org/10.1016/0160-7383\(95\)00068-2](https://doi.org/10.1016/0160-7383(95)00068-2)
- Netz, N., Van Mol, C., Riaño, Y., & Raghuram, P. (2025). The role of place in international student mobility. *Globalisation, Societies and Education*, 23(4), 825–835. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14767724.2024.2414036>
- OECD. (2020). *OECD tourism trends and policies 2020*. OECD Publishing. <https://doi.org/10.1787/6b47b985-en>
- OECD. (2022). *Education at a glance 2022: OECD indicators*. OECD Publishing. <https://doi.org/10.1787/3197152b-en>
- Pereira López, X., Fernández, M., & Carrascal Incera, A. (2016). The economic impact of international students in a regional economy from a tourism perspective. *Tourism Economics*, 22(1), 125–139. <https://doi.org/10.5367/te.2014.0414>
- Pine, B. J., II, & Gilmore, J. H. (1999). *The experience economy: Work is theatre & every business a stage*. Harvard Business School Press.
- Prahalad, C. K., & Ramaswamy, V. (2004). *The future of competition: Co-creating unique value with customers*. Harvard Business School Press.

- Rather, R. A., Hollebeek, L. D., & Rasoolimanesh, S. M. (2022). First-time versus repeat tourism customer engagement, experience, and value cocreation: An empirical investigation. *Journal of Travel Research*, 61(3), 549–564. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0047287521997572>
- Sohaee, N. (2023). Leveraging international student mobility to enhance the competitiveness of developing countries in the global market. In F. A. Yamoah & A. ul Haque (Eds.), *Corporate management ecosystem in emerging economies* (pp. 63–78). Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-41578-4_5
- Tilden, F. (1957). *Interpreting our heritage*. University of North Carolina Press.
- United Nations, & World Tourism Organization. (2010). *International recommendations for tourism statistics 2008*. United Nations.
- Universities UK International. (2023). *International facts and figures 2023*. Universities UK International.
- Vargo, S. L., & Lusch, R. F. (2008). Service-dominant logic: Continuing the evolution. *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, 36(1), 1–10. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11747-007-0069-6>
- Waters, J., & Brooks, R. (2022). Geographies of education at macro-, meso- and micro-scales: Young people and international student mobility. In L. Hammond, M. Biddulph, S. Catling, & J. H. McKendrick (Eds.), *Children, education and geography: Rethinking intersections* (pp. 21–35). Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003248538-4>
- Xu, H., & Miller, T. (2021). International recruitment in Canadian higher education: Factors influencing students' perceptions and experiences with education agents. *Comparative and International Education*, 49(2), 17–34. <https://doi.org/10.5206/cieeci.v50i1.14132>
- Yang, Y., Lomer, S., Lim, M. A., & Mittelmeier, J. (2022). A study of Chinese students' application to UK universities in uncertain times: From the perspective of education agents. *Journal of International Students*, 12(3), 565–586. <https://doi.org/10.32674/jis.v12i3.3777>
- Yin, R. K. (2018). *Case study research and applications: Design and methods* (6th ed.). SAGE Publications.