



## Indian Students Are Increasingly Struggling To Stand Out

### Description

As part of our quest for more qualitative research about international students' motivations, we visited one of the key student recruitment markets – India. Did we learn something new about the way Indian students select universities abroad? Certainly. Did we confirm some of the stereotypes that already existed? Somewhat.

Let's start with a stereotype that we have found some evidence for...

#### **1. Indian students' parents are actively involved in their educational and career choices.**

Although this is still the case, it would seem the attitude here is shifting. A number of students have told us that their parents will actively and sometimes inevitably give them advice on what to study and which countries/universities to target. What's unclear is just how much influence this actually has on their decisions. When we probed students further on this topic, they would often say that they feel they have to consider their family's views even if they don't always agree or feel they have the most relevant experience to be providing advice on the matter but would then seek advice from elsewhere.

In fact, students from India place a great amount of trust on the expertise of their current and future faculty, as well as current and past students of their target institution. Often, this will have a greater impact on their final decision than their parents' views. As Aniruddha from Mumbai shares:

I'll discuss with the faculty first, and definitely I don't think they will misguide me. And after coming to an agreement with them, I will decide where to apply. But my parents are from [a] different background so I cannot discuss with them.

This indicates that Indian students are becoming more independent in their decision-making and although they still really value personal advice, they are selecting their mentors carefully and will pay close attention to their background and knowledge before taking any of their views as fact.

What we have learnt...

## 2. Indian applicants are looking for better quality of education.

We ran a short survey alongside the focus groups, asking students about the key benefits of studying in an internationally recognized institution. Indian students almost unanimously selected 'Quality of Education' as their main motivation for studying abroad. This differentiates them from students from elsewhere in the world, who often place an equally high emphasis on factors such 'Employment Prospects' and 'Connections':

### Quality of Education

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Through the focus groups, we learnt that there's a number of factors Indian students have in mind when they talk about 'quality education', such as:

- Prominent faculty staff
- Focus on practical applications within programs
- The ability to learn independently

This is a very specific definition, which we felt was mostly specific to Indian applicants. Whilst certain elements are echoed by students from all over the world, this idea of 'independent learning' for

example is linked to a more cultural challenge of having the desired levels of independence in their professional and personal lives.

### **3. The challenge of standing out in a population of 1.26 billion...**

Although 1.26 billion people may sound like a lot, the population of India is projected to grow to 1.69 billion by 2050, overtaking China. In addition to this, over 50% of India's current population are aged under 25, meaning that there are many young people that could be applying to universities and, ultimately, many young people that are already competing for employment and opportunities.

This challenge is real and is pushing a lot of prospective Indian students to look abroad and to think creatively about their personal development. This is a huge opportunity for universities looking to recruit talented young people from abroad, so long as they can demonstrate they have what it takes to help an Indian applicant 'stand out'. Priyank from Delhi shares his concern:

You need to have the kind of education that separates you from the crowd, from millions of people. An international degree will do that. It comes with a huge price.

These are just some of the key findings from the report published by the QS Intelligence Unit: What Matters to International Students: Focus on India. If you would like to get deeper insights into the motivations of Indian students, you can download the full report for free [here](#).