

Outbound Travel of Business Students in China and India: Enriching the Experience Not Only for Students but also for the International Communities

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Global expansion has become a strategic imperative for almost any medium to large-sized corporation. Everything from research, production, distribution, marketing, and communications—all contain a global dimension. The purpose of this paper is to stimulate educators to consider methods in which global business travel with students can be more meaningful, productive, and culturally enriching—not only for business students but also for the international communities visited. Ideas are shared on the need to understand diverse cultures and to overcome ethnocentrism—a prerequisite for doing business anywhere. Practical methods are suggested for achieving profound results in international travel with business students.

INTRODUCTION

Educational institutions have a strategic opportunity to differentiate from other institutions through purposeful international travel, not merely globe trotting as “educational travel agents.” Stories of the “ugly American,” spoiled students, loud intruders, harried businesspeople, and other negative perceptions abound regarding Americans traveling abroad. Given this backdrop, traveling with business students, particularly to China and India, is greatly enhanced when focus is placed on four essential and interconnected goals. Rather than the “4 Ps” of marketing (product, price, place, promotion), they are the “4 Cs” of travel. These travel priorities include:

1. Culturally connecting: Reaching out to understand and participate with cultures visited
2. Culturally honoring: Providing service to cultures visited
3. Cooperative team building: Developing relationships with each travel team member
4. Cognitively enriching: Researching, studying, and experiencing sites and cultures

When these goals are the focus, it is reflected not only in the students’ evaluations of the experience but, more importantly, in far-reaching student business attitudes, actions, understandings, and changed lives. In addition, cultures visited gain a new appreciation of the American student traveling abroad. The importance of each element is discussed in this paper, along with examples from India and China, implementation ideas, and “tips” learned along the way. The purpose is to stimulate educators to consider methods in which global business travel with students can be more meaningful, productive, and culturally enriching—not only for business students but also for the international communities visited.

GLOBALIZATION OF BUSINESS IN CHINA AND INDIA

Global expansion has become a strategic imperative for almost any medium to large-sized corporation. One reason is because companies are seeking growth away from the mature and saturated markets of developed countries and toward the fresh opportunities of emerging markets. This globalization is also necessary if companies are to remain knowledgeable about market developments and global customers, to gain possible global scale efficiencies, and to protect against global competitors. Indeed, most business activities today are global in scope. Everything from research, production, distribution, marketing, to communications—all contain a global dimension, and every company is international to the extent that its performance is impacted by events that happen abroad.

Asia, specifically India, is a popular destination for international businesses seeking to expand and enter new markets. Ranging from well-known publications to the cinema, India is presently a popular location. Investors globally are targeting India's markets. How do businesses begin to understand a country of over one billion people that is the world's largest democracy and has Hindus, Muslims, Christians, plus myriad other religions? It is a land of hundreds of dialects where "only about 11% of those eligible to enroll in higher education in India do so, compared with about 21% in the other 'Bric (Brazil, Russia, India, China) countries'" (Yee, 2009, para. 8), and "with 40% of its population under 18" (Sengupta, 2008, p. A1). In summary, India offers strategic opportunities amidst struggles with poverty, disease, extreme water shortages, choking pollution, enormous energy needs, and many challenging infrastructure issues. While dealing with increasing terrorist threats, India faces every other issue confronting large, emerging nations. Amidst this, India's higher education system is one of the largest in the world with many premier institutions, particularly in technology.

Turning to China, how is business to understand the other Asian behemoth, or "the gorilla" as described by McGregor (2005)? There are many perplexities to try to comprehend: a 5,000 year old history, a political system with no opposition parties and little public debate on issues, employment with no trade unions, a media that underpins social control, universities whose students are the 20% of 18 to 30 year-olds rigorously selected to enroll, plus a single institution in Beijing alone which has over 4,000 "think tank" researchers (Leonard, 2008). China's modern history includes foreign policy issues (e.g., Japan, Taiwan, Tibet, and North Korea) and many internal challenges, such as infrastructure development, intellectual property law, pollution, religious freedom, policing the Internet, and the one-child policy, to name a few.

THE IMPERATIVE OF UNDERSTANDING CULTURE FOR CONDUCTING BUSINESS

Two essential goals of international business are to maximize the returns while minimizing the risks. Using international marketing as an example, and realizing that corporate resources and competencies influence strategic choice (Verbke, 2003), the marketing manager controls price, product, promotion, and channels-of-distribution in order to maximize on anticipated demand. These are within a marketer's decision-making area—that is, areas that can be controlled and risk minimized.

Uncontrollable elements, however, present risks that must be carefully considered in order to achieve success. Some of these elements include: infrastructure, competitive issues, economic conditions, political influences, regulatory agencies, and socio-cultural forces. These elements differ from country to country, and are not under the control of the marketing manager. Therefore, to lessen risks marketing programs must be designed to make critical adjustments in uncertain business climates.

Local adaptation is required for success in foreign markets. Of all the variables, both controllable and uncontrollable, of conducting successful business globally, cultural understanding is the uncontrollable variable that most needs to be understood. The challenge of the international marketer is to adjust to the culture and recognize its importance. In the home country, cultural adjustment is not a problem, and is done automatically as a result of years of socialization. The risk lies in the foreign market, when adaptation to cultural differences arises. The primary obstacles to success in international marketing are a person's self-reference criterion (SRC) and an associated ethnocentrism. The SRC is an unconscious

reference to one's own cultural values, experiences, and knowledge as a basis for decisions. Closely connected is ethnocentrism—that is, the notion that people in one's own company, culture, or country know best how to do things (Cateora, Gilly, & Graham, 2009).

America's economic dominance in the world has at times hindered businesses because of SRC and ethnocentrism. An example of this is Disney's initial foray into France with the American concept of "Mickey" and Disneyland. Global opportunities abound for those prepared to shed ethnocentric habits and have a willingness to learn new ways. To be globally effective, one must adapt to cultural differences and understand culture attributes, including beliefs and values shared from one generation to the next (Tung, 2009). Culture is the like-mindedness within a group of people. If it is not understood, there is little hope of successfully doing business or connecting with the people of the other culture. Adaptation or, at a minimum, accommodation, is critical in international business. (Sin, Tse, Yau, Chow, & Lee, 2005). Sympathy for and knowledge of cultural business practices in a foreign environment can remove seemingly insurmountable barriers and create successful business relationships. Understanding the culture of a foreign country, its history, family loyalty, politics, religions, sense of time, ways of thinking, etc. greatly impact the potential for doing business globally.

Adaptation to the foreign culture depends on hard work and a desire to adapt. Conscientious preparation must be done before business is conducted in the target country. "Cultural empathy" is clearly necessary for anyone hoping to be successful in doing business in the host country. It is a part of the basic orientation of a country, and anyone who is confused about the environment is more than likely not going to be effective (Lee & Dawes, 2005).

Experienced international business people know business customs and expectations of a culture. For example, the Chinese word *guanxi* (Rao, Pearce, & Xin, 2005) refers to friendship, human relations, or attaining a level of trust through friendship (Zaheer & Zaheer, 2006). In China and India, trusting relationships and friendships are imperatives for conducting business. The Chinese accept strangers only after a trust relationship has developed. This is part of their culture. The stranger is an outsider, and is considered only after family members, extended family, hometown neighbors, and former classmates. Networking through one of these contacts can prove successful if a strong, trusting friendship has been developed.

Any businessperson wishing to work with individuals, the government, or firms should consider developing an attitude of tolerance, flexibility, cultural curiosity, a liking of others, and a general "others orientation", or a focus on the interests of others. This will help in adapting and integrating into the host culture. These qualities seem obvious in conducting successful business anywhere, but the obvious is often forgotten. Embracing the culture is indispensable when conducting business in Asia. To understand the culture, both study and interaction are imperative.

GROWTH OF UNIVERSITY SPONSORED INTERNATIONAL TRAVEL AND THE OPPORTUNITY TO DIFFERENTIATE PROGRAMS

University sponsored international travel for business students has grown at an extraordinary pace. Many national agencies have also developed programs to encourage students to travel abroad. Stories, however, regarding the character of demanding students, loud intruders, insulting cultural invaders, harried foreigners, and other negative perceptions abound regarding student travel. Youth tourism is rapidly becoming another mass-consumption product that is often little more than student sightseeing vacations with friends and exhausted professors trying to protect the students from themselves and others. There has been a "McDonaldizing" of trips, where the emphasis is on fast travel with oversized itineraries. Bringing business students with limited budgets out to experience a culture at all levels is a significant challenge. If, however, understanding culture and minimizing one's own self-reference perspectives is critical to successfully conducting international business, then educators must consider methods through which global travel with business students can be more meaningful, productive, and culturally enriching not only for students—and to enhance our universities' reputations—but also for the international communities visited.

Important cultural methodological frameworks provide insight and must be reviewed—including cultural theorists such as Frons Trompenaas (e.g., levels of affect); Geert Hofstede’s research to identify value dimensions of varying cultures (e.g., uncertainty avoidance); and Edward Hall’s study of cross-cultural issues (e.g., “high context” and “low context” communication). Intercultural studies need to be understood as part of international preparedness (Bennett, 1993). Other methods, however, provide culturally enriching understanding at a personal level and include experiential lessons gained during travel with students. Practical methods using directed cultural interaction through first hand experiences are indispensable for helping students overcome ethnocentrism, develop networks, understand cultural etiquette, realize the multiple aspects of both uncontrollable and controllable variables of doing business, and basically improve their overall cultural competence—prerequisites for doing good business anywhere. This can be achieved, and profound travel results gained, through these experiential practices, thereby better preparing business students for work in the global market place, and also improving student reputations as global travelers. Many educational institutions have become globe-trotting, logistics-specializing, educational travel agents, whose students do not penetrate or comprehend the nuances of culture, but move from city site to city site, visiting businesses, enjoying restaurants, checking into hotels, then moving on to the next target to do the same. But it is through deliberate and beneficial contact with locals that the understanding and discernment of a culture begins to take place. Businesses know there is nothing like experience, and experience gained through mutually beneficial cultural interactions is invaluable. Universities and colleges have a strategic opportunity to differentiate their travel programs through meaningful and culturally sensitive, people-enriching, experiential international travel.

HOW TO BECOME MORE THAN TRAVEL AGENTS, LOGISTIANS, AND SUBJECT MATTER EXPERTS

Preparation: Community Building Within the Travel Team—Creating an “Others Orientation” Culture and Connecting with Each Other

Someone once said, “Failing to plan is planning to fail.” This could not be truer when preparing to travel with students. In laying the groundwork, there must be time to cultivate the hearts and minds of students for cultural encounters and opportunities they will have during their travel. Thoughtful preparation is essential and will eliminate a multitude of later problems. It begins by creating a culture—an attitude of serving, or an “others orientation” within the team. The essence is a focus on the other person—being interested in them and giving personal time to find out about their talents, history, and passions. It is a practice, or dry run, for the team before they venture out to focus on the people and the places they will be visiting. Without this “others” attitude, which is the antithesis of our more natural egocentric bent and of seeking self-gratification, students will not be able to escape their own self-reference habits and connect with the culture visited. It is a viewing of the world as far as “What’s in it for others?” and not just “What’s in it for me?” This is particularly important in Asia since the cultures are so vastly different from ours (and from each other), and travel can be challenging. Both in India and China, relationships are everything. The Chinese want to do business with individuals they know and trust.

So trust begins at home, with each other—getting to know each other and developing an “others orientation.” It helps if there are students familiar with this orientation from previous classes. This initial stage in developing the team’s ability might be what William Howell called the first of four levels of cultural awareness or “unconscious incompetence”—not knowing what you do not know about a culture. It might also be what he considered the second level of cultural awareness, which is “conscious incompetence,” or awareness that one is learning new skills and knowledge and will make mistakes (Howell, 1982).

Activities that have worked particularly well in preparing students, and have received positive reviews from students, include:

- Students are given articles and practical, commonsense books to read on simple but profound human relations skills. Sometimes the obvious is the most difficult to put into practice.

Interestingly, the students who get along best with other students are the ones most enthused by these materials. Student who actually read the material comprehend its value. A classic, widely used book is Dale Carnegie's *How to Win Friends and Influence People*. It is a favorite among students, and is still being used in training conferences for thousands of business people. There are, however, many sources from which to choose. Students select chapters/articles that resonate with them, present this to the team, and then lead a discussion involving situations that could arise in a foreign country. They might give an "ugly American" ethnocentric response to a situation, then ask the team for alternative, "other-oriented" approaches. For example, a tourist might refer to a "foreigner" by saying, "Why are they so slow?" or "What kind of an outfit is that?" or "Don't they speak English?" The focus is on assisting the team to become more flexible and open to other cultures, to develop an interest in understanding others, and to anticipate cultural situations in which students might need help. Students discuss expectations of what constitutes a good or a poor trip, and the responsibilities of team members and the professor in contributing to a positive experience. A contract that students and accompanying professor develop regarding behaviors can enhance the trip. Topics such as maintaining a positive attitude, respecting schedules, promptly informing each other of concerns, supporting team members, and engaging in only healthful and safe activities might be in the contract so that each team member understands his or her personal responsibility and contribution in making the journey a success for all.

- Indian or Chinese students from local colleges are invited to a simple, potluck lunch or dinner held at a home or at the university. Universities usually have clubs or other organizations through which international contacts can be made. This includes sharing typical American foods (usually pizza), and giving the guests the option of bringing a sample of their favorite home food. Typically the guests bring more food than expected and also present unexpected gifts—cultural lessons! The "foreigners" love the event. Many times it is their first invitation to an American home or from an American student—another cultural lesson. Not much entertainment is needed because conversations abound; however, taking turns drawing cultural questions from a hat is a fun and culturally informative activity. Questions might include: What is your favorite family memory, tradition, holiday, or music? This activity is always a great success generating friendships, exchange of email addresses, and tips about where to go and what to do. During this simple activity, the transformation of student attitudes begins in earnest. These are Asian students from whom they receive invaluable advice before, during, and even after their trip.
- An inexpensive "Contact Notebook" is begun with an individual page about each team member (including a photo), and additional pages for potential travel contacts. The first step is to learn the names of each person on the travel team. This is done as a team through humorous association name games, emphasizing team building. In the small notebook, each student continually records observations about their teammates. Emphasis is placed on what is most appreciated about each person: their passions, business strengths, business contacts, talents, things teammates have in common, etc. Students are also required to spend the equivalent of one-half day during travel with each member on the team. They record in their notebooks the answers to pre-developed questions they will weave into conversations with each other. This activity not only helps to break up cliques and to facilitate new friendships, but also increases conversation skills, moves the focus to "others," and expands student networks of relatives and friends that potentially include hundreds of invaluable business contacts.
- A pretest is given regarding cultural attitudes, and a follow-up test upon return is given to help measure cultural attitude changes. These results can be shared with the students. The test might be developed by either the instructor or the students. There are also professionally developed surveys that test cultural biases, understanding, etc.
- One of the first and most effective activities conducted as a team for bonding and building trust is to have students sit in a circle and share something unique about themselves—something no one else might know but is specific to the individual. They can do this verbally, draw a picture, or

have a teammate represent them. The activity is not about bragging but being vulnerable and sharing something personally quirky. The vulnerability gets the students laughing and lets them break down their guard, especially when the professor starts by sharing that she is profoundly color blind and has extremely flat feet. They then want the shoes to come off and proceed to quiz her on colors of everything in sight. It becomes comical! This activity also helps to identify personality types and learning styles which can be important information while traveling, particularly in finding leaders and followers, and in pairing students for activities.

- Role playing, experience sharing, and guest speakers help students to shed their ethnocentrism and increase their understanding of cultures. Additionally, articles/books are read and discussed regarding the countries that will be visited and the potential situations students might encounter (e.g., how to react to unidentifiable delicacies in China, culturally sensitive locations like religious temples, and the begging of the poor in India). Students usually need and appreciate help with appropriate responses to the myriad cultural interactions they will experience. A relevant example of cultural assumptions made from an ethnocentric point of view occurred several years ago: A well-intentioned travel team brought trunks full of teddy bears wrapped in white paper to an orphanage in a remote town in China, only to discover that the children had never seen stuffed bears and were frightened by them. Even worse, in China the white of the wrapping paper symbolizes death! Because of the importance of gift giving in Asia, a gift giving team is appointed to gather inexpensive yet meaningful gifts for hosts, and to wrap them appropriately for the country visited. Examples of gifts would be: “Love MN” pins, college t-shirts for students, samples of American make-up for girls in Korea (though not in China), pens, paperweights, etc. Teams are also formed to gather traditional American holiday and event items and pictures (e.g., weddings, Valentine’s Day, Thanksgiving) to assist in sharing home culture when abroad. Students are encouraged to consider their own traditions which help them realize the significance of traditions in other countries. The visuals gathered beforehand are useful when interacting with foreign hosts during cultural exchange activities and panel discussions, which are often initiated at universities.

Other ideas include: Asking Indian or Chinese students and friends to speak to the team; meeting for dinner at an ethnic restaurant and having the owners explain etiquette; watching a popular or historic movie as a team highlighting the country to be visited; meeting in small groups to discuss their fears and hopes for the travel; meeting with individual students and the trip leader to discuss any special circumstances, strengths, weaknesses, etc. The key is to build understanding of the culture and to bond with each other before the pressures of travel take over.

Culturally Connecting/Others Orientation/Value Added

In Milton J. Bennett’s model of intercultural sensitivity, he investigated attitudes and degrees of awareness toward cultural differences. He stated that cultural understanding and sensitivity, including the view that cultural differences are interesting, positive, and have their own logic, is obtained through a process of education and experience (Bennett, 1993). It is the intentional, active, intercultural experiential aspect of international travel with business students that is the focus of this paper. Understanding culture is crucial to conducting business and the importance of cultural sensitivity must be communicated to students.

There are so many cultural imperatives that unless meaningful connections with hosts in the country visited are made, the chances of “getting it right,” and also being forgiven when mistakes are made, are slim. Spradley (1980) related that to increase our own cultural knowledge, we need to get inside the heads of the host nationals. This is difficult, but not impossible, especially if it is intentionally experiential and interactive. Cultural examples regularly encountered by business students in both India and China include some of the following:

- In Chinese etiquette, there are elaborate, unwritten codes of rules that apply to all aspects of business. It begins with introductions, when someone offers a business card, always with both hands. An afternoon meeting will likely extend to late in the evening, and the Chinese do not like

to get the impression you are in a rush to leave. Hosting a party for Asian contacts is always welcome, and is a way of connecting and hearing what is really on the minds of your contacts.

- “Gestures that seem insignificant on the surface can make or break your efforts in China” (Alexander, 2001, p. 9). Gestures can bond you together with your contacts. For example, a new friend as a courtesy will insist on walking you to your means of transportation.
- Indians also want to spend time getting to know you and developing trust before they will share their real feelings. An entire day might be spent at a host’s house, “just sitting around,” eating and talking leisurely, or an afternoon visit to a local friend’s parent’s home may extend into the night with seemingly nothing planned except just getting to know you.
- In both India and China, hierarchical social levels are very important. The status of being a professor is an advantage. Longevity is also respected.
- In China, saving face is all important and ensures that dignity and social standing are preserved.
- Politics is an easy topic of discussion in India. However, in China there are political topics too sensitive or considered impolite to discuss.
- Seligman (1999) talked about how the Chinese may view a foreign friend as a way to get benefits from a world to which they may not have access. It is the way they have had to operate in the past in a society with limited mobility.
- Joshi (1997) discussed how Indians do not like to say “no” outright. Sometimes it means “no” and sometimes a “yes” means “no” if there is not follow-up.
- Both China and India have intellectual property rights issues, but in a country with a fledgling legal system, such as China, copyright violations, as well as gifts and bribes, are tricky. Bribery is illegal in both countries, but it is common.
- It is your network and who you know that help in getting things done. For example, once in India after negotiating unsuccessfully for almost an hour with a hotel manager to secure the price of a standard hotel meeting room, an Indian friend of mine happened to walk in. The manager knew my friend, and the price was immediately waved.

To begin the process of becoming culturally capable, one must understand and be willing to adapt to cultural differences shared by a group of people. Howell (1982) categorized this as the third level of cultural awareness, or “conscious competence”—an awareness and understanding of cultural differences gained through cultural interactions in which you are consciously working at improving your cultural appropriateness. Much can be done to improve the intellectual enterprise through textbooks, articles, books, speakers, conferences, site visits, research, tours, etc.

“Others oriented” travel, however, also focuses purposefully on connecting personally and meaningfully at a local level with the communities visited. It is a “go do” approach in addition to a “go see” approach. The real life that results from such local, personal connections is the “value added” of this type of travel. Planning includes: setting up volunteer activities, ensuring that where students stay affords real-life cultural experience and significant cultural interactions, teaming students with foreign students while traveling, setting up site visits for maximum personal local encounters and interactive learning, and choosing local restaurants and activities accompanied by local companions. Such plans help ensure a more “authentic” cultural experience. The goal is to experience with locals what locals experience and foreigners seldom do. As indicated in students’ journals, interviews, and evaluations, this is always the favorite aspect of the trip as such experiences provide opportunities for connections on all levels—intellectually, socially, and particularly at a heart level, even in countries that are not particularly friendly toward the United States. This type of travel also helps form positive impressions of Americans.

When students lack meaningful purpose in life as in travel, they become self-focused and indulgent, chasing the next new and exciting event or scene. Eventually, this grows tiring. Deep satisfaction is not achieved through satiating student appetites with fun, entertainment, and even knowledge. International travel that is deeply life-changing occurs in a manner that stimulates the heart and positively connects with others. Someone once said that “man would rather spend himself for a cause than live idly in prosperity.” In other words, the good life unfulfilled is not something for which one should strive. Thus, it is very worthwhile to contribute or give something back to a country in exchange for all the benefits

derived from traveling in it. As Dr. Karl Menninger said in a speech, when asked what advice he would give a person who felt a nervous breakdown coming on, his recommendation was to “Lock up your house, go across the railway tracks, find someone in need, and do something to help that person” (McMillon, 1999, p. xv). How does service apply to students? There are times, especially in extremely culturally diverse and stressful locations, where students need to focus on problems other than their own. It is helpful to venture out and lend a hand to others in need. When helping an orphan, the elderly, a street child, etc., life is put into a more thoughtful, mature, and global perspective—a perspective readily admired by others.

Student travel chronicles confirm the significant benefits that “others oriented, go do, purposeful” travel offered them. Students personally experience diversity as they interact with people who are different from themselves regarding socio-economic status, ethnicity, race, and culture. They gain appreciation for others’ adversities, such as being disabled, poor, uneducated, orphaned, or an outcast. Further, they gain understanding about how communities and individuals deal with these circumstances. This type of travel gives students a new appreciation and analysis of their own country while observing the pros and cons of other locations in the world. It helps them contemplate their possible vocations and consider how an organization might connect globally in order to help the underprivileged. Most often this experience is the highpoint of their travel, where they got away from frantic attempts to “see” everything and entered a world of “doing” for others.

In living out “others oriented, go do, purposeful” travel, students are prepared to spend a percentage of time, if for only a day, in pre-planned service to others. At least one, but often many activities (sometimes up to 10% of the time), are organized so students can contribute to the country visited rather than just absorbing and taking from the culture. The term “ugly American” is dispelled when students focus, at least in part, on serving others rather than themselves or their team friends. It requires pre-planning, but the payoff is significant.

Examples of service activities from which students benefitted:

- Teaching English to local students, which can be done almost anywhere, anytime. In China, students go to “The English Corner” on Friday night. Chinese students and other locals gather to meet each other and practice their English language skills. Crowds of 20 or 30 locals will swarm American students, asking questions and sharing opinions ranging from politics to business to consumerism to religion. It is a great way to learn how people feel about the United States, especially regarding business and the economy. A few Chinese students, businesspeople, or other locals are identified to invite to dinner the following night. I personally met two Chinese friends this way. The following day we had lunch and they led an informal tour of their favorite sites. These contacts have become lifelong friends, leading to invitations to their weddings and to staying with them in Beijing during the Olympics. This is a great way to network.
- Playing with children in orphanages or street children’s shelters. Students brought simple and inexpensive materials to face paint, make hand prints on paper plates, and blow up balloons and tie them into animals. With the older children, students played everything from baseball, to wrestling, to soccer. These youngsters taught the visiting students to play cricket. The connections with the local caregivers and the children are profound.
- Other volunteer activities have included: painting a shelter for the poor, laying paving stones at a children’s center, helping at a home for the elderly, feeding children at a food distribution center, painting signposts for the local mayor, picking up trash, singing at a local church or hospital, teaching sports, conducting an art project at a local school, providing business lectures and interactive student learning at a local university, etc.

These diverse activities have all been rewarding ways to learn the culture, connect with the people, and gain the respect of businesspeople. Contacts for these activities were made in the United States through religious organizations, businesspeople, adoption agencies, university personnel and foreign students, international business organizations, web searches, travel books, friends, etc. Other arrangements were made by emailing a local contact for information on volunteering. In one instance, we contacted a local city official and asked what we could do to serve the town for a day. He had us paint hundreds of posts

lining the town road. We wondered how that would help in connecting us, but we diligently took our provided buckets of paint and brushes and dressed in orange reflective vests to accomplish the task. To our surprise, the homeless street children of the town came to watch and then help us with our Tom Sawyer-type task! The local press noticed our service work and the fun we were having teaching local children to paint. We ended up on the front page of the local newspaper with the headline: "U.S. students serving our town." In addition, the BBC was visiting and produced a short documentary on our activity. What tremendous good will that simple activity produced! The lessons learned were many, but most importantly it connected us at a heart level, and gave us practically unlimited access in learning the culture and credibility in perusing business contacts. It was a simple task with profound results.

Other examples of connecting culturally with locals include:

- Using local universities, facilities used by the locals when traveling, or housing close to universities. This provides several advantages: Students can interact with locals their own age, experience what the locals experience, connect with possible future leaders of the country, observe what students eat, participate with their schedule, and observe their dress. We learned to shop at inexpensive local stores, discovered where locals went to relax (parks, zoos, places to dance), observed customs (such as not showing affection publically), and practiced the local language.
- Pairing up with local university business or other students to visit their favorite local restaurant, sites, and activities. What contacts and insights are gained by spending time with these future leaders of China and India! We ask the local students if they will honor us by being our special guests, guiding us to their favorite destinations. Usually this wonderful day of activities extends into the evening. The volunteers serve as our guides, and we pay for the transportation and activities, because often locals cannot afford it. Typically they bring us to inexpensive (but wonderful) restaurants, beaches, parks, historic treasures, work places, and, in some cases, their homes to meet or dine with family members. We have eaten Peking duck (including the feet) while watching hundreds being cooked in open furnaces; chomped down numerous homemade Chinese dumplings interspersed with toasts (while noting local customs and etiquette which is so important in business); lined up in a local "salon" for a dry hair wash (in China, many students do not have daily access to showers in which they can wash their hair); and visited dormitory rooms, student dining facilities, and student bathroom and laundry facilities. Other destinations have been temples, squares, historical statues, gravesites, and museums. We have ridden bicycles through the streets of Beijing, climbed hundreds of stairs with locals one evening under the stars to overlook The Forbidden City, etc. Lifetime friendships are formed as the locals serve as advisors on customs and business connections.
- Hosting a mutually organized party for local business students. This gives all students a chance to work together in sharing cultures as they plan for music, dancing, food, games, decorations, etc. Dancing serves as a bond between the students as music and traditional dances are shared from each culture. A reminder of local customs occurred when one American student yelled over the music at another student who was dancing. A hush came over the Chinese because yelling was clearly inappropriate. Because all of the students had bonded, the Chinese students explained the culture and were gracious and helpful.
- Setting up university classroom visits in which a panel of American students answer questions from the host citizens and vice versa. This experience is enjoyable, enlightening, and educational. Politics and business questions eventually give way to personal questions regarding dating practices, family strictness, faith, marriage practices, and other relationship questions. A questionnaire is usually administered to all students which asks questions regarding the roles of men and women, rewards they want from business employment, and altruistic aspirations. It leads to fascinating discussions as the answers are shared.
- Other activities include visits to international ports to see thousands of shipments being readied; talks with public officials like the Minister of Railroads in India; presentations from members of a local chamber of commerce; visits to factories; talks with individuals involved in microenterprise;

tours of local sites and landmarks; interviews with newspaper reporters; visits to businesses, research facilities, and stock exchanges, etc.

Students gain an understanding from these activities, but it is the personal cultural interactions and relationships developed that bring depth of understanding and connect them to the country and the people. The fads of surface travel and self-gratification quickly burn out. Students must be taught a sense of responsibility toward the communities in which they stay. They will learn how giving of themselves personally enriches their endeavors. It is also gratifying to the hosts who experience student generosity, consideration, and effort, rather than observing them simply taking in the sites and dashing from one destination to the next.

Follow-up, Outcomes, and Evaluation

Education, according to William Yates, “is the lighting of a fire and not the filling of a bucket.” Follow-up of any venture is extremely important if there is to be meaningful reinforcement and evaluation of travel priorities.

In order to build effective relationships and help students move into what Howell (1982) categorized as the fourth stage of cultural awareness, “unconscious competence”—where one instinctively knows what is appropriate in the host country, contacts must be kept fresh and interactions maintained.

The effective travel educator must know how to network and follow-up appropriately in order to build deep, trusting relationships—ones in which students are welcomed back to the country, and lasting business connections can be made. It is crucial for students and faculty to process, reflect, and keep fresh the lessons learned through experiential travel. Therefore, successfully planned trips need to be followed-up by a guided unfolding of experiences, a thoughtful assessment of outcomes, and a plan to reconnect with contacts made. This is done as a team because the team prepared together, shared common experiences, and bonded over time. In business, this is routinely conducted at the conclusion of an outbound opportunity, and includes such intents as plans for contact revitalization and an analysis regarding strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats of the venture. With students it is more effective if the time devoted to this activity takes place in the home culture with familiar surroundings and in a back to “normal” real life setting, away from distractions. When this intentional unfolding does not happen, and when faculty do not make the purposeful effort to pull the team together with planned interaction after travel, students can have reentry problems such as difficulty adjusting back to their pre-trip lives, and affirmatively processing their cultural and group experiences. The team may even fall apart, disconnect, or revert back to their pre-trip cliquishness and attitudes. Taking advantage of this post travel learning opportunity helps reinforce gleaned concepts, unravel puzzling cultural and team member experiences, and share the emotional decompression students can experience after adventuring together in a foreign country. Students also sometimes need help dealing with the loss of newfound friends left behind in the host country. Another important consideration is to plan for physical recuperation from time zone changes (one day’s recuperation for each time zone crossed is well-known by seasoned business travelers), illnesses, emotional upheavals, and reflection on life changes.

How are the outcomes of “purposeful, others oriented, go do, experiential travel” measured? It is not by traditional, institutionally prepared, exhaustive form-written surveys, or electronic evaluations conducted independently in an unstructured student dormitory, administered only to students. It is instead in the observed actions and the articulations of students, faculty, and community members visited, consistent with the preparation and follow-up of the journey. The evaluation is customized according to travel goals and priorities, and prepared by the educators leading the travel. The evaluation instrument might also include student input because they have committed to the travel priorities. There is no faster method to extinguish the flame of enthusiasm regarding international travel, for both educators and students, than an evaluation instrument created by those inexperienced or personally unfamiliar with the student travel experience. Purposeful travel can be evaluated and measured by purposeful outcomes both during the experience and upon the students’ return. For example, outcomes were observed and answers to questions evaluated during and after returning from a trip to China in which students:

- Talked of the relationships developed with foreigners rather than just relationships and experiences with their team members (e.g., Professor may ask about the number of local interactions and relationships students developed)
- Enthusiastically monitored their emails for notes from newfound friends (e.g., Professor may ask with whom they connected and if they built a network of positive contacts for potentially returning to the host country)
- Created photo albums and electronic files filled with pictures of their host country friends rather than those primarily of their team friends and sites visited (e.g., Professor observes what was recorded in student pictures as they tell the story. Are there abundant pictures of familiar team friends, famous sites, and “fun,” or are there pictures of foreign friends, local cultural encounters, and host country service activities as the focus?)
- Discussed cultural connections made with people through local experiences, service opportunities, and team members (e.g., Throughout the travel the professor reads student academic chronicles about their interactions and what they considered to be memorable, meaningful, confusing, etc. Professor also gives feedback, encouraging comments, and recommendations regarding his/her observations of the student.)
- Committed to going back to the country because they had connected with the local people, and not just the sites (e.g., Many students returned to China within one year, attending school or teaching English as a second language, and followed up on the networks they had developed. Other students committed to travel and service in China at later times.)
- Mailed gift packages of thanks to their hosts, including items with school logos, pictures of the group and locals, and other items that tied them to their new friends (e.g., Professor asks about to whom they sent gifts, and notes the cultural care and appropriateness of the gifts)
- Shared books, articles, and movies with each other and discussed strategic current events and the politics of the country studied (e.g., Professor asks students to share insights, opinions, knowledge, cultural awareness, and implications concerning their assessment of current events and the future of the places visited. Required a strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats analysis (SWOT) of the country.)
- Wanted to share with other students the meaningful connections they had made with the host culture and its people, plus their understanding of the country’s importance in the world as a new emerging market (e.g., Professor allows students to creatively share their knowledge and ideas through presentations to classes, faculty, and administrators, as well as through wall displays, photo and writing contests between team members, perusing student and professional publications, etc.)
- Encouraged others to view travel in this more sophisticated manner—to see the importance of “others orientation,” the enjoyment of “doing,” and the joy of culturally connecting. Some have interviewed other trip participants and asked questions related to culture, such as, “Did you make any host country friends or connections, and how are you following up on those relationships?” To their dismay, many only talk about the “fun” they had at a pub or club, or of skiing, or sightseeing with their pre-trip friends. Others have stayed in a host country town for an entire semester and returned without ever having connected with anyone in the town! (e.g., Professor interviews students on what were the highpoints of the travel. These almost always include forming new relationships, engaging in culturally-connecting activities, and participating in service experiences.)
- Wanted to make connections through religious and mission organizations, business clubs, adoption agencies, etc. in the United States to help support the organizations visited— orphanages, hospitals, etc. (e.g., Professor asks how they might engage others in helping the communities visited)
- Enthusiastically developed 3x5 foot pictures that depict the country and their new friends. They displayed the pictures on the walls of their university in order to help educate and encourage other students to visit the country and understand its importance in the world. (e.g., Professor observes

their diligence and enthusiasm and asks them to question other students about their reactions to the pictures. What was the “buzz” created?)

- Asked host country contacts to give helpful feedback and recommendations on student activities, cultural appropriateness, etc. (e.g., Professor reads comments, processes them, and gives students ongoing feedback and encouragement throughout the travel)
- Gave written institutional evaluations of the trip (e.g., Professor developed and administered a goal oriented evaluation instrument with input from the students)
- Continued to meet for dinners and events as a team of friends, and enthusiastically shared emails they received from Chinese friends (e.g., Professor is still included in communications, giving professional recommendations, updates, etc.)
- Connected with businesses at home for jobs and internships, sharing their first hand experiences with the culture, rather than just noting the sites and countries seen (e.g., Professor requires students to update their resumes, differentiating their student travel by relating firsthand cultural experiences and networks formed)
- Demonstrated and discussed a newfound appreciation of their home and the freedoms and the opportunities so often taken for granted (e.g., Professor conducts discussion groups and a follow-up Chinese guest lecture with a Q & A time)

A fire is lit, connections are made, culture has been explored on a personal level, curiosity is stirred, enthusiasm about the country abounds, and the outcome is reflected through lives that are changed at a personal level. This translates into positive relationships with the host country. Ethnocentrism has been diminished, and the stage is set for business students to realize the importance of culturally connecting and methods to do it. When this happens, the educator has a great feeling of accomplishment!

CONCLUSION

With globalization and the expansion of business, it is imperative that students understand the cultures of other countries and learn how to escape their own ethnocentric, self-reference perspectives. In this era of student travel and international tension, educators have a unique challenge to properly prepare, conduct, and follow-up on international journeys that equip responsible travelers and future global businesspeople. Direct cultural experiences and volunteering are effective ways to connect with host countries and teach culture at a personal level. Not only do they assist in effectively preparing students, but also serve well in building positive international relations.

Exceptional outcomes will not happen without solid preparation and follow-up. Time spent in the home setting before and after the flurry of travel is invaluable. The fruits of solid “purposeful” and “go do” travel include a greater likelihood of journeys that absorb culture, focus on giving, and result in fewer inappropriate cultural behaviors, less compulsiveness to “go see” as much as possible without connecting with locals, and less emphasis on the number of days traveled versus the quality of the experience. Experiential travel will also alleviate frantic fact finding and information gathering, minimize “McDonaldizing” (the biggest itinerary and the fastest trip), and place greater value on thoughtfully connecting with and understanding people and cultures.

Students’ minds are challenged, hearts are stirred, attitudes are transformed through the quality of relationships developed, the culture has been directly imparted, and teamwork has been promoted. It is: A “giving” travel philosophy that is developed with the team and applied through the locals encountered; a “what can you show and tell me of your great country, and let’s see it equally together” frame of mind; a “you teach me, and I want to learn from you, and I will also share with you” attitude; encouragement of others; and deliberately seeking ways to interact with, examine, and inculcate culture.

The learning is rich when it revolves around people and culture. Instead of chasing adventure for its own sake, it is finding adventure through local connections resulting in greater learning and information dispensed experientially. People, not just places, bring learning to life and give travel its lasting, life-changing value—value that lives on through enduring relationships. It is the difference between looking at a lake as opposed to swimming in a lake. We cannot conduct business unless we understand our

customers, are well networked, and are appreciated by the people with whom we do business. Business students need to know how to adapt locally and to each other. The indispensable priorities in enriching the travel experience for not only students but also for the international communities visited include:

1. Culturally connecting (reaching out to understand and participate with cultures visited)
2. Culturally honoring (providing service to cultures visited)
3. Cooperative team building (developing relationships with each travel team member)
4. Cognitively enriching (researching, studying, and personally experiencing sites and cultures)

Students must be prepared to function effectively in the world of globalization. Professors must help them improve their ability to adapt and deal with individuals, firms, and authorities in foreign countries. The international arena is an ideal environment to cultivate tolerance, flexibility, humility, and other indispensable characteristics of adaptability. It is incumbent upon professors not only to introduce students to other countries, but also to create a desire to understand culture. To skillfully travel internationally and study business with cooperative, cognitively enriching, and culturally competent goals—this is the gift we bring to our students.

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