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THE LANGUAGE TOURISM MARKET SYSTEM: CONCEPTUALISING LANGUAGE TOURISM

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Abstract

The student who travels abroad to learn a foreign language will be using several services provided by the tourism industry and may undertake a number of tourist activities. Language travel is a healthy sector, a sound service industry involving a wide range of stakeholders, from language learning providers to travel principals. In the past, the main focus of an overseas language trip package used to be on language learning. Accommodation, pick-up service, insurance, weekend excursions and extra activities were not the core of the business for travel advisors. Nowadays customers are more demanding and have higher expectations regarding other components of the package they buy. In short, they look for full study experiences abroad. This paper will offer a conceptualization of what constitutes language tourism and the language tourism market system, both in terms of the users who benefit from the experience and the product itself. From the demand perspective, a number of features such as language tourists' demographic aspects, travel behaviour, motivations and perceptions will be explored. On the other hand, an overview of what the language tourism supply consists of will be provided, including its primary components, i.e. language learning and travel elements. The marketing and management structures involved in designing, marketing and distributing the language tourism product will also be included, as well as the environmental and social resource base where it is developed. Future lines of research and steps forward will be presented.

Keywords: Language tourism, study abroad, language travel market

1. INTRODUCTION

Tourism is nowadays a key economic sector which has grown almost uninterruptedly since 1950. According to the UNWTO Tourism Highlights report for 2015, "international tourist arrivals have increased from 25 million globally in 1950, to 278 million in 1980, 527 million in 1995, and 1133 million in 2014. Likewise, international tourism receipts earned by destinations worldwide have surged from US$2 billion in 1950 to US$104 billion in 1980, US$ 415 billion in 1995 and US$1245 billion in 2014" (UNWTO, 2015: 2).

This report indicates that in 2014 France, the USA, Spain and China were the top destinations in the rankings of international arrivals and receipts, and China definitely became the main outbound tourism source. Following the UNWTO, a growth of 3% to 4% in international overnight visitors is expected in 2015, and by 2030 the total number may be 1.8 billion.

As for the reasons why people travelled in 2014, 53% of the total number of international tourist arrivals were motivated by holidays, recreation and other forms of leisure, while 14% were due to business and professional reasons, 27% to other purposes such as visiting friends and relatives, religious or health-related issues, and the travel motivations for the rest (6%) were unknown (UNWTO, 2015).

An increasing volume of trips have been undertaken for the past decades owing to educational purposes, spurred by pleasure, self-realization or learning needs caused by different shortcomings. In today's globalised world learning a foreign language abroad is usually perceived by some population segments as a professional and/or personal must. On the other hand, language travel is in the business spotlight of local economies. Fact-finding surveys and reports are regularly carried out by different agents, and yet it has raised surprisingly little scholarly interest. As some key theoretical concepts related to this specific tourism niche have not been dealt with in depth so far, this article aims at filling the existing gap. Before delving into the complexities of the language tourism market

system in theory, though, we will have a panoramic view of what it entails in practice.

1.1. Facts and figures

To focus on the language tourism industry in practical terms, let us look at some secondary data supplied in different reports on Spain conducted by Hothouse Media Ltd.

With respect to Spain as a source for outbound language tourism, the 15 agencies that took part in a survey published in the issue 202 of Study Travel Magazine reported that while the Spanish study abroad market had experienced a drop in bookings in 2010, the average business growth in 2011 was 24.8% (Hothouse Media Ltd., 2011f). The average length of stay for Spanish students was 2.7 weeks and, globally, 55% of Spanish students stayed with host families abroad. 43% of the surveyed agencies charged a handling fee, of between US$66 and US$294. In contrast, in 2014, as indicated in the issue 241 of Study Travel Magazine (Hancox, 2014), the 18 agencies surveyed reported an average business growth of 12.2%. The average length of stay for Spanish students in 2014 rose to 5 weeks, and 56% of the students still opted for home-stays.

In 2011 English remained the first language choice among Spanish study abroad sojourners, taking a just over 82% share of the market. The UK was the top destination (46%), followed by Ireland (19%), the USA (12%), Malta (8%), Canada (6%) and New Zealand (2%). French language programmes accounted for 5.4% of the bookings and German just over 3%. Three years later, in 2014, the main destinations were the UK (34%), Ireland (27%), Canada and the USA (11% each), and France and Germany represented 5% each.

The study abroad advisory centres surveyed in 2011 pointed out that junior programmes and general language courses accounted for 39% and 36% of the Spanish market, respectively. Other less popular options were intensive programmes (11%), summer programmes (4%), and academic/exam preparation programmes (3%). In 2014, general language and junior courses had a share of 31% each, followed by summer courses (10%), intensive programmes (8%),

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language plus work options (6%) and academic/exam preparation (4%).

The main motivation for agency clients to take a language travel programme overseas in 2011 was to be more successful in their home-based studies (30%), as an investment for their future work (29%) or their current work (12%), for their pleasure (22%), or to facilitate their studies abroad (5%). However, in 2014 the reasons for studying abroad changed dramatically, since 67% of Spanish students were driven by future work expectations, and only 12% did it for pleasure, 9% for their current work, 7% for their current home-based studies and 3% for their future studies overseas.

In 2011, after language courses, which made up a share of 82% of advisors' business, the rest of the segments (secondary education, internships, higher education and volunteer work) were far less significant, commercially speaking. In 2014 the situation was quite similar, as language programmes still were the core business for study abroad agencies (79%).

To finish with this overview of the Spanish outbound market, both in 2011 and in 2014 the most common channel to find new business partners for Spanish agencies was through business conferences (around 45%), followed by the Internet (nearly 30%) and student fairs (9%), among others. As for client recruitment, in 2011 word-of-mouth recommendations were the main source of students (50% in 2011 and 42% in 2014), whereas agency websites (32% in 2011 and 37% in 2014) together with e-marketing (7% in 2011 and 11% in 2014) were increasingly useful.

In relation to Spain as an inbound language tourism destination, let us turn to an illustrative survey published in the issue 239 of Study Travel Magazine, which was carried out among 25 Spanish institutions catering for a total of 17,745 international learners of Spanish as a foreign language in 2013 (Norris, 2014). The survey showed that the students came from Germany (14.9%), the US and the UK (10.4% each), Switzerland (9.9%), the Netherlands (7.3%), Italy (6.7%), the Nordic countries (5%), Russia (4.6%), Japan and Korea (2.9% each). Most of these students

were between 19 and 24 years old (31%), followed by other age ranges: 16-18 (19.5%), 25-30 (18.5%), 31-50 (10%), 12-15 (9%), 8-11 (6%) and 50 or more (6%). The overall average length of stay was 2.8 weeks and the average language tuition time was 19 hours a week.

The average cost of a one-month course excluding accommodation was US$978, and the average weekly cost of accommodation was US$230 for residential lodging and US$268 in the case of homestays with a host family.

The Spanish language schools' marketing budget targeted Western Europe (50%), Central and Eastern Europe (26%), North America (12.5%), Asia (5%), the Middle East (3%), Australasia (2%), Latin America (1%) and Africa (0.5%). In terms of marketing expenditure, the travel costs of attending agency conferences, student exhibitions, going on marketing trips and agency visits accounted for 21% of the budget, after agency costs for commissions, agency brochures and incentives (25%), and publicity costs for magazines, brochures and the Internet (54%). Students were eventually recruited through the Internet (40%), agents (39%), local bookings (13%) and by other not specified means (8%).

1.2. Threats and challenges

Just as other industries, the language travel business has to face a few threats and challenges in order to survive worldwide. Some of them, like natural disasters, are difficult to foresee. For instance, the interference of volcanic ash in air travel in the summer of 2010, the earthquake in Christchurch (New Zealand) in February 2011, and the tsunami and earthquake in Japan in March 2011 caused anxiety among users and providers alike.

Similarly, the fear of diseases such as SARS and H1N1 virus in 2010, the Ebola outbreak in West Africa in 2014 and zika virus nowadays is another thorny issue. In this respect, the junior sector is more vulnerable to health-related threats, and safety and security are fundamental for parents (Smith, 2011a).

Socio-political instability is another major concern. The impacts of crime in some Latin American countries, the armed conflicts

in the Middle East and North Africa region, the Russian military intervention in Ukraine in 2014 or the terrorist attacks in Paris in 2015 have certainly been negative.

The global economic recession has also caused problems in a number of markets. In Malta the scholarships from the Spanish Ministry of Education were reduced in 2011 while VAT on accommodation increased. The volume of outbound tourists from countries hit by the global financial crisis like Greece and Spain has decreased, and the once growing number of Russian students travelling abroad has been affected by currency fluctuations. As a consequence, some organisations have had to struggle. For example, the Archer Education Group had to close some Canada-based schools in 2011 because they couldn't recover from the economic crisis (Hothouse Media Ltd., 2011c). In Spain, the director of the language school association FEDELE stated that the international press about the delicate socio-economic situation in this country has influenced negatively prospective customers, who consider this destination unsafe (Norris, 2014).

In addition, visa conditions have become more restrictive in certain countries, such as the UK or Australia. In the UK, while the economy fostered foreign enrolments at language schools, the student visa system was updated in March 2011. This involved changes in the accreditation of educational institutions, the work rights of international students, and the provision of evidence for students' English language level and economic funding. Thus, the study abroad industry was divided into different sectors, and private language course providers were particularly affected. For example, visa restrictions have become an obstacle for countries like Saudi Arabia and Libya, since students coming from these countries are now supposed to provide evidence of their proficiency in English. On the other hand, student visa holders at language schools or institutions below degree level are not allowed to work at all during their stay in the UK, which is a problem for some students from South American countries (Norris, 2011c). Meanwhile, the Australian language teaching sector had to face hard operating

conditions due to the changes in visa requirements and currency fluctuations that affected potential clients willing to learn English as a foreign language in that destination in 2010 (Norris, 2011a). Moreover, in July 2011 new regulations were introduced in Australia with respect to the accreditation of language schools.

Sometimes an international mega event can have a negative impact on the local language travel industry. For instance, many language schools in South Africa were expecting that being the host nation of the FIFA World Cup in 2010 would boost their operations. Inbound tourism certainly increased, but the effects for study abroad programmes were not as positive due to high flight ticket and accommodation costs and the desire to avoid an overcrowded destination (Hothouse Media Ltd., 2011d). The London 2012 Olympic Games also had a negative effect on English language schools, especially those located in London, with bookings dropping and tourists looking for alternative language learning destinations in that period (Hancox, 2013).

When it comes to global challenges for the language travel sector, the impact of online booking systems cannot be overlooked. Nevertheless, many language travellers still use the services of educational agencies worldwide despite the fact that at present full details can be found on the Internet or the social media (mainly Facebook) and often direct online booking is possible. Even though they may have carried out some information search on their own, most language travellers still feel safer if they are assisted by a travel advisor who will provide help not only when purchasing a course, but also in terms of tickets, visas and insurances (Smith, 2011c).

Last but not least, teaching quality standards -e.g. in high season, when language schools may hire non experienced or non qualified teachers- and pedagogic innovation are a must nowadays. In the junior market constant supervision is a key aspect for parents and they tend to book package trips including attractive activities which are suitable for their children. Consequently, contextualised dynamic, entertaining and varied learning

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activities that constitute a break from traditional school teaching are required. In this sense, the incorporation of new technologies is more and more valued, so many overseas language schools are now fitted with interactive whiteboards and Wi-Fi (Smith, 2011c).

1.3. Trends

In order to conclude with this general picture of the language travel industry some global trends will be presented.

It is a fact that the junior segment, mainly focusing on summer courses, is growing steadily (Smith, 2011c). Young learners' market is more resilient to economic difficulties because parents wish to provide their children with the best education opportunities. There is evidence of a tendency of study abroad stays at a younger age. Before 2008 the minimum age for study abroad sojourns was 9 and the average age was around 13. Now children aged 6 or 7 take part in study abroad programmes and the average age has decreased to 10 or 11 years, particularly with certain nationalities (Smith, 2011a). In addition, more study abroad programmes for children travelling with their parents are on offer (Smith, 2011a).

As middle-aged potential customers currently have more leisure time, resources and willingness to travel abroad, adult study abroad stays are also growing in the UK (Hothouse Media Ltd., 2011b). Summer has always been a peak period in the language travel business. Although the traditional foreign language student is a young learner, adults increasingly need to take advantage of their summer holidays to engage in study abroad language learning packages (Smith, 2011b).

In Europe the European Higher Education Area has facilitated international mobility, and more and more higher education students wish to pursue educational programmes abroad. Although international mobility programmes are not the main business for travel advisors, some students may need a bridging course provided by travel advisors to improve their language skills, their academic credentials, or both (Hothouse Media Ltd., 2011g).

Professional work placement and internship programmes, as well as vocational learning alongside language courses, are expected to grow (Smith, 2011d). For example, English learning programmes at Australian technical and further education institutions are in demand (Hothouse Media Ltd., 2011e).

The demand of English for specific purposes is also rising, since English as a lingua franca has become very common among business people in different sectors, including tourism, law, finance, military, aviation or for business executives (Norris, 2011b). Whereas in the past those people who travelled abroad to learn English were interested in general English or exam preparation courses for an average period of six months, nowadays language study travellers have more specific aims, tend to be more results-driven and enrol in shorter courses, so language programmes have a more practical orientation (Smith, 2011c). Foreign language learning providers in New Zealand offer a wide range of English proficiency exams, with IELTS certifications becoming more and more popular (Hancox, 2011).

Diversification is gaining ground. New products offered by language travel advisors include language learning with complements, namely excursions, sports, cultural visits, volunteer work in the local community, seminars, etc.. Some activity-led learning programmes offer English and art/dance, sporting combos (e.g. English and horse-riding/golf/tennis), Spanish and cooking/flamenco, and gastronomic packages, such as Spanish/French and wine tasting/a visit to a local vineyard/a seminar with wine producers.

Nowadays, travellers tend to compare fees, courses and related travel expenses when choosing a destination. With respect to learning English as a foreign language the range of possibilities is wider than in the past, as besides the traditional, consolidated ones such as the UK, Ireland, Australia, New Zealand, the USA or Canada newer options are available. Today emerging English language destinations like Cyprus, Malaysia, India and the Philippines offer cheaper courses and lower living costs. Malta is also another

English learning option, even though it was somehow affected by the VAT rise on accommodation in 2011. However, geographical considerations such as closeness to source countries are still taken into account when it comes to destination choice, not to mention factors like visa constraints and currency fluctuations (Smith, 2011c).

As for increasing outbound markets, in destinations like the UK, study travel from the Middle East has increased considerably over the past decade in spite of the fact that visa and scholarship requirements must be met (Evans, 2011). Chinese language travel agencies reported in 2011 the rise in the demand for higher education programmes abroad, along with foreign language courses for academic and work purposes, mainly in the US (33% of market share) and the UK (17%), but also in Spain, despite the visa requirements for Chinese students (Hothouse Media Ltd., 2011a). The Spanish market reported a balance between the drop of traditional major outbound destinations affected by the economic downturn like Europe and the USA and the growing volume of students coming from China and Russia in 2013, even though visa regulations were an obstacle for them (Norris, 2014).

Finally, a very important aspect of the language trip package is accommodation. In the past homestay lodging was predominant, while at present residential (shared or single rooms at a hall of residence) on campus accommodation is also in demand, and private apartments are also increasingly used. In general, accommodation standards are now higher to face up to the demands of language travellers. All in all, however, affordability still is the key with respect to accommodation choice, so staying with a host family remains a popular option for many students. Today's language travellers expect good value for money not only when it comes to accommodation and other services included in language trip packages, but they also require to progress faster in their language learning in a shorter time (Smith, 2011c).

2. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Having contextualised language travel from a business point of view, let us examine it from a conceptual perspective. To start with, as no official definition has been articulated by the UNWTO, we will analyse what constitutes language tourism.

According to the UNWTO tourism is a social, cultural and economic phenomenon which entails the movement of people to countries or places outside their usual environment for personal or business/professional purposes. Tourism has implications on the destinations' economy, natural and built environment, and local population, as well as on the tourists themselves. The three basic forms of tourism - domestic tourism, inbound tourism, and outbound tourism- can be combined and originate internal tourism, national tourism and international tourism.

Travellers move between different geographic locations for any purpose and duration. The visitor is a particular type of traveller, so tourism is a subset of travel. A visitor is a traveller taking a trip to a destination outside his/her usual place of residence for less than a year for any main purpose (business, leisure or other personal purposes) other than to be employed by a resident organization in the place visited. A visitor is classified as a tourist or overnight visitor if his/her trip includes an overnight stay. Otherwise, he/she is considered a same-day visitor or excursionist.

Ritchie (2003) states that tourism as an integrated system of components includes a number of interrelated factors, namely a demand side -the tourist market and their characteristics-, a supply side -the tourism industry-, a tourism impact side, and an origin-destination approach related to the interdependence between inbound, outbound and transit destinations and their demand, supply and impacts.

The UNWTO classifies tourism trips according to the main purpose. The category of education and training includes, for example, taking short-term courses paid by employers (excluding on-the-job training), following study programs (formal or informal) or acquiring specific skills through formal courses, such as language courses.

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The Grand Tour, a study trip around Europe first carried out by young British scholars and aristocrats during the 17th, 18th and 19th centuries, is usually viewed as the beginning of cultural and educational tourism. Nowadays, the tourism experiences with educational and learning elements -such as language tourism- are becoming increasingly popular due to the promotion of lifelong learning and higher education in Western cultures, coupled with the willingness to explore post-modern tourist experiences in alternative tourist destinations (Ritchie, 2003).

As maintained by Smith and Jenner (1997), tourism can always have an educational component as it broadens the mind, but specific educational tourism market segments can be identified within the broad educational tourism field. Other authors associate educational tourism to adult extension programs and cultural educational tourism (Kalinowski & Weiler, 1992; Wood, 2001).

Ritchie (2003) distinguishes between two types of educational tourism: travel for purposeful study and travel incorporating learning elements. When presenting the dichotomy of tourism-first versus education-first educational tourism experiences, he argues that education-first segments like language schools students primarily motivated by learning may be considered tourists even if they are not regarded as such or if tourism is not a priority for them. Indeed, they have tourism-related impacts and needs, not to mention the regional development implications of their activities (i.e. visits to cultural tourist sites) for the target destinations.

In line with the guidelines of the UNWTO, Ritchie defines the educational tourist or educational stay-over as "a person who is away from their home town or country overnight, where education and learning are either the main reason for their trip or where education and learning are secondary reasons but are perceived as an important way of using leisure time" (Ritchie, 2003: 18). In contrast, an excursionist or same-day educational tourist engages in a learning activity without staying overnight away from their home.

As for what constitutes educational tourism, Ritchie asserts that it is a "tourist activity undertaken by those who are undertaking an overnight vacation and those who are undertaking an excursion for whom education and learning is a primary or secondary part of their trip. This can include general educational tourism and adult study tours, international and domestic university and school students' travel, including language schools, school excursions and exchange programmes. Educational tourism can be independently or formally organized and can be undertaken in a variety of natural or human-made settings" (Ritchie, 2003: 18).

Building on the above mentioned considerations, following Ritchie and the UNWTO language tourism may be defined as a tourist activity undertaken by those travellers (or educational tourists) taking a trip which includes at least an overnight stay in a destination outside their usual place of residence for less than a year and for whom language learning is a primary or secondary part of their trip (Iglesias, 2014).

Surprisingly, although extensive research has been carried on travelling overseas for language learning purposes from the point of view of second language acquisition, few researchers have examined this phenomenon from a rather holistic language tourism perspective. García Laborda (2007) analyses the difference between language trips and language tourism. For him, the first one mainly has an academic goal, and it consists of summer courses abroad undertaken by adults travelling individually focusing on second language acquisition. Conversely, language tourism is the sum of foreign language learning and entertainment in study abroad stays carried out by groups of younger students. Yet, the irrelevance of such distinction is pointed out by the same author, who wonders how some language trips turn into language tourism, and concludes that both, language travel and language tourism, eventually have very similar purposes, as sojourners generally look for memorable, worthwhile experiences were enjoyment is a fundamental component.

In this article language travel and language tourism are regarded as synonyms, and the key question is why people who have a significant interest in learning a foreign language abroad and make arrangements accordingly for a certain period of time can be considered language tourists. An important consideration will be their use of services provided by the tourism industry.

Kennett (2002) suggests that language learners as cultural tourists have low visibility as they are immersed in the language destination's local culture and would not see themselves as tourists because they are engaged in educational pursuits in non tourist environments, even though they have some of the features of experimental and existential tourists. For Kennett, the serious leisure perspective may provide a theoretical framework for cultural tourism.

Indeed, it is worth considering whether language tourism can be regarded as a type of serious leisure. In 1973 Stebbins coined the term "serious leisure" to refer to "the systematic pursuit of an amateur, hobbyist, or volunteer core activity that is highly substantial, interesting, and fulfilling and where, in the typical case, participants find a career in acquiring and expressing a combination of its special skills, knowledge, and experience" (Stebbins, 1992: 3). This concept was later complemented by Stebbins with two other forms of leisure: casual and project-based leisure. As time went by each one of these forms was broken down into a number of types and subtypes of leisure.

Stebbins defines leisure as a voluntary, contextualized activity carried out in people's free time. People use their abilities and resources to engage willingly in such activity in a satisfying way, a fulfilling way, or both. This is the underlying principle for the serious leisure perspective, the theoretic framework that conceptualizes the three leisure categories: serious pursuits -including serious leisure and devotee work (Stebbins, 2012), casual leisure and project-based leisure.

According to Stebbins, within serious leisure three subtypes exist: amateurs, volunteers and hobbyists. While amateurs are linked with professional counterparts and volunteers are characterized by not receiving a pay for the altruistic help they offer, hobbyists may be cultural tourists, players of sports and games, or nature challenge enthusiasts, among others. In the bibliography section of the serious leisure perspective website (Hartel, 2005), language learners as cultural tourists (Kennett, 2002) are included under the subcategory of hobbyists.

3. METHODOLOGY

The conceptualisation of language tourism presented in this article is based on Ritchie's model of the educational tourism market system and adapted to the idiosyncratic features of this specific niche. Therefore, Ritchie's methodological approach has been used and developed further.

Ritchie conceptualises educational tourism by proposing a systems and segmentation approach depicting the educational tourism market system which "illustrates the elements and settings that combine to provide the educational tourist experience and helps to conceptualize potential research avenues" (Ritchie, 2003: 14). From the demand or consumer perspective, Ritchie's model comprises the educational tourist demographics, motivations, perceptions and travel behaviour; the personal impacts resulting from their experiences; and the interrelationship of these factors. From a supply or product perspective, the model includes the nature of the primary educational tourism product (formed by the combination of primary and secondary suppliers); the possible managing and marketing structures involved; the resource base for this form of tourism; the destination impacts it produces; and the interrelationship of all these factors.

The fragmentation of this sector due to the wide range of organisations involved in the provision, marketing and management of the educational tourism experience may be an obstacle for the stakeholders' operational development. This, in turn, can limit the potential benefits for the target destinations, the tourism industry and the tourists. Therefore, it is particularly relevant to understand the complexities of this

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phenomenon through a systems-based approach.

On the other hand, segmentation -i.e. classifying consumers in sub-groups based on

perspectives. It is important to know each segment's features, needs, perceptions, motivations and preferences and how best manage the educational tourism experience,

Figure 1. The language tourism market system
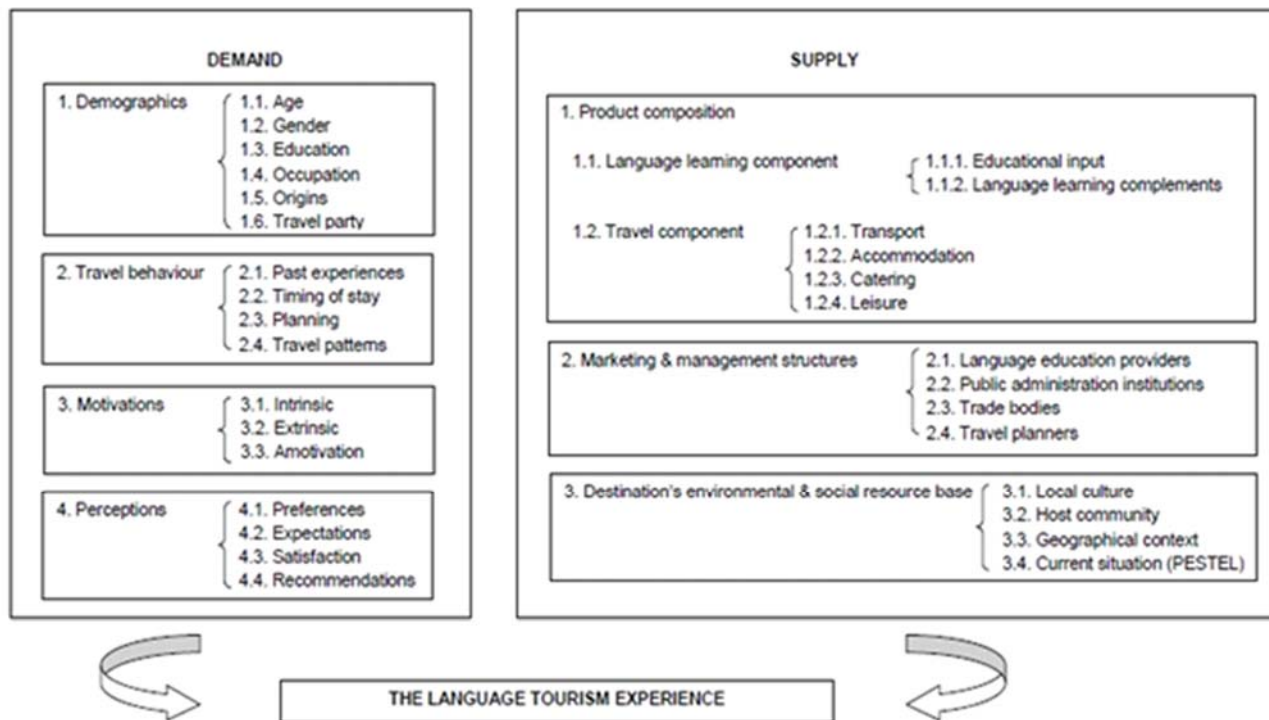
similar characteristics, needs and behaviour- can also help to further understand and manage educational consumers and the educational tourism industry. According to Ritchie, the three main types of segmentation are demographic and socio-economic (related to age, gender, income, employment and education), geographic (related to climate, location) and psychographic (including psychological concepts such as attitudes, values, opinions and personality characteristics). Ritchie analyses four major educational tourism segments: general educational tourism for both the youth and adult market; adult and senior's educational tourism; international and domestic schools' tourism; and international and domestic university/college students' tourism.

A segmentation-based approach is useful in order to study the demand side of the educational tourism market system and the personal impacts, as well as the supply side, from both the education and tourism

since a special interest determines the types of experience tourists look for, the type of product and setting which should be supplied to satisfy them, and the challenges associated with the marketing, managing and planning of this niche market.

4. RESULTS

The model presented in this article puts a spotlight on the main ingredients that make up the language tourism experience concerning both the demand and the supply. Figure 1 offers an overview of the language tourism market system and its constituents.

From the point of view of the consumer (the demand), four main factors need to be considered, namely the language tourists' demographic aspects, their travel behaviour, their motivations and their perceptions.

With respect to the language tourism product (the supply), three key elements must

be born in mind: the product composition, the marketing and management structures in charge of planning, promoting, selling and providing such product, and the language tourism destinations' environmental and social resource base. The language tourism product is made of a language learning component -i.e. some sort of educational input plus several possible language learning complements- and a travel component, which may include transport, accommodation, catering and leisure arrangements. As for the marketing and management structures involved, they can range from language education providers, to public administration institutions, to trade bodies or travel planners. Finally, in order to analyse the environmental and social resource base at the target destinations the local culture and host community need to be studied, as well as their geographical context and their current situation relating to the political, economic, social, technological, environmental and legal factors that define them.

We will be focusing henceforward on the four pillars of the demand by offering a fine-grained taxonomy of consumer-related factors, which have been categorized.

4.1. Demographics

The demographic aspects include the language tourists' age, gender, education, occupation, origins and travel party (i.e. the people they travel with), as shown in Table 1. All these aspects can determine their language tourism experience (Iglesias, 2015a).

Table 1. Demand: demographics

The language tourist: demographics			
1. Age	1.1. Junior	1.1.1. Pre-teens 1.1.2. Teens	
	1.2. Adult	1.2.1. Young 1.2.2. Middle-aged 1.2.3. Senior	
2. Gender	2.1. Male 2.2. Female		
3. Education	3.1. Formal education system	3.1.1. Primary education 3.1.2. Secondary education 3.1.3. Higher education	

	3.2. Informal education	3.2.1. In-company training 3.2.2. Life-long learning		
4. Occupation	4.1. Student			
	4.2. Professional	4.2.1. Professional activity	4.2.1.1. Active 4.2.1.2. Not active	
		4.2.2. Position	4.2.2.1. Employee	4.2.2.1.1. Top management 4.2.2.1.2. Middle management 4.2.2.1.3. Basic operations
			4.2.2.2. Not employee	4.2.2.2.1. Employer 4.2.2.2.2. Self-employed
5. Origins	5.1. Purchasing power	5.1.1. High 5.1.2. Average 5.1.3. Low		
	5.2. Geographical provenance	5.2.1. First world 5.2.2. Developing country		
	5.3. Linguistic identity	5.3.1. Linguistic background	5.3.1.1. Monolingual 5.3.1.2. Multilingual	
		5.3.2. Closeness of first language (L1) to target language (TL)	5.3.2.1. TL similar to L1 5.3.2.2. TL not part of the same language family	
		5.3.3. Previous knowledge of TL	5.3.3.1. Total lack of previous knowledge	
			5.3.3.2. Prior proficiency level (CEFR)	5.3.3.2.1. Advanced 5.3.3.2.2. Intermediate 5.3.3.2.3. Elementary
		5.3.4. Aptitude for L2 learning	5.3.4.1. High 5.3.4.2. Average 5.3.4.3. Low	

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		5.3.5. Personality traits influencing L2 learning (Larsen-Freeman, 1991)	5.3.5.1. Self-esteem 5.3.5.2. Extroversion 5.3.5.3. Reaction to anxiety 5.3.5.4. Risk-taking 5.3.5.5. Sensitivity to rejection 5.3.5.6. Empathy 5..3.5.7. Inhibition 5.3.5.8. Tolerance of ambiguity
6. Travel party	6.1. Individual		
	6.2. Group	6.2.1. Class 6.2.2. Friends 6.2.3. Family	

As a matter of fact, from a foreign language learning perspective the age factor is closely linked to other variables, such as motivation, social identity, personality and aptitude, as well as to the learning context (Lightbrown and Spada, 1993).

Gender is another feature that can be relevant in some specific cultures (Isabelli-García, 2006), particularly for female study abroad sojourners, who sometimes might find it harder to benefit from interactions with the local community.

As for linguistic identity, higher aptitude in the foreign language and personality are also considered key factors. Whereas aptitude is not necessarily innate, personality traits -listed by Larsen-Freeman (1991)- are inherent to the individuals and seem to facilitate second language acquisition provided that they are moderate rather than extreme (Larsen-Freeman, 1991).

4.2. Travel behaviour

The consumers' travel behaviour needs to be taken into account by looking at their past language tourism experiences, the length and period of their current stay, who has been in charge of the planning, and the travel patterns followed before and during their current stay (Iglesias, 2015d). These features are outlined in Table 2.

Table 2. Demand: the language tourist's travel behaviour

The language tourist: travel behaviour			
1. Past experiences	1.1. First time		
	1.2. Previous	1.2.1. Language learning experience	
		1.2.2. Travel component	
2. Timing of stay	2.1. Length of stay	2.1.1. Short term 2.1.2. Mid term 2.1.3. Long term	
	2.2. Period of stay	2.2.1. Year round 2.2.2. Specific season	
3. Planning	3.1. Mediation	3.1.1. Independently 3.1.2. Through intermediaries	
	3.2. Search for information	3.2.1. References	3.2.1.1. Direct acquaintance 3.2.1.2. Indirect acquaintance
		3.2.2. Channel	3.2.2.1. On line 3.2.2.2. Off line
	3.3. Selection of product	3.3.1. Selection process	3.3.1. 1. First choice 3.3.1.2. Market research
		3.3.2. Product configuration	3.3.2.1. Package 3.3.2.2. Single components
	3.4. Arrangements	3.4.1. Travel bookings	
		3.4.2. Language learning	3.4.2.1. Admission 3.4.2.2. Registration 3.4.2.3. Placement
		3.4.3. Legal formalities	3.4.3.1. Travel 3.4.3.2. Work
	3.5. Purchase	3.5.1. Financing 3.5.2. Payment procedures	
4. Travel patterns	4.1. Use of services	4.1.1. Language learning component 4.1.2. Travel component	
	4.2. Interaction	4.2.1. With locals 4.2.2. With other users	
	4.3. Contact with local culture (Berry, 1997)	4.3.1. Integration 4.3.2. Assimilation 4.3.3. Separation 4.3.4. Marginalization	

A key aspect when it comes to the language travellers' behaviour is the cultural and psychological changes deriving from

intercultural contact through acculturation processes. Berry (1997) maintains that the ethnic groups and their individual members who form every plural society must face the question of how to acculturate. In this author's view "strategies with respect to two major issues are usually worked out by groups and individuals in their daily encounters with each other. These issues are: cultural maintenance (to what extent are cultural identity and characteristics considered to be important, and their maintenance strived for); and contact and participation (to what extent should they become involved in other cultural groups, or remain primarily among themselves) (Berry, 1997: 9).

Following Berry's acculturation attitudes model, the degree of tendency to any of the two above mentioned issues leads to four different attitudinal responses or acculturation strategies. Assimilation is related to the fact that individuals do not wish to maintain their cultural identity and wish to interact closely and regularly with the host culture. In contrast, separation occurs when individuals wish to maintain their original culture and avoid connecting with the host culture. Integration takes place when individuals are interested in holding on to their original culture, while at the same time extending relations in the host community. Finally, marginalisation arises if individuals have little possibility or interest in maintaining their original cultural identity (usually because of imposed cultural loss), and are not interested in keeping contact with the host community either (usually due to exclusion or discrimination) (Berry, 1997).

4.3. Motivations

Since the language learning component is a fundamental aspect of the language travel experience, a popular theory in second language acquisition underlies the categorization of motivations depicted in Table 3, which can be applied to the educational input and the language learning complements and also transferred to other aspects of study abroad stays, such as travel component choices and pre and post-trip decisions, as well as the travel patterns in the destination (Iglesias, 2015c).

Table 3. Demand: the language tourist's motivations

The language tourist: motivations	
1. Intrinsic	1.1. Intrinsic knowledge orientation 1.2. Intrinsic accomplishment orientation 1.3. Intrinsic stimulation orientation
2. Extrinsic	2.1. External regulation 2.2. Introjected regulation 2.3. Identified regulation 2.4. Integrated regulation
3. Amotivation	

Self-determination theory was initially developed by Deci and Ryan and formally introduced in the 1980s to study individuals' motivation and personality on the basis of three innate psychological needs: competence, autonomy and psychological relatedness (i.e. identification). In order for people to develop and function properly, engage in activities successfully and enhance their performance, persistence, and creativity such needs should be satisfied and fostered by the socio-cultural environment (Ryan & Deci, 2000).

These authors distinguish between intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. The first one has to do with undertaking activities -such as learning a foreign language- which people enjoy inherently, without expecting some kind of external reward. In contrast, for externally motivated language students learning is a means to an end, e.g. to obtain good qualifications (Ryan & Deci, 2000).

Intrinsic motivation can be divided into three types depending on the origins of learners' satisfaction: intrinsic knowledge orientation (when pleasure draws from satisfying the learners' curiosity about a certain topic), intrinsic accomplishment orientation (when pleasure draws from mastering a difficult task), and intrinsic stimulation orientation (when pleasure draws from the natural beauty of the language, for example in phonetic terms) (Noels, 2001).

As for extrinsic motivation, it can derive from different degrees of self-determination. Therefore, four subtypes of extrinsic motivation can be distinguished and placed along a continuum: external regulation, introjected regulation, identified regulation

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and integrated regulation. The last two are the most self-determined types, as they are closer to intrinsic motivation (Ryan & Deci, 2000). For example, according to Noels (2001) foreign language students may be learning the target language in order to achieve a specific, necessary goal, such as not losing a job (external regulation). They may also self-impose some kind of pressure, such as their willingness to be respected by their colleagues or classmates, and learn a foreign language so as not to feel embarrassed (introjected regulation). Other students may feel that they will eventually become better professionals if they develop their foreign language skills, i.e. learning a foreign language helps them to attain another objective which is important for them (identified regulation). Finally, some students may regard themselves as universal citizens or travellers and consider that their foreign language communicative competence is inherent to that image (integrated regulation).

Besides intrinsic and extrinsic motivation, the lack of motivation whatsoever is referred to as amotivation by Ryan and Deci (2000). Amotivated students are passive and do not believe that their efforts are related to the results they obtain from the tasks they are obliged to do.

4.4. Perceptions

In order to gain a better understanding of users' perceptions concerning their language travel experience, their preferences regarding a wide range of travel and language learning factors are determining, as well as their expectations, degree of satisfaction and recommendation outputs (Iglesias, 2015b). Table 4 offers an overview of these aspects.

Table 4. Demand: the language tourist's perceptions

The language tourist: perceptions		
1. Preferences	1.1. Travel components	
	1.2. Language learning components	1.2.1. Educational input 1.2.2. Language learning complements 1.2.3. Learning styles
2. Expectations	2.1. Confirmation	
	2.2. Disconfirmation	2.2.1. Positive disconfirmation 2.2.2. Negative disconfirmation
3. Satisfaction	3.1. Enhanced satisfaction 3.2. Optimal satisfaction 3.3. Dissatisfaction	
4. Recommendations	4.1. Customer feedback 4.2. References to prospective users	

Expectations and satisfaction are interrelated in this model following the Expectation Disconfirmation Paradigm, which relates the fulfilment of expectations to the satisfaction with a product or service. The Expectancy Disconfirmation Theory is upon the basis of the Cognitive Dissonance Theory, which was introduced in 1957 by Festinger. According to the Cognitive Dissonance Theory, a mismatch between expectations and experience leads to an unpleasant feeling of psychological discomfort (Festinger, 1957).

The Expectancy Disconfirmation Theory has become a dominant framework in terms of assessing customer satisfaction with hospitality and tourism services. Expectations are matched up to product or service functioning, which can cause the confirmation or disconfirmation of expectations. If expectations are confirmed this results in optimal satisfaction, whereas the disconfirmation of expectations can be considered positive or negative depending on whether performance is better or worse than it was expected. Positive disconfirmation gives rise to enhanced satisfaction, while negative disconfirmation derives in dissatisfaction.

Foreign language students sometimes make considerable economic investments in language learning courses, materials and study abroad programs. Study abroad sojourners do have previous expectations from the educational services they are supposed to receive. No need to say that unrealistic expectations can be a source of frustration and dissatisfaction which may prove difficult to foresee and manage without timely detection. The confirmation or disconfirmation of the students' expectations can impact not only on their degree of satisfaction, but also on their motivation, performance, behaviour and the general language learning experience.

Depending on the customers' evaluation of the experience, feedback can be positive or negative, and conducive to the improvement of services. Recommendations can also be negative or positive, and therefore handling recommendations and complaints is very important in terms of attracting prospective customers.

In conclusion, the above mentioned demand-related factors should be taken care of to offer satisfactory language learning experiences abroad. Analysing language travellers' profiles and behaviours, identifying study abroad sojourners' motivations and needs, and providing updated information so that their expectations are realistic is vital when trying to meet them. Of course, an effective needs' analysis taking into account expectations should lead to adapting study abroad programs to the language tourists' demand.

5. CONCLUSIONS

The factors outlined in this article should be taken care of to offer satisfactory language learning trips abroad. Analysing language travellers' profiles and behaviours, identifying study abroad sojourners' motivations and needs, and providing updated information so that their expectations are realistic is vital when trying to meet them. Of course, an effective needs' analysis taking into account expectations should lead to adapting study abroad programs to the language tourists' demand.

Depending on customers' evaluation, feedback can be positive or negative, and conducive to the improvement of services. Recommendations can also be negative or positive, and therefore handling recommendations and complaints is very important in terms of attracting prospective customers. Customer loyalty and retention is fundamental, so product diversification and the introduction of new paradigms may be essential in order to gain returning customers.

It is convenient to offer elements that may constitute an argument to attract repeating travellers to language learning destinations in the future so that they remain competitive.

Once tourist attractions are no longer a novelty and have lost their initial motivational pull, it is necessary to focus on experiences to generate destination loyalty. Thus, language tourism may truly become transformational, an opportunity for fulfilment and for experiential consumption. In turn, the language travel experiences need to be managed sustainably.

The working model of the language tourism market system outlined in this paper has to be further developed. In the meantime, this framework can be used as a starting point to examine the factors that influence the language tourism experience, their interrelations and consequences at different levels.

The approaches and lines of research deriving from this model are numerous and will hopefully take shape through subsequent studies. Future course of action will necessarily lead to categorizing the constituents of the supply. Moreover, prospective studies may aim at gathering well-informed knowledge concerning the language travel demand and supply. Further investigations may explore how the above mentioned factors intervene, analyse the intensity of their effects and pinpoint how to tackle them to find out possible ways of enhancing, controlling or avoiding such impacts.

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