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## Perceptions of International Students in Indian Higher Education Campuses

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## Perceptions of International Students in Indian Higher Education Campuses

### Abstract

The global competition for international students has fuelled the need for education providers to become more consumer oriented in their planning. Our purpose with this study was to understand international student perceptions and discuss corresponding approaches. In this qualitative study we interviewed twenty international students enrolled in two Indian universities to examine: one, their feelings about being an international student in India and two, what attracted them to India as a higher education destination. Our findings suggest that, the people on campus and in the host city are vital to delivering experiences. We identified “quality of education,” “cultural diversity” and the “rapidly growing economy” as the most noteworthy among several factors that have motivated the selection of India as a host country. We discuss the findings through different conceptual lenses and implications for managers have been presented. This research acts as market intelligence input to the Indian HE policy makers and university leaders.

### Keywords

International Students, Indian Higher Education, Feelings, Motivations, Qualitative Study

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## Perceptions of International Students in Indian Higher Education Campuses

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The global enrolment of international students is at an all-time high. In 2017, more than 5.3 million higher education students chose to study overseas (UNESCO, 2019a). Traditionally, the flow of international students has been from the developing countries to the developed and English-speaking countries. In the recent decades however, new education destinations have emerged (Choudaha, 2017; Nachatar Singh, Schapper, & Jack, 2014; Verbik, 2007) and additional student flow directions have developed (Varghese, 2008; Ziguras & McBurnie, 2011). The international student market scenario is that of increasing dynamism and intense competition amongst host countries to attract overseas students. The global marketization (Marginson & van der Wende, 2007) of the education sector and its increasing economic impact on the global economy has garnered a lot of research interest. There have been a number of empirical studies that have examined the destination choice decision making of international students and other consumer behaviour aspects (Binsardi & Ekwulugo, 2003; Chen, 2008; Pimpa, 2005; Shanka, Quintal, & Taylor, 2006). Some of the researchers in this field have also focused their study on the very interesting topic of the international marketing of higher education (Binsardi & Ekwulugo, 2003; Moogan, 2011; Russell, 2005).

International students now have a wider range of education destinations to choose from (Wilkins & Huisman, 2011). Knowing the feelings and motivations (Exposito, 2015; Heng, 2017; Maringe & Carter, 2007; Mazzarol & Soutar, 2002) of overseas students would enable informed discussions on how international education providers can better support international students. This is the base of this study. The study thus seeks to answer the following research questions:

- What are the feelings of international students enrolled in Indian campuses?
- What attracts international students to India?

Empirical studies that work towards developing a better understanding of overseas students are crucial for host institutions and countries to make informed strategy decisions. Responding to this need, a number of such studies have been published. However, most of these have been in developed host country settings. Qualitative studies on the perceptions of international students in Indian higher education have been rare. With internationalisation and inbound mobility of foreign students becoming a top priority for Indian policy makers, it is time that this research gap is addressed. Through this study the researchers contribute to bridging the research gap and create relevant knowledge. Using a qualitative methodology, international students were asked about first, their feelings on being international students in India and second, about what attracted them to Indian HE (their motivations to enrol into Indian campuses). The study uses three conceptual frameworks to discuss the findings of this study and their respective strategy implications. The first concept is that of “negative and positive” consumer feelings, where feeling words have been grouped based on their denotations; the second concept is the “push-pull” dynamics of motivation variables that explain international student mobility and; the third concept is that of “rational and emotional” consumer motives. This study gains important global relevance because of the commonality of the international student source countries that contribute to the overseas student inflow to multiple host countries. To support the apt comprehension of student responses, extensive literature on this topic was read.

The structure of the paper is as follows: The next (second) section gives an overview of international student inflow trends in Indian HE, the third section presents the conceptual frameworks of: “positive and negative” consumer feelings, the “push-pull motivational framework structure of international student mobility and the conceptual framework of “rational and emotional” consumer motivations. The fourth section talks about the research methods adopted for this study. The fifth section states the findings of the study. The last two sections contain, first the discussions on the implications of findings followed by a presentation of the conclusions of the study.

### **India Inflow Trends and Regional Dynamics**

India is the second largest source country of international students but has an inbound mobility rate of only 0.1% (UNESCO, 2019b). Five South Asian countries contributed to about 44% of the total student inflow of nearly 46,000 overseas students in Indian HE, a few Middle Eastern and African countries were the other noticeable source areas (UNESCO, 2019b). The representation of international students from the other continents of the world has traditionally been small and the inbound numbers continue to be miniscule. The inbound student flow pattern indicates that the nature of international student mobility in Indian HE is more regional than international where students from the peripheral countries travel to what might be termed as a regional education destination. An analysis of UNESCO (2019a) cross-border student mobility numbers tell us that mobile students from India’s top three source countries, namely, Nepal, Afghanistan and Bhutan also travel to established and leading destination countries (Australia and US) in significant percentages. This further signifies the complex and challenging nature of the international student market, particularly for an emerging and regional education destination (India).

## **Conceptual Framework**

The first conceptual lens we used to discuss findings and implications was that of “consumer feelings” toward an object, brand or service. Consumer researchers using qualitative research forms often probe respondents to understand feelings that drive consumer behaviour. These feelings could be highly involving and wide ranging (Schiffman, Kanuk, & Hansen, 2008). In the context of consumer behaviour, consumption related emotions have been studied very regularly (Richins, 1997). Feeling “words” can be grouped into distinct positive and negative emotion categories (Shaver, Schwartz, Kirson, & O'Connor, 1987). Consumer feelings are considered to be evaluative in nature and indicate favourable and unfavourable consumer attitude. We utilised the “positive” and “negative” consumer feelings toward a service as a framework to identify positive affirmations and concerns of international students, whereby, designs to deliver enhanced experiences to international students can be planned.

The second conceptual lens we used to discuss findings and their implications is that of the “push–pull” motivations framework that influences cross-border student mobility (Maringe & Carter 2007; Mazzarol & Souter, 2002). The push factors encourage students to leave the home country for their higher education needs and are associated to the creation of interest in acquiring overseas education. Push factors have been said to be linked to the political environment, economy and the education capacities of the home country (Maringe & Carter 2007). Pull factors on the other hand are a set of controllable factors where, the host (country and institution) can create and build upon elements that might attract international students. These factors are the perceived attractive elements of the host country. The country-level pull factors include: the economic and political environment, scholarships, knowledge of the host county, higher recognition of education, social influence, employability, culture, language and immigration (Mazzarol & Souter, 2002; McMahan, 1992). The institution level pull factors include: university reputation, advanced research facilities, large number of international students at the campus, range of courses offered, teacher quality and marketing efforts (Mazzarol, 1998). In this study, the researchers have examined the perceived attractive elements (pull factors) of Indian HE as market intelligence to deliver greater satisfaction to overseas students.

The third conceptual lens we used to discuss findings and implications is that of “rational and emotional” motives that influence consumer decision making. Objective criteria such as price and other technicalities fall under rational motives (Schiffman, Kanuk, & Hansen, 2008). Within the international HE domain, the factors of standard of education, employment opportunities costs of availing overseas education (Binsardi & Ekwulugo, 2003), and geographical proximity (Shanka, Quintal, & Taylor, 2005) are objective and comparative in nature. These hence are examples of factors that fall under the rational perspective. Under the emotional motivations perspective on the other hand, consumers use the subjective criteria of expressions and emotions such as affection or fear (Schiffman, Kanuk, & Hansen, 2008). Within the international HE domain, the factors of influence of family and friends (Pimpa, 2003; Morrish & Lee, 2011), culture (Cubillo, Sanchez, & Cervino, 2006) and personal sensibilities are subjective and hence can be categorized as examples of emotional motivation factors. The authors have used this understanding of rational and emotional motives to determine meaningful and effective communication strategies for the host institution and country to employ.

## **Method of Enquiry and Analysis**

In this study we adopted a qualitative research method. This method permitted the researchers to know the world from the perspective of the respondents and in their specific

settings (Hatch, 2002). A platform was thus created to discover variables that might be host country specific. Standardized open ended interview questions were used to allow the respondents to open-up about their views (Turner III, 2010). The questions started with the word “what” and “how” to initiate expansive responses (Chenail, 2011). While this method allowed the gathering of thick and rich qualitative data, gaining an inclusive viewpoint on the narrative responses asked for application and effort from the researchers (Turner III, 2010).

## Participants

This research was conducted with twenty international students enrolled in various institutional campuses of two Indian universities. A purposive sampling technique was adopted to locate international students who satisfied the criteria of a typical international student: foreign nationality and enrolled in a full-time tertiary level study program. Additionally, the intention was to include students from several countries. As the researchers did not seek generalizability, the focus was less on sample size and more on sample adequacy (Bowen, 2008). The adequacy of sample size was determined by the realization of thematic saturation (Guest, Bunce, & Johnson, 2006). Nepal and Afghanistan, the two Asian countries that contribute to the highest number of international students were most strongly represented. This composition of the sample set is an approximate reflection of the major source continents. Asia dominates the contribution percentage and followed by representation from Africa. Most of the students are from the under-graduate courses and from the business management stream. Table 1 provides an overview of participant demographics.

Table 1  
*Profile of the respondents*

<b>Student Code</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>Gender</b>	<b>Country</b>	<b>Program Stream</b>	<b>University</b>
<b>ST01</b>	24	Male	Yemen	Business, (UG)	A
<b>ST02</b>	21	Male	Afghanistan	Business, (UG)	A
<b>ST03</b>	24	Male	Afghanistan	Business, (UG)	A
<b>ST04</b>	24	Male	Afghanistan	Business, (UG)	A
<b>ST05</b>	24	Male	Afghanistan	Business, (UG)	A
<b>ST06</b>	21	Male	Afghanistan	Business, (UG)	A
<b>ST07</b>	23	Male	Turkmenistan	Business, (UG)	A
<b>ST08</b>	24	Male	Korea	Business, (UG)	A
<b>ST09</b>	21	Male	Afghanistan	Business, (UG)	A
<b>ST10</b>	24	Male	Nepal	Business, (UG)	A
<b>ST11</b>	23	Male	Nepal	Business, (UG)	A

<b>ST12</b>	19	Male	Uganda	Business, (UG)	B
<b>ST13</b>	21	Male	Uganda	Business, (UG)	B
<b>ST14</b>	25	Male	Uganda	Business, (PG)	B
<b>ST15</b>	20	Female	Nepal	Business, (UG)	B
<b>ST16</b>	22	Male	Mozambique	Business, (UG)	B
<b>ST17</b>	22	Male	Nepal	Business, (UG)	B
<b>ST18</b>	24	Male	Uganda	Arts (PG)	B
<b>ST19</b>	26	Male	Kenya	Arts (UG)	B
<b>ST20</b>	24	Male	Nepal	Arts (PG)	B

Note: A code was assigned to each of the respondent, the names though disclosed by the participates during the interview, have been kept confidential. The two universities are denoted as A and B respectively. UG: undergraduate 3 full-time year program, PG: post-graduate 2 full-time year program.

### Data Collection

The researchers conducted the interviews in the English language and face to face. This arrangement was sought to match the interviewers and the respondents' comprehension and communication needs. Most of the interviews were conducted within the university campus, in a few other instances, the interviews were held at places near the campuses. Only participants that would openly and honestly share "their stories" were sought (Creswell, 2007, p. 243). Having an international student as a co-researcher facilitated the identification of willing respondents, additionally, this helped in building a stronger rapport with the respondents. Respondents were briefed about the objectives of the study, the confidentiality of the responses and the use of the information solely for academic purposes. Participants were requested for their permission to make audio recordings.

Respondents were asked similar questions during the interview, the strategy employed was to let the respondent speak as much as possible about the topic with as little prompting as possible. The questions though open ended focused on the two specific research questions of this study, the actual interview time was not large. The responses produced in these settings were of a rich text and sufficient data was derived to achieve the objectives of study. The non-verbal communication of the respondents indicated a probable appreciation of the research agenda. Favourable body language of the participants also hinted that the interview was being conducted in an environment that was conducive to the sharing of information.

### Content Analysis

The interviews were recorded in audio, were written out and examined. The transcripts were read line by line but the analysis focused on identifying meaningful whole units (Chenail, 2012). The data was examined in-depth by each of three researchers individually, the status of the analysis was then compared and discussed.

The processes of analysing the content had a few steps to it (Lieblich, Tuval-Mashiach, & Zilber, 1998):

- 1) The identification of the relevant sections was guided by the research questions.
- 2) Perspectives across the relevant data were used to create classifications (units were derived from words, an individual sentence or sentences). Independently judging and categorizing the content by the researchers allowed reliability, subsequent joint discussions created higher understanding (Lieblich et al., 1998).
- 3) Each classification was counted, tabulated and ordered by frequency. Later, a list of themes was prepared and ordered coherently.
- 4) Subsequently, the final themes were hosted under a broader coherent structure.

The word-based techniques of constant comparative method and key-words-in-context (KWIC) were put into practice to discover themes in the text. Resemblances, differences and repetitions were identified, the transformation of initial notes into themes continued throughout the transcript. Constant comparative method (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) was used to identify themes as the text was verbatim and had a rich text. The KWIC technique was considered significant as it ascertained the relevance and value of the words by understanding the context. The keywords were chosen through a reading of previous research on the topic of international student destination choice. The techniques were put in use by eyeballing the transcripts rather than using a computer software. A manual check was preferred over use of software in consideration of the size of the transcripts not being extensive and the researchers' knowledge on the topic.

### **Quality Control**

As qualitative investigators, what stories are told and how they are conveyed to us, the descriptions that we form and the way we communicate to others is based upon our role and experience in relation to our participant and the setting (Greene, 2014). The researchers applied self-reflection based on their respective roles as faculty and an overseas student and their domain knowledge. The participation of all the three investigators in the data analysis procedure strengthened the reliability of the findings. This said, they "set aside" their biases gained through their knowledge of the phenomenon (Hein & Austin, 2001, p. 5) and mostly true in the case of a study of one's own society (Greene, 2014). Validity and reliability was also ensured through the use of techniques that included having a single interviewer for all the interviews and a careful thought on the questions and probes. The accuracy of data was ascertained by crosschecking the obtained data within the team of researchers. To ensure confidentiality of information, the interviews were transcribed in a private setting, the transcriptions containing data are accessible only to the researchers. The regular discussions between the researchers during the data analysis phase involved comparing, questioning and probing of insights, thus enabling the trustworthiness of their findings.

### **Results**

In the following section, the researchers present the findings of this study under two categorizations: one, the post enrolment affective outlook of the overseas students and two, the factors that attracted these international students to Indian HE. The categorizations are synchronous with the research questions of this study. To present the results, the respective theme has first been defined followed by the provision of evidence and the stating of analytical comments. When presenting quotes from the interview transcripts, the authors have not included names or assumed titles.



## **Post-Enrolment Feelings of Overseas Students**

Two major themes were identified through the analysis of transcripts. One, an “affirmative post-enrolment outlook” towards Indian HE and two, “people” as the key determinants to creating experiences.

### **Theme 1: An Affirmative Post-Enrolment Outlook Towards Indian HE**

The authors found that most of the respondents conveyed affirmative feelings about being an international student in an Indian education campus. Affirmative feelings signify a favourable post-enrolment outlook towards the service provider. Positive feelings have been conveyed through expressive words like, “feeling good,” “it feels nice,” “better” and “happy.” A respondent explained his feelings about being an overseas student in India as, “of course I feel happy. Maybe, I am blessed to be here because many of them in my country, they want an opportunity to come this side but they don’t have it.” This response denotes the different “push-pull” dynamics that play a role in higher education students becoming mobile across international borders.

The reasons for affirmative feelings conveyed by the students include the quality of education on offer. This has been expressed through statements such as: “studying here is very good” and it’s a “good exposure,” for business students. A number of enablers have contributed to the positive outlook towards Indian HE. The various enablers for the affirmative feelings have been very well expressed by a student through this statement: “I feel better because the education system is better, also it is a safe country ... we can improve our language ability (English), also its good because lots of cultures are there.” The positive outcome of enrolling in an Indian HE is apparent through the analysis of transcripts. The following response of a student evidences this: “There is improvement in everything, my lifestyle, my study, everything is comfortable.” These findings convey satisfaction about being a consumer of overseas higher education, a critical aspect for a higher education service provider operating in a competitive market.

### **Theme 2: “People” Interactions as the Key Determinant to Creating Experiences**

The narratives say that interactions of international students with “people” (in the country, city and institution) are key to creating experiences and feelings. The following statement by a respondent evidenced this: “... people here are talkative ... they give you perfect vibes, positive vibes ... I feel very good in this college.” A student said: “actually the people are so good, they attracted me to stay here.” When asked to explain the term “good people” he added that this means “they are very friendly and like polite also.” In another instance, a respondent recollected instances of some people outside the campus being a “a bit rude to me” on occasions when he first came to the country. Enhanced post enrolment affective outlooks for overseas students should thus be created by designing “people” interactions that consist of appreciation for choosing India as a study destination.

## **Factors That Have Attracted International Students to India**

The main question of this research is about what attracts international students to India. Based on the analysis of interview transcripts, the researchers found that there are four major themes that the students consider as the major attractions of Indian HE. The themes that emerged from the interview transcripts are: (1) The quality of higher education on offer. (2)

Indian culture and cultural diversity. (3) Growth of Indian economy. (4) Affordable cost of education.

### **Theme 1: The Quality of Higher Education on Offer**

Most notably, overseas students enrolled in Indian campuses strongly believe that the standard of education in India is good and this is what has attracted them to India. This is evidenced by the quotes by students such as: “education system is better” and “quality of education is very good compared to any other country.” Another respondent said “firstly the variety of choice of courses, there are a lot of courses ... and colleges are ranked at the international level...” English as a medium of formal communication is also considered as an advantage of Indian HE.

The quality of education available in the “home country” and “other countries” are the points of reference to express the good quality of education here in India as was said by a student:

Education system in the country is quite different from where I come from and that also encouraged me to come because I expected more than we are getting in my country and when I combine all these factors it brings me to a point you know coming to India was not a second thought to me it was the first thought.

The “push-pull” variable is evident in these findings where Indian education is regarded to be better than the education capacity at home. These dynamics play a major role in the transnational mobility of students.

### **Theme 2: Indian Culture and Cultural Diversity**

The analysis of the transcript finds the culture and cultural diversity of India as an attractive factor. Interestingly, the matching of the Indian culture with their own as well as being different were stated as attractive elements. The following expression captures the general view about the cultural diversity in the country and its significance to international students:

I came here because India has diversity of cultures and many languages, so trying to learn from different people, dealing and handling different people, different background and cultures enable you to handle different customers from all over the globe. It has a big population, again we learn to deal with different people because we are not sure of which kind of people going to be dealing with while conducting business, but because there are very many people here, it enables you to learn different cultures and how we can deal with different people in society all over the globe.

Students related the presence of international students on college campuses to different cultures coming together and it being an important aspect of learning and becoming “globally ready” as is reflected in the following statement:

Here you meet people from all over the world. Korean people mainly, Nepal, people from Nepal and I also think studying in India is more in fact you learn how to live your life properly... I believe if you can live in India for four to five years you can live properly in any other country.

The diversity of the Indian culture appeals to international students and this feature is unique to India and should be leveraged to attract a greater number of overseas students.

### **Theme 3: Growth of the Indian Economy**

The business sector in India and the growth in the Indian economy have been rated as attractive elements. A student perceived that the “business sector of India is growing very fast.” Respondents believed that the “information technology” and “medical sectors” were doing well in India. One student expressed that the Indian business environment rather interestingly: “I am Korean and there are a lot of Korean companies coming to India and I think India has a lot of opportunities ...” The fact that most of the respondents are from the “business management” stream would have had an impact on this theme being recognized as one of the most important.

### **Theme 4: Affordable Cost of Education**

Indian education being affordable has been found to be an attractive feature. The students perceive the expenses associated with studying in India to be “cheaper than other foreign countries.” A student mentioned that India was attractive because: “... cost in India compared to the cost in .... the nearest English country from Mozambique is like 200 times less.” This perception of higher education in India being less expensive than in other countries can work well toward attracting students from the developing countries of Asia and Africa.

The other attractive factors of Indian HE that the study discovers include: the people in the host city and the host city itself, India’s good relations with some of the respective home countries, geographical proximity, the presence of international students on campus, the influence of friends and family and interestingly, the image of India created by Indian movies.

## **Discussion**

This was an exploratory study based on a sample of international students enrolled in two Indian universities. While the findings generally support what is already known about student motivations, this study provides sufficient data to enable the development of a tentative mapping of international student perceptions. Significantly, the findings of this study function as an intelligence input for Indian policy makers to build strategies on how enhanced experiences and superior consumer satisfaction can be delivered to overseas students. Following the pattern of the paper, the discussion presented in the following sections has been categorised under three parts: the first part views the study findings on international student experiences through the “positive and negative” consumer feelings framework and discusses how enhanced experiences can be delivered to foreign students. The second part, views the study findings on international student motivations through the “push and pull” factors framework and discusses how better satisfaction can be delivered to overseas students. The third part views the study findings on international student motivations through the “rational-emotional” consumer motives framework and discusses an approach to employ a meaningful marketing communication with the target student audience.

### **Delivering Enhanced International Student Experiences**

Positive and negative feelings have been known to create a favourable or unfavourable attitude toward an object or brand. Emotions have also been associated with consumption of products and need to be examined to deliver experiences (Holbrook & Hirschman, 1982). This study indicates that positive and negative feelings are majorly created through the interactions

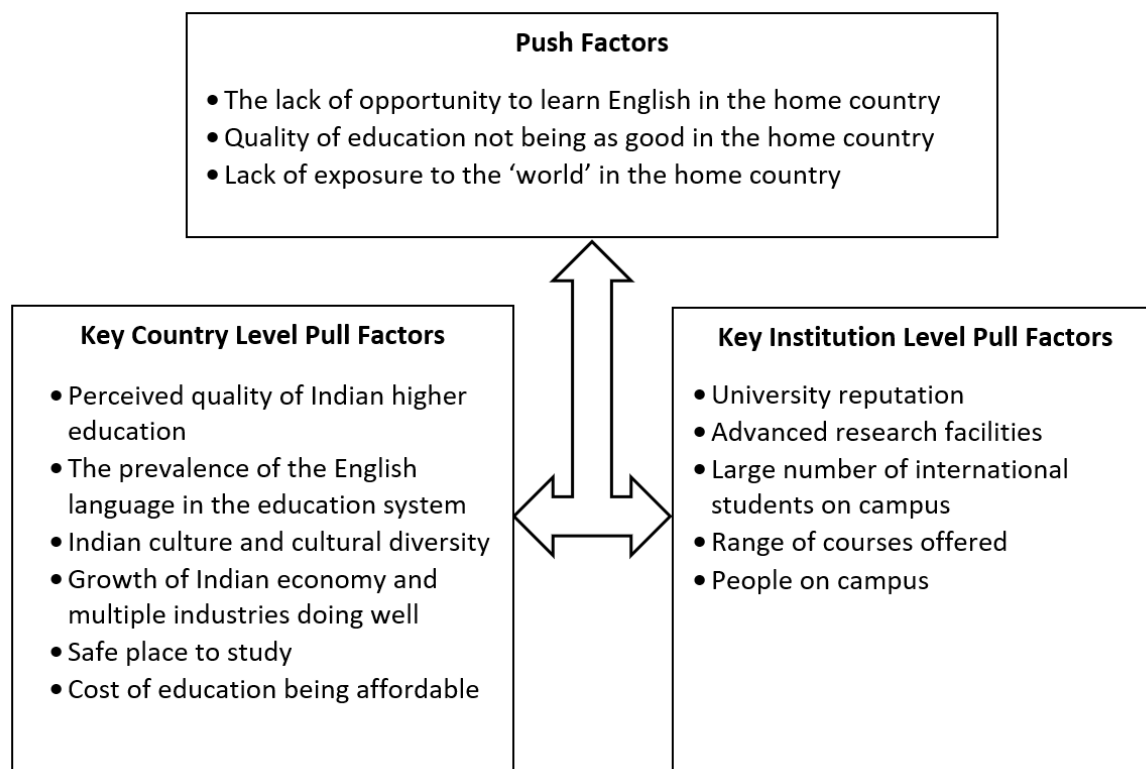
that the international students have with “people” on and outside the institution campus. The “people” element as a means of creating and delivering experiences can be a key tool to building a favourable attitude towards Indian HE. It may be considered that international students are apprehensive to start conversations, probably because of the new surroundings in the host country. The people, constituting mainly of teachers, fellow domestic students and host city populations becoming proactive in welcoming and communicating with international students would be vital to creating and delivering affirmative consumption experiences. Preparing the academic faculty and students to engage with overseas students is recommended as a best practice for aspiring host institutions and countries (Arthur, 2017). Similarly, and importantly, host city and host country populations also need to be “prepared” to engage a diverse and international student population.

### Delivering Satisfaction on the Perceived Motivation Factors

The key idea underlying the need to investigate the elements that attract international students to India is to identify the “pull factors” that have influenced their destination choice. Understanding perceptions of international students is vital as perception of education services impact the level of satisfaction (Arambewela & Hall, 2009). The level of consumer satisfaction on the education services on offer would majorly depend upon how the university has performed in terms of delivering value on the ascertained pull motivation factors. The findings suggest that the international students’ decision to select India as an overseas study destination has been governed by multiple and varied push and pull motivational forces, the pull factors relate to institution as well as country. The forces thus identified have been explained in Figure 1.

**Figure 1**

Country and Institution Level Pull Factors for International Students in Indian Campuses



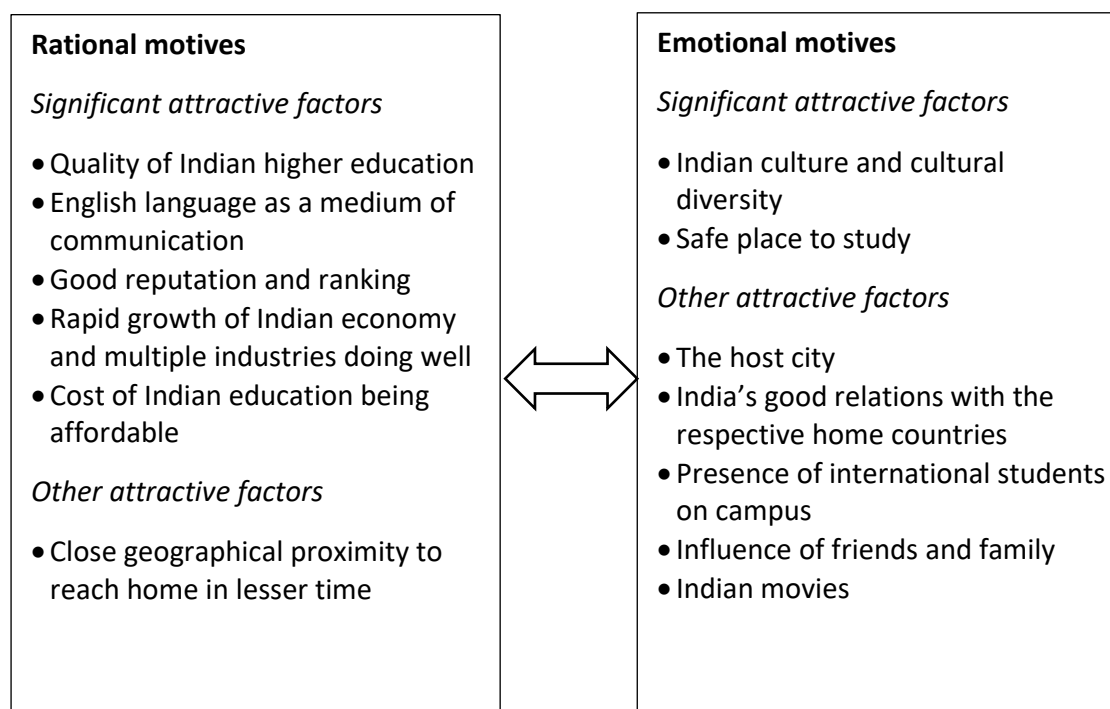
This study finds quality, reputation of institution, cost, culture, an English speaking environment to be the standard pull elements. These findings are largely in tune with what researchers have identified as elements that attract overseas students in other host country settings (Maringe & Carter 2007; Pimpa 2005; Wilkins, Balakrishnan, & Huisman 2012). Interestingly, the factors of cultural diversity in India and Indian movies being discovered as pull elements are specific to Indian HE and can have significant strategic implications. Satisfaction with services is determined by customers' expectations. Diminishing the deference between pull factor perceptions as listed above and what the international students actually experience is the key to improving the level of customer satisfaction.

### Understanding Consumer Motives to Determine Meaningful Marketing Communication

Consumers respond favourably to marketing communications that have rational and emotional appeals. Message content with rational appeals relate to the target consumers interest areas by displaying product benefits, whereas, emotional appeals attempt to stir up emotions that can motivate buying (Kotler & Armstrong, 2011). Host countries and universities can hence plan an effective marketing communication if it corresponds to the respective categories of utilitarian and emotional motives. Figure 2 lists the destination choice motives of international students based on the two categorizations.

Figure 2

Rational and Emotional Motives of International Students in Indian Campuses



The consumer motivations determined in this study are driven by rational factors such as quality, cost, learnings opportunities and proximity of home country. The utilitarian motives suggest that product benefits are perceived by the student to be highly useful and decision making is outcome based. This study finds culture and several other feelings as constituents of the emotional rationale. It is also to be considered that international higher education as a service industry and experiential in nature, hence the emotional appeal perspective is

significant. The findings suggest that the international student consumer set would absorb both types of appeals, a marketing communication consisting of a combination of rational and emotional motives is hence recommended.

### Conclusion

Countries and universities cannot simply admit overseas students without proper support and planning. Understanding the perceptions of international students towards Indian HE and knowing what attracts them to Indian HE would help recognize and align the variables that influence decision making. It is through such understanding that countries and universities begin to respond appropriately to the needs of consumers and become a responsible higher education destination country. The findings on attractive elements have implications on delivering support, satisfaction and employing an effective marketing communication. The authors have not come across a qualitative study on the perceptions of international students in Indian HE, the study hence presents new knowledge in this field. This study however has specific limitations. The findings from this qualitative study are indicative but are not to be generalized as the participant number is not large, also, since the international students were of different nationalities their perspectives might differ. Some of the findings of this study might relate to similar host country settings and contexts, however, receiving countries and universities need to study and determine the experiences and motivations of their respective set of international students. The interviews were conducted in English, this is not the first language of the researchers or of the respondents and might be considered as a limitation. More research needs to be done on international students with specific demographic backgrounds. While some research findings can be transferred to similar contexts, providers need to distinguish the specific needs of international students. Constant progress in international student support is vital.

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