Self-initiated Expatriation:

a Focus on Italian and Portuguese students

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Summary

Self-initiated expatriation: a focus on Italian and Portuguese students

Abstract

The purpose of this work project is to analyze the phenomenon of self-initiated expatriation (SIE) through its link to the Protean Career and Career Capital theories, focusing in particular on Italian and Portuguese students attending a Master in the business area. The main research questions are to understand the reasons driving the intention to expatriate, after the conclusion of the academic path, using three main categories (*Adventure Motivation*, *Work Characteristic Motivation* and *Instrumental Motivation*) and the intention to repatriate. A sample of Italian and Portuguese students was obtained. Italians show a higher intention to expatriate relative to Portuguese; nevertheless, no other significant differences were found among the two populations, because of the similar cultural background and economic situation. Additionally, several heterogeneities were observed considering other clusters defined by Gender, Teaching Language of the Master and Past International Experiences, across the two nationalities. Furthermore, possible future researches and practical implications were discussed.

1. Introduction

The aim of this work project is to investigate the phenomenon of voluntary expatriation among skilled Italian and Portuguese graduates, the main motivations driving their choice and the principal geographical regions targeted. In particular, the intentions of last year's Master students, attending mainly, Luiss Guido Carli (Rome) and Nova SBE's (Lisbon) programs in Management, Finance and Economics will be analyzed.

First, the relevant literature relative to self-initiated expatriates (SIE), to the relations between career capital and international experiences and a general overview on the phenomenon of brain drain will be presented.

Then, the methodology used in the work project will be described: the structure and the data collection method of a questionnaire, created according to the literature and the information gained through individual interviews.

Third, the more relevant results will be examined. The data collected were analyzed, through a factor analysis and a series of regression models, in order to scrutinize, firstly, the general intentions and motives reported the sample and then the significant differences, namely by gender, nationality and academic background.

Finally, the limitations of the project and its main conclusions will be discussed.

2. Literature review

2.1 Self-initiated Expatriation: Definition of the Phenomenon

The last decades are characterized by an increasing degree of integration of markets across regions, related not only to the trade of physical goods and services, but also to the labor market. Due to globalization, the labor market has greatly changed, aiming to become an international labor

market, mostly in the highly skilled resources segment, where the competition is already on a global scale. Globalization of markets implies for companies the globalization and integration of both their strategies and functions.

Human Resources Management (HRM) is considered the least globally developed functional area within the firms (Suutari, 2003), even though the implementation of a successful global strategy depends, deeply, on getting the right people with the right skills in the right place at the right time (Brett and Stroh, 1995). Therefore, skilled individuals are required to move across national borders to foster the development of globally competent managers, characterized by the ability to interact effectively with people who are culturally different, to deal with various competitive and political environments, and to see rapid change and uncertainty as an opportunity (Evans *et al*., 2002). An international exposure can represent an effective mean to develop these competences (Suutari and Brewster, 2000) and so both companies and individuals value and pursue work related experiences beyond national borders.

Until recently, companies had focused their attention and resources, mainly, on managing company assigned expatriates (AEs); however, global mobility is a more complex and broad phenomenon. Assigned expatriates can be defined as people transferred by their employer to work in a foreign subsidiary for a set period of time, typically one to five years (Tharenou, 2013). AEs usually require an expensive remuneration package and often, being unwilling to expatriate, they can experience several problems related to cross-cultural adjustments (Tharenou, 2013).

Because of these possible downsides, both researchers and companies became more aware and interested in a different and relatively new phenomenon: self-initiated expatriation (SIE). Among the various mobile population in the international context (OECD, 2011), self-initiated expatriation experiences were not largely analyzed in the literature, because of the complexity of the concept and the diversity of its use, from both a theoretical and an empirical point of view (Doherty *et al.,* 2013).

The first time the concept appears in the literature is in 1997, when Inkson *et al*. analyzed the practice, common among young New Zealanders, of autonomously undertaking an international experience. Abroad, the expatriates combined job experiences, often temporary and not related with their career, with leisure time, traveling and visiting new places. Inkson defined the phenomenon as "overseas experience" (OE), implying that the main locations targeted were mostly in Europe, North America and East Asia, i.e. overseas in the perspective of New Zealand. The main motivations driving the decision of having an OEs, in a structured comparison with the well studied group of AEs, are mainly related to cultural experience and geographical exploration (Inkson *et al.,* 1997).

Suutari and Brewster (2000) narrowed the analysis to highly skilled and trained individuals, travelling abroad to find their own work and aiming to start an international career, focusing in particular on a group of Finnish engineers working outside their home country. Due to geographical implications of the European context (Doherty, Richardson and Thorn, 2013) the term "overseas experience" was not appropriate, therefore the phenomenon was named differently, as "self-initiated foreign work experience" (SFE). The study highlighted the high degree of heterogeneity among the sample considered and tried, consequently, to define six subgroups. The classification had been based on the deviations from the average SFEs, according to four main categories of variables: source of initiative, goals of the foreign job, source of funding and career type (Suutari and Brewster, 2000).

This definition of SFE did not produce further literature; instead other denominations were used to refer to the same phenomenon, tailoring them to the specific implications or findings of the particular study, such as "self-designed apprenticeship" (Arthur *et al.,* 1999), "self-selecting expatriation" (Richardson and McKenna, 2002) and "self-directed expatriation" (Richardson and Mallon, 2005). In 2008, Doherty and Dickmann used the term "self-initiated expatriation" (SIE),

which is widely accepted, nowadays, by the academics because of its broad meaning and implications. First, "self-initiated" implies the independent decision of relocating across international borders, remarking the relevance of the intention and freedom of the individual. Second, "expatriation" connotes the temporal dimension of the experience, narrowing the phenomenon to those who intend to leave the home country on a temporary basis (Doherty, Richardson and Thorn, 2013). Moreover, the intention to repatriate its used to mark a distinction with the phenomenon of immigration, i.e. a voluntary experience of international mobility undertaken on a permanent basis (Al Ariss and Crowley-Henry, 2013).

2.2 Comparison of AEs and SIEs

Could SIEs be an alternative to AEs? This question does not include local employees, because of a talent shortage of them, especially in developing/emerging markets and also because their goals may not converge with those of the MNC (Tharenou, 2013). The key implications of the increasing number of SIEs, who are joining the global labor market, is that MNCs can make use of these employees to fill key positions in subsidiary operations at a lower cost than company assigned expatriates (Collings *et al*., 2007). SIEs are already in the host country and do not require expatriate compensation packages, and so they are less expensive (Suutari and Brewster, 2000) and have a greater confidence in their ability to work and live abroad (Doherty et al. 2011) and to manage cross culture adjustment.

2. 3 Career Capital Theory and International Experiences

The empirical studies on the topic are frequently linked to the contemporary career theories (Doherty, Richardson and Thorn, 2013), being the career one of the main driver and evaluation criteria of SIE (Thorn, 2009). The link of SIE to career theory should have implications not only at a micro-level (individual dimension), but also at a meso-level (organization dimension), influencing Human Resources practices among companies.

Individuals are becoming more self-concerned and self-conscious about their career opportunities and evolution, as it can be detected among SIEs, who actively pursue their personal and professional goals (Cao *et al.,* 2013) in a foreign country. Consequently, SIEs could be easily linked to the concept of Protean Career, defined as flexible, driven by individual rather than organization and involving a whole-life perspective (Cao *et al.,* 2013). A protean career orientation (PCO) offers to individuals, with a high level of adaptability and identity (peculiarities of expatriates), more autonomy and freedom (Hall, 2002). Moreover, it values a broader idea of success, including both work and non-work related experiences, with a positive implication on cross-cultural adjustment issues. The idea of protean career, stressing the role of individual awareness and the relevance of learning experiences, shows several synergies with the so called Career Capital theory.

The Career Capital theory, or Intelligent Career framework (DeFillippi and Arthur, 1994), founded on a resourced-based perspective, states that employees uptake employment opportunities to develop relevant investments and resources. The career capital can be seen as the capital that is valued within the career field (Bourdieu, 1986), based on knowledge, a key characteristic of the contemporary working environment (Lamb and Sutherland, 2010). In particular, career capital consists of three distinct, complementary and interdependent types of generic capital (Tharenou, 2013): knowing-why, knowing-how and knowing-whom.

Knowing-why career capital is related to motivations and personal meaning, providing a sense of purpose and identification with the career. It is linked to the energy and the confidence needed by individuals to pursue a desired career path, in accordance with the concept of protean career, and it is fundamental for employees' commitment (Suutari and Makela, 2003). An international experience, usually, influences greatly the aspirations of the individuals, increasing their sense of potential, their identification with the world of work and their expectations on future

career implications (Jokinen *et. al.,* 2008). Therefore, global mobility clearly has a positive impact on knowing-why career capital (Suutari and Makela, 2003).

Knowing-how career capital provides an individual with the work-related skills, knowledge and understanding needed for a good performance (DeFillippi and Arthur,1994). It can be interpreted as a more flexible and broad extension of the concept of human capital. Knowing-how is related to the more technical and conceptual aspects, combining explicit knowledge, implicit experience and soft skills. International experiences are important learning opportunities, developing not only general managerial competences, as well as social and planning skills, but also more specific international competences, as cross cultural skills (Lamb and Sutherland, 2010). Thus, one may expect to find a positive relation between knowing-how capital and international assignments, interpreted, moreover, as a key instrument for further managerial position, in particular for SIEs (Jokinen *et. al.,* 2008).

Finally, knowing-whom career capital refers to career relevant formal and informal networks and contacts (DeFillippi and Arthur, 1994), developed both inside (intra-firm) and outside (inter-firm) the organization. It combines professional and social relations in a unique network (Jokinen *et. al.,* 2008), broadening the concept of social capital. Thanks to global mobility, individuals can encounter a wider number of people in a broad range of geographical, cultural, professional and social environments. International exposure, therefore, allows to develop more solid and trust-based relations, due to the face-to-face interactions (Lamb and Sutherland, 2010), and a more efficient information seeking process, "knowing who knows what" (Jokinen *et. al.,* 2008).

Therefore, international assignments can be seen as "mind-stretching" experiences and growth opportunities, which influence one's identity and future career expectations and intentions (Jokinen and Suutari, 2008). These opportunities seem to be more evident for self-initiated expatriates, able to maximize the career capital gains from the international experience and, afterwards, to leverage them, as a competitive advantage, in the home country labor market.

2.4 Brain Drain and International Mobility

Most of the literature on self-initiated expatriation had focused on samples of well-educated young individuals, who have decided to move between developed countries (Doherty, 2013). In fact, students or new graduates are, usually, not in a position to obtain expatriate positions within an MNC, therefore they try to achieve similar development outcomes, in terms of capital career, through their own initiative (Jokinen and Suutari, 2008). In particular, young graduates, who autonomously undertake an international experience, tend to follow a protean career orientation (Cao *et al.*, 2013). Moreover, to better understand the phenomenon of mobility among graduates, two general trends should be taken into consideration: university exchange programs and the general circumstances of brain drain.

First, the European Union provides a context and several programs that encourage youth mobility across national borders, within or outside Europe, as *Erasmus* or *Leonardo* programs. The aim of the different projects is to enhance the value of transnational mobility and to build a skilled European workforce, through the internationalization of the higher education and the harmonization of training (Doherty *et al*, 2010). Although many young people could benefit from these programs, it has been seen that a majority do not take up the opportunity. This could be explained through the identification of the main driver beyond the decision to expatriate, also if only for studying purposes. The main motives are, indeed, related to a holistic personal development, self-directed experimentation, desire to look for adventure and to travel. An important role is played, however, by work related motives, as well, namely the perception of the positive impact on future career opportunities in the home country (Doherty *et al*, 2010). According to this, it is important to explore the degree of acceptance and attitude toward protean careers among young Europeans (Doherty *et al*, 2010) and the correlations with their intention of expatriate.

Second, the phenomenon of brain drain and its linkage with SIE among skilled graduates must be considered. Brain drain could be defined as the permanent or long-term international emigration of skilled people, who have been the subject of considerable educational investment by their own societies (Wickramasekara, 2002). A study of Özden and Schiff (2006), tried to assess for the first time a systematic framework of the brain drain, among several countries (OECD areas and no-OECD area), scrutinizing both the south-to-north and the north-to-north flows. The research estimated that, in 2000, high skilled migrants represented 34.6% of the OECD immigration stocks (with an increase of 4.8% from 1990) and that, among them, 90% lived in one of the thirty OECD member states. Highly skilled migrants are all the working age (25+) foreign-born individuals that completed at least the tertiary education level (13 years or above). Clearly, the international mobility of skilled workers and its social and economic consequences are crucial issues for middle and low-income countries, that generally show a low immigration selection rate (interpreted as a proxy of the proportion of skilled emigrants in the total emigration stock) and a negative percentage of net brain drain. However some high income OECD countries also present these features, as Portugal and Italy. The two European countries reported in 2000 a net brain drain (calculated as the percentage difference between highly educated immigrants and highly educated expatriates) of -1.7% and -0.6%, respectively, against a European average of -0.1% and a OECD average of +1.6% (Özden and Schiff, 2006). Although these numbers should be carefully considered and evaluated, due to the difficulty to precisely measure the phenomenon (because of the lack of uniform systems of statistics on the number and characteristics of international migration), they show a negative trend in the two countries considered (IMF, 1998).

Therefore, it is interesting to further analyze the Italian and Portuguese environment. In particular, this project will try to address two main questions, in an exploratory way:

Q1: Which graduates are more willing to undertake an international career as self-initiated expatriates?

Q2: Which are the most influential motives for undertaking an international career?

3. Methodology

3.1 Sample and data collection

The research questions were addressed using the data collected through a web-based questionnaire. The questionnaire was prepared on the basis of the literature review and of qualitative data, obtained through individual interviews with Nova's students. During the interviews, first the past experiences and future plans in terms of international exposure, related not only to the work and academic environment but also to travel and leisure time, were scrutinized, in order to test the openness and boundaryless orientation. Then, the motivations and the perceived advantages and disadvantages of a potential self-initiated expatriation experience were discussed. Finally, the geographical preferences and the intention to repatriate, in relation with the positive and negative possible implications, on both personal and professional life, were considered.

The questionnaire, as can be seen in Figure 1 in the Appendix, is composed of two main parts, specifically formulated to address the two research questions. The first part, intending to answer Q1, focuses on the academic background, on the previous international experiences and on future working intentions. It is structured with multiple choices questions, open and close ended, depending on the variable inquired. The second part, aiming to analyze the motivations driving the individual decision, is, instead, formed by ranking type questions, developed according to a 1 to 5 scale (where 1= I definitely do not agree and 5= I fully agree). Additionally, biographical data were included to be used as control variables.

The survey, written in English, was developed using the SurveyMonkey software and was delivered according to a web-based approach (official Master's pages on Facebook and direct contact through personal emails), in order to easily and most effectively capture the sample of

young people (Doherty, 2010). The sample considered consists of 156 observations, from 90 Italians, 50 Portuguese and 16 students of other nationalities; the respondent rate could not be assessed because of the lack of data, due to the collection method chosen.

3.2 Measures

As explained above, the motivations were measured according to 15 variables, with a rating scale from 1 to 5. In order to analyze the variables and reduce the data, to a more manageable size retaining as much information as possible (Field, 2009), an exploratory factor analysis was performed, (please see Tables 1 and 2 in Appendix). In particular, principal components with a Varimax Rotation method were used, with fixed number of factors, to reduce the 15 items into 3 factors. The first factor (Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.67$, items motivations 2, 3, 4, 8, 11, 15) was labeled as *Work Characteristic Motivations*, the second (Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.64$, including items 5, 6, 12) as *Adventure Motivation* and the third (Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.59$, including items 7, 9, 10, 13, 14) as *Instrumental Motivation*.

Moreover, to simplify and clarify the analysis of the data, the clusters of the professional preferences were reformulated, to combine different working areas considered similar. In particular the factors were reduced to seven: *Strategy* (combining *Strategic Planning* and *Consulting*), *Marketing* (combining *Sales* and *Brand Management*), *Finance* (combining *Investment Banking* and *Financial Analyst*), *Human Resources, Operations, Research* and *Entrepreneurship*. All of them will form the variable *Working Area of Interest*.

4. Findings

4.1 Research Question Q1: Intention to Expatriate

The first research question (Q1) aimed to analyze the characteristics of the students, influencing their decision to self-expatriate. Before computing the statistical analysis, the expected

signs of the most relevant regressors were evaluated, according to the literature. *Gender* was expected to be positive, implying a higher predisposition of women to self-expatriate (Myers and Pringle, 2005). *Past International Experiences*, related both to the academic and the working environment, and the *English* as teaching language were expected to be positively correlated to the wiliness to expatriate, being assumed as a proxy of the boundaryless and protean career predisposition (Doherty *et al.*, 2010 and Cao, 2013).

In order to address Q1, a linear regression analysis was performed, considering as dependent variable the *Intention to Expatriate* and as independent variables *Gender*, *Nationality* (Italian, Portuguese or Other), *Master Attended* (Management, Finance or Economics), *Teaching Language* (English or other), *Past International Experiences* (Academic or Work related) and the *Working Area of Interest* (Strategy, Marketing, Financial, Operations, HR, Research, Entrepreneurship).

As shown below in Table 3, the intention of expatriate is positively related to the *Teaching Language* (β= 0.349 and p=0.000) and the *Academic Experience Abroad* (β= 0.068 and p=0.381), supporting the intuitions from the literature. However, in contrast with the expectations, *Gender* (β= -0.042 and p=0.587) and *Working Experience Abroad* (β= -0.079 and p=0.392) are negatively correlated to the dependent variable. Nevertheless these data are not highly significant, they show an interesting tendency that should be further analyzed. The impact of the *Nationality* (*Portuguese*: β= -0.087 and p=0.347) shows a negative relation of the Portuguese relative to the Italian students. Moreover, the *Master Attended* seems to have an impact on the expatriation decision, in particular attending the Master in Economics (β= 0.190 and p=0.122) and Finance (β= 0.045 and p=0.722) has a positive impact, in comparison to the Master in Management (excluded variable). Finally, the model tested the predictive activity of *Working Area of Interest,* showing that the direction of the impact largely differs among the several subcategories. A preference in the *Human Resources* (β= 0.016 and p=0.095) and *Operations* (β= 0.079 and p=0.474) areas is positive related to the

dependent variable (as has been noticed, also, in other regression, not reported), while in *Strategy* (β= -0.223 and p=0.027), *Entrepreneurship* (β= -0.426 and p=0.039) and *Research* (β= -0.185 and p=0.317) a significant negative impact was obtained.

The model presents no multicollinearity problems for any of the independent variables considered, as can be seen from the VIF values in the Table 3.

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	Collinearity Statistics	
	B	Std. Error	Beta			Tolerance	VIF
(Constant)	,571	,122		4,674	,000		
Gender	-,042	,077	-,045	-,545	,587	,920	1,087
English Language	,349	,096	,336	3,640	,000	,733	1,365
Academic experience abroad	,068	,077	,073	,879	,381	,905	1,105
Job related experience abroad	-,079	,092	-,073	-,859	,392	,866	1,155
Strategy	-,233	,104	-,237	-2,235	,027	,555	1,803
Financial Area	-,215	,133	-,186	-1,611	,110	,470	2,128
Operation	,079	,166	,042	,474	,636	,810	1,235
HR	,016	,172	,008	,095	,924	,846	1,182
Research	-,185	,185	-,112	-1,005	,317	,504	1,982
Entrepreneur	-,462	,221	-,185	-2,088	,039	,801	1,249
Finance	,045	,125	,036	,357	,722	,624	1,603
Economics	,190	,122	,167	1,558	,122	,546	1,831
Portuguese	-,087	,093	-,090	-,943	,347	,688	1,454
Other Nationality	,031	,138	,021	,224	,823	,739	1,354

Table 3. Linear Regression. Dependent variable: Intention to Expatriate. Independent variables: Gender, Nationality, Master, Teaching Language, Working Area and International Experiences

Furthermore, a binary logistic regression has been conducted for a deeper test of the model, because of the choice of a binary dependent variable, i.e. a categorical variable that can assume only two values (in this case "yes" or "no"). The results of the model, reported in Table 4 in the Appendix, support the finding of the linear regression, hence it was decided not to report them.

4.2 Research Question Q2: Motivations and Intention to Repatriate

The second research question (Q2) was aimed to scrutinize the motivations driving the decision to self-expatriate, according to the different characteristics of the individuals and their future intentions.

In order to address Q2, three linear regression analyses were performed, considering as dependent variables the items derived from the factor analysis, respectively *Adventure Motivation, Work Characteristic Motivations* and *Instrumental Motivation. Gender*, *Master Attended* (Management, Finance or Economics), *Teaching Language* (English or other), *Nationality* (Italian, Portuguese or Other), *Past International Experiences* (Erasmus, Exchange Outside Europe, Master Abroad, Summer School, Internship, Job Experience)*, Working Area of Interest* (Strategy, Marketing, Financial, Operations, HR, Research, Entrepreneurship)*,* and *Geographic Region Targeted* (South Europe, North Europe, East Europe, North America, South America, Middle East, Australia, Africa) were used as independent variables.

Regarding the first factor, *Adventure Motivation,* as shown in Table 5 below, a positive relation can be seen with *Nationality*, in particular Portuguese (β= 0.313 and p=0.064) and Other Nationality (β= 0.503 and p=0.025), English as *Teaching Language* (β= 0.371 and p=0.031) and *Academic Experiences Abroad*, as Exchange Outside Europe (β= 0.290 and p=0.096). Among the *Master Attended* the model shows a negative impact of the path in Finance (β= -0.371 and p=0.120) and Economics (β= -0.009 and p=0.961), relative to Management. Finally, no significant differences can be noticed among *Geographic Region Targeted*.

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	Collinearity Statistics	
	B	Std. Error	Beta			Tolerance	VIF
(Constant)	3,391	,272		12,486	,000		
Gender	,147	,124	,127	1,184	,241	,688	1,453
North Europe	,033	,162	,022	,203	,840	,681	1,467
South Europe	-,140	,131	-,123	-1,073	,288	,608	1,646
East Europe	,100	,150	,070	,670	,505	,727	1,376
North America	,182	,161	,134	1,130	,263	,564	1,772
South America	,158	,140	,136	1,125	,265	,543	1,842
Middle East	,189	,164	,135	1,154	,253	,583	1,716
Far East	,155	,159	,113	,974	,334	,595	1,679
Australia	,251	,125	,219	2,009	,049	,672	1,489
Africa	,129	,177	,088	,726	,470	,544	1,839
Finance	-,371	,235	-,228	-1,577	,120	,382	2,614
Economics	-,009	,193	-,006	-,049	,961	,456	2,195
Strategy	-,306	,157	-,248	-1,948	,056	,491	2,035
Financial Area	-,052	,225	-,033	-,230	,819	,394	2,538
Operation	-,347	,222	-,173	-1,564	,123	,654	1,529
HR	,401	,246	,175	1,625	,109	,692	1,444
Research	-,444	,335	-,178	-1,326	,190	,445	2,249
Entrepreneur	,498	,463	,128	1,075	,286	,562	1,780
Erasmus	,118	,150	,103	,785	,435	,462	2,162
Exchange (outside Europe)	,290	,172	,178	1,691	,096	,718	1,393
Master Abroad	,239	,316	,086	,757	,452	,616	1,622
Summers school	,049	,187	,033	,262	,794	,512	1,952
Internship	,001	,169	,001	,009	,993	,655	1,527
Job experience	-,140	,194	-,074	-,724	,472	,772	1,295
Portuguese	,313	,166	,251	1,887	,064	,452	2,210
Other Nationality	,503	,219	,288	2,299	,025	,508	1,969
English Language	,371	,168	,248	2,205	,031	,630	1,587

Table 5. Linear Regression. Dependent variable: Adventure Motivation. Independent variables: Gender, Teaching Language, Nationality, Working Area of Interest, Geographical Region Targeted, Past International Experiences.

The second factor, *Work Characteristic Motivations*, as reported in Table 6 below, shows a significant positive relation with *Gender* (β= 0.404 and p=0.001), implying an higher impact on women's decision. *Geographic Region Targeted* has a significant relation with the dependent variables, both positively, as North America (β= 0.333 and p=0.035) and negatively, as South

America (β=-0.093 and p=0.494). No significant differences are obtained considering the variables

Nationality and *International Experiences*.

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	Collinearity Statistics	
	B	Std. Error	Beta			Tolerance	VIF
(Constant)	3,463	,261		13,260	,000		
Gender	,404	,120	,406	3,381	,001	,688	1,453
North Europe	,053	,156	,041	,340	,735	,681	1,467
South Europe	,143	,126	,146	1,141	,258	,608	1,646
East Europe	,065	,144	,053	,454	,651	,727	1,376
North America	,333	,155	,286	2,157	,035	,564	1,772
South America	-,093	,135	-,093	-,687	,494	,543	1,842
Middle East	,130	,158	,108	,825	,412	,583	1,716
Far East	-,047	,153	-,040	-,309	,758	,595	1,679
Australia	,161	,120	,163	1,340	,185	,672	1,489
Africa	-,140	,170	-,111	-,824	,413	,544	1,839
Finance	,041	,226	,029	,180	,858	,382	2,614
Economics	-,138	,186	-,109	-,740	,462	,456	2,195
Strategy	,042	,151	,040	,278	,782	,491	2,035
Financial Area	,052	,216	,038	,240	,811	,394	2,538
Operation	-,039	,214	-,023	-,185	,854	,654	1,529
HR	,245	,237	,124	1,036	,304	,692	1,444
Research	,420	,322	,195	1,305	,197	,445	2,249
Entrepreneur	-,147	,445	-,044	-,329	,743	,562	1,780
Erasmus	-,164	,144	-,167	-1,140	,259	,462	2,162
Exchange (outside Europe)	,199	,165	,142	1,208	,232	,718	1,393
Master Abroad	-,282	,304	-,118	-,929	,356	,616	1,622
Summers school	-,018	,180	-,014	-,100	,920	,512	1,952
Internship	-,173	,163	-,131	-1,062	,292	,655	1,527
Job experience	,100	,187	,061	,537	,593	,772	1,295
Portuguese	,148	,159	,138	,932	,355	,452	2,210
Other Nationality	-,048	,211	-,032	-,230	,819	,508	1,969
English Language	,015	,162	,011	,090	,928	,630	1,587

Table 6. Linear Regression. Dependent variable: Work Characteristic Motivation. Independent variables: Gender, Teaching Language, Nationality, Working Area of Interest, Geographical Region Targeted, Past International Experiences.

The last factor, *Instrumental Motivation*, Table 7 below, shows a negative but no significant

relation with *Nationality* (Portuguese and Others) and *International Experiences* and a negative and

significant relation with *Working Area of Interest* (Human Resources β=-0.682 and p=0.048). A contrast impact of *Master Attended* is observed, presenting a positive relation for the master in Finance (β=0.051 and p=0.876) and negative for the master in Economics (β-0.265 and p=0.322), in comparison to the Management path.

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	Collinearity Statistics	
	B	Std. Error	Beta			Tolerance	VIF
(Constant)	3,395	,372		9,115	,000		
Gender	,161	,171	,123	,943	,349	,688	1,453
North Europe	,138	,222	,081	,620	,537	,681	1,467
South Europe	-,075	,179	-,058	-,418	,678	,608	1,646
East Europe	,111	,205	,068	,539	,592	,727	1,376
North America	,010	,220	,006	,045	,964	,564	1,772
South America	-,114	,192	-,088	-,596	,554	,543	1,842
Middle East	-,128	,225	-,080	-,567	,573	,583	1,716
Far East	-,206	,218	-,132	-,942	,350	,595	1,679
Australia	,218	,172	,168	1,273	,208	,672	1,489
Africa	-,033	,243	-,020	-,136	,892	,544	1,839
Finance	,051	,322	,027	,157	,876	,382	2,614
Economics	-,265	,265	-,160	-,998	,322	,456	2,195
Strategy	-,053	,216	-,038	-,247	,805	,491	2,035
Financial Area	-,020	,308	-,011	-,065	,948	,394	2,538
Operation	-,084	,305	-,037	-,276	,783	,654	1,529
HR	-,682	,338	-,263	-2,018	,048	,692	1,444
Research	,120	,459	,043	,262	,794	,445	2,249
Entrepreneur	-,464	,635	-,105	-,730	,468	,562	1,780
Erasmus	-,142	,205	-,110	-,692	,492	,462	2,162
Exchange Outside Europe	,134	,235	,073	,569	,571	,718	1,393
Master Abroad	-,210	,433	-,067	-,485	,629	,616	1,622
Summers school	-,251	,256	-,148	-,982	,330	,512	1,952
Internship	-,056	,232	-,032	-,241	,810	,655	1,527
Job experience	,344	,266	,159	1,292	,201	,772	1,295
Portuguese	-,035	,227	-,025	-,156	,877	,452	2,210
Other Nationality	-,417	,300	-,211	-1,389	,170	,508	1,969
English Language	,052	,231	,030	,224	,824	,630	1,587

Table 7. Linear Regression. Dependent variable: Instrumental Motivation. Independent variables: Gender, Teaching Language, Nationality, Working Area of Interest, Geographical Region Targeted, Past International Experiences.

Furthermore, although self-initiated expatriation is by definition a phenomenon that implicates leaving the home country on a temporary basis, the intention of repatriate was analyzed to better understand and frame the sample. A linear regression was performed, considering as dependent variable *Repatriate Intention* and as independent variables *Gender*, *Geographic Region Targeted* (South Europe, North Europe, East Europe, North America, South America, Middle East, Australia, Africa), *Motivation Factors* (Adventure Motivation, Work Characteristic Motivation and Instrumental Motivation), *Nationality* (Italian, Portuguese or Other) and *Past International Experiences*.

As exhibited in Table 8, the *Gender* (β=0.167 and p=0.064), *Portuguese Nationality* (β=0.192 and p=0.048) and some *Geographic Region Targeted*, as South Europe (β=0.256 and p=0.003) and South America (β=0.128 and p=0.155), show a positive and significant impact on the intention to repatriate. *Past International Experiences* (β=-0.138 and p=0.126), *Adventure* (β=-0.082 and p=0.292) *Instrumental* (β=-0.088 and p=0.174) *Motivations* present, instead, a negative but not significant relation with the dependent variable. In addition, these results had been supported by a logistic regression (Table 9 in Appendix), performed because of the binary nature of the dependent variable.

Finally, none of the models present multicollinearity problems for any of the independent variables considered, as can be seen from the VIF values in the Tables 5, 6, 7, 8.

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	Collinearity Statistics	
	B	Std. Error	Beta			Tolerance	VIF
(Constant)	,756	,466		1,620	,109		
Gender	,167	,089	,212	1,881	,064	,716	1,397
North Europe	,023	,116	,021	,195	,846	,793	1,261
South Europe	,256	,083	,328	3,084	,003	,803	1,245
East Europe	-,067	,102	-,068	-,650	,518	,831	1,204
North America	-,100	,106	-,107	-,943	,349	,712	1,405
South America	,128	,088	,162	1,445	,153	,724	1,381
Middle East	,045	,112	,047	,405	,687	,666	1,501
Far East	-,124	,101	-,134	-1,230	,223	,761	1,314
Australia	,024	,087	,030	,272	,787	,736	1,359
Africa	-,004	,112	-,004	-,037	,970	,691	1,448
Adventure motivation	-,082	,077	-,118	-1,062	,292	,735	1,360
Instrumental motivation	-,088	,064	-,146	-1,371	,174	,798	1,254
Work characteristics motivation	,141	,097	,170	1,464	,147	,677	1,477
Portuguese	,192	,095	,227	2,011	,048	,710	1,408
Other Nationality	-,192	,139	-,166	-1,376	,173	,622	1,609
Any international experience	-,138	,089	-,156	-1,549	,126	,898	1,114

Table 8. Linear Regression. Dependent variable: Repatriate Intention. Independent variables: Gender, Geographical Area Targeted, Motivation Factors, Nationality and Past International Experiences.

5. Discussion

The focus of this study was an exploratory analysis aimed to understand the dimension of the phenomenon of SIE and the peculiarities characterizing the graduates willing to self-expatriate to pursue an international career.

The first interesting variable to consider is gender. In fact, even though international assignments are proposed by companies to a low proportion (10-15%) of women (Myers and Pringle, 2005), this trend should be reduced if not inverted among SIEs. Nevertheless, according to the results of this study, male graduates have a higher preference toward expatriation, even though

in a non significant way. This difference, from the expectations, could be explained considering that the literature had focused in the comparison between SIEs and AEs, where AEs are generally dominated by males. Moreover, a significant heterogeneity among gender can be seen in the motivation factors. In fact, while men are mostly driven by *Adventure Motivations*, as travelling and meeting different people and cultures, women, being less risk takers and willing to gain more specific knowledge and expertise (Myers and Pringle, 2005), value mostly *Work Characteristics Motivations,* as expanding the technical skills and the professional network. Finally, women show a significantly higher repatriation intention, due, probably, to the perception of the need of start their own family in the home country (Myers and Pringle, 2005).

Regarding the academic background, a significant influence is exercised by the *Learning Language*. In particular the choice of a program in English, interpreted as a proxy of international mind-set and geocentric orientation, increases the propensity to expatriate and decreases the wiliness to return home. Additionally, the *Master Attended* has a lower impact on the decision, confirming that the choice to go abroad is not only driven by work related features, but by a combination of these with personal characteristics and objectives.

Moreover, as inferred from the literature, students with no *Past International Experiences* present a lower intention to self-expatriate and, eventually, their decision is mostly driven by *Work Characteristic Motivations*, rather than Adventure and *Instrumental Motivations*. This could be justified by the pressure of the labor market to pursue international experiences in order to learn work related practices and increase the career capital. Further studies should be conducted, however, in order to test this hypothesis. It is also interesting to highlight a difference within the variable of *Past International Experience*, in particular between work related (job and internship) and academic related (Erasmus, exchange outside Europe and master abroad) experiences. The two factors have, in fact, a different impact, the first negative and the last positive, on the intention to

leave the home country. This could be explained recalling the Career Capital theory, i.e. graduates, who had already a work experience abroad, had been able to accumulate both the professional and personal capital considered as needed.

Finally, considering the *Nationality*, Italians seem more willing to undertake an international experience and show low propensity to repatriate, relative to their Portuguese colleagues. Nevertheless, no further evidence and significant differences can be observed between the two groups. This homogeneity could be due to the similar cultural environment (see Hofstede cultural dimensions framework) and current economic situation in these countries. Although, relevant differences with other nationalities, namely French and German, are noticed, they cannot be considered significant, because of the low number of observations (being chosen only as a control variable). For instance, it is observed that graduates from *Other nationality*, when planning an international experience, are looking more for adventure and personal enrichment, and less driven by *Instrumental* and *Work Characteristic Motivation*, perceiving, probably, less technical added value from the experience abroad, as compared to Italians and Portuguese. These findings should be, therefore, the object of further analysis, in order to assess the influence of the socio-cultural and economic environment on the decision of young graduates to leave their home country.

Furthermore, this project has several practical implications both for companies and national governments. In fact, on the one hand, global companies should implement tailored HR practices to attract graduate self-initiated expatriates and retain them, offering the most suitable working environment and compensation package. In order to effectively plan and implement these strategies is important to know and understand the population of SIEs, as aimed in this project. On the other hand, governments have incentives to avoid a massive expatriation (brain drain) of their highly skilled resources, and therefore, they can benefit, as well, from a deeper knowledge of the phenomenon.

6. Limitations

This project presents several limitations. First, being a web-based survey, the sample could lack in response, representativeness and probability nature of the sampling (Doherty *et al.*, 2010). Second, the significance of the various regression models could have been harmed by the nature of the data, being the sample convenient and small, and by some omitted variables, as income and sentimental/love life situation. These factors were omitted because they were considered too difficult to assess and test objectively, due to the sample composition, composed by young students usually financially dependent on others, namely their parents, and unstable/unreliable on their personal relationships.

Finally, the study was focused on business students attending, mostly, renowned and internationally oriented universities, such as LUISS and Nova. The peculiar and homogenous background of the sample could have implications on the significance of the results, therefore future research should be conducted in order to enlarge the scope to other universities, faculties and/ or to a broader range of nationalities.

7. Conclusions

International mobility, in all its different forms, is, nowadays, a relevant and broad phenomenon. Companies, because of the higher degree of internationalization of the operations and the markets, should be aware of this circumstance and try to maximize the possible benefits deriving from global managers. In order to achieve this purpose, it is important to know the population, its peculiar characteristics, driving motivations and future intentions. In particular, the focus of this project had been on the recent phenomenon of self-initiated expatriation, because of its comparative advantage, on costs and cross-culture adjustments, *versus* company assigned expatriates.

SIE, the autonomous and temporary expatriation of high skilled resources, can be linked to the phenomenon of brain drain and to the theory of career capital, interpreting the international experience as a means to accumulate the three types of capital (knowing-why, knowing-how and knowing-whom) and to be, afterwards, leveraged as competitive advantage in the home country labor market.

The research analyzed in depth a sample of Italian and Portuguese business students, because of the interesting features of these two countries, showing a high degree of brain drain, mostly among young people. No significant differences between the two nationalities can be observed, although a distinction can be identified, crosswise, among gender, the teaching language of the master attended and past international experiences.

In conclusion, further studies should be conducted to better understand the phenomenon of SIE and its causes, in order for companies to plan and implement adapted human resources practices, aimed to attract and retain valuable and skilled individuals.

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Appendix

	Component		
	1	2	3
Mot.1: Exposure to different culture	,363	,401	-,138
Mot.2: International work experience on CV	,481	,365	,328
Mot.3: Learn different work methods	,700	,030	-,074
Mot.4: Extent technical skills	,657	,000	,050
Mot.5: Travel to different part of the world	,130	,751	-,107
Mot.6: Experience the adventure	-,261	,678	,068
Mot.7: Have a better pay	-,034	,012	,692
Mot.8: Expand work experience	,526	,062	-,068
Mot.9: Work in a more participative environment	,334	-,197	,426
Mot.10: Escape from the economic crisis	-,089	,079	,676
Mot.11: Enlarge professional network	,496	,333	,211
Mot.12: Meet different people	,111	,750	,119
Mot.13: Closest friend are working abroad	,018	-,013	,612
Mot.14: Want to work for an international organization	,353	,103	,512
Mot.15: Open better professional opportunities in the home country	,565	-,135	,310

Table 1. Factor Analysis. Rotated Component Matrix (Fixed Number of Factors). Extraction methods: Principal Component Analysis. Rotation method: Varimax with Kaiser normalization

	Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items	N of Items
Factor 1: Work Characteristic Motivation	,662	,671	6
Factor 2: Adventure Motivation	,616	,641	3
Factor 3: Instrumental Motivation	,568	,598	4

Table 2. Factor Analysis: Reliability Statistics

	B	S.E.	Wald	df	Sig.	Exp(B)
Gender	-,206	,432	,227	1	,634	,814
English	1,877	,553	11,536	1	,001	6,531
Italian	-,250	,918	,074	1	,785	,778
Portuguese	-,850	,909	,874	1	,350	,428
Management	-1,129	,690	2,676	1	,102	,323
Finance	-,779	,769	1,025	1	,311	,459
Job Experience Abroad	-,500	,513	,949	1	,330	,607
Academic Experience Abroad	,390	,428	,830	1	,362	1,477
Strategy	1,101	1,200	,841	1	,359	3,007
Marketing	2,479	1,213	4,176	1	,041	11,932
Financial Area	1,197	1,310	,834	1	,361	3,310
Operation	3,341	1,619	4,256	1	,039	28,243
HR	2,624	1,602	2,683	1	,101	13,797
Research	1,488	1,546	,926	1	,336	4,426
Constant	-,705	1,246	,320	1	,572	,494

Table 4. Logistic Regression. Dependent variable: Intention to Expatriate. Independent variables: Gender, Nationality, Master, Teaching Language, Working Area and International Experiences.

	B	S.E.	Wald	df	Sig.	Exp(B)
Gender	2,092	1,003	4,353	1	,037	8,097
International Experience	-1,383	1,008	1,883	1	,170	,251
Adventure Motivation	-,913	,861	1,124	1	,289	,401
Instrumental Motivation	-1,041	,633	2,709	1	,100	,353
Work Characteristics Motivation	1,456	1,066	1,863	1	,172	4,288
North Europe	-,674	1,170	,332	1	,564	,510
South Europe	2,891	1,101	6,893	1	,009	18,012
East Europe	-,810	1,006	,648	1	,421	,445
North America	-,317	1,103	,083	1	,774	,728
South America	1,007	,901	1,250	1	,263	2,737
Middle East	,692	1,342	,266	1	,606	1,997
Far East	-,760	1,137	,448	1	,503	,467
Australia	-,023	,895	,001	1	,979	,977
Africa	-,102	1,113	,008	1	,927	,903
Italian	,933	1,159	,648	1	,421	2,541
Portuguese	3,914	1,513	6,693	1	,010	50,089
Constant	1,336	5,372	,062	1	,804	3,803

Table 9. Logistic Regression. Dependent variable: Repatriate Intention. Independent variables: Gender, Geographical, Area Targeted, Motivation Factors, Nationality and Past International Experiences.

Figure 1. Questionnaire

I: BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION			
1. Gender			
Female	☐	Male	☐
2. Age			
18-20	☐	21-23	☐
24-26	☐	> 26	☐
3. Nationality			
Italian	☐	Portuguese	☐
Other (please specify)_____			
II: ACADEMIC INFORMATION			
4. What is your academic background?			
Management	☐	Finance	☐
Economics	☐		
5. At which university are you currently enrolled?			
Luiss Guido Carli	☐	Nova SBE	☐
Other (please specify)_____			
6. Is English the language used in your academic program?			
Yes	☐	No	☐
7. In which area would you like to work?			
Consulting	☐	Investment Banking	☐
Brand Management	☐	Financial Analyst	☐
Human Resources	☐	Operation Management	☐
Sales	☐	Strategic Planning	☐
Research	☐		
Other (Please Specify))_____			

8. Are you planning on starting an International career, after the Master graduation?			
Yes	☐	No	☐

III: MOTIVATIONS OF AN INTERNATIONAL CAREER

9. I want to start an International career, because:

		I definitely do not agree	I do not agree	Not agree or disagree	I agree	I definitely agree
1	I will gain personal exposure to different cultures	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
2	I will have an international work experience on my CV	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
3	I can learn different work methods	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
4	I will extend my technical skills	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
5	I want to travel to different parts of the world	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
6	I want to experience the "adventure"	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
7	I will have a better pay	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
8	It will expand my work experience	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
9	I want to work in a more participative environment	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
10	I want to "escape" from the economic crisis	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
11	Working abroad will enlarge mine professional network	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
12	It will allow me to meet new people	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
13	My closet friends are working abroad	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
14	I want to work for an International company	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
15	It will open better professional opportunities in my home country in the future	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

IV: LOCATION PREFERENCES

10. Which parts of the world are you targeting?

1	South Europe	☐	6	East Europe	☐
2	North Europe	☐	7	North America	☐
3	South America	☐	8	Far East	☐
4	Middle East	☐	9	Australia and New Zealand	☐
5	Africa	☐			

V: INTENTION TO REPATRIATE

11. Are you intending to come back to your home country, after a few years working abroad?

Yes	☐	No	☐