

THE INTERNATIONAL MARKETING FIELD TRIP:
EFFECT ON ATTITUDES TOWARD MULTINATIONAL CORPORATIONS

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International marketing courses have been found to deal with cultural, legal, financial and other variables that are not well known to many of our students. The best way to learn about international marketing would be to include personal observation of international marketing operations in various countries. Since this is impractical, we have tried to choose a next-best alternative - that of seeing part of international marketing activities in operation.

As an experiment, a group of students was given a pretest, an exposure to international marketing people and activities, and a posttest. The immediate subject considered was attitudes toward multinational corporations. The experience was a visit to Johns-Manville's international marketing offices at the company's world headquarters. The purpose of the experiment was to determine what effect this first-hand experience would have upon student attitudes regarding multinational corporations and international marketing. A control group was composed of students who had taken the international marketing course, but did not make the visit.

As a generalization, there was a shift of approximately six percent toward a more favorable attitude toward multinational corporations by students who made the visit. More specifically, about one-fourth of the participating students developed a more favorable attitude regarding the social responsibility of multinational corporations. The responses regarding other questions were less clearly defined. There was no meaningful change in the responses of the control group that did not make the visit.

Although the sample size was small and the changes were not dramatic, there was a definite shift toward more favorable attitudes concerning the various aspects of multinational corporations after the field experience. The study suggests that while the field trip is considered to be fun and interesting, and serves as a pleasant change from classroom instruction for both students and instructors, it did affect the general attitudes of participants in this particular instance. This may be enlightening not only to instructors of international marketing, but to the executives of multinational corporations who are concerned about the attitudes of others toward their firms. This kind of information may be used as an approach to generate a stronger interest within companies to provide for more educational programming of this nature.