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Louisiana Secondary Agricultural Educators' Perceptions of an International Experience toward Their Teaching Career

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Abstract

As societies across the globe are becoming interdependent, it is becoming increasingly essential for secondary agricultural educators to integrate an international component into the agricultural curriculum. The purpose of this study was to evaluate secondary agricultural educators' perceptions of participating in an international experience (IE) toward their teaching career. This study showed that more than three-fourths of secondary agricultural educators perceived participation in an IE to be beneficial to their careers, and nearly three-fourths perceived participation to be relevant to their careers. It is concluded that secondary agricultural educators perceive minor barriers to participation in an IE. In addition, secondary agricultural educators who perceive participation in an IE to be beneficial and relevant to their careers also perceive locations to be more appealing and activities to be more important than those who do not. Further, secondary agricultural educators who perceive participation in an IE to be relevant to their career perceived fewer barriers to participation in an IE. However, there were no statistically significant differences between perceived barriers of secondary agricultural educators who perceive participation in an IE to be beneficial to their career and those who do not perceive participation to be beneficial to their career.

Keywords: Agricultural educators; international experience; location; activities; barriers

Today's world is hardly an unassociated assortment of landmasses with independently thriving societies. Rather, it is steadily becoming the home of an increasingly interdependent, global society (Lamm & Harder, 2010; Zhai & Scheer, 2002). Advancements in technologies and infrastructures of communication and transport systems worldwide are bridging gaps between nations (Akpan & Martin, 1996). Moreover, global organizations are being created, social environments are becoming more culturally diverse, and more people are traveling globally (Akpan & Martin, 1996; Zhai & Scheer, 2002). These trends in global society reveal a new dynamic of global interconnectedness (Akpan & Martin, 1996; Zhai & Scheer, 2002). According to Roberts (2007), a vast array of social dilemmas and injustices are occurring worldwide. While

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these occurrences may seem relevant to the community most immediately affected, Roberts (2007) suggested the consequences are like a domino effect, far reaching beyond the limits of a country's borders. Therefore, societies should become aware of the global state of interdependency (Lamm & Harder, 2010; Roberts, 2007).

Zhai and Scheer (2002) stated the evolution of this worldwide system demands the integration of a global perspective among all of society's institutions. Therefore, government officials, teachers, business personnel, farmers, and other professionals alike need to be equipped to respond to the present and future global challenges and opportunities (Harder, Lamm, Ganpat, & Lindner, 2011; Zhai & Scheer, 2002). According to Bruce, Podemski, and Anderson (1991), this includes engaging in different cultural environments while efficiently interacting and working with an open mind.

The overall demand for a global perspective has definite implications for U.S agriculture (Harbstreit & Welton, 1990; Ludwig & McGirr, 2003; Moriba, Edwards, Robinson, Cartmell, & Henneberry, 2012). In fact, Akpan and Martin (1996) maintained that, "the need for developing an awareness of the agricultural industry has become one of the major issues of our time" (p. 63). For a person to be educated in agriculture, a person must understand the agricultural systems, cultures, and societies (Akpan & Martin, 1996). Institutions in higher and secondary education have worked to introduce a global focus over the past decade (Harbstreit & Welton, 1990). The American Association for Agricultural Educators (AAAE) modified its purposes to foster the internationalization of agricultural curriculum, and educators have introduced global instruction in secondary classrooms (Harbstreit & Welton, 1990). However, researchers found U.S. high school students had limited international knowledge (Harbstreit & Welton, 1990), with the lowest level being agriculturally related (Radhakrishna & Dominguez, 1999). Years later, the push for this global mindset has continued. In fact, in the 2011-2015 national research agenda, Doerfert (2011) identified needs for global trends and developed a focus inclusive of international research. Research Priority 1 of the national research agenda addressed the need to educate the world's citizens on the impact of global agriculture to "create win-win solutions that ensure the long-term sustainability of agriculture, natural resources, and quality of life in communities across the world" (Doerfert, 2011, p. 8).

Integrating a global perspective into the agricultural curriculum can produce globally competent students. According to Bruce et al. (1991), it is logical to first develop global perspective among educators, and then introduce them to effective ways to integrate this global perspective into the current curriculum (Bruce et al., 1991; Roberts, 2007). Case (1993) stated that, "teachers themselves must gain knowledge of the world and perceptual understanding, a process that involves open-mindedness, anticipation of complexity, resistance to stereotyping, inclination to empathize, and non-chauvinism" (p. 318). According to Bruce et al. (1991), developing an overall appreciation for the global society can aid secondary agricultural educators in developing global perspective among their students. According to Nieto (2006), the levels of cultural diversity in classrooms are quickly rising; therefore, it is critical that educators develop a sense of cultural sensitivity. Previous studies found that participating in IEs aided in (a) reducing misconceptions and discriminations, (b) promoting the development of cultural understanding and appreciation, (c) strengthening the ability to interact with people of other cultures, and (d) building personal confidence (Hamza, 2010; Moriba et al., 2012). Providing opportunities for secondary agricultural educators to participate in an international experience (IE) can facilitate successful integration of a global perspective into the agricultural curriculum (Nieto, 2006). International experiences (IEs) can be multifaceted and can, therefore, produce a wide range of beneficial outcomes for students and educators (Roberts, 2007).

An extensive review of literature resulted in no findings on research regarding participation in IEs among secondary agricultural educators. However, studies involving IEs among Extension educators can be of insight, because both secondary agricultural educators and Extension educators are responsible for teaching agricultural concepts. Various research studies

found that Extension educators who have had participated in an IE (a) are more likely to have a global mindset, (b) exhibit higher sensitivity to the needs of diverse learners, (c) have a more developed sense of cultural awareness, and (d) demonstrate less stereotyping toward people in developing countries (Lamm & Harder, 2010; Harder et al., 2011; Suarez, 2003). Additionally, professionals who had visited a foreign country had a more positive perception of the internationalization of the agricultural education curriculum than their counterparts (Harder et al., 2011).

Besley and Peters (2009) maintained that it is necessary for high school educators to have international backgrounds in order to better internationalize the high school curriculum, and therefore promote global competence among high school students. In a study by Schneider (2004), current high school teachers reported that study abroad opportunities should be better promoted in teacher training. Further, the Association of Colleges of Teachers of Educations (AACTE) conducted several studies regarding global competence among secondary educators and found that encouraging faculty to travel abroad was a major strategy in teacher training (Schneider, 2004). Therefore, it would be beneficial to promote international experiences among secondary agricultural educators, so that they may better internationalize their curriculum.

Studies involving university professors and other educational professionals could also be of insight to the effects of IEs among secondary agricultural educators. In a study involving agricultural professors, Akpan & Martin (1991) found that many professors had not participated in an IE and did not feel competent in incorporating a global perspective into their curriculum. The researchers recommended that the agricultural education department provide more opportunities for faculty to participate in IEs (Akpan & Martin, 1991). Additionally, Roberts (2007) stated that IE participation should be increased among K-16 educators. Not only would it be beneficial in their own professional development as an educator, but it could also be fundamental in developing the same global competence and mindset among their students (Roberts, 2007). In a study by Hamza (2010), educational administrators reported an increase in their cultural awareness after participating in an IE. Further, these administrators stated that they were able to use their IEs to better educate others on global issues (Hamza, 2010). Studies regarding perception change pre and post IEs can also give insight to the benefits of IEs among secondary agricultural educators. Wingenbach, Chmielewski, Smith, and Pina (2006) studied university students' cultural awareness before and after participating in an IE. Findings revealed that the students had a higher sense of cultural sensitivity and appreciation after the IE than before (Wingenbach et al., 2006). If the identified effects of IEs for agricultural Extension agents, students, and other educational professionals can be applied to secondary agricultural educators, their participation in an IE could benefit the secondary agricultural classroom and should be increased. To promote IEs among secondary agricultural educators researchers should examine their perceived level of benefit and relevance of participating in an IE toward their teaching career.

Theoretical Framework

Ajzen's (2006) Theory of Planned Behavior served as the theoretical basis for this study. According to Ajzen (2006) human behavior is guided by behavioral, normative, and control beliefs. The manipulation of any three beliefs can modify an individual's intention to perform a specific behavior (Ajzen 1991; Ajzen, 2006). According to Ajzen (2006), behavioral beliefs represent an individual's favorable or unfavorable attitude toward possible outcomes of a specific behavior. If favorable outcomes are perceived to outweigh the unfavorable outcomes, the individual is more likely to perform that behavior (Ajzen, 2006). As such, a secondary agricultural educator who has a favorable attitude toward an IE and perceives the benefits to outweigh unwanted consequences is more likely to participate in an IE (Ajzen, 2006). Additionally, location appeal of an IE and time required to participate may persuade a secondary

agricultural educator's attitude toward participating in an IE. Secondary agricultural educators may have more favorable attitudes toward participating in an IE in a specific location as opposed to other locations. Further, if secondary agricultural educators have more favorable attitudes toward activities in which to participate during an IE, they may be more likely to participate. Conversely, secondary agricultural educators will be less likely to participate in an IE if they perceive negative outcomes to participation such as lack of financial support, work obligations, and lack of time to participate (Andreasen, 2003; Dooley & Rouse, 2009; Franklin, Al-Hassan, Elliot, & Knight, 2004; Lamm & Harder, 2010; Ludwig, 2001; Ludwig, 2002; Selby, Peters, Sammons, Branson, & Balschweid, 2005).

Normative beliefs are those beliefs an individual perceives regarding a socially expected behavior and that individual's level of intent to perform that behavior (Ajzen, 2006; Francis et al., 2004). An individual who perceives that specified behaviors are the norm within a social realm will be more likely to perform that behavior (Ajzen, 2006). Therefore, if a secondary agricultural educator perceives participation in an IE is of value among administrators or colleagues, it is more likely they will participate in an IE. However, if a secondary agricultural educator perceives that others do not place value on their participation or their administrators do not support their participation, they are less likely to participate

Control beliefs represent any factors an individual considers helpful or hindering to their performance of a specific behavior (Ajzen, 2006). Control beliefs also include individuals' perception of how much control they have over such factors (Ajzen 2006). For instance, secondary agricultural educators may perceive cost, current job requirements, and language barriers as possible factors that impede their ability to participate in an IE (Irani, Place, & Friedel, 2006; Zhai & Scheer, 2002) and as a result, are less likely to participate. By identifying specific location appeal, activity importance, and perceived barriers toward participation in an IE, efforts can be made to promote more favorable attitudes toward IEs among secondary agricultural educators (Ajzen, 1991; Ajzen, 2006).

Purpose and Research Questions

The purpose of this study was to examine Louisiana secondary agricultural educators' perceptions of the benefit and relevance of participating in an IE toward their teaching career. Six research questions guided this study:

1. What were the personal and professional characteristics of secondary agricultural educators in Louisiana?
2. To what extent did secondary agricultural educators perceive participation in international experiences to be beneficial and relevant to their teaching career?
3. What were secondary agricultural educators' perceptions of location appeal, activity importance, and perceived barriers regarding participation in international experiences?
4. Did relationships exist between secondary agricultural educators' prior international experience and their perceived level of benefit and relevance of participation in an international experience toward their teaching career?
5. Did differences exist in secondary agricultural educators' international experience location appeal, activity importance, and perceived barriers based on the extent they perceived participating in an international experience to be beneficial to their career?
6. Did differences exist in secondary agricultural educators' international experience location appeal, activity importance, and perceived barriers based on the extent they perceived participating in an international experience to be relevant to their career?

Methods

Secondary agricultural educators (N = 223) in Louisiana were the target population for this study. Sample size (n = 142) was determined using Cochran's (1977) sample size formula.

As a result of frame error, three secondary agricultural educators were removed from the study, and three opted out of the study. The adjusted sample was 136. Responses were collected from 68 of the secondary agricultural educators for a 50% response rate. Data were analyzed only for those respondents (n = 54) who indicated interest in participating in an IE.

Instrumentation

The instrument used in this study was developed by Rieger (n.d.) originally. However, Lamm & Harder (2010) modified the instrument to identify Extension agents' perceptions of participation in an international Extension experience. The researchers obtained permission to use this instrument and further modified items to reflect perceptions of secondary agricultural educators concersning participation in an IE. A panel of faculty and doctoral level graduate students at Louisiana University reviewed the instrument to ensure face and content validity.

The modified instrument contained three sections. The first section was designed to measure secondary agricultural educators' perceptions of how beneficial and relevant participating in an IE was to their teaching career. The second section of the instrument measured secondary agricultural educators' perceptions of location appeal, activity importance, and perceived barriers toward participating in an IE. The secondary agricultural educators were asked to rate their perceptions of location appeal using a four-point summated scale (1 = *Not Appealing,* 2 = *Not Very Appealing,* 3 = *Somewhat Appealing,* 4 = *Very Appealing*). Further, secondary agricultural educators were asked to rate their perceptions of activity importance in which to participate during an IE using a four-point summated scale (1 = *Not Important,* 2 = *Not Very Important,* 3 = *Somewhat Important,* 4 = *Very Important*). Finally, secondary agricultural educators were asked to rate their perceptions of the magnitude of barriers to participation in an IE using a three-point summated scale (1 = *Not a Reason,* 2 = *Minor Reason,* 3 = *Major Reason*). The third section of the instrument required secondary agricultural educators to indicate their personal and professional characteristics (i.e., gender, ethnicity, years of professional experience, age, fluency in foreign languages, residential location, and acquaintance with people from other countries). Cronbach's alpha coefficients were used to calculate reliability estimates. Two scales, location appeal α = .84 and activity preference α = .90, yielded exemplary reliability estimates and one scale, barriers α = .77, yielded extensive reliability estimates according to Robinson, Shaver, and Wrightsman (1991).

Data Collection

The researchers followed Dillman, Smyth and Christian's (2009) Tailored Design Method to collect responses from participating secondary agricultural educators. The researchers sent an email via SurveyMonkey© to the secondary agricultural educators with a link to the questionnaire. Follow-up emails were sent to non-respondents at the beginning of weeks two and three. To control for non-response, a random sample of 40 non-respondents were contacted via telephone and encouraged to participate. Of the 40 non-respondents contacted, 28 responded. Independent samples t-tests were used to compare respondents to non-respondents based on four central variables: (a) location appeal, (b) activity importance, (c) barriers, and (d) preferred length of an IE. No statistically significant differences were found in the variables means between respondents and non-respondents. As a result, the data were combined for further analysis.

Data Analysis

The data were coded for analysis using SPSS20. Data were analyzed for those secondary agricultural educators (n = 54) who indicated interest in participating in an IE only. Descriptive

statistics (i.e., frequency, percentage, mean, and standard deviation) were used to analyze research questions one through three. Research question four was analyzed using non-parametric Spearman *rho* correlation coefficients. The strength of relationships was determined using Davis' (1971) coefficient conventions: r = .01 to .09 = *Negligible*, r = .10 to .29 = *Low*, r = .30 to .49 = *Moderate*, r = .50 to .69 = *Substantial*, and $r \geq .70$ = *Very Strong*. To address research questions five and six, the researchers divided respondents into two groups based on the foundation of behavioral beliefs supported by Ajzen's Theory of Planned Behavior.

Ajzen (1991) stated that individuals who exhibit a positive attitude toward a behavior are more likely to perform that behavior. Therefore, secondary agricultural educators who indicated that participating in an IE was *Not beneficial at all* and *Not very beneficial* to their teaching career were labeled as "not beneficial," and secondary agricultural educators who indicated that participating in an IE was *Somewhat beneficial* and *Very beneficial* to their teaching career were labeled as "beneficial." Additionally, secondary agricultural educators who indicated that participating in an IE was *Not relevant at all* and *Not very relevant* to their teaching career were labeled as "not relevant," and secondary agricultural educators who indicated that participating in an IE was *Somewhat relevant* and *Very relevant* to their teaching career were labeled as "relevant." Independent samples *t*-tests were used to detect differences between groups, and a statistical significance level of .05 was established *a priori*. Lastly, effect size was determined using Cohen's *d* (Cohen, 1988).

Findings

Research Question 1: Personal and Professional Characteristics

Of the 54 secondary agricultural educators who responded, more than one-half were male (61.1%), and the overwhelming majority were Caucasian (96.3%). Secondary agricultural educators ranged from 22 to 63 years of age, with the mean age of 42 (SD = 11.16), and averaged 16 years of teaching experience. Six (11.1%) of the secondary agricultural educators reported prior participation in an IE, and two secondary agricultural educators (3.7%) indicated being fluent in a language other than English, specifically French. Further, secondary agricultural educators (57.7%) reported having friends from outside the United States (see Table 1).

Research Question 2: Level of Benefit and Relevance of International Experience to Their Teaching Career

As displayed in Table 2, the secondary agricultural educators were divided into two groups based on their response (Not beneficial/relevant = *Not beneficial/relevant at all* and *Not very beneficial/relevant* and Beneficial/Relevant = *Somewhat beneficial/relevant* and *Very beneficial/relevant).* As such, 31 (57.4%) of the secondary agricultural educators indicated they perceived that participating in an IE was *Somewhat beneficial* to their career, and 11 (20.4%) secondary agricultural educators indicated that participation was *Very beneficial*. Further, 28 (51.9%) of the secondary agricultural educators indicated they perceived participating in an IE was *Somewhat relevant* to their teaching career, and 12 (22.2%) secondary agricultural educators indicated that they perceived participating was *Very relevant* (see Table 2).

Table 1

Personal and Professional Characteristics

Characteristic	*N*	%
Gender		
Male	33	61.1
Female	21	38.9
Ethnicity		
Caucasian	52	96.3
African American	2	3.7
International Experience		
Yes	6	11.1
No	48	88.9
Fluency		
Yes	2	3.7
No	52	96.3
Residence		
Inside city limits	45	83.3
Outside city limits	9	16.7
Friends from Outside U.S.		
Yes	22	42.3
No	30	57.7

Table 2

Perceptions of Benefit and Relevance of Participating in an International Experience

Level	*f*	%
Benefit		
Not beneficial at all[a]	1	1.9
Not very beneficial[a]	11	20.4
Somewhat beneficial[b]	31	57.4
Very beneficial[b]	11	20.4
Relevant		
Not relevant at all[a]	3	5.6
Not very relevant[a]	11	20.4
Somewhat relevant[b]	28	51.9
Very relevant[b]	12	22.2

Note. $N = 54$.
[a]Not beneficial/relevant (*not beneficial/relevant at all* and *not very beneficial/relevant*). [b]Beneficial/Relevant (*somewhat beneficial/relevant* and *very beneficial/relevant*).

Research Question 3: Location Appeal, Activity Importance, and Barriers

Regarding secondary agricultural educators' appeal of location, the construct mean was 2.91 (*SD* = 59). The three locations with the highest means were Australia or New Zealand (*M* = 3.52, *SD* = .75), Europe (*M* = 3.26, *SD* = .81), and North America (*M* = 3.17, *SD* = .67). The locations with the lowest means were Africa (*M* = 2.54, *SD* = 1.19), Asia (*M* = 2.54, *SD* = .96), and Southeast Asia (*M* = 2.54, *SD* = 1.04) (see Table 3).

Table 3

Perceptions of Appeal of Selected Locations for an International Experience

Location	*N*	*M*	*SD*	Interpretation
Australia or New Zealand	54	3.52	.75	Very appealing
Europe	54	3.26	.81	Somewhat appealing
North America	54	3.17	.67	Somewhat appealing
Caribbean	54	3.02	.92	Somewhat appealing
South America	54	2.98	.96	Somewhat appealing
South Pacific	54	2.80	.94	Somewhat appealing
Central America	54	2.78	.95	Somewhat appealing
Africa	54	2.54	1.19	Somewhat appealing
Asia	54	2.54	.96	Somewhat appealing
Southeast Asia	54	2.54	1.04	Somewhat appealing
Construct	54	2.91	.59	Somewhat appealing

Note. Real Limits: 1.00 to 1.49 = *Not appealing at all*, 1.50 to 2.49 = *Not Very Appealing*, 2.50 to 3.49 = *Somewhat appealing*, and 3.50 to 4.00 = *Very Appealing*.

As for secondary agricultural educators' perceptions of the importance of activities in which to participate during an IE, the construct mean was 3.37 (*SD* = .55). The two activities with the highest means were "Acquiring hands-on experience" (*M* = 3.76, *SD* = .47) and "Working one-on-one with a host country agricultural educator" (*M* = 3.46, *SD* = .64). The activities with the lowest means were "Staying with a host family" (*M* = 2.50, *SD* = .82) and "Attending non-credit classes at foreign universities" (*M* = 2.31, *SD* = .84) (see Table 4).

Regarding perceived barriers, the construct mean was 2.28 (*SD* = .39). The barriers with the highest means were "Financial cost" (*M* = 2.78, *SD* = .50), "Time commitment" (*M* = 2.63, *SD* = .56), and "Work obligations" (*M* = 2.52, *SD* = .61). The barriers with the lowest means were "Potential for being victim of crime, terrorism, or unjust government action" (*M* = 1.96, *SD* = .75) and "Potential for contracting diseases in foreign countries" (*M* = 1.76, *SD* = .75) (see Table 5).

Table 4

Perceptions of Importance of Activities during an International Experience

Activity	*N*	*M*	*SD*	Interpretation
Acquiring hands-on experience	54	3.76	.47	Very important
Working one-on-one with a host country agricultural educator	54	3.46	.64	Somewhat important
Learning about a different culture	54	3.44	.66	Somewhat important
Traveling in country	54	3.44	.69	Somewhat important
Participating in field research	54	3.33	.87	Somewhat important
Socializing with citizens of host country	54	3.28	.69	Somewhat important
In-field lectures and labs	54	3.24	.78	Somewhat important
Sightseeing	54	3.13	.83	Somewhat important
Free time to do what you want	54	3.07	.87	Somewhat important
Learning and speaking the language of the host county	54	2.93	.72	Somewhat important
Earning academic credit through courses at foreign universities	54	2.54	.91	Somewhat important
Staying with foreign host family	54	2.50	.82	Somewhat important
Attending non-credit classes at foreign universities	54	2.31	.84	Not Very important
Construct	54	3.37	.55	Somewhat important

Note. Real Limits: 1.00 to 1.49 = *Not Important at All,* 1.50 to 2.49 = *Not Very Important,* 2.50 to 3.49 = *Somewhat Important,* 3.50 to 4.00 = *Very Important.*

Table 5

Perceived Barriers to Participation in an International Experience

Barrier	*N*	*M*	*SD*	Interpretation
Financial cost	54	2.78	.50	Minor reason
Time commitment	54	2.63	.56	Minor reason
Work obligations	54	2.52	.61	Minor reason
Family obligations	54	2.45	.67	Minor reason
Not aware of any programs related to my position	54	2.33	.73	Minor reason
Language barrier	54	2.07	.61	Minor reason
Lack of support from supervisor(s)	54	2.06	.69	Minor reason
Potential for being victim of crime, terrorism, or unjust government action	54	1.96	.75	Not a reason
Potential for contracting diseases in foreign countries	54	1.76	.75	Not a reason
Construct	54	2.28	.39	Minor reason

Note. Scale: 1 = *Not a Reason,* 2 = *Minor Reason,* 3 = *Major Reason*

Research Question 4: Relationships between Prior International Experience and Perceived Level of Benefit and Relevance Toward Teaching Career

The data analysis revealed that no statistically significant relationships existed regarding prior participation in an IE and perceived level of benefit and relevance toward teaching career (see Table 6). Because no statistically significant relationships were found, effect size was not reported.

Table 6

Relationships between Prior International Experience and Perceived Level of Benefit and Relevance toward Teaching Career (*N* = 54)

Variable	*P*	*p*	Effect size interpretation
Benefit	.10	.464	N/A
Relevance	.19	.165	N/A

Note. The strength of relationships was determined using Davis' (1971) coefficient conventions: *r* = .00 to .09 = *Negligible*, *r* = .10 to .29 = *Low*, *r* = .30 to .49 = *Moderate*, *r* = .50 to .69 = *Substantial*, and *r* ≥ .70 = *Very Strong*.

Research Question 5: Differences in Perception of Location Appeal, Activity Importance, and Barriers Based on Perceived Benefit of an International Experience

There were no statistically significant differences found between secondary agricultural educators who perceived participation in an IE as not beneficial with those secondary agricultural educators who perceived participation in an IE as beneficial regarding perceived barriers. However, there were statistically significant differences between secondary agricultural educators who perceived participation in an IE as not beneficial with those secondary agricultural educators who perceived participation in an IE as beneficial when comparing their perceptions of location appeal (t = 3.42, p = .001) and activity importance (t = 3.39, p = .001). The effect sizes for location appeal (d = 1.20) and activity importance (d = .92) were large according to Cohen (1988) (see Table 7).

Table 7

Comparison of Perceptions by Construct Regarding Perceived Benefit

Construct by Group	*n*	*m*	*sd*	*t*	*p*	*d*	Effect Size Interpretation
Location							
Not beneficial	12	2.44	.44	3.42	.001	1.20	Large
Beneficial	42	3.05	.57				
Activities							
Not beneficial	12	2.94	.73	3.39	.001	.92	Large
Beneficial	42	3.39	.42				
Barriers							
Not beneficial	12	2.39	.33	1.05	.301	- -	N/A
Beneficial	42	2.26	.40				

Note. Effect size was determined using Cohen's (1988) *d*: .20 = Small, .50 = Medium, .80 = Large

Research Question 6: Differences in Perception of Location Appeal, Activity Importance, and Barriers Based on Perceived Relevance of an International Experience

Statistically significant differences were found between secondary agricultural educators who perceived an IE as not relevant to their teaching career and those secondary agricultural educators who perceived an IE as relevant to their teaching career regarding location appeal (t = 4.42, p = <.001) activity importance (t = 4.38, p = <.001), and barriers (t = 2.63, p = .011). As such, the effect sizes for location appeal (d = 2.14), activity importance (d = 1.26), and barriers (d = .85) were large (Cohen, 1988) (see Table 8).

Table 8

Comparison of Perceptions by Construct Regarding Perceived Relevance

Construct by Group	*n*	*m*	*sd*	*t*	*p*	*d*	Effect Size Interpretation
Location							
Not relevant	14	2.39	.39	4.42	<.001	2.14	Large
Relevant	40	3.40	.54				
Activities							
Not relevant	14	2.89	.60	4.38	<.001	1.26	Large
Relevant	40	3.54	.42				
Barriers							
Not Relevant	14	2.51	.31	2.63	.011	.85	Large
Relevant	40	2.21	.39				

Note. Effect size was determined using Cohen's (1988) *d*: .20 = Small, .50 = Medium, .80 = Large

Conclusions, Implications, and Recommendations

This study's conclusions are limited to secondary agricultural educators in Louisiana. More than half of the secondary agricultural educators are male and range from 22 to 63 years of age with an average age of 42. Secondary agricultural educators average 16 years of teaching experience, and almost all of the secondary agricultural educators are Caucasian who speak only English. Further, a majority of the secondary agricultural educators have not participated in an IE during their lifetimes, and less than half of secondary agricultural educators have friends who live outside of the United States.

More than three-fourths of the secondary agricultural educators perceive that participating in an IE is beneficial to their teaching career, and nearly three-fourths perceive that participating in an IE is relevant to their teaching career. Consistent with previous research (Harder et al., 2011; Lamm & Harder, 2010) and Ajzen's Theory of Planned Behavior, this finding demonstrates that most secondary agricultural educators have already formed positive attitudes toward participation in an IE. Additionally, secondary agricultural educators perceive Australia or New Zealand as very appealing for participation in an IE and all other locations as somewhat appealing. Although a different yet similar population, this finding supports previous research conducted by Lamm and Harder (2010) who found that Florida Extension agents preferred Australia and New Zealand to all other locations for an IE. Therefore, international experiences geared toward secondary agricultural educators should include Australia or New Zealand as destination locations.

Consistent with findings from Harder et al. (2011) regarding Trinidad Extension officers' preferences for activities in which to participate during an IE, secondary agricultural educators

perceive acquiring hands-on experience and working one-on-one with a host country educator as the most important activities. Secondary agricultural educators perceive all other selected activities in which to participate during an IE as somewhat important with attending non-credit classes at foreign universities as the least important. International experiences for secondary agricultural educators should therefore be designed to include hands on experiences, as well as opportunities to work one-on-one with a host country educator. According to Ajzen (2006), an individual is more likely to perform a behavior if he/she perceives the favorable outcomes to outweigh the unfavorable outcomes. Because the majority of secondary agricultural educators perceive participation in an IE to be beneficial and relevant to their teaching career, view most locations for an IE as at least somewhat appealing, and perceive almost every activity to be somewhat important, perhaps they will be more likely to participate in an IE in the future. Therefore, efforts should be made to provide secondary agricultural educators with opportunities to participate in an IE.

Secondary agricultural educators perceive all selected barriers as minor reasons for not participating in an IE. However, the barriers secondary agricultural educators perceive to impede most on their ability to participate in an IE are (a) financial cost, (b) time commitment, and (c) work obligations. This finding supports previous research findings that indicate financial cost, time, and work obligations as top barriers toward participation in IE (Andreasen, 2003; Dooley & Rouse, 2009). When viewing barriers through the lens of Ajzen's (2006) Theory of planned behavior, secondary agricultural educators are less likely to participate in an IE because they perceive these barriers to hinder their ability to participate. As such, administrators at the state and local levels along with teacher educators should consider taking a role in assisting secondary agricultural educators find financial support to participate in an IE. In addition, secondary agricultural educators in Louisiana are on 12-month contracts. Therefore, school administrators should consider allocating time during the summer months to specifically encourage participation in an IE. In addition, professional development workshops conducted by secondary agricultural educators who have participated in an IE in the past should be implemented. These workshops should focus on the importance of global competence, eliminating perceived barriers, and seeking IE opportunities.

Secondary agricultural educators who perceive participation in an IE to be beneficial and relevant to their teaching career perceive locations to be more appealing and activities to be more important than secondary agricultural educators who do not perceive participation in an IE to be beneficial and relevant to their teaching career. However, there were no statistically significant differences regarding barriers between secondary agricultural educators who perceive participation in an IE to be beneficial to their career and those who do. Further, secondary agricultural educators who perceive participation in an IE to be relevant to their career perceive fewer barriers to participation in an IE than those secondary agricultural educators who do not perceive participation in an IE to be relevant. This finding suggests that individuals who exhibit a positive attitude toward a behavior are more likely to perform that behavior (Ajzen, 2006).

The findings from this study provide small insight to understanding secondary agricultural educators' perceptions of participation an IE. Therefore, a future study should be conducted with a larger sample size. In addition, research should be conducted with secondary agricultural educators in other states to gain a better understanding of secondary agricultural educators' perceptions of an IE toward their career, and the results of those studies should be compared to this study. Because nearly one-fourth of the secondary agricultural educators perceive that participation in an IE is not beneficial to their teaching careers, and slightly more than one-fourth perceive that participation in an IE is not relevant to their teaching career, a qualitative, semi-structured interview should be conducted to better examine why these secondary agricultural educators do not perceive participation in an IE to be beneficial or relevant to their careers. The results of this qualitative study would provide researchers with a richer description of the exact reasons why these individuals do not perceive participation in an IE to be beneficial

or relevant to their teaching careers. Finally, this study shows that a small percentage of secondary agricultural educators have had previously participated in an IE. A qualitative study examining these individuals' prior experiences would provide valuable information. Specifically, this study could provide researchers with information regarding their perceptions of benefit and relevance of participation toward their teaching career and perceived barriers prior to their IE and when they returned from their IE.

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