

Influence factors in the choice of Institution of Higher Education – Case Study at a Private HEI in Minas Gerais

Fatores de influência na escolha da Instituição de Ensino Superior – Estudo de Caso em uma IES Privada de Minas Gerais

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ABSTRACT

The present study had as objective to analyze which factors influenced the students of Administration in the choice of the institution of superior education. In an attempt to respond to the proposed objective, a quantitative research was carried out with the students of the Faculdade de Ensino de Minas Gerais (FACEMG). Using the questionnaire as a research tool, 30 attributes were presented to the students, grouped by similar nature into nine influence factors: institutional reputation, HEI social responsibility actions, teaching staff, support activities, infrastructure and infrastructure, communication and attendance, courses offered, price and selective process, divided into 30 attributes of a similar nature, in a five-point Likert scale. It was observed that the main factors that influenced the students in the choice of HEI were the price of tuition, the teaching staff and the diversity of courses offered. In view of the results found, it is necessary to pay more attention to the factors most cited by the students, both for their maintenance in HEI and for the prospection of new students, without necessarily neglecting to observe the other factors.

KEYWORDS: Consumer behavior; Higher Education Institutions; Influence factors.

RESUMO

O presente estudo teve como objetivo analisar quais fatores influenciaram os estudantes de Administração na escolha da instituição de ensino superior. Para tanto, realizou-se uma pesquisa quantitativa com os alunos da Faculdade de Ensino de Minas Gerais (FACEMG). Utilizando-se o questionário como instrumento de pesquisa, foram apresentados aos alunos, trinta atributos agrupados por natureza semelhante em nove fatores de influência: reputação institucional, ações de responsabilidade social da IES, corpo docente, atividades de suporte, estrutura e infraestrutura, comunicação e atendimento, cursos ofertados, preço e processo seletivo, em escala Likert de cinco pontos. Observou-se que os principais fatores que influenciaram os alunos na escolha da IES foram o preço das mensalidades, o corpo docente e a diversidade de cursos ofertados. Ressalta-se, diante dos resultados encontrados, a necessidade de se dispensar maior atenção aos fatores mais citados pelos alunos, tanto para sua manutenção na IES quanto para a prospecção de novos estudantes, sem necessariamente deixar de observar os demais fatores.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: Comportamento do consumidor; Instituições de Ensino Superior; Fatores de influência

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1 INTRODUCTION

The end of high school, with the imminent choice for a college course, is often a difficult time in the lives of young people. With ages, usually between the ages of 17 and 19 or close to that, many students still do not know the profession they wish to pursue. It is a complex choice that can be influenced by factors such as: ease of access to the course, whether geographical or access; image of the profession; possibility of financial rise; opportunities in the labor market; gratuity or low cost of tuition; the influence of friends, family, teachers or teaching professionals of the institution where he/she studied and the ability and vocation for the course or profession (Cobra & Braga, 2004). After choosing the university course, the young people are faced with another important decision: the choice of the institution in which they will study. Choosing a higher education institution (HEI) is also a rather complex task. Numerous factors can influence this decision, such as: location of HEI; value of tuition or gratuity of education; flexibility of schedules; image of the institution on the market; influence of family and friends; teaching staff; and personal desire, among others. The students, at that moment, need to make a survey of the institutions that offer the course they want and verify which ones are in accordance with their possibilities and expectations.

With the democratization of education, brought about by government programs, higher education has become more accessible to a larger part of the Brazilian population. This greater accessibility created a new demand for students, leading to the creation of new HEIs, mainly private ones, and more competitiveness in the market. Institutions realized that they needed to differentiate or lose market share for the competition, felt the need to improve the relationship with the students (Souza, Guimarães, & Jeunon, 2015), they began to pay more attention to students - their clients and the more choice they had, the greater their prospecting and retention work would be.

A course with great demand is the Bachelor of Administration. The fact that the course is traditionally offered by several HEIs allows, on the one hand, the future student to consult several institutions before opting for the one in which he will study. On the other hand, it practically forces the HEIs, especially the private ones, to try to differentiate themselves as much as possible in order to absorb the greatest number of students, such is the competitiveness between them.

To do this, they must know the most important factors for the choice of HEI by future students and thus, be able to prepare themselves to better meet the demands. Marketing plays an important role in accomplishing these tasks (Coutinho, Eidt, Folletto, & Cardoso, 2017). According to Kotler and Fox (1994, p. 95), "institutions have become truly marketing conscious when their markets have undergone change." They realized that with increased competitiveness, they needed to do something different to survive and improve their market share.

The challenge of institutions in the search for this market share is great. In this context, knowledge about their target audience, their needs, their expectations and the reasons that make them choose one or another college when they decide to enter higher education, becomes of paramount importance. Institutions that best understand what is really important to the student and succeed in turning that understanding into effective prospecting and maintenance actions will certainly gain a competitive advantage over competitors.

In view of the above, it is extremely important to know what factors exert influence on the students at the moment of choosing the educational institution. For that, it was proposed, as a general objective of this research, to analyze which factors influence the students of Administration in the choice of the institution of higher education.

To help achieve the general objective, the following specific objectives were proposed: to identify the attributes that influenced the students in the decision by the HEI, to verify the priorities of the attributes and to identify the main factors of influence valued by the students.

The study was justified, mainly, by the need that HEIs have to know better the factors that influence the choice of an HEI. In a highly competitive market, such as education, HEIs need to devise strategies to prospect and subsequently retain customers. This prospecting becomes even more difficult when it comes to courses offered by various institutions, such as the Administration. With more options, students are more likely to differentials and be more discerning in their choice.

Identifying the factors that lead them to choose one college over another is fundamental so that the institutions can guide their strategic planning in search of new students and more participation in the market.

In order to provide a logical sequence and facilitate the reader's understanding, the article was divided into six parts. In the first, introduction, the theme of the study, the problem, the general and specific objectives, the justification and the present structuring are presented. The second part is devoted to the theoretical foundation. The methodological procedures used to carry out the research are addressed in part three. Next, the analysis of the factors influencing the choice of HEI is made. Part five is devoted to the final considerations of the work. Finally, the conclusions are presented and suggestions are made for further research.

2 CONSUMER BEHAVIOR

The study of consumer behavior is of great value to organizations as it allows them to better understand the profiles, needs and desires of their current and potential consumers. In markets with high levels of competitiveness, understanding the factors influencing purchasing behavior has become essential for companies that want to survive and stand out, including HEIs. It helps in decision-making processes, in the definition of new market niches and in the identification of strengths and weaknesses (Shinaider, Fagundes, & Shinaider, 2016).

According to Solomon (2011, p. 33), consumer behavior addresses the "study of the processes involved when individuals select, buy, use or discard products, services, ideas or experiences to satisfy needs and desires."

Mowen and Minor (2003) define consumer behavior as the study of buying units (consumers) and the processes of exchange involved in the acquisition, consumption and disposition of goods, services, experiences and ideas.

Studying consumer behavior involves knowing feelings, thoughts, experimentation and actions in the consumption process (Churchill & Peter, 2013; Peter & Olson, 2009). It also involves knowing how individuals spend time, money and effort on consumption.

The main part of consumer behavior is decision making (Bossa, 2014). By knowing the reasons that lead the consumer to buy, organizations can prepare to better meet their needs and meet their expectations. Mendes and Aquino (2014) corroborate what Bossa (2014) stated when understanding that consumer behavior allows companies to anticipate demands and meet needs and needs effectively, thus seeking a possible future loyalty relationship where both parties have mutual gains.

2.1 Influence factors at consumer behavior

Consumer decision-making is influenced by several variables. Understanding these variables is of paramount importance to organizations as it can help them to better understand the thinking of their clients.

According to Kotler and Keller (2006, p. 172), "consumer buying behavior is influenced by social, cultural, personal and psychological factors." The combination of these factors results in a purchase decision (Rani, 2014).

The personal characteristics of an individual or a group of individuals with similar characteristics can influence their buying decision process. Among these characteristics we can mention: age and stage of the life cycle, occupation, economic circumstances, personality, self-image, lifestyle and values.

Psychological factors may be related to certain characteristics of consumers, which influence them in the buying process. "A set of psychological factors combined with certain characteristics of the consumer leads to decision-making processes and purchasing decisions" (Kotler & Keller, 2006, p. 192). Among them, we can mention: motivation, perception, learning and memory.

Organizations need to understand what happens in the consumer consciousness between the arrival of the external stimulus and the purchase decision (Machado, Mattei, & Oliveira, 2006), so that they can stimulate them to buy.

Social influences, in turn, encompass culture, subculture, social class, reference groups and family.

Finally, situational influences encompass the physical, social, time, task, and momentary conditions.

2.2 Consumer buying process

Besides the factors that influence the purchase itself, it is important to know the process used by the consumer, that is, how he behaves from the moment he recognizes a need that he will later try to satisfy by acquiring a product or service until his behavior post-purchase.

The consumer buying process, also known as the decision-making process, "is a set of steps that covers the before, during and after purchase" (A.T. Urdan & F. T. Urdan, 2010). It has as basic goal the purchase of a product or service (Gonçalves, 2013). Alessandra Shinaider, Fagundes, & Anelise Shinaider (2016, p.150) state that "the steps of the purchasing decision process are essential for the choice of a product or service." This process is described by several marketing authors (Blackwell, Miniard, & Engel, 2009, Churchill & Peter, 2003, Kotler & Keller, 2006, Solomon, 2011).

For Kotler and Keller (2006), the decision to buy the consumer goes through five processes, as shown in Figure 1.

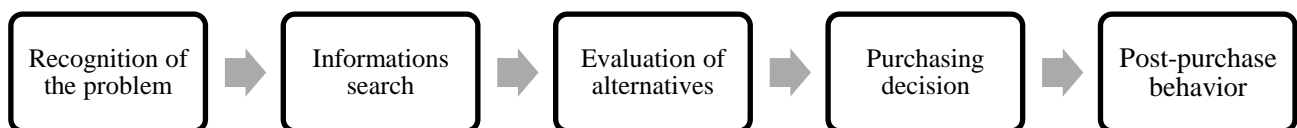


Figure 1 – Model of the five stages of the consumer buying process
Source: Kotler and Keller (2006, p. 189).

In the first stage, the buyer recognizes a problem or a need (Kotler & Keller, 2006). Karsaklian (2008) argues that the discovery of a need causes the consumer to be in a state of discomfort. It is the moment in which the individual perceives differences between his current state and his desired state (Las Casas, 2008). When you reach a certain level of intensity, the need becomes a motive. According to Assael (1992), motives are general impulses that define a need and direct behavior to meet this need. At this stage, the consumer realizes that in order to pass from one state to another, he must solve a problem (Solomon, 2011).

By recognizing a need, the consumer initiates a search for information, which "is the process by which the consumer searches the environment for adequate data to make a reasonable decision" (Solomon, 2011, p. 337). In this stage the consumer investigates the environment in search of data to make his decision (Martins, Silva, & Teixeira, 2009) and searches for the information necessary to make the most assertive decision or to make it more comfortable (Biazebete, 2012). According to Ferrel and Hartline (2006), his choices will depend on the situations in which he finds himself; whether emergency or not.

After obtaining the necessary information, the consumer starts the process of evaluating alternatives. This step involves "deciding what features or characteristics are important and identifying which of these features or features each alternative offers" (Churchill & Peter, 2003, p. 150). It is the moment when the consumer forms his / her beliefs and attitudes regarding the options available (Mowen & Minor, 2003).

Having evaluated the alternatives available, the next step is to choose which one to buy. The purchase is the main stage of the decision making process (Pimenta, 2011). The purchasing decision step "includes deciding whether or not to buy and, in the first case, what, where, when to buy and how to pay" (Churchill & Peter, 2003, p. 150). According to Kotler and Keller (2006, p. 195), "a

consumer's decision to modify, postpone or reject a purchase is highly influenced by the perceived risk."

One of the roles of marketing is to understand the factors that cause consumers a sense of risk in order to reduce them, for example, based on information and support (Kotler & Keller, 2006). In this way, it will facilitate the consumer purchasing decision process.

Finally, the last of the five steps of the model presented by Kotler and Keller (2006) is the stage of post-purchase behavior. It is then that consumers evaluate the purchase and consider whether they are satisfied or not (Churchill & Peter, 2003). Consumer satisfaction or dissatisfaction is determined by the relationship between their expectations and perceived performance (Araújo, Gomes, & Delgado, 2012). If the product or service does not meet consumer expectations, it is likely to be dissatisfied. If your expectations are met, you are likely to be satisfied

2.3 Consumption of services

The services sector has significant and growing participation in the economy of most existing countries. Their growth is visible even in emerging economies and often amounts to up to half of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of these economies (Lovelock, Wirtz, & Hemzo, 2011).

According to Sarquis (2009), the sector encompasses a large number of organizations from a wide range of industries, employs a significant number of people and absorbs a significant amount of the expenses of individuals and organizations.

According to Gronroos (1993, p. 36), service is:

An activity or series of activities of a more or less intangible nature - which normally, but not necessarily, occurs during interactions between customer and service employees and / or physical assets or goods and / or systems of the service provider - which is provided as a solution to the problem (s) of the customer (s).

When compared to the consumption of goods, the consumption of services presents some distinctive characteristics, such as: intangibility, simultaneity, heterogeneity and perishability. Intangibility is related to the lack of physical substances, that is, services cannot be touched or evaluated as an object, a thing. Concurrency refers to service being generally produced and consumed simultaneously. The fact that the performance or quality of the service is related to who, when and where it is executed makes it heterogeneous. Different people may have different perceptions about a service provided in the same place, at the same time, by the same person. Similarly, the same person makes distinct evaluations of the same service at different times. Finally, services cannot be stored, which makes them perishable and makes it difficult to manage organizational resources (Lovelock et al., 2011; Sarquis, 2009).

2.4 Consumption in Educational services

In the constant search for the attraction of new students, the knowledge of the potential consumer and what he seeks in an educational institution become relevant to HEIs. In this sense, several studies were carried out in an attempt to identify the main factors of attraction or influence of consumers in the organizational market.

Alves (1999) emphasizes the prestige of the organization as the most important factor in choosing an HEI. According to her, students make prior consultations with friends and acquaintances to inform themselves about institutions and courses (Alves, 1999). Later, in another study, the author adds that the factors that most influence the image of an HEI are: quality of teaching, reputation, location, academic environment, HEI ethics, teaching staff, attention to the student, ease of completion graduation and social responsibility of the HEI (Alves, 2003).

Proximity of work and residence, quality of teaching, marketing campaign, monthly fee, possibility of professional opportunities and ease of entry are the main attraction factors cited by

Mund, Durieux and Tontini (2001). In the research carried out by the authors it was evident that the most valued characteristic of an HEI is the recognition by society and the market as a quality institution. In the view of the interviewees, the quality is related to the qualification of the teaching staff and the infrastructure of the institution, including laboratories with modern equipment, comfortable classrooms and library with complete collection.

Kotler and Fox (1994) exhibit an extensive relation of attraction factors. According to them, the most sought after attributes of students are: academic reputation, cost, location of campus (urban or rural), distance from home, campus extension, socializing, campus physical appearance, housing and living conditions, and marketing of work.

Innovation is an attractiveness attribute addressed by Mavondo, Chimhanzi and Stewart (2005). For the authors, innovating in services is fundamental for institutions that aim to attract students.

A study with HEI directors and freshmen of Administration courses identified that the most relevant attributes for the choice of the educational institution are: the qualification of the teachers, the recognition of the HEI for its teaching quality, the concept of the institution before the Ministry of Education (MEC) and the opinion of friends who have studied / studied at the institution (Perfeito, Becker, Silveira, & Fornoni, 2004).

According to Pimpa and Suwannapirom (2007), the institution's curriculum, employability, the attractiveness of HEI and the cost of tuition are important attributes for students. As for Seeman and O'Hara (2006), the factor that attracts most students is the reputation of the HEI.

Finally, for Rowley (2003), the perception of quality and the level of commitment to the service provided by the HEI are fundamental to the students' decision.

Identifying the factors influencing consumer behavior, HEIs may use them to gain student preference (Biazon, 2012). Consumer preferences are driven by the perceived value of characteristics and attributes of products and services.

2.5 Marketing strategies in the consumption of educational services

With the most competitive market, HEIs realized that they needed to deal effectively with their audiences if they wanted to be successful (Kotler & Fox, 1994) and felt the need to promote themselves to potential students (Alves, Mainardes, & Raposo, 2010). "They have been forced to develop new skills in order to become more effective in attracting students" (Alésio & Domingues, 2010, p. 148). They would need to "adopt more professional and appropriate positions in the new times" (Las Casas, 2008, p. 93). Differentiation has become necessary to attract and retain students (Lanzer, 2004). The managers understood that, in order to be successful in their objectives, HEIs should value the recognition, prediction and satisfaction of their clients' needs (Kassiani et al., 2017), as well as understanding the consumption habits of their potential consumers (Moura, 2017).

They found, therefore, in marketing, the necessary instrument to guide them in facing the new panorama of Brazilian education. Thus, marketing in the educational sector has ceased to be an element that is little worked and, for many, even unnecessary, to become an essential concern of institutions (Cobra & Braga, 2004). Thus, knowing marketing research methodologies became of great importance for educational managers (Birau, 2014).

For Mainardes (2007), marketing contributes to HEIs by developing programs that result in increased audience satisfaction. To do this, institutions need to organize themselves, use their creativity and apply marketing strategies appropriately (Vicentine, 2009). The application of these strategies requires complex activities based on fundamental marketing elements, such as the marketing mix (Birau, 2014). Shimp (1990) states that the success of marketing strategies depends, as a matter of priority, on the understanding of consumer behavior.

The use of marketing in educational institutions, however, is not yet a consensus among educational managers. Trevisan (2002, p. 102) believes that "despite the importance of marketing for HEIs, favorable and unfavorable positions are found." While some dismiss the idea altogether, others suggest that marketing should be introduced with caution in the educational environment (Kotler & Fox, 1994).

Two main criticisms of the use of marketing in educational institutions are made by Kotler and Fox (1994): their incompatibility with the educational mission and the fact that marketing should not be necessary. The incompatibility of marketing with the educational mission is defended by those who think that educational institutions are "above" it, and this is recommended only for commercial companies: "they see marketing as 'hard selling' and believe that it depreciates education and the educational institutions that use it" (Kotler & Fox, 1994, p. 31). But the fact that marketing should not be necessary to educational institutions is advocated by those who believe that people should only acknowledge that education was "good for them" (Kotler & Fox, 1994).

Although marketing adherence by HEIs has increased considerably in relation to the years prior to the democratization of higher education in Brazil, Cobra and Braga (2004, 27) warn that "HEIs where marketing is done with a strategic vision are rare". For authors, in many institutions marketing is used only for disclosure, while it could have more functionality if tied to their planning and management. If applied assertively, educational marketing can have a direct influence on the results of HEIs (Filip, 2012).

Price, location and promotion decisions are strategic for HEIs. A wrong choice can bring them negative consequences, such as loss of students, while right decisions can be quite effective in winning and retaining students.

3 METHODOLOGICAL PROCEDURES

This research can be characterized, for purposes, as descriptive and, as to the means, as a case study. Regarding the type of approach, the research is characterized as quantitative. Quantitative research deals with the collection and analysis of numerical data and the application of statistical tests (Collis & Hussey, 2005).

The research universe was made up of students of the bachelor's degree in Administration of the Faculdade de Ensino de Minas Gerais (FACEMG), a private higher education institution located in Belo Horizonte-MG. The sample was composed by students from the 1st to the 7th period of the administration course of the Pampulha campus, at night. The students of the 8th period were not selected as a sample, since they attended this period of the course fully online, with only eight face-to-face meetings during the semester, in addition to the test dates. Sampling was by accessibility or convenience.

For the collection of data, 244 questionnaires were printed, totaling the number of students enrolled. Of these, 151 were validated after data cleansing. The questionnaire used in this research was an adaptation of the instrument used by Biazon (2012), which constructed it from Antunes (2004). The use of its questionnaire is due to the fact that it meets the need of this research, due to its structure and the types of questions addressed.

The questionnaire was divided into two stages. The first one sought to identify the personal profile of the respondents.

The second stage aimed to identify the importance of several factors for the choice of HEI. We presented 30 attributes to be evaluated on a five-point Likert scale, ranging from the lowest grade (1 = total disagreement) to the highest grade (5 = total agreement). In this investigation, the attributes with no or less influence for the students can be related to the points of degree 1 and 2 in the scale. Indifferent attributes can be related to the point of degree 3 and, finally, attributes with more or total influence on student choice may be related to grade 4 and grade 5 points on the scale. The data collection technique used in the research was the self-answered questionnaire and the cross-sectional type. The SPSS 18.0 software was used for the tabulation and analysis of the data. We sought to identify the means of each attribute and, later, of each factor. Then, the Paired T test was performed to identify if the differences between the means found were actually significant. Finally, correlation was used to measure the degree to which variables tended to change together. The specific correction used was that of Spearman. This correlation evaluates the monotonic relationship between two ordinal or continuous variables. In these cases, the variables tend to change together, but not necessarily at a constant rate.

For the presentation of the results, the attributes of influence were grouped into factors, according to their nature and similarity, based on an adaptation of Meyer (2002) and Antunes (2004), replicated by Biazon (2012). The factors are as follows:

- a) Factor 1 - Institutional reputation: represents how HEI acts in its external environment. These are aspects such as innovation and reputation in society;
- b) Factor 2 - Actions of social responsibility of the HEI: approaches teaching and extension projects that value both the academic community and society with social actions;
- c) Factor 3 - Teaching staff: represents teachers and their attributes as a degree, motivation and work experience;
- d) Factor 4 - Support activities: it stimulates the accomplishment of stages and scientific initiation, as well as the participation of the direction and its coordinators in activities next to the students and teachers;
- e) Factor 5 - Structure and infrastructure: it comprises the physical and material attributes that support the good functioning of the teaching and learning process (library, laboratories, etc.);
- f) Factor 6 - Communication and service: refers to the way in which communication can attract the student, if the advertisements they see are attractive, important for their decision; and service means how to relate to the public involved in HEI;
- g) Factor 7 - Courses offered: the courses offered by HEIs on their campus;
- h) Factor 8 - Price: it is the importance given or not to the value to be paid by the educational services;
- i) Factor 9 - Selective process.

The determining attributes of choice were grouped into nine factors summarized in Figure 2.

Groups	Attributes
Factor 1 Institutional reputation	AT02: The institution has a good reputation in society.
	AT05: The institution has a good concept in the MEC.
	AT07: The institution has market acceptance.
	AT12: In the opinion of acquaintances, friends and parents, the institution is conceptualized.
	AT14: The institution's brand provides students with status in society.
	AT24: The institution has an innovative profile.
Factor 2 Actions of social responsibility of HEI	AT30: Knowing that the students trained by the institution have good acceptance in the labor market is an attribute that influences the choice.
	AT17: The institution invests in cultural activities, from the holding of events of interest to the academic community.
Factor 3 Teaching staff	AT18: The institution cares about the community, carrying out social actions.
	AT26: The teaching staff of the institution (teachers) is qualified.
	AT27: The teachers of the institution are experienced.
Factor 4 Support activities	AT28: The teachers are motivated to teach.
	AT20: The management of the institution seeks to be involved with academic activities.
	AT21: The coordinators of the institution seek to be involved with academic activities.
	AT25: The institution supports and mediates the accomplishment of vocational internships with companies and/or entities.
Factor 5 Structure and infrastructure	AT01: The institution is close to my residence or work.
	AT03: The institution's infrastructure (classrooms, library, parking, canteen etc.) is compatible with what I expect.
	AT08: The institution works in shifts that serve me well (morning, afternoon and night).
	AT09: The institution has a method of teaching that I like (face-to-face, semipresencial, at a distance).
	AT10: The institution provides security to students.
Factor 6 Communication and service	AT13: The advertisement of the institution pleases me.
	AT19: The institution has qualified staff.
	AT22: The information provided by the institution's employees is reliable.

Factor 7 Courses offered	AT06: The institution offers the courses (options of courses) that I desire.
	AT16: The courses have content appropriate to the reality of the labor market.
	AT29: The evaluation criterion of the institution is an attribute that influences the choice.
Factor 8 Price	AT04: The monthly fee is compatible with what I can afford in a college course.
	AT15: The institution offers discounts on tuition and/or scholarships.
	AT23: The cost-benefit relationship that has been studied at the institution is attractive.
Factor 9 Selective process	AT11: The vestibular process is simplified.

Figure 2 – Attributes and influence factors in the choice of HEI
Source: Survey data.

4 ANALYSIS OF INFLUENCING FACTORS IN THE CHOICE OF HEI

Here we present the analysis of the attributes that, according to the respondents, influenced the choice of HEI. Knowing the mean of each attribute is an important step in achieving the study objectives. Table 1 shows the overall mean of each of the 30 attributes surveyed.

Table 1 – Average of attributes

Attributes	Average
AT01: The institution is close to my residence or work.	3,54
AT02: The institution has a good reputation in society.	3,62
AT03: The institution's infrastructure (classrooms, library, parking, canteen etc.) is compatible with what I expect.	2,89
AT04: The monthly fee is compatible with what I can afford in a college course.	4,52
AT05: The institution has a good concept in the MEC.	4,43
AT06: The institution offers the courses (options of courses) that I desire.	4,37
AT07: The institution has market acceptance.	3,92
AT08: The institution works in shifts that serve me well (morning, afternoon and night).	4,52
AT09: The institution has a method of teaching that I like (face-to-face, semipresencial, at a distance).	3,93
AT10: The institution provides security to students.	3,27
AT11: The vestibular process is simplified.	3,86
AT12: In the opinion of acquaintances, friends and parents, the institution is conceptualized.	3,27
AT13: The advertisement of the institution pleases me.	3,48
AT14: The institution's brand provides students with status in society.	2,95
AT15: The institution offers discounts on tuition and/or scholarships.	4,27
AT16: The courses have content appropriate to the reality of the labor market.	4,26
AT17: The institution invests in cultural activities, from the holding of events of interest to the academic community.	3,39
AT18: The institution cares about the community, carrying out social actions.	2,84
AT19: The institution has qualified staff.	3,61
AT20: The management of the institution seeks to be involved with academic activities.	3,61
AT21: The coordinators of the institution seek to be involved with academic activities.	3,87
AT22: The information provided by the institution's employees is reliable.	3,64
AT23: The cost-benefit relationship that has been studied at the institution is attractive.	4,25
AT24: The institution has an innovative profile.	3,62
AT25: The institution supports and mediates the accomplishment of vocational internships with companies and/or entities.	3,54
AT26: The teaching staff of the institution (teachers) is qualified.	4,28
AT27: The teachers of the institution are experienced.	4,35
AT28: The teachers are motivated to teach.	4,20
AT29: The evaluation criterion of the institution is an attribute that influences the choice.	3,89
AT30: Knowing that the students trained by the institution have good acceptance in the labor market is an attribute that influences the choice.	3,96
Total Average	3,81

Source: Survey data.

The most valued attributes were the tuition value (AT04) and the diversity of shifts in which classes are taught (AT08), with an average of 4,52. Other highly valued attributes were the HEI concept in the MEC (AT05), with an average of 4,43; the options of courses that the HEI offers (AT06), with average 4.37; and teacher experience (AT27), with an average of 4,35.

The least important attributes for choosing the HEI were the brand that the institution provides students with the company (AT14), with an average of 2,95; the institution's infrastructure (AT03), with an average of 2,89; and the concern of the HEI with the community, demonstrated through social actions (AT18), with an average of 2,84. Table 2 shows the mean of each of the nine factors.

Table 2 – Average by factors

Factors	Average
1. Institutional reputation	3,68
2. Actions of social responsibility of HEI	3,12
3. Teaching staff	4,28
4. Support activities	3,77
5. Structure and infrastructure	3,63
6. Communication and service	3,58
7. Courses offered	4,17
8. Price	4,35
9. Selective process	3,86
Average	3,83

Source: Survey data.

In view of the averages found, it is possible to affirm that the price factor had a greater influence on the choice of the HEI, with an average of 4,35, followed by the teaching staff and courses offered. The selection process of the institution obtained the fourth highest average, which shows its considerable influence in the choice of the students. This fact deserves further reflection. Is the occupation of the fourth place by the selective process factor related to the flexibility of the process, which offers scheduled evidence and entry with the National High School Exam (ENEM) grade? Or is your position due to the ease of the selective process, which presents simple evidence, which does not select the best? To what extent is selection merely a formality? With similar averages, support activities, institutional reputation, infrastructure and infrastructure, and finally, communication and service, occupied the next places in the hierarchy of factors. The social responsibility actions of the institution, in turn, had little influence in this process. It is important to note that there is a lack of knowledge about the social responsibility actions, since there is no disclosure by the institution - a point to be improved - which probably explains their low perception among students.

After the survey of the averages of the attributes and of each factor, we proceeded to the T-test between the factors, as shown in Table 3.

Table 3 – Paired T Test

Pairs of factors	t	Df	p
Institutional reputation - Support activities	,067	150	,947
Institutional reputation - Structure and infrastructure	,857	150	,393
Institutional reputation - Communication and service	1,892	150	,060
Teaching staff – Price	-1,238	150	,218
Support activities - Structure and infrastructure	,488	150	,626
Support activities - Communication and service	1,593	150	,113
Support activities – Selective process	-1,951	149	,053
Estrutura e infraestrutura - Communication and service	1,030	150	,305

Source: Survey data.

Table 3 shows only the pairs of factors whose p value is greater than 0,05, thus accepting the null hypothesis that affirms the existence of equality between the means. As the averages are significantly the same there is no evidence of difference in the scores attributed to the factors. Thus, it can be seen that the score attributed to teaching staff, for example, was not significantly different from that attributed to the price factor, even though it presented different averages. The other factors not presented in the table, when paired, presented p value less than 0,05, thus rejecting the null hypothesis and confirming the difference between the means. In these cases, it can be stated that the score attributed to one factor was significantly different from that attributed to the other. In the researched literature it was not possible to identify studies that demonstrated these equalities or differences between means.

Finally, the Spearman correlation test was performed, the results of which are shown in Table 4.

Table 4 – Spearman correlation

		Spearman Correlation								
Fatores		Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 3	Factor 4	Factor 5	Factor 6	Factor 7	Factor 8	Factor 9
Factor 1	Correlation coefficient	1,000	,653	,559	,554	,672	,662	,695	,526	,451
	p value	.	,000	,000	,000	,000	,000	,000	,000	,000
Factor 2	Correlation coefficient	,653	1,000	,454	,642	,580	,701	,445	,359	,301
	p value	,000	.	,000	,000	,000	,000	,000	,000	,000
Factor 3	Correlation coefficient	,559	,454	1,000	,539	,519	,516	,619	,460	,320
	p value	,000	,000	.	,000	,000	,000	,000	,000	,000
Factor 4	Correlation coefficient	,554	,642	,539	1,000	,495	,655	,556	,329	,248
	p value	,000	,000	,000	.	,000	,000	,000	,000	,002
Factor 5	Correlation coefficient	,672	,580	,519	,495	1,000	,568	,626	,457	,438
	p value	,000	,000	,000	,000	.	,000	,000	,000	,000
Factor 6	Correlation coefficient	,662	,701	,516	,655	,568	1,000	,522	,441	,411
	p value	,000	,000	,000	,000	,000	.	,000	,000	,000
Factor 7	Correlation coefficient	,695	,445	,619	,556	,626	,522	1,000	,558	,463
	p value	,000	,000	,000	,000	,000	,000	.	,000	,000
Factor 8	Correlation coefficient	,526	,359	,460	,329	,457	,441	,558	1,000	,430
	p value	,000	,000	,000	,000	,000	,000	,000	.	,000
Factor 9	Correlation coefficient	,451	,301	,320	,248	,438	,411	,463	,430	1,000
	p value	,000	,000	,000	,002	,000	,000	,000	,000	.

Source: Survey data.

The Spearman test found that the correlations between all factors are significant, since the p value found was always below 0,05. Positive correlation coefficients show that the factors tend to score in the same direction. The correlations are mostly moderate, with correlation coefficients between 0,4 and 0,7. The only strong correlation with a coefficient above 0,7 occurred between factors 2 (actions of social responsibility of HEI) 6 (communication and service). The few weak correlations are mainly related to the selective process (factor 9), with the social responsibility actions of the HEI (factor 2), the teaching staff (factor 3) and the support activities (factor 4). The price factor also presented weak correlations with the actions of social responsibility of the HEI (factor 2) and support activities (factor 4). Despite the price, teaching staff and courses offered had the highest averages, the correlations between them were only moderate. Because they are independent factors, the correlation between them is merely numerical. It is not possible to affirm the existence of a relation of dependence between the variables, nor its non-existence. As in the Paired T test, no study was identified in the researched literature that could better clarify this relationship, showing the studies only the influence factors in the students' choice and their order of relevance.

4.1 The Faculdade de Ensino de Minas Gerais - FACEMG

The Faculdade de Ensino de Minas Gerais had its first courses - Law and Technology in Human Resources Management - started in 2009, still under the name of Instituto Minas Gerais de Educação e Cultura (IMGEC), based in the Cruzeiro neighborhood in Belo Horizonte / MG. Since its inception, the institution has always sought to offer tuition below the average of other HEIs as a means of attracting students.

Its teaching staff has approximately 100 teachers, masters and specialists. Although there are no teachers with the title of doctor, there are professors studying the doctorate.

Currently, it has four campuses, three of them located in Venda Nova and one in Barro Preto and offer courses in Administration, Accounting, Law, Physical Education, Civil Engineering, Aesthetics and Cosmetics, Pharmacy, Physiotherapy, Commercial Management, Management Human Resources, Logistics, Management Processes, among others.

5 DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

The first objective of the research was to identify the attributes that influenced the students in the decision by HEI. It was verified that the most important attributes for the students were related to the amount of the tuition and the shifts in which the institution offers classes. Mund et al. (2001), Kotler and Keller (2006), The Holanda, Faria and Gomes (2006), Cobra and Braga (2004) and (Bronemann and Silveira, 2004), that the monthly price, as well as communication campaigns, does not have a strong influence on decision making.

Although there are several educational institutions in Belo Horizonte that offer the Administration course, FACEMG offers monthly tuition lower than the market average. In this case, the institution's pricing policy is fundamental for attracting students.

At the institution, classes usually take place during the day and night periods. On the one hand, it is possible to relate the predilection for the issue of class schedules to the fact that most students work during most of the day and therefore need flexible schedules to reconcile study with work. On the other hand, it should be noted that in most educational institutions, classes take place in the same shifts, and in some, there are still classes in the afternoon shift. Considering this fact, the attribute "the institution works in shifts that serve me well (morning, afternoon and night)" would not be a differential between the institutions, except in specific cases. The shifts offered by the HEI were not identified in any of the researches, specifically. It is understood that they are related to the question of structure for attendance of students, addressed in this study in the factor "structure and infrastructure".

The attributes "the institution presents a good concept in the MEC", "the institution offers the courses (options of courses) that I desire" and "the teachers of the institution are experienced" had close averages and together they were the next most valued by the students. Since several HEIs in Belo Horizonte offer the course addressed in this study, this attribute may not be, as well as class-shift, a great differential for institutions, although it eliminates from the list of students' options those who do not offer. Their analysis is impaired in this study, since the respondents were already students enrolled in the HEI at the time of the research. Moogan, Baron and Bainbridge (2001) cite the diversity of courses offered by the institution as an influencing factor. Already the experience of the teaching staff is cited by Alves (1999), Mund et al. (2001) and Perfeito, Becker, Silveira and Fornoni (2004). The concept of the institution before the MEC, in turn, is valued by the students in some researches (Perfeito et al., 2004, Holanda, Farias, & Gomes, 2006).

The second objective of the research was to verify the priorities of the attributes of influence. The most important attributes in choosing the HEI were, in descending order of importance: a) "the institution works in shifts that serve me well (morning, afternoon and night)" and "the monthly amount is compatible with what I can pay in an upper course ", tied; b) "the institution shall good concept in the MEC "; c) "the institution offers the courses (options of courses) that I desire" and, finally, d) "the teachers of the institution are experienced".

It is understood, therefore, that students must reconcile their studies with work and therefore need to take classes in certain shifts, but do not give up having classes with teachers who have experience and pay tuition that fit in their budget. All this in an institution that is well-respected by the Ministry of Education and offers the course they seek.

The third objective of the study was to identify the main factors of influence valued by students. They were grouped according to the nature of the attributes. It was found that the preferred factors were, according to their priority: a) price; b) teaching staff; c) courses offered.

It is important to note that, although the attribute "the institution works in shifts that attend me (morning, afternoon and night)" has been mentioned by respondents as the most influential in the choice of HEI, the factor to which it relates, "structure and infrastructure", did not appear among the most valued. This can be explained by the reduction of the general mean of the factor, caused by the lower means of the other attributes that compose it. This reduction did not occur in the "price" attribute, in which all the factors obtained high averages, contributing to the fact that it was the most valued factor by the students.

It should be noted that the application of the Spearman correlation and the Paired T test led to more in-depth findings about the results, not only in the mere identification and ranking of the means between attributes and factors, thus making the study more robust and going beyond the proposed objectives.

6 FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

This article had as main objective to analyze which factors influenced the students of Administration in the choice of the institution of superior education.

A quantitative research was carried out with the FACEMG students. It was verified that, the main factors of influence valued by the students, were the price, the teaching staff and the courses offered by the HEI. Among the attributes that made up the factors, those related to the HEI work shifts and to the monthly value were pointed out as the most influential. Next, in order of influence, the most important attributes for the students were the concept of the HEI in the MEC, the course options offered and the teachers' experience.

It is understood that, in order to maximize their chances of success in prospecting students and even their maintenance, the institution should focus its efforts on maintaining a qualified, experienced and motivated teaching staff; in the provision of new courses, adapted to the reality of the market and at diversified schedules, to serve the largest number of people; and the continuity, and even improvement, of its pricing policy, discounts and/or scholarships.

Some attributes, such as the quality of the teaching, the location of the HEI and its infrastructure, mentioned in several studies addressed in the theoretical framework of this research, were not so significant for the respondents, considering that they were already part of the student body of the institution. If the research was conducted with students not yet enrolled, the results could probably be different. Regardless, these and the other attributes analyzed in the research also need to receive attention from the leaders, although they are not initially a priority for the students. The development of the set of factors - and not the attention focused only on two or three factors - is essential, since the Paired T test demonstrated that there is no significant difference between several means found, being important to worry about the whole and to offer to students a better service in all areas.

It is necessary to emphasize the contribution that a qualitative research would bring to this study. The deepening of student perceptions would be of great value to the article. This is a methodological limitation that deserves to be highlighted. The only quantitative research left in the question of depth. Semi-structured interviews with students would significantly contribute to the study. Such methodology will be adopted in a future article, in order to complement this. Another limitation is related to the sample used. Because they are students from a single institution, with a specific profile, it is not possible to extend the results to other HEIs. It is possible to affirm that, although the sample size was sufficient to carry out the analyzes, convenience sampling was a limitation, since it did not have randomness or representativeness of the population. It is also worth noting the high number of

questionnaires discarded after data cleaning, which contributed negatively to the measurement of the overall results. Therefore, the application of similar research covering several institutions, private and even public, be they colleges, universities or universities, would add greater value to the results.

It is suggested, specifically for new studies in the institution itself, the expansion of the sample for the other courses, shifts and units, covering as many students as possible.

Another suggestion addressed to the FACEMG is the realization of a new research on the same subject, but with the candidates to the vestibular in the institution. It is quite probable that the influence of some factors on the students' choice may be different from those found by this research, since the college students have not yet started their college course, unlike the college students who were already enrolled in college when it was applied. The comparison of the results of both works could give the institution significant contributions.

For research in general, it is suggested the refinement of the attributes and factors of influence to be researched, observing the tendencies of national and international studies, with similar objectives. It is also interesting to apply, in new studies, statistical tools such as those used in this research, since the studies studied were simply in the demonstration of the means, without the deepening in questions such as the significance or not of the means and the correlation between the factors .

Finally, another suggestion is the development of articles focused on the decision-making process, mainly for the post-purchase phase, in order to evaluate students' satisfaction with the services provided by HEIs and their expectations.

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