

The Influence of Language on Destination Selection

Samantha Rosenson
Kenneth Backman, PhD.
Clemson University

Introduction:

The purpose of this research study was to determine the influence of language on destination selection among undergraduate students. More specifically, the aim was to determine whether or not language influenced the following categories of students differently: those who are currently enrolled in a foreign language course vs. those who are not, males vs. females, and those who intend to travel internationally in the next year vs. those who do not.

Literature Review:

An initial literature review revealed that there has not been much research done on this topic. In fact, according to Basala and Klenosky (2001), “the impact of language is one of the least studied factors in tourism research.” Although there are studies that include language as one aspect of their research, in particular those research studies conducted by Basala and Klenosky, Chen and Hsu, and Han, this area remains somewhat unexplored, which makes the results of this study more significant.

Results:

The results of this study show that language has a greater influence on those students who are not currently enrolled in a foreign language course, males, and those students who do not intend to travel internationally in the next year. In fact, the outcomes of multiple t-test analyses showed that current language course enrollment influenced 9 out of the 11 travel/language preferences included in this study, while gender and an intention to travel internationally in the next year both influenced 6 out of 11 travel/language preferences.

Conclusion:

Possible explanations for these results could include the inherent interest in foreign languages and cultures shared by students taking foreign language courses, the existence of a female majority in many foreign language courses, and the sense of adventure characteristic of students intending to travel in the next year. Among other examples, these findings could be useful in marketing non-English-speaking destinations, understanding the importance of foreign language courses to international travel, and determining ways to best accommodate international visitors to our own country, who may share attitudes similar to those of the respondents in this study.