

EXPECTATIONS, OUTCOMES AND ATTITUDE CHANGE OF STUDY ABROAD STUDENTS

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As universities prepare students for the 21st century, the value of a globalized education is increasing. Study abroad programs are increasingly important means for students to gain the global education that they will need to be successful in international settings. Many universities now offer students the ability to integrate a study abroad program into already intensive academic programs by offering shorter study abroad programs (2-8 weeks) during break periods between academic sessions in winter and summer. This study is based upon a larger dataset collected from students participating in several international study abroad programs offered by a US university's tourism program. This study builds upon two previous studies conducted by the authors, by examining the extent to which students' expectations were fulfilled and attitudes changed after participating in a short-term study abroad program using a large dataset collected from four study abroad programs.

One of the previous studies conducted by the authors examined attitude change toward the hosts after the trip (Nyaupane, Teye, Paris, 2008). The study contradicted the contact theory and cultural distance theory of attitude change. The second study examined the motivations of students to participate in study abroad programs and how attitudes towards destinations are formed (Nyaupane, Paris, & Teye, 2010; Nyaupane, Paris, & Teye, 2011). The later study indicated that social motivations are cognitively based, and cannot be easily substituted. While there has been some studies to explore study abroad programs from an educational perspective (Chew & Croy, 2011), these studies are primarily focused on academic component of study abroad programs and there is a lack of understanding of the outcomes and attitude change from a theoretical, methodological and practical point of view.

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A study abroad program's outcomes can be better understood by comparing students' attitudes and expected outcomes prior to the trip and what they actually received after the trip. This approach is based on the confirmation/disconfirmation methodological paradigm that has been used in the consumer behavior, and behavioral and cognitive psychology literature (Wirtz & Bateson, 1999; Woodruff, Cadotte, & Jenkins, 1983). This approach argues that satisfaction and attitude are not absolute; rather they are relative to a baseline. Prior to a study abroad trip, students may form expectations and attitudes, which are predictions of the experience they will receive. After the trip, the students cognitively compare actual experience with expected experience. A mismatch will either cause a positive or negative discrepancy (Woodruff et al., 1983).

The study focused on four groups of undergraduate students participating in four different study abroad programs: Australia and Fiji, Australia and New Zealand, Austria and Holland, and Dubai, UAE. The study followed a pre-and-post non-experimental design, which can help alleviate the problems of internal validity (Robson, Shannon, Goldenhar and Hale 2001, p. 13). The students were surveyed twice: 1) prior to the trip (pre-trip), and 2) after the trip (post-trip). All of the programs took place during a 5 week summer session, with the exception of Dubai, which took place during a 3 week winter session break. To measure attitude, a set of 23 attitude questions were selected based on the previous studies (Allport, 1954; Pizam, Jafari, and Millman, 1991). To measure expectations and outcomes, a set of 21 questions were used. The expectations and outcomes questions were developed based on the input from the study abroad instructors and a focus group with a group of students who had experience with study program programs. This study uses a Likert-type scale which asks respondents to rate each expectation/outcome statement on a 1-5 scale with 1 being 'strongly disagree' and 5 being 'strongly agree'. Expectations and outcomes questions included both inner-directed (eg, international travel, escape, and academic) and outer directed (eg., social motivation) needs and values (Gnoth, 1997).

A Multivariate Analysis of Variance (MANOVA) model with students' expectations and outcomes as the dependent variables was developed to compare the differences in the expectations (Pre) and outcomes (Post) between the study abroad programs. The results are presented in Table 1, including only the five items that show a significant pre/post difference. Overall pre and post attitudes were compared between each country using ANOVA, and differences in pre and post attitudes were compared for each country using t-tests (Table 2).

INSERT TABLE 1 HERE

INSERT TABLE 2 HERE

The findings of this study support the notion that expectations based upon inner-directed values are more likely to be unfulfilled or exceeded as the only outcomes to be significantly different from the expectations were based upon the inner-directed motivations for education, social/cultural benefits, and relaxation (Table 1). The increase in the expected outcome of the trip enabling enhanced learning about the tourism field can be seen as a 'surprise', even though students signing up for the program were aware that they would be taking tourism courses. On

the other hand, the attitude change towards a destination, whether positive or negative, is often the result of objects and situations outside of the direct control of the students, such as interactions with non-tourism services and local people (Nyaupane, Paris, Teye, 2008). These can be considered 'unexpecteds', whereas experiences with tourism services are expected and to an extent can be controlled by the individual. The formation of attitudes towards a destination and the reformation of attitudes after visiting a destination are result of situational experiences and the fulfillment of outer-orientated values/motivations/expectations. The results of this study support the expectation theory of attitude change and urge tourism researchers to rethink the use contact theory in tourism contexts. The contact theory assumes that the attitude of groups or individuals are positively changed through intercultural contact (Allport,1954); however, the outcomes of the trip were not positive for all countries. Adding three destinations on the previous analysis, this study challenges the findings of the previous studies employing contact theory.

Study abroad programs are often structured and unidimensionally focused on academic outcomes. Study abroad professionals' should consider focusing their attention on designing and implementing programmes that maximize the experiential learning opportunities during the program, provide ample time for social/cultural interaction within the local context, and additional free time that students can use for exploring their own interests at their own pace. This will allow for students to have a sense of control as well as provide the best opportunity for positive experiences, which could act as a counter any potential negative experiences outside of their control.

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Table 1.

Multivariate Analysis of Variance (MANOVA) Results for Expectations/Outcomes for Four Study Abroad Programs.

Expectation/Outcome	Means								Univariate	
	Australia/ Fiji		Austria/ Holland		Australia/New Zealand		Dubai		F	p
	Pre	Post	Pre	Post	Pre	Post	Pre	Post		
I will be relaxed as a result of this trip	3.90	3.64	4.06	3.25	4.25	2.94	3.89	4.00	5.593	.000
I will recognize the importance of foreign language	3.71	3.68	4.12	4.25	3.81	3.34	3.11	4.00	2.836	.008
This trip will enable me to learn a lot more about the importance and complexities of the travel and tourism field	4.32	4.76	4.00	4.31	3.87	4.41	3.89	4.35	2.496	.018
Overall, the trip will yield positive social and cultural benefits	4.58	4.52	4.69	4.34	4.81	4.34	4.67	4.53	4.678	.032 ^a
I will go on a similar study abroad program again	4.35	4.16	4.62	4.19	4.50	4.09	4.78	4.53	4.266	.040 ^a

Pre/Post MANOVA model: Pillai's Trace=.343, F=3.537, p<.001.

Trip MANOVA model: Pillai's Trace=.447, F=1.203, p=.144

a. Only significantly contributes to Pre/Post Model

Table 2.

Overall Comparison of Attitudes

Country	Australia	Fiji	New Zealand	Austria	Holland	Dubai	Other UAE	F	p
Pre-Trip	5.48 ^a	5.02 ^{bc}	5.45 ^{ab}	4.48 ^c	4.58 ^c	4.75 ^{bc}	4.52 ^c	9.786	.000

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Post-Trip	5.22	5.08	5.46	5.53	5.18	4.97	4.87	2.124	.051
Difference	-.26	.06	.01	1.05**	.60*	.22	.35		

abc: Means sharing the same superscript are not significantly different at the .05 level.

: Significant difference between Pre-post based on t-test at the .05 () and .001(**).