

Becoming a mobile student—the process and reasons why Chinese students choose Italy



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This paper examines the motivations and decision-making processes of Chinese students selecting Italy for higher education, focusing on English-taught programs in non-English-speaking countries. Within the context of higher education internationalization and the rising global demand for student mobility, Italy has emerged as an attractive destination for Chinese students despite being a small-language country. Over the past two decades, Europe has gained prominence in global education due to its cultural appeal, diverse education systems, and the increasing availability of English-taught programs, even in non-English-speaking nations.

Drawing on semi-structured interviews with twenty Chinese Master's students at the University of Padova, the study employs the "push-pull model" from international student mobility literature to explore the factors influencing their choices. Findings indicate that prior successful mobility experiences enhanced students' confidence in studying abroad, while their social networks played a critical role in shaping positive perceptions of Italy. Key pull factors included economic affordability, innovative curricula, high-quality education, and relatively low language entry barriers.

This research underscores the complexity of study-abroad decisions, highlighting the interplay between individual motivations, social networks, and systemic factors. It also provides valuable insights into how small-language countries like Italy strategically leverage English-taught programs to enhance their competitiveness in the global education market.

References:

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