

Consumer Journey

Over the past years, the study abroad decision process has grown more complex and of interest to students. Understanding the international student journey becomes more crucial than ever for any related firm. There are 6 stages when it comes to studying abroad. These 6 stages start anywhere from 2 years to 6 months of a student completing 12th grade or their undergraduate.

Stage 1: Awareness – Discovery

Prospective international students start their journey by using generic search terms like study engineering abroad or study business abroad at a desired location or university. They then choose certain criteria like country, career, personality tests to figure out what matches with their interests.

Stage 2: Comparison and Decision-Making

Prospective students have by now selected specific countries, programs types, degree levels and are ready to compare the best options for them to study abroad. They become deeply engaged with peer feedback (parents, alumni, students, higher education influencers), recommendation and ranking.

Stage 3: Information Gathering

Prospective students look for more detailed information and browse study opportunities by country, program, degree or university. They look for details such as starting dates, admission requirements and tuition fees. They are very receptive to social media content, reviews and customized emails.

Stage 4: Application

Prospective students have narrowed down their choice to a few international programs. They gather all the required documentation and send their application online. They will mostly look at scholarships, starting dates and application periods information.

Stage 5: Post-Application / Pre-Acceptance

While waiting for the admission confirmation email, students look more thoroughly into location and internship guides. They interact again with articles related to this topic, react to targeted emails and re-analyse reviews.

Stage 6: Acceptance to Enrollment

Students will most probably be accepted to multiple institutions. Their last decision step is to select one university over another. They make their final choice based on highly specific details about geography, financial aid and the university's academic reputation.

I will now be going through all the products and tests that students must take or could purchase when moving abroad:

1. IELTS

The International English Language Testing System, or IELTS, is an standardized test of English language proficiency for non-native English language speakers. By taking an IELTS test, a student will receive a test report that is recognised and accepted by thousands of institutions around the world, including companies, universities, professional bodies, and government agencies. Students will also improve their English language skills.

2. SAT

The SAT is a standardized test widely used for college admissions in the United States. The purpose of the SAT exam is to measure a high school student's readiness for college and also provide colleges with one common evaluation parameter which can be used to compare all the candidates.

3. AP

Advanced Placement is a program in the United States created by the College Board which offers college-level curricula and examinations to high school students. Colleges and universities may grant placement and course credit to students who obtain high scores on the examinations. AP Exams enable students to earn college credit or do college courses before they even start college, which can enable them to graduate early (students can sometimes save as much as a year at college), save tuition, pursue a double major, and move into upper-level courses sooner.

4. Career counselling

Career Counselling helps students understand the career options that they have, and how to pursue them. Career Counselling helps students understand their own strengths and weaknesses with regard to their present course or profession, and lets them know what career they would be suited for. Career counselling has also now started to encompass the whole process of studying abroad as well so they do provide SAT, AP, ACT and IELTS training as well help students with profile building and essay writing. Some popular career counsellors in India that provide counselling and all other related services are - Univariety, Testrocker, Spark, CollegePass.

5. Others

Some universities expect individual entrance level exams to be taken by the student for admission, these tests are not world renowned and only necessary if the university a student is applying for demands it to be done. These tests include MCAT, LSAT, GMAT, GRE, TOEFL, etc.

In India there are quite a few popular boards present which are :

- State Boards.
- Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE)
- Indian Certificate of Secondary Education (ICSE)
- International General Certificate of Secondary Education(IGCSE)
- International Baccalaureate(IB)

I will now be going through what each board of students are required to go through, we can group State board, IGCSE, ICSE and CBSE in one group however as they must meet similar criterion

IGCSE, CBSE, ICSE:

- SAT(Required if University requires it or else optional)
- AP(Always optional however boosts your profile and allows you to cut costs)
- IELTS(Required)
- Other tests must be taken on demand

IB:

- SAT(Required if University requires it or else optional)
- AP(Not required or valid as IB gives college credits)
- IELTS(Not required getting a passing grade in english is enough)
- Other tests must be taken on demand