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## Research shows 'digital native' students seek validation from personal connections

*New study examines what channels students engage with when deciding where to study*

Despite the breadth of information available online, students still seek advice from someone they trust when making life-changing decisions such as studying overseas, according to new research conducted by IDP Education.

Presented at the 2018 Australian International Education Conference in Sydney, IDP's latest Student Buyer Behaviour study examined almost 3,000 students' perceptions of the five main English-speaking countries and the channels of information that influence their decision-making process.

The research identified two clusters of students that differed in their attitudes towards online communications:

### Cautious Clickers

- Students who engage with less sources of information in both searching and communicating
- Prefer to deal with a single point of contact when trying to resolve online queries
- Do not associate online communication with personal conversation
- Place lesser value on online sources when deciding at which institution to study

### Carefree Chatters

- More comfortable in browsing and accessing multiple sources to gather information
- Physical and online means of communication are interchangeable
- Will utilise all available channels depending on their choice
- Place greater value on online sources when deciding at which institution to study

Head of Research for IDP Education, Lyndell Jacka, said that today's students are 'digital natives.' However, with such a huge investment required to study abroad, the importance of receiving trusted advice on their study destination from a family member, alumni, friend or expert cannot be underestimated.

"While students have easy access to online forums, reviews, live chat and university comparison websites at their fingertips, the study revealed they still highly value advice from those within their personal network and sought validation on their study options," Ms Jacka said.

The research also highlighted international students no longer perceive barriers between physical and digital channels and are increasingly benefitting from the convenience of omni-channel engagement.

"To continue to meet students' needs, the international education sector must ensure we can provide consistency in our offering no matter what research tool is used.

"The clear key take-away is choice. Students want to be able to choose if they want to speak to a person or manage their services by themselves online," Ms Jacka said.

The study also examined the five key drivers of student mobility - safety, affordability, graduate employment opportunities, student visa policies and quality of education.

Similar to the results of the 2017 report, Canada was seen most favourably in four out of the five key drivers of student mobility, while the US maintained its high-quality brand status on quality of education.

Students' perceptions about Australia and the UK as being safe destinations improved this year, while the US continues to significantly trail far behind.

On the affordability front, the US and the UK were both perceived as less affordable places to study due to higher living costs and tuition fees.

Securing a part-time job in Australia was cited as an area of dissatisfaction, with 38 per cent of students surveyed stating their expectations have not been met.

"Affordability continues to be a major concern for students. The inability to gain part-time work to financially support their study and living needs could negatively impact their international study experience," Ms Jacka said.

The research findings were released at the Australian International Education Conference which attracts more than 1,500 international education experts and is jointly presented by IDP Education and the International Education Association of Australia.

For more information and a full program and schedule, visit the AIEC 2018 [aiec.idp.com](http://aiec.idp.com).

### **About IDP Education**

IDP is a global leader in international education. We help international students study in English-speaking countries. Our success comes from connecting students with the right course at the right institution in the right country. We've been operating for almost 50 years, creating a network of opportunity with offices in more than 30 countries.

We are also a proud co-owner of IELTS, the world's most popular high-stakes English language test, and an operator of 10 English language teaching campuses across South East Asia.

### **Ends**

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