





Short-Term Study Abroad Programs: What is on Undergraduates' Minds?

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Introduction

- Globalizing undergraduate education programs is gaining importance (Bruening & Frick, 2004).
- International experiences help students understand other cultures while widening their worldview by showing them their previous perceptions and understanding of other countries and cultures were narrow (Bruening & Frick, 2004; Zhai & Scheer, 2002).
- Kuh (2008) stated universities must, “make it possible for every single student to participate in at least two high-impact activities during his or her undergraduate program, one in the first year, and one taken later in relation to the major field” (p. 21) to improve student success.

Introduction

- Colleges of agriculture should consider the importance of study abroad and consider making it a mandatory experience for all students (Brooks, Frick, & Bruening, 2006).
- Students are most motivated to participate in an international experience based on how much the international experience will contribute to their overall life experience (Briers, Shinn, & Nguyen, 2010).



Objectives

- To gain a better understanding of the participants' motivations for participating in a short-term study abroad experience.
- The specific research objective was to:
 - Explore student participants' motivations to participate in a short-term study abroad program.

Context of Agribusiness Study Abroad Course

- United Kingdom: International Agribusiness, Law and Culture covered in ARE 494
- 10 day program abroad with weekly class meetings before and after the travel throughout the semester





Theoretical Framework

- Theory of Planned Behavior
 - In relation to this study, student behaviors about studying abroad, their subjective norms, and perceived control over the international experience can predict their intentions of studying abroad.
- Herzberg's Motivational Theory
 - Study abroad programs are new and interesting opportunities for students, which may motivate students and create internal satisfaction, ultimately increasing their productivity in their academic careers and future employment.



Methods/Procedures

- A census study was conducted with the North Carolina State University College of Agricultural and Life Sciences Agribusiness 2014 Short-Term United Kingdom Study Abroad Program participants (N = 23).
- Each participant was enrolled in the course ARE 494 or AGI 194 (3 credit hours).
- Program began in 2011 and since then 113 undergraduate students have participated in this international experience.



Methods/Procedures

- Descriptive qualitative study utilized observational case study research.
- Case study is considered a bounded system and is viewed as an object instead of a process (Stake, 1995; Creswell, 1998; Merriam, 1998).
- A benefit of case study research is that it allows researchers to preserve the significant and holistic characteristics of real-life experiences (Merriam, 1998; Yin, 2013).



Timeline of Data Collection

- 1st class meeting of Spring semester 2014
 - Consent to participate, completed written questionnaire
- Late February
 - Students participated in focus groups on motivations
- Students traveled to the U.K. in early March
- The day after they return to the U.S.
 - Students participated in the second round of focus groups with reflective questions and discussion
- Throughout the entire semester
 - Students kept a journal with prelection and reflection posts
 - Short writing prompts during class
 - Researcher had access to their study abroad application responses



Methods/Procedures

- Data Analysis:
 - Open-ended questions were analyzed by a coding process. As Merriam (2009) suggests, the coding was broken down to categorize the data into broader themes.
 - These themes assisted in making meaning and answering the research questions pertinent to the study.
 - The researcher searched for common themes related to the participants' motivations for studying abroad.
 - Subthemes were identified within the common themes in order to describe the findings in more detail.



Methods/Procedures

- Trustworthiness Criteria:
 - Triangulation was used to ensure the meaning of the data is clear and valid (Creswell & Miller, 2000).
 - Variety of data collection methods: written questionnaires, oral questionnaires, focus groups, applications, and journal entries.
 - Lincoln and Guba (1985) assert qualitative research can be evaluated through credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability.
 - Confirmability: included excerpts of the raw data which illustrate the findings and conclusions.
 - Confirmability and Dependability: Met by the audit trail of the researcher, which included audio recordings, field notes, and questionnaire results, which were appropriate for improving the trustworthiness of the data.



Results/Findings



Results/Findings

- Characteristics of the population:
 - 48% male student participants ($n = 11$) and 52% female student participants ($n = 12$)
 - Range of ages from 18 to 39 with a mean age of 21
 - 19 students were seeking a Bachelor's of Science degree from NC State University
 - 4 students were seeking an Associate of Applied Science degree from the Agricultural Institute
 - Majors included:
 - Agribusiness Management ($n = 9$), Animal Science, Poultry Science, Livestock and Poultry Management, Plant and Soil Science, Genetics, Agricultural Education, Agricultural Science, and Food Science



Results/Findings

- The following themes and subthemes arose:
 - Theme 1: A Short-Term Length Aspect
 - The discovery of a ten day short-term program generated interest in studying abroad
 - This particular study abroad experience as a foundation leading to future, long-term trips abroad
 - “Short-term programs have more structure. I am thinking about doing a long term study abroad program later but first I wanted to do this because there is a lot more structure in short-term programs.”



Results/Findings

- The following themes and subthemes arose:
 - Theme 1: A Short-Term Length Aspect (CONTINUED)
 - A lack of desire to stay away from home for a long period of time
 - “Because of obligations I have back on the family farm I would be unable to go on a [study abroad trip for the] entire semester. This short trip works perfectly with my schedule.”
 - The perception of a diminished risk associated with short-term study abroad programs
 - “Going somewhere for ten days isn’t intimidating. If you get over there and didn’t like it, it’s only ten days till you’re back at home.”
 - “I feel like there is less risk involved. I am kind of scared to leave somewhere for an entire semester and go somewhere new.”



Results/Findings

- The following themes and subthemes arose:
 - Theme 2: Completion of Course Credits
 - How the short-term study abroad program fit into their degree plan
 - “It was the only [study abroad program] that my degree program would allow me to do.”
 - Timing of the program
 - **“I like the fact that they are over spring break and you don’t miss any classes that way.”**
 - “I chose this program in general because I like the fact that it is only in spring break. Normally I don’t do anything in spring break but work so it is something fun to do.”

Results/Findings

- The following themes and subthemes arose:
 - Theme 3: Promotion through Personal Interactions
 - Interactions between students
 - “I had heard a lot of people that had went through the program in the past say it was the best experience and that they would go back right now if they could.”
 - Interactions with faculty which motivated them to participate in the program
 - “I was talking with my professor and he said I should go for it.”
 - “I chose to study abroad because of Dr. Campbell. I had first met Dr. Campbell in his Agricultural Law class that he offered this fall. He has impressed upon all of us how very great an opportunity this trip is for us and **how easily obtainable the costs are. I had never planned to study abroad for fear of the costs but he broke down the different ways that you may be funded and I was more at ease with the idea of paying for the trip.** I have always wanted to see other areas of the world and now I am really excited that I am able to with my N.C. agricultural peers.”



Results/Findings

- The following themes and subthemes arose:
 - Theme 4: An Experiences Aspect
 - Travel and cultures
 - “Short-term study abroad allows a taste of a different country. It inspires but does not overwhelm the traveler.”
 - **“I have chosen to study abroad because I come from a very small and rural community. I have grown up seeing people who have never even really been out of the state and I decided a while ago that I am not that type of person. I want to see the world even if it is just this one trip.”**
 - Content based experiences
 - “When I first came to N.C. State and heard about traveling abroad, **I never saw myself as going that far away from my hometown in Johnston County. That all changed when I found out about the amazing opportunities to visit and explore another place's agriculture. I also hope that I get a chance to learn something that I could bring back to my own farming operation that would be beneficial to our resources.**”



Conclusions



Conclusions

- Students were attracted to this short-term study abroad program because of the length of the program.
- Students that do not wish to stay away from home for an extended period of time considered short-term programs to be an ideal opportunity.
- This study abroad program was seen as attractive since it was over spring break and students did not have to miss class (Zhai & Scheer, 2002; Bruening & Frick, 2004).



Conclusions

- An attractive option for students who have too many obligations at home to leave home for a long period of time.
- Students were motivated to participate in this short-term program because they viewed it as a chance to see if they might possibly enjoy a long-term stay abroad.
- Students viewed short-term study abroad programs having less risk than long-term study abroad programs because there was less time invested abroad and away from home.



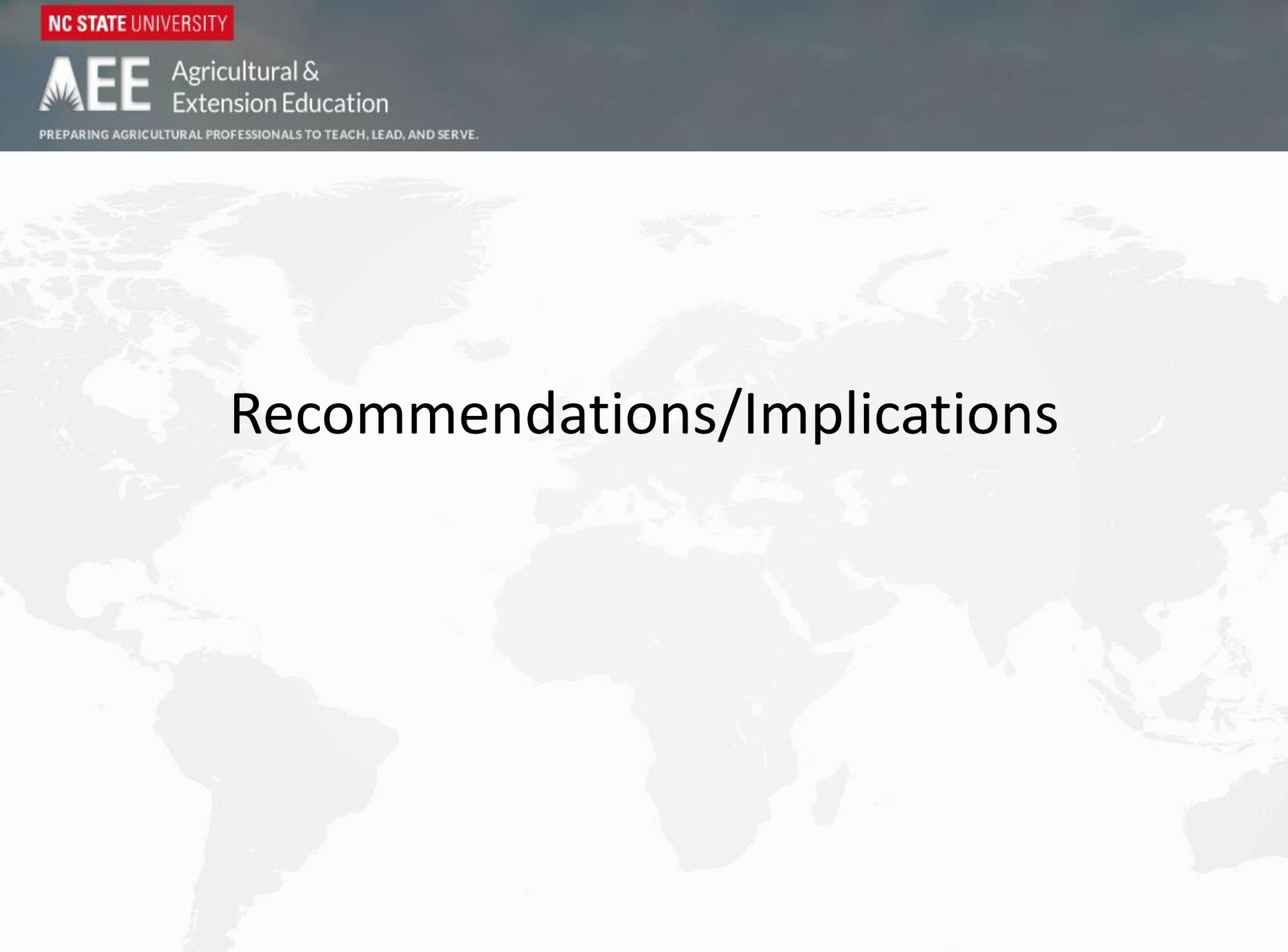
Conclusions

- Some students were encouraged to participate in this study abroad program through interactions with others.
 - **Several positive interactions, like the conversations held with peers who had previously participated in the program, served as a motivator for current students** (Zhai & Scheer, 2002).
 - Past participants enjoyed their study abroad experience and shared that enjoyment with potential program participants, which is related to Herzberg's (1959) Two Factor Theory when discussing how personal growth leads to motivation and satisfaction.
 - As stated in Ajzen's Theory of Planned Behavior, the more positive discussion of the program leads to a stronger desire to participate in the program (Ajzen, 2006).
 - **Professors also motivated students to participate in this short term study abroad program.**
 - This encouragement from the professors could be viewed as expectations from others, which would be considered a normative belief (Ajzen, 2006).



Conclusions

- When agriculture majors at North Carolina State University are contemplating a study abroad program, there are not many options that help fulfill their degree requirements (Brooks, Frick, & Bruening, 2006).
- One reason participants were motivated in this particular study abroad program was the chance to complete course credits which are under the required category of General Education Global Knowledge courses.
- This program was the only study abroad option to help meet the curricular hour needs of students.
- Having a short-term program containing three hours of course credit was appealing to students.

A faint, light gray world map is visible in the background of the slide, showing the continents of North America, South America, Europe, Africa, Asia, and Australia.

Recommendations/Implications



Recommendations for Future Practice

- Past program participants should be recruited to talk to potential student participants about the study abroad program.
- A study abroad peer presenters program should be formed in colleges of agriculture.
 - Give presentations to classes and students in the college.
 - This ambassador-type program will also provide the peer-presenters with leadership and public speaking skills.



Recommendations for Future Practice

- Having faculty who support and encourage study abroad opportunities is important.
 - Faculty in colleges of agriculture should become more involved in the study abroad opportunities
 - Through their own participation
 - Encourage students and/or advisees to seek out global programs
 - Identify and encourage students who would be good candidates for a study abroad experience



Recommendations for Future Practice

- More short-term study abroad programs with an emphasis on agriculture should be developed and offered.
- Since students placed importance on having a study abroad program relating to their majors and fields of study, the development of additional short-term study abroad programs should occur in colleges of agriculture.



Recommendations for Future Practice

- Faculty should be made aware of the various study abroad opportunities so promotion for degree-related short-term study abroad programs could occur.
- Undergraduate coordinators play an important and active role in informing the faculty of their departments about the available agriculturally related study abroad opportunities and how they fit into students' degree plans.
- Faculty advisors throughout colleges of agriculture should be given displays or brochures with detailed information about how their advisees can study abroad while fulfilling their degree-related required courses at the same time.



Recommendations for Future Practice

- Short-term programs during spring break should be continued to be held because they reach students who cannot be away from home for an extended amount of time.
- Underclassmen, especially freshmen, should be informed early in their academic career about the short-term study abroad options available so they can plan in advance for future study abroad programs.



Recommendations for Research

- Pre-trip and post-trip focus groups should be held for the future short-term study abroad programs as a way to understand the participants' motivations to participate in the international experience.
- A similar study should be carried out with the future participants of this same program each year to see if the same motivations arise.



Recommendations for Research

- Examine how location of an agriculturally related short-term study abroad program encourages or discourages student participation.
- Compare agricultural short-term study abroad programs at North Carolina State University to see if participants share similar motivations.
- A similar study could also be conducted with short-term programs offered through colleges of agriculture at other universities.



Recommendations for Research

- Students' motivations could also be examined with study abroad programs of different lengths and/or objectives.
 - For example, research could be conducted with students who elect to participate in a long-term study abroad program or a program with a service-based focus.



THANK YOU

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