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Paulette Hebert
Design, Housing and
Merchandising Department,
Oklahoma State University,
USA

Mohit Bhardwaj
School of Fashion and Design,
GD, Goenka University, India

Aditya Jayadas
Design, Housing and
Merchandising Department,
Oklahoma State University,
USA

Understanding University Interior Design Program Admissions: A Case Study-Field Study in Northern India with Comparisons to USA

Paulette Hebert, Mohit Bhardwaj, Aditya Jayadas

Abstract
Students across the globe study Interior Design. As prospective students to interior design programs in different countries navigate the admission process they often face challenges due to non-standardized admission processes in different universities, especially in different countries. The admission process to interior design programs in different universities in India and the United States are compared in this study. A case study and field of the admission process in India were conducted along with a content analysis of the admission process for 20 interior design programs in India and the United States. The results show that the admission process is different not only between universities within a country, but also between the two countries. Establishing a database where students could navigate the admission process across universities in different countries could help students better navigate the admission process. This could also benefit administrators of interior design programs to better understand the admission process across the globe, and thereby help enhance the admission process for prospective students.

Keywords: Interior design, Admission process, Case study, Field Study, Content Analysis

Introduction

Current state of education in India

The greater than one billion person population of India represents the largest democracy in the world and its politics and global location poise it well for the future (Scotford, 2005). India has invested in its education system and has experienced a correlated increase in both high school attendance and high school graduation rates. Impressively, 20 million high school students are projected to graduate in India by 2017 (Sheehy, 2012). With a current population of 1,210,854,977 (Census of Indian Population, 2011) and an estimated 68,288,971 enrolled in a degree beyond high school, higher education in India continues to grow (Census of Indian Education, 2011). With an estimated 33,023 colleges ("Statistics on Indian Higher Education", 2012), India produces a large roster of college students, including interior design program candidates, annually.

A precise timeline of annual activities and procedures have been established to funnel students into college programs, such as interior design. In the 10th grade, high school students in India select a track from math, engineering, biology/medical, commerce, or humanities. After the results are announced from the annual 12th grade testing in May, students with scores of 90% or more may secure admission to *public* universities at no cost. Those with scores at or below 90%, who wish to attend college, may choose to apply to *private* universities with varying programs and associated costs. Indiresan (2005) indicates that generally, the number of *private* universities has grown in India because the government is unable to provide enough seats for all of the students who wish to enter *public* universities, especially in disciplines somewhat allied to interior design, such as architecture and engineering.

According to India's University Grants Commission (2015), officially there are 239 *private* Universities in India. It is difficult to determine exactly how many Indian institutions offer degrees in interior design. According to HTCampus (2016), 208 India colleges provide

Correspondence:
Paulette Hebert
Design, Housing and
Merchandising Department,
Oklahoma State University,
USA

interior design (or related discipline) education. However, all of these colleges do not offer degrees in interior design. According to Singanapalli Balaram (2005), India historically has not distinguished between different design disciplines but rather considered "ornament as essential to architecture", (p. 12). Some programs may teach interior design but call it by another name.

In India, a relatively small proportion of the population attends college. Out of 838,410,861 individuals it was estimated that 68,288,971 individuals have an education beyond high school (Census of Indian Education, 2011). Generally, fewer women attend colleges when compared to their male counterparts. Out of the 68,288,971 individuals who attended some college in 2011, 42,120,460 were male and 26,168,511 were female (Census of Indian Education, 2011). The ratio of male and female are ~62% male and ~38% female in colleges by large. One exception is in the discipline of education where approximately half of college students are females. Other exceptions are engineering and commerce which are even more male-dominated than the general college population (Velkoff 1998).

Current state of interior design in India
Interior Design appears to be a growing profession in India. According to the Economic Times of India (2015) the Commerce and Industry Minister, Nirmala Sitharaman, stated that the government will establish the National Institute of Design (NID) in Rajasthan. She elaborated, "Design is a very big component in industrial development ..." Further, in an earlier Economic Times of India article, (Alam, 2013) Nitee Johar, the director of Rinterior indicated that

"The demand for interior decorators in Gurgaon is seeing a tremendous upswing Owing to robustness in the hospitality, corporate and residential sectors…With rise in the population of high net worth individuals (HNIs), growing economy and exposure to latest trends have worked to push upward the business graph of interior designing in Gurgaon,"

Purpose of current research
The purpose of the current research was to explore the processes of interior design program candidates' recruitment, application and admissions in India and make some comparisons to the United States of America's interior design programs. Objectives included to 1) conduct a case study of Interior Design recruitment and admissions procedures and enrollments for one Interior Design program in Northern India; 2) conduct a field study to document a "snapshot" of one Indian University's Interior Design programs' participation at a third party-hosted recruiting fair event in Northern India; 3) conduct an online study of the first 20 Indian college websites that offer Interior Design and 4) conduct an online study of American University's interior design programs' admissions websites.

Methodology
One new, *private* University in Northern India, henceforth referred to as "University A", has proactively sought to grow enrollment in their fledgling interior design program. University A was selected via convenience sampling for the current interior design program case study and the current interior design field study. As a comparison, admission websites from American interior design program were

reviewed via content analysis.
A university research team, consisting of one interior design faculty member from an American interior design program, one ergonomics faculty member from an American design, housing and merchandising program and one interior design faculty member from an Indian University, developed a four -part study:
Part 1: The researchers performed a case study of *private* University A's application and
Admissions activities.
Part 2: Researchers conducted a field study of one large, multiple *private* higher
Education institutions' recruiting fair in Northern India.
Part 3. Researchers conducted a content analysis of American interior design programs'
Websites.
Part 4. Researchers conducted a content analysis of Indian interior design programs'
Websites.

Part 1. Case Study
Researchers gathered and analyzed longitudinal data regarding applications and admissions to University A's interior design program over a three year period, 2013-2015. Data regarding participation in the five application and admission phases was considered for both undergraduate and graduate students. Participation by gender was also noted. Frequency counts were performed.

Part 2. Field Study
Researchers attended one significant college recruiting fair event in India in June 2015, made observations, and photo-documented activities. The researchers visited all of the institutions' booths, performing a frequency count of the total universities represented, and performing a frequency count of the interior design programs represented. The researchers observed the activities of potential students and their families as well as university faculty and staff. Brochures from booths offering handouts were collected. A few days later, the researcher met with university faculty; reviewed University A's website and examined recruitment, application and admission materials. The researcher studied interior design and related industry and education publications.

Part 3. Content Analysis – Schools in the United States
Subsequent to the field study, the researcher performed an online content analysis of undergraduate interior design programs in the United States of America. The researcher utilized content analysis of a convenience sample of the first 20 viable programs which met the search criteria. There was no discrimination between *public* or *private* universities. The keywords used were: "undergraduate" + "interior" + "design" + "United" +"States". The first, viable, 20 schools and corresponding data are shown in *Table 2*.

Part 4. Content Analysis – Schools in India
Similar to the content analysis done for the universities in the United States, a content analysis was carried out for the first viable Interior Design programs in India. The keywords used were "undergraduate" + "interior" + "design" + "India". The first google search listed only 10 universities, so the second website with a list of 208 interior design programs in India was (HTCcampus, 2016).

From the first 20 universities listed on the website if the degree offered was only a diploma (1-2yrs) or a short course that university was not considered. Only universities offering a Bachelor's degree for 3-4 years were considered. The data for the 20 Indian universities are summarized in *Table 3*.

Findings
Part 1. Case Study
The five phases typical of the interior design admissions process in India were identified as 1) Completed Data Sheet, 2) Paid Application Fee, 3) Completed Application Form, 4) Sat for Exam and 5) Secured Acceptance.

Phase 1: Attended a Recruiting Fair and Completed Data Sheet
Representatives of University A and prospective students attend many annual recruiting fairs in May and June. Faculty and staff members regularly attend the fairs and explain their "Unique Selling Proposition" (USP). Fairs are held for two to three days per week in different locations throughout the country and these are sponsored by third parties. Fairs are set up typically for Saturdays and Sundays and sometimes also Fridays) for eight consecutive weeks. College recruiting events in India are quite large and attract many potential college students. Families often attend with students since college is an important decision.

Phase 2: Paid Application Fee
Potential student applicants paid a fee of 1000 rupees (approximately $16.66 U.S.) for the application processing. This fee was hand-delivered in person or mailed to University.

Phase 3: Completed Application Form
Potential student applicants answered questions on a form regarding their birth place, birth date, high school attendance, high school courses studied. The completed application was hand-delivered in person or mailed to the University of Interest.

Phase 4: Sat for Exam
Potential student applicants traveled to University A on a choice of three Saturdays in June in order to take a comprehensive entrance exam. The exam covered Analytical Ability (30%), English and Comprehension (30%) and Creative Ability (40%) and 3 hours were allowed for the exam. Applicants were allowed to bring colors, pencils, eraser and pen to the exam. *Figure 1* shows students taking an admission test at a university in India.

Fig.1: Students take admissions test at "University A" in Northern India

Phase 5: Secured Acceptance
After the completion of all the exams, faculty member representatives reviewed the application forms and exam results. Currently only 1st and 2nd year students have been accepted. However, it is anticipated that as the institution grows, more students may be accommodated in each cohort and cohorts will be added.

Longitudinal Results
In 2013, University A had a total of 216 undergraduate student applications to the interior design program, completing Phases 2 – 4. Only 70 students were selected to join the program (Phase 5). There were no post-graduate (AKA graduate student) applications. In 2014, University A had a total 305 undergraduate and 25 graduate student applications to the interior design program, completing Phases 2-4. Only 69 undergraduate students and 6 graduate students were selected to join the program (Phase 5). In 2015, University A had a total of 320 undergraduate and 30 graduate student applications, completing Phases 2-4. Only 69 undergraduate and 6 graduate students were selected to join the program (Phase 5). Refer to *Table 1* for quantities of interior design students completing phases of admission process at "University A".

Table 1: Interior design students completing phases of admissions process at University A

	Year		
Phase	2013	2014	2015
1. Attended a Recruiting Fair and Completed "Data Sheet"	216 undergraduate; 0 graduate students	305 under graduate; 25 graduate students	320 undergraduate; 30 graduate students
2. Paid Application Fee	216 undergraduate; 0 graduate students	305 under graduate; 25 graduate students	320 undergraduate; 30 graduate students
3. Completed Application Form	216 undergraduate; 0 graduate students	305 undergraduate; 25 graduate students	320 undergraduate; 30 graduate students
4. Sat for Exam	216 undergraduate; 0 graduate students	305 undergraduate; 25 graduate students	320 undergraduate; 30 graduate students
5. Secured Acceptance	70 undergraduate; 0 graduate students	69 undergraduate; 6 graduate students	51 undergraduate; 5 graduate students
Gender of Accepted Students			
Undergraduate Level			
Male	43%	48%	38%
Female	57%	52%	62%
Graduate Level			

Male	0%	0%	40%
Female	0%	100%	60%

Part 2: Field Study

During the study period, a recruiting fair was held on Saturday, June 6, 2015 and Sunday, June 7, 2016. During this case study weekend period, some 8,000 footfall was reported by the organizer for participation over the two day event. A total of 55 institutions, *private* colleges, and universities participated. In several instances, three generations of families were observed accompanying potential students to the recruiting fair. Students participating in a recruiting fair event in Northern India can be seen in *Figure 2*. Food for purchase was served at the fair which was open from 10:00 am to 7:00 pm.

Fig. 2: Students participating in a Recruiting Fair Event in Northern India

Based on the field study observations, it appeared that fair booths ranged in size but most were relatively generous in terms of space. The booth for "University A" measured 48 square meters (refer *Figure 3*). In many booths, electronic monitors displayed looped videos and backlit signage listed universities' affiliations with foreign universities and Indian industry partners. Electronic signage with testimonial images and quotes from graduates and parents were also in evidence.

Fig. 3: "University A" booth at recruiting event in Northern India

Many booths were professionally designed and built and/or set-up by third parties. Special attention-gathering artifacts, which showcased student-produced projects, were also seen in a few of the booths, such as a garment-draped mannequin or design boards, including those displayed in the "University A" booth. Figure 4 shows a university interior design faculty member visits with a perspective student and parent at a recruiting event in Northern India.

Fig.4: A University interior design faculty member visits with a perspective student and parent at a recruiting event in Northern India

Part 3: Content Analysis: Schools in the United States

The first, viable, 20 school "hits" and their corresponding data are reported in this study. Refer to *Table 2* for data regarding the convenience sample of 20 American interior design programs. The twenty American schools had several commonalities in their requirements. In a few instances, the Universities indicated that an item was "not required" from applicants, but rather, it was optional and was "encouraged" or "recommended" only. Although not explicit on all of the universities' websites, it is presumed that an admission form was required by all institutions. The admissions' materials found in the content analysis included: "application fee" (n=7, 35%) and a few of the universities indicated the amount of their application fee, which ranged from $40.00 U.S. to $60.00 U.S.

Table 2a: Criteria for application for Interior Design programs in the United States

Criterion/Univ.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20
Application Fee	y					y			y		y	y		y				y		
Written Statement	y		y			y			y	y*				y	y		y	y	y	
Official Transcript	y		y			y			y					y	y	y	y		y	
Letters of Recommendation or Teacher Recommendation	y		y*			y			y					y*	y*		y			y
SAT/ ACT Scores	y	y	y	y	y		y		y		y	y		y		y	y		y	
Portfolios	y	y						y	y	y*							y*	y		
English Proficiency	y	y						y	y					y	y				y	
Diagnostic Course(s)		y																		
High School Courses		y			y															
Selection Admission Review		y									y									
Cumulative GPA (college)		y	y	y	Y					y	y	y	y							
Interviews															y					
Resume															y					
Class Rank					y								y							
Other		y																	y	

where, y – yes and y* - conditional/optional

Table 2b: List of universities in Table 2a above

S.No.	University
1	NY School of ID, New York
2	Florida State University, Florida
3	Rhode Island School of Design, Florida
4	Virginia Tech, Virginia
5	Iowa State, Iowa
6	University of Cincinnati, Ohio
7	Florida Intl. University, Florida
8	University of Bridgeport, Conneticut
9	Parsons, New York
10	University of North Texas, Texas
11	University of Florida, Florida
12	Western Michigan University, Michigan
13	Southern Illinois University, Illinois
14	Pratt Institute, New York
15	SCAD, Georgia
16	Brenau University, Georgia
17	Endicott College, Massachusetts
18	New School of Architecture and Design, California
19	Kendall College of Art and Design of Ferris State University, Michigan
20	University of Oregon, Oregon

Some type of written statement was required by one half of the institutions (n=10, 50%) however one of these schools required a written statement only if ACT/SAT scores were "low". The researchers classified items as "written statements" if "essays" or "artistic statements" were required. Official transcripts were required by several schools (n=9, 45%). For these institutions, *high school* transcripts were required by interior design programs who were admitting first year college students and *college* transcripts were required by interior design programs who were admitting students via selective admissions at some point after completion of their first year of college.

Letters of recommendation were required by one fourth of the schools (n=5, 25%) and some of these universities required that these recommendations be from teachers. Letters of recommendation were "recommended" or "optional" with one school requiring a portfolio only if ACT/SAT scores were "low". Proof of English Proficiency was required by over a third of the programs but only if English was not a first language of the applicant (n=7, 35%). Diagnostic college courses were required by a single program (n=1, 5%). A couple of programs required proof of completion so particular high school courses (n=2, 10%). A couple of programs had "selective admissions reviews" (n=2, 10%). Several universities required cumulative GPA scores (n=8, 40%) achieved in high school or college, as applicable. Interviews were required by only a single program (n=1, 5%). A single program required

resumes (n=1, 5%). Class rank was required by a couple of programs (n=2, 10%). Only a few of the schools had other requirements and these were classified by the researchers as "other" in the table and included an "observation exercise" (n=1, 5%); attitude (n=1, 5%) work ethic (n=1, 5%); "ability to accept criticism (n=1, 5%).

Part 4: Content Analysis: Schools in India
The first 20 school "hits" and their corresponding data are reported in this study. As mentioned earlier, only schools with a Bachelor's degree were included. Diploma and short courses were omitted. Refer to *Table 3* for data summarizing the criteria for admission to the interior design programs in India.

Table 3a: List of the 20 Interior Design programs in India

Criterion/Univ.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20
Application Fee	y	y	y	y	y	Y	y	y		y	y	y	y	y	y	y	y	y	y	y
Written Statement																				
Official Transcript	y	y	y	y	y	Y	y	y		y	y	y	y	y	y	y	y	y	y	y
Letters of Recommendation or Teacher Recommendation																				
SAT/ ACT Scores																					
Portfolios																				y	
English Proficiency																				
Diagnostic Course(s)																				
High School Courses																				
Selection Admission Review																				
Cumulative GPA (college)	y		y							y				y				y	y	
Interviews								y									y		y	
Resume																				
Class Rank																				
Other	y	y	y	y				y*						y			y			

where, y – yes and y* - conditional/optional

Table 3b: List of universities in Table 3a above

S.No.	University
1	Pearl Academy, Delhi
2	Indian Institute of Art and Design, Delhi
3	Avantika University, Ujjain
4	United Institute of Design, Ahmedabad
5	Vogue Institiue of Fashion Technology, Bangalore
6	Indian Institute of Fashion and Design, Bangalore
7	IMS - Design and Innovation Academy, Noida, UP
8	International School of Design, Delhi
9	International Institiute of Fashion Design, Delhi
10	Inter National Institiute of Fashion Design, Gurgaon
11	National College of Design, Chennai
12	Interior Design Academy, Bangalore
13	JD Institiue of Technology, Bangalore
14	Shree Devi College of Interior Design, Mangalore
15	MEASI Academy of Architecture, Chennai
16	Nikalas Mahila Mahavidyalaya, Nagpur
17	Blitz Institiute of Creative Arts, Varanasi
18	Apeejay Institiute of Design, Delhi
19	Sushant School of Design, Ansal Univ., Gurgaon
20	RNB Global University, Bikaner

All the schools required an application fee and a minimum pass grade in 10+2 (high school) exams (n=20, 100%). Not all the schools listed the specific application fee amount. None of the universities listed that an official transcript was required. Other than that there was very limited information available on most school websites. A cellphone number and contact information is to be entered to gain access to specific information as it relates to admission for all the schools. There was no specification of recommendation letters for any of the schools. SAT/ACT scores are not applicable. However, six schools did require grades beyond just passing to get admission (n=6, 30%). In addition, two schools required the National Aptitude Test is architecture scores (n = 2, 10%) and four other schools required a

school specified aptitude test to be taken for admission to their programs (n= 4, 20%). While three schools did officially list an interview process (n=3, 15%), only one school listed requirements for a portfolio (n=1, 5%). There were no specific requirements listed for diagnostic or high school courses. There was one school with an age restriction requiring that applicants should be less than 21 years of age at the time of admission (n=1, 5%). Also, one of the schools listed that written and oral communication tests could be required (n=1, 5%). A resume and class rank were not listed as a requirement by any of the schools.

Implications and Discussion
Recruiting fairs require much effort for all participants:

student applicants, applicants' families, universities' faculty members, and university staff members. However, recruiting fairs appear to be effective at marketing school's offerings and in communicating college's competitive advantages. The recruiting fairs are well attended. Recruiting fairs are also efficient for attendees since they can see representative of 50+ colleges in one visit in one competitive environment.

The application fees found in the study of American universities were all less than $100. U.S.. However, the application fee at the Indian "University A" was found to be considerably less. The application fees for admission to all the Interior Design programs were less than $50.00. In addition, the requirements were very different for the Indian and American schools. For instance, separate aptitude tests were required in some of the Indian schools. The requirements for admission were not standardized as in the United States. Also, the highest admit score of 60% based on high school grade does not translate to a D-grade as in the United States. A better understanding of grade conversions would benefit individuals responsible for the admission process.

The undergraduate and graduate interior design program's applications and associated activity for "University A" has generally increased during the three year study period (Phases 1-4) but the undergraduate and graduate acceptance rates (Phase 5) have generally decreased during the three year study period. The general college-level population in India has been said to be much lower for women than for men. However, interestingly, in the current study, the acceptance rate of both genders into interior design at "university A" was found to be similar. Families were found to be a very important part of the college selection process. It is recommended that successful Indian institutions may want to target families in the admissions process.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the admission requirements for Interior Design programs are different in India and the United States. A better understanding of these requirements would enable individuals in different countries to make better decisions when considering applicants for admission into Interior Design programs. In the future, it is recommended that the admission process for other countries be carried out to better understand the admission process for Interior Design in a global world.

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