

Study Abroad: Student Perceived Benefits from Short Term Study Abroad

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Introduction & Framework

- Short term study abroad trips have become increasingly popular at Universities within the United States.
- The optimal study abroad trip length is subjective to institutional needs.
- Current agricultural students are facing a tremendous challenge upon graduating college to compete within a global work force.
- The majority of large agricultural industries are now invested in international operations, in order to better compete for these types of jobs students must immerse themselves within diversity and be prepared to compete within these markets. (Hall, 2005)

Purpose, Objectives, and Methods

- The purpose of this study was to explore perceived benefits students participating in short term study abroad trips held.
- Objective 1: Identify the experiences and skills learned on the study abroad trips
- Objective 2: Identify barriers of short term study abroad trip. Data was analyzed utilizing a collective case study approach.

Results

Theme 1: Students gained a deep cultural awareness. “ I’ve been to a lot of places and seen a lot of cultures....Brazil was by far the happiest... most of them were very, very poor...but just happy people”.

Theme 2: Lasting professional experiences were created. Additionally, themes emerged in regards to the second objective, barriers to short term study abroad. One student interviewed for a highly competitive internship the week after returning from Brazil and believes he received the internship in part because of the trip.

Results Continued

Theme 3: Students would not have attend if required to learn the host country’s language. The students stated they were able to communicate within the host country effectively enough to not value you the requirement of advanced language training and would not attend a trip with this requirement.

Theme 4: Students are opposed to longer study abroad trips. One faculty members indicated he has one student attend a study abroad prior to the inception of these short term high impact trips ranging from ten to fourteen days.

USD participation begins to lower.

Theme 5: Trip cost was ideal. Students indicated they paid approximately \$3,000 USD for their trips. The faculty member with the most experience indicated if trips are around \$4,000

Theme 6: Students alcohol management became an issue.

Discussion

- Participants indicated their cultural awareness increased as indicated by Zhai and Sheer (2004) in various scenes of the trip, not only in the educational day to day aspects but in the night life the country had to offer as well.
- These students learned cultural awareness, dealt with lack of time, processed through language barriers, and found their opportunity with this class.
- Students maintained differing opinions with alcohol usage on the trip and further exploration should be conducted with a larger population.
- Further research should look at the difference within instructors and the perceived success of the trips. The Brazil trip was conducted by an instructor with two years of teaching experience and two study abroad trips while the Germany trip was conducted by a tenured faculty member with thirty years of teaching experience and taken over five hundred students on study abroad trips.