

The importance of place for international students' choice of university: a Malaysian case-study

Jasvir Kaur Nachatar Singh

La Trobe University, Melbourne, Australia
jnachatarsingh@students.latrobe.edu.au

Jan Schapper

La Trobe University, Melbourne, Australia
j.schapper@latrobe.edu.au

Gavin Jack

La Trobe University, Melbourne, Australia
g.jack@latrobe.edu.au

In this paper we explore the importance of place for international postgraduate students currently enrolled in a Malaysian university. Using place as the analytic focus, the findings from the semi-structured qualitative interviews conducted with thirty-three postgraduate international students indicate that place had a significant role in the choice of destination of the students. Amongst the factors that contributed to the students' decisions to enrol in a Malaysian university was the sense of Malaysia as a safe environment, shared cultural values with the students' own background, the financial benefits derived from low tuition fees and low cost of living, proximity to the students' home country as well as access to culturally important items such as *halal* and other dietary requirements. From this brief case-study, we glean insights into the significance of national attributes in the decisions made by international postgraduate students in their choice of university to study. This insight has important implications for the Malaysian government's strategy of competing in the global market for international students.