

Examining Students' Perceptions of Study Abroad Programs Involving Sport Through Application of the Social Cognitive Career Theory

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The impact of globalization can be seen throughout the sport industry, as organizations continue to examine ways in which their product can reach new markets. The International Olympic Committee and Fédération Internationale de Football Association (FIFA) have been the most successful promoters of a global adherence to positive aspects of sport (Cronin & Holt, 2003). Many of the sport organizations domestically have established, or are beginning to establish, a presence internationally. The National Football League (NFL) has expanded into Europe (Howard & Crompton, 2004). The National Basketball Association (NBA) has developed into a transnational corporation (Jackson & Andrews, 1999). Similarly, Major League Baseball (MLB) has made concerted efforts to promote the game internationally for the past 15 years (Maurer, 2005).

With the increase in globalization comes the need for sport managers with a global perspective. One possible way to achieve this global understanding is through study abroad. Vaccaro (2002) found that employers considered important features such as language skills, intercultural competence, and a willingness to take the risk to study abroad. In addition, Cheney (2001) argued that business schools should look to incorporate intercultural communication into their curricula to prepare graduates with the necessary tools to communicate effectively with people from diverse cultural backgrounds.

Despite the potential importance of study abroad, there is limited research that has focused specifically on the concept in the area of sport. As such, the purpose of this study was to examine sport management students' perceptions of studying abroad by incorporating social cognitive career theory (SCCT). SCCT employs the use of two cognitive-person constructs: self-efficacy and outcome expectations. In turn, these constructs guide and direct people through vocational interests, choice goals (i.e., intent), and ultimately a career decision (Lent & Brown, 1996). These constructs interact with other characteristics of persons (e.g., sex) and their environments (i.e., supports and barriers) while the process of career development occurs (Lent & Brown, 1996). Accordingly, Lent et al. (1994) proposed that person, environment, and behavioral variables have a reciprocal effect on one another.

Research Question 1 sought to identify particular barriers and supports to studying abroad in sport management. Additionally, Research Question 2 was interested in examining the influence of supports and barriers on students' study abroad self-efficacy, while Research Question 3 sought to examine the impact of study abroad self-efficacy and study abroad outcome expectations on interest in such endeavors. Two studies were performed to examine these constructs in more detail with the purpose of explaining students' perceptions to study abroad programs.

We were unable to identify research in the sport management domain related to study abroad. Consequently, it was first necessary to derive an understanding of the students' self-efficacy, the sources of that self-efficacy, and potential barriers and supports students perceived in their choice of whether or not to study abroad. Answers to these issues were obtained through the qualitative approach adopted in Study 1. The instrument used to collect data was developed using the basic tenets of SCCT and the subjects of this study were male ($n = 14$) and female ($n = 5$) sport management students from a university in the southwestern United States. All students consented to participate in the study. The majority of the participants were Caucasian ($n = 18$), with one Hispanic ($n = 1$). The classification breakdown consisted of seniors ($n = 8$, 42.1%) and juniors ($n = 11$, 57.9%). The participants ranged from 20 years to 29 years of age with a mean age of 21.6 years ($SD = 2.04$).

Two analysts met independently to code the data into themes. In response the Research Question 1 barriers and supports were listed and broken down into like categories. Several support factors emerged such as: "gain experience," "further education," "travel," "learning outside of the classroom," "increase job prospects," and "affordability." Several barrier themes emerged, including: "language," "cultural differences," "apart from friends and family," and "job obligations."

In Study 2, we sought to extend the analysis of students' attitudes and behavioral intentions of studying abroad by drawing from the qualitative findings in Study 1. The instrument used to collect data was developed using the basic tenets of SCCT and each study variable was anchored by a 7-point Likert-type scale. The participants in this study were male ($n = 43$) and female ($n = 28$) sport management students from a university in the southwestern United States. The majority of participants were Caucasian ($n = 66$, 93.0%). The classification breakdown included a majority of sophomores ($n = 32$, 45.1%), followed by juniors ($n = 18$,

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25.4%), freshman ($n = 13$, 18.3%), and seniors ($n = 5$, 7.0%). The ages of the participants ranged from 18-25 years with a mean age of 20.1 years ($SD = 1.26$). Means, standard deviations, and bivariate correlations were computed for all variables.

We examined Research Questions 2 and 3 through path analysis using AMOS 5.0. Results from the path analysis indicated that the model was a close fit to the data: $\chi^2(8) = 16.37$, $p = .04$. standardized root mean square residual (SRMSR) = .08; confirmatory fit index = .96. In response to Research Question 2, both barriers ($X = -.17$, $p = .05$) and supports ($X = .66$, $p < .001$) were significantly associated with study abroad self-efficacy, collectively explaining 57% of the variance. Research Question 3 was concerned with the relationships among self-efficacy, outcome expectations, interests, and intent. Results from the path analysis indicate that study abroad self-efficacy was then related to outcome expectations ($X = .39$, $p < .001$) and interest ($X = .39$, $p < .001$). Contrary to previous SCCT research and theorizing (Lent et al., 2000, 2003), outcome expectations were not associated with interest in studying abroad ($X = -.02$, $p = .87$). Thus, in the current study, such interest appears to be driven largely by people's efficacy estimates. Finally, as expected, interests were strongly associated with intent to study abroad ($X = .91$, $p < .001$).

This study has several implications. Sport management academia should be cognizant of impact supports and barriers have on self-efficacy when planning or developing sport management study abroad programs and subsequently look for ways to help students overcome those barriers and negative outcome expectations. Furthermore, Brown and Lent (1996) offer several suggestions on how to help an individual who is struggling with choice.