

## SE03 EP07: An Entrepreneur Abroad

### Amelia Pham

H: Welcome to Noles Abroad, a podcast by Florida State University International Programs! I'm Hannah

Z: And I'm Zoe! And we are your hosts. On this podcast we'll talk about study abroad from the perspective of the students, faculty, staff, and alumni who make it an experience worth sharing. We'll also bring you travel tips and fun facts from around the globe.

H: In this episode we talk to Amelia Pham, an entrepreneurship major who studied abroad in Florence, Italy. We hear about Amelia's dream of opening a dog café and how her time in Florence gave her inspiration for her future café. Let's go to our conversation with Amelia now.

Hey Amelia, how are you?

Amelia (A): I'm great, how are you?

H: Doing really well. To start us off today can you introduce yourself?

A: Yes, of course. So my name is Amelia Pham. I am now a junior pursuing Commercial Entrepreneurship with minors in International Affairs as well as Hospitality and Tourism Management. I had the opportunity to study abroad in Florence, Italy in the Fall of 2019.

Z: Awesome, so you mentioned that you're an entrepreneurship major. Can you talk about why you wanted to major in that and why you chose to come to FSU?

A: Yeah so that whole thing was a whole turn of events that led me here. I originally wanted to be a vet but things didn't go as planned and I had to shift my career goals while still wanting to maintain my passion for animals. I also always knew I wanted that cliché of being my own boss, so I was definitely drawn to being an entrepreneur. And as I was looking for schools I came across Florida State and learned that we were the first public university to have a college of entrepreneurship and after reading about how amazing the program was, I was definitely sold. And in addition to that, my dad had always pushed my sisters and I to study abroad and he the only thing he looked into was how great the program was at Florida State.

H: Definitely sounds like you found a good fit at Florida State for both entrepreneurship and studying abroad, so glad you're able to take advantage of those. But I loved what you said about wanting to be your own boss, can you tell us a little bit about like what was your earliest memory or like what was the spark for that like what made you want to be your own boss?

A: Yeah so my first venture, I guess, where I dealt in entrepreneurship was when I ran my own little Instagram boutique. And at the time that I started it was around 2014, so I was 13 or 14 at the time, and recently thrifted clothes was a huge thing on Instagram and I was definitely drawn to having something of my own to start building upon. And especially that age, being only 14, it was my first time working with customers where I realized I loved working in customer service. And I got to do big girl things like go to the post office even though my mom had to bring me and really just own my own little business. So that really inspired me to continue running something you know on a larger scale, so hopefully in the future.

Z: And you mentioned that you wanted to sort of fuse your love for animals and keep that passion but also you know do entrepreneurship, so how does that kind of fit together?

A: Yeah so um like you said the one thing, the one consistent thing in my life has always been getting back to animals. So animal rescue has long been a very important goal of mine and I did want to be able to incorporate that into my career. So in doing so I hope to one day run a dog café. And while it may not be the same as being a vet I will be able to give back to like different animal shelters and rescue groups through the work like I look forward to doing.

H: What exactly, in your mind, what is a dog café? For those who might not know, what does that mean?

A: Yeah so we actually have something similar in Tallahassee, here. So essentially you have your own café, just the normal thing, like I hope people go there to study and just relax, get some good food and drinks, but at the same time we have like a separate room where you can go in and play with dogs and all these dogs would be adoptable rescue dogs that I work with like a local animal shelter so I would definitely highly encourage my customers or anyone else that visits to hopefully adopt them so we can cycle out some more animals and find them forever homes.

H: That sounds so sweet and a great fusion of people who want some good coffee and good food and some dog snuggles. Who doesn't want that? That sounds awesome. So let's talk a little bit about your study abroad experience. How did being in Florence influence your inspiration for your future business?

A: Yeah so I had known it prior to going Florence that I did want to run that café but you know, before I went I was definitely in between what I wanted my café to look like in terms of like what inspirations and influences to draw from. So originally I had tossed the idea of like Vietnamese with some sort of European fusion, but after living in Florence I really took a step back and was like this is the European influence that I really want and it was definitely from Italy. So obviously Florence now forever holds a very special place in my heart and I would love to take back some of those ideas and things that I witnessed back to my own business. Some things from like the ambiance, how welcoming everyone was wherever I went, I also paid special attention to the way everything was laid out, the architecture. Obviously their food and drinks are amazing so I want to incorporate some of Italian fusion into my café as well.

Z: That's so cool. Did you have a chance to like talk to any of the café owners while you were there?

A: Yeah so actually being a student, I hadn't really thought that I would form that many relationships with local store owners or anything but after frequenting the same places over and over they really got to know me, and I got to know them. So it was definitely one of my favorite things was to just head over to the study center, but stop at the café beforehand, I would see the local owners and it was really fun because they would always, not poke fun at me for not knowing Italian but a little bit, and then proceed to teach me how to order. And it just felt so welcoming and that's what I want to bring back to my café. But yeah it was always great to just be greeted with such a warm smile and they always made us feel like home, when we clearly weren't home at all, and that spoke very highly of how treated their customers. So building those relationships is really fun.

H: Yeah relationship building, I'm sure in hospitality and customer service like you mentioned, is absolutely key. Were there any other like little lessons or things that you learned from those owners, like getting to interact with them, things that you'll infuse in your business?

A: Yeah mainly just the building connections part because I realize how pivotal that is not only in like running a business, but like also day-to-day life as well. It was definitely, it's definitely a very crucial aspect of entrepreneurship so that's something I really am trying to work on because I am not the most outgoing person at times, but if I'm in a position where I can make others feel welcome that's definitely something that will help in my business and in life as well. But also being in Florence specifically, it's amazing how everyone is so immersed into the culinary world and I got to meet so many amazing people, my professor even introduced me to his friends who were opening up their restaurants in other parts of Europe. So that was really cool just knowing that making connections to last a lifetime will really help me push myself and everything as well.

H: Absolutely, connections are certainly a huge piece of anything in life. But we really admire your determination and dedication to this goal of owning your own café so we're curious to know what are your next steps in achieving that goal?

A: Since I've committed to the idea of running a café I've kept a tiny little Journal with me, I love journaling so I have one for almost everything, but my favorite one obviously is the one for my dog café. Every time I think of any new idea it can be like a new food or drink item I want to my menu, some decor or advertising techniques, I'll jot it down real fast and in doing so it helps me it better visualize exactly what I want for the future and just know that everything I'm working towards will find its way to me as well. But more in the moment, right now since I am a Junior in the Jim Moran College I'm very like immersed into my courses. All of my professors are exceptional people and many of them are entrepreneurs as well so I have so much to learn from them that will help me incorporate into my business as well.

Z: That's so awesome. I think that you know it's cool that you could take that learning that you're doing in college in Tallahassee and then just make it, expand even more abroad by making those connections and learning so much. We, like Hannah said, we really admire your determination. And I think it's cool that you keep a journal with all of your ideas as well, that's a smart idea.

A: Thank you!

Z: Can you talk about like what lessons did study abroad teach you overall that you think will come in handy as an entrepreneur?

A: Yeah again, just the building connections aspect of it but also something that I really had trouble with was going outside of my comfort zone. And that's definitely something study abroad really pushes you to do because you're in such an unfamiliar place with new people, that obviously you'll get to know, but you grow with them. So being an entrepreneur again, the biggest thing for me was having confidence in myself and knowing that everything I was going to pursue was worth it for me or it will get me somewhere that I need to be. And studying abroad really did push me out of all of those comfort zones that I had. Just me being in my shell, I realized, wasn't what would help my study abroad experience and help me grow so I really had to push to meet all those people, to push myself to talk to the store owners, or just like really explore the city, and like everything that I had to offer.

H: That explanation might lead into our final question for you and that is what advice do you have for students considering studying abroad?

A: So definitely I would say, take full advantage of everything that is laid out in front of you. Not only do or does the program offer certain excursions or activities, but you really have your own time there as well and the city is completely yours to explore. You have the opportunity to meet all these amazing new people and discover these new places and it will be your home for however long you're there and if you really do it right it will be a forever home no matter where you go next. So one thing I wish I had done more was just to walk around the streets of Florence. Obviously I did that more than enough, but just evening strolls or just getting able to see like everyone as they went about their day I think was really beautiful. So there's always so much more to be seen than you think there is. And whatever city you do end up in, you'll find those places that really speak to you and make that experience so much more worth it.

H: That's really great advice and I'm sure students will absolutely want to take advantage of that and explore the cities that they are living in and be able to call those places home for themselves in the future. Amelia, thank you so much for sharing your story with us, thank you for sharing your time and best of luck, I cannot wait to visit your dog café someday, it sounds so fun and I'm sure you will absolutely achieve it.

A: Thank you, I so look forward to opening it as well!

Z: Thank you!

H: Before we disembark, we want to talk about IP Alumni Week!

During FSU Homecoming week this spring, International Programs will be celebrating IP Alumni Week – a week dedicated to recognizing and engaging all the alumni and friends of IP. We will be hosting various virtual events and will have opportunities for alumni to share their study abroad stories. Hearing from folks who have studied abroad before helps current & future students decide to have their own experience worth sharing. We also hope this week will be an opportunity for IP alums to reminisce about their time abroad.

Z: We often highlight alumni stories on our blog, on this podcast, and on social media, so if you have a story you would like to share, we would love to hear from you. You can email us at [IP-Media@fsu.edu](mailto:IP-Media@fsu.edu) for more information on how you can share your story from your time abroad!

H: Thank you for listening and thanks to Amelia for sharing her story with us today!

Z: This podcast is a production of FSU International Programs. The music for this podcast was composed by John Bartmann. Our logo was designed by Vanessa Guirey, who also does our sound engineering. Editing, transcription, and research is done by us, Zoë Crook and Hannah Meister.