Effects of International Study Tours on Attitude toward Doing Business Globally: Assurance of Learning in Executive MBA Programs

Uday Tate, Marshall University, USA
Kamal Fatehi, Kennesaw State University, USA
Basanna Patagundi, Birla Institute of Management, Bangalore, India

Abstract

The past two decades have experienced and realized the wave of globalization as pervasive and impactful imperative in the world of academia, and not just in the corporate world. This realization is reflected in the 2011-13 Report by AACSB Task Force on Globalization of Management Education (The Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business - International, June 2011-13). The AACSB report highlights broad globalization trends in management education that have drawn the attention of institutions, corporations and business schools alike, that are striving to prepare their key stakeholders (managers and students) to face today's complex global challenges. Today's increasingly integrated and complex global business environment has led many Executive MBA programs to address and incorporate global awareness, perspectives, and practices into curriculum instructions. This challenge led to many U. S.- and non-US based Executive MBA (EMBA) programs to follow the mandate proclaimed by AACSB: "…AACSB recognizes institutions that uphold its mission and core values, work to advance the interests of global management education, and participate in AACSB's community of leading business schools. In this context, AACSB focuses on continuous quality improvement in management education through innovation, engagement, and impact" (http://www.aacsb.edu/). Specifically, many EMBA programs have infused a global tour as an important component of the curriculum, albeit some of these programs have made such global tours as an optional part, whereas many EMBA programs have made it a required component. Of the curriculum; about 65

percent of EMBA programs require a global trip

(http://www.emba.org/research_prog_results.htm).

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" (www.lnaguageCorps.com).   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.emba.org/). Typically EMBA global tours are schedule anywhere between 7 to 15 days in various destination (e.g., Germany, France, the Czech Republic, Hungary, China, India, Chile, Brazil, Argentina, to name a few).

The AACSB Mandates of 2011-13 have led the present researchers address the following issues: (1) do global tours help US-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 moths, with holiday breaks. The EMBA cohort initially had 33 students enrolled, but three withdrew before the program began due 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 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 and Germany/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 (or agreement or

disagreement) on a five-point, Likert-type scale (see Tables 1a and 1b). The statements were modified after the questionnaire reported in Handbook of Marketing Scales (Beardon, 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 2). 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, we administered the same questionnaire, 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 2. 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.

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 3a 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).

To test Research Hypothesis 2, we used t-test for paired comparison via SPSSX. The results are shown in Table 3b. 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, 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.

Bibliography

Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business -International, June 2011-13,
    http://www.aacsb.edu/

Executive MBA Council, http://www.emba.org/research_prog_results.htm

Beardon, William O., Richard G. Netemeyer, and Mary F. Mobly. Handbook of
    **Marketing Scales: Multi-Item Measures for Marketing and Consumer Behavior
    Research**.

Lee, James A. "Cultural Analysis in Overseas Operations" in **Harvard Business Review**,
    (March-April 1966), pp. 106-114.

Moffatt, Ron, International Center at San Diego State University, USA.
    www.lnaguageCorps.com

Table 1a
Scales Measuring Global Awareness

Items Measuring Global Awareness	Scale: Low Level = 1 to High Level 5
My global awareness	
My ability to identify global opportunities	
My ability to track global trends	
My awareness of cross-cultural differences	

Table 1b
Scales Measuring Global Awareness

5 = Strongly Agree;   4 = Agree;   3 = Neither;   2 = Disagree;   1 = Strongly Disagree

1. Doing business with people from foreign countries will make me feel uncomfortable.   Scale value____

2. Understanding foreign cultures is important for success in global business.   Scale value____

3. Speaking the official language of a foreign country is important for success in global business.   Scale value____

4. Business practices are fundamentally the same around the world.   Scale value____

5. There may be a few exceptions, but in general foreign businesspersons are pretty much alike in their business practices across various countries   Scale value____

6. Some foreign cultures are admirable, but on the whole I don't like them.   Scale value____

7. Foreign cultures are different but not inferior.   Scale value____

8. I have no desire to know any foreign culture.   Scale value____

9. Doing business with people from foreign countries will make me uncomfortable .   Scale value____

10. Negotiating with businesspersons in foreign countries is very similar to negotiating with American businesspersons.   Scale value____

11. Knowing the culture of one country is sufficient for developing business practices suitable throughout the world.   Scale value____

12. Many countries have adopted American values, products, and services. Therefore, what works in America should work in foreign countries.   Scale value____

Table 1b…continued

13. If the company I work for does not export products overseas, then I do not
    need to be concerned with global business trends.   Scale
value_____

14. If I were a sales manager of a company located in a foreign country, I will hire only
    American salespersons.   Scale
value_____

15. Many consumers in foreign countries have adopted American values, fashions, trends, I
    and products. Therefore, I need not study their consumer behavior.   Scale
value_____

16. If I have to make global marketing decisions, I will use information
    from American sources only.   Scale
value_____

Table 2
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%

Table 3a
**Testing of Research Hypothesis 1: A global tour will increase EMBA students'
awareness of global trends, opportunities, and differences.**

Measures of Global	Pre-Tour	Post-Tour	Paired t-test	Statistical

Awareness	Average	Average		Significance Level
My global awareness	4.27	4.63	2.11	Significant at .05 level
My ability to identify global opportunities	4.00	4.47	2.23	Significant at .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 .05 level

Table 3b
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 .01 level
I do not like foreign cultures	2.73	1.20	3.57	Significant at .01 level
What works in the United States should work in foreign countries	2.90	1.63	1.96	Significant at .05 level
I do not need to be concerned with global business trends	2.63	1.37	2.80	Significant at .01 level

*Note: Of sixteens 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.