

Information seeking challenges when moving across cultures: the case of Saudi female international students in Australia.

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This paper presents preliminary findings from a longitudinal qualitative PhD study on the information needs of Saudi female international students (SFIS) studying in Australia, and the search and information channels they use for seeking daily and academic information. More specifically, the study aims to explore and describe how the information needs and preferred sources of SFIS may change once they arrive in Australia. Using an exploratory research approach, data were collected in June 2015 through five semi-structured interviews. Preliminary findings drawn from a grounded theory analysis showed that the students' information needs and the information sources they used prior to their arrival, changed once they arrived in Australia. Before leaving home, the majority of students prioritised information on Australian culture and possible discrimination. Following their arrival, university administration and English fluency needs took precedence, and this trend remained until the last stage of their study. The students found that their English fluency in accessing university information presented more of a challenge than accessing day-to-day information, which was often available in both Arabic and English, or could be translated online. Further, Saudi relatives with Australian residency assisted students with their information collection in Australia. Recommendations to universities include greater attention to translation services especially when designing information portals, and reassessment of campus assistance and support services given to international students to enhance their academic experience.

Key words: social media, information needs information seeking, Saudi female international students.