

French Influence and the Willingness of Indians to Study in France

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Abstract: *The research undertaken serves a purpose. This report will be talking about the students; who are the samples for this study. The students met ranged from 20s to early 30s. And there were a few people who ranged from mid 30s to early 40s, who are willing to continue their higher education. These students are planning to do their higher education in France. France has acquired the 5th position when it comes to study destinations. This report deals with question as to why students end up going to France. What factors drive them to choose France as a study destination? While this research was being undertaken, I had encountered over 190 students from different parts of India. Most students came up with similar reasons and some had reasons which have never been highlighted when one talks about France as a study destination. This shows that the students were aware and did a thorough research before choosing France. Many students went for exchange programs; however there were a big number of people who went for full time programs. It was interesting enough to see that most people encountered were choosing France, for not only its rich culture or heritage but completely due to the opportunities and research facilities. Most students go on internships to labs present in France, to broaden their knowledge about the research opportunities. Exchange programs provide students to understand the importance of studying in a different country and in a complete different environment. These exchanges would help the students to build their personality and give them confidence, if they ever plan to study abroad. France is the best place to do this. As this is the most student-friendly country and have known to be very diverse. For this research, the sample size was 208 students. All these students were interviewed on individual basis. Each student was asked few questions and based on that the results were established.*

Keywords: Education, Higher Education, French Influence, France

1. Introduction

France has been one of the leading countries in the world to attract international students. France ranked 5th in the world for education (US News, 2016). France has over 289,000 international students as of 2014/15 (Campus France). France is known to be very diverse as it receives students from every corner of the world. The reason that most students give for France being their study destination as it has been seen and perceived as more friendlier and more welcoming than most countries. United Kingdom ranks 1st in the world, in terms of education (US News, 2016). France, however have several competitors and has tough competition; Germany and Canada are equally fighting with France in terms of international intakes each year. Most students prefer Germany and France after the United Kingdom.

France maintains a very good relationship with India and due to this Indians get several opportunities when it comes to studying or living in France. According to several sources they agree that Indian profiles are one of the best and strong profiles due to the education system in India trains every individual very nicely. So, it is always an advantage for Indians to be selected into the French institution however, this also means that the competition is high and every year it gets tougher. So students have to showcase themselves and live up to the expectations.

There have been very limited amount of studies that I have come across which talks about as to why students prefer to study abroad and particularly in France. Most students came across, have the want to go to UK. And hence, it is one of the reasons as why UK is on top the list. UK is known for their education system and prestigious universities. From the recent interactions with students it was seen that most of them would however like to be in France or Germany as it

has been offering good courses to them. Further studies have shown that Germany had the biggest student intake. In 2013-2014 about 10000 students went to Germany from India and since then the number has increased. Germany states that it gets the biggest number of students from China. China sends in at least 30000 students.

Germany has tried in the last few years to make relations with India better through the bilateral trade. It was also said that some schools would offer German as a third language in some schools. These steps are taken forward to strengthen the relation that the two countries possess. France also has tried to strengthen the relation by bilateral trade and other means. If we have to focus only on the education sector of France, we can say that it is doing well and there is a possibility that soon France, may take over the No.1 slot from UK. Going through recent statistics it has been seen that Germany and Australia are turning out to be a big competition for France.

If we talk about Germany, the statistics show that the enrolment of students in Germany is way more than France. The below tables shows where Germany, usually recruits students from and which areas of study get more students.

Table 1: Total International Student Enrollment: 301,350

International Students' Enrollments	Number of Students	Percent of Total
Public Institutions	287,658	95.5%
Private Institutions	13,692	4.5%
Total Enrollments	301,350	

Table 2: Top 10 Sending Places of Origin and Percentage of Total International Student Enrollment 2013/2014:

Rank	Place of Origin	Number of Students	Percent of Total
1	Turkey	33,004	11.0%
2	China	30,511	10.1%
3	Russia	14,525	4.8%
4	Austria	11,235	3.7%
5	Italy	10,156	3.4%
6	India	9,495	3.2%
7	Ukraine	9,100	3.0%
8	Poland	8,665	2.9%
9	France	6,558	2.2%
10	Bulgaria	7,117	2.4%

Table 3: Total Number of International Students From All Places of Origin by Field of Study, 2013/2014

Rank	Field of Study	Number of Students	Percent of Total
2	Engineering	71,352	23.7%
1	Business and Management	52,168	17.3%
9	Humanities	37,619	12.5%
5	Mathematics and Computer Sciences	29,748	9.9%
6	Fine and Applied Arts	24,412	8.1%
4	Social Sciences	22,504	7.5%
3	Physical and Life Sciences	22,475	7.5%
	Other/Unspecified Subject Areas	16,536	5.5%
7	Health Professions	14,458	4.8%
8	Education	5,212	1.7%
10	Agriculture	4,866	1.6%

(Timeframe for reported data: October 2013 to March 2014.
Source: The German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD))

However, on further interaction with students it was seen that most students wanted to go to Germany for their Engineering programs, Management and other technical programs. The reason being; Germany was providing them with good labs to test their research and providing them better facilities.

Australia and Canada are also upcoming in terms of education. They are providing good opportunities for students which are making them choose Australia and Canada. Unlike UK and the USA; France, Australia, Canada and Germany were more cost effective. The living expense was more affordable for people.

There are many reasons as to why one may choose France. During this project I encountered almost 200 students and every person had a different answer. This made this project far more interesting. According to statistics, the total number of enrolment was 298,092 in 2014/15 (Campus France). Below there is a presentation as to from where most students have been recruited from and which field have most students enrolling themselves in?

Table 4: Total international student enrollment: 298,092

Academic Level	Number of Students	Percent of Total
Undergraduate Degree/Qualification International Students	98,107	32.82%
Undergraduate Study Abroad/Non-award study International Students	95,157	31.84%
(Post-)Graduate Degree/Qualification International Students	25,179	8.42%
All International Students (excluding offshore enrollments)	298,902	

Table 5: Top 10 sending places of origin and percentage of total international student enrollment

Rank	Place of Origin	Number of Students	Percent of Total
1	Morocco	35,199	11.8%
2	China	29,709	10.0%
3	Algeria	21,279	7.1%
4	Tunisia	11,573	3.9%
5	Italy	10,353	3.5%
6	Senegal	8,800	3.0%
7	Germany	8,790	2.9%
8	Cameroon	6,978	2.3%
9	Spain	6,667	2.2%
10	Vietnam	5,863	2.0%

Table 6: Total number of international students from all places of origin by field of study

Rank	Field of Study	Number of Students	Percent of Total
1	Humanities & Literature	69,514	23.32%
2	Mathematics and Computer Sciences	61,725	20.71%
3	Economics, Sciences & Social Sciences	44,256	14.85%
4	Other/Unspecified Subject Areas	32,635	10.95%
5	Law & Political science	25,964	8.71%
6	Business & Management	20,923	7.02%
7	Engineering	17,934	6.02%
8	Health Professions	16,984	5.70%
9	Fine & Applied Arts	8,967	3.01%

(Timeframe for reported data: September 2014 to August 2015. Source: Campus France)

The statistics provided do not show the recent enrolment as 2016 intakes are still going on. These statistics show that France is growing as a study destination. On interaction with the students who are leaving this year for their further studies in France. I was highly inspired and it shows that how it is at one point necessary to study abroad at least once in lifetime. It enhances one's view and one who is hungry for knowledge and experience; it is a very big opportunity for them. Further in this report we shall see how my interaction with 208 students over a period of two months went and which motivated me to continue further with this work.

2. Research Profile

There are three important objectives in this research project:-

- To understand as to why Indian students are influenced to study in France
- To understand the French Influence in India

- To determine how Campus France can spread awareness about French Higher Education in India.

The students came from an age range from 18 and it went to in the late 35s. Maximum number of students was seemed to be seen in the range of 22-24. As most students going; were going to France for a masters' degree.

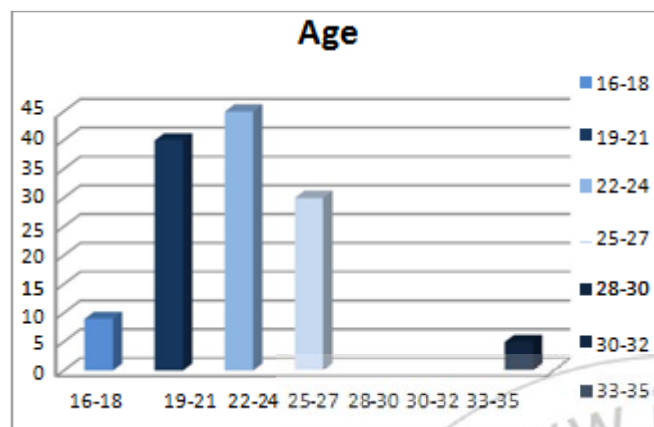


Figure 1

The project "French Influence and Willingness of Indians to Study in France" needed me to interact with students who are going to France in 2016. The research revolved around the fact as to why students go abroad for further education and particularly France. Initially the study involved a questionnaire which needed to be filled by the respondents who walk into the Campus France office for their Visa Academic Interview. The first group of respondents; around 6 students filled the questionnaire and then I would ask them some further questions based on the answers they gave me. However, after a point I decided to use other techniques to interact with students. So, I used a combination of unstructured, structured interview method and observation.

Interview: is a tool through which qualitative research can be done. In this method the researcher asks the respondent or the interviewee questions related to the research topic to gain more insight. There are two types of interview:

Structured Interview: In this type of interview the researcher has a set of fixed questions that he or she has to ask the interviewee for the research purpose. These questions are not flexible and don't allow the interviewee to deviate from the main topic. These sorts of questions are usually in form of surveys and small questionnaires where the option of being subjective is not applicable. They are usually close ended and quantitative in nature in a way.

Unstructured Interview: In this type of interview the researcher has a set of questions but doesn't necessarily mean that he would be asking those questions to the respondent. He or she may skip out certain questions or ask something else. There is no such pattern followed. The researcher has the freedom to ask the respondent question based on the answers that respondent gives. The respondent usually goes out of context and deviates from the research topic. It is more conversational and more qualitative in nature.

So, for this research I had used a combination of both methods. So even though there were a set of questions, there were few questions I would avoid for some students or I would add more questions depending on the situation. Most students encountered were so keen in the research project that it was more conversational than structured. This motivated me to take this project further and hence, I was able to interact with 208 students.

Observation: is a tool used by researchers to observe and categorise overt behaviour. Researchers commonly use observation when they think that the better way to gain results from the respondent is to such observe the respondent in the particular situation. Rather than questioning one person about something, he or she may not be able to verbally express but his or her body language is louder than actions.

So, after the academic interview was over, they would come to me and I would just take 5 mins from them and ask them certain questions. Questions that I have asked them were:-

- 1) What course have you applied for?
- 2) What languages do you know? Will you institution provide you with French lessons as you are an international student?
- 3) What were your country preferences?
- 4) Was France your first choice? Why?
- 5) If not France, where would you have gone? Why?
- 6) Did anything influence you to go to France?
- 7) Have you been given any scholarship?
- 8) Will you be opting for any financial support?
- 9) Is your course in your preferred language?
- 10) Why have you chosen this course? And how will this help you in the future?
- 11) Do you plan to work in France?
- 12) Are you aware of the benefits given to you as a student in France?
- 13) Is this the first time studying abroad?
- 14) Did you go through Campus France?
- 15) How was your experience with them? Would you want to change anything?
- 16) Did you have any problem with the website while applying for the visa process?
- 17) Do you have any suggestions for Campus France?

These were some of the questions I had asked the students. The answers to these questions were fairly interesting and through these I had also received several feedbacks.

First set of questions involved me to know more about the students, and what they are exactly going for. Most people who I had interacted with told me that they are going for management courses. The reason being that France; have the best Business school in the world and the top ranking schools belong to France, be it HEC, ESSEC or EDHEC. Not only management but engineering and social sciences were also very popular. Colleges like Pierre-and-Marie-Curie University, Sorbonne and Sciences Po were the popular choices for students. Who were keen to study International Studies and Political Science; Sciences Po is one of the best university to study. Most students who are going in for International Studies said that it was a difficult choice, to go for Leiden University, Netherlands or Sciences

Po, as both had great courses to offer. In the end the reason to choose Science Po, was due its recognition and specializations offered.

Most courses offered were in English. France, to attract more students around the world, has English speaking courses in private and public universities. However there are courses which are completely in French but the university makes sure that mandatory classes are given to students, before they commence their studies. Several exchanges that happened from an institution this year, had courses offered in French, however they were given the opportunity to give their exams in English. However, it was a concern for few students who had no level in French. But it seemed that they were very ambitious to work towards it and learn a new language. These exchanges are done to internationalize students and give them a global perspective on life and the course they are taking. What and how things are taught in India is very different than how it is done elsewhere. And in this globalised world it is very important to have a global approach towards life.

When I spoke about country preferences, most students encountered always had the want to study in France. They felt that studying there would give them the European exposure as well as the global exposure. Students had the want to go to the following countries:-

Table 7

<i>Country Preference</i>	<i>No. of People</i>
France	50
Germany	35
Australia	22
UK	20
USA	18
Canada	12
India	9
Europe in general	9
Netherland	8
Milan	5
Dubai	5
Singapore	5
Spain	4
Depends on the course	4
Switzerland	2

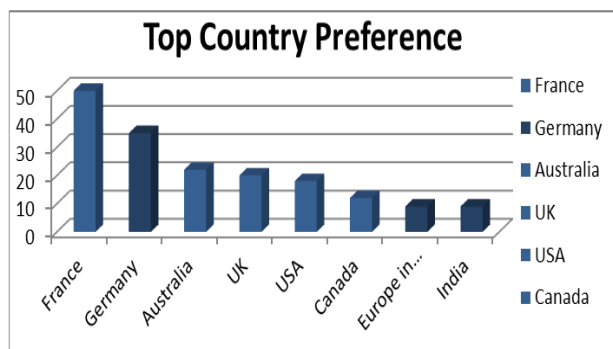


Figure 2

Most students had the want to go to Germany, Australia and the UK. Hardly students came in saying that they are going to France, because they didn't know where else to go. Three such students came in who said, the only reason they want to

go to France, is because they didn't get through UK and France is closer to UK and it would be easy to take a transfer. They believed they would have experienced the European higher education, so shifting wouldn't be an issue. Most students who walked in wanted to experience, French culture and study in the most student friendly country presently in the world. Most students who came, had France as their first preference, reason being it is cost effective, student friendly and the exposure given to them is world apart. Most students wanted to go to Germany due to the research opportunities provided and they thought it was very difficult to choose between France and Germany. Both countries are at par with each other according to students. However the deciding factor for them was the student friendly-ness of France and the overall diversity present which provides students the opportunity to make globalized network.

When the question was raised that what other things influenced you to go to France? This question had gotten some very witty comments from the students. 160 out of 208 students said they are going to France because of the culture there. To experience something which they have only seen through movies and magazines, it was the perfect opportunity to experience it. They were interested to know a different language, be part of a global culture and France is where they want to start from. Students who were going to learn fashion, fashion management or luxury brand management they wanted to go to Paris, as that is the hub for brands. Fashion means Paris. And they think it will be the best place they can learn about fashion. If not Paris, they would have opted for Milan. But most of them were keen to go towards Paris. Rest of the students, said the reason to choose France was not only culture but the atmosphere, the access to Europe, and most importantly the food. They said that for a vegetarian it is very easy to adjust in. However, when two students got into this food context they said, "We see so many different varieties in India, now it's time for France to surprise us." Few students had already been to France, and they said that their experience made them want to go back. People are so hospitable that it is a good place to stay. Some students who went for their Undergraduates are going back for Masters and some are continuing their PhDs there, as they fell in love with the country. They believe that the courses offered and the way things are beautifully taught and the practical experience given to them is what lacks in education elsewhere. Most students said that they chose course over the country. This also shows that how; France's education has influenced people to choose it over other countries who top charts when it comes to university rankings.

Scholarships are awarded to many students who go for further studies in France. French government gives out plenty scholarships to student, be it partial or full. This year almost 200 scholarships were given to students in India to continue their education. Charpak and Eiffel are the two scholarships given to students. Charpak is an exclusive scholarship available only to Indian students. These scholarships are given out by the French Government. These scholarships either look after you living expenses in France or take care of your education and when awarded a full scholarship they cover everything. Many students who

walked in to Campus France had been awarded a scholarship. I had the opportunity to meet them and interact. Most universities even provided a large amount of fee waivers to students. Students didn't think they would need to apply for any financial support as most universities in France are government funded. Either the government takes care of it or they are extremely cost effective. However many students who walked in said that living expenses are high. But they also added that it is better than other countries. The atmosphere and student friendly-ness trumps over the other factors.

France is accepting many students from around the world. And hence, it is seen that most universities are providing English courses to the students. There are many courses that universities offer that are in English and they keep a mandatory French course for students. So, they have a background in French. However the exchange programs that were offered to some students were in French, which can be concerning for them. However the option of giving the exam in English was reassuring. It is important that two countries start involving themselves in trade but also through exchanges of citizens which help them understand and get exposure to other cultures. Exchanges are a good method of getting two countries exposed to different cultures. These

exchanges also help the students understand where they want to study in the future. If their experience is bad, they won't go back; these four months become a crucial turning point for them. If the experience is good, they would want to go for more exchanges and eventually end up there.

Most students wanted to work in France. And their course is so diverse that it is mandatory for them to do an internship. This internship exposes them to the working environment of Europe. However, it is mandatory for them to know French. And it seemed as though that the university will take care of the language requirements. Students plan on staying back in France, after their degree as they believe, France would give them a better exposure and a better working environment. They think that the management area is much more developed and one may get a better exposure working here. Paris as claimed by students is the hub for culture, heritage and knowledge. Students who are going to Paris particularly thought that it is the best opportunity for them to gain work experience there. Most students had their own ventures and wanted to get it internationalized. They felt that if they get the international exposure, they can come back to India and apply those techniques and get their business going in India. And if possible start to expand internationally.

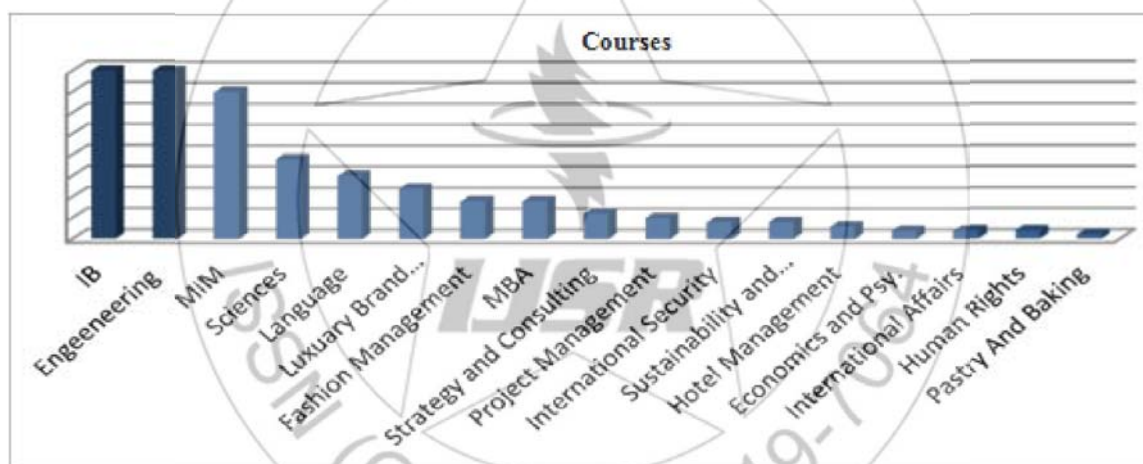


Figure 3

Out of 208 students, large amount of them were going for the first time to study in France. They were excited and were waiting eagerly to get the French experience they have heard about. Rest of the students was going back for the second time for course which would help them enhance their skills and mostly because they felt it was the best country to study in.

In terms of promotion, most students feel that, France has so much to offer. And only a handful can be aware of these. These handfuls are the ones who are constantly researching about higher education. They feel France should be endorsed more and more promotional activities should be done. So that more people are aware of the opportunities that France has to offer. Being aware of Campus France, I had asked the students if they had an idea what Campus France is, they said they got to know about it after they had applied for the university. They felt if they were aware that how useful Campus France is, it would have been better for them while applying for the universities. Promotional activities for

Campus France are required. As they said, when they met the counsellors they had felt that if this guidance was given to them before they would had more clarity.

Students, who are going through Campus France, had all smiles and wanted to thank the counsellors all along. They felt that the guidance provided to them was impeccable and the way the counselling is done, being able to be one of them who got counselled I can say, very proudly, they take care of you and put your interests in front of you. Even if you are unaware what it is you want, they make sure you can identify them and choose a course which is favouring you. They refer you to the best universities based on your profile.

Through this I have tried to summarize the responses from 208 students. After encountering these students I was able to develop a pattern. This pattern helped me to summarize this project. Each student was unique and I have had interesting conversations with each one of them.

3. Conclusion

France and India hold a very tight bond, France has a great influence in India, and they use various methods to keep this bond strong. And it can be seen with the amount of trade and in this case students going abroad. The creation of The Institut Francaise India which is part of the huge cultural network of over 100 IFs (Institut Francaise) worldwide working in close relationship with over 1000 Alliance Francaise. In India alone there are 16 Alliances Francaise, some with multiple campuses. The French government has given the responsibility to IF to take the initiative to promote French culture overseas, be it in the form of artistic exchanges, promotion of French thought and ideas through the printed word or audio visual medium, of French language, and of French know-how via student, academic, research and scientific exchange.

Students are highly motivated and have the willingness to go to France. Students who are going to France this year ranged from 18 years to 54 years of age, each one of them were interested and enthusiastic. They are hungry for knowledge and France is giving them exactly what they want. Unlike other countries according to the students, France is not very rigid with the course structure and allows students to study the way they want and the courses they want in the curriculum. This helps them to customize their degree to their preference. This was the biggest reason why one would want to go to France. France is providing them with practical and theoretical knowledge and gives them an opportunity to work and get the idea of the European market.

French influence is increasingly spreading across India due to these organizations and the trade that goes on between these two countries. They have significant amount of collaborations which makes it possible for these two countries to maintain such good relationship with each other. France was one of the first countries with whom India has entered into an agreement on civil nuclear cooperation following the waiver given by the Nuclear Suppliers' Group, enabling India to resume full civil nuclear cooperation with the international community.

Students, who are going to France, are going there as France's education system has influenced them and are giving them great opportunities to perform. France is providing them with practical and theoretical knowledge and gives them an opportunity to work and get the idea of the European market. Students are highly motivated and have the willingness to go to France. Students who are going to France this year ranged from 18 years to 54 years of age, each one of them were interested and enthusiastic. They are hungry for knowledge and France is giving them exactly what they want. Unlike other countries according to the students, France is not very rigid with the course structure and allows students to study the way they want and the courses they want in the curriculum. This helps them to customize their degree to their preference. This was the biggest reason why one would want to go to France. France is the center for culture, fashion, knowledge and heritage, being able to study here would give them maximum

exposure and it would open several doors of employability for students.

And this little research project has given me the motivation to continue this further. And I wish to continue my research further even after the end of the internship and I shall update IFI on any new findings.

4. Acknowledgment

The success and final outcome of this project required a lot of guidance and assistance from many people and I am extremely fortunate to have got this all along the completion of my project work.

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Author Profile



Sneha Hossain is currently completing final year in BA (Hons) Psychology from GD Goenka University, Gurgaon, Haryana. She was always intrigued as to how behaviour is affected due to the environment and other stimulus around. Her area of interest has been to study human emotions and to work with children and elderly. As an individual she seeks to connect psychology and international studies, to see how these two subjects beautifully complement each other. Hence, this is why a research paper as this has been derived. She developed this research paper during her internship period with Institut Français en Inde, Embassy of France- India. She aspires to work with organizations which would help her explore her interest areas; betterment and security of individuals specially elders and children. As a young motivated individual, she has also worked with children and elderly with mental disabilities to understand their perspective on life and their lifestyle. She wants to continue her research in this area and want to develop more studies and researches around it.