21ST CENTURY EXPATRIATES

JOSEPH ERIC MASSEY

Ph.D. Walden University
E-mail: Eric.Massey@Waldenu.edu

Abstract- Expatriates are persons who live and work for extended periods of time in foreign countries. In the current investigation, the changing nature of expatriate life in the 21st century was examined. Specifically, the use of smartphone technology and its effects on expatriate adaptation was analyzed. Additionally, expatriates and their assignments were investigated for possible changes as well. The findings demonstrate that (1) smartphone use positively impacts adjustment, (2) expatriate assignments tend to be shorter in duration than in the past, (3) there are more female expatriate than before, and (4) expatriates continue to self-initiate in the 21st century.

Index Terms- Expatriate Adjustment, Expatriate Duration, Self-Initiated Expatriates, Technology, Women Expatriates.

I. INTRODUCTION

In the last few decades, the march toward globalization has quickened, and Marshall McLuhan's global village has increasingly become a reality. "A major consequence of globalization is global mobility where the movement of people across international boundaries, whether temporary or permanent, has become a common phenomenon" [1, p142].

Because of globalization, practitioners, policy makers and academics understand that for organizations and nations to be competitive, the development of a global orientation in people and institutions is required [2]. Organizations require people with a global mindset. One way organizations groom and mentor their employees to have a global mindset is through expatriation. Expatriation is when individuals are relocated from one country to another by an employer, or increasingly, of their own volition. This usually means moving from the home country to a host country for a fixed period of time [3].

Expatriates are people living and working outside their own countries. For many reasons, including the globalization of the world's marketplace, expatriates are widely used in the world. Up to 80% of companies in the U.S. use expatriates—in other words they send their professionals abroad [4]. That trend is evidenced in most developed countries around the world.

Expatriates are different from others who travel, such as tourists or migrants, in the length of time and reasons of travel. Expatriate assignments traditionally range between six months to five years in the host country. Expatriates (or expats as they're commonly called), unlike migrants, intend to return home and have a specific, work-related purpose for being in the host country in the first place [5].

One of the challenges organizations face as they try to remain competitive in an increasing global economy, is the preparation and training of expatriates. The focus of previous research has been the competencies of expatriate managers [6]. Intercultural competence has become an important sub-discipline in business and management literature since the late part of the 20th century, but has existed in the organizational communication discipline since the 1960s. "The global nature of business involves such competencies; the trend has resulted in many employees working in international assignments and particularly managers being sent on assignments abroad" [5, p245].

One question is why so many firms in the U.S. and in many other countries, send their professionals to live and work in foreign countries. To borrow a phrase, the answer is to think globally, and act locally. To be effective in the global marketplace organizations must know that marketplace, and have their own representatives living within the global market—such intimate knowledge of a global market requires expatriation.

Of course expatriates are a costly investment in human and capital resources. Expatriate recruitment, training, and placement make this group one of the costliest that organizations employ [6]. At the end of the 20th Century expatriates cost two to three times what a typical professional at home costs, and that cost continues to rise. Typical expatriate packages range from $300,000 to $1 million a year. Problematic is the fact that along with the high cost of expatriation comes a high rate of failure, which is typically defined as early return from the assignment [7].

That failure rate is not surprising, "since many MNCs [multinational corporations] use the same employee selection procedures to select both expatriates and domestic employees with the same job title" [8, p180]. Because of the large investment in expatriates by MNCs and the high failure rate, much research has examined the factors that influence success or failure. There are five main reasons for failure: (1) managers' inability to adjust; (2) family-related issues; (3) managers' personality; (4) inability to adapt to the new culture; and (5) inability to manage the responsibilities of the new position in the MNC [10].

How to make expatriates successful is then the goal. Factors for success include: (1) cultural sensitivity, (2) empathy for others, (3) willingness to accept the challenge of living and working abroad, and training in (4) the language and (5) the culture of the host country [3]. Research and theory on expatriate adjustment is substantial and has provided MNCs with

useful information about how successful expatriate assignment can and should happen.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

A.Expatriation

Expatriates are people living and working outside their own countries for extended periods of time. "Expatriation represents the most expensive staffing strategy for the multinational corporation, but it remains a viable method for increasing the corporation's understanding of international operations" [4, p177]. There have been changes in the type of international assignments but "expatriation is still the most common way of meeting the need for international work" [2, p256].

Expatriates are used to "establish and maintain linkages with other countries, protect company interests, and enhance the firm's global knowledge base" [12, p647). The use of expatriates continues to rise alongside the growth and expansion of international business.

B. Expatriate History

Expatriates have been used in human enterprise for thousands of years. Tribal exchanges could be thought of as expatriation [13]. From tribal societies that "engage in one another's religious ceremonies to international businessmen [sic] from across the globe who engage in shared methods of contract and arbitration, by associating with the customs of outsiders, heterogeneous individuals have established trust enabling peaceful interaction throughout history" [13, p893]. And the colonization of the world by mostly European countries is certainly an early example of expatriation. In fact, some might view expatriation as an extension of colonization. "There is considerable sociological similarity and sometimes even historical continuity between European colonial society and the expatriate communities in contemporary neo-colonial countries" [14, p8].

In more modern times, and since the industrial revolution, expatriation has taken on its more modern meaning described above—people who are sent from the home office to work abroad. Early writings in expatriate literature appear to have been focused on the same issues that are problematic today. Harland Cleveland wrote that "at Syracuse University we have been trying to find out what makes some Americans succeed and others fail in overseas assignments" [15, p11]. Adjustment was a problem then, just as it is today. Cleveland and colleagues found that there were five "elements of overseas performance," including (1) technical skill, (2) belief in mission, (3) cultural empathy, (4) a sense of politics, and (5) organization ability [16, pp5-6). No doubt those same five elements are as true today as they were in 1960 when Cleveland identified them.

C. Expatriate Adjustment

Adjustment is "the personal (i.e. values, attitudes) and work-role (how the job is done) changes that may be utilized during an individual's transition process" [17, p276). It means having to adjust "not only to a new work culture, but also to new ways of living" [18, p291). Being an expatriate is not easy, and not everyone is suited to the role. "Millions of people are engaged in work abroad every year resulting from migration, expatriation or short overseas assignments" [18, p41]. To succeed, these individuals must adjust to work and non-work conditions in the host country. To be successful expats then, people new to the host country must develop stable and useful relationships with the host country's people and culture. Specifically, an expatriate needs to be able to "predict the behavior of others in the host environment; explain others' attitudes, feelings and behaviors; interact competently; and go about their everyday lives with relative ease and a sense of psychological comfort" [18, p41]. The antecedents and outcomes of expatriate adjustment to the host country has been a focus of research since Tung's foundational work in 1981 [19], and remains a key variable in the research, management, and practice of expatriates.

Expatriate adjustment involves orientation to a foreign culture as well as the adjustment to a new work environment. In a typical expatriate assignment, not only is the employee being transferred—it is oftentimes an entire family that is transferred from one part of the world to another. Thus expatriate adjustment is not only about the employee adjusting to a foreign culture, it is often the expatriate and his (or increasingly her) family as well.

Adjustment is seen as a process that begins before an expat even leaves home. Transition to a new culture is challenging, but such "adjustment is essential for expatriate managers to achieve their organization's goals and objectives" [17, p276].

D. Social Support

The critical role of social support that is provided by host country contacts in expatriate adjustment has been demonstrated empirically (20]. Host country networks provide social support, defined as "communication that helps individuals manage uncertainty and ambiguity and increases their perceptions of control regarding life" [18, p42]. Social support reduces uncertainty, ambiguity and anxiety, which have long been established as deterrents to expatriate adjustment.

Historically, the only way to develop a social network was through face-to-face encounters. That all changed in 1989, when the World Wide Web was created which initiated what is commonly referred to as the information revolution. "Internet technologies, such as blogs, social network sites and wikis, are now widely recognized to be changing the way individuals make and interact with social contacts and thereby access social support" [18, p42].

Research demonstrates that the use of technology to develop social support networks positively influences expatriate adjustment [18]. Because of the importance

of technology-driven social support systems in the host country to expatriate adjustment, "a complete understanding of the process of expatriates' adjustment to foreign environments in the digital age requires an understanding of the role these technologies play in supporting expatriate adjustment" [18, p42].

In the current investigation expatriate adjustment into the host culture is the focus. The role that smartphone technology plays in adjustment is particularly examined.

E. Smartphones & Adjustment

By 2025 "more than 5 billion people on our planet will be using ultra-broadband, sensor-rich smartphones" [21, p221]. There are benefits associated with the use of mobile technology such as smartphones, but there are disadvantages as well, including the disruption of work life and social activities. For better or worse, the smartphone has become fully integrated into modern life in the 21st century. Research in the last decade investigated the changes brought by the use of mobile devices such as the smartphone in expatriate adjustment and the expatriate experience [22].

The research demonstrates the effect smartphones have on everyday life, including such daily activities as "information search, use of idle times such as waiting for a bus, on-site decision making, and experience documentary and sharing" [22, p52]. Importantly, this research indicates that the use of smartphones by expatriates requires a re-thinking of expatriate life and adjustment. Being digitally connected through mobile devices such as smartphones mediates expatriate experiences making the host country less foreign.

Smartphones also allow users to check into social media sites, send and receive email, conduct bank transactions, send and receive instant messages, browse the Internet, check the traffic, and more. Smartphones therefore have the potential to transform everyday life, including interpersonal interaction, privacy, social networking, economics, education, and urban transport [23]. Research has demonstrated that that the use of the smartphone is influencing people's lives and social relationships in significant ways, and gives the possibility of conducting activities and interaction in novel ways, which results in an increasing spatial and temporal flexibility [21].

Expatriates constantly interact with diverse people, both inside and outside the organization, all over the world. Smartphones help expats stay in touch with co-workers, customers, partners, and business processes, and keeps them connected, responsive and efficient. Therefore, the usage of smartphones during work is increasing.

Of course the connectivity that internet and smartphone technology afford applies not only to work life, but to personal life as well. News and information from home are available in your hands, and social media allow expatriates to communicate with friends and family instantaneously.

F. Changes in Types of Assignments, Types of Expats

1) Shorter Assignments: KPMG reports that managing expatriates has become intense, partly because of an increase in the number of expatriates employed worldwide. In 2005, McKinsey Global Institute estimated that 75,000 expatriate positions in international corporations in China were necessary. However, traditional expatriates numbered only 3,000 to 5,000 at that time.

The data from McKinsey in 2005 are valid today, the 2008 global economic crisis notwithstanding. International organizations continue to need mobile and skilled managers and expatriates remain in high demand [24].

Short-term expatriate assignments appear to be an appropriate option for the current challenges. Short-term expatriates are more mobile and skilled compared to the expatriates undergoing long-term expatriate assignments [24]. More importantly, the management of these expatriates is reported to be less complicated as they are usually not accompanied by their spouses during the assignments. These assignments are increasingly being used as a substitute to long-term expatriate assignments. The use of this type of assignment has been increasing by 80% based on a study by KPMG in 2010 that involved 1,000 multinational organizations.

Short-term expats have advantages such as cost-savings and flexibility; beyond their shorter length compared to short-term assignments. "A three-minute phone call from New York to London that cost US$10.80 in 1970 costs less than US$0.20 today. An internet call is virtually free. Given improvements in transportation and communication, it follows that the number of traditional expatriates are being substituted with other less costly and more project-oriented forms of international staffing" [25, p141]. Such alternatives to the traditional expatriate assignment are either much shorter in timespan, or merely require periodic site visits to company subsidiaries yearly, which can be done without the need for relocation of expatriates and their families to host countries.

Daniel Sonsino, vice president of talent management learning and development at Polycom, Inc., sent three employees from China, India and Austin, Texas, to Israel for simultaneous month-long assignments. The assignments' nontraditional structure and length: (1) Helped the workers launch the designated product within a set time frame, (2) Stimulated transfer of knowledge and best practices from Israel to other offices, and (3) Provided high-potential employees with cross-cultural, international experience.

Short-term expatriates also cost less than a traditional three-year international assignment. "We have used traditional expatriate assignments," Sonsino says, "but

we have moved away from using them lately and will probably use them even less in the future" [26, p59].

2) Female Expatriates: The number of female expats increased "from 3% in the 1980s, to 10–14% in the 1990s, and to 16–20% in the new millennium" [25, p133]. Ironically, while the number of expatriates continues to increase, the percentage of women expatriates falls significantly behind male expatriate figures, even though the number of women in the workforce generally and management specifically has increased worldwide [27]. Global Relocation Trends reported that in 2013, women constituted 23 percent of expats, while Mercer reported that only 13 percent of expats were women.

The low percentage of expatriate women does not derive from a lack of interest. There is empirical evidence that many women want to pursue an international career [28]. The low numbers of female expats is also not because of host-country national (HCN) discrimination toward women. Instead, the low numbers of women expats is because of managers' belief that women are not suited for international assignments [29]. The reasons given by supervisors that they do not believe women are viable candidates are (1) dual-career marriages, (2) HCN prejudice toward women, and (3) the belief that women are not interested in expatriation [25].

These misconceptions have slowly and gradually been proven incorrect. Since then, there has been an increase in the number of expatriate women [30]. Because of such myth-busting, research on women expats has moved from barriers to selection to keys for successful adjustment and work performance, acceptance of women expatriates by the host country, and issues of to work–life balance [25].

3) Self-initiated Expatriates (SIE): Expatriate research has recently turned its attention to people who are commonly referred to as self-initiated expatriates (SIE). SIEs are people who are personally directing their career trajectories without organizational support [31]. These people decide for themselves to live and work internationally.

An SIE has been defined as a person "hired as an individual on contractual basis and not transferred overseas by parent organizations. In other words, SIEs are gainfully employed abroad and have acquired their regular job on their own without being assigned to the host location by any organization. Consequently, SIEs are expatriates and neither short-term travelers (sojourners) nor immigrants" [29, p200].

Moreover, the number of SIEs has experienced a dramatic increase in recent years [32]. "Due to talent shortages in many countries and the increasing demand for mobile and interculturally competent employees with differentiated skill sets, SIEs are strategically valuable human resources for multinational corporations and are employed in large numbers" [33, p2013].

III. HYPOTHESIS & RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Based on the previous review of literature, the following hypothesis and research questions are proffered to guide the research:

H1: Smartphone use among expatriates increases expatriate adjustment.

RQ1: Are expatriate assignments shorter now than in the past?

RQ2: Are there more female expatriates now than in the past?

RQ3: What is the ratio of organization-initiated expatriates (OIE) and self-initiated expatriates (SIE)?

IV. METHODOLOGY

A. Participants

Participants (N=200) were recruited from social networking sites and forums in Bangkok, Thailand. Snowball sampling was used to generate a sufficient number of participants.

B. Procedures

Participants all responded to the questionnaire, which was provided online. The questionnaire included a cover page, which instructed respondents that their participation was voluntary and that their responses to the survey were completely anonymous. The questionnaire consisted of 15 questions, including demographic questions, smartphone use, and respondents' level of adjustment.

V. RESULTS

A. Hypothesis 1

Smartphone usage affects expatriate adjustment. The prediction that smartphone use increases expatriate adjustment was tested with an analysis of variance (ANOVA). Smartphone utility was the independent variable and adjustment was the dependent measure for this hypothesis. There was a significant main effect for expatriate adjustment, $F(3, 199) = 9.55$, $p < .05$. Means for expatriate adjustment demonstrate that the difference was in the predicted direction.

Table I. Means for Smartphone Use and Adjustment.

Adjustment Level	Mean Score
Very Adjusted	1.58
Adjusted	1.75
Somewhat Adjusted	2.03
Not Adjusted	3.25

B. Research Question 1

Are expatriate assignments shorter now than they were in the 20th century? The number of short-term expatriate assignments is increasing. Because of the

expense of sending people on expatriate assignments has caused organizations to change their approach to expatriate management [24]. KPMG found that this change has led to an increase in the use of short-term international assignments. For instance, 27 percent of the 361 corporate mobility professionals who participated in Atlas Van Lines' 2012 survey expected international short-term assignments to increase.

Gail Auerbach, a human resources executive for Masonite, says that long-term expatriate assignments "are still going on and have their value, but I personally have found them to be of less value." She goes on to state that "the cost and complexity of moving someone and their family abroad for three years has increased. More significantly, as quickly as the world changes today, traditional expatriate assignments are less effective in meeting the business needs" [26, p59].

The current investigation supports those claims. The data are represented in table two, and demonstrate that while 2-3 year expat assignments are still quite popular, 1-2 year assignments are being used as well.

Table II. Percentages for Expatriate Assignment Length

Assignment Length	Percentage
1 Year or Less	3.5
1-2 Years	26.9
2-3 Years	24.9
3-5 Years	20.4
5+ Years	18.9

C.Research Question 2

Are there more female expatriates than in the 20th century? Women have increased in the expatriate ranks, and that trend has continued into the 21st century. Global Relocation Trends reports that in the last three decades, the percentage of females in international assignments has risen 20 percent. In the late 20th century, only 3% of expatriates were female. However, as recently as 2013, the percentage of female expatriates was estimated at between 13-23 percent [25]. The data in the current study indicate that 31% of the surveyed expats were women, indicating a significant increase in the numbers of expatriate women.

Table III. Percentage of Female & Male Expatriates.

Sex	Percentage
Female	30.8
Male	68.2

D.Research Question 3

What is the ratio of organization-initiated expatriates (OIE) and self-initiated expatriates (SIE)? A number of studies have emphasized the difference between SIEs and traditional expatriates. The crucial difference is that SIEs, rather than being transferred by their employer for a prearranged period, by and large relocate of their own volition.

Many SIEs are Millennials, a group that is more interested in work-life balance than previous generations. They leave their home country because they want a global experience [34]. “Millennials want global experience, especially if such experiences provide career challenges and learning opportunities. The [2011 PricewaterhouseCoopers] survey indicated that 80% of Millennials expect to work in other countries and 70% expect to learn and use a foreign language in their careers” [34, p63].

With little exception, the studies that have focused on the factors that influence SIEs to expatriate have indicated that they are driven by a sense of adventure, a desire to travel, personal development, a need to escape from current circumstances, to follow a relationship or simply for the love of a specific country as opposed to a single economical or career advancement factor.

What we know about SIEs is that they are usually younger, a bit less educated, and have fewer years of work experience than organization-initiated expatriates (OIE) [31]. SIEs have begun a trend in expatriate assignments which includes a generation of university graduates taking charge of their own career paths, gaining global experience without the initiation of organizations.

What we do not know conclusively is the percentage of expatriates who are OIE versus SIE. Some research has indicated that as many as 50-70% of expatriates can be classified as SIE [35]. But that number is misleading, because conceptualization of OIE and SIE, as well as other expat types, migrant workers and sojourners is not clearly theorized or operationalized in practice or academia [36]. “The lack of conceptual coherence in defining an SIE is as acute as incomprehensible” [37, p1282].

Because of the growing importance of SIEs as well as the questions surrounding their conceptualization and operationalization, they were analyzed in the current investigation, which is included in table four.

Table IV. Number of Self-Initiated Expatriates (SIE).

Assignment Type	Percentage
Organization-Initiated Expatriates (OIE)	66.2
Self-Initiated Expatriates (SIE)	28.9

VI. DISCUSSION

The tested hypothesis received support, and the research questions were answered affirmatively. More specifically, smartphone use increases expatriate adjustment, expatriate assignments are generally

shorter now than they were in the 20th century, the numbers of female expatriates has increased, and the ratio of self-initiated expatriates also was identified.

CONCLUSION

The findings from the research are informative for both organizations and academics. Organizations benefit by learning more about how to best manage expatriates and the expatriate adjustment process, and the academic community benefits by learning more about
(1) smartphone use and its effects on expat adjustment, (2) expatriate assignment duration changes, (3) the increasing number of women expatriates, and (4) the reasons for and numbers of self-initiated expatriates in the 21st century.

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