

Internationalization of the university; identifying factors related to university selection by international students; Subject of study: University of Tehran

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ABSTRACT

This research was conducted with the aim of identifying the factors related to university selection by international students of Tehran University. The current research was carried out in the framework of qualitative approach and phenomenological method. The participants in the research included international students of Tehran University, who were interviewed with 12 people using the purposeful sampling method and based on the principle of theoretical saturation. Data were collected using semi-structured in-depth interviews. Validity of qualitative data using Lincoln and Guba's (1985) four judgment criteria including; Validity or believability, transferability/transferability, confirmability or neutrality and reliability or consistency and reliability of qualitative data were confirmed by recoding by the second coder and the coder himself. Data analysis has been done using the seven-step Claizi method. Based on the results of data analysis, 76 concepts, 13 sub-components and 2 main components have been identified. The findings of the research showed that the factors related to university selection by international students fall into two general categories of internal factors including; Individual development, demographic characteristics and social base of the family, feeling of peace in Iran, Iran's ancient history and external factors including; The scientific authority of the University of Tehran at the national and regional level, cultural and social conditions, language-to-language information and advertising, regional security, exchange and sharing of information in the electronic environment, the reputation of the University of Tehran, the ease of commuting for students from neighboring countries, the economic benefits of education. They are divided in relation to other countries and the interactions of countries in political fields and international relations. According to the findings of this research, it can be concluded that: The choice of university by international students is related to a set of internal and external factors, the set of components related to the choice of university is unique for each student, the external factors are more related to the choice of university by international students than the internal factors, the component of social conditions - Culture has been

emphasized by students more than other components, and among the concepts, field of study, language and friends have been emphasized more.

Keywords: *university selection, international students, Tehran University, related factors, internationalization.*

Introduction

This study aims to identify the factors influencing international students' decision-making in selecting the University of Tehran.

Methodology

The research follows a qualitative methodology and employs a descriptive phenomenological approach. Purposeful sampling was conducted among international students, and data were collected through 12 semi-structured interviews.

Findings

The factors influencing university selection were categorized into two main groups:

1. Internal Factors:

These factors are mostly related to students' personal characteristics and individual preferences:

Personal Development: Many students cited gaining new skills, scientific and professional advancement as their main goals.

Demographic Characteristics and Family Social Background: Gender, marital status, and family environment were significant factors in students' decisions.

Sense of Comfort in Iran: Psychological and social security in Iran were key reasons for choosing this country as a study destination.

Iran's Ancient Heritage: The cultural, historical, and civilizational attractions of Iran were effective factors in students' decision-making.

2. External Factors:

These factors pertain to the external environment and include:

Scientific Prestige of the University of Tehran: The academic reputation, quality of education, presence of distinguished faculty, and high ranking of the university were key factors in attracting students.

Cultural and Social Conditions: Cultural, linguistic, and religious proximity to Iran, as well as the sense of empathy from the Iranian society, played a major role in the selection process.

Word-of-Mouth Information and Advertising: Positive experiences of former students, recommendations from friends and family, and informal advertising had a significant impact.

Regional Security: Compared to other countries, Iran offers better security for students.

Reputation of the University of Tehran: The international recognition of the university and its large population of domestic and international students were influential.

Ease of Travel: Geographic proximity to students' home countries and the ease of obtaining visas were other significant reasons.

Economic Benefits: Lower tuition fees and living costs compared to other countries were important advantages for international students.

Political Interactions and International Relations: Diplomatic relations and political cooperation between Iran and some of the students' home countries facilitated student recruitment.

Conclusion

The study indicates that international students' decision-making in choosing a university is influenced by a complex interaction of internal and external factors. External factors, such as cultural-social conditions and the scientific prestige of the university, play a more prominent role than internal factors. Additionally, economic and security factors are of high importance.

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