

Opportunities in Study Abroad: Planning, Steps and Suggestions

Diana Saiki, Ball State University Muncie, IN

Alyssa Dana Adomaitis

The New York City College of Technology, CUNY

Key words: Study Abroad, Fashion, Concept

Significance/innovation of the concept: Impact of study abroad: Faculty lead field studies are supported at most universities, but they can be time consuming and daunting to plan. The benefits of study abroad experiences have been well documented (Livingmore, 2011). There is growing evidence that short term faculty lead field studies provide a positive outlook on the fashion industry (Boorady, et al., 2016). Furthermore, these experience enhance students' "cultural intelligence" or the ability to communicate with diverse cultures and work well in diverse cultural settings (e.g., Livermore, 2011, Rolling, Presley, & Thornton, 2018). There is some literature on faculty lead international experiences study the apparel industry, such as El Salvador (e.g. Ha-Brookshire, 2008). However, limited information was found on developing a foundation for a faculty lead field study, particularly to a non-European country. Therefore, *the purpose* of this concept paper is to outline the steps of making a successful faculty lead field study to a country that is not a common destination, but equally as pertinent to the apparel and textiles industry and that provides a rich contrasting cultural experience for undergraduate students residing in the United States.

Process: There were many steps to developing a faculty field study including: 1) deciding on a location; 2) seeking funding for a site visit or a visit to the country to plan the field study 3) planning a site visit; 4) implementing the site visit; 5) follow-up. To determine a location, research was done on potential regions that were understudied at the university. India was selected. The Indian apparel market is the 6th largest in the world and it is estimated that by 2022 it will be worth 59.3 billion (APEC, 2016). The specific destination was Chennai, India. Chennai is the capital of Tamil Nadu. It is in the southeastern part of India on the Bay of Bengal. It is about the size of NYC and is known for its arts, ancient temples and culinary. The city has undergone significant economic growth with state-of-the art technology and healthcare. However, it still maintains connections to the fashion industry in technical textile production, (Kabirdoss, 2022) manufacturing, and retail (Bauer & Jagasia, 2019). Another consideration was existing connections to others living in the region. In this case, one of the faculty planners had maintained connections in Chennai when she lived there 20 years earlier.

Second, traveling without students needed funding, which was sought from multiple sources. A grant was acquired from the university's international offices and departmental funds for faculty travel were used. In addition, the participating college (Honors College) helped fund the site visit. Some funds were also contributed through faculty collaboration at another

university. Finally, a sabbatical proposal was submitted and accepted to visit Chennai, conduct research, and develop the field study.

The third step was to plan a *two-week site visit* to Chennai. To plan for the site visit, many primary objectives were made including to: a) make connections with individuals in critical businesses in the Chennai, India Location; b) visit key tourist sites of Chennai; c) acquire a working knowledge of the culture in southern India; and d) identify methods to make the field study feasible for a group of students (e.g. bus arrangements, maximum size, hotel location, etc.). Several methods to reach these goals were sought. For example, the site visit included staying at and assessing two hotels. In addition, several connections were contacted both online and at the university for guidance (a general tour company, colleagues at different universities, a private tour guide, a university connection). Having many methods to reach the established broad objectives contributed to a multi-layered experience that included visits to several universities, critical businesses in the area, apparel and textile businesses, and tourist sites.

Fourth, the field study was completed. It was important to remain flexible on the trip. The schedule changed often diverging from the initial planned schedule. However, the strategy of having many methods to meet objectives made the schedule full despite changes made to it during the visit. The alternative plans often achieved better results than the original plan. For example, the original faculty who was familiar with India was not able to go on the site visit. It left the faculty unfamiliar with India traveling to the country for the first time. However, a colleague from a different university was available and she earned a grant to travel abroad. Her grant required presentation at an international conference, which added another activity to make connections in Chennai. Having the faculty who was not familiar with India complete the site visit also broadened connections in India. The connections she made, plus the connections already known added to potential options and activities for the field study. In addition, the colleague from the other university had less travel requirements and, thus, she traveled north to the Taj Mahal. The Taj Mahal has since become a potential visiting site for the field study.

The fifth step is to follow-up with the site visit. This step includes developing of the field study course and promotional materials, promoting the field study, and teaching the course. There are many steps within this last step that are beyond the scope of this abstract. However, the field study is now ready for development due to the careful site-visit work. At this step, it is important to continually reference the site visit documentation and assess the place (Chennai).

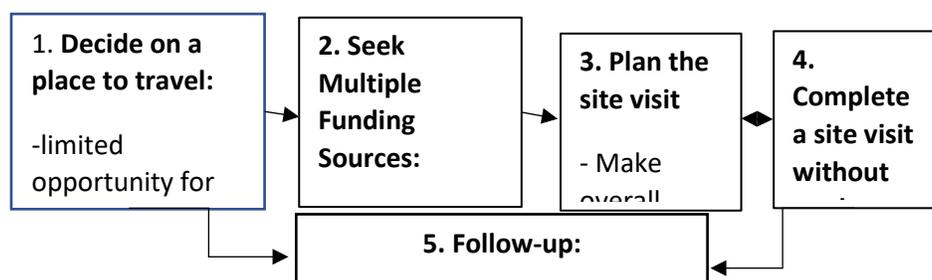


Figure. Process flowchart to develop a foundation for a faculty lead field study.

Proposal for future action: Field studies are important for student learning, particularly to understand the apparel and textiles industries. While universities support these opportunities, it can be daunting to plan a field study. Developing countries can provide some complementary experiences for apparel and textile students. A decision-making model was made to clarify the steps to ensure successful planning and making of a faculty lead field study. Detailing the process is important in making the process feasible and inspiring development of similar experiences. Further action includes implementation of the field study and developing a model highlighting the decision points. In addition, the model can be tested and revised as faculty from our and other universities develop similar student experiences.

References

- AEPC. (2016). Performance of Indian apparel market. Delhi, Delhi, India.
- Bauer, S. & Jagasia, D. (2019, June 28). Is the Indian apparel and textile industry reinventing itself? Forbes, <https://www.forbesindia.com/blog/the-innovation-edge/is-the-indian-textile-and-apparel-industry-reinventing-itself/>
- Boorady, L. M., Hall, N., Ledbury, J. L., & Emerson G. (2016). The long-term impact of a sustainability-focused short-term study abroad program. *2016 ITAA Conference proceedings* 73. <https://core.ac.uk/download/pdf/128977146.pdf>
- Ha-Brookshire, J. & Hawley, J. M. (2013). Envisioning the clothing and textile-related discipline for the 21st century its scientific nature and domain from the global supply chain perspective, *Clothing and Textiles Research Journal*, 31(1), 17-31. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0887302X12470024>
- Kabirdoss, V. (2022, December 26). Tamil Nadu has a lot of scope to be a hub for technical textiles. The Times of India, http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/articleshow/96504819.cms?utm_source=contentofinterest&utm_medium=text&utm_campaign=cppst
- Livermore, D. (2011). *The cultural intelligence difference*. AMACOM
- Rolling, L. M., Presley, B. A., & Thornton, M.K. (2018). The impact of a short-term fashion study abroad trip on undergraduates' cultural intelligence and career perceptions as future global fashion change agents. *2018 ITAA Conference Proceedings* 75. <https://core.ac.uk/download/pdf/212846983.pdf>