

UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHERN QUEENSLAND

**Internationalization of Business Students:
The Impact of a Foreign Study Experience on
Career Choice and Perceived Job Marketability**

A Dissertation submitted by

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ABSTRACT

With increased internationalization comes the necessity for individuals to become global citizens, to be more aware of world events, and to be more culturally aware and sensitive. It is important for universities to create an academic culture that promotes and supports study abroad opportunities as a means of exposing students to the world outside their home countries. More specifically, it is important for universities to prepare their business students for careers in the global marketplace.

In order to understand the perceived impact of a study abroad experience on job marketability, comparisons were drawn between business students' expectations and values prior to studying abroad and their perceived outcomes and values afterward. Cross-cultural, gender, and generational comparisons were also drawn.

The Magellan Exchange, a non-profit consortium of universities worldwide, facilitates student and faculty exchanges. More than 1,400 students have studied abroad through The Magellan Exchange, and approximately 90 percent of those have been business students. Past business participants were invited to complete an online survey, which was based upon the questionnaires of two prior studies. The questionnaire included questions addressing pre-experience values and expectations as well as post-experience values and perceived outcomes; it also questioned basic demographics and key components of the study abroad program, measuring the personal, academic, and career impact of a foreign study experience.

The conceptual framework of the study allowed for the investigation of participants' original values and expectations, which are influenced by family, friends, gender,

culture, previous experiences, and the environment, prior to studying abroad. It also takes into consideration the effect of external factors (i.e., environmental, economic, social, cultural, and demographic) on the learning experience (i.e., the study abroad experience), which in turn impacts perceived outcomes and values after the international experience as well as the post-experience career-related outcomes.

Factor analysis revealed the latent factors of *expectations of Adventure, Intrepidness, Career Preparation, Money and Self-Actualization* as well as the *values of Adventure, Intrepidness, Career Preparation, Money and Self-Actualization*.

Analysis revealed significant differences between respondents' expectations and perceived outcomes on all five factors, as well as between the values assigned to those expectations and perceived outcomes.

Cross-cultural comparisons indicated that U.S. and European respondents differed in their *expectation and perceived outcome of Adventure*, as well as in the *value of Adventure and Money* before the experience and the *value of Adventure, Intrepidness and Money* after the experience. In addition to the cultural impact, the study revealed generational and gender differences between respondents.

The career implications of study abroad are becoming more apparent and more important with increased internationalization. Understanding the goals and expectations of study abroad, as well as the values associated with them, in addition to what participants perceive as outcomes and how they value them, affords an opportunity for universities to better market foreign study programs to prospective participants, thus improving participation rates and better preparing business graduates for the competitive global workplace.

CERTIFICATION OF DISSERTATION

I certify that the ideas, experimental work, results, analyses, software and conclusions reported in this dissertation are entirely my own effort, except where otherwise acknowledged. I also certify that the work is original and has not been previously submitted for any other award, except where otherwise acknowledged.

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Signature of Candidate

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Date

ENDORSEMENT

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Signature of Supervisor/s

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Date

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