

Constraints to College Students' Participation in Educational Travel

Yun-Fang Wang
Arizona State University

Kathleen L. Andereck
Arizona State University

Christine A. Vogt
Michigan State University

Abstract

International study programs can contribute a great deal to the educational and personal development of students. This study investigates constraints to student participation in an international study program. All students who requested information for a summer international study program at a major university were surveyed to determine the extent to which factors constrained participation. Based on leisure and travel constraint models and past research, factors that most constrained student participation were investigated. Results suggest that students are most constrained by structural factors such as cost and work commitments. Results can assist program directors and faculty to facilitate student participation in international study programs.

Keywords: international study programs, leisure constraints, travel decision

Biographical Information

Yun-Fang Wang received her M.S. degree from Arizona State University West and Kathleen L. Andereck is an Associate Professor in the Department of Recreation and Tourism Management, P.O. Box 37100, Arizona State University West, Phoenix, AZ 85069-7100. Christine A. Vogt is a Visiting Assistant Professor in the Department of Park, Recreation and Tourism Resources, Michigan State University, East Lansing, MI 48824-1222.

Introduction

Substantial claims have been made about the importance and the positive effects of educational travel. It is believed that international study programs have the potential to promote mutual understanding, cross-cultural experience, intercultural relations, and international peace (Edgerton, 1979; Pearce, 1980). Several studies have examined the influence of travel on students (Altbach, 1991; Carlson & Widaman, 1988). It is commonly believed that studying in a foreign country for an extended period of time will enhance international understanding (Carlson & Widaman, 1988). Mings (1988) de-

defined international understanding as "the state of being knowledgeable about a place and its people, while harboring generally positive and supportive attitudes toward them" (p. 33). Abrams (1965) believed international understanding can represent two things: (a) an increase in a student's understanding of international relations, cultivation of the value of world-mindedness, and a disposition in favor of world peace; and (b) improvement of relations between people as a consequence of increased contact between them. Because of the significance of international travel as an educational experience, it is important to provide opportunities for international study to a wide variety of students. In order to maximize participation in study abroad programs, understanding the factors that inhibit participation is necessary. Therefore, the purpose of this study was to determine the level of influence that constraints have on the decisions of college students to participate in international study programs using the concepts and models developed in leisure constraints research.

Literature Review

Travel Decision

Researchers from the leisure, recreation, and travel/tourism disciplines have attempted to explain the traveler's decision making process. A common concept found in this research is that travel decisions are influenced by forces internal or external to the person (Norman, 1995). In his model of the travel decision making process, Schmoll (1977) suggested that travel decisions are influenced by four sets of variables: travel stimuli, personal and social determinants, external factors, and characteristics of the destination. Travel stimuli include travel literature; travel advertising and promotion; suggestions and comments of friends, relatives, and other travelers; and information from travel intermediaries such as travel agents. Personal and social determinants involve personality characteristics, socioeconomic factors, attitudes, and values. External factors include the image held of services and destinations, previous experience, cost and time constraints that must be negotiated, and the assessment of risks. Finally, characteristics of the destination include cost/value relationship, attractions and amenities available, range of opportunities, type of arrangements offered, and quality/quantity of information.

Mill and Morrison (1992) identified seven stages in the vacation trip buying process. First, a potential traveler becomes aware of the destination. Second, the potential traveler seeks out additional information to become knowledgeable about that destination. Third, the potential traveler develops an interest or attitude about the destination. Fourth, after evaluating the various alternatives, the potential traveler develops a preference for a destination. Fifth, the potential traveler is convinced the benefits of the destination will meet her or his needs. Sixth, the potential traveler reaches the conviction stage of the buying process and must now confront structural barriers (e.g. lack of time and money). The final stage of the buying process is the adoption stage. Incorporating constraints into travel decisions recognizes that most human decisions are influenced by limited time, money, resources, skill, and ability to perform a desired behavior.

Constraints to Travel

Little investigation has been conducted on the barriers that may prevent people from traveling. In their descriptive research on travel constraints, Lansing and Blood (1964) identified money, time, health, family, or a lack of interest as the reasons for not traveling. Crompton (1977) examined the influence of constraints on travel decisions and on destination choice. Three types of perceived constraints identified were lack of time, lack of financial resources, and "travelability" (e.g., the presence of children) constraints. Interestingly, the results showed that only time constraints were significantly related to travel behavior, and that overall, constraints had a moderating rather than an inhibiting effect on vacation travel decisions. For example, a family would still take a vacation, but the trip might be shorter in distance or length than might otherwise occur due to constraints.

Building on Crompton's (1977) research, Um and Crompton (1992) continued studying the influence of perceived constraints in pleasure travel destination decisions. They identified four major perceived constraints: high cost of travel, potential health problems, too much time spent to get to a destination, and safety concerns. The destination choice was conceptualized as a three-stage sequential decision consisting of an early consideration set, a late consideration set, and a final destination decision. Consideration set was defined by Woodside and Sherrell (1977) as "the travel destinations that the consumer is aware of and has some likelihood greater than zero of visiting within some time period, e.g., a year" (p. 15). A longitudinal survey approach was used to explore the role of perceived inhibitors in formulating a late consideration set of destinations from an early consideration set, and in selecting a final vacation destination from the late consideration set of destinations. The study results suggested inhibitors were most influential in whether an alternative destination in the late consideration set was selected as a final destination. Other travel literature focused on constraints has investigated senior travelers (Blazey, 1987; 1989), travel and retirement status (Blazey, 1992), and perceived constraints to travel for college-educated mature adults (Kerstetter, 1990; Kerstetter & Holdnak, 1990).

Leisure Constraints

Although studies on travel constraints have been fairly limited and often lacking in conceptual frameworks, studies reported in the leisure sciences literature have often been based on well developed conceptual models (Crawford, Jackson & Godbey, 1991; Crawford & Godbey, 1987). These researchers identified three types of barriers to participation in leisure activities: intrapersonal, interpersonal, and structural. Intrapersonal constraints involve "individual psychological states and attributes" (Crawford & Godbey, 1987, p. 122) such as stress, depression, anxiety, religiosity, perceived self-skill, and subjective evaluations of the appropriateness and availability of various leisure activities. Interpersonal constraints are "the result of interpersonal interaction or the relationship between individuals' characteristics" (Crawford & Godbey, 1987, p. 123). Examples

of this type of constraint include inconsistent spousal preferences and lack of a suitable partner with whom to engage in a particular activity. Structural constraints as they are commonly conceptualized are intervening factors between leisure preference and participation (Crawford & Godbey, 1987). Examples of structural constraints include season, climate, lack of time, lack of financial resource, availability of opportunity, and awareness of such availability.

Crawford, Jackson, and Godbey (1991), building on their previous work, proposed a "hierarchical" model that suggests individuals confront a sequential or hierarchical series of constraint levels. First, at the intrapersonal level, leisure preferences are formed when intrapersonal constraints are "absent or their effects have been confronted through some combination of privilege and exercise of the human will" (Crawford et al., p. 313). Then, depending on the type of leisure activity, constraints at the interpersonal level are encountered. This could be lack of partners or co-participants to engage in leisure activities although this might be less relevant in the case of solitary activities. Only when this type of constraint has been overcome do structural constraints begin to emerge. Finally, if structural constraints are absent or have been negotiated, an individual will participate in leisure activities. However, if the constraints are sufficiently strong, non-participation will result. Building on this research, Raymore, Godbey, Crawford, and von Eye (1993) conducted a study of 363 male and female 12th graders. Their results supported Crawford and Godbey's (1987) notion that intrapersonal, interpersonal, and structural constraints form three distinct classes of constraints on leisure and that the three types of constraints exist in a hierarchical order. This study provided the first empirical support for the hierarchical process model of leisure constraints.

Several studies have considered the influence of socio-demographic characteristics on perceptions of constraints. Witt and Goodale (1981) examined the relationship between barriers to leisure enjoyment and family stages. The results indicated the nature of barriers change over life stages and motivational and attitudinal barriers need as much attention as other critical barriers such as time, money, and opportunity problems. In a study examining the relationship between perceived barriers to recreation and gender-role personality traits, Henderson, Stalnaker, and Taylor (1988) investigated leisure constraints confronting women. Previous findings showed women had more constraints to participation than men. In this study, although a few associations were found between women and barriers to recreation, the barriers identified for women were similar to barriers identified in other studies. The authors found that women have more antecedent, or intra and interpersonal, barriers than did the general public. They further suggested that additional qualitative research is needed to understand the antecedent constraints related to definitions of self as woman and leisure barriers.

Other researchers have directed attention to the factors constraining participation in leisure. The basic assumption in previous studies is that constraints function only as barriers to leisure participation, and thus result in reduced level of participation or non-participation (Crawford & Godbey, 1987). This assumption, however, is being chal-

lenged by several recent studies conducted on the relationship between constraints and participation (Kay & Jackson, 1991; Shaw, Bonen, & McCabe, 1991). These studies have discovered that although constraints may exist, participants are able to negotiate them and continue to participate. Studies conducted in Britain and Canada have uncovered relationships not reported in other literature. The studies both had the purpose of examining the relationship between social characteristics, reported/perceived constraints, and the reported effects of the constraints on leisure participation. In a study of British participants, Kay and Jackson (1991) assessed the impact of constraints on leisure participation using survey data. They discovered that time and money were by far the most constraining factors to people's leisure participation, regardless of socio-economic status. Further, the findings suggested that constraints are to some extent a matter of perception; constraints rarely prevented participation but rather reduce frequency of participation. In some extreme cases, constraints had no effect on the level of leisure participation. The authors concluded that constraints are likely to be reported not only by non-participants, but also by participants, and high levels of constraint may be reported more frequently by participants than by non-participants.

In a study of Canadians (Shaw, Bonen, & McCabe, 1991), only intervening constraints were examined among individuals who expressed a desire for increased activity levels. The results were similar to the British study indicating that only two out of the eleven constraints were associated with lower levels of participation. All other reported constraints showed either no relationship with participation or were associated with increased levels of participation.

Hypotheses

Because of the educational value of international study programs, it is important to understand factors that prevent student participation. This study endeavored to determine the level of influence constraints have on the decisions of college students to participate in international study programs using the concepts and models developed in leisure constraints research. Toward that end and with consideration of the combined findings of travel and leisure constraints literature, the following hypotheses were tested:

- 1) Students with past international travel and living experience perceive fewer constraints to participation in an international study program.
- 2) Students who have decided to participate in an international study program perceive fewer constraints than those who have decided not to participate.

Methods

Design of the Questionnaire

The survey instrument was a four-page questionnaire consisting of a series of 17 closed and open-ended questions. The survey instrument included questions regarding

students' interest in a study abroad program and their travel abroad experience; their decision regarding participation; the importance of 15 specific reasons for choosing an international study program; perceived constraints affecting students' participation in a specific international study program; and demographic characteristics.

Constraints were measured using 29 items with a five point scale (1=No Influence, 2=Slight Influence, 3=Some Influence, 4=Strong Influence, and 5=Very Strong Influence). Each student was asked to indicate how much influence each item may have had on her or his decision not to participate in an overseas study program. The items were drawn from existing research on leisure constraints (i.e., intrapersonal, interpersonal, and structural) and travel constraints (Crawford & Godbey, 1987; Jackson, 1988; Crawford, Jackson, & Godbey, 1991; Henderson et al., 1988; Blazey, 1989; 1992; Kay & Jackson, 1991; Shaw et al., 1991; Norman 1995).

Participation was measured by asking respondents: "Which of the following best describes where you are with your participation decision?" Students could select one of the following: already signed up, going to sign up before the deadline, maybe going to sign up, or definitely not signing up. The study was conducted after the refund period for deposits had expired indicating that this question was a reasonably reliable measure of participation decision even though the actual trips had not yet taken place. The questionnaire was pre-tested on one senior level class of about 40 students and was found to be understandable and easy to complete by students.

Data Collection

The population for this study was university students who requested information and/or applied to participate in any of twenty-five international study programs offered in the summer of 1999 by a major southwestern U.S. university. All of the programs were academic, for-credit courses such as language studies, architectural studies, and tourism studies. A questionnaire was mailed to every student who requested information and/or applied to participate in any of the programs. Collecting data from only those students requesting program information is a limitation of this study in that the students had an expressed interest in international study programs. A study of a general population of students might yield different results.

The self-administered mail survey was developed to collect data following a modification of Dillman's (1978) Total Design Method (TDM). The mailing procedure involved two mailings and a postcard. The first mailing included a cover letter, a questionnaire, and a pre-stamped self-addressed return envelope. One week after the first mailing, a follow-up reminder and thank you postcard was sent to the entire population. Two weeks later, a second complete mailing consisting of a letter, replacement questionnaire, and stamped return envelope was mailed to non-respondents to appeal for the return of the survey. As an incentive to complete and return the survey, a drawing for a \$50 cash award was offered.

From a total of 718 questionnaires mailed, 454 questionnaires were returned. A total of 18 questionnaires were returned as undeliverable. An overall response rate of 65 percent was achieved.

Data Analysis

Statistical analysis of the data incorporated descriptive statistics, factor analysis and t-tests. Initially, descriptive analysis was applied to describe demographic information with means, percentages, and frequencies. For constraint items, a factor analysis was performed to identify underlying dimensions. Scale reliability was assessed with Cronbach's alpha. Finally, t-tests were used to test the hypotheses.

Results

Demographic Characteristics

Demographic data including gender, age, year in school, citizenship, and presence of a disability were collected to obtain a profile of the students who requested information and/or applied to participate in international study programs for the summer of 1999. Survey respondents ranged between 17 and 71 years old. The average age of the respondents was 23 years old. The 20-29 year old age category comprised the greatest number of the respondents (69.1%). Twenty-three percent of the respondents were under the age of 19, while only eight percent were over the age of 30. Female respondents accounted for 74 percent of the sample. Nearly one-third (31.2%) of the sample were juniors; sophomores consisted of 25 percent, and the seniors were 22 percent. Ninety-nine percent of the respondents reported no presence of a disability, and 97 percent were U.S. citizens.

Table 1 reports characteristics of respondents' past travel experience such as their last travel outside of the U.S., the number of international trips taken in lifetime and in the last three years, and their previous living abroad experience. Forty-four percent of the respondents traveled outside of the U.S. less than one year ago, whereas 14 percent had never previously traveled outside of U.S. The majority of the respondents (82%) had taken at least one international trip in their lifetime. Among them, 39 percent had taken four or more trips before. In addition, 72 percent had taken at least one international trip in the last three years. The average number of international trips taken by the respondents in their lifetimes were 2.4, with an average of 1.5 in the last 3 years. Although these numbers appear to be high, trips from Arizona to Mexico are quite common due to proximity. Sixteen percent of the respondents had lived abroad.

Travel Decision

When students were asked to indicate their decision regarding participation, 81 percent of the respondents had already signed up for an international study program, whereas 13 percent were definitely not signing up. Six percent of the respondents were still not sure if they would eventually participate. Due to their uncertainty about the

decision, the six percent of respondents who said either “going to sign up before the deadline” or “maybe going to sign up” were excluded from further statistical analysis to reduce ambiguity. As well, the number of uncertain students was too low for statistical tests.

TABLE 1
Students' Travel Characteristics

| International Travel Experience ^a | Frequency | Percentage |
|--|-----------|------------|
| <u>Last travel outside of the U.S.</u> | | |
| Less than 1 year ago | 199 | 43.9 |
| 1-3 years ago | 134 | 29.6 |
| More than 3 years ago | 57 | 12.6 |
| Never traveled outside of the U.S. | 63 | 13.9 |
| <u>Number of international trips taken in lifetime^b</u> | | |
| 0 | 81 | 18.0 |
| 1 | 72 | 16.0 |
| 2 | 60 | 13.4 |
| 3 | 63 | 14.0 |
| 4 or more | 173 | 38.5 |
| <u>Number of international trips taken in the last 3 years^c</u> | | |
| 0 | 125 | 27.8 |
| 1 | 132 | 29.3 |
| 2 | 87 | 19.3 |
| 3 | 49 | 10.9 |
| 4 or more | 57 | 12.7 |
| <u>Previously lived abroad</u> | | |
| Yes | 72 | 15.9 |
| No | 381 | 84.1 |

Notes:

^aTrips to Canada and Mexico were treated as travel outside of the U.S. and as international travel

^bMean: 2.4; SD: 1.6

^cMean: 1.5; SD: 1.3

Perceived Constraints

Table 2 presents the mean, standard deviation, and frequency distribution of the 29 items that make up the constraints measures. The cost of the study program, which received the highest mean score ($M=3.42$), was rated as having at least "some influence" on students' decisions to participate in an international program. Other perceived constraints that had between "slight influence" to "some influence" included: "work commitment" ($M=2.43$), "previous family commitment" ($M=2.37$), "lack of time" ($M=2.27$), and "no one to travel with" ($M=2.07$). The constraints with the smallest influence on students' participation decision were "didn't enjoy overseas trips in the past" ($M=1.07$) and "require too much self discipline" ($M=1.12$).

TABLE 2
Constraints to Participation in an International Study Program

| Constraint | Influence on Participation Decision (%) | | | | | Mean ^a | SD |
|--|---|--------|------|--------|-------------|-------------------|------|
| | No | Slight | Some | Strong | Very Strong | | |
| Cost too much | 2.0 | 13.1 | 24.4 | 22.0 | 28.6 | 3.42 | 1.34 |
| Work commitments | 35.4 | 19.4 | 20.5 | 16.7 | 8.0 | 2.43 | 1.33 |
| Previous family commitment | 39.0 | 17.3 | 20.0 | 15.1 | 8.6 | 2.37 | 1.36 |
| Lack of time | 35.3 | 26.4 | 20.2 | 12.2 | 5.8 | 2.27 | 1.22 |
| No one to travel with | 47.1 | 18.8 | 19.2 | 10.0 | 4.9 | 2.07 | 1.22 |
| Concern about safety | 46.6 | 26.2 | 15.5 | 7.8 | 4.0 | 1.96 | 1.14 |
| Inadequate language skills | 43.9 | 26.4 | 22.0 | 5.5 | 2.2 | 1.96 | 1.04 |
| Lack of transportation | 51.4 | 19.4 | 18.0 | 8.0 | 3.1 | 1.92 | 1.14 |
| Destination not convenient | 68.8 | 13.4 | 12.7 | 4.0 | 1.1 | 1.55 | 0.94 |
| Don't have needed equipment | 67.4 | 17.6 | 10.3 | 2.9 | 1.8 | 1.54 | 0.92 |
| Would interrupt my normal routine | 68.8 | 16.5 | 9.4 | 3.8 | 1.6 | 1.53 | 0.92 |
| None of my friends participate | 72.5 | 16.6 | 6.4 | 3.3 | 1.1 | 1.44 | 0.84 |
| Not at ease in social situations | 72.9 | 17.8 | 6.2 | 2.4 | 0.7 | 1.40 | 0.77 |
| Concerned about going someplace disappointing | 73.4 | 17.3 | 6.9 | 2.2 | 0.2 | 1.39 | 0.73 |
| Parents would not approve | 78.6 | 9.6 | 7.8 | 2.2 | 1.8 | 1.39 | 0.86 |
| Travel requires too many decisions | 75.3 | 17.8 | 4.4 | 1.8 | 0.7 | 1.35 | 0.71 |
| Too many people traveling during the summer | 75.8 | 16.4 | 5.8 | 1.1 | 0.9 | 1.35 | 0.72 |
| Unable to meet the minimum GPA | 83.7 | 6.5 | 4.9 | 2.7 | 2.2 | 1.33 | 0.87 |
| Travel requires too much planning | 75.6 | 18.4 | 4.7 | 0.7 | 0.7 | 1.32 | 0.66 |
| Too many rules and regulations | 78.9 | 13.3 | 6.0 | 1.3 | 0.4 | 1.31 | 0.68 |
| Afraid to use certain forms of transportation | 83.4 | 11.3 | 4.2 | 0.9 | 0.2 | 1.23 | 0.59 |
| Travel time takes too long | 84.0 | 11.8 | 2.9 | 0.9 | 0.4 | 1.22 | 0.58 |
| Ill health | 88.2 | 6.0 | 2.0 | 2.9 | 0.9 | 1.22 | 0.70 |
| My friends dropped out | 88.7 | 5.1 | 4.2 | 0.9 | 1.1 | 1.21 | 0.66 |
| Lost interest | 89.3 | 6.0 | 1.8 | 2.0 | 0.9 | 1.19 | 0.65 |
| Physical barriers make travel difficult | 87.8 | 8.5 | 2.9 | 0.7 | 0.2 | 1.17 | 0.52 |
| Lack of physical energy | 89.1 | 7.6 | 2.7 | 0.7 | 0.0 | 1.15 | 0.47 |
| Requires too much self discipline | 90.9 | 6.7 | 1.8 | 0.4 | 0.2 | 1.12 | 0.45 |
| Didn't enjoy overseas trips in the past | 94.7 | 4.2 | 0.9 | 0.2 | 0.0 | 1.07 | 0.31 |

Note:

^aBased on a scale of 1=No Influence, 2=Slight Influence, 3=Some Influence, 4=Strong Influence, 5=Very Strong Influence.

A factor analysis was performed on the 29 constraint items to determine possible underlying factors. Based on constraints theory, confirmatory principal component factor analysis with varimax rotation was conducted. A four factor solution was generated, each with an eigenvalue greater than one. The results explained 50.2 percent of the variance (Table 3).

TABLE 3
*Factor Analysis of Constraints Influencing the Decision
to Participate in an International Study Program*

| Scale Item | Factor Loadings | | | |
|---|-----------------|----------|----------|----------|
| | Factor 1 | Factor 2 | Factor 3 | Factor 4 |
| <u>Travelability</u> | | | | |
| Travel requires too much planning | .782 | | | |
| Travel requires too many decisions | .734 | | | |
| Travel time takes too long | .635 | | | |
| Too many people traveling during the summer | .609 | | | |
| Concerned about going someplace disappointing | .607 | | | |
| Didn't enjoy overseas trips in the past | .563 | | | |
| Too many rules and regulations | .535 | | | |
| Afraid to use certain forms of transportation | .397 | | | |
| <u>External/Structural</u> | | | | |
| Lack of time | | .732 | | |
| Lack of transportation | | .713 | | |
| Work commitments | | .657 | | |
| Cost too much | | .649 | | |
| Destination not convenient | | .602 | | |
| Don't have needed equipment | | .578 | | |
| Previous family commitment | | .535 | | |
| Inadequate language skills | | .505 | | |
| Concern about safety | | .443 | | |
| <u>Internal/Intrapersonal</u> | | | | |
| Ill health | | | .734 | |
| Lost interest | | | .702 | |
| Lack of physical energy | | | .698 | |
| Require too much self discipline | | | .658 | |
| Physical barriers make travel difficult | | | .525 | |
| Parents would not approve | | | .485 | |
| <u>Friends/Interpersonal</u> | | | | |
| None of my friends participate | | | | .795 |
| No one to travel with | | | | .717 |
| My friends dropped out | | | | .688 |
| Eigenvalues | 4.0 | 3.7 | 3.3 | 2.1 |
| Percent of variance explained | 15.2 | 14.4 | 12.5 | 8.1 |
| Mean ^a | 1.28 | 2.16 | 1.21 | 1.57 |
| Standard deviation | .42 | .74 | .44 | .74 |
| Reliability: Cronbach's Alpha | .82 | .82 | .80 | .73 |
| Total variance explained: 50.2% | | | | |

Notes:

^aBased on a scale of 1=No Influence, 2=Slight Influence, 3=Some Influence, 4=Strong Influence, 5=Very Strong Influence.

The four factors were labeled: 1) travelability, 2) external, 3) internal, and 4) friends. These findings were generally consistent with Crawford and Godbey's (1987) conceptual framework. Based on Crawford and Godbey's (1987) framework, the underlying constraint dimensions were identified as intrapersonal, interpersonal, or structural constraints. The "internal" factor was identified as an intrapersonal constraint dimension. The influence of "friends" was classified as an interpersonal constraint dimension. The "external" factor was identified as a structural constraint dimension. Factor one, labeled "travelability," was a constraint that did not fit into Crawford and Godbey's (1987) leisure constraints conceptual framework. It consisted of both intrapersonal constraints (i.e., travel requires too much planning, travel requires too much decisions) and structural constraints (i.e., travel time takes too long, too many rules and regulations). In order to assess the quality of the constraint scales, Cronbach's Alpha was used to determine reliability. The reliability coefficients (Cronbach's Alpha) for the four dimensions ranged from .73 to .82 (Table 3). The "external" factor consisting of nine items received the highest mean score ($M=2.16$), followed by the influence of "friends" constraint ($M=1.57$) and travelability constraint ($M=1.28$). The "internal" factor had the lowest mean ($M=1.21$).

TABLE 4
*Constraint Differences Between Students with
Respect to Past International Experience*

| Constraint | International Travel Experience | | | | | Living Abroad Experience | | | | |
|---------------|---------------------------------|------|-------------------|------|-------|--------------------------|------|-------------------|------|---------|
| | 1+ Trips | | None | | t | Some | | None | | t |
| N | Mean ^a | N | Mean ^a | N | | Mean ^a | N | Mean ^a | | |
| Travelability | 365 | 1.26 | 81 | 1.36 | 1.65 | 71 | 1.21 | 379 | 1.29 | -1.88 |
| Internal | 365 | 1.20 | 81 | 1.26 | 1.07 | 71 | 1.15 | 379 | 1.22 | -1.48 |
| External | 365 | 2.13 | 81 | 2.30 | 1.94* | 71 | 2.18 | 379 | 2.16 | 0.29 |
| Friends | 366 | 1.55 | 81 | 1.71 | 1.49 | 71 | 1.40 | 380 | 1.61 | -2.53** |

Notes:

^aBased on a scale of 1=No Influence, 2=Slight Influence, 3=Some Influence, 4=Strong Influence, 5=Very Strong Influence.

*Significant at the .05 level

**Significant at the .01 level

Past Travel Experience and Constraints

The first hypothesis states: Students with greater international experience perceive significantly less constraints to participation in an international study program. The results in Table 4 indicate respondents who had no past international travel experience were significantly more constrained by the "external" factor than those who had past

international travel experience ($t=1.94$, $p<.05$). The “friends” constraint was significantly higher for respondents who had never lived abroad than those who had previously lived abroad ($t=-2.53$, $p<.05$).

The second hypothesis examined the relationship between travel decision and perceived constraints. This hypothesis states: Students who have decided to participate in an international study program perceive fewer constraints than those who have decided not to participate. Table 5 presents the results of the t-tests conducted to test the hypothesis. The statistical analysis indicates that the “external” constraint was significantly related to the travel decision ($t=-3.31$, $p<.001$). The other constraints constructs were unrelated to students’ participation decisions.

TABLE 5
*Differences in Constraints Perceived by Students’
Regarding an International Study Program*

| Constraint | Participants | | Non-participants | | t |
|---------------|--------------|-------------------|------------------|-------------------|---------|
| | N | Mean ^a | N | Mean ^a | |
| Travelability | 364 | 1.26 | 59 | 1.33 | -0.95 |
| Internal | 364 | 1.21 | 59 | 1.13 | 1.78 |
| External | 364 | 2.09 | 59 | 2.43 | -3.31** |
| Friends | 365 | 1.60 | 59 | 1.51 | 0.85 |

Notes:

^aBased on a scale of 1=No Influence, 2=Slight Influence, 3=Some Influence, 4=Strong Influence, 5=Very Strong Influence.

**Significant at the .01 level

Discussion

Among the four underlying constraint dimensions identified in this study, structural (i.e., external) constraints were the most evident, followed by interpersonal (i.e., friends), “travelability”, and intrapersonal (i.e., internal) constraints. The majority of respondents appeared to perceive time, money, work, and family commitments as the constraints most affecting their participation decisions. These results are similar to Raymore et al. (1993), Henderson et al. (1988), and a number of other constraint studies.

The first hypothesis examined the relationship between past international experience and the four perceived constraint dimensions. College students without past international travel experience were significantly more constrained by “external” barriers

than those with international travel experience. In addition, students who had no previous living abroad experience perceived higher interpersonal constraints (i.e., "friends") than those who had previously lived abroad. The findings appear to correspond to the hierarchical constraint model proposed by Crawford et al. (1991). When intrapersonal constraints have been negotiated, interpersonal and structural (i.e., "external") constraints begin to emerge. Although not specifically tested, it is possible that students in this study have already negotiated intrapersonal constraints given their expressed interest in international study programs (asked for information). In all likelihood, students with no interest in the programs, in ill health, or with other intrapersonal constraints would not request information about the programs.

It is reasonable to conclude that constraints are inversely related to past travel experience as people learn to negotiate various constraints each time they travel. A similar result was found by Norman (1995) where individuals who have traveled frequently in the past three years were significantly less constrained than those who have not. Also, people with experience living abroad may tend to be less concerned about having a partner because they are usually experienced travelers or have been accustomed to unfamiliar environments. In short, the findings of this study suggest students with travel/living abroad experience tend to be more independent in terms of the need for a travel companion or more capable of overcoming "external" constraints, suggesting a higher comfort level with international travel.

The second hypothesis investigated the influence of perceived constraints on students' decisions to enroll in an international study program. As expected, the "external" constraint was found to be significantly different between participants and non-participants. This finding supports the conceptual model of Crawford et al. (1991) who had similar results. A limitation of this study is that all respondents had already expressed their interest in the international study program. By expressing their desire to participate in the study program, students were likely to have already successfully negotiated internal/intrapersonal constraints and had moved to the next level (i.e., interpersonal constraints). Also, since respondents already knew they would be going with their classmates, students from their department, or someone they attended school with, the interpersonal factor was found not to be a significant constraint. This leaves the external (i.e., structural) constraint as the final constraint to influence the students' travel decisions.

Conclusions

The findings from this study provide insight into understanding the influence of perceived constraints on students' participation in an international study program. The four constraint dimensions identified by the factor analysis closely resemble the conceptual framework of intrapersonal, interpersonal, and structural constraints that has emerged in the leisure constraints literature. The travelability dimension is an added aspect of travel behavior that leisure models do not address.

Overall, most constraints do not appear to be perceived as an inhibitor to educational travel. Financial concerns (e.g., money and missing work) were the top two inhibitors. Research by Blazey (1987, 1992) on the constraints to travel for individuals 55 years of age and older found similar results with regard to the strength of constraints. In his study, only a small number of constraints were identified as having an inhibiting effect on leisure travel behavior.

The five constraints most often identified by respondents in this study of educational travel by college students were cost, work commitments, previous family commitment, lack of time, and no one with whom to travel. Four out of the five most constraining items are structural/external constraints. These results are similar to those found by Kay and Jackson (1991). In their study regarding the impact of leisure constraints on leisure participation, several variables were identified as the constraints most affecting leisure participation: money, time, family commitments, transport problems, work, and health. Moreover, the results of this study indicate that non-participants of the international study programs perceived significantly higher structural constraints than participants. The findings strongly suggest that structural constraints function as the most prohibitive factor to students' participation decisions.

The ultimate goal of an international study program director is to remove barriers and maximize the opportunities for people to participate in an enriching travel and educational experience. Understanding the constraints experienced by students that want to participate in international study programs can help directors make study abroad opportunities more widely available. Students that already have an interest in international study are constrained by structural factors, particularly financial considerations. This suggests that program directors must make an effort to keep study abroad programs as cost effective as possible. Providing scholarships or other financial aid for students might also increase the number of participants.

Future research could point to additional steps that international study program directors could take to maximize participation. First, the present study could be replicated using foreign students participating in summer, semester, and year long study programs in the United States. The results from these students could be compared to American students studying in foreign countries. This would not only provide a further understanding of constraints for students studying abroad, but also help recognize differences and similarities between students from different countries. Second, research is also needed to investigate perceived constraints of a general population of college students, with a random sample of all enrolled students. Finally, while this study is limited to a small number of variables that affected perceived constraints, it is recommended future research include other variables such as motives and attitudes.

Acknowledgement

The authors would like to thank the Arizona State University Main Summer Sessions/Commencement Office for funding this study.

References

- Abrams, I. (1965). Study Abroad. In S. Baskin (Ed.), Higher education: Some newer developments. New York: McGraw-Hill.
- Altbach, P. (1991). Impact and adjustment: Foreign students in comparative perspective. Higher Education, *21*, 305-323.
- Blazey, M. A. (1987). The difference between participants and non-participants in a senior travel program. Journal of Travel Research, *26* (1), 7-12.
- Blazey, M. A. (1989). Factors constraining travel among older adults. Presentation at the 1989 NRPA Leisure Research Symposium held during 1989 NRPA Congress for Recreation and Parks in San Antonio, TX.
- Blazey, M. A. (1992). Travel and retirement status. Annals of Tourism Research, *19*, 771-783.
- Carlson, J., & Widaman, K. (1988). The effects of study abroad during college on attitudes toward other cultures. International Journal of Intercultural Relations, *12*, 1-17.
- Crawford, D. W., & Godbey, G. (1987). Reconceptualizing barriers to family leisure. Leisure Sciences, *9*, 119-127.
- Crawford, D. W., Jackson, E. L., & Godbey, G. (1991). A hierarchical model of leisure constraints. Leisure Sciences, *13*, 309-320.
- Crompton, J. L. (1977). A system model of tourist's destination selection process with particular reference to the role of image and perceived constraints. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, Texas A&M University, College Station.
- Dillman, D. A. (1978). Mail and telephone survey: The total design method. New York: John Wiley and Sons, Inc.
- Edgerton, W. B. (1979). Who participates in education exchange? Annals of American Academic of Political and Social Science, *424*, 6-15
- Henderson, K. A., Stalnaker, D., & Taylor, G. (1988). The relationship between barriers to recreation and gender-role personality traits for women. Journal of Leisure Research, *20* (1), 69-80.
- Jackson, E. L. (1988). Leisure constraints: A survey of past research. Leisure Sciences, *10*, 203-215.

Kay, T., & Jackson, G. (1991). Leisure despite constraint: The impact of leisure constraints on leisure participation. Journal of Leisure Research, 23 (4), 301-313.

Kerstetter, D. L. (1990). An exploratory study of the travel behavior of college-educated older adults. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, Pennsylvania State University, University Park.

Kerstetter, D. L., & Holdnak, A. (1990). Comparison of perceived pleasure travel constraints to travel behavior characteristics of college-educated mature adults: An exploratory study. Paper presented at the Resort and Commercial Recreation Association research symposium.

Lansing, J. B., & Blood, D. M. (1964). The changing travel market. MI: Survey Research Center, Institute for Social Research, University of Michigan.

Mill, R. C., & Morrison, A. M. (1992). The tourism system: A introductory text (2nd ed.). Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, Inc.

Norman, W. C. (1995). The influence of perceived constraints on the generic travel decision. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of Minnesota, Twin Cities.

Pearce, P. L. (1980). A favorability-satisfaction model of tourist's evaluations. Journal of Travel Research, 10, 13-17.

Raymore, L., Godbey, G., Crawford, D., & von Eye, A. (1993). Nature and process of leisure constraints: An empirical test. Leisure Sciences, 15, 99-113.

Schmoll, G. A. (1977). Tourism promotion. London: Tourism International Press.

Shaw, S. M., Bonen, A., & McCabe, J. F. (1991). Do more constraints mean less leisure? Examining the relationship between constraints an participation. Journal of Leisure Research, 23 (4), 286-300.

Um, S. & Crompton, J. L. (1992). The roles of perceived inhibitors and perceived facilitators in pleasure travel destination decisions. Journal of Travel Research, 30 (3), 18-25.

Witt, P. A., & Goodale, T. L. (1981). The relationships between barriers to leisure enjoyment and family stages. Leisure Sciences, 4 (1), 29-49.

Woodside, A. G., & Sherrel, D. (1977). Traveler evoked set, inept set, and inert sets of vacation destinations. Journal of Travel Research, 16, 14-18.