



STUDY ABROAD TAGLINE REBRAND

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SITUATION ANALYSIS

In 2017, the Iowa State University Study Abroad Center (SAC) rebranded its organization. The rebrand included updating all SAC collateral material, logos, office location and websites. One thing the rebrand did not include was a new tagline, keeping with the old tagline, “Cyclones Abroad.” This semester, our PR 424 group worked with the SAC to develop a new tagline that could accompany its new brand. The tagline would be used on multiple platforms, including the study abroad website, SAC social media channels and all collateral materials.

During our initial meeting with the marketing and program coordinator of the Study Abroad Center, we learned that there was not an underlying reason as to why the old tagline needed to be changed. The coordinator simply wanted a new tagline, after having “Cyclones Abroad” for awhile. However, our group looked at this situation as an opportunity to make the SAC’s visual and verbal communication strong and consistent, as well as increase the SAC’s target audience awareness of its organization and programs.

Following our group’s meeting, but prior to conducting any research, we did a surface examination of the target audience’s awareness of the SAC and its programs. By doing that, we were able to gain a better understanding of whether the “Cyclones Abroad” tagline was the issue, or if the level of awareness was the issue. By auditing the website and social media channels of the Center, our group believed the issue was lack of awareness.

ORGANIZATION ANALYSIS

In 2018, over 1,800 students went abroad through the Study Abroad Center (SAC). As a way to continue increasing this number and promote SAC programs in a fun and creative way, the SAC set out to complete its 2017 rebrand at the beginning of Fall 2019 by updating its tagline, “Cyclones Abroad.” Along with that, the organization looked to further understand the extent that students are aware of its tagline, program and ways to study abroad.

When we observed the Study Abroad Center, our group noticed a number of communication issues within the organization that may hinder its overall goal.

1. The SAC has two websites that are similar but differ in certain areas. One website is titled “Study Abroad Center” and the other is titled “ISU Abroad.” One of the sites is for students to apply for study abroad programs through Iowa State University, and the other is for people to gain knowledge of the programs. Due to the nature of two separate websites that could easily be one, we believe that confusion has been created among students who are looking into studying abroad.
2. There are multiple Iowa State study abroad social media accounts. The SAC has one main Instagram account with approximately 2,000 followers. The problem that arises with this is that when a student goes to search for the organization, about six other ISU study abroad Instagram pages are available to choose from. Some of these are college-specific ones, such as “LAS Study Abroad.” We believe that this can cause confusion among our target audience, as well.
3. Although the Study Abroad Center wants to rebrand its current tagline, “Cyclones Abroad,” until it is changed, the tagline should continue to be visible on its website and social media channels. We found that it is not. In addition, there are offshoot slogans and catchphrases on the SAC website that may have come with the recent rebrand. One example is the concept of “The

Backpack,” which is found on the website more often than “Cyclones Abroad.” As objective viewers of the website, our group found that “The Backpack” is not described very well to the public, making it seem random.

4. Lastly, hashtags are becoming obsolete. In the past, the “Cyclones Abroad” tagline was used as a hashtag on social media. Based on our group’s knowledge and contemporary trends, hashtags are not used that much anymore. If the SAC wants to use the tagline on social media, it will have to be used in more modern ways.

AUDIENCE ANALYSIS

The target audience for Iowa State University’s Study Abroad Center (SAC) is undergraduate students, ages 18-23, who are interested in going abroad for personal and educational reasons. The audience consists of all genders; Iowa residents and out-of-state and international students; and students in the colleges of Liberal Arts and Sciences, Human Sciences, Agriculture and Life Sciences, Business, Design and Engineering.

This audience is currently in the awareness stage of development when it comes to the SAC. They are aware that Iowa State has study abroad programs and that there is a study abroad tagline; however, they do not know what it is and do not try to find it. Members of this audience learn about studying abroad in a variety of ways:

- from class presentations
- from friends who are also interested in studying abroad
- online research, and
- the study abroad fair.

Half of the target audience knows exactly where they want to study abroad without input from outside sources, such as college advisers, friends, parents, professors and the study abroad office. The other half of the target audience talks to the aforementioned groups to make a decision on whether they will study abroad and, if so, the location.

Members of the target audience prefer to find details about studying abroad online instead of going into the study abroad office to talk with someone; however, they have a difficult time finding financial aid for studying abroad. They also do not use the Study Abroad Center’s tagline, “CyclonesAbroad,” as a hashtag. This is because they are unaware of the SAC’s social media presence and hashtag. The main exception to this level of awareness is if a student is a blogger for the SAC or if a professor requires they use it for class assignments.

There are two main factors this target audience considers when deciding to study abroad or not: cost and relevance. They want to know the cost of the program and whether financial aid is available, as well as whether the program will benefit them in the long run, outside of education. For example, they do not want to go abroad if it would stop them from graduating on time or if a course would not be recognized on their degree audit. The audience also believes studying abroad will provide a great opportunity to learn about different cultures, meet new people and enhance their resume.

PRIMARY RESEARCH

SURVEY

To get an initial overview of the Study Abroad Center's target audience, we created a six-question survey and sent it to all undergraduate students at Iowa State University. There were 828 responses. We started the survey with the question of "What's the population of your hometown?" With this question, we wanted to gauge the relevance of study abroad programs to people from small towns, mid-sized areas and large cities. Of the 828 responses:

- 223 students said they come from a hometown with a population between 10,001-50,000;
- 216 students come from a hometown population between 1,001-10,000;
- 161 come from a hometown population between 50,0001-100,000
- 98 come from a hometown population between 101,000-500,000
- 95 come from a hometown population of less than 1,000
- 19 come from a hometown population between 501,000-1 million, and
- 26 come from a hometown population of more than a million.

We also used this survey to find out when students first learned about studying abroad, if they studied abroad and, if so, when. We found out that:

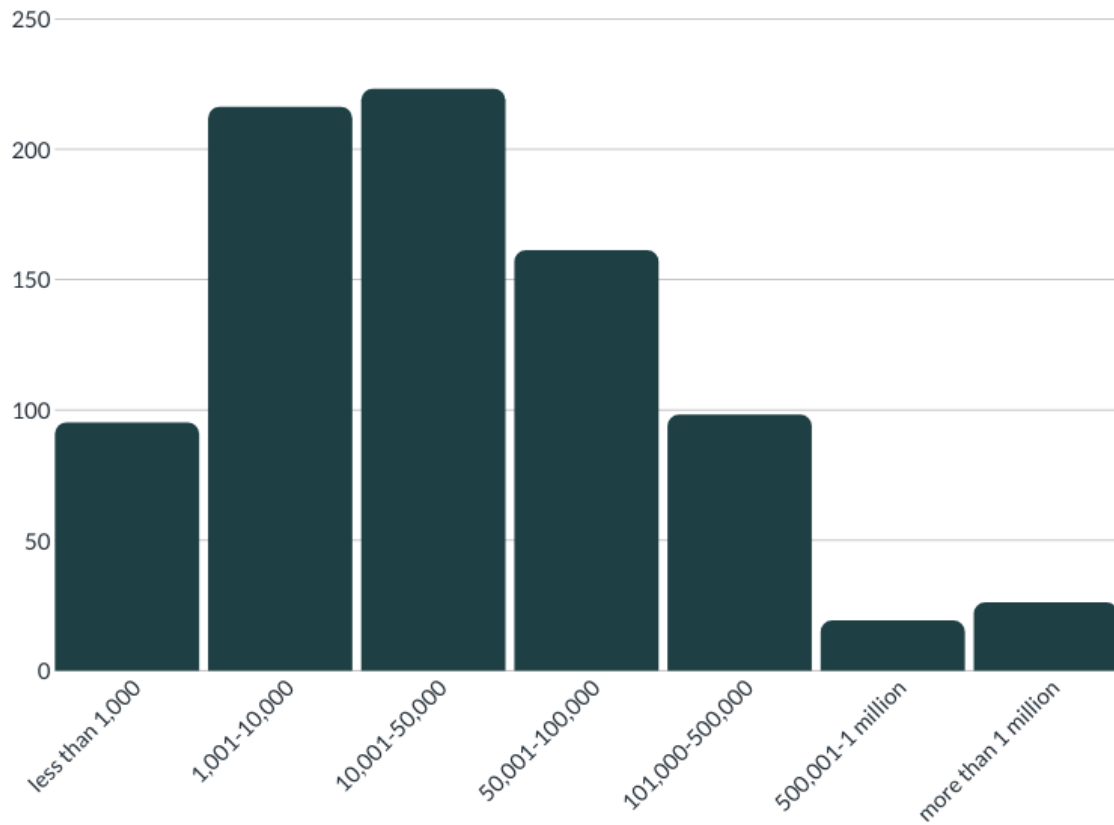
- 725 students first learned about studying abroad as a freshman,
- 46, as a sophomore,
- 41, as a junior,
- 20, as a senior, and
- five, as a super senior (fifth year and higher).

Despite student awareness of study abroad programs at such an early time during their education at Iowa State, the majority of respondents have never studied abroad (583). Of the 254 who have studied abroad, 98 studied abroad as a junior, 97 as a sophomore, 40 as freshman, 18 in their senior year and one as a super senior (fifth year or higher).

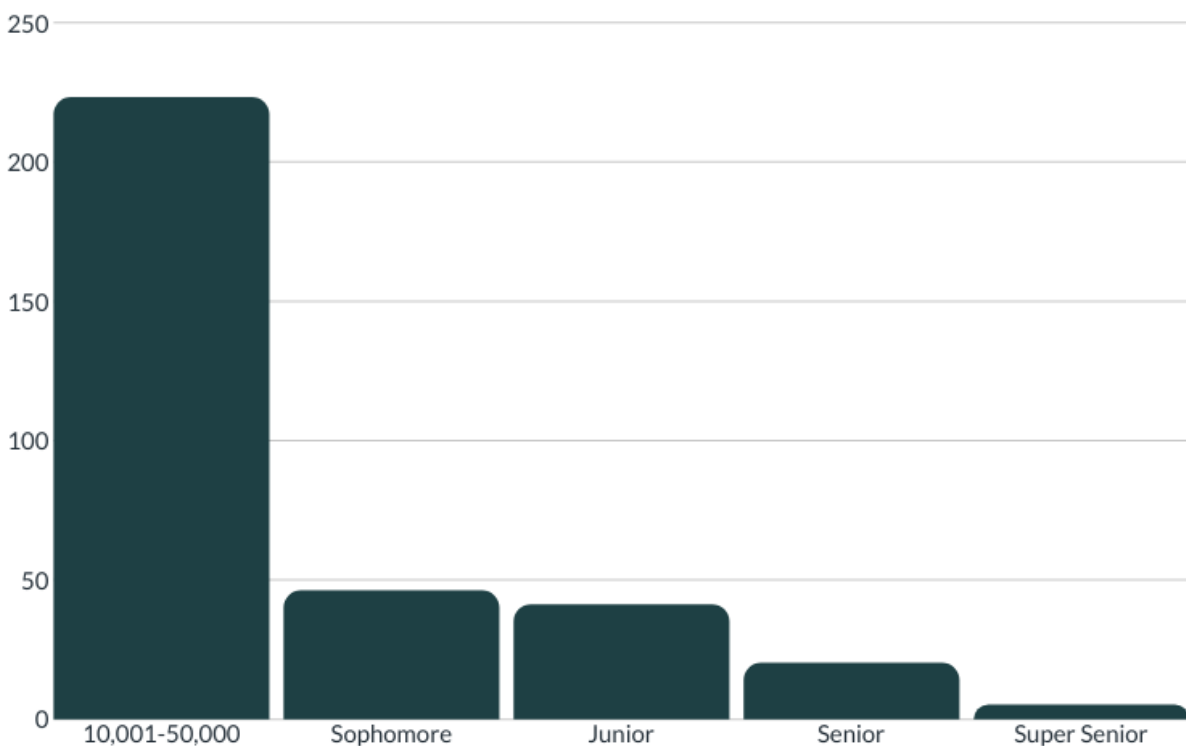
The last part of our survey was used to learn about student awareness of the old SAC tagline, "Cyclones Abroad." We asked respondents whether they knew Iowa State had a general study abroad tagline that they could use as a hashtag on social media. The majority of respondents (558) said they did not know, and 276 said they did. If the respondents said they were aware of the tagline, they were forwarded to the last question: have they used or seen the tagline as a hashtag before? 182 said yes and 98 said no.

From this survey, we learned that the SAC does a good job of providing general information to students first entering Iowa State as a freshman. Of the people who learn about studying abroad and decide to pursue it, they will typically do it in either their sophomore or junior year. However, the SAC can improve on promoting its tagline to these groups because once people are aware, most will use the tagline as a hashtag.

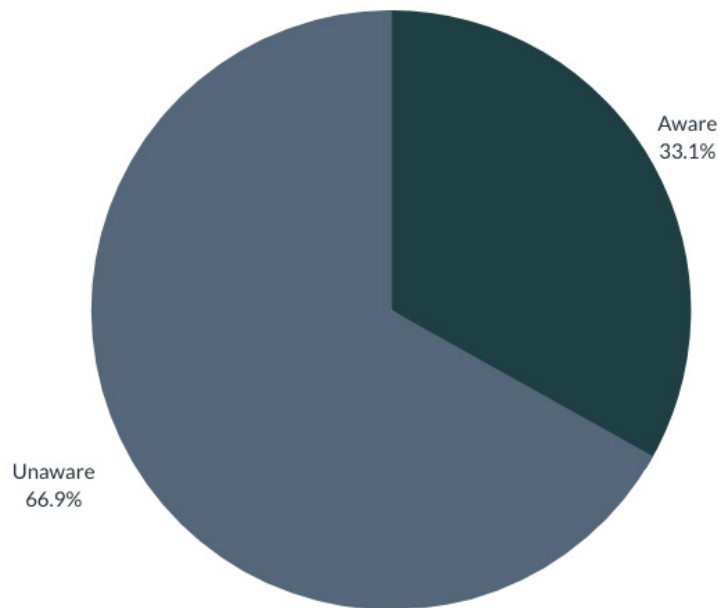
HOMETOWN POPULATIONS OF IOWA STATE UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS



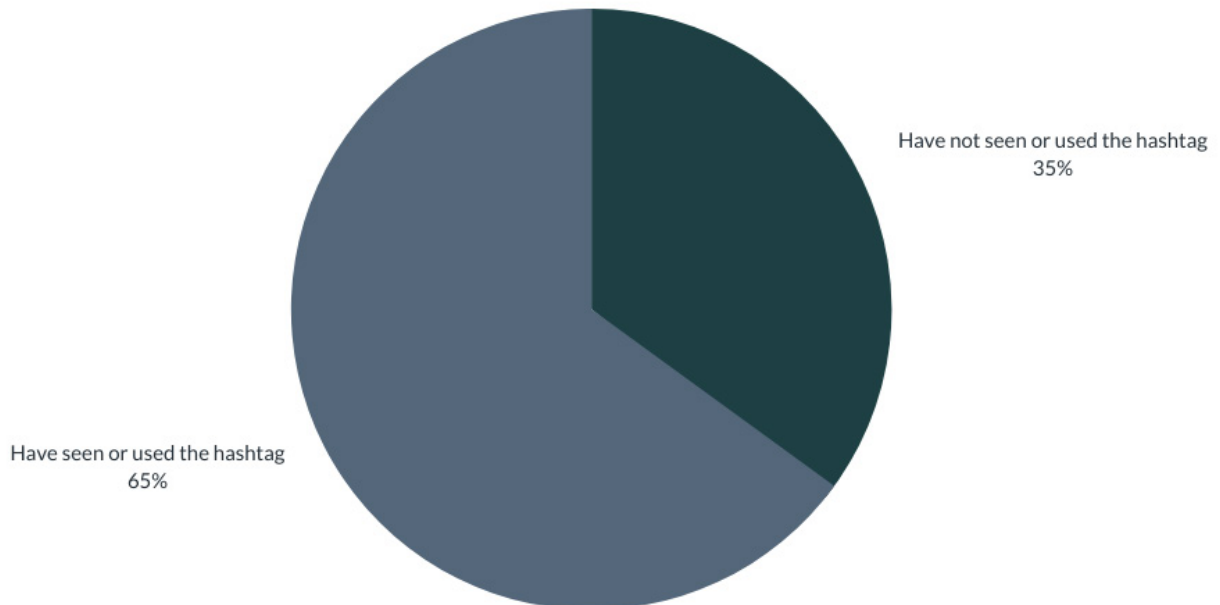
WHEN STUDENTS LEARNED ABOUT STUDYING ABROAD



AWARENESS OF STUDENTS OF STUDY ABROAD TAGLINE



% OF STUDENTS WHO HAVE SEEN OR USED "CYCLONES ABROAD" AS A HASHTAG



*BASED ON INITIAL AWARENESS OF SAC TAGLINE

FOCUS GROUP

Following the survey our group sent out, we conducted an 8-person focus group consisting of undergraduate students of different majors and years of studies. Half of the group also studied abroad at least once before in college. We chose to conduct a focus group as our primary method of research due to the specific insight we would be able to gather.

During the focus group, we asked questions and presented statements to gauge the concerns and knowledge about studying abroad the participants had. A few overarching themes were consistently presented. One of the largest themes was money. Majority of the group listed cost as the number one area they consider when researching programs. They like to prioritize programs that provide the most financial help. A concern was also presented when talking about money: some majors do not offer very many study abroad scholarships, and if they do, they aren't advertised.

- Other topics considered when looking into studying abroad included:
- what would be gained from the experience in addition to academics,
- if the study abroad program is hosted in a location they already wanted to visit, and
- if the program won't set them back academically (as in, staying additional years).

One interesting point made was that for computer science majors, there really is not a pull to study somewhere else because the major is already so online-based. This is in addition to the lack of support and safety some countries would have for them. According to a participant who is currently studying computer science, studying in Russia or China would not be an option for them. Another point made was that for some students, there was a pull to travel, but the practicality of it was minimal. Some students would prefer to spend money enjoying the time away from school and not "be shackled down by classes."

We also received interesting insight about the Study Abroad Center (SAC) tagline. All of the focus group participants expressed they were aware Iowa State had a study abroad tagline, but the specific phrase didn't come to mind right away because it was irrelevant to them. They said if content as not relevant to them and their interests, they skipped past it, both on social media and in-person. It was also expressed that hashtags are becoming dated, and it's much more common to tag accounts rather than use a hashtag. Nonetheless, the students had some ideas for graphics that could complement any SAC tagline. One of the ideas was to create a gif or filter of Cy wearing a shirt with (or being surrounded by) a variety of country flags and allowing all Iowa State students studying abroad to use it on their Snapchat or Instagram stories.

KEY INSIGHTS



Program cost and financial aid are key decision makers.



Studying certain majors in specific countries can be dangerous!



Tag accounts instead of hashtag!



Ability to graduate on time after studying abroad is important.

SECONDARY RESEARCH

To learn more about the target audience of the Study Abroad Center (SAC), our group looked at documents on the SAC website as well as statistics provided by the SAC public relations intern.

According to the Study Abroad Center's Fiscal Year 2018 report, 1,833 students studied abroad for academic credit. In fiscal year 2019, 1,773 students studied abroad for credit. In both fiscal years, the majority of students who studied abroad came from the College of Agriculture: 416 in 2017-2018 and 397 in 2018-2019. The most popular locations to study abroad in both years were Italy, Ireland, Australia, the United Kingdom and Spain.

Each year, the majority of the students who studied abroad were seniors (864 in 2018 and 862 in 2019), then juniors (586 in 2018 and 570 in 2019) and sophomores (245 in 2018 and 210 in 2019). Majority of study abroad students were females and Iowa residents. In both fiscal years, most students studied abroad during the summer (651 in 2017-2018 and 584 in 2018-2019) with the next time frame being spring semester, then spring short travel, fall semester and fall short travel.

G.O.S.T.

GOAL

The goal of our communication plan was to promote studying abroad at Iowa State University through the Study Abroad Center's tagline.

OBJECTIVES

To achieve the overarching goal our group set, we developed two objectives: one to affect awareness and the other to affect attitude.

1. The first objective was to affect the awareness of undergraduate students at Iowa State University by the end of the Fall 2019 semester; specifically, to increase the awareness of the proposed Study Abroad Center taglines among all final focus group participants.
2. The second objective was to affect the attitude of undergraduate students at Iowa State University; specifically, to increase the number of focus group participants who had a positive opinion about the proposed taglines from zero to at least four by the end of the final focus group.

STRATEGIES

In order to transition our audience from an aware public to an active public and achieve our objectives, we used a proactive strategy via a dialogue model of communication. We wanted to gather feedback from our target audience in regards to the old and proposed new taglines. The dialogue model worked best for this communication model because it allowed us to have a conversation about specific reasons the audience was for or against a certain tagline.

TACTICS

We used two tactics for our communication plan. The first tactic was to mock-up promotional materials and social media posts with the current tagline and three new taglines our group developed: Enroll in Adventure, Adventure Can't Wait and Adventure Is Everywhere. The second tactic was to conduct a focus group and get feedback from participants on which tagline they preferred, which is where the dialogue model came into play.

We chose to use mock-ups of a Facebook post, Instagram post and website header as a tactic because a visual presents a clearer picture. Our intention was for the focus group participants to have a better understanding of how the tagline could be used and share an informed opinion. We also chose to use a focus group as a tactic because it was more interpersonal and allowed us to gather specific feedback, which was necessary to learn which tagline was preferred and why.



EVALUATION

This communication plan was different than most. Because we were helping the Study Abroad Center (SAC) complete its rebrand from 2017, we could not officially publish or promote any content on their behalf. So, our communication plan was to conduct a final focus group to determine which tagline we would propose to the SAC, and our evaluation would be whether a tagline is accepted by the organization.

However, we were able to evaluate the success of our G.O.S.T. To evaluate the different elements of it, we used our final focus group to see how the participants responded to the different taglines and mock-ups we presented to them. We created a mock-up of a Facebook post, Instagram post and website header, and showed the participants each tagline mock-up one-by-one (*see example mock-ups on page 10.*) The proposed taglines included: Enroll in Adventure, Adventure Can't Wait and Adventure is Everywhere.

We then encouraged the participants to take part in an open discussion and share their thoughts and opinions with one another. This conversation gave a lot of insight into the types of elements students desired in the SAC's communication efforts. Some of the insights included:

- A strong connection to Iowa State via the word "Cyclones" or "IAState" instead of "ISU" due to the latter being used for multiple universities;
- Keeping the tagline short;
- Making the tagline specific for being abroad, unlike the tagline "Choose Your Adventure at Iowa State";
- Not focusing on adventure because "adventure" could differ per person

In addition to wanting to gain these insights, we also used the focus group to see what elements of increasing awareness were most applicable for the Center to use. We were able to use this feedback to better identify what the Study Abroad Center needs to know for their rebranding.

Overall, our group did not achieve both of our objectives. We achieved the first objective, which was to increase the awareness of focus group participants of the proposed SAC taglines. By sharing with them the mock-ups with the potential taglines and gathering their feedback, all participants became aware of them. Our group did not achieve our second objective, which was to increase the number of focus group participants who had a positive opinion about the proposed taglines. All of the focus group preferred the existing tagline, "Cyclones Abroad," due to the reasons listed earlier in this section.

Despite our half-and-half success in achieving our objectives, we used the best strategies and tactics. The dialogue model of communication allowed us to have a candid conversation where we understood the beliefs and reasonings of the target audience in an effort to help us develop new taglines. Hosting a focus group as a tactic also allowed us to finalize what taglines to present to the SAC to achieve our goal of promoting the SAC to the target audience.

After completing our research plan, there are a few things that could be changed to make it better. This includes hosting more focus groups and not conducting an online survey. While the survey was useful in giving us a broad overview, the focus groups allowed us to get more specific information that was far more useful in crafting a tagline. Hosting more than two would have been beneficial in order for us to get a more varied, accurate perspective, seeing how our first focus group disliked "Cyclones Abroad" and our final focus group liked it the most. In addition to hosting more focus groups, having more participants in the focus group could have helped with gaining a wider perspective.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Although the issue at hand was to help the Study Abroad Center complete their rebranding by developing a tagline, we believe the ultimate way to extend the use of this brand would be to increase and maintain awareness of the Center and its messages among its target audience: undergraduate students. To do this, our group recommends the Study Abroad Center:

- Host presentations in all colleges in order to familiarize students whose individual college does not promote study abroad a lot
- Reduce their number of websites to one
- Table at on-campus events outside of the Study Abroad Fair
- Stay up-to-date and use social media in innovative ways, such as creating a filter for Instagram or Snapchat
- Develop a campaign to maintain the awareness of the Center, for students both on-campus and abroad
- Encourage students to tag the Study Abroad Center's Instagram account instead of using a hashtag
- Keep the current tagline, "Cyclones Abroad"