

**Advancing Facilitators and Deterrents Theory
of Students' Study-Abroad Decisions**

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ABSTRACT

The number of American college students studying abroad continues to climb every year. The increasing global market is making it necessary for an increase in foreign relations amongst college students. This study proposes a model of planned behavior to examine how students' attitude, subjective norm, and perceived behavioral control play in their decision to study abroad. The total of 448 surveys was collected from a university located in the southeast region of the United States. The study examines indirect and direct effects of each dimension on student's intent to study abroad. The survey results also indicate perceived benefits of and barriers to study abroad. Among the three dimensions of planned behavior, attitude is the pervasive predictor of study abroad participation. Implications and improvement opportunities conclude the paper.

Keywords: study abroad, model of planned behavior, Southeast United States

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The purpose of the research here is to learn what marketing strategies may be necessary to increase the number participants in university study abroad programs. Using the theory of planned behavior, the researcher examines factors that play a role in a student's decision to study abroad. Moreover, the study examines impacts of various motivators and deterrents, such as friends, family, school involvement, personality, and financial situations, on students' decision whether or not to study abroad.

The rate of participation of such programs is increasing worldwide, reflecting globalization of markets and students' interests in foreign policy and travel. Studies have shown that studying abroad while in college can positively impact a student's career path, world-view, and self-confidence (Dwyer and Peters, 2004). Study abroad experiences offer many life-changing and lasting academic, intercultural, personal, and social benefits (Sanchez, Fornerino, and Mengxia, 2006). Study abroad experiences can contribute to successfully training future global leaders to be more effective and respectful of other cultures and political and economic systems (Clark and Wright, 2010) and provide students with a world-view in which they are willing to take a stand for the world's welfare, and not just what benefits their own country (Dwyer and Peters, 2004). Business schools use study abroad programs to increase revenues, diversify the student body, add value to academic programs by offering the benefit of an international student population, and provide faculty with experiences in international teaching (Sanchez et al., 2006).

Although the number of students participating in study abroad programs has doubled over the last twenty years, the United States has the lowest participation rate in the world in study abroad programs (Releyea, Cocchiara, and Studdard, 2008). According to Open Doors 2010 fast facts, the Total U.S. Higher Education Enrollment was 3.5% or 19.5 million students in 2009. The top choices for enrollment for U.S. students were the United Kingdom, Italy, Spain, France and China. The top field of study was Business Management and Engineering with 62 percent of students' funding for international study coming from personal and family sources (Open Doors, 2010). A recent study on the differences in national investments in education helps explain that more foreign students enter programs and fewer native students leave in countries with higher spending on education (Sanchez et al., 2006). Universities in many industrialized and economically emerging countries are making significant efforts to increase involvement of students and faculty in study abroad programs.

THEORY DEVELOPMENT

The theory of planned behavior explains human behavior as a function of intentions and perceived behavioral control over behavior. According to this theory, people use three factors to make decisions: attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control. The main focus behind the theory of planned behavior is the actual intention of performing the behavior (Ajzen and Driver, 1992).

Attitude

An attitude is a predisposition created by learning and experience to respond in a consistent way toward an object. Attitudes can also be applied toward feelings for services

and destinations (Lam and Hsu, 2006). Fishbein and Ajzen (1975) propose that people made decisions based on the consequences of their action. Positive or negative experiences in travel affect students' behavior toward traveling.

A person's attitude toward a specific destination can affect his or her perception of that location as well as interest in that location as a destination. Therefore, a student's attitude toward travel destinations is likely to affect perceived behavioral control and interest in studying abroad.

Subjective Norm

The study estimates subjective norm by both an individual's normative beliefs about what others who are most important to the student think he or she should do and the extent to which the individual is motivated to comply with what these referents think (Lam and Hsu, 2006). When students begin to develop an interest in studying abroad, they seek advice from parents and close friends when making their decision (Smith and Bing, 2009).

Subjective norms are based on the opinions of these referents and the perceived social pressure to behave in a particular way (Lam and Hsu, 2006). Subjective norms do not directly impact a person's behavior but instead impact the intention to perform a behavior (Armitage and Conner, 2001). Therefore, a student's perception that family and friends will support his or her decision to travel abroad will positively affect the student's intention as well as perceived behavioral control.

Perceived Behavioral Control

Perceived behavioral control is about how easy or difficult an individual thinks it is to perform a behavior (Lam and Hsu, 2006). Factors such as the availability of resources and opportunities play a huge role in deciding if the behavior or action is the correct one.

Also, if a person cannot control some behavioral instances because of lack of availability of required resources, the interest to travel will be lower (Han, Hsu, and Sheu, 2010).

In the case of students studying abroad, the required resources likely include finances, the ability to understand the language, the ability to interact with people from different cultures, and the ability to maneuver around the area. For example, if the study abroad destination requires some physical ability and students think that it will be too difficult for them to keep up they are less likely to be interested in going on the trip in the first place.

Motivation

Until recently, research on motivation in education concentrated on its expectancy aspects (Berndt and Miller, 1990). Principles drawn from self-determination theory, however, call for some self-guided exploration of learning, curricular enrichment activities, interest-driven activities out of school, and other activities that offer opportunities for learning but do not involve striving to accomplish a particular goal (Brophy, 1998; p. 104-105). Self-determination theory disputes that humans have an innate desire for stimulation from birth (Ryan and Deci, 2000).

Applying self determination theory, the reasons for participating in study abroad can be either intrinsic or extrinsic. Intrinsically motivated students would participate in activities due to the desire to learn, to know, and to experience new things, rather than to please their parents or to enhance their professional resumes. Intrinsically motivated actions are done “for their own sake.” The study-abroad experience broadens awareness of the world and enhances a participant’s ability to learn how to adapt easily in different environmental and cultural situations (Van Hoof, 2006).

Seeking stimulation such as in desiring an exciting life or desiring to break away from everyday life motivates action intrinsically. Thus, people who claim high need for value stimulation might choose opportunities that enhance or add excitement to their social life—such as participating in a university’s study abroad program (Sanchez et al., 2006).

On the other hand, extrinsically motivated students would engage in study abroad for future professional and social benefits. External regulation occurs when our actions are regulated by external rewards, pressures, or constraints. An example of external regulation would be when a student joins a study abroad program for the credit or in the hopes of getting a better job in the future.

If a student signs up for study abroad for these reasons, external regulations are likely to be activated. Introjected regulated behaviors are controlled in part by the environment but also by internal reward/punishment contingencies such as ego enhancement, guilt, or obligation. Such regulation is internal in the sense that a person no longer requires external prodding to perform an action. However, the felt pressure to perform the action is still external to the person’s sense of self. Introjected regulation is seen in students who chose to study abroad primarily because they want to achieve higher social status among friends and to please their parents.

Deterrents

The perceived negative barriers to studying abroad (deterrents) may outweigh the motivators to study abroad causing students to deny the experience (Sanchez et al., 2006). Students are aware of the academic benefits associated with international experiences in their education, but potential deterrents to studying abroad partly explain the lack of student interest and participation in study abroad programs. Among these potential deterrents are

financial feasibility, accessibility to the information, social and family obligations or restraints (Salisbury et al., 2008; Sanchez et al., 2006), and level of school involvement (Salisbury, Umbach, Paulsen, and Pascarella, 2008).

Studying abroad can be hard for some college students to afford, so students must determine the financial feasibility of participating in such programs. When an activity is considered risky, students tend to engage in a higher level of information gathering. Smith and Bing (2009) find that individuals with access to information related to the trip tend to be involved in thinking about the trip and its feasibility. Family and friends are another major factor in the decision to study abroad, and some studies show that family and friends play a dominant role in decision making.

Gitelson, Kerstetter, Crofts, and Van Raaij (1994) find that family and friends are the sole decision makers in 30 to 40 percent of all travel related decisions. A student's interactions with people on and off campus influence their decision to study abroad. Students with a high level of intercultural communication apprehension are more likely to avoid participating in a study abroad experience (Goldstein and Kim, 2005). Since interacting with culturally diverse people is a key component of the study abroad experience, people who are used to communicating and working with others on a regular basis would be more likely interested in studying abroad.

METHOD

The questionnaire to measure motivational factors for and deterrents to study abroad participation was developed from the related literature (Nyaupane, Paris, and Teye, 2010; Relyea, Cocchiara, and Studdard, 2008; Salisbury et al., 2009; Sanchez et al., 2006). On a

5-point Likert scale, students were asked to rate to what extent each motivator and barrier (deterrent) would affect their decision to participate in study abroad. The attribute, subjective norm, and perceived behavioral control inventory was adapted from Ajzen and Driver (1992).

Students were asked to rate the level of agreement on each item. The intent to study abroad was measured by single item. All items were measured using 5-point Likert scales. The survey also asked participants for demographic information such as gender, ethnicity, class standing, income, and so forth. A convenience sample was used to collect the data with participants selected from across the campus at a regional liberal arts university located in the southeastern United States. The data were collected over a two week period. A total of 443 surveys were collected and later analyzed with principal component analysis and confirmatory factor analysis. The model of theory of planned behavior was tested using Structural Equation Modeling (SEM).

ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

Respondent Demographics

Table 1 shows that the data collected met expectations of typical college students enrolled at a large southern U.S. state-supported university—most are single, Americans, with the majority being in-state residents.

The typical respondent was a single (96%), Caucasian (717%) male (51%) between 19 and 22 years old (81%). A majority of respondents were juniors and seniors (66%) with household incomes over \$50,000 (7%). About half of the respondents were in-state students (54%) and were employed (55%). At the university where this study took place,

the majority of students are Caucasian U.S. citizens. Only four out of the 443 subjects were non-US citizen.

Table 1 about here.

Student Interest

The respondents were asked to identify the destination where they would like to study abroad and their preferred length of stay. Each subject's responses were directed to this specific destination. The university offers study abroad programs in 14 different countries in four different school terms. The studying abroad program offers credit for core classes, and many are offered after the usual fall and spring semesters; for example, travel abroad is offered in the "Maymester" or summer terms. Summer study abroad opportunities are gaining popularity because they are less likely to set students back for their expected graduation date than travel during the regular, longer fall and spring terms. Figure 1 shows the number of students indicating a preference for each destination. Figure 2 shows the number of students expressing an interest in study abroad in the school terms indicated.

Figures 1 and 2 about here.

Exploratory Factor Analysis: Motivators and Deterrents

A series of exploratory factor analysis was performed on the study variables to ascertain the discriminant validity of the items. A principal component analysis (PCA) of the measurement items (with varimax rotation) was conducted in order to identify the

underlying factor structure of motivators and deterrents. None of the 13 motivation items cross-loaded, and a scree plot suggested a four-factor solution where the eigenvalues drop significantly after a cutoff point of .81. The KMO measure of sampling adequacy was .87 and Bartlett's test of sphericity was significant at the .001 level. The four factors together explained 81 percent of the total variance and include intrinsic experience, professional regulators, introjected social and intrinsic liberty.

From the 14 deterrent items, a four-factor solution has an eigenvalue over 1.00. The KMO measure of sampling adequacy was .74; Bartlett's test of sphericity was significant at the .001 level. The model explained 60 percent of the total variance and factors were named information available, level of school involvement, financial feasibility, and family apprehension. The result of PCA and levels of internal consistency (Cronbach's alpha) appear in Table 2.

Table 2 about here.

Multiple Regressions: Motivational and Deterrent Factors

Multiple linear regression analysis was used to test models for predicting study abroad participation from 4 motivational factor scores (retained using regression method). Basic descriptive statistics and regression coefficients appear in Table 3.

The four predictor model was able to account for 30% of the variance in study abroad intention, $F(4, 432) = 46.99, p < .001$. The deterrent factors only explained 2.5% of variances in study abroad intention.

Table 3 about here.

The two factors of intrinsic experience and professional regulators turned out to be far more important than social and intrinsic liberty factors. Based on this analysis, we have recommended that the Office of International Students and Services to consider focusing on self realization and future career. Also focusing on credit hours (to receive credits for classes) would be one great recruiting strategy

Confirmatory Factor Analysis: Theory of Planned Behavior

CFA (measurement model) was used to assess the discriminant validity of the attitude, subjective norm, and perceived behavioral control variables. Table 3 provides the results of two nested models progressing from a one-factor model to the hypothesized three-factor model. A root mean squared error of approximation (RMSEA) for the hypothesized model was less than .10. The results indicate that the hypothesized three-factor model provides the better fit to the data.

Anderson and Gerbing (1988) recommend that alternative models be evaluated regardless of the satisfactory fit indices of the full model. Because measurement constraints imposed upon the hypothesized model provide an adequate fit to the data ($\chi^2 = 143.31$, $df=32$, $RMSEA=0.08$), the examination of a structural model is acceptable (Anderson and Gerbing, 1988).

Table 3 about here.

Structural Model

The structural equation model was drawn from the literature. Theory of Planned Behavior Inventories were adapted from Ajzen and Driver (1992)'s study. The attitude construct is composed of three variables (study abroad would be fun, study abroad would be a good experience, study abroad is beneficial). The subjective norm dimension has four items (employers think study abroad is useful, my family would support my decision to study abroad, my peers would support my decision to study abroad, and my family has traveled outside of the country in the last 5 years).

Perceived behavioral control was measured with three items (I understand the language spoken in the destination country, I have the ability to interact with people from different cultures/backgrounds, my family can pay for all or most of the expenses necessary to study abroad if I choose to go). The structure of proposed path model appears in Figure 3.

Figure 3 about here.

As Byrne (2001) recommends, a RMSEA less than 0.1; Parsimony Ratio (PRATIO) greater than 0.6; Normed Fit Index (NFI), and Common Fit Index (CFI) greater than 0.9 were used to decide the relative fit of the proposed model. As shown in Table 4, the hypothesized structure model adequately fit to the data (RMSEA =.08; Byrne, 2001).

Table 4 about here.

As Table 4 shows, the three endogenous variables were equally strong indicators of the intent to study abroad. The most detrimental factor for participation was subjective norm ($\beta=.29$, $p<.001$), followed by perceived behavioral control ($\beta=.24$, $p<.001$), and finally, attitude toward the program ($\beta=.23$, $p<.001$). The three factors together explained 27% of participation intent. The model examined possible mediating impact of perceived control on intention to study abroad, and the result shows an inverse relationship between attitude and perceived behavioral control ($\beta=-.07$, $p<.001$). The impact of attitude is negatively mediated by perceived behavioral control (lack of language skills, money, and openness to other culture), which significantly impaired a person's ability to study abroad. Students at this specific university had a fairly positive attitude about the program but their resource may be insufficient to support the decision to participate. On the other hand, referents' (family and friends) support had a strong positive impact on the student's perceived control ($\beta=.58$, $p<.001$), thus increasing the student's confidence which eventually strengthened his or her participation intention ($\beta=.29$, $p<.001$).

Implications for Designing Study-Abroad Marketing Strategies

Although the United States of America produce lowest participation rate in both long-term and short-term study abroad programs in the world (Releyea, Cocchiara, and Studdard, 2008), the actual number of participants are growing. The current study respondents indicated their preferred destination as Australia, Italy, Costa Rica, Egypt, Spain, England, and Greece in the descending order, which is conforming the national survey conducted by U. S. Higher Education (Open Doors, 2010). The respondents were selected across the campus, including majors in humanity, science, business, education. The

majority of respondents were business majors. Authors examined the relationship between motivational and deterrent factors and potential participant's intention to study abroad. The factor analysis identified four motivational factors; intrinsic experience, professional regulators, introjected social, intrinsic liberty and four deterrent factors; information available, school involvement, financial feasibility, family apprehension. The current study results support the previous research findings that the majority of students' funding for international study coming from personal and family sources (Open Doors, 2010).

The study also examines prospects' intention to study abroad using theory of planned behavior. The results bring in somewhat interesting insights on perceived behavioral control. Positive attitude toward the idea of study abroad was negatively correlated to perceived behavioral control and the intent was mediated by students' perception on how much they can afford it.

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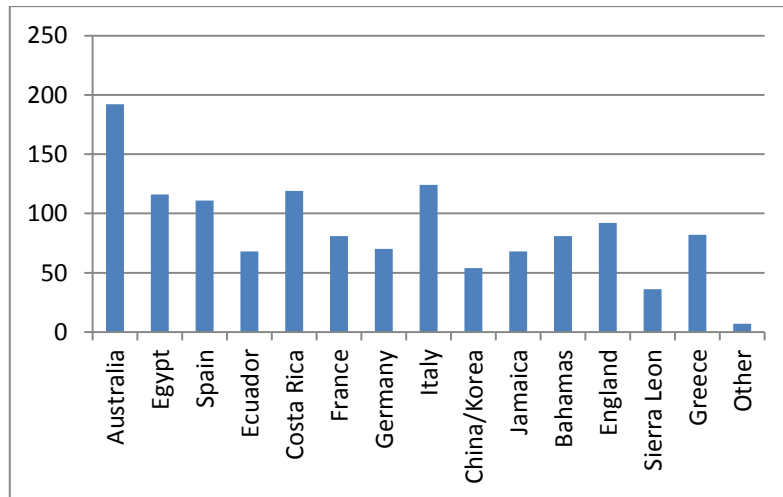
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Table 1
Profile of Respondents

	Frequency	Percent
Gender (n=441)		
Male	226	51.1
Female	214	48.9
Grade Level (n=442)		
Freshmen	56	12.7
Sophomore	87	19.7
Junior	131	29.6
Senior	163	36.9
Graduate Student	5	1.1
Marital Status (n=442)		
Single	426	96.4
Married	7	1.6
Divorced	9	2.4
Citizenship (n=442)		
US Citizen	438	99.1
Non US. Citizen	4	0.90
In state (n=442)		
In-state	240	54.4
Out-of-state	201	45.7
Employment Status (n=441)		
Employed	245	55.6
Not employed	196	44.4
Ethnicity (n=442)		
Caucasian/White	313	70.8
African American	80	18.1
Hispanic/Latino	21	4.8
Asian/Pacific islander	17	3.8
American Indian	11	2.5
Income (n=424)		
Less than 20,000	68	16.0
20,000-29,999	18	4.2
30,000-49,999	45	10.6
50,000-69,999	78	18.4
70,000-99,999	98	23.1
100,000 or more	117	27.6
College (n=411)		
Business	256	62.3
Humanity	52	12.7
Science	67	16.3
Education	23	5.6
Undecided	13	3.2
Information Source (n=434)		
Flyers	99	22.8
Friends	88	20.3
Advisor/Professor	75	17.3

Website	53	12.2
College newspaper	47	10.8
Mail	36	8.3
Other	36	8.3

Figure 1. Preferred Destinations



Note: Other destinations include Japan, New Zealand, Argentines, Israel, St.Barts.

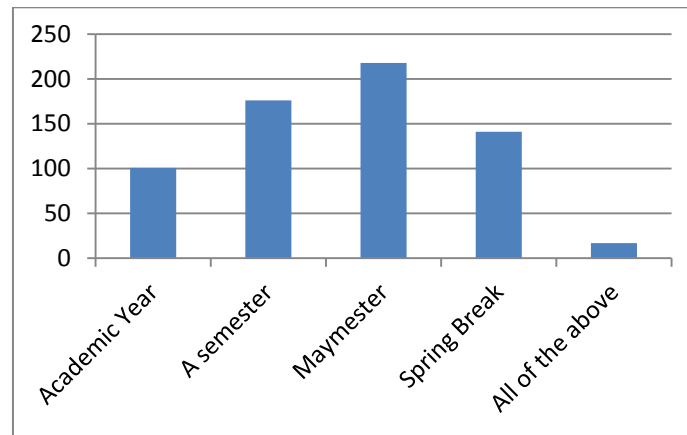


Figure 2

Number of Students per Preferred Period of Study Abroad

Table 2
Result of Principal Component Analysis

Motivation Factors				
Item	INTRINSIC EXPERIENCE	PROFESSIONAL REGULATORS	INTROJECTED SOCIAL	INTRINSIC LIBERTY
To gain self confidence	.808			
To learn a new language	.784			
To experience new culture	.768			
To meet new people and interact	.757			
To more easily be able to enter the job market		.869		
To receive credits for core classes		.744		
To benefit my future career		.731		
To achieve a higher social status			.855	
To be exposed to new practices			.813	
To please my parents			.798	
To increase enjoyment				.793
To become more independent				.758
To achieve goals or dream				.692
Eigenvalues	5.594	1.688	1.377	.812
% of variance explained	43.034	12.982	10.593	6.246
Cronbach's Alpha	.851	.812	.803	.802
Deterrent Factors				
Item	INFORMATION AVAILABLE	SCHOOL INVOLVEMENT	FINANCIAL FEASIBILITY	FAMILY APPREHEN SION
Accessibility to information for the study abroad program	.864			
How much I already know about the program	.788			
Traveling with people I am comfortable with	.676			
Who I am going to live within the study abroad country	.673			
Leadership position in a club/organization on campus		.769		
Participating Greek life		.722		
Being a part of an athletic team		.716		
Part of academic honor society		.664		
Cost of the program			.830	
Cost of expenses once in study abroad country			.812	
A job that I need in order to support myself			.535	
Leaving family behind				.759
Limited contact with family while I am abroad				.716
Limited ability to help family while gone				.680
Eigenvalues	3.582	2.234	1.497	1.134
% of variance explained	25.587	15.957	10.694	8.098
Cronbach's Alpha	.791	.721	.609	.525

Table 3. Motivational and Deterrent Factors When making Study Aboard Decision (N=437)

Factor	Study Abroad Intention	β	r	b	$CI_{.95}$ for r	
Intrinsic Experience	.377***	.376***	.411***	.528***	.417	.639
Professional Regulators	.305***	.305***	.343***	.429***	.318	.540
Introjected Social	.164***	.164***	.193***	.231***	.120	.340
Intrinsic Liberty	.203***	.203***	.236***	.285***	.174	.396
Mean	3.31					
S.D.	1.405					

*** $p < .001$

Table 3. Confirmatory Factor Analysis of the Measurement Model

Model	χ^2	df	$\Delta \chi^2$	RMSEA	IFI	NFI	CFI
One factor	353.37	35		.14	.71	.69	.71
Three factor	143.31	32	200.06*	.08	.90	.87	.89

Note: *p< .05. RMSEA= root mean square error of the approximation, IFI=incremental fit index, NFI=normed fit index, CFI=comparative fit index. N=443.

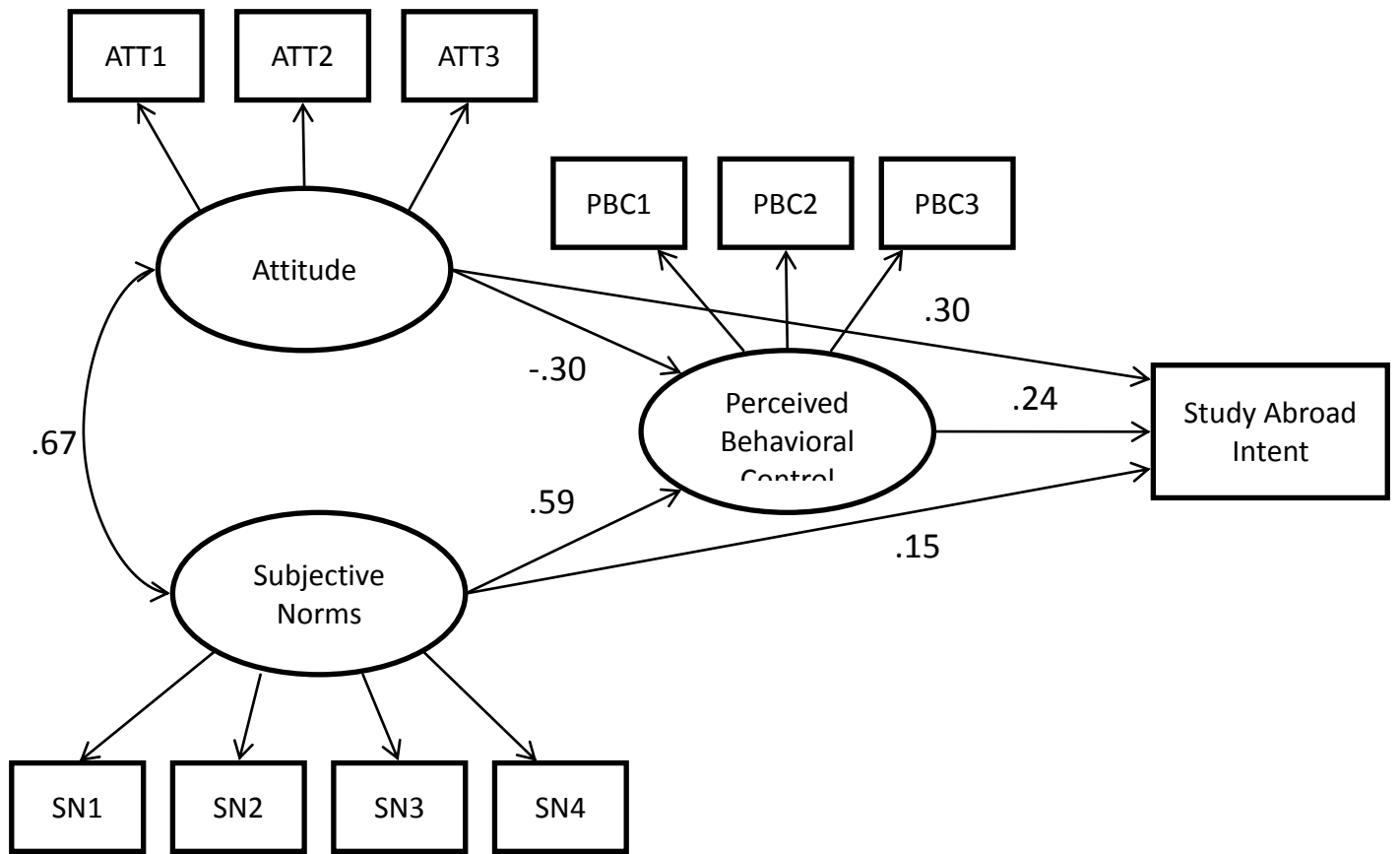


Figure 3. Structural Equation Model

Table 4. Fit Indices and Path Co-efficient of Proposed Model (n=443)

χ^2	df	RMSEA	IFI	NFI	CFI
154.50	39	.08	.91	.88	.90

Effect	DE	IE	TE	Residual path coeff.	R ²
On Perceived Behavioral Control				.89	.20
of Attitude	-.30***		-.30 ***		
Of Subjective Norms	.58***		.58***		
On Study Abroad Intent				.85	.27
of Attitude	.30***	-.07***	.23***		
Of Subjective Norms	.15***	.14***	.29***		
Of Perceived Behavioral Control	.24***		.24***		

Note: The significance of indirect effects were decided based on the Sobel test. For brevity, only those independent variables with either significant direct or indirect effect were listed in this table. DE=Direct effect, IE=Indirect effect, TE = total effect. *significant at the .05 level, **significant at the .01 level, ***significant at the .001 level.