

Studying revealed by stroud's study that females

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Studying abroad during a student's college years is a classic experience that many have done or will do in the future. Many envision themselves experiencing a distinct culture, a new environment or a different style of education. Gaining personal growth through independence and obtaining school credit may convince students to leave the comforts of their friends and family to travel overseas for a few months as a break from their everyday lifestyles. The study abroad process can be very overwhelming for many, due to the plethora of information that one needs to know, such as the process of applying for student visas, boarding, insurance, and the program itself. Identifying the most effective type of information source that motivates interest in studying abroad will assist students in selecting the most suitable program that meets their needs.

With that being said, our research will study the extent to which different types of information sources affect a student's interest in studying abroad.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Making the plan to study abroad

In an increasingly globalized world, having the knowledge and the exposure to cultures and societies other than one's own is an asset to an individual's human capital. One way that university students can become a globally competent candidate is through the participation in study abroad programs. It is important to understand the various factors that influence a student's decision to study abroad and thus many previous research has been done to examine these factors. A study conducted by Salisbury, Umbach, Paulsen, and Pascarella in 2009 found that students' financial capital and socioeconomic status were influencing factors in their study abroad decision-making. Students from lower income families were less likely to plan to

participate in study abroad programs relative to students from higher income families, and restrictions in financial capital significantly hinders the probability of study abroad participation (Salisbury et al., 2009).

Furthermore, the study also found that students' openness and acceptance of diverse worldviews and people positively relates to the likelihood of study abroad participation (Salisbury et al., 2009). Students who indicated the desire to understand other countries and cultures were twice as likely to plan to study abroad compared to those who expressed the contrary (Stroud, 2010).

Lastly, students' gender was found to be another demographic factor that affects study abroad intent, as revealed by Stroud's study that females were 2.4 times more likely to intent to study abroad than males (Stroud, 2010). As analyzed above, there has been extensive research done on study abroad students' demographics in regards to what factors constitute the decision to study abroad. This includes ethnicity, socioeconomic status and career goals. However, there still remains a research gap within this area of study, namely, the types of information sources that students use to obtain information and its influence on the interest to study abroad. This research article will look into how information sources play a role in the interest to study abroad. Types of Information Sources Students use various type of information sources to acquire knowledge, instruction, and advice. A study conducted by Goff, Patino, and Jackson analyzed high school students' preferences of information sources as they consider college choices.

This study categorized information sources into three components: media sources (magazines, TV, Radio), social normative sources (peers, friends, family) and direct sources (college fairs, school counselors, websites) (Goff et al., 2004). Using the framework from this study, information sources can be categorized into face-to-face interaction and digital communication.

Obtaining information through face-to-face interaction vs.

digital communication
In order to gain a better understanding of how information sources affect students' interest in study abroad, we look into past research regarding information sources and its effect on people. A study conducted by Okdie, Guadagno, Bernieri, Geers, and Mclarney-Vesotski in 2011 found that face-to-face communication created greater oneness with their partner than participants who communicated through a computer. Participants in this study who connected face-to-face reported liking their partner more than the participants who interacted over the computer (Okdie et al.

, 2011). Moreover, a study done by Summers, Waigandt, and Whittaker in 2005 found that there was no significant differences in retaining knowledge between a group of students taking a 15-week online statistics course and another group taking the same course in person (Summers et al., 2005).

Whether it is preference or retaining information, a substantial amount of research has been conducted on face-to-face communication and digital communication. We can further analyze factors such as preferences and getting information from specific sources to examine whether they influence the interest to study abroad. METHOD DESCRIPTION Instrument/Procedure

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Description Our protocol was broken into two portions: survey and interview (see appendix A).

This process spanned for about 15 to 20 minutes. The survey was intended to grasp a broad idea of what types of information sources the participants have used and preferred when researching about study abroad. This was why we inquired what they have used with the given choices (see Table 1). We also asked for the top 3 information sources for obtaining information and the top 3 information sources to get advice. Obtaining information and getting advice are distinct in meaning, which was why we inquired for a ranking from each category. Furthermore, a question about the participants' comfortability in face-to-face communication (1- extremely uncomfortable, and 5- extremely comfortable) was asked to gauge their preferability between face-to-face and digital communication (see Appendix A). After the short survey was conducted, the interview process began and it consisted of eight questions.

This gave us an opportunity to obtain open-ended, more in-depth responses which was not captured through the short survey. Asking these type of questions for the survey and interview would provide us with a potential insight as to how different types of information sources play a role in students' interest to study abroad. Pilot Testing The pilot testing consisted of 5 participants from the University of Washington. Their class-standing ranged from freshman to second-year masters and their respective disciplines were diverse, such as Economics, International Studies, and Education.

We chose to use a purposive sample to ensure that participants were appropriate for our study. An appropriate participant would be a college student with the interest to study abroad, and had done preliminary research on study abroad programs. Before the testing process, every participant was informed that our study will look into different types of information sources and whether they play a role in a student's interest in studying abroad. In addition to that, every participant was provided with two predefined categories of information sources as well as the corresponding types under each category (see Table 1). Each pilot testing session took about 15 to 20 minutes with the first part being a survey and the second part being an in-person interview (see Appendix A). We took notes on participant's responses during each interview. Throughout the process of conducting initial surveys and follow-up interviews with our pilot participants, we found that there were minor confusions about the categorization of information sources in our study.

Our participants did not distinguish between " friends" and " peers/classmates", and would often use these interchangeably in their responses. As a result, we had to further follow-up with our participants to obtain clarification as we performed qualitative analysis on the data. Besides that, participants noted that Questions 2 and 3 in the survey (see Appendix A) could be stated more clearly. The wording to both of the questions was flawed because we were asking participants to answer the questions using prior knowledge while at the same time limiting them to a set of answer choices (see Table 1). Other than that, participants did not find the survey or interview process challenging or uncomfortable, and were willing to provide

further clarification on their responses when we contacted them after the interview. Even though our sample size was small and non-representative, we still managed to gain insights into our research question and found common patterns of behavior that could explain the extent to which the type of information sources influence a student's interest to study abroad.

Furthermore, we found a common theme for the reason of interest in study abroad programs, which is to experience a different culture other than one's own. Face-to-Face Communication (FtF) vs.

Digital Communication To analyze responses to Question 4 and 5 in the interview about which information sources was the most trustable and easiest to access (see Appendix A), we used a binary coding scheme (0- Digital Communication, 1- FtF Communication) to categorize and quantify the responses from participants. We found that participants trusted FtF communication more than digital communication, but participants indicated that digital communication was easier to access than FtF communication (see Table 2). In a broad sense, our study found that participants generally prefer information sources that are communicated FtF rather than digitally when it comes to obtaining information and asking for advice about study abroad programs. 3 out of 5 participants indicated that they prefer FtF communication to obtain information about study abroad, and all 5 participants indicated that they prefer FtF communication to ask for advice about study abroad (see Table 3). In other words, 8 out of 10 responses for Questions 6 and 7 (see Appendix A) showed preference for FtF communication.

Common reasonings for the preference of FtF communication were because it was easier to ask questions face-to-face, receive feedback immediately without a time lag, clarify matters on the spot, and receive contextual suggestions. Comparisons of the types of information sourcesIn our initial survey (see Appendix A), we asked participants to choose from a list of information sources that they have used in their process of researching study abroad programs. The results (see Figure 1) indicated that university website was the most used information source, with counselor/advisor and friends/family next in terms of usage.

We also noted that none of the participants used blog/forums or services from recruiters, which made us question if these two types of information sources were still relevant today. We also asked participants to rank the top 3 information sources that comes to mind when they want to obtain general information and ask for advice about study abroad. The results showed that 4 out of 5 participants ranked university website as their top 1 information source to obtain information. However, when it came to asking for advice, only 2 out of 5 ranked university website as their top 1 information source, the other 3 participants ranked advisors, peers, and professors, respectively, as their top 1 information source.

Other analysesWe found that if a participant indicated a scale of 5 (out of 5) for their level of comfortability in terms of FtF interactions, their overall preference for obtaining information about study abroad would be via FtF communication. DISCUSSIONAfter receiving feedback from our participants in the pilot testing, we decided to revise our survey questions to reduce

confusion and allow for a better understanding of each question (see Appendix B). First, to highlight the distinction between “ friends” and “ peers”, we added a short description as to how we want to define both categories within our study.

Besides that, we also added an option (“ Other”) to allow for flexibility in our participants’ responses. Lastly, we rephrased Questions 2 and 3 of the survey to be more concise and less contradictory. The literature review provided us with an insight to further examine the various factors that influences a student’s interest in studying abroad and how different types of information sources create an impact on people.

Through the literature review, we identified a gap within this research domain, which is the relationship between the various types of information sources and students’ interests in study abroad programs. Through conducting the pilot testing with our participants, we gained awareness of college students’ preferences over digital communication and FtF interaction in terms of acquiring information and getting advice on study abroad programs. The findings of our research could potentially become a resource in a university’s marketing strategy plan for study abroad programs. It can also guide administrative decisions in terms of the allocation of resources into information sources and communication channels that appeal the best to prospective study abroad students. Overall, we did not find a conclusive pattern of behavior that answers our research question. However, we found that students prefer FtF communication to get advice regarding study

abroad, and of all the digital communication sources, the university website was students' most preferred choice.

Our research can further be conducted and analyzed to attain more data in order to procure potential trends to answer our research question.

Additionally, demographics can be specified to compare the results of our study from different groups of participants. All in all, an extensive dataset will provide us with a deeper understanding of our research question.