EFFECTS OF INTERNATIONAL STUDY TOURS ON ATTITUDE TOWARD DOING BUSINESS GLOBALLY
ASSURANCE OF LEARNING IN EXECUTIVE MBA PROGRAMS

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PURPOSE
IN the light of recent focus on global tours as an important part of executive education (e.g., EMBA programs), the purpose of the present research is to determine if a global tour will have an impact on EMBA students' global awareness and attitude toward doing business globally.

Design/Methodology/Approach/Findings: To achieve this purpose, the results of a survey from a cohort of 30 EMBA students at a medium-sized university in the United States. The survey instrument was administered before and after a global tour that was a required part of the EMBA curriculum the university. The survey instrument measured the level of global awareness in terms of such issues as understanding of foreign cultures, negotiation skills needed when doing business in a global environment, etc. The survey data were analyzed using a t-test for paired comparison, using SPSSX. In sum, the results reported the increases in the level of global awareness and more positive attitude toward doing business globally indicated by the EMBA students can be attributed, at least partly, to the global tour experienced by those students.

Research Limitations/Implications: The research study used a before-after measurement sequence without any control group for the purpose of comparison. Therefore, it was difficult to categorically conclude that the global tour "caused" the higher levels of global awareness among EMBA students. It is likely that the changes in global awareness in the respondents might have been caused by such other factors as news reported on television, newspapers, discussions on global topics with their colleagues at work or in the EMBA cohort, global cases discussed in the EMBA class, and so on. The sample size also limits the generalizability of the results from the study.

Practical Implications/Value: The results suggest that global tours can help corporate managers increase their awareness with respect to many global issues, thus increasing the possibilities of conducting global business transactions more effectively and perhaps successfully. In addition, have a global tour as part of an EMBA program's curriculum will increase its value to potential EMBA applicants.

Originality: The research study was based on the primary data that were collected using a survey instrument, instead of secondary data.

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In general the purpose of EMBA global tours is to develop globally-ready executives who can understand various global challenges and incorporate them in their corporate strategies. Ron Moffatt, Director of the International Center at San Diego State University, stated that corporate executives should grasp and appreciate: "…global systems, global issues, the dynamics of how things are interrelated and interconnected in the world, and how society can best address such global issues" (*http://www.nafsa.org/_/file/_global_competency_2.pdf*). Most of EMBA tours are organized, scheduled, and delivered by companies who specialize in international management education at various parts of the world (*http://www.embac.org*). Typically EMBA global tours are scheduled anywhere between 7 to 15 days in various destination (e.g., Germany, France, Czech Republic, Hungary, China, India, Chile, Brazil, Argentina, to name a few).

Research on contextual factors has led to the recommendation that, to the extent that it is important for students to be able to apply what they learn to solve problems and make decisions, instruction be carried out in a problem-solving context. Learning that occurs in the context of problem solving is more likely to be retained and applied (Singh & Sahi, 2012).

The AACSB Mandates of 2011-13 have led the present researchers address the following issues: (1) do global tours help U.S. based EMBA students become global-ready? and (2) do global tours help US-based EMBA students develop "right" mind-set or attitude toward doing business globally? The purpose of the present research is to determine if a global tour will have an impact on EMBA students' global awareness and attitude toward doing business globally. Specifically, two research hypotheses are:

H1: A global tour will increase EMBA students' awareness of global trends, opportunities, and differences.

H2: A global tour will positively increase EMBA students' attitude toward doing business globally.

Methodology

The present research was conducted as part of the Assurance of Learning Initiative in an Executive MBA program at a mid-sized state university in the North Central part of the United States. The EMBA program was based on a lock-stem, cohort system, in other words, students enrolled in the program take all courses together in the same sequence. All courses were offered on Saturdays, with five or six consecutive Saturdays for 12 EMBA courses. The program duration was about 16 months, with holiday breaks. The EMBA cohort initially had 33 students enrolled, but three withdrew before the program began due to family or job-related issues, resulting in a sample of 30 EMBA students.

Before the start of EMBA curriculum (12 courses), the cohort went through a series of pre-curriculum preparation, including several non-credit workshops on quantitative tools, fundamentals of business functional areas, communication skills, and leadership development and assessment. The last course offered was the EMBA capstone, after which the cohort attended an international residency (a three-working-day tour in Frankfurt, Germany and a three-working-day tour in Budapest, Hungary). The tour was conducted by a travel company specializing in international education for executives and MBA students in the United States. The arrangement included hotel, air/ground transportation, meals, and social events. Importantly, during the six-working-day tour, the company had scheduled several factory visits, guest speakers of banks/chambers of commerce/major retailers/hospitals, panel discussions with the faculty and EMBA students at business schools in host countries (Frankfurt, Germany, and Budapest, Hungary). The topics covered many strategic and tactical aspects of global business practices (e.g., supply chain management, cross-cultural nuances, outsourcing, global market entry strategies, etc.), particularly focusing on the differences and similarities between the United States, Germany, and Hungary.

To accomplish the purpose of the research, we developed a questionnaire to measure students' self-reported levels of various skills (analytical, communication, problem solving, and computer), and awareness of and attitude toward doing business globally. Specifically, there were four statements measuring the level of global awareness and 16 statements measuring attitude toward doing business globally. The respondents were asked to indicate their level (agreement or disagreement) on a five-point, Likert-type scale. The statements were modified after the questionnaire reported in Handbook of Marketing Scales (Bearden, Netemeyer, and Mobley, 1993). In addition, the questionnaire collected such demographic information as age, gender, job description, years of managerial experience, and industry type represented by a respondent's company (see Table 1). As a pre-program measure, the questionnaire was administered on the first Saturday when the cohort began its course work. A total of thirty students (the cohort size) completed the questionnaire. The students were asked to put their special program identification number so that their post-program responses could be matched with their pre-program responses.

The cohort completed the EMBA curriculum of 12 courses during the period of 16 months. On the last Saturday of the program, the same questionnaire was administered, with a few modifications to capture students' responses as an assessment of post-program measures of the variables that were measured on the first Saturday of the program schedule. Again, the respondents were asked to write their program identification number on the questionnaire. Thus, the before and after responses for each respondent were matched by his/her identification number on the questionnaire.

Results

As indicated under Methodology, using a sample of 30 EMBA students, the present study obtained two measures of global awareness and attitude toward doing business globally, before and after measures from the same sampling units. The demographic description of the sample is shown in Table 1. As can be seen, the sample had higher percentages with respect to male, engineering/science major, and the manufacturing sector, with an average age of around 33 years and managerial experience of 8 plus years.

Table 1: Demographics of the EMBA Cohort

Demographic Characteristic	Descriptive Statistics
Gender	Male = 70%; Female = 30%
Average Age	33.63 years
Average Managerial Experience	8.33 years
Undergraduate Major	Engineering/Science = 30% Management-Marketing = 23.3% Accounting/Finance = 16.7% Computer Science = 13.3% Journalism = 10.7% Other = 6%
Industry Represented	Manufacturing = 33.3% Government Agencies = 20% Health Services = 16.7% Business Services = 16.7% Banks/Financial Institutes = 6.7%

The measures of both pre and post administration of the questionnaire were entered for SPSSX. To test the research hypotheses, we used a t-test for paired comparison via SPSSX. As for Research Hypothesis 1, Table 2a indicates that, out of four measures of global awareness, three measures showed a statistically

significant increase (level of global awareness, ability to identify global opportunity, and awareness of cross-cultural differences) from the before- to after-measures. Recognizing the drawbacks of comparing a set of before-after measures obtained from the same sampling units, it is possible that the global tour experienced by the EMBA students led to the increase in their global awareness. Recall that the global tour consisted of many factory and corporate visits, guest speakers, and interaction with faculty/EMBA students from the host countries (Germany and Hungary).

Table 2a:Testing of Research Hypothesis 1: A Global Tour will Increase EMBA Students' Awareness of Global Trends, Opportunities, and Differences

Measures of Global Awareness	Pre-Tour Average	Post-Tour Average	Paired t-test	Statistical Significance Level
My global awareness	4.27	4.63	2.11	Significant at 0.05 level
My ability to identify global opportunities	4.00	4.47	2.23	Significant at 0.05 level
My ability to track global trends	4.11	4.17	.226	Not Significant
My level of awareness of cross-cultural differences	4.00	4.23	1.96	Significant at 0.05 level

Table 2b: Testing of Research Hypothesis 2: A Global Tour will Positively Increase EMBA Students' Attitude Toward Doing Business Globally*

Measures of Attitude toward doing business globally**	Pre-Tour Average	Post-Tour Average	Paired t-test	Statistical Significance Level
I will have difficulty in doing business in a foreign country	3.03	2.03	3.94	Significant at 0.01 level
I do not like foreign cultures	2.73	1.20	3.57	Significant at 0.01 level
What works in the United States should work in foreign countries	2.90	1.63	1.96	Significant at 0.05 level
I do not need to be concerned with global business trends	2.63	1.37	2.80	Significant at 0.01 level

*Note: Of sixteen items measuring Attitude toward Doing Business Globally, only four showed statistically significant changes from less positive to more positive attitude.

**Note: Changes from higher to lower averages indicate changes from less positive to more positive attitude.

To test Research Hypothesis 2, we used t-test for paired comparison via SPSSX. The results are shown in Table 2b. As can be seen, of the sixteen statements used to measure attitude toward doing business globally, only four statements items showed a significant change from less positive to more positive attitude. In other words, it is possible that after the global tour, the EMBA students: (1) felt less difficulty in doing business in a foreign country, (2) indicated more liking for foreign cultures, (3) less display of self-reference criterion (Lee 1966), and (4) less worries (concerns) about global trends.

Conclusion

Ceteris paribus, the increases in the level of global awareness and more positive attitude toward doing business globally indicated by the EMBA students can be attributed, at least partly, to the global tour

experienced by those students. Of course, the caveat is: the study was based on a before-after measurement without any control group for comparison. Hence one cannot categorically state that it was the global tour that "caused" to have higher levels of global awareness and to have more positive attitude toward doing business globally. It is likely that during the 16-month period, the students' level of global awareness and attitude toward doing business globally might have been affected by such unknown factors, as online and TV news reports, reading articles pertaining to global trends, etc.

Despite many drawbacks of the present research, it points to the value of having a global tour as part of EMBA curricula. When speaking to the students who had experienced the global tour indeed gave a positive feedback regarding the tour and highly recommended to continue the practice of global tour as a required part of the EMBA program. It is the opinion of the current authors that a global tour should be not only a significant part of EMBA programs, but should also be incorporated in regular MBA (non-executive) curricula.

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