

Guidelines for Developing and Conducting an International Marketing European Study Tour: Lessons Learned from Two Decades of Fostering Cultural Immersion

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This paper offers a comprehensive and time-tested set of guidelines for developing and conducting a successful International Marketing European Study Tour (IMEST) that not only provides real value to the student, but does so in a cost-effective way for the sponsoring institution. It focuses on lessons learned by the primary author who has organized and led more than two decades of IMESTs. The secondary author has assisted with three recent IMESTs and has been instrumental in helping to refine the process that has been strengthened over many iterations. The purpose of the IMESTs has always been to foster learning of the International Marketing course objectives in a culturally immersive context. In order to execute a successful IMEST, the following entities all have specific roles and responsibilities: leader, coordinator, faculty, chaperones, administrators, students, travel agents, participating organizations, participating universities, and local guides and assistants. Important components discussed include: the length of the IMEST, the cities chosen, duration in each city, flow and cohesion between the cities (known as *progressive cultural-immersion experiential learning*), modes of transportation, hotel selection and amenities, rooming issues, student code of conduct, safety concerns, dissemination of the schedule and other supporting documents, promotion of the IMEST, and recruitment of students and participating organizations. It is essential to address the complex interaction of these entities and components in order to produce an IMEST that maximizes the educational, cultural, and social benefits for the students. As the result of many iterative refinements, the authors have discovered that optimal value is achieved through the use of a sixteen-day overseas format that spends time in either two or three cities.