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An Exploratory Comparison of Private and HBCU Marketing Student Study Abroad Program (SAP) Participation Intentions

Cover Page Footnote

Omar P. Woodham is an Assistant Professor of Marketing in the College of Business and Economics, at North Carolina Agricultural and Technical State University, located in Greensboro, NC. Dr. Woodham has recent publications in the area of branding and specializes in the use of structural equation modeling. George W. Stone is an Associate Professor of Marketing in the College of Business and Economics, at North Carolina Agricultural and Technical State University, located in Greensboro, NC. Dr. Stone has published in numerous consumer related journals in the area of green marketing, and has been associated with the Annual Atlantic Marketing Conference since 1995. Kathryn T. Cort is an Associate Professor of Marketing in the College of Business and Economics, at North Carolina Agricultural and Technical State University, located in Greensboro, NC. Dr. Cort's area of expertise is in the area of international marketing and has published in a number of highly ranked international marketing journals. Michael Jones is a Professor of Marketing in the College of Business at Southeastern Louisiana State University, located in Hammond, LA. Dr. Jones is one of the original participants at the Annual Atlantic Marketing Conference and is widely published in the area of marketing education. He has extensive experience with study abroad programs and has led student trips to China over the last ten years.

An Exploratory Comparison of Private and HBCU Marketing Student Study Abroad Program (SAP) Participation Intentions

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Abstract – The current research compares two demographically diverse universities regarding their respective awareness of the study abroad programs (SAPs) offered by their school. The study focuses on each sample's awareness of SAP opportunities (i.e., as offered by their own institution) as well as each group's opinion of the level of university administrator effort aimed at promoting the SAP offerings at each school. The authors analyzed whether student perceptions of the level of administrator support affected student expectations regarding SAP participation prior to graduation. Given the different socio-economic characteristics of the two student samples used in the study, the authors provide additional insight as to the relatively low rate of minority SAP participation.

Keywords - Study abroad program, minority participation rates, college administrative emphasis

Relevance to Marketing Educators, Researchers, and Practitioners - This paper is useful in helping college administrators develop strategies for improving student SAP participation rates, particularly in view of the wide variance in student body populations. The authors advocate for added administrative emphasis, especially at colleges where minorities make up the majority of the student body population.

Introduction

Business school administrators have long recognized both the practical and evaluative requirement to imbed international/global content into their curriculum, resulting in a search for effective pedagogical methods that seamlessly blend theory with practical application. One method that appears to satisfy both AACSB content requirements while providing real world application to students is to promote student participation in study abroad programs (henceforth referred to as SAPs). One of the advantages long associated with studying abroad is that students receive classroom oriented content while simultaneously being exposed to another country's culture (Ahamer 2014, Alphin 2014, Carver & Byrd 2008, Kamdar & Lewis 2015, Webb, Mayer, Pioche & Allen 1999, Wright & Larsen 2012). Given the benefits associated with SAPs, questions should probably be asked as to why any college administrator would fail to promote and encourage SAP participation, and further, why some students seem uninterested in participating in SAPs. Research indicates, however, that participation rates do vary among universities and at least some of the blame for the difference falls on the shoulders of administrators (Evenson, 2015, White, Hollingsworth, Allen, & Murdock-Sistrunk, 2011, McClelan 2007). Further, factors associated with the demographic composition of the student body appear to impact student participation rates, with SAP participation among students at minority oriented colleges generally being lower than at predominately white colleges (Evenson, 2015, Brown 2002).

SAP participation is considered important from both an administrative and employer perspective (and may become even more valuable as an employment prerequisite in the future) since the trend toward transnationalism and borderless societies increasingly requires the ability to communicate with people from different cultures (Brandauer & Hovmand 2013, Eckert, Luqmani, Newell, Quraeshi, & Wagner 2013, Forray & Woodilla 2009). SAPs may send a quasi-signal (to potential employers) not only of the student's tolerance for risk and his/her level of personal initiative, but indicative of exposure to the kind of workplace diversity each graduate will encounter in a typical work environment (Gasman 2013, Lum 2002, White, Hollingsworth, Allen & Murdock-Sistrunk 2011). SAPs also help college administrators fulfill the AACSB mandates requiring that business schools allot a portion of their curriculum to the study of international issues (Niser 2010). Currently, the AACSB allows business schools wide latitude both in terms of content and assessment. Business schools have typically responded using three basic strategies. They can: 1) offer a "global specific" course for each business

discipline; 2) insure that a percentage of each course is allotted to global issues; or they can 3) offer a mandatory “global course” as part of the business core. By developing and actively promoting SAPs, administrators not only achieve the ACSB’s international content requirement (Festervand & Tillery 2001) but they help enrich the overall student learning experience (McKenzie 2010, Strother & Strother 2014). Again, promoting student participation in SAPs should be something of a “no brainer” since benefits (Niser 2010, Qinggang, Taplin & Brown 2011) accrue to both college administrators (i.e., achieving AACSB global content requirements) and their students (increased employment opportunities).

Purpose

The purpose of the current research effort was to assess the degree to which differences exist in terms of student SAP awareness, perceptions of administrative emphasis on SAPs, and student intent to participate in a study abroad experience, based in part on the type college and the demographics of the student bodies examined. The study observed two different student body populations enrolled at two different but similarly sized colleges, focusing on each sample’s awareness of SAP opportunities (i.e., as offered by their own institution) as well as each group’s opinion of the level of university administrator effort aimed at promoting the SAP offerings at each school. The authors analyzed whether student perceptions of the level of administrator support (or lack thereof) affected their own expectations regarding participation in an overseas learning experience prior to graduation. The two institutions chosen for the study included a medium sized, public (state funded) HBCU not noted for its study abroad programs, and a private liberal arts college nationally recognized for promoting its study abroad programs, to determine the extent to which increased administrator emphasis impacted student intentions to participate in a SAP prior to graduation. Given the different socio-economic characteristics of the two student samples used in the study, the authors hoped to gain additional insight as to the relatively low rate of minority SAP participation.

The first study uses a series of t-tests to test the initial set of hypotheses, followed by a second study which tests follow-on hypotheses using confirmatory modeling techniques. The public university used in the study is an HBCU with 83% of our sample indicating “African-American” (Black) for race and 80% indicating “in-state” for residency status. Institutional data indicates the average socio-economic background of the typical student to be lower-to-middle income with the majority using some form of financial aid. Eighty-five percent of the private university students indicated “White” for race and 80% indicated “out of state” for residency status. The private university enrollment appears largely comprised of upper middle income households. Given this background, the researchers attempted to address the following issues: 1) Factors that might help explain low SAP participation rates among African-American students, 2) The importance of administrator emphasis in promoting SAP participation, and 3) Student perceptions of the perceived usefulness/benefits of SAP programs.

Literature Review

The following discussion describes some of the issues taken into consideration when developing the factors investigated in the study. Each factor relates to the potential impact differences in student body populations might have on participation rates at various type campuses.

Minority Awareness/Interest: A recent Institute of International Education report (2015) indicated that a relatively small percentage (30%) of the U.S. population possessed a valid passport, half that of Canadian citizens (60%) and considerably lower than what is reported for citizens of the United Kingdom (75%). While overseas travel rates appear to be increasing on college campuses, only around 10 percent of U.S. college students are currently engaged in study abroad programs (http://www.iie.org/Who-We-Are/News-and-Events/Press-Center/Press-Releases/2015/2015-11-16-Open-Doors-Data#.V82S2_Sf9ME).

The relatively low rate of passport possession for Americans in general tends to mask an even lower rate among U.S. minorities (Bender, 2012; Stabile, 2014), which in turn, may help help explain the lower SAP participation rate among minority college students (Evenson 2015; Brown 2002). While black and Latino students comprise roughly a quarter of the college age population, the Institute of International Education (IIE) indicates that 81% percent of those participating in SAPs are white. The participation rate among black, Latino and Asian students is 4.2%, 6%, and 7.6% respectively. Minority students are clearly under-represented in terms of SAP participation based upon their respective ethnic representation in college (Nguyen and Coryell 2015; Gasman 2013).

Individual College Emphasis: For the more internationally focused college administrator, globalization has taken on a preeminent role alongside other strategic administrative goals (Forray & Woodilla, 2009; Jenkins, 2011; Lane, 2003). Many school administrators are serious enough about the need to advance their global academic goals that they now include the study abroad experience as a graduation requirement---with some schools imbedding the cost of the SAP into the overall tuition and some offsetting the cost by offering students financial aid specifically targeted for expenses associated with studying abroad (Stuart 2007). Institutions that promote the SAP experience as an *expectation* also appear to have an advantage in recruiting students interested in pursuing a global education. The quantity of offerings as well as the level of effort devoted to promoting awareness of current offerings not only impacts student impressions of the quality of the international program (Lum, 2002), but tends to be indicative of the level of emphasis each administration places on its SAP program. One area where administrative support is critical to student impression formation lies with the sign-up process itself. Institutions which simplify the administrative process and make it easy for the student to sign up for such programs (i.e., in terms of access to financial aid, assistance with travel schedules, giving college credit, and/or

obtaining a passport, etc.) are thus thought to have an advantage in terms of increased student participation. Administrative emphasis in these two key areas (e.g., promotional effort and assistance) is thus believed to play a major role in explaining some of the discrepancy in student SAP participation across universities (Mills, 2010).

Student Body Characteristics: The educational mission of many small colleges is often determined by the needs of the respective student body, and to some extent, by the needs of the community from which the majority of the student population originates (Cone and Payne, 2002). Because small to medium sized public university administrators typically don't enjoy the financial resources necessary to promote and develop new programs, administrators are forced to structure their existing curriculums where the need is most prevalent (Harmel, 2016). Financing for any new program (such as global/international programs that include an SAP) is therefore often passed along to the most financially vulnerable students, many of whom may actually have the desire to participate. Financial issues are therefore believed to play a role in SAP participation rates since the lack of financial assistance available through the university is expected to adversely impact low income students more than it does for students less concerned about the financial aspects of foreign travel (Deviney, Vrba, Mills, and Ball, 2014)

Additionally, because foreign travel tends to be less common in the typical minority household (perhaps due lower financial resources), colleges where minorities are the majority are generally less likely to understand the true nature of the benefits associated with a study abroad experience. The lack of foreign travel experience also appears to raise the level of fear many minority students associate with traveling outside the confines of the U.S. (Deviney, et. al. 2014, McLellan, 2007). The demographic characteristics of the typical student enrolled at any given institution, particularly in terms of the average socio-economic background, was therefore posited to impact each university's participation rates in two ways; the first being in the level of administrative emphasis---since the demographic characteristics of the typical enrollee is/are believed to play an instrumental role in determining what type programs can be offered.

As noted earlier, large state universities are generally able to offer a variety of programs due to their financial strength and size. Students enrolled at small regional state schools on the other hand, typically score lower on standardized tests and are generally less qualified academically than their large university peers (Cone & Payne 2002). Resources that could be devoted to educational enrichment programs such SAPs are often then syphoned off into areas such as remedial programs not designed to enrich the student educational experience as much as to help prepare them for higher level course work.

Secondly, because familiarity with overseas travel is statistically less common among minorities in general, we posit earlier that colleges with predominately minority and/or lower socio-economic student populations would experience higher levels of fear (or uncertainty) over participation in SAPs than would their peers at

campuses where the socio-economic background tends to be higher and where previous foreign travel experience is more likely to be expected.

Method

Sample Selection

The initial sample for the study included HBCU business students enrolled at a Mid-Atlantic public university with an enrollment of approximately 10,000 undergraduates. Students enrolled in the Marketing Research course and assigned to the SAP project collected surveys from randomly assigned business classes (n = 73). The second sample came from a private university with 5,599 undergraduates. The school in question has a reported SAP participation rate of 72%. A marketing professor at the private university assisted the authors in collecting a sample from two marketing classes (n = 41).

Survey Instrument

Focus groups were conducted using enrolled in the Advertising/Integrated Marketing Communication and Marketing Research classes. Insight gained from the two focus group sessions was helpful in constructing the questionnaire items for the survey. The initial survey went through a series of “item cleanings” involving professors with SAP class experience (i.e., in various parts of the world to include Europe, Asia, Central America, and the Middle East). The survey was divided into two sections based on exploratory theories developed during the focus groups sessions.

Initial Exploratory Study

Testable Hypotheses

One of the premises of the initial analysis was that students enrolled at the private university would be more aware of SAP offered at their school, more knowledgeable of the benefits of SAP participation, and express higher intent to go on a school sponsored foreign travel experience prior to graduation than the typical HBCU student. One of the perceptual factors emerging from HBCU student input was that the school *administration does not place enough emphasis on international educational travel*, and that, *most HBCU students would be unaware aware of the overseas travel opportunities offered through their university*.

Most of the students who participated in the focus groups were unaware of the overseas study opportunities offered by the university and most expressed uncertainty as to which administrative office to go to in order to gather information about the university’s SAP offerings. When the subject of what other colleges and universities provide in terms of SAP opportunities, many recited anecdotes about how students at other schools were encouraged to engage in study abroad programs

while the general belief was that encouragement was not provided by administrators on their campus---further leading to the perception that most HBCU students are unaware of the benefits associated with a foreign educational experience. Another area of interest as to why HBCU students might not be interested in participating in an SAP related to the apparent apathy and lack of understanding of the importance of global issues in general, which in turn equates to less understanding of the benefits associated with foreign travel as a resume enhancer. Hence, our hypotheses read as follows:

Hypothesis 1a: HBCU students will demonstrate lower levels of awareness of the availability of SAPs than students enrolled at the private university.

Hypothesis 1b: HBCU students will demonstrate lower levels of knowledge about the long term employment benefits associated with SAPs than students enrolled at the private university.

Hypothesis 1c: HBCU students will demonstrate lower intention to participate in SAPs than students enrolled at the private university.

A second set of hypotheses relate to possible reasons accounting for low HBCU SAP participation. Two areas emerged that possibly explain some of the relatively low level of HBCU student interest (as measured by participation rate) in SAPs. The two factors relate to: 1) the perceived lack of entertainment value provided by these programs and 2) fear associated with unfamiliarity with foreign travel. The following hypotheses related to reasons were examined and are stated as follows:

Hypothesis 2a: HBCU students are more likely to perceive SAPs as lacking entertainment value than students enrolled at the private university.

Hypothesis 2b: HBCU students will express higher levels of fear related to foreign travel than students enrolled at the private university.

Hypothesis 2c: HBCU students will attribute more blame to their university as a reason for not participating in SAPs than students enrolled at the private university.

Initial Findings

Hypotheses 1 and 2 were analyzed using t-tests across groups for each factor (See Table 1 for the items on each factor and Table 2 for descriptive statistics on each item). The section below labeled, “Further Investigation” presents more detail on the data in Table 1.

Table 1
Items and Loadings

| Factor | Label | Item | Loading (HBCU) | Loading (Private) | AVE | CR |
|---|-------|--|-------------------|----------------------|-------|-------|
| | | Please indicate your level of agreement with the following: | | | | |
| Aware | SAP7 | Most students <u>at this</u> university are aware of the study abroad opportunities offered <u>through this</u> university. | 0.914 | 0.737 | 0.757 | 0.925 |
| | SAP8 | The administrators in charge of the study abroad program at my university do a good job of making sure students at <u>this</u> university are aware of the study abroad programs offered through <u>this</u> university. | 0.878 | 0.898 | | |
| | SAP9 | In general I believe that most of the students <u>at this</u> university understand the benefits associated with participation in an international study abroad program. | 0.751 | 0.597 | | |
| | SAP22 | The people at my university who run the study abroad program do an excellent job of promoting the study abroad opportunities offered through the university. | 0.789 | 0.683 | | |
| Employ | SAP3 | Participation in an international Study abroad program would help me land a job after graduation. | 0.546 | 0.913 | 0.547 | 0.733 |
| | SAP4 | Participation in an international study abroad program will improve my employment opportunities. | 0.561 | 0.903 | | |
| | SAP10 | Knowledge of foreign cultures gained through participation in a study abroad program will impress employers looking to hire qualified college graduates. | 0.979 | 0.911 | | |
| Travel Intent (SAP Participation) | SAP14 | I will definitely travel abroad, somewhere, before I graduate. | 0.916 | 0.867 | 0.777 | 0.913 |
| | SAP15 | I hope to participate in a study abroad program before I graduate. | 0.853 | 0.937 | | |
| | SAP17 | I plan on gathering more information about the study abroad programs offered at my school. | 0.921 | 0.716 | | |

Table 1 (cont'd)
Items and Loadings

| Factor | Label | Item | Loading (HBCU) | Loading (Private) | AVE | CR |
|----------------|-------|--|-------------------|----------------------|-------|-------|
| | | <u>Please indicate your level of agreement with the following reasons students at your University do NOT participate in SAPs:</u> | | | | |
| Entertain | NOT34 | Lack fun and excitement | 0.951 | 0.663 | 0.764 | 0.905 |
| | NOT35 | Are too boring | 0.946 | 0.837 | | |
| | NOT36 | Do little to expand knowledge of the world | 0.734 | 0.912 | | |
| Fear | NOT39 | SAPs expose students, who are afraid to fly, to long hours of travel by air | 0.92 | 0.777 | 0.681 | 0.863 |
| | NOT40 | Think SAPs might expose students to danger (because you have to travel outside the United States) | 0.857 | 0.879 | | |
| | NOT44 | Some students are probably afraid they might get hurt (or even scared of being kidnapped by terrorists, etc.) | 0.724 | 0.722 | | |
| Doubt of Value | SAP18 | The benefits attributed to study abroad programs offered through most universities are mostly overrated. | 0.927 | 0.888 | 0.597 | 0.809 |
| | SAP19 | The benefits received from participating in a study abroad program are not worth the financial cost. | 0.724 | 0.886 | | |
| | SAP20 | The primary reason to participate in an international study abroad program is to get college credit hours in a very short time period. | 0.76 | 0.75 | | |

Responses were measured using a 5-item Likert scale with: 1 = not at all a factor to 5 = one of the most important factors.

Table 2
Descriptive Statistics

| Factor | Label | HBCU | | Private | |
|---------------|-------|------|------|---------|------|
| | | Mean | SD | Mean | SD |
| Aware | SAP7 | 2.78 | 1.12 | 4.32 | 0.82 |
| | SAP8 | 3.07 | 1.07 | 4.17 | 0.80 |
| | SAP9 | 3.16 | 1.11 | 4.17 | 0.77 |
| | SAP22 | 2.92 | 1.06 | 3.80 | 0.78 |
| Blame | NOT46 | 3.30 | 1.14 | 1.78 | 0.99 |
| | NOT47 | 2.95 | 1.20 | 2.07 | 1.15 |
| | NOT50 | 3.64 | 1.06 | 2.09 | 1.28 |
| Employ | SAP3 | 3.86 | 0.99 | 3.44 | 0.92 |
| | SAP4 | 3.99 | 0.86 | 3.54 | 1.05 |
| | SAP10 | 4.29 | 0.72 | 3.85 | 1.06 |
| Entertain | NOT34 | 2.42 | 1.38 | 1.78 | 0.99 |
| | NOT35 | 2.37 | 1.38 | 1.85 | 1.01 |
| | NOT36 | 2.52 | 1.32 | 1.90 | 1.09 |
| Fear | NOT39 | 2.70 | 1.30 | 2.27 | 1.23 |
| | NOT40 | 2.96 | 1.30 | 2.59 | 1.32 |
| | NOT44 | 3.05 | 1.17 | 2.29 | 1.15 |
| Travel Intent | SAP14 | 3.07 | 1.30 | 4.27 | 1.23 |
| | SAP15 | 3.42 | 1.30 | 4.44 | 1.10 |
| | SAP17 | 3.27 | 1.17 | 3.59 | 1.40 |
| Value | SAP18 | 2.78 | 1.20 | 2.73 | 1.27 |
| | SAP19 | 2.74 | 1.07 | 2.41 | 1.16 |
| | SAP20 | 2.55 | 1.17 | 2.15 | 1.31 |
| World View | SAP1 | 4.49 | 0.69 | 4.65 | 0.73 |
| | SAP2 | 4.54 | 0.67 | 4.24 | 0.83 |
| | SAP12 | 4.50 | 0.67 | 4.61 | 0.70 |

Factor 1a: = “Awareness of SAP Opportunities” (Cronbach’s Alpha = .89)

The first factor measured the awareness level of students based in part on the actions of the university to promote and encourage student participation. Awareness among HBCU students was significantly lower than for Private University students (M = 2.98 vs. 4.12; t = 7.9, p < .001), supporting H1a.

Factor 1b: = “Employment Benefits” (Cronbach’s Alpha = .828)

The second factor related to awareness of the future employment benefits of participating in school sponsored SAPs. Surprisingly, this factor was higher for HBCU students than for students at the private university ($M = 4.04$ vs. 3.61 ; $t = 2.84$, $p < .01$), indicating that students at the HBCU appear to be fully aware of the benefits of foreign exposure and also realize that a study abroad experience translates well with employers interested in applicant résumés that have international exposure. This finding is contrary to what was anticipated given the stronger promotion (of SAPs) at the private university. Thus, H1b is not supported.

Factor 1c: = “Intentions to Travel Abroad” (Cronbach’s Alpha = .857)

As expected, Private University students indicated significantly greater intentions to travel abroad prior to graduation when compared with the same intentions among HBCU students ($M = 4.10$ vs. 3.25 ; $p < .05$), thus supporting H1c.

The next section of the survey related to reasons why many HBCU students may not be inclined to participate in SAPs. As anticipated, three factors emerged and these factors appear to be closely aligned with the proposed hypotheses:

Factor 2a: = “Entertainment Value” (Cronbach’s Alpha = .852)

Hypothesis 2a related to the perceived entertainment value of the travel abroad experience. The first factor in the “reasons” section consisted of three items, two of which related to the perceived lack of entertainment value and one item related to the perceived lack of usefulness of these type programs. The HBCU student mean was significantly higher than the Private University student mean ($M = 2.44$ vs. 1.84 ; $t = 3.05$, $p < .01$), suggesting that HBCU students are inclined to agree that SAPs are boring/not exciting and that SAPs don’t provide any new insight into the world. Thus, H2a is supported.

Factor 2b: = “Fear” (Cronbach’s Alpha = .781)

This “Fear Factor” deals with the perceived risks associated with foreign travel. Because most HBCU students are not likely to have traveled outside the United States, we predicted that HBCU students would be more likely to cite fear of foreign travel as a reason for not participating in SAPs than students from the private university. The “Fear Factor” was significantly higher for HBCU students than for the private university students in our sample ($M = 2.90$ vs. 2.38 ; $t = 2.6$, $p < .05$), thus H2b is supported.

Factor 2c: = “Blaming the University for lack of Awareness” (Cronbach’s Alpha = .781)

We predicted that HBCU students (vs. Private University Students) would be more likely to attribute the lack of HBCU participation to the university administration than students enrolled at the private university. The lack of

communication and a failure on the part of the administration to promote the availability of on campus SAP opportunities was frequently noted as one of the primary reasons for low SAP participation rates among their fellow HBCU students. This finding was confirmed by the higher mean scores (agreement with the reason statements) for HBCU students ($M = 3.3$ vs. 1.98 ; $t = 7.6$, $p < .001$), thus supporting H2c.

Further Investigation

The collective findings (above) support the idea that administrators at the private university (PU) place more emphasis and allocate more resources toward promoting the SAP experience than administrators at the HBCU. In general, PU student scores were higher in terms of overall awareness and knowledge of the availability of their school's SAP offerings. PU students also appear more enthusiastic in general about SAPs than their HBCU counterparts. The HBCU student sample, on the other hand, while less aware of the availability of on campus SAP offerings, actually appeared to place more value on the potential employment benefits associated with SAPs than their PU peers.

On deeper inspection, however, we note that the mean scores for the second set of factors, while significantly different between the two groups, were low for both groups of students. One of the possible implications from this finding is that neither group thinks the "reasons" provided are valid explanation for low student participation. Although conjecture, the higher HBCU mean scores may simply be an acknowledgement that SAP participation rates among their peers is low. Additionally, factors that might be useful in explaining low participation rates among one's peers may not necessarily reflect the attitudes of HBCU students who do intend to study abroad before they graduate. Hence, while the factors identified in the exploratory t-test evaluations appear to adequately address some of the inherent attitudinal differences between the two groups of university students (vis-à-vis SAP involvement), they may not be predictive of whether one individual is more likely to travel abroad than another. Anecdotally, there are clearly many HBCU students who are interested in studying abroad and who do intend to make that happen prior to the end of their college experience.

In order to increase the validity of our findings and allow the survey items to "speak for themselves," confirmatory factor analysis was applied using a multi-group moderation model to help further explain the possible "drivers" that predict one's intent to travel. Using our initial results (factors) as a starting place, we thus proposed a second set of testable hypotheses using confirmatory factor analysis:

Hypothesis 3 Higher "awareness of university sponsored SAPs" among private university (PU) students will result in higher PU student intentions to travel (vs HBCU students).

Hypothesis 4 Higher “belief in the value of SAPs” among PU students will result in higher PU student intentions to travel (vs. HBCU students).

Hypothesis 5 Higher “doubt about the entertainment value of SAP participation” among HBCU students will result in lower HBCU student intentions to travel (vs. PU students).

Hypothesis 6 Higher “fear/danger associated with SAP participation” among HBCU students will result in lower HBCU student intentions to travel (vs. PU students).

Hypothesis 7 Higher “doubt about the overall value of SAP participation” among HBCU students will result in lower HBCU intentions to travel (vs. PU students).

Results

Exploratory factor analysis was run using Varimax rotation without constraining the number of factors. Eight “clean factors” emerged that explained approximately 60% of the variance in the data. Due to the small sample size, covariance-based techniques for confirmatory factor analysis used in programs like AMOS are inappropriate. Consequently, Partial Least Square Structural Equation Modeling in SmartPLS3, a regression-based technique, was used to set up the model and verify the validity of the constructs (see Figure 1 below for the model).

Although a preliminary check of the average variance extracted (AVE) suggests that all variables achieved the 0.5 minimum (Hair, Black, Babin, & Anderson, 2010), a bias-corrected permutation (1,000 iterations) was run on the two samples, resulting in two factors falling short of the 0.5 AVE minimum in at least one of the groups. The two factors (i.e., “university blame for lack of communication” and “worldview value”) were dropped from further consideration in the analysis. The remaining variables had AVEs higher than 0.5 as well as composite reliabilities higher than 0.7, indicating satisfactory convergent validity (Hair et al., 2010). See Table 1 for items, loadings, composite reliabilities, and AVEs. The data satisfied discriminant validity (Fornell & Larcker 1981), as the square roots of AVEs for each variable was higher than the correlations with other variables (see Table 3).

As expected given the difference in the level of exposure to SAPs that exists among students at the two respective institutions (see Figure 1), the resulting model exhibited greater explanatory power for the responses of private university students ($R^2 = 0.514$) compared to HBCU students ($R^2 = 0.277$). All variance inflation

factors for the inner and outer model were less than 5, indicating that the model was free of collinearity issues.

Figure 1: Structural Model

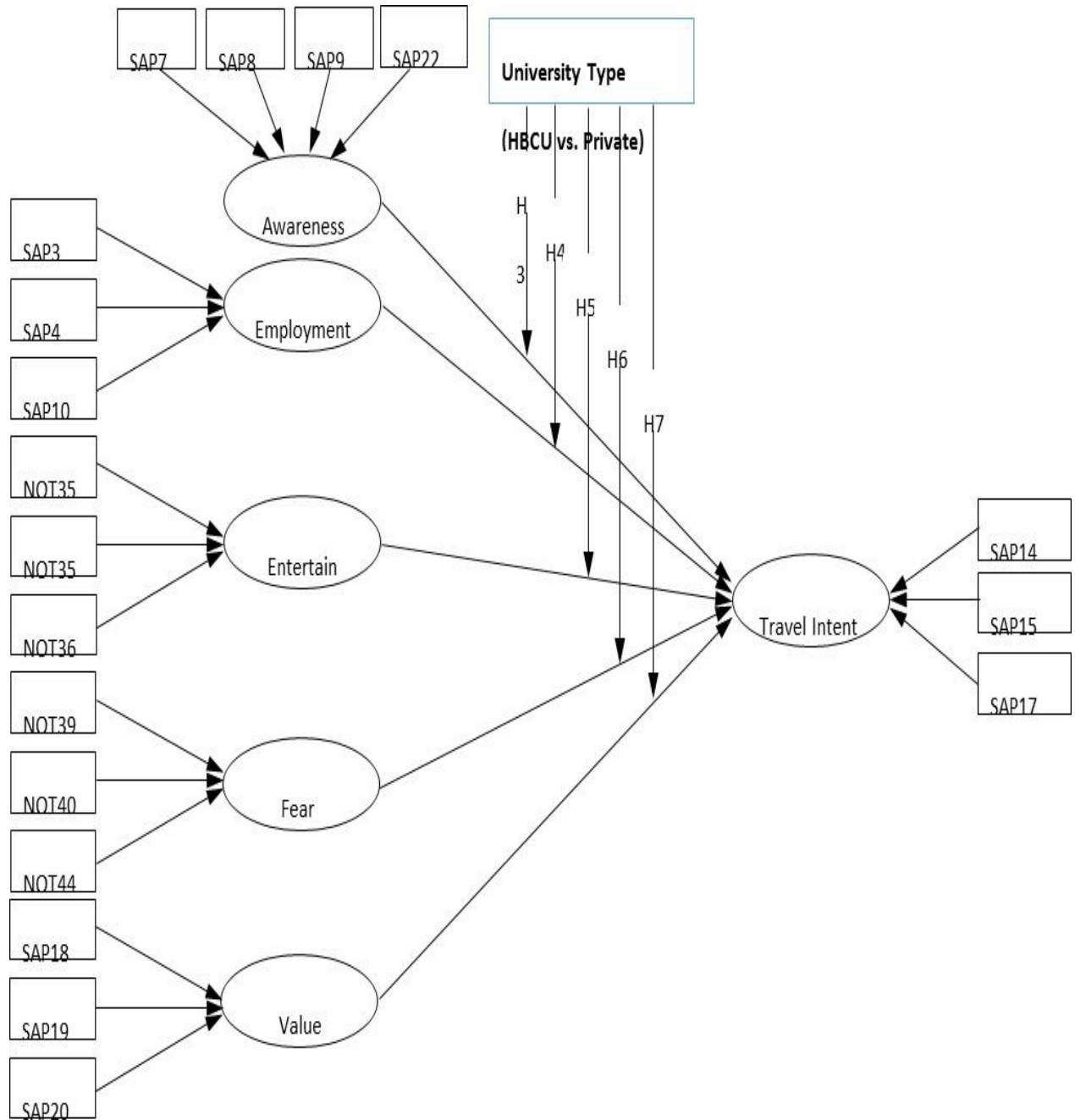


Table 3**Fornell and Larcker Test - (Discriminant Validity)**

| | Aware | Employ | Entertain | Fear | Travel_Intent | Value |
|---------------|--------|--------|-----------|-------|---------------|-------|
| Aware | 0.870 | | | | | |
| Employ | -0.185 | 0.74 | | | | |
| Entertain | -0.098 | -0.015 | 0.874 | | | |
| Fear | -0.263 | -0.109 | 0.295 | 0.825 | | |
| Travel_Intent | 0.162 | -0.043 | 0.145 | 0.32 | 0.881 | |
| Value | 0.152 | -0.152 | 0.259 | 0.28 | 0.212 | 0.773 |

Diagonal values are square roots of AVEs and off-diagonals are correlations

Effects of Factors on Intentions to Travel

Multi-group analysis using SmartPLS3 was run on the regression results to test the effect each factor (i.e., as listed in hypotheses 3 through 7) might have on the dependent variable *Travel Intent*. The first two factors relate to awareness and perceived benefits associated with SAP participation while the latter three represent opinions related to reasons for non-participation.

H3 proposed that intent to travel would increase based on increased awareness. Subsequently, since awareness of the programs offered by the university was higher among PU than HBCU students, H3 proposed that PU students would also display higher levels of intent to travel. The path coefficient for the effect of awareness on travel intent was significant for the PU sample ($\beta = 0.366$, $t = 2.04$, $p < .05$) but not for the HBCU sample ($\beta = -0.18$, ns). The difference between samples was also significant ($t = 2.159$, $p < .05$), thus supporting H3 (See Table 4 below for Path Coefficients).

H4 proposed that intent to travel would increase with increases in the perceived value of the programs. As with H3, PU students appear to place greater value on the SAP experience than HBCU students, and consequently, H4 proposed that the PU student sample would demonstrate greater intent to travel abroad than the HBCU sample. Similar to the results for H3, the path was significant for the private university sample ($\beta = 0.549$, $t = 3.34$, $p = .001$), but not for the HBCU sample ($\beta = -0.08$, $t = 0.44$, ns). The difference between samples was also significant ($t = 2.47$, $p = .05$), thus supporting H4.

Hypotheses 5 to 7 are based on possible explanations (or “reasons”) for the lack of participation among students. H5 proposed that higher agreement with “a lack entertainment value” as a reason for low SAP participation, would equate to a student being less likely one is to participate. The results, however, indicate that a

lack of entertainment value as a reason for not participating was insignificant for both groups. As shown in Table 2, the respective means for both groups were low, suggesting that both student groups reject “a lack of entertainment value” as a reason for low participation. Clearly, a lack of entertainment value is not viewed

Table 4
Path Coefficients by University

| Path | HBCU | | | | Private | | | |
|---------------------------|---------|-------|-------|-------|---------|-------|-------|-------|
| | β | SD | t | p | β | SD | t | p |
| Aware → Travel_Intent | -0.18 | 0.165 | 1.089 | 0.277 | 0.366 | 0.18 | 2.035 | 0.042 |
| Employ → Travel_Intent | -0.08 | 0.183 | 0.436 | 0.663 | 0.549 | 0.165 | 3.336 | 0.001 |
| Entertain → Travel_Intent | 0.117 | 0.107 | 1.097 | 0.273 | 0.224 | 0.143 | 1.567 | 0.118 |
| Fear → Travel_Intent | 0.247 | 0.115 | 2.147 | 0.032 | 0.47 | 0.112 | 4.192 | 0.000 |
| Value → Travel_Intent | 0.264 | 0.126 | 2.088 | 0.037 | -0.028 | 0.163 | 0.173 | 0.863 |

seriously as a factor to deter a student from participating in a study abroad program. H5 is not supported.

H6 proposed that higher agreement with “fear/danger” as a reason for low SAP participation would result in lower intent to travel abroad. Since HBCU mean scores were higher on this factor than for PU students, HBCU student travel intentions were also expected to be lower. Surprisingly, higher HBCU scores on the fear factor actually equated to greater intentions to travel, suggesting that while HBCU students might attribute fear as a factor among their peers, fear was not a consideration for those HBCU students who do intend to travel abroad ($\beta = 0.247$, $t = 2.147$, $p < .05$). Not surprisingly, the fear factor was also significant for private university students ($\beta = 0.47$, $t = 4.192$, $p < .001$). No significant differences were found between groups ($t = 1.33$, ns). While support for the path and direction exists for both samples, H6 is not supported.

Finally, H7 proposed that higher agreement with “doubt about the overall value” (the cost versus the benefits) as a reason for low participation would result in lowered intentions to travel. As with the other “reason” factors, the HBCU mean on the “doubt about value” factor was higher than for PU students, with H7 subsequently proposing that intent to travel would be lower for the HBCU sample. This effect was significant for HBCU students ($\beta = 0.264$, $t = 2.09$, $p < .05$), but not for the PU student sample ($\beta = -0.028$, $t = 0.17$, ns). Although the proposed direction was correct (with significance found in the HBCU group and not in the PU group) the difference between groups was not significant ($p = .18$). Thus, we conclude that we found only partial support for H7 (see Table 4 for results).

Conclusions and Recommendations

The current research examined several factors believed to contribute to college student SAP participation. One of these, student *awareness of university sponsored SAP programs*, appeared to be highly influenced by the level of emphasis college administrators place on their respective SAP program. Another factor thought to motivate students had to do with student perceptions of the future employment benefits associated with SAP participation—with increased positive beliefs (i.e., about the association between employment and SAP participation) thought to increase a student's intent to participate. Ironically, what the research disclosed was that the HBCU mean was *actually higher* than that of the PU, indicating that HBCU students made this connection to a greater extent than students from the PU sample. HBCU students nonetheless had *lower* intentions to participate scores than students associated with the PU, suggesting that PU students do not participate simply “to get a job” but perhaps view SAPs as valuable for other reasons. HBCU students, on the other hand, while *more* likely to associate SAP participation with future job opportunities, nonetheless expressed lower intentions to participate in an SAP than their PU peers.

The authors also tested both student samples on a series of additional reasons that might help explain why some students fail to participate in an SAP if is being offered. These factors included boredom, a perceived lack of entertainment value, and fear (i.e., foreign travel is potentially dangerous) as potential reasons for low participation. Although both samples tended to disagree with many of the reasons provided, PU students expressed stronger disagreement with these reason when compared to their HBCU peers, suggesting that factors such as family background (higher socio-economic background) and previous foreign travel exposure (greater familiarity) may mitigate some of the issues/reasons among this group when compared to these factors' adverse impact on HBCU student participation. Statistically, the socio-economic background of the typical PU student is higher than for the HBCU group. Increased wealth implies certain advantages (such as foreign travel). Those with previous foreign travel experience may thus discount factors such as boredom and lack excitement, and are possibly better able to mitigate fear and/or danger as factors because of increased familiarity with the hazards often associated with traveling abroad. Individuals with little to no experience traveling abroad may simply be projecting fears associated with uncertainty and/or fear of the unknown.

Based on the differences in drivers of SAP participation, we recommend the following 4-pronged strategy to increase participation at HBCUs:

Be realistic

First, HBCU (and similar institution) administrators need to realize that their students have very real obstacles to overcome, both from a psychological and resource perspective. Simply assuming that students will be self-motivated enough to do the background research necessary to arrive at the conclusion that foreign travel is a “good thing” is unrealistic. In general, many students lack the motivation, many students are fearful of the unknown, and many students lack the resources to engage in “luxury” type pursuits—particularly those who work full time during the summer to pay their day-to-day living expenses while attempting to get a degree. In essence, these are precisely the sort of students who would benefit the most from participation in an SAP experience (Wright & Larsen, 2012). Administrators of HBCU and other small local public universities should therefore realize that many students need extra encouragement, if not real incentives, if they are to enhance their education beyond merely attending college to obtain a degree (Deardorff 2016).

Personal Selling

The current research suggests that many of the respondents in our HBCU sample actually do have a good grasp of the benefits accruing to students who participate in an SAP. And yet, the HBCU sample was quick to blame administrators for any perceived lack of communication associated with making students aware of the programs available from the university. The survey contained items related to “professors who sell their SAP program” and/or administrators who “talk up” the programs that are available. Anecdotal evidence from conversations with professors who have successfully led SAP programs indicates that one of the best ways to get students to sign up is to make an appeal directly to the students – in their classroom. Website information simply doesn’t seem to be working.

Target Student Groups

University based advertising (of SAPs) does not appear to be effective in terms of outreach and/or as a method of stimulating SAP travel demand. While university websites offer information on virtually every department, most students don’t bother to access the information unless they are personally interested and/or have a specific need. SAP advisors should thus consider developing a data base on the students who have participated in an overseas program and then begin to identify the characteristics of those students (i.e., such as GPA, college major, and possibly even statistics on family background). Once a useful profile has been established, administrators should then begin targeting students with a similar profile. Predictive modeling packages such as SAS, for example, might prove useful.

Top Level Emphasis

As research has demonstrated repeatedly, top (administrative) level emphasis is often a key to implementation of any program. As the PU sample demonstrated, administrators who actively promote their SAP offerings get higher rates of participation (Deardorff 2016). The difference in the level of travel intent at the two schools in our study highlights the importance of top level administrator emphasis. Emphasis in this case would include providing the necessary resources and assistance many students need before they would consider signing up for an SAP (i.e., transfer of credits, financial assistance, help in obtaining passports, etc.). In order to obtain these resources, HBCUs may need additional funding and so communication to donors should place greater emphasis on the value of SAPs to current students in terms of both educational enrichment and future employment opportunities.

Limitations and Directions for Future Research

This exploratory study's primary limitation has to do with the limited size of the samples. In addition, only business students were used, further reducing the generalizability across university campuses. However, by gathering data from two extreme (polar opposite) SAP university program offerings, the study highlights many of issues that appear to impact student participation in study abroad programs, particularly given the disparity in the backgrounds of the two university populations. From a private university perspective, the results are mostly positive and so the perception is that the PU administration is on the right track in terms of the manner in which they are promoting their SAP initiatives. The results from the HBCU sample, on the other hand, appear to indicate that much work remains if the administration hopes to improve SAP participation rates. Hopefully, the findings from our exploratory research effort will assist administrators in developing more effective and meaningful campus-wide promotion techniques that will improve study abroad program participation.

Further research needs to be conducted to enhance the design and implementation of SAP programs to insure that they not only deliver what is promised, but that students get excited by the prospect of participation. As it stands, most students don't realistically consider SAP participation because: 1) It is not a "top of mind" college experience; and 2) most don't understand the true value of foreign exposure. If colleges and universities are serious about preparing their students for the globally centric world they will inherit, then administrators could start by implementing well-designed SAPs that represent and expose students to the competitive global environment—and then, they must emphasize the importance of participation.

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