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# Understanding a new tourism market and destination development

## The case of Chinese tourism in Spain

Aureli Lojo Blesa

Supervisors

Dr. Gemma Cànoves

Dr. Mimi Li

Understanding a new tourism market



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Supervisors

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To China and the millions of Chinese  
tourists that travel the world.

This work is a dissertation submitted to fulfill the degree requirements of the PhD Program in Geography at the Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona

**Thesis Committee**  
Page 193

**Title in Spanish**  
Planteamientos para comprender un nuevo mercado turístico y desarrollar el destino: El caso del turismo chino en España

**Image credits**  
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百編巡房索咲頻十  
鎖瘡有修香影移  
月過空在穩脩外寒梅  
是此身

壬亥金壽の常此余亦  
翁其寫法 西唐生高知



# Preface

Now my restless mind is eager to wander,  
now my feet grow stronger, happy in their eagerness.  
Farewell, sweet crowd of comrades,  
who set out together from home far away,  
and whom different roads bring back by different ways.

Catullus, 1st Century CAN



## Preface

# Abstract

China is the top source market, in terms of both numbers of tourists and international tourism expenditure. The growth of tourism in China is one of the most exciting phenomena that have occurred in recent years. However, understanding Chinese tourists is a challenge for Western destinations. The main objective of this thesis is to improve our understanding of Chinese tourism in Spain. To this end, five practical approaches are generated here. The specific research objectives are to: (1) review the existing literature; (2) interpret the tourist product; (3) understand the tourist behavior; (4) know the characteristics of the main sources of tourism information; and (5) identify the image of the destination.

This thesis consists of a compendium of publications. There are three main parts: the general introduction (**Part I**); five articles (**Part II**); and the discussion and general conclusions (**Part III**). From a quasi-positivist philosophical position, all the articles are approached with quantitative data and methodologies. An inductive method has been followed (not based on previous hypotheses, but on research objectives). The design of the research is empirical, and the research strategy is the case study. Two techniques are used for data extraction (web scraping and surveys), which have been analyzed mostly with quantitative techniques.

After analyzing the past 10 years' research production on Chinese outbound tourism, the results of **Article 1** reveal that the main networks of scientific collaboration are built around four authors. The findings also identify and explain six thematic clusters of research: tourist behavior; policies and impacts; industry development; consumer segments; services; and cultural values and tourism. The analysis of the products offered by Chinese travel agencies (**Article 2**) finds patterns and similarities in tourism itineraries. The main cities visited are Barcelona, Madrid, Seville, Granada, Toledo, Mijas, Ronda and Córdoba. The product is formulated through cultural and experiential dimensions. The cultural dimension is formed by history, culture, and architecture. The experiential dimension is formed by the convenience of an organized trip, the tour guide and the services offered.

**Article 3** defines the Chinese tourist's demographic profile, motivations and satisfaction with the destination. The results show that, overall, the Chinese tourist is firstly motivated by novelty and relaxation on their trip to Spain and, secondly, by heritage and culture. However, tourists that visit Spain for the third time are more motivated by the climate, nature, and shopping than by the culture and heritage. After analyzing the websites of four types of information providers, the results of **Article 4** show the positioning of sources in online search engines. The findings also show the profiles of density, diversity and domains of information. Blogs are the most diverse and rich sources of information, followed by travel guides and Barcelona Turisme. In contrast, travel agencies tend to be more repetitive.

**Article 5** proposes a conceptual framework for understanding the fragmentation of the tourist image. The results show that, for Barcelona Turisme, the image of Barcelona is built on the concept of public space, elements of local art, tangible and intangible culture, festivities and sports. In contrast, Chinese sources have a much more traditional and limited image (based on Gaudí). The general discussion and conclusion (**Part III**) includes a discussion of the results, the academic and practical implications, limitations, and future areas of research. As shown in this last part, the methods and theoretical bases contributed by this dissertation are also applicable to other emerging tourism markets. The theoretical and practical implications for the entire dissertation are discussed.

*Keywords: Chinese tourism, new tourism markets, destination development.*

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## Preface

# Presentation

This research was developed under the auspices of the Department of Geography at the Autonomous University of Barcelona between October 2015 and September 2019. The thesis, submitted to fulfill the degree requirements of the PhD Program in Geography, is presented as a thesis by “compendium of publications” and is regulated by the Spanish RD 99/2011 (January, 28) for doctoral studies. Based in this regulation, all article-based dissertation must include at least two published (or accepted for publication) articles in the compendium; the articles must be published in journals contained in international indexes (such as Scopus); information about the journals impact factors should be disclosed; and the dissertation must incorporate a co-authorship statement to explain the role of co-authors (see **Addendum**). According to this regulation, this dissertation includes three parts:

- **Part I**, the general introduction, presents the subject, the thematic unit of the collection of articles, research rationale, investigation gaps, objectives, theoretical basis, and methodological stance.
- **Part II** corresponds to the collection of academic articles.
- **Part III** contains the general discussion and conclusions.

The thesis includes in the **Addendum** a Spanish language version of the Abstract (**Resumen**), details on selected publications and journals (**Scientific production**), an explanatory justification of the work done by the authors of the articles (**Co-authorship statement**), and information about the doctoral candidate (**About the author**).

### *Research production of the doctoral candidate*

Throughout the development of the doctoral thesis, as of July of 2019, I have produced several publications in which I am the first and primary (or only) author. The scientific production includes six articles published (or accepted for publication), one published book chapter, and two articles under review (**Table 1**).

**Table 1.** Scientific Production 2015–2019. Eight articles and a book chapter

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Reference, journal indexes, journal impact factor and status

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- Lojo, A., & Cànoves, G. (2015). El turismo chino en Barcelona. Elementos clave de un fenómeno reciente. *Documents d'Anàlisi Geogràfica*, 61(3), 581–599.
- Lojo, A. (2016). Turismo Chino Emisor: Estado de la Cuestión y Agenda. *Boletín de La Asociación de Geógrafos Españoles*, (72), 471–500.
- Lojo, A. (2016). Chinese tourism in Spain: An analysis of the tourism product, attractions and itineraries offered by Chinese travel agencies. *Cuadernos de Turismo*, (37), 243–268.
- Lojo, A., Li, M., & Cànoves, G. (2019). Co-authorship networks and thematic development in Chinese outbound tourism research. *Journal of China Tourism Research*. 15 (3), 295–319.
- Lojo, A., & Li, M. (2018). Segmentation by experiential familiarity and travel mode of the Chinese outbound market to Spain. *Journal of China Tourism Research*, 14(1), 100–121.
- Lojo, A., & Timothy, D. (2019 accepted). Understanding tourism information sources: Textual communication, efficiency and information gaps. *Tourism Analysis: An Interdisciplinary Journal*. (accepted)
- Lojo, A. (2019 submitted). Tourism behavior of Chinese Generation Y in Europe: Experiences and new trends. (Under review)
- Lojo, A., Xu, H. & Li, M. (2019 submitted). Destination image fragmentation and information sources. A comparative analysis of local and Chinese representations of Barcelona. (Under review)
- Lojo, Aureli (2016). Turismo chino en España, 2015. “Cuando el turista chino llega a Barcelona”. In: Grottsch & Vera (ed.): II Vol. Libro Blanco del Turismo Chino en España: Chinese Dream, pp.128-136. Chinese Friendly Publications.

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These contributions are related to the same specific objectives, theoretical frameworks and methodologies explained in this dissertation (see **Part I. General introduction** and Addendum **Scientific Production**). This work has taken place in an international environment of multidisciplinary collaboration. I have tried to achieve balance between the international diffusion of research in journals of an Anglo-Saxon context and dissemination in a closer context of Spanish journals.

All the articles published during the period of the doctoral thesis (2015–2019) belong to journals indexed in “Scopus”. It is worth mentioning the case of the *Journal of China Tourism Research*, which is part of the first quartile in the area of “Cultural Studies” and the second quartile in the area of “Tourism Studies” in the “Scimago Journal and Country Rank”. In the Spanish context, I have published in the three academic journals of Geography with the highest H index: *Cuadernos de Turismo*, *Documents d'Anàlisi Geogràfica*, and *Boletín de la Asociación de los Geógrafos Españoles* (Delgado López-Cózar & Martín-Martín, 2018). H Index, SJR Index and JCR Index, when available, are provided in the Addendum (see **Scientific Production**).

## *Thesis contents*

This thesis aims to provide insight into new tourism markets and destination development through the study case of Chinese tourism in Spain. Five specific objectives are targeted: (A) gaining a clear idea of which authors have studied about Chinese tourism and what has been studied (at the international scale); (B) understanding the tourist product and the use of the territory in the case of Chinese tourism in Spain; (C) understanding the profile of Chinese tourists in Spain, their experience and tourism behavior; (D) knowing the differences between local and Chinese information sources in the case of Barcelona; and (E) understanding the tourism destination image of Barcelona in the Chinese market.

I have chosen one article for each research objective and conceptual area (A–E) to be included in the collection of publications. Although all the articles are complementary and belong to the same doctoral project, this decision has been taken to balance and define the thesis contents. The selection criteria include: (1) selecting articles in the English language before articles in Spanish; and (2) choosing articles that were already published before the articles under review. This dissertation contains the author original manuscripts (preprints) or the accepted manuscripts of the articles. The version of record (final published version) of the articles is owned by the journals of publication.

The following collection of five articles defines the body (**Part II**) of the thesis:

- Lojo, A., Li, M., & Cànoves, G. (2019). Co-authorship networks and thematic development in Chinese outbound tourism research. *Journal of China Tourism Research*, 15 (3), 295–319. **Published. (Article 1)**
- Lojo, A. (2016). Chinese tourism in Spain: An analysis of the tourism product, attractions and itineraries offered by Chinese travel agencies. *Cuadernos de Turismo*, (37), 243–268. **Published. (Article 2)**
- Lojo, A., & Li, M. (2018). Segmentation by experiential familiarity and travel mode of the Chinese outbound market to Spain. *Journal of China Tourism Research*, 14 (1), 100–121. **Published. (Article 3)**
- Lojo, A., & Timothy, D. (accepted, 2019). Understanding tourism information sources: Textual communication, efficiency and information gaps. *Tourism Analysis: An Interdisciplinary Journal*. **Accepted. (Article 4)**
- Lojo, A., Xu, H. & Li, M. (2019 submitted). Destination image fragmentation and information sources. A comparative analysis of local and Chinese representations of Barcelona. **Submitted. (Article 5)**

吳子見而喜之晴  
酣霜老秋何處紫  
到山嵐紅到樹西  
寒鴉噪晚風無人  
拍點斜陽路



## Part I

# General introduction

Moonlight before my bed  
Perhaps frost on the ground.  
Lift my head and see the moon  
Lower my head and I miss my home.

床前明月光  
疑是地上霜  
舉頭望明月  
低頭思故鄉

Li Bai, 8th Century



## Part I

# General introduction



## Background

Tourism is an immensely geographical activity. It is born from searching for other spaces, landscapes, places, and cultures, and is currently taking place in an increasingly interconnected world. Tourism is a global phenomenon that causes changes and creates relationships between people and places. The main fields of study of tourism from the geographical perspective are: (1) the emergence of contemporary global tourism; (2) tourism's social relationships, environmental issues, and the tourism economy; and (3) understanding tourist areas and territories (Williams & Lew, 2015). Within the emergence of the global tourism field, the rise of new international tourism markets and flows has attracted notable academic and professional interest (Prideaux, Cave, Thompson, & Sibtain, 2012).

In this scenario, the development of Chinese tourism is one of the most exciting events that have occurred in recent years. Tourism in Communist China was considered reprehensible behavior (Arlt, 2006). Due to important structural changes over the last 30 years, we have witnessed the birth, consolidation and evolution of leisure travel in contemporary China. However, understanding the new Chinese tourist in Western destinations is a challenge for marketing, services, and cultural intelligence. This thesis analyses a new tourism market, the Chinese market, from a perspective that extends from the geography of tourism to transdisciplinarity.

## Research rationale

In recent decades, tourism has maintained sustained growth and become one of the fastest growing economic sectors. Tourism has the potential to affect cultural preservation, environmental protection, peace, mutual understanding between

cultures, job creation, economic growth and the evolution of destinations (UNWTO 2017). In order to be a key factor in the economic and cultural dynamism of the territories, tourism development needs to be intentionally planned (Giaoutzi, 2017).

Tourism, as a social event, depends on changes in different collectives. As societies develop, consumption patterns change, and new markets of consumers may emerge. These new markets represent a stimulating field of research, an economic opportunity, and a challenge for tourist destinations (D. Xu & Meyer, 2012). The development of new consumer markets depends on three contextual criteria: a new group of consumers, an adequate social environment, and a state of positive economic inertia to facilitate leisure expenditure (Li, 2016). According to these criteria, the countries with emerging economies represent a paradigmatic case of new tourism markets.

In recent years, economic development has favored new countries taking on a crucial role in contemporary global tourism. The World Tourism Organization projects a growth of international tourist flows of 43 million travelers per year until 2030 (UNWTO, 2018). The highest growth rates will be produced by emerging markets, especially those from the Asia-Pacific region. Emerging markets include all the BRIC countries (Brazil, Russia, India and China), Turkey, Malaysia, Mexico and the Arab countries (Euromonitor International, 2012). However, at the global scale, the areas with the highest growth are the Middle East, Africa and Asia-Pacific (UNWTO, 2019). Tourism in these markets continues to grow due to a favorable economic environment, improvements in airline connectivity, and greater visa facilitation.

Among all the emerging countries, the largest explosion in the number of international tourists has occurred in China. This revolution began in the 1990s, when the Chinese government allowed its citizens to travel to destinations in Southeast Asia. In 1999, it allowed traveling for the first time to two Western destinations: Australia and New Zealand. During the first decade of the 21st century, they began to allow travel to European countries. Currently, 117 countries have received the Approved Destination Status by the Chinese government, which is a requirement to obtain a tourist visa. Globally, the development of Chinese tourism has redefined international tourism flows. Since 2014, China is the top tourism source market, in terms of both numbers of outbound tourists and international expenditure (Law, Sun, Fong, Fong, & Fu, 2016).

Nowadays, the Chinese tourism market is the largest in the world. In 2018, 150 million Chinese tourists left their country and spent more than 261 billion dollars



(Xinhua, 2019). Due to the speed of growth and high disbursement, Chinese tourism is highly desired in Europe, at both top tier and less developed destinations (Jørgensen, Law, & King, 2018). Even at mature destinations that face the challenge of tourist saturation, such as in the city of Barcelona, Chinese tourism is also considered a beneficial segment for diversifying tourism (Barcelona Turisme, 2018b). This is because this market is less bulky than the French, German and English markets; it spends more time in the city; and it is interested in cultural places rather than nightlife (Turespaña, 2019). In 2017, tourists of Chinese nationality made an expenditure of 5.4 million euros in the city of Barcelona, which represented a growth of 90% over the previous year. In the city, Chinese are the top tourism spenders within the non-European markets (Barcelona Turisme, 2018a).

However, the demand from new markets may be affected, primarily by lack of knowledge on tourist behavior. It has been pointed out that, the lack of research in Europe on Chinese tourism and the poor understanding of this market make it difficult to attract these tourists (Prayag, Cohen, & Yan, 2015). To manage tourist destinations, it is necessary to generate research proposals with practical utility (Jin & Wang, 2016). The destinations that will be more desirable and better positioned are those that better understand this source market and obtain visitors who are satisfied with the destination.

## **Gap and objectives**

The study of emerging markets is a novel research opportunity. In Europe, studies on new tourism markets such as China, Russia, India and Arab countries are scarce. According to Jin and Wang's (2016) literature review of more than 150 articles published on Chinese tourism between 2000 and 2014, only six referred to studies located in Europe. Chinese tourism has been studied mainly in Asian destinations, which are very different from European destinations. Hong Kong, Taiwan, Macao and South Korea have the highest number of studies. With the exception of Australia, knowledge on this market is very limited in the West.

When I started this dissertation in 2015, there were zero Scopus indexed articles that addressed the topic of Chinese tourism in Spain. Only four studies could be considered by widening the search to works listed on Google Scholar. Noya (2007) analyzes the components of the image of Spain in China. Bustelo (2007) identifies the importance of economic development and the tourism potential of India and China. Beltrán (2010) studies the case of Asian communities in Spain and transnational mobility. In the first study, which focuses specifically on tourism, Tomás Gaimundiz (2011) explains in his master thesis the need to adapt the local destination to the Chinese market.

Given the lack of studies regarding new tourism markets in Spain and, specifically, about Chinese tourism in Spain, it is necessary to generate research approaches that will help understand this market. This thesis originates as an effort to be an exploratory and empirical study. Since Chinese tourism is one of the main actors in the emergence of global tourism flows, the main objective of the dissertation is to increase the understanding of Chinese tourism in Spain. The study presents a literature review and four specific objectives (with various research approaches). The results can provide academic, marketing and management implications for the development of the destination.

The literature review objective is:

- A. To get a clear idea of which authors have researched into Chinese tourism and what has been studied (at the international scale) by identifying (1) the main authors and universities dedicated to this study area and (2) the main topics and lines of research developed. This review offers an overview of existing knowledge within the field.

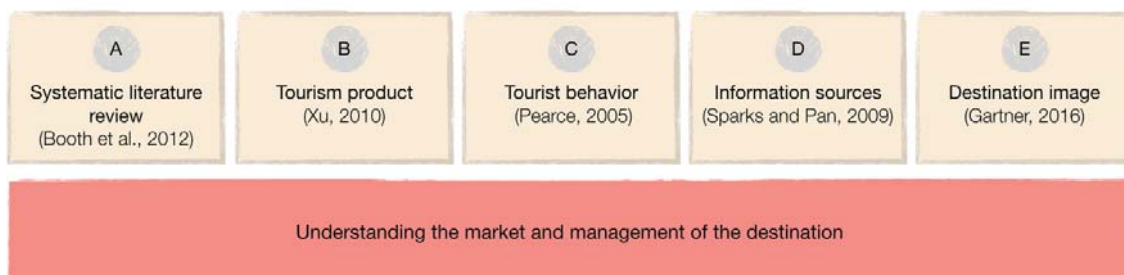
The four specific objectives of this study are:

- B. To understand the tourist product and the use of the territory in the case of Chinese tourism in Spain through the recognition of itineraries within the Spanish territory and the aspects of the destination that construct the formulation of the tourist product.
- C. To understand the profile of Chinese tourists in Spain, their experience and tourism behavior by means of understanding the differences between different segments of Chinese tourists in Spain based on their motivations before the trip and satisfaction after the trip.
- D. To know the differences between local and Chinese information sources, in the case of Barcelona, via the study of content, structure of information, and gaps in knowledge between different Chinese information sources and local information sources.
- E. To understand the tourism destination image of Barcelona in the Chinese market by means of identifying differences between the induced tourist image in the main Chinese sources (travel agencies, tourist guides), the image perceived in China (as it is portrayed in blogs), and the image projected by Barcelona Turisme (according to its official website).

## Conceptual bases

This thesis is built upon the Rationale Choice Theory (RCT). This is a general theory commonly used in the planning and management of tourism destinations (Phillips & Chhabra, 2015). In its first stage, the RCT establishes the need to generate diverse knowledge in order to formulate objectives and rational decisions that guide development at the destination. In this study, the traditional epistemological position is used to consider knowledge as a justified belief that arises from empirical research approaches (Schryen, Wagner, & Benlian, 2015).

**Figure 1.** Five conceptual areas and a general objective



Using the previous premises, the thesis is developed within five conceptual areas linked to the five specific research objectives (**Figure 1**). The conceptual areas pertain to the following domains of knowledge: (A) systematic literature review; (B) tourism product; (C) tourism behavior; (D) tourism information; (E) tourism destination image. Thus, to fulfill the objectives of the study, the following theoretical bases are used:

- A. The concept of systematic literature review designates a synthesis of the knowledge that is formulated by systematically detailing the databases used while indicating the search terms, the reasons for making decisions, and the method of analysis (Booth, Papaioannou, & Sutton, 2012). From the social sciences perspective, the concept of social structures used in the review is understood as patterns of relationships between social groups or individuals (Abercrombie, Hill, & Turner, 2000).
- B. Building upon the general marketing theory, the concept of tourism product is defined as the totality of services consumed at the destination that are promoted by certain agents (J. B. Xu, 2010). Adding a geography of tourism perspective, the tourist product is also formulated according to tourist itineraries (Hernández, 2011). In addition, this study is based on the theory of physical information, according to which the patterns of movement can be measured in a space (Qin, Verkasalo, Mohtaschemi, Hartonen, & Alava, 2012).

- C. Tourism behavior includes all the processes that tourists carry out in planning and participating in tourism (Pearce, 2005). This area of study is based on psychological and sociological theories about consumption, which are useful for defining the concepts of motivation, satisfaction, consumer segmentation, and experiential familiarity. The geographic perspective is used to categorize attributes and representations of the tourist destination (Hall & Page, 2009).
- D. Tourism information sources are things, people, places and experiences, from which it is possible to obtain information about a destination (Sparks & Pan, 2009). This study is based on information theory, which assumes that information can be measured and quantified (Brillouin, 2004). Information theory defines the concepts of information density, diversity and entropy. Additionally, the linguistic perspective allows understanding and comparing the textual contents of different sources.
- E. The concept of tourism destination image is defined as the sum of perceptions, beliefs and ideas that someone has about the tourist destination (Gartner, 2016). This thesis uses the tourist image fragmentation theory, which states that nowadays images of tourist destinations are complicated, fragmented, and diverse because different social agents produce and disseminate information (Camprubí & Coromina, 2017).

## Methodological stance

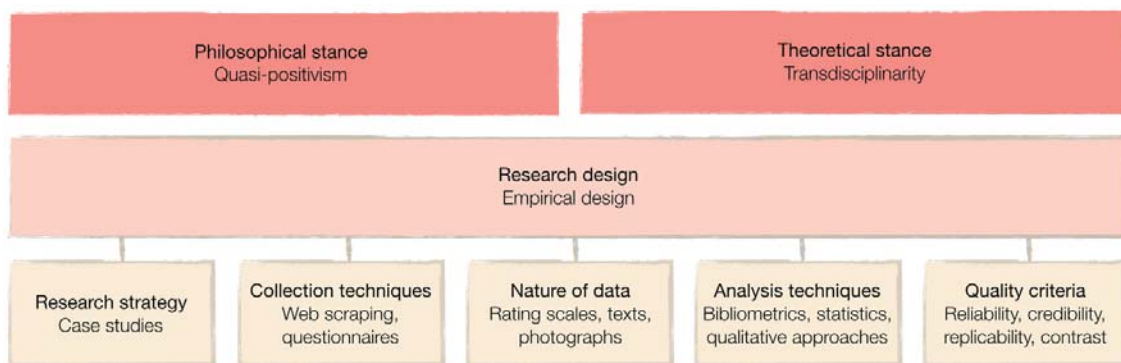
In this dissertation, I take a quasi-positivist philosophical position. Most of the studies are constructed with quantitative data and quantitative methodologies. An inductive method has been followed in all the articles, for which there were no research hypotheses, but instead implicit research objectives (see Arghode, 2012). Through the case studies in this thesis, the results obtained allow us to suggest new variables, factors and processes that affect the theoretical and practical understanding of tourism. The thesis in its entirety is built on an empirical research design (see White, 2011), with explicit-implicit theoretical bases and explicit methodological bases (see Dulany, 2012). The data extraction techniques, the nature of the data, the data analysis techniques and the quality criteria are made explicit in each article included in this thesis.

**Figure 2** shows the general methodological framework and research design. The conceptual constructs and theoretical bases belong to an interdisciplinary academic framework —extending beyond a single discipline and moving towards transdisciplinarity (see White, 2011). The research strategy developed is the case

study, and three contexts are examined: publications on Chinese tourism in 16 academic journals (**Article 1**); Chinese tourism in Spain (**Article 2** and **Article 3**); and, Chinese tourism in Barcelona (**Article 4** and **Article 5**).

Two main techniques are used for data extraction. First, a web scraping technique employed a Mozilla Firefox add-on to extract and download information from websites (e.g., Höpken, Eberle, Fuchs, & Lexhagen, 2018). This technique was used twice: in June 2015 and between April and May 2017. Secondly, surveys were used as a research instrument. In this case, after a pilot study in the Barcelona city Airport, the surveys were distributed to mobile devices through the Chinese messaging application WeChat (e.g., Zhu, Xu, & Jiang, 2015) and were captured during March and April 2016.

**Figure 2.** Methodological framework and research design



The data obtained is quantitative and qualitative in nature, and it includes: (1) socio-demographic profile and Likert Scale ratings on motivation and satisfaction items; and (2) texts and photographs. Numerically, they are quantified as: 44 tour packages from the main Chinese travel agencies; 360 valid questionnaires; more than 300 pages of texts; and 4,990 photographs. In addition, **Article 1** exploits authorship data and existing research themes of 121 academic articles .

This data has been analyzed mainly with quantitative techniques. The main techniques used are: bibliometrics and network analysis (e.g., Koseoglu, 2016); statistical techniques such as frequency analysis, principal component analysis, and variance analysis (e.g., Zhang & Peng, 2014); syntactic and semantic textual analysis techniques (e.g., De Ascaniis & Gretzel, 2013); and also qualitative categorization and domain identification techniques (e.g., Wu & Pearce, 2014).

In this research, several criteria for quality and rigor have been applied. For example, prior to the analysis of the surveys, reliability and internal credibility checks were applied (see Chang & Vowles, 2013). In this case, the following strategic steps were taken: sample screening, IP address verification, and removal of invalid responses. Also, before the distribution of the surveys, a pilot study was performed.

Regarding the data obtained from the websites, we have maintained objectivity and contrasted the importance of the data sources (see Nielsen, 2011); To increase the reliability of the qualitative processes, the categorization has been replicated and verified between the author (or the various authors) and a research assistant of Chinese nationality (see Wu and Pearce, 2014). More specific details about quality and rigor are found in each article. In addition, throughout all the research processes, I had the assistance and collaboration of Chinese professors, research colleagues, and translators who have assisted with language and cultural issues.

## **Dissertation contents**

**Part II** is comprised of a collection of five academic articles. I have included a single article for each research objective and conceptual area (A, B, C, D, and E). **Article 1** contains a review of the literature on Chinese tourism in an international context. This systematic study analyzes the content of 121 articles published on Chinese tourism in the 16 journals with the greatest impact on tourism. Through bibliometric techniques, a relational analysis is developed. The results reveal the networks of collaborations between authors, the main institutions and the geographical areas of research. The results also identify six major areas of research and discuss future lines of research.

One of the most important aspects of tourism, from a geographical perspective, is the spatial distribution and patterns of movement at the destination. In **Article 2**, after analyzing the characteristics of tourism in China, we analyzed the tourism product offered by Chinese tour operators. The distinctive elements used to formulate the tourism product are detailed through an analysis of their tour packages. Itineraries, main destinations within Spain, and the most appreciated destination attributes are identified.

Chinese tourism in Europe has evolved in the last 15 years and, currently, different types of tourists coexist. **Article 3** focuses on tourism behavior and tourist segmentation to understand the most important types of present-day tourists. The results show the differences between group tour travelers (GTT), free independent travelers (FIT), first time visitors, and repeat visitors. Through a statistical analysis, the findings show differences in the profile of the tourists, their motivations, satisfaction and intention to return to the destination.

The contents of different sources of tourist information are compared in **Article 4**. A case study of the information about the city of Barcelona is presented. To understand the communication differences in Chinese and local information sources, this research examines the texts of the websites of the Barcelona Tourism Office

(DMO) and a set of Chinese information sources (travel agencies, travel guides, and travel blogs). The results compare the communication, concentration and distribution of information. The findings also explain the differences in content between the analyzed information sources.

The destination image is an important concept in tourism. It influences the marketing of the destination and tourist behavior. In **Article 5**, a conceptual framework of the fragmentation of the tourist image is proposed. With a case study, the textual and photographic representations of Barcelona are examined in different Chinese information sources. An analysis of mixed quantitative and qualitative content is carried out to identify the main variables that explain destination image fragmentation. The results also show the differences in the image of the destination.

**Part III** contains the global discussion of results and conclusions. I also reflect on the nature of the research as well as the theoretical and practical implications. Limitations and future research areas are also discussed. In addition, I endeavored to increase the flow between the various articles collected in the dissertation by adding flow tables (Bridging Sections 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5) between articles. Note that the published version of the articles do not contain these bridging sections.

### Bridging Section 1

| Three main parts |   |                              |  |
|------------------|---|------------------------------|--|
| <b>Part I</b>    | <b>General introduction</b>   |                              |  |
| <b>Part II</b>   | <b>Objective A</b>  | Systematic Literature Review | <b>Article 1:</b> Co-authorship networks and thematic development in Chinese outbound tourism research             |
|                  | <b>Objective B</b>  | Tourism Product              | <b>Article 2:</b> Chinese tourism in Spain: An analysis of the tourism product, attractions and itineraries...     |
|                  | <b>Objective C</b>  | Tourist Behavior             | <b>Article 3:</b> Segmentation by experiential familiarity and travel mode of the Chinese outbound market to Spain |
|                  | <b>Objective D</b>  | Information Sources          | <b>Article 4:</b> Understanding tourism information sources: Textual communication, efficiency and gaps            |
|                  | <b>Objective E</b>  | Destination Image            | <b>Article 5:</b> Destination image fragmentation and information sources...                                       |
| <b>Part III</b>  | <b>General discussion and conclusions</b>   |                              |  |
|                  | <b>Addendum:</b> Abstract, scientific production, co-authorship statement, about the author |                              |  |

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## Part II

# Collection of articles

Two roads diverged in a yellow wood,  
And sorry I could not travel both  
And be one traveler, long I stood  
And looked down one as far as I could  
To where it bent in the undergrowth

Robert Frost, 1916



## Article 1

# Co-authorship networks and thematic development in Chinese outbound tourism research



## Abstract

Due to the increasing number of contributions, related topics that were addressed, and contributing authors, Chinese outbound tourism was established as a research field in the mid-2000s. The purpose of this paper is to review the literature in the field via analysis of collaboration patterns and thematic development using a bibliometric approach. 121 academic articles published between 2006 and 2016 are retrieved from 16 tourism journals, and a relational analysis is performed by creating co-authorship and co-keyword networks. The results offer networks of col-

laborations between authors, institutions and the geographical origins of the research. This network analysis permits exploration of linkages among central authors and institutions. In addition, the results identify and discuss six main thematic areas of research. Significant structural characteristics of the research field, implications and unexplored research themes are presented and discussed.

*Keywords: Co-authorship, Bibliometric studies, Chinese outbound tourism, Co-keywords, Network analysis*

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## Introduction

In the last 30 years, academic research on Chinese tourism has been growing in quantity and quality due to the work from scientists from within and outside China (Huang, van der Veen, & Zhang, 2014). Within Chinese tourism studies, outbound travel is recognized as a critical research component (Jin & Wang, 2016; Law, Sun, Fong, Fong, & Fu, 2016; Tse, 2015) along with others such as sustainability, management of resources, human resources training, and local policy and planning (Andreu, Claver, & Quer, 2010). According to Keating et al. (2015), the Chinese outbound tourism research field has recently become recognized and legitimized within the broader field of tourism scholarship with the involvement of more researchers and topics. It would therefore be of great interest to comprehend the attributes and characteristics of this newly developed research field.

To study the characteristics and attributes of any research field, two primary different perspectives can be employed (Koseoglu, Rahimi, Okumus, & Liu, 2016). The first perspective includes traditional methods of review, systematic reviews and qualitative approaches, all of which can provide a framework that depicts the evolution of the topics. The second perspective considers bibliometric analyses, which can increase objectivity and are valuable for mapping the structure and dynamics of the scientific subject. In following the assumptions of the second approach, the new topics are socially negotiated and dynamically produced through networks of researchers and institutions that form communities for collaborations (Belhassen & Caton, 2009; Benckendorff & Zehrer, 2013). Thus, the relational structure of scientific collaborations, institutions, and research domains are elements that allow us to frame the progress and characteristics of a specific tourism topic.

Chinese outbound travel is an attractive research topic, and it has led to a branching off of the previous scholarly literature reviews. Three previous types of literature reviews have been developed: narrative reviews focusing on understanding the status of Chinese outbound tourism research (Cai, Li, & Knutson, 2008; Law et al., 2016; Tse, 2015); systematic reviews dividing the analyzed articles into fields of knowledge (Jin & Wang, 2016; Keating et al., 2015); and a review that creates a holistic scheme of drivers for destination choice (Keating & Kriz, 2008).

The growing number of articles reviewing this research field illustrate that the existing research has been often superficial: repeatedly similar methods are employed to study motivations and image (Tse, 2015); previous studies usually fail to differentiate between basic tourists' segments (Lojo & Li, 2018); and this has led to homogeneous and stereotypical representations of Chinese tourists in the acade-

mic literature (Jørgensen, Law, & King, 2018). In response to the call for an in-depth understanding, literature reviews are required to contribute new research directions, propose alternative research techniques, and offer new perspectives. To our knowledge, a bibliometric review with relational insights has yet to be covered and will allow shedding new light onto social structures as well as the thematic structure of tourism, thus leading to a deeper understanding of the research.

Following the previous considerations, this study aims to offer a more quantitative, objective approach using bibliometric techniques which: (1) will offer a social network analysis through the examination of the networks of co-authorship, universities and geographical areas involved in the production of research; and (2) will supplement previous review efforts to portray the thematic structure of the research following a co-word analysis. The findings will enable researchers, managers and industry practitioners to understand the research field's social and thematic structure while also providing them with six new proposed research directions.

## **Background**

Since the nearly nonexistent Chinese outbound tourism (COT) in the 1970s and 1980s, the recent growth of Chinese outbound travel has been a revolution in terms of Chinese consumption patterns and consumer behavior. Since 2014, China has been the first source market for international tourism worldwide. If the Chinese economy and household income continue growing, the number of travelers is expected to increase, as currently only 4% of the Chinese population owns a passport compared to 37% of Americans (Xinhua, 2017). Due to this development, the number of studies regarding COT has been steadily growing (Jin & Wang, 2016). Keating et al. (2015) studied the stages of development of COT research and concluded that three stages can be identified in the development of the research field. The first studies on COT began during the 1983–1992 period, but those articles have only an ancillary focus on Chinese outbound travel. A second stage is identified during the 1993–2002 period, when the research focused on the potential characteristics of the Chinese market for places such as Korea and Hong Kong. Third, the research topic took off in the middle of the 2000s, as can be shown by the increase in the published research, the topics and the methods used to study it.

Several papers have reviewed COT with unique contributions, but they are not exempt from the research limitations that allow for further investigations. The first reviews appeared in 2008 (Cai et al., 2008; Keating & Kriz, 2008) and adopted two distinct approaches. Cai et al. (2008) reviewed 30 academic articles from 20 tour-

ism journals published from 1995 to 2006, developed a qualitative narrative review, and recognized three main research streams: market overview, destination-specific research with findings obtained from secondary data, and destination-specific research with findings from primary consumer data. Keating and Kriz (2008) conducted a unique review approach that focused on the drivers of the destination choice made by Chinese outbound tourists. They created a model for destination choice that included five elements for explaining the destination choice: push factors, pull factors, internal moderators, destination image and external moderators. These first review efforts were motivated by the growth of research in the field and they questioned whether Western models and the same predominant tourism methodologies should be applied to study Chinese tourism.

With the evolution of the research field, new reviews emerged to assess the recent changes. Tse (2015), through a qualitative thematic review, integrated the findings and discussions from 80 papers published in 21 tourism journals between 1995 and 2013, and he identified three broad categories of research: destination-related, tourist-related and source-market-related. Law et al. (2016) reviewed 122 articles by following a systematic and an in-depth qualitative assessment of the studies. These authors revealed changes in researched destinations along with the Approved Destination Status scheme, the development of research problems, the methods and data collection techniques used and the changes in research topics. Both reviews were motivated to integrate the findings of COT articles through a profound qualitative approach, which is effective for critically analyzing the research though it does not observe the social characteristics of the research production.

Two reviews used systematic approaches to assess the corpus of literature. Firstly, Keating et al. (2015) performed a review of articles published from 1983 to 2012, which they extracted from three journals. The review chronicled the main contributions in three stages (1983–1992, 1993–2002 and 2003–2012) and classified the articles into research disciplines. As the authors acknowledged, one of the research limitations is that the study was restricted to only three journals, which may make it difficult to generalize the findings. Secondly, Jin and Wang (2016) combined the narrative and systematic quantitative review approaches and selected 161 articles published between 2000 and 2014 in 16 tourism journals. Both review articles combined quantitative and qualitative approaches to assess the research field in a compelling way. In both cases, their studies lack a deep social analysis. Regarding the topics addressed, both articles categorized the articles among research disciplines and procured a narrative synthesis of the main results within each discipline. Nevertheless, classifying the articles according to disciplines of study makes it dif-



difficult to understand not only the interests and linkages between topics, but also the internal structure of the COT research.

By adding a new perspective to the earlier works, a relational bibliometric study can provide information about aspects that have not yet been studied. None of the previously mentioned studies have analyzed authorship networks, the contributions of academic institutions or the relationships between keywords. Thus, the originality of this present study is related to the methodology used, because advanced bibliometric techniques contribute to an understanding of the inner structures of the research field, thus providing a broader picture than those used in previous qualitative and discipline-based analyses.

Bibliometric studies in tourism add knowledge of the discipline domains, the intellectual and social structure, and how they evolve over time, all of which can be uncovered through the quantitative studies of published articles as bibliographical units (Broadus, 1987). Bibliometric analysis is an approach for evaluating the progress of a discipline or a research topic by “sorting data, including citations, author affiliations, keywords, themes discussed, and methods employed in published studies via basic/advanced statistical techniques” (Koseoglu et al., 2016, p. 180). According to Koseoglu et al. (2016), there are two main typologies of bibliometric studies: evaluative and relational studies. The former studies employ techniques to measure the productivity and impact metrics of publications. The latter employ quantitative methods to explore relationships between authors, institutions, and keywords of the publications, all based on the Network of Social Agents theory. In other words, relational techniques try to find relationships among published research by considering citations, authors, affiliations and keywords to construct networks of relationships and co-occurrence analysis. These studies produce indicators for the structural characteristics of research production (Benckendorff & Zehrer, 2013).

The analysis of the co-authorship and institution networks of scientific research allows understanding the patterns of collaboration and comparing collaborative statistics to different contexts (Uddin, Hossain, Abbasi, & Rasmussen, 2012). Co-word analysis techniques are used to map the dynamics of the scientific subject by means of social network analysis (He, 1999). Based on the co-occurrence of words, this technique seeks to visualize the themes being researched and the linkages among them (Ronda-Pupo & Guerras-Martin, 2012). Thus, co-keyword analysis has been used previously in bibliometric studies of Tourism research (Hoz-correa, Muñoz-Leiva, & Bakucz, 2017; Ying & Xiao, 2012) and of Social Science research (Leung, Sun, & Bai, 2017; Olmeda-Gómez, Ovalle-Perandones, & Perianes-

Rodríguez, 2017), specifically in order to create a network of themes and its relationships in the conceptual space of a research field using an objective quantitative approach (Koseoglu et al., 2016).

## Methods

The sequence of this research has been developed by following the three key parts of the systematic review argued by Briner and Denyer (2012): first, a comprehensive accumulation of literature was done by locating, selecting and including/excluding literature; second, an analysis was developed; third, a reflective interpretation was carried out by identifying and critically appraising the results. To achieve the goals of the paper, the methodology is based on the theory of networks of social agents (NSA). In this paper, the NSA is used to visualize relational structures of knowledge production and it is employed in two phases. In the first phase, the results show different networks to disclose the origin of the research (authorship, institutions, and regions). In the second phase, the research themes are mapped through the co-occurrence and clustering of keywords.

## Sampling

For this review, the sources of data were academic tourism journals, with only research articles being considered. Following the model previously developed and used by Jin and Wang (2016), five tourism journal rankings have been examined. The rankings are derived from (a) four academic articles that include ratings of relevant tourism journals and from (b) the Thomson Reuter's Social Science Citation Index (McKercher, Law, & Lam, 2006; Michael Hall, 2011; Pechlaner, Zehrer, Matzler, & Abfalter, 2004; Ryan, 2005; SSCI, 2016). The selected journals for the present study appeared in three of the five sources. Fifteen journals were selected: *Tourism Management*, *Annals of Tourism Research*, *Journal of Travel Research*, *International Journal of Hospitality Management*, *Journal of Hospitality and Tourism Research*, *International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management*, *Journal of Travel and Tourism Marketing*, *Cornell Hospitality Quarterly*, *Tourism Economics*, *Asia-Pacific Journal of Tourism Research*, *Journal of Hospitality Marketing and Management*, *International Journal of Tourism Research*, *Current Issues in Tourism*, *Tourism Analysis*, and *Journal of Sustainable Tourism*. In addition, the *Journal of China Tourism Research* has been added because it is the only journal that specializes in China tourism.

The objectives of this study are to understand the recent structures of knowledge creation, so all the articles published between 2006 and 2016 have been selected for further analysis. In this examination, we have also included the articles that

were available online (as advancements) as of June 2016. There are two main reasons to select 2006 as the starting year for sampling articles. Firstly, two previous review papers analyzed Chinese outbound tourism research from its origin to the year 2006 (Cai, Li and Knutson, 2008; Keaton and Kriz, 2008); therefore, the present study aims to supplement the previous results revealed in those articles in order to offer insights into the recent developments of the research field. Secondly, the articles in this study that were retrieved before 2006 were small in number and had a similar focus. Only one paper from 2006 in the selected journals was centrally related to Chinese outbound tourism; and this became four papers in 2007 and ten papers in 2008. The topic exploded after 2010, with more than 15 papers being published each year.

The search for articles was performed directly on the websites of each of the selected journals and using six search strings: “China outbound”, “Chinese outbound”, “China international”, “Chinese international”, “China overseas” and “Chinese overseas”. 129 articles were retrieved in this first phase. Next, the articles were first examined to determine their inclusion or exclusion: all the papers that analyze mainland Chinese outbound tourism were included; the papers excluded were those that focused only on Chinese domestic tourism or on Chinese outbound tourism from Taiwan, Hong Kong or Macau. Articles that study the tourism behavior of Chinese students in international contexts (outside China) were also included. After this process, 15 papers were initially excluded and 114 articles were selected for the analysis phase (see **Annex 1**). During a second screening stage, seven articles that study domestic Chinese tourism were finally included because their results draw conclusions and implications for “outbound tourism” (as expressed by the authors themselves within their articles’ text) (see **Annex 2**); and eight articles were finally excluded (see **Annex 3**).

### *Standardization and cleaning the data*

The step of standardizing and cleaning the data in NSA is crucial for developing a relational analysis, and “it can be done manually or using specific software depending on the volume of the data” (Fonseca, Sampaio, Fonseca, & Zicker, 2016, p. 4). In this study, the standardization of the codes (authors, affiliations, and keywords) was performed manually and each article’s metadata was individually checked. Firstly, the library of articles was transferred into reference/citation manager software. The spellings of authors’ names and surnames (individual authorship) were homogenized using the software interface. Second, the authors’ affiliations to academic institutions (organizational authorship) were also homogenized. Finally, it was necessary to consolidate the keywords of the articles, and similar keywords were simplified and standardized. For example, “tourism motivations” and “Chi-

nese motivations” were simplified into “motivations”. “Chinese tourism”, “Chinese outbound tourism” and “China tourism” were deleted as they cannot offer new information about the relations between topics. After these processes, the library was exported as a simple text data file in order to analyze the information using software for advanced bibliometric studies.

### *Analysis of the data*

For the analysis of the data, VosViewer software was used in this study (van Eck & Waltman, 2013). The first procedure was to calculate the characteristics of the networks. Three main networks were generated. The first was a network of co-authorship and collaboration between researchers within the research field. In this network, the nodes are the authors and the links connect authors who have co-authored a paper. Second was a network of academic institutions that show the patterns of cooperation between authors’ institutions of affiliation (nodes) and their connections (links). Thirdly, the network of keywords is used to determine the topics of research, which are represented by nodes (keywords) and links connecting different keywords that appear together in the articles. For these networks, the number of nodes, links, density of the network, largest set of connected items, and number of clusters are included as descriptive characteristics of the network (Table 1).

The clusters —using the VosViewer jargon— are a set of closely related nodes that are calculated according to the “smart moving algorithm” technique of normalization analysis (van Eck & Waltman, 2010), and each node of the network pertains to only one cluster. In this study, the clustering resolution has been set at a value of 1.00 and the minimum cluster size is set to 1; for the co-keyword analysis of topics, the minimum cluster size has been set to 20 (Waltman, van Eck, & Noyons, 2010).

**Table 1.** Descriptive characteristics of the networks

| Type of network | Nodes | Links | Density | Largest set of connected nodes | No. clusters | Representation  |
|-----------------|-------|-------|---------|--------------------------------|--------------|-----------------|
| Co-Authorships  | 225   | 278   | 0.0055  | 29                             | 59           | <b>Figure 1</b> |
| Institutions    | 112   | 130   | 0.0209  | 71                             | 39           | <b>Figure 2</b> |
| Co-keywords     | 266   | 789   | 0.0236  | 238                            | 32           | <b>Figure 3</b> |

The first section of the findings shows the relational analysis of authorships, institutional affiliation of authors and countries of origin of the produced research. The second section of the findings show the intellectual and thematic structure of the research field using a co-occurrence analysis and frequency analysis of keywords.

**Table 2** shows the evolution of the most frequent keywords for three different periods, namely 2006–2010, 2010–2013 and 2013–2016. In **Table 3**, the clustering technique has been employed to select the main research topics and the relationships between them. In this table, the numbers in the third column are a cross reference to the articles included in **Annexes 1** and **2**. Although all the articles are contained in at least one category of keywords, some of them pertain to more than one research category.

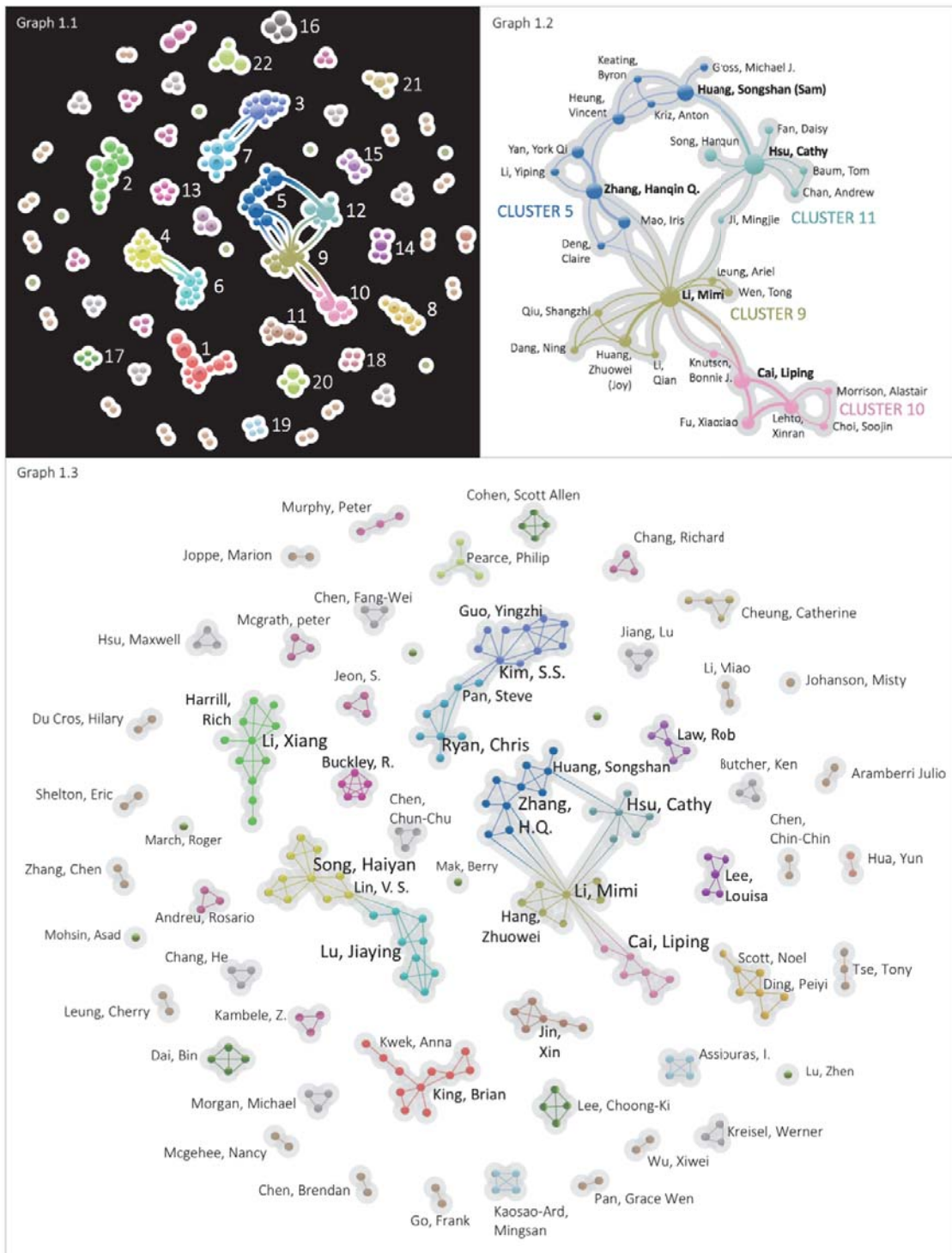
## Findings

### *Social structure of the research field*

The production of the Chinese outbound tourism research is highly collaborative. In our sample, most of the papers are authored by two or three authors, with these papers accounting for 78.25% of the total. Only 10 articles are authored by a single author, which accounts for 8.26%. The degrees of relationships between groups of authors allow organizing the researchers into 51 clusters (Graph 1.1 in **Figure 1**). Of the total number of clusters, only eight have connections with other groups. In the middle of the graph is situated the core, which is the densest part of the network; while on the periphery are allocated the sparse parts of the network, with authors that have none to one collaboration. The biggest cluster is formed by 11 authors represented by nodes (Cluster 1 in Graph 1.1). The three biggest clusters are formed with collaborations around Brian King and Anna Kwek (Cluster 1, 11 nodes), Samuel S. Kim (Cluster 2, 11 nodes) and Haiyan Song (Cluster 3, 10 nodes).

The largest set of connected authors within the whole sample includes 29 researchers. They are linked through Clusters 5, 9, 10 and 11. In **Figure 1**, Graph 1.2 shows this set of authors with enough detail to see the complete relationships between authors. As can be seen in the graph, the largest set of connected authors is constructed around researchers Cathy Hsu, Liping Cai, Mimi Li, Songshan Huang and Hanqin Q. Zhang. Graph 1.3 in **Figure 1** represents the whole network of authors, which includes 225 authors and 278 arcs, resulting in a network density of 0.0055. If total linkages are considered, the authors that contributed most to the network cohesion are Mimi Li, Xiang Li and Haiyan Song, who all have 10 or more links with other authors; while Cathy Hsu, Samuel S. Kim, Hanqin Q. Zhang, Cai Liping, Jiaying Lu and Chris Ryan all have 7 or more links with other authors. They are also the researchers that contributed most to the production of articles, with four or more papers in the sample. Graph 1.3 also shows that – out of 51 clusters – only 7 are formed with one author and 13 with two authors. This confirms the tendency to work within a collaborative environment.

Figure 1. Network of Co-authorships

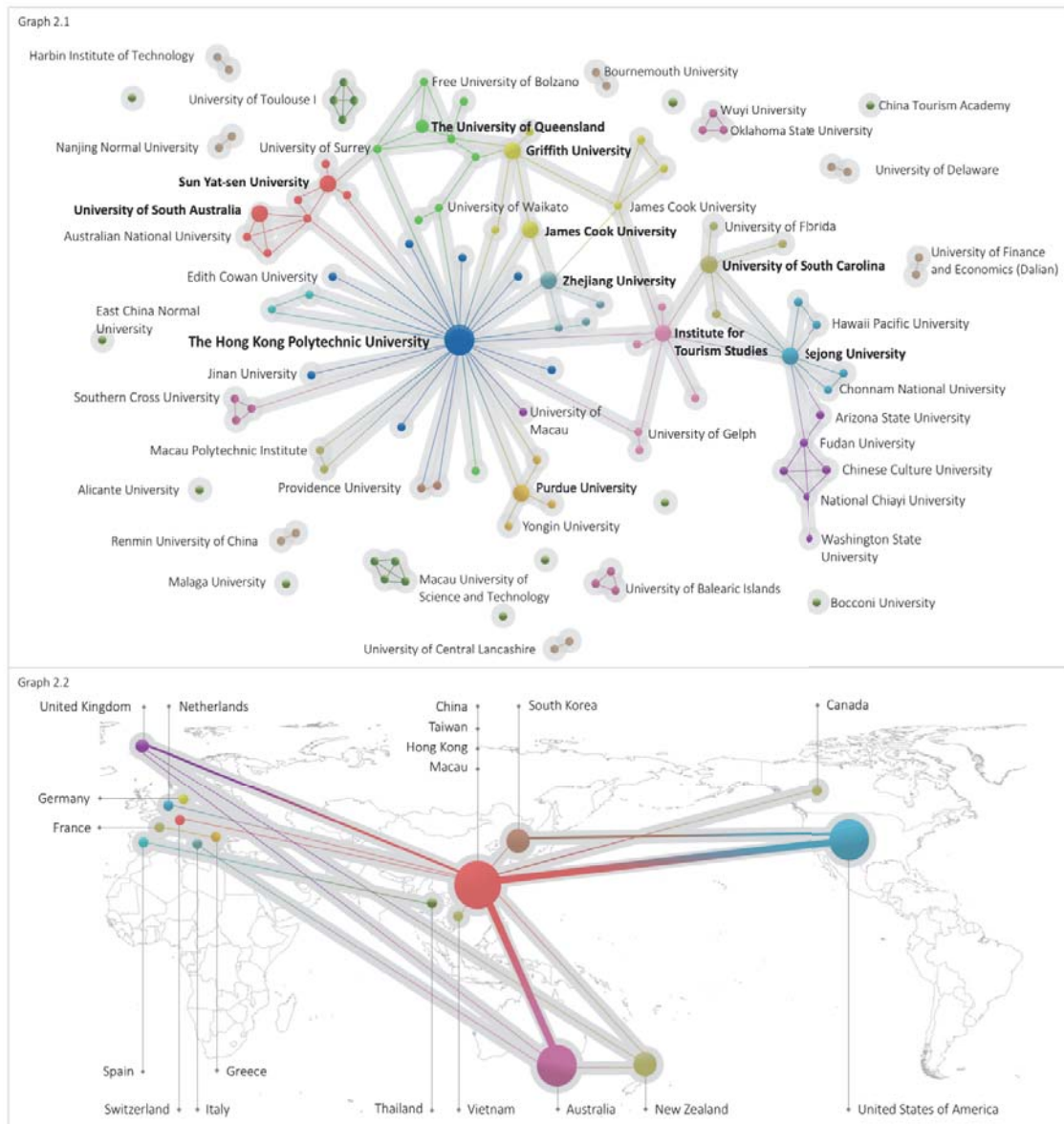


Note 1: Graph 1.1 represents the 51 clusters present in the sample. Clusters with more than 4 authors are numbered according to the number of authors per cluster.

Note 2: Graph 2.2 shows the largest set of connected items, formed by 29 authors from 4 clusters. The size of the node is determined by the number of links, and the size of the arcs is determined by the number of collaborations between authors.

Note 3: Graph 3.3 provides the whole network of authors.

Figure 2. Relationships between institutional affiliation and countries of origin of authors



The network of academic institutions (Figure 2, Graph 2.1) is built with 112 nodes and 130 links, with a density of 0.0209. All the authors are affiliated with higher education institutions except for those authors affiliated to the China Tourism Academy (CTA), Corallia Clusters Initiative (CCI) and the Hong Kong Institute of Vocational Studies (HKIVS). The CTA is a research organization dependent on the China National Tourism Administration, a public entity in China. The CCI is a public organization devoted to the management of and innovation in Greece. However, each of them contributes to the production of only one article. Overall, the sample of articles reveal the lack of collaboration between private enterprises, public research organizations, public administrations and universities. The absence of private enterprises in the sample is especially relevant.

**Figure 2** shows that the main institution linked with the production of research is The Hong Kong Polytechnic University (HKPU). 66 authors are affiliated with this institution, and it corresponds with 20.5% of the authors and the production of 39 documents. Regarding the network structure (**Figure 2**, Graph 2.1), HKPU holds a central place with a link strength of 36 connections. Along with HKPU, the top 10 universities in terms of producing research and international collaboration are: the Macau Institute for Tourism Studies (Macau), Griffith University (Australia), Sejong University (South Korea), Zhejiang University (China), James Cook University (Australia), University of South Australia (Australia), Purdue University (USA), Sun Yat-sen University (China) and the University of Queensland (Australia). Around HKPU is formed the largest set of connected items, with 71 institutions altogether. In this network, 13 out of 112 institutions are unconnected and displayed on the periphery of the graph.

Graph 2.2 in **Figure 2** shows the relevance of Hong Kong, Macau, China and Taiwan in the production of research. This cluster completely or collaboratively produces 92 documents out of 121. The next regions in terms of research production are Australia (where 39 documents originate) and the United States of America (with 27 documents). Next are New Zealand, the United Kingdom and South Korea, which contribute, respectively, 8, 7 and 6 documents. All the other remaining regions present in **Figure 2** range between one and three documents. The results show that the more productive institutions are from East Asian countries and regions, which coincide with: (a) the demographic, geographic and cultural proximity to Mainland China; and (b) East Asian regions such as Hong Kong that receive a greater flow of mainland Chinese tourists and are more affected by this tourism market (Xie & Li, 2009). In addition to Australia, a Western country that is closer to China, the United States of America also contributes significantly to the research, in part due to the higher number of Chinese researchers within the academic institutions of these two Western countries.

### *Thematic structure of the research field*

**Figure 3** shows the network of co-occurrence of keywords within the sample, which allows an understanding of the topics that have been researched. The co-word analysis is used to illustrate the association between keywords in the sample of articles, thus allowing for a (a) visual representation of the research field, (b) a greater understanding of the evolution of the main research topics, and (c) organization of the reviewed articles. In this study, the topics addressed can be reduced to a set of six clusters. As a result, the clusters, keywords and their connections can be visualized in a thematic network (**Figure 3**). The most frequent keywords



are presented in a larger size while the most connected topics are located at the center of the figure. The most studied components are related to travel motivations (89 links with other keywords), destination image (49 links), tourist behavior (45 links), group tours (39 links), tourist satisfaction (39 links) and segmentation of tourists (38 links). The most frequently studied destinations include Australia, Macau, Taiwan, Hong Kong and the United States. The figure also shows different topics that are studied in relation to certain destinations, such as recreational vehicle tourism and zero-fare tours in Australia and cross-strait territorial impacts of tourism between Taiwan and China. On the periphery of the graph are located eccentric topics such as Confucianism and Chinese tourism, educational tourism, food and food services, marketing and the territorial distribution of tourism at the destination, tourism impacts, and tourism policies.

Figure 3. Network of co-keywords



Note: Clustering resolution “1.0” and minimum cluster size “20”. Clustering technique by “association strength” (van Eck and Waltman, 2013).

In Table 2, the changes in the most frequent keywords show the evolution of the main research topics. During the first period of our sample, between the years 2006 and 2010, the articles centered on the case of Australia as a destination for Chinese outbound tourism and unethical practices in tourism, such as zero-commission tours, which account for 4.82% of the total keywords of the period. In the second and third stage, from 2010 onward, the topics of travel motivations and destination image grow sharply in relevance. In addition, the articles show differ-

ent ways to segment the tourists in order to understand Chinese tourists in foreign destinations. The evolution of topics also shows a structural characteristic: the number of published articles, topics and keywords follows an increasing trend. In the selected sample, 22 articles and 60 keywords comprise the first stage; 43 articles and 106 keywords are in the second stage; and 56 articles and 165 keywords in the third. The greater diversity of studied topics and destinations makes it possible to cluster them into six different groups that are represented by different colors in **Figure 3**. **Table 3** shows the main research topics within each cluster and a cross-reference to the articles reviewed.

**Table 2.** Evolution of topics of interest

| Rank | 2006–2010              | %    | 2010–2013              | %    | 2013–2016              | %    |
|------|------------------------|------|------------------------|------|------------------------|------|
|      | Most frequent Keywords |      | Most frequent Keywords |      | Most frequent Keywords |      |
| 1    | Australia              | 4.82 | Motivation             | 7.41 | Motivation             | 5.28 |
| 2    | Zero-commission        | 4.82 | Destination Image      | 4.94 | Destination Image      | 2.85 |
| 3    | Tourist behavior       | 3.61 | Behavior               | 3.70 | Satisfaction           | 2.03 |
| 4    | Group tour             | 3.61 | Segmentation           | 2.47 | Segmentation           | 2.03 |
| 5    | Motivation             | 3.61 | Food /dinning          | 1.85 | Australia              | 2.03 |
| 6    | Marketing              | 3.61 | Group tour             | 1.85 | Word-of-mouth          | 1.63 |
| 7    | Attitudes              | 2.41 | Casinos                | 1.85 | Students               | 1.63 |
| 8    | Constraints            | 2.41 | Macau                  | 1.85 | Expectations           | 1.63 |
| 9    | Information sources    | 2.41 | Satisfaction           | 1.85 | Group tour             | 1.63 |
| 10   | Preferences            | 2.41 | Travel magazines       | 1.85 | Independent            | 1.22 |

**Note:** The percentage shows the relationship between the number of occurrences and the total number of keywords in each period.

### *Cluster 1. Motivations, satisfactions, destination image*

The articles comprised in this cluster address the more popular topics in Chinese outbound tourism research, including tourists' travel motivations, satisfaction with the destination, segmentation of tourists and destination image. In addition to studying travel motivations to specific destinations, motivation studies also develop eccentric topics such as the effects of personal values or Confucian values on motivations (e.g. Li, Zhang, & Cai, 2016). Studies also tried to evaluate tourist satisfaction with the travel to different destinations as well as the impact on satisfaction of the motivations, tour-quality, and heritage sites (e.g. Nguyen & Cheung, 2016). The sample of articles also shows that market segmentation and understanding differences between segments of tourists is crucial in an emerging market that is becoming increasingly heterogeneous (e.g. C.-C. Chen & Lin, 2012). Another popular research stream is formed by the destination images (induced, organic, projected,

perceived) and its multiple perceived components (attitudinal, sensorial and cognitive), as well as projected brands (e.g. Song & Hsu, 2013).

**Table 3.** Clusters of research topics

| N                            | Main Topics                  | Articles  |
|------------------------------|------------------------------|---|
| <b>Cluster 1</b>             |                              |   |
| 1                            | Motivations                  | 1, 4, 16, 17, 22, 24, 28, 31, 34, 43, 45, 46, 49, 59, 60, 65, 66, 69, 71, 74, 84, 91, 96, 99, 101, 103, 106, 114, 116, 117, 118 |
| 2                            | Satisfaction/loyalty         | 7, 13, 31, 42, 43, 44, 55, 63, 66, 69, 83, 102  |
| 3                            | Segmentation                 | 4, 10, 14, 34, 47, 48, 71, 72, 80, 93, 94, 108, 109   |
| 4                            | Perceived image              | 11, 25, 26, 34, 39, 50, 54, 66, 78, 80, 81, 82, 91  |
| 5                            | Projected image —attributes  | 2, 3, 23, 25, 26, 39, 48, 50, 74, 78  |
| <b>Cluster 2</b>             |                              |   |
| 6                            | Tourism policies             | 18, 20, 61, 62, 87, 88  |
| 7                            | Cross-strait relationship    | 73, 121   |
| 8                            | Tourism impacts              | 27, 70, 86, 57, 77, 105   |
| 9                            | Taiwan                       | 8, 10, 26, 34, 53, 54, 69, 73, 78, 91, 121  |
| <b>Cluster 3</b>             |                              |   |
| 10                           | Australia                    | 5, 12, 16, 25, 35, 36, 37, 39, 63, 64, 94, 97, 99, 113  |
| 11                           | Recreational Vehicle tourism | 97, 98, 99  |
| 12                           | Zero-commission tours        | 35, 64, 88, 110, 111  |
| 13                           | Expectations                 | 29, 42, 49, 50, 71, 91, 115   |
| <b>Cluster 4</b>             |                              |   |
| 14                           | Young tourists, students     | 12, 17, 19, 29, 36, 55, 68, 72, 76, 101, 120  |
| 15                           | Backpacker                   | 36, 67, 71  |
| 16                           | Independent travelers        | 36, 58, 72  |
| 17                           | Shopping                     | 84, 88, 102, 114  |
| <b>Cluster 5</b>             |                              |   |
| 18                           | Choice, Information sources  | 2, 10, 12, 14, 32, 48, 55, 76, 79, 93   |
| 19                           | Macau, gambling              | 14, 56, 69, 92, 96, 108   |
| 20                           | Activities, experience       | 15, 53, 69, 92, 95  |
| 21                           | Service quality/encounters   | 21, 29, 49, 53, 56, 71, 95, 105   |
| <b>Cluster 6</b>             |                              |   |
| 22                           | Group tour                   | 7, 8, 13, 29, 35, 38, 42, 65, 75, 88, 110, 111  |
| 23                           | cultural Values              | 21, 37, 38, 45, 117, 118, 119   |
| 24                           | Socioeconomics factors       | 20, 52, 87, 100, 104, 107   |
| 25                           | Food/restaurants/dining      | 9, 21, 41, 53   |
| <b>Un-clustered articles</b> |                              |   |
| *                            | Various destination studies  | 51, 89  |
| *                            | Reviews of literature        | 6, 30, 33, 85, 112  |

**Note:** Number of articles refers to the articles retrieved and listed in **Annexes 1** and **2**. Articles can be related to more than one topic. Visual relationships between clusters are displayed in **Figure 3**.

### *Cluster 2. Policies, impacts, and the case of Taiwan and Hong Kong*

Some articles address understanding the characteristics of Chinese outbound tourism in terms of context and policies, independently of the tourists' destination country. Research efforts show that competitive, demographic, political, economic, cultural and technological forces are shaping this tourism market. As such, determinants like political changes and Chinese tourism law are studied (e.g. Dai, Jiang, Yang, & Ma, 2016). In addition to the effect of tourism policies, researchers showed interest in assessing tourism impacts and outcomes—which include more than an evaluation of satisfaction/dissatisfaction with the trip. In this research stream, the studies address “personal realm” outcomes, such as learning outcomes, positive life changes produced by the tourism activity, and tourist emotions that emanated from a trip to Japan (e.g. Tse, 2014). Two specific cases of tourism impacts are: changes in the geopolitical power and territorial understanding between China and Taiwan; and the effect of the “Chinese tourist wave” and tensions produced in Hong Kong (e.g. Siu, Lee, & Leung, 2013).

### *Cluster 3. Australia and the development of the local tourism industry*

Cluster 3 compresses studies related to the development of the tourism industry, focusing on the case of Australia and an analysis of tour operators, tour packages and wholesale retailers. Firstly, zero-fare group tours received attention as a phenomenon that is lacking in ethics and thus hurting tourism. Its mechanisms, conceptualization, legal aspects, and the case of Australia and Hong Kong were studied (e.g. H. Q. Zhang, Heung, & Yan, 2009). Secondly, the development of certain key points for the tourism industry were studied in regard to Australia, New Zealand, Thailand and the UK (e.g. Y. Zhang & Murphy, 2009). Thirdly, the destination of Australia was studied in relation to topics such as RV tourism, tourism expectations, a model of game-theory and tour products (e.g. Wu & Pearce, 2014).

### *Cluster 4. Studies into specific travel segments*

Different products and different ways of travel are emerging in China, and an important research theme is the focused study of different segments and tourism products. In this review, we have seen that the specific travel segments and products that were studied are: Chinese adventure tourism; backpackers' views of Macau and their travel motivations; young Chinese tourists, their expectations and use of smartphones; shopping tourists; female travelers' motivations; Chinese international students, their travel behavior, the role of hosts and influential factors in selecting a study destination; senior tourism; and cruise tourism (e.g. Tsang, Lee, & Liu, 2014).

*Cluster 5. Choice of destination, service quality/encounters and the case of Macau*

The selected studies reveal that the tourist experience is much more than the tourist visit itself. An initial phase of the travel behavior starts with the planning of the trip, using sources of information, choosing a destination, considering motivations and constraints, and tourism images (Williams & Lew, 2015). In our sample, the choice-of-destination-related research is a major area of interest that is linked to how information sources affect tourists and the information-seeking behavior of Chinese tourists—with attention paid to word of mouth, travel agencies and online sources (e.g. Sparks & Pan, 2009). In addition, the services of the destination are studied in the cases of Chinese tourist dinner experiences and service expectations (e.g. Chan, Hsu, & Baum, 2015). Within this cluster, Macau is a destination that has received special attention regarding tourist behavior, service encounter, and gaming patterns at the destination (e.g. Lo, Tsai, & Cheung, 2013).

*Cluster 6. Cultural values, food behavior and group tours*

This cluster comprises studies of the socioeconomic characteristics of China and Chinese values applied in tourism. The former studies are approached mostly through a review of secondary sources along with statistical analysis of secondary data and/or of new primary data (e.g. Yang & Wu, 2013). The latter include research into cultural values, the concepts of guanxi, mianzi, lian, and the values of comfort, indulgency, leisure seeking, Confucianism and also the effect of personal values, which are investigated to define the intrinsic behaviors of Chinese tourists (e.g. Kwek & Lee, 2010). Another characteristic of the Chinese tourists and their culture is the importance and influence of tour packages, which are closely studied, particularly in terms of the effects that the tour package has on destination loyalty, the needs of tourists and tourist satisfaction (e.g. Chang, Wang, Guo, Su, & Yen, 2007).

## **Discussion and future research**

### *Theoretical and practical implications*

This study offers new insights into the structures of social relationships in the production of Chinese outbound tourism research. Using the networks theory, a co-authorship analysis is performed and the results provide implications that are significant in several ways. Firstly, the findings show an increasing trend in producing collaborative research in tourism academia. The analysis conducted here detected that most of the articles included are authored by two or more authors. Racherla and Hu (2010) analyzed 1,181 published articles on tourism from 1996 to 2005, and their results indicate that 30.72% of the papers were single-authored; while in

this study only 8.26% of the papers are single-authored. The density of the tourism researchers network obtained by Racherla and Hu (2010) regarding 705 tourism articles published between 2001 and 2005 was 0.0007, and the density obtained by Acedo et al. (2006) for 14,705 papers from social sciences published between 1980 and 2002 was 0.0002. In the present study, the network density of co-authorships is 0.0055. These comparisons show that, within our sample, there is a considerably greater propensity to produce collaborative research.

This result could be explained by the following factors: (a) academic collaboration may be induced by the multidisciplinary nature of tourism research and the existence of different approaches used by tourism researchers to study international Chinese tourism; (b) the results may be affected by the number of articles analyzed being lower than the number of previous articles that applied the network theory (Acedo et al., 2006; Koseoglu, Okumus, Putra, Yildiz, & Dogan, 2017; Racherla & Hu, 2010); (c) a more specific and newly developed research topic is analyzed here, and this may show different patterns of knowledge production due to the novelty.

Secondly, similar to previous studies (Racherla & Hu, 2010), the results show the benefits of developing a network of collaborations. In the case of academic institutions, Hong Kong Polytechnic University has a remarkably higher degree of centrality in the network of institutional collaboration. The core location in the graph of this institution is associated with more linkages to other institutions, a higher number of articles produced, and a higher number of topics addressed. Thirdly, at the geographical level, the results show that the regional boundaries are mostly inexistent within nodes: most of the participating countries and world regions are interconnected in one network formed by different clusters. This factor reinforces the idea that within a specific research field of tourism, academic production tends to be highly collaborative, even between different world regions and academic institutions. However, these implications should be interpreted with caution, as the present research did not aim to evaluate the evolution of academic collaboration in the whole field of tourism research.

In addition to the previous considerations, three main practical implications can be derived from the results. First, this study provides bibliometric indicators and network analyses that contribute valuable information on the performance of academic institutions, universities and also individual scientists that are conducting research on Chinese outbound tourism. Since Chinese outbound tourism is currently affecting tourism destinations worldwide, new researchers, institutions, and local industries will need to understand these new travelers. Thus, similarly to previous bibliometric studies in the field of management (Koseoglu, 2016; Koseoglu et al., 2017), co-authorship analysis provides helpful information for students, man-

agers and industry practitioners who are looking for relevant scholars and advisors that have played critical roles in the research field.

Second, international academic mobility is a fundamental element of present-day academic habitus (Bilecen & Van Mol, 2017). Specifically, international mobility, visiting scholars, and international students play key roles in the successful research related to intercultural phenomena and developing intercultural competence (Valeeva, 2013). Hence, the findings of the current study – including the taxonomy of research topics associated to specific articles (**Table 3**) – make it possible for internationally mobile academics and students interested in Chinese outbound tourism to find collaborative pathways, strategic collaborations and relevant academic institutions.

Third, the results indicate an absence of researchers and academic institutions from under-researched areas such as Africa, Central America, the Caribbean and South America. Applied to today's research and managerial efforts towards understanding Chinese tourism to new destinations, it is interesting to note that the absence of researchers shows a corresponding relationship to the world regions that were absent in the thematic analysis of the research field. A new sociocultural group of visitors to world destinations have always led to changes in tourism supply, and they have further substantially obliged local service providers to adjust (Petermann, Revermann, & Scherz, 2005). Thus, the flow of Chinese travelers constitutes new and culturally different travelers that need to be understood at various international tourism destinations. For example, European destinations such as France and Spain have revealed that they are still dedicating efforts towards the challenge of understanding Mainland Chinese tourists, and they have admitted that their countries need to be friendlier to these visitors (El País, 2017; Neild, 2014). Therefore, identifying under-studied areas and generating knowledge about emerging tourism destinations provide an opportunity and a research challenge that network analysis could help address.

### *Paths for future research*

The co-keyword analysis identified six current research streams related to clusters of keywords. Some research topics within these clusters have received greater attention. This can be clearly seen in **Table 3** by observing the number of articles that are linked to each research topic. Similar to the observations of Tse (2015), the findings showed that the most studied areas in Chinese outbound tourism are the topics of tourism motivations, destination image and tourist satisfaction. It is expected that within these topics there is little room for innovation. However, in providing a new perspective from the previous review articles, **Table 3** also reveals

topics that have been barely addressed and require further research for each cluster. In cluster 1, which is related to consumer behavior, aspects of tourist behavior involving social contact have been scarcely studied. Within the whole research field of tourism behavior, it has been recognized that relationships between tourists, other tourists, and local residents are fundamental research topics (Pearce, 2005). Taking into account that Chinese outbound tourism reflects a crucial difference between social modes of travel such as Free Independent Travel and Group-tour (Lojo & Li, 2018), this research field could contribute the opportunity to further understand how tourism choices and the tourism experience is affected by feelings of crowdedness, solitude and security.

Cluster 2 is related to the policies and impacts of tourism. Tourism impacts include not only the evaluation of the trip and satisfaction/dissatisfaction, but also 'personal realm' outcomes such as skills development, knowledge, perception, emotions, self-development and identity, all of which are relevant topics in need of further study by tourism academia (Morgan, Lugosi, & Ritchie, 2010). However, personal realm outcomes of the tourist experience remain in their initial stage of development (Tse, 2014). As Chinese tourism is a paradigmatic example of a new and maturing market, new possible research avenues within this cluster could be related to impacts on concepts of self-identity, the sense of the other, changes in self-perception, and emotional encounters that arise from the experiences of these international tourists (e.g., Ji, Li, & Hsu, 2016).

In Cluster 3, questions related to the tourism industry at the destination are in the initial stages of development. The arrival of new tourism flows from emerging markets implies that different approaches are needed for local tourism industries (UNWTO, 2017) and different challenges are arising, as has been studied in the case of zero-fare tours in Australia (King, Dwyer, & Prideaux, 2006). Surprisingly, few keywords within the analyzed articles are related to industry and organizational questions. It has been mostly overlooked the different characteristics of organizational management in Chinese tourism supply chain. Future research in this field could cover aspects such as studies into destination labor force, adaptability of facilities and services, cooperation and collaboration between stakeholders, accommodation and travel retailers, and tour guiding issues (e.g., Chan et al., 2015).

In Cluster 4 the study of specific travel segments constitutes an important extant research stream that is increasing with the rise of different ways of travel, more experienced consumers, and different products. It has been noted previously that the diversification of the Chinese market is occurring at a rapid pace and is showing indications of reaching its maturity (Arlt & Burns, 2013). To understand this 'second wave' of Chinese tourists, studies into specific tourism segments are needed



(e.g., G. Chen, Bao, & Huang, 2013; Gardiner & Kwek, 2016; Wang, Wu, Luo, & Lu, 2017). Within this study sample of articles, the investigations that focus on specific segments are steadily increasing over time, and it is possible to identify a diversification of the most frequent keywords in the sample. As a result of this trend, it is guaranteed that this cluster will continue growing with the study of new segments. Under-studied segments that are of interest for tourism managers and academia include nature, sports, medical, food and wine, accessible, and family and child-oriented tourism (e.g. J. Y. Yu & Ko, 2012).

Cluster 5 comprises destination-related studies, with topics such as choice of destination, activities at destination and services at destination. However, the spatial distribution of tourism activities at destination and itineraries are under-researched. This research gap has been identified as being present throughout the field of tourism, “which is strange given their potential importance as determinants of visitor expenditure distribution, and how itinerary planning may become a tool of destination management” (Ryan & Gu, 2007, p. 189). These topics have attracted little attention from researchers but are becoming increasingly important for tourism destinations, as such future research is expected. Jørgensen, Law and King (2018) studied the heterogeneity of Chinese tourists to Scandinavia in relation to opportunities for second-tier destinations, and they concluded that there is a need for further research regarding differentiation between destinations. Continuing with the example of Chinese tourists to Europe, these tourists usually plan a trip with an itinerary through different cities and countries (ETC & UNWTO, 2013). This phenomenon provides an opportunity for researchers to investigate the differences between types of destinations, multi-destination trips, and spatial distribution—dispersion, concentration and itineraries—of Chinese tourists at the destinations (e.g., Lojo, 2016; Ryan & Gu, 2007).

The sixth identified cluster comprises eccentric topics that define the core characteristics of Chinese outbound tourism. Topics present in this cluster are considered important for defining the characteristics of the “Chinese source market”, as stated by Tse (2015). In addition, these topics are able to define the macro-context that circumscribe Chinese outbound tourism. Because economics, demographics, socio-cultural attributes and even value systems are changing at a rapid pace in China, research in this area will continue to be necessary for future tourism research (Hsu & Huang, 2016). Within this cluster are new research topics that have been considered previously, specifically those related to the unique Chinese travel culture, power discourse, policies and socioeconomic determinants for travel (Tse, 2015). The co-keyword analysis adds a new perspective and shows that these topics are connected with research into cultural values and systems of belief such as Confu-

cianism (e.g., Kwek & Lee, 2010). Following this path, Chinese outbound tourism research is a fertile research field for cross-cultural research (Li, 2014; J. Yu & Lee, 2014) into how tourists behave differently across different cultures. In addition to the case of gastronomy and service expectations that have already been studied (Table 3), future research lines include the investigation of intercultural interactions such as the determinants and structure of intercultural interactions between hosts and guests. Ultimately, it is unquestionably important to understand not only how different cultural backgrounds affect tourist behavior, but also the intercultural interactions between tourists and the tangible and intangible elements of the local culture at the destination.

## Conclusion

This paper identifies the social structures and subjects addressed in the last 10 years of Chinese outbound tourism research in a sample of 16 leading tourism journals. The social structures are analyzed by building networks of co-authorship and collaboration between academic institutions and their countries of origin. The analysis of subjects addressed is obtained through a co-keyword analysis and by clustering the keywords according to co-occurrence strength. The results contribute to deepening our understanding of the collaborative behavior of tourism researchers, organizations and countries, specifically by revealing the central actors and the networks of cooperation. The findings also allow visualizing the structure and evolution of research topics, the relationships between certain Chinese tourism destinations and the development of specific topics. The theoretical and practical implications of this study and new future research opportunities have been thoroughly discussed as a result of the findings and the bibliometric indicators obtained. We have also suggested that Chinese outbound tourism could be a good field for covering a selected number of research gaps, and we have proposed a new set of future research directions as guidelines.

Some limitations of the present study can be mentioned. The sample of articles comes from 16 English language journals, and the temporal selection includes articles published between 2006 and 2016. This implies that a higher number of articles, topics and authors exist. Studies have been omitted from this review about Chinese tourism in specific destinations published in languages other than English, such as Korean, Japanese, French, German or Spanish. Regarding the structure of collaborations, only research articles have been considered, and there may exist more collaborations within other research products such as research projects. However, this study contributes to understanding social collaborative behavior in tourism studies while also offering new insights into Chinese outbound tourism.

## Bridging Section 2

| This article  |   |  |   |
|---|---|--|---|
| <p>Social network theory is used to visualize relational structures of knowledge production.</p> <p><b>Results:</b> origin of the research (authors, institutions and geographical areas)</p> | <p>Literature review<br/>Chinese outbound tourism research</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Article 1</b></p> <p><b>Results 2:</b> cluster map of research themes.</p> | <p>Bibliometric and relational techniques of analysis: networks of social relationships, co-occurrence and clustering of keywords</p> <p><b>Results 3:</b> suggestions for future research</p> |   |
| Implications for the whole dissertation   |   |  |   |
| <p>Future research: Europe and European countries such as Spain are understudied</p>  | <p>There is a need for more applied and practical research to understand tourism in Europe</p>  | <p>There exists no unique theoretical, disciplined and methodological approach to studying new markets</p>   |   |
| Suggested paths for future research   |   |  |   |
| <p>What is the spatial distribution of Chinese tourism?</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Article 2</b></p>   | <p>How do distinct travel segments of Chinese tourists differ in tourist behavior?</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Article 3</b></p>                                  | <p>How do different information sources compare? And what are the information needs of tourists?</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Article 4</b></p>                                       | <p>Is there a fragmentation of tourism destination image in the Chinese market?</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Article 5</b></p> |

**Note:** This table is not included in the published article. It adds to the overall flow of the dissertation

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## Annexes

### Annex 1. List of included articles

| N  | Author(s)         | Title  |
|----|-------------------|--|
| 1  | Agrusa et al.     | Mainland Chinese Tourists to Hawaii: Their Characteristics and Preferences   |
| 2  | Andreu et al.     | Destination Attributes and Chinese Outbound Tourism to Europe                |
| 3  | Aramberri et al.  | The Chinese Gaze: Imaging Europe in Travel Magazines                         |
| 4  | Assiouras et al.  | Segmenting East Asian Tourists to Greece by Travel Motivation                |
| 5  | Breakey et al.    | Impact of Chinese Outbound Tourism to Australia: Reviewing the Past...       |
| 6  | Cai et al.        | Research on China Outbound Market: A Meta-Review                             |
| 7  | Chan et al.       | The Impact of Tour Service Performance on Tourist Satisfaction and...        |
| 8  | J. Chang et al.   | Trends in Outbound Group Package Tours in China and Taiwan: a Marketing...   |
| 9  | R. Chang et al.   | Food Preferences of Chinese Tourists   |
| 10 | C.-C. Chen & Lin  | Segmenting Mainland Chinese Tourists to Taiwan by Destination Familiarity... |
| 11 | F.-W. Chen et al. | Automatically Extracting Tourism-related Opinion from Chinese Social Media   |
| 12 | N. Chen et al.    | Factors Influencing Chinese Students' Behavior in Promoting Australia...     |
| 13 | Y. Chen et al.    | Why Can Package Tours Hurt Tourists? Evidence from China's Tourism...        |
| 14 | Choi et al.       | Segmenting Chinese Visitors to Macau by Information Source Variables         |
| 15 | Chow & Murphy     | Travel Activity Preferences of Chinese Outbound Tourists for Overseas...     |
| 16 | Chow & Murphy     | Predicting Intended and Actual Travel Behaviors: An Examination of...        |
| 17 | Corigliano        | The Outbound Chinese Tourism to Italy: The New Graduates' Generation         |
| 18 | Dai et al.        | China's Outbound Tourism —Stages, Policies and Choices                       |
| 19 | Gardiner & Kwek   | Chinese Participation in Adventure Tourism: A Study of Generation Y...       |
| 20 | Guo et al.        | Development Characteristics and Implications of Mainland Chinese...          |
| 21 | Hoare et al.      | Understanding Chinese Diners in an Overseas Context: A Cultural Perspective  |
| 22 | Hsu & Huang       | An Extension of the Theory of Planned Behavior Model for Tourists            |
| 23 | Hsu & Song        | Projected Images of Major Chinese Outbound Destinations                      |
| 24 | Hua & Yoo         | Travel Motivations of Mainland Chinese Travelers to the United States        |
| 25 | S. Huang & Gross  | Australia's Destination Image Among Mainland Chinese Travelers...            |
| 26 | Z. Huang et al.   | An Examination of Taiwan Destination Brand Associations: From the...         |
| 27 | Ji et al.         | Emotional Encounters of Chinese Tourists to Japan                            |
| 28 | Jiang et al.      | Exploring Chinese Outbound Tourism Motivation Using Means–End Chains...      |
| 29 | T. Jin et al.     | China's Generation Y's Expectation on Outbound Group Package Tour            |
| 30 | X. Jin & Wang     | Chinese Outbound Tourism Research: A Review                                  |
| 31 | Johanson          | The Outbound Mainland China Market to the United States: Uncovering...       |
| 32 | Kambele et al.    | Travelers' Information-Seeking Behaviors                                     |

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|----|---------------------|--|
| 33 | Keating et al.      | A Systematic Review of the Chinese Outbound Tourism Literature: 1983–2012        |
| 34 | Kim et al.          | Differences in Tourist Attitude and Behavior Between Mainland Chinese...         |
| 35 | King et al.         | An Evaluation of Unethical Business Practices in Australia's China Inbound...    |
| 36 | King & Gardiner     | Chinese International Students. An Avant-Garde of Independent Travellers?        |
| 37 | Kwek & Lee          | How “Face” Matters: Chinese Corporate Tourists in Australia                      |
| 38 | Kwek & Lee          | Chinese Tourists and Confucianism  |
| 39 | Kwek & Lee          | Intra-Cultural Variance of Chinese Tourists in Destination Image Project...      |
| 40 | Lai et al.          | Chinese Outbound Tourists' Perceived Constraints to Visiting the United States   |
| 41 | Law et al.          | How do Mainland Chinese Travelers Choose Restaurants in Hong Kong? ...           |
| 42 | Lee et al.          | The Impact of Tour Quality and Tourist Satisfaction on Tourist Loyalty...        |
| 43 | F. Li & Ryan        | Chinese Tourists' Motivations and Satisfaction of Visiting North Korea           |
| 44 | G. Li et al.        | Comparing Mainland Chinese Tourists' Satisfaction with Hong Kong and the...      |
| 45 | M. Li & Cai         | The Effects of Personal Values on Travel Motivation and Behavioral Intention     |
| 46 | M. Li et al.        | An Exploratory Study of the Travel Motivation of Chinese Female Outbound...      |
| 47 | M. Li et al.        | Segmenting Chinese Outbound Tourists by Perceived Constraints                    |
| 48 | X. Li et al.        | Positioning USA in the Chinese Outbound Travel Market                            |
| 49 | X. Li et al.        | When east meets west: An exploratory study on Chinese outbound tourists'...      |
| 50 | X. Li et al.        | Chinese Outbound Tourists' Destination Image of America: Part I                  |
| 51 | Lin et al.          | Modeling and Forecasting Chinese Outbound Tourism: An Econometric...             |
| 52 | Lin et al.          | Tourism expenditure patterns in China  |
| 53 | Y.-C. Lin & Chen    | Needs Assessment for Food and Food Services and Behavioral Intention...          |
| 54 | Y.-H. Lin et al.    | The Salient and Organic Images of Taiwan as Perceived by Mainland...             |
| 55 | Liu & Ryan          | The Role of Chinese Students as Tourists and Hosts for Overseas Travel           |
| 56 | Lo et al.           | Service Quality of Casinos in Macau: From the Mainland Chinese Perspective       |
| 57 | Loi & Pearce        | Exploring Perceived Tensions Arising from Tourist Behaviors in a Chinese...      |
| 58 | A. Lu & Chen        | Information Search Behavior of Independent Travelers: A Cross-Cultural...        |
| 59 | J. Lu et al.        | Do Perceptions of Time Affect Outbound-travel Motivations and Intention?...      |
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| 61 | Ma et al.           | Impacts of China Tourism Law on Chinese Outbound Travelers and...                |
| 62 | Mak                 | The Influence of Political Ideology on the Outbound Tourism in China             |
| 63 | Mao & Zhang         | Structural Relationships among Destination Preference, Satisfaction and...       |
| 64 | March               | Towards a Conceptualization of Unethical Marketing Practices in Tourism...       |
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| 67 | Ong & du Cros       | The Post-Mao gazes. Chinese Backpackers in Macau                                 |
| 68 | Park et al.         | Examining Chinese College Students' Intention to Travel to Japan...              |
| 69 | Park et al.         | A Comparative Study of the Motivations, Activities, overall Satisfaction...      |
| 70 | Pearce & Lu         | A Framework for Studying the Learning Outcomes of Chinese Outbound...            |
| 71 | Prayag et al.       | Potential Chinese Travellers to Western Europe: Segmenting Motivations...        |
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| 76 | Shu & Scott         | Influence of Social Media on Chinese Students' Choice of an Overseas...          |
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| 80 | Stepchenkova et al. | Chinese Outbound Tourists' Destination Image of America: Part II                 |
| 81 | Sun et al.          | Using Chinese Travel Blogs to Examine Perceived Destination Image...             |
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| 83 | Truong & King       | An Evaluation of Satisfaction Levels among Chinese Tourists in Vietnam           |
| 84 | Tsang et al.        | Understanding the Shopping Motivation of Mainland Chinese Tourists in...         |
| 85 | Tse                 | A Review of Chinese Outbound Tourism Research and the Way Forward                |
| 86 | Tse                 | Does Tourism Change Our Lives?   |
| 87 | Tse & Hobson        | The Forces Shaping China's Outbound Tourism                                      |
| 88 | Tse & Tse           | The Legal Aspects of “Zero-Fare” Tour in Shopping Tourism: A Case of...          |



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|-----|--------------------|---|
| 89  | Untong et al.      | Tourism Demand Analysis of Chinese Arrivals in Thailand                       |
| 90  | Wan et al.         | Behavioral Differences in Gaming Patterns among Chinese Subcultures...        |
| 91  | C. Wang et al.     | Toward an Integrated Model of Tourist Expectation Formation and Gender...     |
| 92  | L. Wang et al.     | Travel Behaviors of Mainland Chinese Visitors to Macao                        |
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| 94  | Y. Wang & Davidson | Chinese Holiday Makers' Expenditure: Implications for Marketing and...        |
| 95  | Wong & Li          | Destination Services and Travel Experience in the Gaming Mecca: The...        |
| 96  | Wong & Rosenbaum   | Beyond Hardcore Gambling: Understanding Why Mainland Chinese Visit...         |
| 97  | Wu                 | Driving an Unfamiliar Vehicle in an Unfamiliar Country: Exploring...          |
| 98  | Wu & Pearce        | Understanding Chinese Overseas Recreational Vehicle Tourists...               |
| 99  | Wu & Pearce        | Chinese Recreational Vehicle Users in Australia: A Netnographic Study...      |
| 100 | Xie & Li           | Development of China's Outbound Tourism and the Characteristics of...         |
| 101 | F. Xu et al.       | Students' Travel Behaviour: A Cross-cultural Comparison of UK and China       |
| 102 | Y. Xu & McGehee    | Shopping Behavior of Chinese Tourists Visiting the United States...           |
| 103 | X. Yang et al.     | Cross-Cultural Perspectives on Promoting Festival Tourism...                  |
| 104 | Y. Yang & Wu       | Chinese Residents' Demand for Outbound Travel: Evidence from the...           |
| 105 | Yeung & Leung      | Perception and Attitude of Hong Kong Hotel Guest-contact Employees...         |
| 106 | Yun & Joppe        | Chinese Perceptions of Seven Long-haul Holiday Destinations: Focusing on...   |
| 107 | G. Zeng & Go       | Evolution of Middle-class Chinese Outbound Travel Preferences: An...          |
| 108 | Z. Zeng et al.     | To Gamble or Not? Perceptions of Macau Among Mainland Chinese...              |
| 109 | C. Zhang & Zhang   | Analysing Chinese Citizens' Intentions of Outbound Travel: a Machine...       |
| 110 | H. Zhang et al.    | Play or not to Play. An Analysis of the Mechanism of the Zero-commission...   |
| 111 | H. Zhang et al.    | Understanding the Mechanism behind the Zero-commission Chinese...             |
| 112 | J. Zhang & Sheldon | Ordering the Disordered Subject: a Critique of Chinese Outbound Tourists...   |
| 113 | Y. Zhang & Murphy  | Supply-chain Considerations in Marketing Underdeveloped Regional...           |
| 114 | Zhu et al.         | Behind Buying: The Chinese Gaze on European Commodities                       |

## Annex 2. List of 7 included articles after a second screening process

| N   | Author(s)      | Title   |
|-----|----------------|---|
| 115 | Buckley et al. | Chinese Model for Mass Adventure Tourism                        |
| 116 | Fan & Hsu      | Potential Mainland Chinese Cruise Travelers'                    |
| 117 | Fu et al.      | A Confucian Analysis of Chinese Tourists' Motivations           |
| 118 | Fu et al.      | Framing Chinese Tourist Motivations Through the Lenses of...    |
| 119 | Hsu et al.     | Reconfiguring Chinese Cultural Values and their Tourism....     |
| 120 | O'Regan et al. | Smartphone Adoption amongst Chinese Youth...                    |
| 121 | Rowen          | Tourism as a Territorial Strategy: The case of China and Taiwan |

**Note:** These articles do not specifically study Chinese outbound tourists, but the authors explicitly mention the implications and conclusions related to the Chinese outbound market.

## Annex 3. List of 8 excluded articles

| N | Author (s)       | Title   |
|---|------------------|---|
| 1 | G. Chen et al.   | Segmenting Chinese Backpackers by Travel Motivations                |
| 2 | H. Chen & Weiler | Chinese Donkey Friends in Tibet. Evidence from the Cyberspace...    |
| 3 | Y. Chen et al.   | What drives People to Travel: Integrating the Tourist Motivation... |
| 4 | Hsu et al.       | Expectation, Motivation and Attitude: A Tourist Behavioral Model    |
| 5 | M. Li et al.     | The Chinese Way of Response to Hospitality Service Failure...       |
| 6 | M. Li et al.     | A Subcultural Analysis of Tourism Motivations                       |
| 7 | McCartney et al  | Influencing Chinese Travel Decisions: the Effect of Celebrity...    |
| 8 | Sun et al.       | Symbolic Consumption and Brand Choice: China's Youth Hostels...     |

**Note:** The articles were retrieved by the search strings but were excluded after a two-phase screening process.



## Article 2

# Chinese tourism in Spain: An analysis of the tourism product, attractions and itineraries offered by Chinese travel agencies



## Abstract

Analysis of the characteristics of tourism in China, and the evolution of Spain as an international destination, illustrates the importance of understanding Chinese outbound tourism and its implications for the Spanish tourism industry. The results of the paper present the characteristics of the tourism product offered by Chinese travel agencies. The study also indicates the itineraries, the main destinations within Spain

and the distinctive elements of Spain that are valued by the tour operators. The purposes of this study are (1) to identify the patterns of the tourist groups from China to Spain and (2) to understand the characteristics of the tour packages offered by Chinese travel agencies.

*Keywords: Chinese tourism, Spain, tour operators, tourism product, content analysis*

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## Introduction

Currently, Spain is one of the most popular tourist destinations worldwide. Based on the number of visitors, Spain was ranked third in the world since 2012 (WTO, 2015). Although tourism plays an important role in the Spanish economy, it still has some weaknesses. For instance, Spain's high seasonality, the underutilization of available resources and the difficulty of attracting more tourists who are in the high spending capacity group. For these reasons, one of the main aims of the Spanish Ministry of Industry, Energy and Tourism is to increase the spending made by foreign tourists in the country instead of pursuing an increase in the number of tourists (MIET, 2015). Thus, the Spanish tourism industry needs to understand and adapt to the new high spending international source markets, such as China and Russia (Canals, 2014), along with other established outbound markets like USA.

The Chinese outbound tourism has already attracted the interest of a large number of scholars (Nyiri, 2006; Ryan & Huang, 2013; Kwek & Lee, 2013; Tse, 2015) and Spanish media (Hosteltur, 2014; Álvarez, 2015) due to its particular characteristics. Since the mid-1990s, the number of mainland Chinese tourists has been increased higher than any other countries. In today's world, China is the leading market of tourism industry worldwide. When Spain was qualified as an approved destination by the Chinese tourism agency, the China National Tourism Administration (CNTA), the number of Chinese tourists visiting Spain began to increase. The numbers of this visitors have reached 287,000 in 2014. Thus, with the increasing number of the tourists from China, one of the aspects that should be considered is: why they come to Spain and what activities take place in this country?

Furthermore, the World Tourism Organization indicates that 70 % of the Chinese tourists travel outside their country through groups which are organized by tour operators (WTO, 2014). Therefore, knowing the interests of the tourists traveling to Spain by Chinese travel agencies is a relevant way to improve the understanding of this outbound market. Based on these considerations, the article aims to recognize the characteristics of the Chinese tourism in Spain. This study is based on the following research questions: Are there common patterns in trips organized by different Chinese companies and which is their image of Spain? What activities do the tourists who hire the services of these companies and what are the main attributes that are valued in Spain? In addition, this paper also attempts to answer the question: whether it is possible or not to achieve an approach to the dynamics of tourism consumption in a particular destination through the analysis of the products offered by the leading Chinese tour operators.

## Chinese tourism

The People's Republic of China (PRC) was proclaimed in October 1949 after the Chinese Communist Party (CCP), led by Mao Tse Tung, reached the victory in the Chinese Civil War. Under the revolutionary vision of Mao's Communism, the leisure travel was associated with a reprehensible behavior of idleness and decay of the bourgeois lifestyle which had to be avoided (Arlt, 2006). Following the death of Mao in 1976, the politics of the CCP gradually began to change. During the 11th Congress of the CCP, held in late 1978, were introduced the Chinese economic reforms and opening-up policies (Brand et al., 2008). It was possible not only to start a sustained increase in the national economy level, but also in the household level. Evidence of the effectiveness of the reforms is the increase in the country's GDP. Remarkably, China's GDP has risen from US\$0.45 billion in 1978 (Tse, 2015) to 10.35 billion in 2014 (International Monetary Fund, 2015).

The economic development and the loosening of the communist ideology were the factors that initially explained the importance of the domestic tourism. The aim of developing this tourism appeared for the first time on the agenda of the central government in 1985 (Wei et al., 1999). Tourism was quickly adopted and in mid-1990 leisure travel was a mass phenomenon among affluent families. The factors that explain this phenomenon are the growth in the household incomes and the government's policies to promote tourism. In addition, because of the introduction of five-day workweek in 1995, the government declared 1996 as the "Year of leisure and holidays", *xiuxian dujia you* 休闲度假游, under the slogan of "China 1996: a new holiday world" *96 zhongguo: Zhanxin de dujia tiandi* 96 中国: 崭新的度假天地 (Zou, 2004). Subsequently, when in 1998 the domestic consumption was declining, the government insisted on developing the tourism as an incentive for the national economic development. In 1999, the Chinese Communist Party declared ten days of annual leave and created two weeks of national holidays (which begin on 1 October and 1 May) that were added to the already existing holidays like Chinese New Year.

Nyiri (2006) indicates that domestic tourism was understood as the consumption of controlled areas and spaces specifically dedicated to tourism activities. This is shown because at the beginning of the decade of 2000, the Chinese authorities based their tourism statistics on the number of tickets sold in access to sightseeing areas or areas with tourism scenery. Choukron (2009) indicates that tourism was motivated by the escape from the pollution in cities, the desire to see natural landscapes and discover places with traditional Chinese culture. Nyiri (2006) considers that the main reason was to visit cultural and scenic places, scenic spots —places

with traditional, historical, philosophical or artistic value. The most common Chinese term to define these places is *Jingdian* 经典, although more formal expressions include *fengjingqu* 风景区 and *mingshengqu* 名胜区.

For long time, tourism was understood as a journey committed to visiting cultural sites and famous sceneries in China. A list of places to visit, that is to say, a canon, was established in the sixteenth century, when the trip was an activity approved by the privileged classes. This canon included the places that appeared in the landscapes and temples portrayed in poetry, prose and paintings by classic Chinese artists of the Tang and Song dynasties (618–1279). After 1978, the canon was renewed by the local governments of the PRC. As mentioned by Nyiri (2006: 9) “for example, the gazetteer for the famous sacred Mount Emei in Sichuan ... provide a description of the ‘traditional ten views’”. It describes the types of scenic places that tourists should visit, and they are classified in different categories: mountains, famous trees, bridges and pavilions, among others. According to this author, traditional *mingsheng* have remained as structural elements of the cultural routes and itineraries.

Along with the development of domestic tourism, international tourism mostly began in the 1980s due to the permissiveness of the government (ETC & UNWTO, 2008) and the strong demand from the people to travel outside their country (Arlt, 2006). The initial phase of outbound tourism started in 1983, when the first permits were allowed to visit relatives who were in the colonies of Hong Kong and Macau. In the 1980s, the outbound tourism was conceived as family reunions and business trips (ETC & UNWTO, 2008). In addition, at the beginning of 1990 the Chinese government also accepted Chinese tourists to travel to Southeast Asian countries. The second phase started in 1997 with the appearance of the concept of Approved Destination Status (ADS). The Chinese Government implemented this policy in order to officially recognize the outbound leisure tourism in China. The ADS is a status granted to a foreign country by the Chinese administration. Furthermore, the ADS is necessary to allow Chinese tourist groups to travel to foreign destinations and also allow the destination able to be promoted in China (He, 2010). Between 2002 and 2007, most European countries received the ADS. Indeed, Spain and Portugal acquired the ADS status in 2004 (ETC & UNWTO, 2008).

The economic development and the gradual emergence of Chinese tourism is framed in the dynamics of Chinese consumerism. After the fall of the Berlin Wall, the Chinese government adapted itself to the new international situation, and the demands of its population, adhering to consumerism. Lu (2000) notes that since the 1990s, the raising household income, the abundance of consumer goods and the official government promotion have stimulated the desire to consume on a

large middle-class population. Then the importance of getting higher wages and consuming prestigious brands was appeared. Luxury goods are associated with the definition of social status (Davis, 2000). Then, some international destinations were seen as brands to consume (Arlt, 2006). Such consumption is not satisfied only with following fashions and trends, but Chinese consumers also compete for prestige and style (Yan, 2009). As a result, tourism is seen as a positional good among the middle and upper class with purchasing power, as it happened in Europe (Garay & Cànoves, 2011).

Ryan & Huang (2013), analyzing the tourism in China, consider at the present that tourism in the country is a symbol of modernity and being a citizen of the global world. Tourism is viewed positively by Chinese citizens, who feel that travel is a reward for their past sacrifices and hard work. As a result of all the above factors, in the last decade China has emerged globally as the first international tourism market. The number of Chinese tourists has grown from 10 million in the year 2000 to over 100 million in the 2014 (WTO, 2015). This number continues to rise and in the first half of 2015 it has already surpassed the 62 million tourists (COTRI, 2015). The expenditure of these tourists abroad has also followed a remarkable growth and the Chinese tourists are doing the higher expenditure abroad. Globally, the total of Chinese tourists' expenditure in different countries were US\$13 billion in 2000, this number has raised to 164.8 billion in 2014 (WTO, 2015).

Nowadays, the term Mainland China, *zhongguo dalu* 中国大陆, is used to describe the geopolitical area controlled by the PRC and it usually excludes the former colonies, that now are Special Administrative Regions (SAR). The Chinese National Tourism Administration (CNTA) at the moment consider the travels from mainland China to the SAR of Hong Kong and Macau as Chinese outbound tourism. For this reason, the numbers of Chinese outbound tourists mentioned above was very high. As a result, mainland Chinese tourists mainly went to the countries that are in the same geographical region as China. Hong Kong and Macau are the most popular destinations and they attract the 48.1 % of the mainland China travel market (WTO, 2014). Out of the 100 million tourists who left mainland China in 2014, only 3.5 % went to Europe, and more than the 90 % travelled to Asian destinations. If Hong Kong, Macau and Taiwan are not considered, the most visited states are the Republic of Korea, Malaysia, Japan and Thailand (WTO, 2014). Outside the Asia-Pacific region, Europe and USA are the main destinations. In this regard, it should be noted that usually tourists who fly to Europe or to the USA will have a better purchasing power, because the traveling is more expensive and living standards in Western destination are higher.

Regarding the tourists' profile, the European Travel Commission has defined the following types of Chinese tourists who are interested in traveling to Europe: (1) traditionalists, those who come through organized groups, (2) youth interested in arts and culture (also known as *wenyi* youth or *wenyi qingnian* 文艺青年), (3) experience-centered; (4) hedonists; (5) and connoisseurs (ETC & UNWTO, 2012). Recently, the Chinese agencies have increased their specialization and new tourism products due to the customer segmentation and customer's different interests in different activities (Ferran, 2014). In Europe, there are tourism products offered with classic itineraries and visiting cities, monuments and football fields. However, more experiential itineraries are gradually appearing at the same time. These experiential itineraries' activities are aimed at the needs of a specific segment of consumers. According to previous studies, most of the Chinese tourists come from urban areas and have medium or high incomes. More likely, 52.1% of Chinese who left the country were paid less than CNY500 a month (€730), 31.4% of them between CNY500 and CNY1,000 (between €730 and €1,460) and the remaining 16.5% of them had higher incomes (WTO, 2014).

## **Spain as an international destination**

It is possible to identify four stages in the evolution of Spain as a tourism destination (Almeida, 2012). First stage wasn't developed until the 17th century. During the first stage Spain was a destination for the European bourgeois class, who defined the country as a quaint, folkloric and behind the rest of Europe. In the second stage, the first tourism policies and public intervention were developed to promote Spain's tourism between 1900–1950 (Almeida, 2012). In 1928, the National Tourism Board (Patronato Nacional de Turismo) was founded and the creation of a tourism identity of the nation begun. At this stage, through panels of tourism promotion, the heritage resources of the country were promoted as well as Spain's folkloric past and the images of the modern development of Spain (Fernández & Valero, 2015).

The third stage was between 1951 and 1975. During this period, the great development of tourism has occurred, and the number of international visitors rose from about half million in 1950 to 21.2 million in 1970 (Murray, 2015). This growth appeared after the World War II because of the economic development and the social peace prevailing in Europe. Due to the rising mass forms of tourism that aimed Spain as their destination, the country was positioned as a holiday destination of sun and sand. In addition, Spain became competitive because of the attractive climate, the extensive coastline, the accessibility to major generating countries of northern Europe by air, the pricing of Spanish tourism products and the distinc-



tive culture of the country (Williams & Lew, 2015). At that time, the tourism industry functioned as an economy of scale that offered homogeneous products, so that situation can be considered analogous to the Fordist production of goods (Santana, 2000).

In the fourth stage, after 1980, Spain reaches its maturity and increases the need of new tourism strategies and development plans (Almeida, 2012). The rapid and uncontrolled development of tourism in the previous stage had led to the maturity of Spain as a tourism destination and also pointed out some weaknesses of Spain's tourism industry. The lack of organization in the Spain's tourism industry was reflected in the over-development, over-commercialization and crowding of beaches and streets in tourist areas. Also, this lack of organization caused pollution, the deterioration of natural environment and the progressive decline of the attractiveness of Spain as a popular destination. At the same time, in the Western world the post-Fordist tourism triumphed. The characteristics of post-Fordist tourism consumption can be seen as a vindication of the romantic trip (prior to Fordism), the consumption of feigned spaces (evolution of Fordism), or a rejection of the homogenization of mass tourism (as opposed to Fordism) (Santana, 2000). In Spain, these phenomena involved rebuilding the tourism industry with a model based on occupying new spaces, from the mountains to the coast, passing through the urban centers (Murray, 2015) and offering new products: mainly, the monumental routes, pilgrimages and folklore, hunting and fishing, food and culture, education and the beaches of the Mediterranean coasts (Moreno, 2007) (**Figure 1**).

Changes in the postmodern society have meant that there are several types of tourists and not just one type of tourist. The destinations compete to attract different tourist segments and to position itself as global references (Prat, 2014). In this scenario, Spain is a country with a remarkable tourism success and tourism is a mainstay of the Spanish economy, assuming about 10 % of the GDP (INE, 2014). According to the World Tourism Organization (WTO, 2015), Spain is among the top three countries that receive most international tourists worldwide. In 2014, Spain was third in arrivals with 65 million overnight visitors, behind France and USA. Moreover, Spain was second in tourism earnings worldwide with US\$ 65 billion in 2014, right after USA. In Spain, the growth on the tourism revenue has continued for five years, after surpassing the falls recorded in 2008 and 2009 which were caused by the economic crisis.

According to the Spanish Constitution of 1978, Spain is a State of Autonomies and an Autonomous Community (AC) is Spain's first level of geopolitical division. In this country, there are 17 AC and two autonomous cities, which they receive different numbers of tourist arrivals. In 2014, Catalonia was the autonomous region

of main destination for 25.9 % of international tourists, followed by the Canary Islands (17.7 %), the Balearic Islands (17.5 %), Andalusia (13.1 %), Valencia (9.6 %) and Madrid (7 %). The other eleven communities are the main destination for less than 3 % of international travelers (FRONTUR, 2015a). The big percentages of international tourists travel in different parts of Spain are the evidences of the territorial imbalance in the distribution of tourism. The capital of Catalonia, Barcelona, was the most visited city of Spain in 2013, with 5.52 millions of international visitors. In the same year Barcelona was the fifth most visited city in Europe, right behind London (UK), Paris (France), Rome (Italy) and Prague (Czech Republic) (Statisa, 2015). In Barcelona this figure raised to 6.06 million foreign visitors in 2014 (Infotur Barcelona, 2015).

**Figure 1.** Location of Spain on the Iberian Peninsula



In the same year, the reason for visiting Spain for the 86.5 % of the international tourists were leisure and holiday traveling; 6.6% of them were travelling for work and business; 1.5 %, for studies; 3.9 % for family reasons, health or purchases; and the remaining 1.4 % for other reasons. In the same year, the three countries that emitted more tourists to Spain were the United Kingdom, with 15 million visitors, France with 10.6 million and Germany with 10.42 million. Those three countries covered 55.4 % of the total foreign tourists traveling to Spain. The high number of tourists from those three countries can cause sectorial and space imbalances, because these tourists had a preference for a low-cost vacation based on sun, sea and sand. In 2014, in Spain the Germans had an average expenditure of €962, the British, of €849, and the French, of €617. Moreover, they are mostly attracted by the

Mediterranean coastal area, and the significant concentrations of the tourists in these regions cause overcrowded spaces.

Approximately 1% of the tourists that visited Spain came from East Asian countries. Japan stands in first place with 475,000 visitors and China in second place with 287,000 visitors (Frontur, 2015b). Non-EU visitors tend to have greater purchasing power than Europeans: the tourists with a higher average expenditure in Spain are the US Americans, with an average of €2,338; followed by the rest of the Americans, with €2,233; the Chinese, with €2,040; the Japanese, with €1,812; and those from the European Nordic countries, with €1,152 (Egatur, 2015; Turespaña, 2014; Rios, 2014). As a result, the Asian visitors are the higher investors in shopping with an average expenditure of €975 for the Chinese and €540 for the Japanese. Due to different consumption patterns among different tourism groups, the expansion of the East Asian tourism outbound markets in Spain can help the diversification of the tourism consumption and reduce the spatial and sectorial imbalance.

**Table 1.** Evolution of the Chinese Tourism in Spain. 2010–2014

| Year | Arrivals (thousands) | Annual increase |
|------|----------------------|-----------------|
| 2010 | 102                  | —               |
| 2011 | 130                  | 27,45 %         |
| 2012 | 177                  | 36,15 %         |
| 2013 | 252                  | 42,37 %         |
| 2014 | 287                  | 13,89 %         |

Source: Hosteltur (2011, 2011b, 2013, 2014, 2015b).

In Europe, the number of tourists has raised from three million Chinese visitors in 2011 (ETC & UNWTO, 2013: 51) to nearly 7.5 million in 2013 (WTO, 2014) which represents an increase of approximately 150% in three years. Spain was not an exception from this trend. In the same years, the number of Chinese travelers in Spain increased nearly 93.84 %: from 130,000 (in 2010) to 252,000. The statistic suggested that Spain was less attractive to Chinese tourists than other European countries like France, Switzerland, Italy and Germany to Chinese tourists. The analysis of the annual increment of Chinese tourists in Spain shows that in 2014 the increasing number of Chinese tourists in Spain was smaller than in the previous years (**Table 1**). This annual declination indicates a change in Spain and it would be necessary to evaluate the reasons for this declination in future work. However, the effect of the Chinese tourist in Spain's economy is significant, because Chinese tourists take an average expenditure of €2,040 which was twice as much as the Germans' expenditure in Spain. Furthermore, these figures have led to the expect-

tation that in 2020 the number of Chinese tourists will exceed one million (Hosteltur, 2014).

## **Analysis of tour Packages and itineraries in Spain**

### *Selected travel agencies and methodology*

According to the World Tourism Organization (WTO, 2014), 70% of the Chinese tourists who travelled to Europe like to organize their trip through organized tours. The reason for that is because it is not easy to obtain visas for independent leisure travel with a Chinese passport. Most Chinese leisure tourists who travelled to Europe are part of a group tour. The group tours usually have at least five Chinese tourists, and a tour guide, who is coordinated by tourism agencies that have the corresponding official licenses. The tourists in the group tours will stay with the group for most of the trip and all the activities are the responsibility of the tour guide and the travel agency. There are thousands of companies engaged in the sale of tourists' packages (ETC & UNWTO, 2013), but seven large companies with head office in Beijing, Shanghai and Guangdong are leading the market of package tours to Europe. These companies are: China Travel Service (CTS), China Youth Travel Service (CYTS), China International Travel Service (CITS), China Comfort Travel Co. (CCT), JinJiang Tours LTD (JJT), Huating Overseas Tourist Company (HOTC) and GZL International Travel Service (GZL) (ETC & UNWTO, 2013) (**Table 2**).

Most of these companies are state-owned, such as CTS, CYTS, CITS, JJT and HOTC. The first company mentioned is CTS. CTS is the largest operator of international travel and is a subordinate agency of the China National Tourism Administration. According to their website ([www.ctsho.com](http://www.ctsho.com)), their origins date back to 1949. The second company is CYTS, an agency controlled by the Communist Youth League of China. In 1997, CYTS was the first company in the tourism sector which entered the Chinese stock market. The third one, CITS, is the largest domestic travel company and the second largest for international travel in China. It has offices in most large and medium cities in China, so it is one of the most widespread companies throughout this country. According to its website ([www.cits.net](http://www.cits.net)), the company was founded in 1954, under the supervision of the Chinese State Council. The fourth company is JJT which is part of the conglomerate Jinjiang Group. JJT was founded in 2003 by assets of the Shanghai Municipal People's Government. The same cluster is holder of HOTC ([www.jjrtr.com](http://www.jjrtr.com)), the fifth company. The sixth one is China Comfort Travel Co. This travel agency is a subsidiary of Beijing Tourism Group Co., founded in 1998. Finally, GZL was established in 1980 and is currently the largest company operating in southern part of China. The headquarter of the GZL is in Guangzhou ([www.gzln.cn](http://www.gzln.cn)).

To achieve the aims of this research, this study used content analysis to analyze the characteristics of trips offered by these companies to Spain. Content analysis is a non-intrusive method that has been used since the early 1920s in areas such as political science, psychology and communication sciences. In addition, content analysis has also been widely developed in the discipline of tourism studies. Studies on destination image, tourism promotion and customer experiences and satisfaction are areas of applicability of content analysis in tourism contexts (Stepchenkova, 2012). This is because content analysis is a technique used to study a diverse spectrum of textual or visual information in order to describe and understand precisely what is said about a particular topic in a particular mean, from which information is extracted. This methodology uses quantitative or qualitative methods to make inferences from texts or other sources of information. On the one hand, quantitative content analysis needed the mathematical or computational techniques to draw conclusions from the data. On the other hand, qualitative content analysis is defined by Mayring (2000) as an empiric and controlled method in which the information sources are analyzed taking into account the context of communication and the key elements of the transmitter and receiver.

**Table 2.** Leading outbound travel agencies in Mainland China

| Travel agencies | Head office | Company                                      |
|-----------------|-------------|--|
| Mainland China  | Beijing     | 1. China Travel Service (CTS)                |
|                 |             | 2. China Comfort Travel Co. (CCT)            |
|                 |             | 3. China Youth Travel Service (CYTS)         |
|                 | Shanghai    | 4. JinJiang Tours LTD (JJT)                  |
|                 |             | 5. Huating Overseas Tourist Company (HOTC)   |
|                 | Guangdong   | 6. GZL International Travel Service (GZL)    |
|                 |             | 7. China International Travel Service (CITS) |

Source: ETC & UNWTO (2013: 93).

The seven travel agencies mentioned above were the sources of information considered in this research. The analysis has been developed based on a data collection and study of all the offers available on their websites. Specifically, we have collected all the available products responding the keyword search “Spain”, in Chinese: *xibanya* 西班牙. In a search made on June 6, 2015, we found a total of 44 packages available with tours offered for the third and fourth quarters of 2015. The study consisted of four main steps: (1) identify the product name and the company which offering it; (2) determine which cities and regions are visited and for how many days; (3) notice which are the main attractions of the destinations; (4) examine in quantitative level the characteristics of the tours (length, cities visited and itiner-

aries) and in a qualitative level the activities done and the strategies of the tour operators; (5) and finally draw conclusions.

### *Results. Itineraries in Spain*

The analysis of the tour packages indicates that all packages are offering a complex itinerary through different cities with different activities arranged. These itineraries are designed to visit several heritage cities and these cities' main monuments. Commonly in one day different cities are visited and only in Madrid and Barcelona is programmed a longer stay. In Madrid and Barcelona tourists usually spend two days in each city. The Chinese tourist groups usually travels through buses or Spanish High-Speed Train (AVE) in Spain. Although the tour packages that include journeys with AVE are a minority among the total tour packages, the itineraries with AVE are becoming more popular. In addition, the journeys with AVE are associated with greater exclusivity and stays in four- or five-stars hotels or *Paradores de Turismo de España*. It should be pointed out that the tourists have a tight schedule visiting various cities in one day. Besides, their schedules tend to conform to the Chinese customs. The rough schedule will be, they start breakfast from 6:30a.m. to 7:30a.m.; lunch from 11:30a.m. to 12:30p.m., and dinner from 5 p.m. to 6 p.m. Therefore, they go to restaurants that are able to meet those schedules, which are not common restaurants' service schedule in Spain. Because of that, most of the tours will make several stops in Chinese restaurants, so they miss the Spanish ones. As for the route, in the case of the tour package that only goes through Spain, the journey begins in Madrid, continues in Andalusia and ends in Barcelona.

A remarkable feature of the analyzed tour packages is that most of them are considering to visit more than one country in Europe. In a very few occasions, a trip is organized solely to Spain. When this happens, it is very uncommon and it is reflected in the name of the package, such as in the product "Spain. A 10-day trip through cities and villages, in 4-star hotels", 西班牙一地大城小镇 10 日游—全程 4 星 ([www.jinjiang.com](http://www.jinjiang.com)). It is remarkable that 91% of the analyzed tour packages include itineraries through other countries while visiting Spain. The tours through Spain are mostly complemented with tours through Portugal (in the 74% of the products) and to a lesser extent, France (13.6%). The journey through Spain might also be complemented with itineraries with other countries, such as Italy, Monaco, UK, Greece and Turkey, although these associations are offered at less than 5% of the offers.

It is worthwhile noting that according to the data analysis, the tour package has an average duration of 7.5 days in Spain. If the visit to the other countries is included

such as Portugal, the average stay of tourists in Europe is from 10.5 days. However, the Chinese tourists spend an average time of 12 days outside their country including their time investment from 15 to 18 hours on the outward flight and the same amount time for the return trip.

**Table 3.** Major and minor destinations

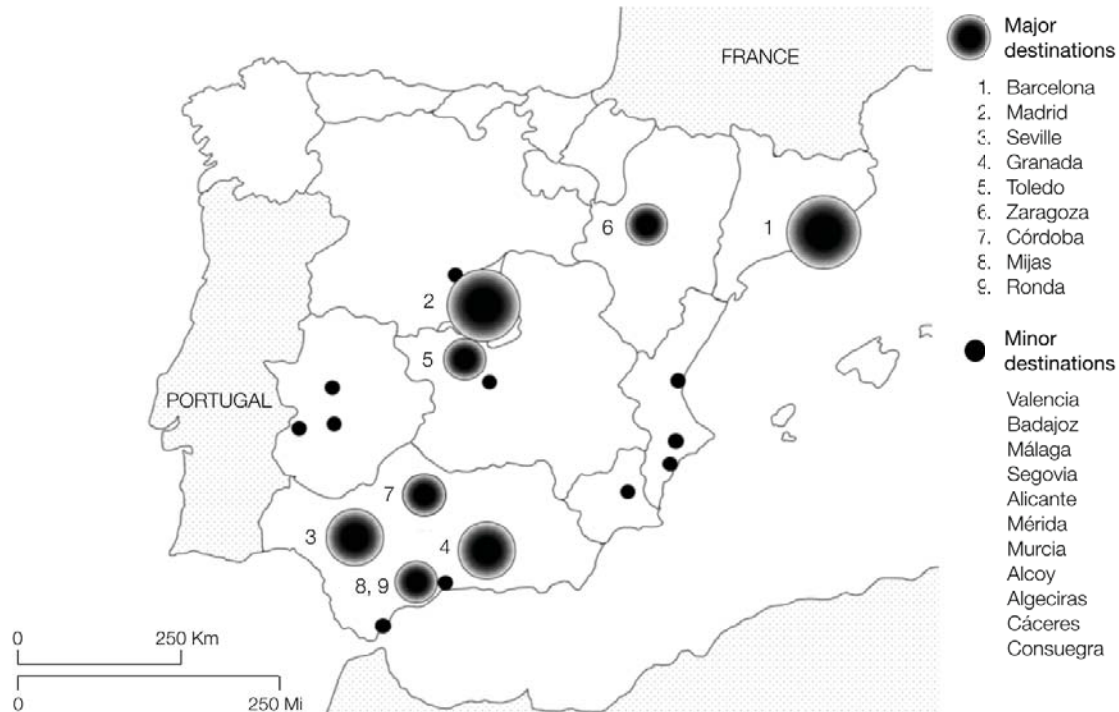
| Major destinations | Presence in tour packages | Average length of stay (days) | Minor destinations | Presence in tour packages | Average length of stay (days) |
|--------------------|---------------------------|-------------------------------|--------------------|---------------------------|-------------------------------|
| 1. Barcelona       | 100 %                     | 1,91                          | 10. Valencia       | 18 %                      | 0,88                          |
| 2. Madrid          | 100 %                     | 1,72                          | 11. Málaga         | 14 %                      | 0,75                          |
| 3. Seville         | 80 %                      | 0,95                          | 12. Badajoz        | 11 %                      | 0,9                           |
| 4. Granada         | 80 %                      | 0,92                          | 13. Segovia        | 11 %                      | 0,5                           |
| 5. Toledo          | 73 %                      | 0,56                          | 14. Alicante       | 5 %                       | 1                             |
| 6. Mijas           | 60 %                      | 0,55                          | 15. Mérida         | 2 %                       | 1                             |
| 7. Ronda           | 50 %                      | 0,48                          | 16. Murcia         | 2 %                       | 1                             |
| 8. Zaragoza        | 41 %                      | 1                             | 17. Alcoy          | 2 %                       | 0,5                           |
| 9. Córdoba         | 41 %                      | 0,88                          | 18. Algeciras      | 2 %                       | 0,5                           |
|                    |                           |                               | 19. Cáceres        | 2 %                       | 0,5                           |
|                    |                           |                               | 20. Consuegra      | 2 %                       | 0,5                           |

According to the data analysis, it is feasible to categorize the cities that are destinations in the itineraries of the tour packages between major and minor destinations. Barcelona and Madrid are the protagonist cities of Spain, with an average stay of nearly two days in each. In addition, these cities were found in 100% of the offers: the visit to Spain always includes stops in Madrid and Barcelona. Although these destinations are not in every single one of the tour products, other main destinations are the cities of Seville, Granada, Mijas, Ronda and Cordoba. According to this research, part of the principal destinations are also the cities of Toledo and Zaragoza. The cities that appear in less than 40% of the tour packages have been considered as minor destinations. These minor cities are distributed in the southern half of Spain and in the Mediterranean coast. They are: Valencia, Málaga, Badajoz, Segovia, Alicante, Mérida, Murcia, Alcoy, Algeciras, Cáceres and Consuegra (Table 3 and Figure 2).

It is interesting that mobility factors affect the stops on the itineraries. For example, in the case of bus travel it is usual to do a stop between Madrid and Barcelona, because it is a seven-hour journey. Depending on the route, the stop can be in Valencia or Zaragoza. In these cases, it is normal to schedule a one-day stay in these cities. However, when this same journey is made on Spanish High-Speed Train

(AVE), the time spent is about 3 hours and usually there are no stops between Madrid and Barcelona.

Figure 2. Location of major and minor Spanish destinations



Regarding the itinerary through Spain and Portugal, there are three models of tours. The first and predominant one, starts in Lisbon (Portugal), enters in Spain from the south and covers some Andalusian cities (Seville, Granada, Mijas, Ronda and Córdoba), continues per Madrid (including a visit to Toledo) and ends in Barcelona. This tour appears in the 74 % of the tour packages. The second one just goes through Spain: it begins in Madrid, continues to Andalusia, go back to Madrid and ends in Barcelona. This tour appears in the 9% of the packages. The latest one offers the reverse route. After a trip to south France or north Italy, tourists enter in Spain via Barcelona, then are directed to Madrid and then continue their journey to Andalusia. Then they take the plane back in Madrid or Lisbon. As a result of these routes, that with minor variants are already well established in all the offers, we found that the participation of the excluded regions is complicated. At the moment, on the map of Spain, the lack of presence of the cities in the northwest of this country is highlighted (Figure 2).

In order to display the characteristics of the routes and to identify a particular product, we proceed to explain a typical case found in all companies with minor variations, represented by the product “Spain and Portugal, a profound trip in 13 days” (西班牙葡萄牙深度游 13 日游) at a price of CNY20,488 —about 3,000 euros



(www.aoyou.com). This price includes travel, accommodation, breakfast, lunch and access to all scheduled activities. There are also optional activities that must be paid separately. The information of the package is divided into two parts. In the first part, four main elements are mentioned. Firstly, on the website, the flight information is displayed: the total travel time should be 16.5 hours. Secondly, it is highlighted the accommodation and displacement options: this product offers 11-night stays in four-star hotels and the journey between Madrid and Barcelona is travelled by AVE, the other journeys by bus. Thirdly, some details of the gastronomy are also mentioned in the trip: there will be combination of menus, eastern and western. It is mentioned the “taste of cream and egg tarts, a traditional desert from Portugal, and the Spanish paella” (This and the following quotations presents in sections 4.2. are a translation of the text in the product “Spain and Portugal, a profound trip in 13 days” (西班牙 葡萄牙 深度游 13 日游), from the website of China Youth Travel Service (www.aoyou.com), accessed June 6, 2015.). Then, some cultural elements of the destination are synthetized. In this case with the emphasis in Portugal: “in addition to Lisbon, Sintra will be visited, an ancient town in a mountain that the poet Lord Byron covered with praise and flattery. This is a city which has been listed as a World Heritage Site by the United Nations”.

**Figure 3.** Itinerary of Spain and Portugal, a profound trip in 13 days (CYTS)



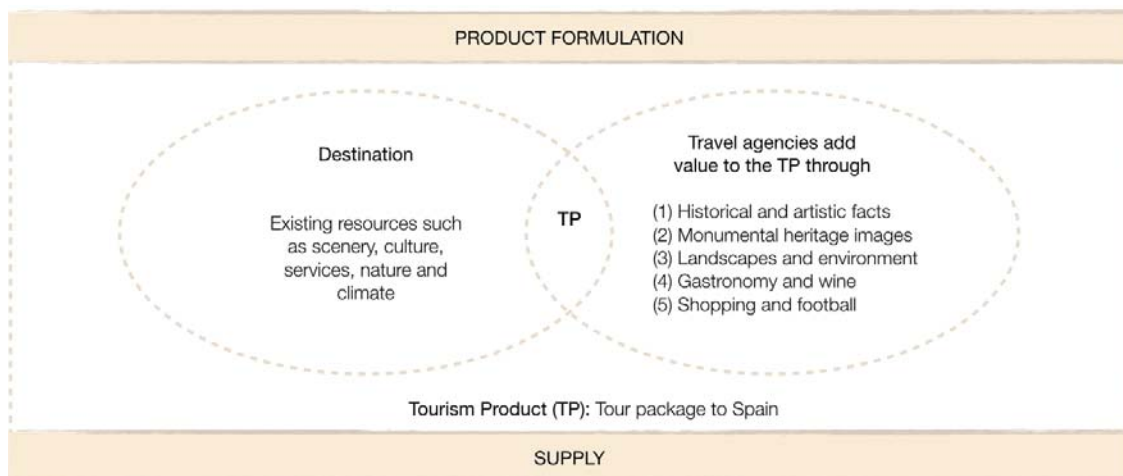
In the second part, the tourism companies' website showed the itinerary and the schedule. The specific itinerary in this proposal is as following. After the first day of the outward travel, on the second day tourists will visit Lisbon and Cascais in Portugal, this journeys are made by bus. On the third day, tourists will visit Sintra and Obidos, and then they return to Lisbon (Portugal). On the fourth day, they will reach Spain, and the visit will start in Seville. On the fifth day Ronda, Mijas and Granada will be visited. The sixth day is spent between Granada and Cordoba, rep-

representatives of the “Moorish Architecture”. On the seventh day, the tour group will visit Toledo and at night they will reach Madrid. The eighth and ninth days are scheduled in Madrid. Finally, after a journey in AVE, the tenth and the eleventh day is to visit Barcelona. On the twelfth day they leave Barcelona and in the thirteenth they will be back to Beijing. In the website, the distances travelled by bus are also announced, which in some days can reach 413 kilometers (Figure 3).

*Results. Aspects of the destination that add value to the product offered*

Cities and urban areas are unique tourism places in the travel products. The analyzed tourism agencies used different strategies to add value to the existing travel products and realized the importance of urban and cultural tourism. The popular tourism destinations claim to have a distinctive cultural and historic identity that can be highlighted in order to open new markets. It is important to analyze the strategies that are used to build and add value to Spanish tourism resources. So, the use of cultural elements as administrable resources leads to tourist potentialities in the territory. The *product formulation* by the analyzed travel agencies is the way that the companies adapt the qualities of the destination to adapt the needs of its customers. As a part of the product formulation, the travel agencies attempt to construct a tourist image of the destination in their websites. Through categorizing of the investigated tourism packages, five categories of tourism attractions were generated. These categories are five main aspects that are linked to the image of Spain and are displayed in the tour packages in order to add value to the destination. These categories are: (1) historical and cultural elements, (2) material and monumental heritage, (3) landscapes, environment and intangible heritage, (4) gastronomy and wine, (5) shopping and football (Figure 4).

Figure 4. Tourism product as a result of the strategies of image construction



First of all, the territory is linked with the historical and cultural elements that have happened or been inspired by the city. Two major strategies are used: highlighting the artistic creations linked to the city and through historical facts. For example, in the case of Seville, the city is described as the place where the Opera *Carmen* (1875) by George Bizet was set, based on the novella *Carmen* (1845) of Prosper Merimee. According to CTS, “this wonderful city was already described in the Bizet’s masterpiece Carmen” ([www.ctsho.com](http://www.ctsho.com)). In the Portuguese city of Obidos, there is an example of valorization through historical facts. As stated in CYTS: “It is a well-preserved medieval city, the king of Portugal gave as a wedding gift to the Queen, for that reason it is known as The Wedding City”. Then, the agency mentions the story as it is a beautiful place to visit if you want to start or strengthen a marriage ([www.aoyou.com](http://www.aoyou.com)).

Secondly, highlighting the material heritage of the stops is another major way to add value to the offered journey. In fact, the major attraction of the tour is to get in contact with monumental and architectonic heritage, that is to say, the *scenic spots* of the country. This happens in all the cities. For example, the most popular attractions in Barcelona are the ancient and romantic urban layout of the historical district, La Sagrada Familia, Las Ramblas and Park Guell. For the material heritage it is usual to establish the link with the World Heritage Site status granted by the UNESCO. For example, the Park Guell is described as “an incredible World Heritage Site and the masterpiece of Antonio Gaudí. It contains a park of stone, ceramics, natural forms and elements that seem extracted from a fairy tale (...) inspired by nature and mythology” ([www.aoyou.com](http://www.aoyou.com)). In a similar way, in Madrid, the outstanding elements are the Royal Palace, *Palacio Real*, “of wonderful architecture and beautiful decor” ([www.jinjiang.com](http://www.jinjiang.com)) and the *Plaza del Sol* and *Plaza de España*.

Thirdly, the landscapes and atmosphere of Spain is an element which is also used in order to capture the attention of tourists. It is worth noting the case of Mijas and Ronda in Spain and Sintra in Portugal. These cities are described in terms of its urban environment and unique atmosphere. These cities are also characterized as picturesque sites with unique landscapes and outstanding planning. Mijas is “the great balcony of Europe ..., where white houses are glimpsed down the hill, under the glow of a bright sun” The travel agencies also take into account the attractiveness of some elements of intangible culture and local people behavior, such as “flamenco music and dancing” and “Spanish people’s enthusiasm”, especially in Andalusia. The reference to “flamenco and bullfighting”, along with the “joy of the people of the region” are the elements that appear most frequently

mentioned. In fact, several times the elements that define the character and culture of Andalusia are attributed to the entire country. That is to say, the unique features

of Andalusia are being used by the travel agencies to characterize Spain as “a country of Flamenco and romance” (www.aoyou.com).

Fourthly, in the analyzed tour packages there are several references to food and complementary activities. It can be found many times the allusion to wine, cellars and *paella*. Moreover, a flamenco dance show in Seville, a visit to the Dali Museum in Figueres, and the taste of the famous roast pork (*cochinillo asado*), are regarded as optional activities that tourists can hire or not, when buy their traveling package. These elements allow the flexibility of the product and are priced between €30 and €60 per person.

Lastly, Madrid and Barcelona are more likely to be the place for shopping and free time to the Chinese travel agencies. In addition, in these two cities the tourists can visit the football stadiums of the Real Madrid Football Club (RMCF), the Santiago Bernabeu, and the one of the Football Club Barcelona (FCB), the Nou Camp. As mentioned earlier in the paper, Madrid and Barcelona are the cities that Chinese tourists spend more than one day. Therefore, they have a little more time for activities at their own pace. In these cases, the Chinese tourists are able to have time to visit the department store of El Corte Ingles, outlet shopping complexes and souvenir shops. The shopping activities are important elements for the travel agencies and special agreements with the outlet shopping complex La Roca Village and Las Rozas Village are mentioned in several tour packages. As stated by CYTS, in those two shopping complexes are offered “exclusive discounts at over 100 name-brand boutiques” (www.aoyou.com). The tourism packages mentioned before indicating that shopping is an important element to be considered for the Chinese tourist. In China, the customer is afraid of the fake luxury products and there are heavy taxes for luxury foreign brands. In Europe, the boutiques of Louis Vuitton, Prada and Dior, among others, are directing their selling campaigns to Chinese tourists, who are interested in buying authentic products at a much lower price than in China. The huge expenditure that Chinese spend on the luxury goods in Europe can be an important factor to be considered in the tourism in Spain.

This study can contribute to a further understanding of the Chinese outbound tourism in Europe. Most of the above-mentioned elements can be seen as heritage aspects of the destination. The highlighted history, monuments, landscape and atmosphere and the gastronomy reveal an interest in the distinctive culture of Spain. The cultural dimension of the destination is shaping the overall tourism image of Spain. This also allows to interpret that the travel agencies are stimulating a tourist gaze based on the distinctive cultural elements of the destination. Another dimension that is manifested by the travel agencies is the experiential dimension. With the tour package, the customer will enjoy the convenience and the easiness of the

travel organized by the travel agencies. At the same time, the travel is also seen as an opportunity for education, sightseeing and shopping. Therefore, convenience, education, sightseeing and shopping are also contributing to the overall image of the product offered (Figure 5).

Figure 5. Overall image of the destination in the tour packages



## Discussion

This study allows us to interpret that the content analysis of the tour packages is a useful tool to help understand the Chinese tourism in Spain. Content analysis is a descriptive method that have given results in a quantitative and qualitative way. The websites include the information of destinations that the tourists will visit in the tourism package such as the stops, and most aspects about the food and the lodging, as well as the most representative elements of each stop. This can lead to quantitative results about the major and minor destinations within Spain, the itineraries in Spain and the length of stay in this country. In addition, the information about the activities and the attractions of the tour packages can be read in a critical and analytical way. Through qualitative categorizing it is possible to understand how the image of the destination is created in order to obtain the tourism product and what are the implications of that. Thereby, this study concludes that the products available on websites of travel agencies can be used as a valid source of information, in the same way as the leaflets of tour packages (William & Lew, 2015), tourist guides (Suhett & Prat, 2011) or Official Tourism Websites (Zhang et al., 2015).

The methodology consisted in process the information from 44 tour packages with visits to Spain and 33 of the tour packages included visits to Portugal. Regarding the limitations of this research, first of all, the websites of tour operators analyzed only show the products available for the third and fourth quarters of 2015. Secondly, as long as we have only analyzed the leading travel agencies of mainland China, it is very likely that there will be different itineraries and tour packages in minor travel agencies. Thirdly, obviously, within the analyzed companies these products are not static, and it is expected to be changed in the future. So their itineraries depend on the interests of the future tourists and the travel agencies. Fi-

nally, it is also appropriate to mention that the analyzed travel agencies offer a traditional product, which attracts most tourists traveling to Spain. According to the ETC & UNWTO (2013), the traditional product is defined by the guidance of the travel agency and the tour group.

As has been confirmed in this study, the leading Chinese travel agencies are offering traditional tour packages to Chinese tourists. In Spain, the characteristics of these tour packages are the following: the tourist must belong to an organized group, the tours are organized by travel agencies, several destinations are visited in few days, the guide and the travel agency make the arrangements and plan the itinerary, free time is allowed only in Madrid and Barcelona, most of the products are offering similar itineraries and similar activities, and most the products are creating a similar overall view of Spain.

Despite the study has only detected traditional products, there are many other minor products that are practiced by most exclusive companies, which have not been addressed in this article. According to Medina (2014), Chinese tourists are also attracted by the golf travel, which allow the tourist to play golf at golf resorts and luxury hotels, such as the Nanjing Zhonghan International Golf Resort in China, which receives a high number of Chinese tourists. The absence of this kind of minority tourism in the analyzed travel agencies might indicate that most exclusive and different products are not developed in Spain.

Finally, we should understand that it is not possible to draw inferences from the results of this study to other tourism segments. The tourists who travel through the service of travel agencies are usually middle age and affluent Chinese. It is believed that this segment wants a traditional product (ETC, 2014). In Spain, there is a notable presence of young Chinese tourists who choose to travel independently. These independent travelers usually tend to prefer cheaper forms of travel and their itineraries within Spain are different from the ones offered by the travel agencies. It is remarkable the case of Chinese students temporarily residing in Europe. These tourists enjoy arranging travels within Europe and they also arrive at Spain (Lojo & Cànoves, 2015). These younger tourists do not use the travel agencies and their sources of information are much broader. Also, another point of interest is the ability to relate this analysis with other outbound tourism markets in East Asia affecting Spain. In the case of Japanese tourism, the organized tours are also of great importance (Gómez, 2011). However, for the Japanese as well as the Chinese, they adapt to the travel agencies of their own countries, so it is needed a different study to understand their travel patterns.

## **Conclusion**

Although Spain ranks as the third in the world in tourist arrivals, this country is a mature tourism destination and the rapid development of tourism in the precedent years has revealed several problems (Williams & Lew, 2015): the appearance of new international destinations with a similar tourism product of sun, sea and sand, such as Greece, Turkey or Florida; the geospatial imbalance and the dependence on the tourists from the UK, France and Germany; and the rapid pace of tourism development during the second half of the 20th century had provoked the crowding of bars, beaches and streets, pollutions of sea and the emergence of petty crime. Because of these aforementioned factors, the Spanish tourism industry should focus on exploring ways of diversifying the tourism market, expanding its product and promoting different tourism areas. The understanding of the Chinese tourism and other outbound markets is a key element in order to expand the international demand of the destinations' tourist industry.

The article analyzed the Chinese tourism in Spain through a study of the organized tour packages of travel agencies from Mainland China. This kind of tours includes the vast majority of Chinese tourists who visit Spain. This research provides an understanding of the characteristics of Chinese tourism in Spain and reveals the patterns and similarities among the leading travel agencies, building on an analysis of the information provided by Chinese tour operators. For all the agencies the most important activity is sightseeing in different cities and get to know heritage elements. The results indicate that Chinese tourists are mainly interested in Barcelona, Madrid, Seville, Granada, Toledo, Mijas, Ronda, Cordoba and Zaragoza. In addition, the itineraries often include Portuguese cities, such as Lisbon, Obidos or Cascais. The average length of stay in Spain is 7.5 days, and it reaches 10.5 days if the journey includes visits to Portugal.

The cities that appear in all the travel routes are Madrid and Barcelona. These are also the cities where the stay is longer and different activities are planned such as free time and shopping. The results at the regional level show that the region with a strong presence in terms of number of cities visited is Andalusia. The presence of Chinese tourists is better distributed in this Autonomous Community, with a total of seven cities present in tour packages (although the most popular places are Seville and Granada). For this reason, the Andalusian culture is frequently associated with the image of Spain.

In addition, the travel agencies attempt to create an image of Spain in order to add value to the product offered. This image is revealed through the cultural and experiential dimensions of the travel. The interest in the culture is noted because the tour packages highlight the distinctive elements of Spain: (1) history and artistic

culture; (2) the iconic architecture, scenic spots and recognizable urban spaces of the Spanish traditional culture; (3) landscape, environment and intangible elements of the culture such as bullfighting or flamenco; (4) and Spanish cuisine (paella is getting increasingly famous). The experiential dimensions announced by the websites are: the convenience of an organized trip, learning about different places and cultures, sightseeing and shopping experiences.

This study also allows a further understanding in the strategies of the travel agencies to create the tourist product and the characteristics of the Chinese outbound tourism to Europe. The analyzed companies stimulate the idea of heritage and cultural tourism amongst their potential buyers. It can be understood as cultural tourism because the main attractions of the product are the heritage and cultural elements, such as monumental and scenic areas, traditional customs and other peculiarities of the Spanish culture. However, the concept of cultural tourism is too wide and can reach different degrees and expressions. In addition, despite the intentions of the travel agencies, it can be doubted if a tour package that it is adapted to the customs and habits of the Chinese tourist can give the opportunity to experience in depth the culture of the destination.

In order to achieve a better product for these tourists, a slight adaptation is necessary to overcome the infrastructural weakness. For example, the Chinese tour packages are offering catering services in restaurants that can adapt to their schedules (mostly Chinese restaurants), so they miss the traditional Spanish cuisine. In addition, Chinese restaurants can meet the expectations of the tourists and offer both Chinese and Spanish meals, as well as provide information in Chinese language. Therefore, it is necessary a further work to improve key elements of the industry: in accommodation, transportation, catering and providing services in Chinese. In these areas should be done an effort to adapt the services to the Chinese tourist. If these weaknesses are overcome, then the efforts should be focused in offering quality itineraries in accordance with their interests: history and arts, culture and scenic spots, landscapes, environment and natural spaces, gastronomy, shopping and football.

In conclusion, the majority of Chinese tourists visiting Spain through organized groups are attached to travel agencies from mainland China. So, in order to influence the itineraries and the activities, the Spanish tourism and hospitality industry should focus their efforts on establishing agreements with these travel agencies. The Chinese tourists are increasingly interested in visiting Spain and they demand products adapted to their interests, tastes and needs. This tourism is expected to grow in Europe, but it is necessary to pay attention to their needs in order to position Spain as a leading destination.



### Bridging Section 3

| This article   |  |  |
|--|--|--|
| <p>Theory of the tourism product as an underlying principle. Attributes of the destination and itineraries of the destination as explicit concepts used.</p> <p><b>General purpose:</b><br/>Understanding Chinese travel agencies and group tour travelers</p> | <p>Tourism product research, Spain tourism product in the Chinese travel agencies</p> <p><b>Article 2</b></p> <p><b>Findings:</b><br/>The itineraries within Spain, the experiential and cultural elements of the destination in the Chinese market.</p> | <p>Quantitative spatial analysis (spatial distribution of tourism) and qualitative content analysis (components of the tour product)</p> <p><b>Limitations:</b><br/>This study focuses only on Chinese travel agencies and group tour travelers.</p> |
| This study limitations lead to further research  |  |  |
| <p>What are the differences between distinct travel segments? Do all types of tourists value the same attributes of the destination?</p> <p><b>Article 3</b></p>   | <p>Are these results valid only for information conveyed through travel agencies? How do different information sources compare and communicate their message?</p> <p><b>Article 4</b></p>  | <p>There is an image of the destination related to the tourism product offered by Chinese travel agencies. What is the image of the destination in different information sources?</p> <p><b>Article 5</b></p>  |

**Note:** This table is not included in the published article. It adds to the overall flow of the dissertation

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## Article 3

# Segmentation by experiential familiarity and travel mode of the Chinese outbound market to Spain



## Abstract

East Asian travel markets are maturing with new travel trends arising as tourists become more experienced. This paper analyzes the possibilities of segmenting East Asian tourists' motivations and satisfaction in Western destinations by experiential familiarity and travel mode, namely Free Independent Travel and Group-Tour Travel. Based on these variables, this study builds on a survey questionnaire of Mainland Chinese travelers to Spain. A quantitative analysis of motivations and satisfaction is performed. Comparison of means, one-way MANOVA and Principal Component Analysis are the main analytical techniques used to understand the a priori selected segments of tourists. The main results show significant differences among con-

sumers: Independent travelers are less satisfied with the Chinese language services, but group-tour travelers are overall less satisfied with the trip and the destination. The results also show that repeat visitors are motivated by different aspects of the destination, such as Spanish natural resources and beaches, which are less important for the first-time visitors. Among the studied segments of consumers, the differences in motivation, satisfaction and sociodemographic profiles are discussed along with the practical implications of the research.

*Keywords: Market segmentation, motivation and satisfaction, experiential familiarity, mode of travel, Chinese outbound tourism.*

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## Introduction

In recent years, the development of East Asian tourism has been an exceptional phenomenon, and the growth in this travel market is changing the tourism landscape worldwide (UNWTO, 2017). China is one of the largest potential markets to Europe (ETC & UNWTO, 2013), with the affluence of Chinese travelers in Western destinations constituting a paradigm of current international tourism as destinations try to attract these new visitors and understand this market. Extensive literature on Chinese outbound tourism examines this source, yet —according to the literature review conducted by Jin and Wang (2016)— few studies cover the case of Chinese outbound tourism to Europe, which is an under-researched destination. This paper studies the case of Spain, where previous literature indicated that more research should be conducted to understand this new market (Andreu, Claver, & Quer, 2013; Lojo & Cànoves, 2015).

The motivation and satisfaction of new consumers are key factors in the tourism development of established destinations. Motivation has been considered the original trigger that sets off all the events that are involved in travel (Holden, 2006), and consumer satisfaction with the destination plays an important role in effectively managing tourism at the destination (Williams & Lew, 2015). Because of its central relevance, travel motivation and satisfaction have been recurrent themes in the tourism and hospitality literature (Johanson, 2008; S. Lee, Jeon, & Kim, 2011; Park, Lee, & Miller, 2015). In order to add value to the study of motivations and satisfaction as a strategic marketing tool, market segmentation offers techniques that can increase the understanding of a new tourism market (Dolnicar, 2004a). Despite the enormous body of research on tourism motivation and satisfaction regarding the Chinese market, research on marketing segments that consider a priori segmentation has not been conducted yet.

The basis for successful marketing segmentation is to understand and satisfy the differences in consumer needs through different variables (Dolnicar & Kemp, 2009). An a priori segmentation leads to the identification of different groups of tourists according to prior knowledge, and it has been used widely in tourism research (Dolnicar, 2004a, 2004b; Wedel & Kamakura, 2012). The basis of the first segmentation taken into account in this paper is the mode of travel: the importance of different modes of travel, such as Free Independent Travel (FIT) or group-tour travel (GTT) have been recognized as a determinant factor in Chinese tourism (X. Li, Meng, Uysal, & Mihalik, 2013; A. C. C. Lu & Chen, 2014). Experiential familiarity is selected as a second basis that affects motivation and satisfaction. This decision is based on previous works (Cohen & Cohen, 2012; X. Li, Cheng, Kim, & Petrick, 2008; Oppermann, 1997; Tan & Wu, 2016) which have argued that

familiarity remarkably affects travel experience and implies different marketing strategies.

Tse (2015) argued that previous research into Chinese tourism motivations tends to be linear and simple, and he states that new approaches should be developed. In addition, previous studies barely address the important dichotomy between either GTT and FIT or between first-time and repeat visitors in the same destination. To fill this gap, this study focuses on exploring the travel motivations and satisfaction of Mainland Chinese travelers to Spain adding the perspective of market segmentation. To understand the basic groups of tourists with similar needs, an a priori basis of segmentation has been selected by introducing variables for experiential familiarity and mode of travel (FIT or GTT). To this purpose, Mainland Chinese outbound tourists in Spain are the target group. The research question is: How does segmentation by experiential familiarity and mode of travel affect the motivation and satisfaction of Chinese tourism to Spain? If significant differences are found between these travel groups, the present study could help us better understand the Chinese outbound tourist experience for long-haul destinations. This will in turn have marketing implications for European tourism managers, specifically in terms of quality improvement for local tourism organizations in Spain.

## Literature review

### *Tourist motivations, satisfaction and a priori segmentation*

Understanding tourism motivations is a necessary element in tourism marketing with regard to the positioning of the destination, which is associated with the needs of the tourist, their expectations and the activities in which the visitor engages (Park et al., 2015). In this paper, the Push and Pull theory is used to study the motivations for traveling. This constitutes a two-dimensional approach to studying motivation, which has been commonly adopted in tourism studies (Crompton, 1979; Dann, 1981; Iso-Ahola, 1982; Kim, Lee, & Klenosky, 2003). Crompton (1979) proposed that travel is motivated by internal psychological forces that “push” tourists and by external forces from the destination characteristics that “pull” tourists to a specific destination. That is, the Push factors are the elements that drive people to engage in a trip, and the Pull factors are the elements and attributes of the destination that attract the travelers. Previous researchers identified in Chinese tourism push factors such as “seeing something different”, “increasing knowledge”, “rest and relaxation”, “experiencing a different culture” and “shopping” (Johanson, 2008). Pull factors that are investigated in tourism are linked to the attributes of the destination such as “visiting specific natural spaces”, “seeing the Wildlife” or “local culture” (Y. Zhang and Peng, 2014).

Satisfaction is a reaction resulting from the consumption of tourism experiences, and it is a constitutive part of marketing theory. It is crucial for influencing future purchase intentions, the perceived image of the destination and word-of-mouth communication (Truong & King, 2009). In Tourism literature, satisfaction with the travel is analyzed following a cognitive approach, evaluating how expectations are met and as an emotional reaction to consuming an experience (Prayag, Hosany, Muskat, & Del Chiappa, 2017). Satisfaction is a function perceived by the tourist that arises from the relationship between expectations and actual travel experience (Truong & King, 2009). Consumer satisfaction is high when the services and the tourism product perform according to or higher than expectations and when the consumer experience is perceived positively. With one exception, no research to date has studied Chinese tourists' level of satisfaction with the attributes and services of a specific Western European destination —the exception being the case of the United Kingdom (G. Li, Song, Chen, & Wu, 2012).

Smith (1956) states that segmentation is a strategic tool that allows viewing a heterogeneous market as a number of smaller homogeneous markets. Segmentation allows grouping together individuals with similar characteristics. In marketing studies, segmentation is a key element for adding value to the study of motivations and satisfaction of consumers (Dolnicar, 2008). The benefits that segmentation offers to the destination lie in the ability to understand specific types of tourists (Dolnicar, 2004a), and it further offers competitive advantage in the global market of international destinations. Marketing researchers generally segment a market a priori or a posteriori. In both cases, segmentation variables are the basis for defining groups of consumers. The a priori approach first defines the segmentation variables and then applies profiling descriptors to analyze the consumers. This segmentation technique can also be used to externally validate different segments (Woodside & Martin, 2013). The a posteriori approach assumes that there does not exist enough prior segmentation information, and it therefore lets statistical techniques (such as clustering or grouping techniques) generate segments (Dolnicar, 2008).

The first issue before selecting the segmentation technique is identifying the segmentation variables from the nearly infinite number of base variables. In this paper, two objective variables have been selected from the general understanding of Chinese outbound tourism literature. This approach represents the simplest model of analysis and —if suited to the research objectives and there is enough prior information— it is preferable to more complex segmentation methods (Dolnicar, Lazarevski, & Yanamandram, 2013). Firstly, according to the previous literature, mode of travel has been identified as an important antecedent to travel experience.



Different groups of Chinese travelers such as group tour travelers, independent travelers or backpackers have different motivations for engaging in a trip (J. Chang, Wang, Guo, Su, & Yen, 2007; Y. Chen, Schuckert, Song, & Chon, 2016; Luo, Huang, & Brown, 2015; Ong & du Cros, 2012). Secondly, familiarity and previous travel experience with the same destination have been shown not only to have a significant effect on satisfaction and loyalty levels (X. Li et al., 2008), but they also affect destination choice and motivation for a new travel experience (Lau & McKercher, 2004; G. Lee & Tussyadiah, 2012).

### *Group-tour and independent travel*

When buying international tourism services and products, one of the first decisions faced by the consumer is the choice between group-tour travel (GTT) or independent travel (FIT). Woodside and Ahn (2013) argued that contracting travel arrangements via organized group packages is more popular among tourists from nations with a more highly collectivist culture, while independent travel is more frequently preferred by highly individualist nations. Cultural distance, differences in languages, and safety concerns can also affect the choice between group-tour and independent travel (Xiang, 2013). In China, the all-inclusive group tours were the only permitted form of leisure travel until the late 1990s, and it is still popular for travel to long-haul destinations. According to the World Travel Organization (UNWTO, 2014), 39% of the Mainland outbound travelers still prefer to choose a group tour when travelling abroad, and 31% choose a partially organized tour arranged by travel agencies who book their air tickets and make hotel reservations. Recently, the demand for independent travel has been growing, and Chinese tourists may be granted tourism visas to travel independently if they can demonstrate that they have enough financial means to travel and will return to China after the trip (Inkson & Minnaert, 2012).

Page (2009) defines a “package tour” as an all-inclusive product that comprises aircraft seats, accommodation at destination, return transfer from airport to accommodation, services of a tour operator representative and insurance coverage. In this paper, a group-tour traveler (GTT) is the tourist that visits the destination through a “package tour” (Page, 2009) and as part of a group led by a tour guide. Wang et al. (2000) identified 8 services that are usually provided by East Asian group tours: pre-tour briefing, airplane tickets, hotel and restaurant arrangements, coach services for traveling within the destination, sightseeing of scenic spots, trips to shopping centers and the assistance of a tour guide. According to Weaver and Lawton (2014), group tours allow travelers to remain within culturally familiar elements and avoid the discomfort of cultural differences. Chang et al.

(2007) analyzed the trends in outbound package groups in China and Taiwan, and they concluded that the group-tour packages in many Asian economies are evolving from homogenized to more personalized products. In the case of outbound travel to the Special Administrative Region of Hong Kong, package tours result in low tourist satisfaction and have been demonstrated to affect tourists' behavioral intentions over time (Y. Chen et al., 2016).

In contrast to group-tour travelers, independent tourists are those who arrange their own transportation and accommodation at the destination. These tourists can also purchase air tickets and accommodation through a travel agency or an internet-based agency (Arlt & Burns, 2013). In this paper, and according to Tsaur et al. (2010), the Free Independent Tourist (FIT) is the tourist that “plans itineraries and handle[s] everything [...] by themselves, as opposed [to] tourists that purchase packaged tours”. Backpackers, international students and young tourists have also been identified as part of the independent travel market because they do not buy package products (King & Gardiner, 2015). Thus, accessibility to information is one of the most critical features of a destination that can influence the decisions of independent travelers. Internet, travel guide books, magazines and films are the main sources of information for Chinese independent tourists (Xiang, 2013).

### *Experiential familiarity*

Familiarity, defined as knowledge of a product (Seo, Kim, Oh, & Yun, 2013), is a potential analytical tool in tourism research (Prentice, 2004). Consumers who are familiar with a destination tend to have a more pleasurable tourism experience (Baloglu, 2001). Thus, it is necessary for tourist destinations to use a reliable and valid measure of familiarity in order to better understand the consumers. The operationalization of the familiarity construct involves identifying different types of familiarity. The main typology of inter-related types of familiarity stated by Prentice (2004) includes 7 perspectives: informational, experiential, proximate, self-described, educational, self-assured and expected familiarity. Experiential familiarity refers to knowledge based on past experiences at the destination, and it has been found to be an important construct that affects tourist behavior (Seo et al., 2013) and positively influences intentions to revisit (Tan, 2016). The most common way to measure experiential familiarity is by the numbers of visits to a particular destination and by differentiating between repeat and new visitors (X. Li et al., 2008; Oppermann, 1997).

Repeat visitors are different from first-time visitors because they have past experiences about the destination that provide them with additional information, thus different marketing strategies are required for both groups (Lau & McKercher,

2004; Oppermann, 1997). Opperman (1997) analyzed international repeat and first-time visitors to New Zealand and concluded that significant differences can be found in travel behavior depending on the experiential familiarity. According to this author, repeat visitors stay longer but visit fewer spots within the destination and have a more relaxed visit. On the other hand, first-time visitors tend to be more active by visiting more attractions and taking part in a significantly higher number of activities at the destination. Li et al. (2008) systematically compared the travel behavior of first-time and repeat visitors via a two-phase online survey for US domestic travelers, and their results show significant differences in travel planning, activities, and satisfaction with the trip. According to their study, first-time visitors tend to travel greater distances than repeaters while at the destination. Also, first-timers are active planners who begin seeking information much earlier.

### *Research gap*

To date, no previous research has analyzed the motivations and satisfaction of Chinese outbound tourists while considering a priori segmentation variables for mode of travel and experiential familiarity. In Chinese outbound tourism literature, several researchers have studied the travel motivations and their satisfaction after a trip to a specific destination. As such, the countries where previous motivation and satisfaction studies have been conducted are Hong Kong (Nguyen & Cheung, 2016; Tsang, Lee, & Liu, 2014), Macau (Kim, Wan, & Pan, 2015; Park et al., 2015; L. Wang, Fong, & Law, 2015), New Zealand (Mohsin, 2008), Singapore (Kau & Lim, 2005), Hawaii (Agrusa, Kim, & Wang, 2011; Johanson, 2008), USA (Hua & Yoo, 2011; Lai, Li, & Harrill, 2013), Canada (Z. Lu, 2011), Italy (Corigliano, 2011), UK (G. Li et al., 2012), and Australia (Mao & Zhang, 2014; Y. Zhang & Peng, 2014). However, an analysis of the published literature shows two main limitations. Firstly, several authors address their studies only toward group-tour tourists (Agrusa et al., 2011; Johanson, 2008; Ward, 2014; Y. Zhang & Peng, 2014) or toward independent tourists (G. Chen, Bao, & Huang, 2013; Luo et al., 2015; Prayag, Disegna, Cohen, & Yan, 2015). Secondly, the mode of travel for the tourist sample remains unspecified in many motivation studies (Corigliano, 2011; Lai et al., 2013; G. Li et al., 2012; Z. Lu, 2011; Tsang et al., 2014) and also in a number of analyses regarding satisfaction with the destination and tourist experience (Kim et al., 2015; Park et al., 2015; L. Wang et al., 2015). In motivation and satisfaction studies, not specifying which kinds of respondents are surveyed obstructs the possibility of correctly extrapolating the results. Consequently, this paper expands on the previous literature and tries to overcome these two limitations by including segmentation variables.

## Methodology

### *The instrument*

Chan, Hsu and Baum (2015) argue that an initial qualitative stage is useful for capturing technical and functional domains for further quantitative analysis. Thus, qualitative methodologies are used in exploratory studies to identify the items that can be used as motivation and satisfaction categories. In previous works, motivation items have been generated through semi-structured interviews or focus groups conducted on Chinese tourists (Fu, Cai, & Lehto, 2016; X. Li, Lai, Harrill, Kline, & Wang, 2011; Tsang et al., 2014). On the other hand, a quantitative approach is used in this paper because it is most adequate when motivational and satisfaction items are adapted from previous literature and are used, first, to test a novel context (such as a different destination) (Park et al., 2015; Y. Zhang & Peng, 2014) and, second, to compare new segments of consumers (Dolnicar, 2008).

Therefore, this study builds on previous motivational and satisfaction items (Kim, Guo, & Agrusa, 2005; S. Lee et al., 2011; Y. Zhang & Peng, 2014) and uses quantitative analysis, specifically by employing a questionnaire survey to achieve the research objective of understanding differences in motivation and satisfaction between different segments of Chinese tourists. The employed survey was designed in English and translated to Chinese by an English-Chinese translator. Then, two back translations to English were realized by two Chinese PhD students at the Autonomous University of Barcelona (Spain) to ensure the accuracy of the questionnaire.

The survey included three sections. The first section collected information related to the demographic profile of respondents, the number of previous trips to Europe and Spain, and the current way of travel organization differentiating between Group-Tour Package travelers (GTT) and Free Independent Travelers (FIT). Data obtained from this part was linked to the information from the second and the third sections of the survey to segment tourists and compare the results between them. The second part of the survey was aimed to evaluate motivational items, divided between Push and Pull elements. These items were adapted from the list of attributes on overseas destinations from Kim, Guo and Agrusa (2005) and the list of Chinese tourists' motivations to travel abroad from Y. Zhang and Peng (2014). In the third section, 9 satisfaction items were also included, building on the items from S. Lee, Jeon and Kim (2011). Previous studies have indicated that tourism satisfaction (S. Lee, Jeon & Kim, 2011) and experiential familiarity (Kozak, Bigné, & Andreu, 2005) affect revisit intention. In this paper, three questions covering "overall satisfaction", "revisit intention" and "recommendation intention" are in-

cluded in the third section of the questionnaire in order to help further understand differences between the selected segments of consumers.

For the second and third section, a 5-point Likert scale was used to measure the importance of each item, 1 being not important at all and 5 being extremely important. However, no perfect method exists for measuring psychological traits and attitudes. The measurements of tourism motivations and satisfaction in this study are used to identify differences in responses among distinct types of tourists. After adapting the items to this objective, the validity and reliability of the first version of the questionnaire was evaluated by means of a pilot test on 30 Chinese tourists who were approached at Barcelona Airport in March 2016. The results of the pilot study indicated agreement on the clarity of the questions being asked, and the feedback received was used to make minor modifications to better address the questions towards Chinese tourists.

### *Sampling*

The target population is Mainland Chinese travelers who have travelled to Spain for leisure in the last three years, from 2014 to 2016. Travelers going to Spain for business or study were not considered, as well as anyone traveling before 2014. Respondents were reached through an online survey distributed via WeChat. WeChat is the most used social media and instant messaging application in China, with more than 730 million Chinese users in 2016 and accounting for 80% of the Mainland Chinese online population (China Daily, 2017). The high number of active users indicates that this is an efficient channel for reaching the targeted population. Snowball sampling was used to obtain a representation of individuals from various backgrounds, with the target being first-time visitors, more experienced travelers, young tourists, FIT and GTT.

Initially, 45 Chinese outbound travelers who have travelled to Spain in the last two years were identified via the researchers' personal connections, and snowball sampling was used to expand the sample: respondents were asked to share the online survey with their acquaintances. This method has the advantages of avoiding experimenter selection bias and providing ease in collecting experimental data (Tung & Ritchie, 2011). Snowball sampling is a technique that has been widely used in Chinese tourism studies because of the difficulty in conducting a survey among different segments of Chinese tourists and because it is possible to avoid extracting the sample entirely from the authors' personal social contacts (J. Lu, Hung, Wang, Schuett, & Hu, 2016; Song & Hsu, 2013). Distribution of the questionnaires began on March 29 2016, and the survey was closed on April 29 2016, with 600 responses recorded and 437 of them completed.

To overcome reliability weaknesses associated with online surveys, the following strategic steps were taken: sample screening, IP address verification, and removal of invalid responses (T.-Z. Chang & Vowles, 2013). Screening questions were constructed to sort out unwanted respondents who did not travel to Spain for leisure from mainland China. IP addresses were tracked back using Qualtrics online survey software. Respondents from repetitive or similar IP addresses were removed. All the data were first screened individually to remove questionable responses, excessive missing values, and removal of inconsistent responses by selected pairs of questions. After following these steps, 360 questionnaires were considered acceptable and usable.

### *Data analysis*

A descriptive analysis was performed first to obtain sociodemographic profiles of the respondents. Following previous literature, principal component analysis was used to identify underlying dimensions in Push and Pull motivations (Y. Zhang & Peng, 2014). Principal component analysis (PCA) is the most common form of factor analysis used in tourism studies, particularly as an exploratory tool for uncovering the underlying dimensions within a set of items (Hosany & Gilbert, 2010). Varimax rotation is used to maximize the difference between derived components and to achieve simplicity (Bronner & de Hoog, 2011; Turner & Vu, 2012). Subsequently, a series of one-way Multivariate ANOVA (MANOVA) were performed to analyze the differences in motivations and satisfaction. Sociodemographic characteristics, mode of travel, and previous trips to the destination were used as categorical independent variables. One-way MANOVA examined whether the motivation and satisfaction items demonstrate any differences between the segmentation and sociodemographic variables (Woodside and Martin, 2013; Park, Lee and Miller, 2015). Significant differences were found based on the travel mode and previous travel experience. Finally, a series of one-way ANOVA was used to identify the differences and their significance in each individual item (Zhang & Lam, 1999; Y. Zhang & Peng, 1999; Lu and Chen, 2014). The results were analyzed using the software SPSS and they are displayed in the Results section by means of tables and figures to facilitate comparing and characterizing segments.

## **Findings**

### *Demographic profile and tourism experience of the respondents*

**Table 1** summarizes the respondents' demographic profile, previous travel experience and mode of organizing their travel. Among 360 participants, the percentage of females (59%) was to some extent more than that of males. More than 70%

of those sampled were below 40 years old, which indicates the prominence of young travelers. Their occupations were diverse. Office workers accounted for more than half of the respondents and students were one fifth of them. A dominant proportion had a bachelor's degree or above (95.6%), and 45.8% had postgraduate studies. It is interesting to note that tourists traveling to Spain are highly diverse in terms of income, age, relationship status and place of residence. In our sample, 76.9% of the tourists travelled independently. Most of the surveyed tourists were on their first trip to Spain (67.8%), even though almost half of the sample had already travelled to Europe three or more times.

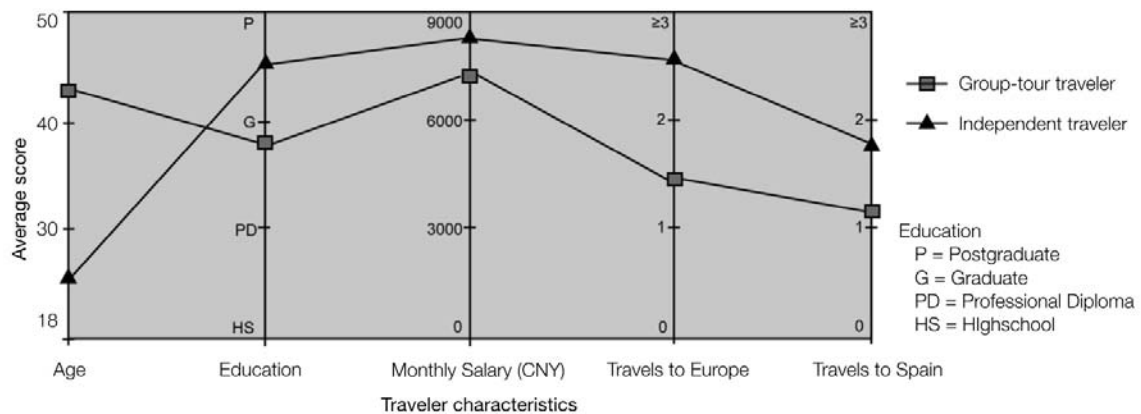
**Table 1.** Demographic characteristics and travel experience of the respondents (n=360)

| Items               |              | N    | %          | Items           |               | N     | %     |
|---------------------|--------------|------|------------|-----------------|---------------|-------|-------|
| Gender              | Female       | 213  | 59.2%      | Employment      | Civil Servant | 14    | 3.9%  |
|                     | Male         | 147  | 40.8%      |                 | Self employed | 30    | 8.3%  |
| Age                 | 18–29        | 208  | 57.8%      | Office worker   | 195           | 54.2% |       |
|                     | 30–39        | 70   | 19.4%      | Student         | 80            | 22.2% |       |
|                     | 40–49        | 30   | 8.3%       | Housewife       | 2             | 0.6%  |       |
|                     | 50–59        | 31   | 8.6%       | Retired         | 35            | 9.7%  |       |
|                     | 60 or older  | 21   | 5.8%       | Unemployed      | 4             | 1.1%  |       |
| Place of residence  | Beijing      | 33   | 9.2%       | Monthly         | No income     | 50    | 13.9% |
|                     | Shanghai     | 88   | 24.4%      | Income (yuan)   | < 3,000       | 17    | 4.7%  |
|                     | Guangdong    | 13   | 3.6%       |                 | 3,000–6,000   | 78    | 21.7% |
|                     | Other        | 222  | 63.5%      |                 | 6,000–9,000   | 63    | 17.5% |
| Undisclosed         | 1            | 0.3% | > 9,000    |                 | 105           | 29.2% |       |
| Relationship status | Married      | 145  | 40.3%      | Undisclosed     | 47            | 13.1% |       |
|                     | Widowed      | 2    | 0.6%       | Trips to Europe | First         | 113   | 31.4% |
|                     | Divorced     | 4    | 1.1%       |                 | Second        | 73    | 20.3% |
|                     | Partnership  | 59   | 16.4%      |                 | Third or more | 171   | 47.5% |
|                     | Single       | 135  | 37.5%      | Undisclosed     | 3             | 0.8%  |       |
| Education           | Undisclosed  | 15   | 4.2%       | Trips to Spain  | First         | 244   | 67.8% |
|                     | High school  | 11   | 3.1%       |                 | Second        | 41    | 11.4% |
|                     | Professional | 24   | 6.7%       |                 | Third or more | 69    | 19.2% |
|                     | Graduate     | 147  | 40.8%      | Undisclosed     | 6             | 1.7%  |       |
|                     | Postgraduate | 165  | 45.8%      | Travel method   | Independent   | 277   | 76.9% |
| Undisclosed         | 13           | 3.6% | Tour group |                 | 83            | 23.1% |       |

A separate descriptive analysis was performed by first considering the responses of Free Independent Travelers (FIT) and Group-Tour Travelers (GTT). **Figure 1** displays the comparison of the means in demographic and previous travel experi-

ence items between these two segments. In our sample, the average age of FIT is 24.5 years while that of GTT is 42 years. The level of education and income is similar for both groups, but independent travelers have a slightly higher level of education and monthly salary. Finally, FIT are more experienced than GTT, have travelled two or more times in Europe and have also travelled to Spain more.

**Figure 1.** Comparison of demographics between Independent and Group-Tour Travelers



### *Underlying motivation factors*

In this study, two Principal Component Analyses (PCA) with Varimax rotation were performed to generate new push and pull factors. Cronbach’s alpha reliability coefficients were applied to test the consistency of the new factors. The coefficients reported in **Table 2** range from 0.63 to 0.79. Only one pull factor is lower than the agreed lower limit of 0.7, and that is “ideal climate, beaches and nature” with a coefficient of 0.63 —which, despite being lower, can still be considered acceptable (Zhang and Peng, 2014; Kim, 2008). Based on the KMO measure of sample adequacy (0.80) and the significance of the Bartlett test ( $p < 0.000$ ), the first procedure generated a two-factor model of Push items when Eigenvalues were set at greater than 1. Individual items have a high loading ( $> 0.55$ ) and the two factors explained 60.0% of the variance. As shown in **Table 2**, the first factor was labeled “novelty and relaxation” (Eigenvalue = 3.40; variance = 42.50%) and the second factor “shopping and socializing” (Eigenvalue = 1.40; variance = 17.45%). The PCA performed on the Pull items was also based on the KMO measure of sample adequacy (0.84) and the results of the Bartlett test ( $p < 0.000$ ). Items with low factor loadings ( $< 0.55$ ) were candidates for deletion and two of them were discarded from the rotated component matrix (“Spanish shopping facilities” and “Spain is a peaceful and safe destination”). The remaining individual items have high factor loading ( $> 0.63$ ) and the two generated factors explained 53.92% of the variance. The first



and second Pull factors were labeled, respectively, “Ideal climate, beaches and nature” (Eigenvalue = 3.31; variance = 41.40%) and “Spanish heritage and culture” (Eigenvalue 1.00; variance = 12.53%). The results indicate that the motivation elements can be reduced to 4 main elements: from more to less importance among the Mainland Chinese tourists traveling to Spain: novelty and relaxation (mean = 4.45); culture elements (4.04); ideal climate, beaches and nature (4.02); and shopping and socializing (3.32).

**Table 2.** Principal component analysis: Factor Loadings and Statistics

| Principal Component Analysis |  | Push factors (f. loadings) |                       | Pull factors (f. loadings) |                   |
|------------------------------|--|----------------------------|-----------------------|----------------------------|-------------------|
| Initial variables            |  | Novelty, relaxation        | Shopping, socializing | Climate, beaches, nature   | Heritage, culture |
| Expectations                 | Visiting new places and sceneries              | 0.83                       |                       |                            |                   |
|                              | Resting and relaxing                           | 0.74                       |                       |                            |                   |
|                              | Increasing my knowledge and experience         | 0.74                       |                       |                            |                   |
|                              | Experiencing Western culture                   | 0.75                       |                       |                            |                   |
|                              | Socializing                                    |                            | 0.76                  |                            |                   |
|                              | Shopping                                       |                            | 0.68                  |                            |                   |
|                              | Visiting friends or relatives                  |                            | 0.58                  |                            |                   |
|                              | Prestige and status                            |                            | 0.81                  |                            |                   |
| Attributes                   | Spanish architecture and monumental heritage   |                            |                       |                            | 0.75              |
|                              | Spanish culture and lifestyle                  |                            |                       |                            | 0.71              |
|                              | Suitable for traveling with family and friends |                            |                       |                            | 0.63              |
|                              | Beautiful beaches and sun                      |                            |                       | 0.81                       |                   |
|                              | Natural and green spaces                       |                            |                       | 0.75                       |                   |
|                              | Ideal climate and clean environment            |                            |                       | 0.66                       |                   |
| Statistics                   | Mean factor score (standard deviation)         | 4.5 (0.54)                 | 3.3 (0.77)            | 4.0 (0.62)                 | 4.0 (0.62)        |
|                              | Eigenvalues                                    | 3.40                       | 1.40                  | 3.31                       | 1.00              |
|                              | % of variance explained                        | 42.50%                     | 17.45%                | 41.40%                     | 12.53%            |
|                              | Reliability (Cronbach’s alpha)                 | 0.79                       | 0.71                  | 0.63                       | 0.70              |
|                              | Measure of sampling adequacy (KMO)             | 0.80                       |                       | 0.84                       |                   |

**Note:** Two principal component analyses were performed. The first procedure generated two factors for Push items and the second generated two factors for Pull items.

### *Comparison of motivational items among different segments*

A series of one-way MANOVA were performed to analyze the differences between different sociodemographic groups and travel characteristics. **Table 3** indicates that significant differences were found based on both travel mode and previous travel experience of the respondents. A new series of one-way MANOVA indicate that relevant differences appear while comparing the new factors obtained through the PCA analysis of the same segments.

**Table 3.** Multivariate significance test results

| Wilks' lambda effect  | Value | F     | Hypothesis d.f. | Error d.f. | Significance | Partial eta squared |
|---|-------|-------|-----------------|------------|--------------|---------------------|
| <i>MANOVA for all 16 motivational items</i>                     |       |       |                 |            |              |                     |
| Travel mode   | 0.770 | 2.7   | 32              | 620        | 0.000        | 0.122               |
| Times in Spain  | 0.803 | 1.468 | 48              | 919        | 0.023        | 0.071               |
| <i>MANOVA for 4 motivation factors obtained through the PCA</i> |       |       |                 |            |              |                     |
| Travel mode   | 0.915 | 4.006 | 16              | 706        | 0.000        | 0.043               |
| Times in Spain  | 0.916 | 2.619 | 12              | 932        | 0.002        | 0.029               |

After the series of one-way MANOVA, the differences in the means of individual motivational items and factors were obtained using the one-factor ANOVA procedure for each factor (travel mode and previous travel experience). **Table 4** shows that independent travelers have a perception of higher motivations for visiting the destination, as several items are significantly higher for the FIT. The results suggest that, because traveling independently implies greater personal involvement, tourists need to know more about the destination's attributes and to feel more motivated to travel. Also, group travelers reported they were not motivated to travel to Spain for visiting friends or relatives (mean = 2.38), but independent travelers highlight this item with much higher scores (mean = 3.28). For both groups, the least important motivational factor is "shopping and socializing" (F2), which has negative values for GTT (mean=2.93) and neutral to important values for FIT (mean=3.42). For both groups, the most important factor is "novelty and relaxation" (F1), followed by "heritage and culture" (F4) and "ideal climate beaches and nature" (F3). The results also indicate that motivation scores depend on previous travel experience. Repeat visitors are motivated by visiting friends and relatives, but they also appreciate various other attributes of the destination, such as the ideal climate and Spanish shopping facilities.

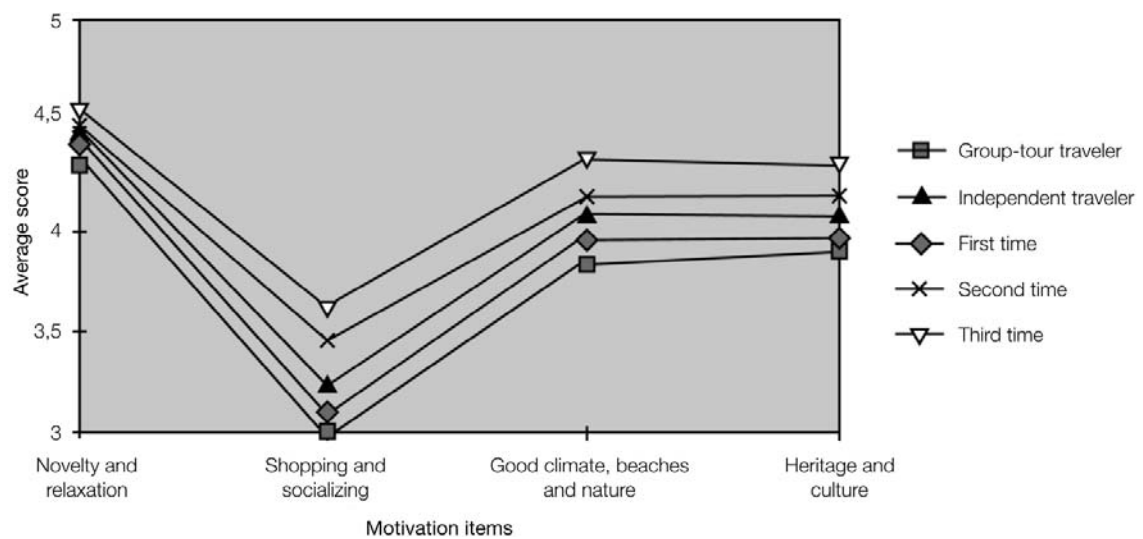
**Figure 2** shows that all the tourism segments similarly most appreciate the novelty and relaxation motivational factor on their long-haul trip. In the same way, all the travel segments are least motivated by the "shopping and socializing factor". The results indicate that Spain is not viewed as a destination for shopping and socializing among first-time and GTT travelers, whose scores are near indifference, while the motivation score in these areas increases for more experienced travelers, such as second-time and third-or-more-time visitors. Overall, more experienced travelers show the highest levels of motivation and appreciation of Spanish attributes than less experienced travelers.

Table 4. Motivations. Effects of previous experience and travel mode

| Motivational items                           | Travel mode |        | Times in Spain |      |        |
|--|-------------|--------|----------------|------|--------|
|  | Independent | Group  | 1              | 2    | >2     |
| <b>Expectations</b>                          |             |        |                |      |        |
| Visiting new places and sceneries            | 4.57        | 4.55   | 4.54           | 4.61 | 4.63   |
| Resting and relaxing                         | 4.59        | 4.27** | 4.44           | 4.66 | 4.68*  |
| Increasing my knowledge and experience       | 4.51        | 4.07** | 4.37           | 4.34 | 4.59   |
| Experiencing Western culture                 | 4.34        | 4.27   | 4.31           | 4.22 | 4.46   |
| Socializing                                  | 3.71        | 3.24** | 3.49           | 3.71 | 3.90*  |
| Shopping                                     | 3.50        | 3.38   | 3.45           | 3.41 | 3.60   |
| Prestige and status                          | 3.23        | 2.75** | 3.06           | 3.20 | 3.25   |
| Visiting friends or relatives                | 3.28        | 2.38** | 2.86           | 3.41 | 3.54** |
| <b>Attributes</b>                            |             |        |                |      |        |
| Spanish architecture & material heritage     | 4.26        | 4.27   | 4.27           | 4.17 | 4.32   |
| Beautiful beaches and sun                    | 4.16        | 3.98   | 4.05           | 4.12 | 4.36*  |
| Ideal climate and clean environment          | 4.14        | 3.90*  | 3.96           | 4.37 | 4.34** |
| Spanish culture and lifestyle                | 4.01        | 3.82   | 3.87           | 3.90 | 4.35** |
| Natural and green spaces                     | 3.96        | 3.82   | 3.87           | 3.95 | 4.09   |
| Suitable for traveling with family & friends | 3.91        | 3.42** | 3.67           | 3.93 | 4.23** |
| Peaceful and safe place                      | 3.52        | 3.21   | 3.34           | 3.49 | 3.80** |
| Shopping facilities                          | 3.43        | 3.22   | 3.26           | 3.46 | 3.70** |
| <b>Factors</b>                               |             |        |                |      |        |
| F1. Push. Novelty and relaxation             | 4.48        | 4.29*  | 4.41           | 4.46 | 4.53   |
| F2. Push. Shopping and socializing           | 3.42        | 2.93** | 3.22           | 3.43 | 3.57** |
| F3. Pull. Ideal climate, beaches and nature  | 4.06        | 3.88   | 3.94           | 4.00 | 4.30** |
| F4. Pull. Heritage and culture               | 4.08        | 3.90*  | 3.95           | 4.15 | 4.27** |

Note: \* = 0.01 < P ≤ 0.05; \*\* = P ≤ 0.01.

Figure 2. Comparison of motivation factors between different segments



*Perceived quality of the destination and satisfaction with the travel experience*

**Table 5** shows the results of a series of one-way MANOVA performed to compare the significance of the differences between different travel modes and different previous travel experience. According to this procedure, significant differences were found based on travel mode, but not based on the number of times in Spain.

**Table 5.** MANOVA tests. Significance for satisfaction items by segments

| Wilks' lambda effect | Value | F     | Hypothesis d.f. | Error d.f. | Significance | Partial eta squared |
|----------------------|-------|-------|-----------------|------------|--------------|---------------------|
| Travel mode          | 0.716 | 4.297 | 24              | 566        | 0.000        | 0.154               |
| Times in Spain       | 0.891 | 0.927 | 36              | 833.93     | 0.594        | 0.113               |

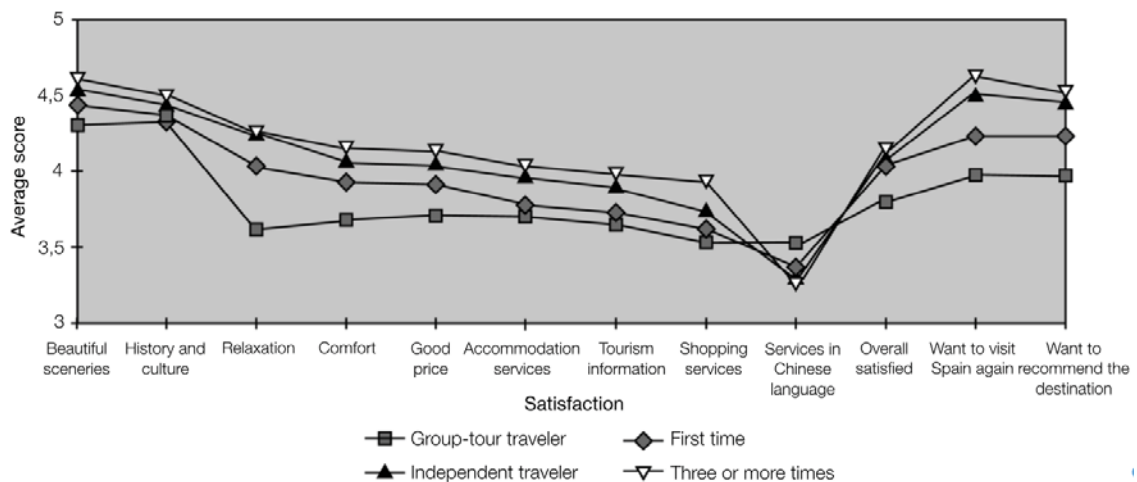
**Table 6** shows the results of the one-factor ANOVA test that is used to examine whether there are differences between tourism segments on the individual satisfaction items. For all groups, the Chinese tourists are more satisfied with the “experiences of beautiful scenery” and the “historical and cultural legacy of the destination”, with mean values of between 4 (satisfied) and 5 (extremely satisfied). The lower mean scores of the destination are related to the quality of Spanish tourism services in the Chinese language, followed by shopping services, information about the destination and accommodation services, with mean values of between 3 (neutral) and 4 (satisfied) for all groups. Independent travelers are similar to repeat visitors in that they are more satisfied with the trip overall, more prone to visit Spain again and have higher intentions of recommending the trip, in particular when compared to GTT and first-time visitors.

**Table 6.** Univariate ANOVA tests. Comparison of satisfaction scores

| Comparison in mean scores      | Travel method |        | Times in Spain |      |        |
|--------------------------------|---------------|--------|----------------|------|--------|
|                                | Independent   | Group  | 1              | 2    | >2     |
| Beautiful scenery              | 4.53          | 4.33*  | 4.47           | 4.41 | 4.58   |
| Historical and cultural legacy | 4.40          | 4.42   | 4.38           | 4.41 | 4.49   |
| The trip was relaxed           | 4.25          | 3.67** | 4.06           | 4.15 | 4.26   |
| The trip was comfortable       | 4.07          | 3.64** | 3.91           | 3.95 | 4.14   |
| The trip had a good price      | 4.06          | 3.72** | 3.94           | 3.85 | 4.15   |
| Accommodation services         | 3.96          | 3.70*  | 3.87           | 3.78 | 4.06   |
| Accessible tourism information | 3.89          | 3.67*  | 3.77           | 3.97 | 3.99   |
| Shopping services              | 3.75          | 3.54   | 3.62           | 3.71 | 3.94*  |
| Services in Chinese language   | 3.32          | 3.54** | 3.36           | 3.45 | 3.29   |
| I am overall satisfied         | 4.25          | 3.88** | 4.12           | 4.23 | 4.28   |
| I want to visit Spain again    | 4.48          | 4.03** | 4.28           | 4.46 | 4.63** |
| I will recommend the trip      | 4.43          | 4.00** | 4.28           | 4.39 | 4.50   |

Figure 3 shows that, overall, independent travelers report higher satisfaction with the destination than group-tour travelers; and repeat visitors are more satisfied with the destination than first-time visitors. Only one item is an exception to this trend: the satisfaction with Chinese language information is lower among independent travelers when compared to GTT. Independent travelers are more relaxed at the destination, value the shopping services more and are more prone to visit the destination again; but they are especially dissatisfied with the services in the Chinese language. GTT report lower scores, want less to visit the destination again, and feel the trip was less relaxed.

Figure 3. Comparison of satisfaction by travel method



## Discussion and conclusions

This study set out to contribute to the literature by applying a priori segmentation variables to the study of Chinese outbound tourism motivations to Spain and satisfaction with the travel experience. Experiential familiarity and mode of travel were selected as the segmentation variables. As mentioned in the literature review, the current findings add to the growing literature on motivation and satisfaction that was lacking in terms of differentiating tourist segments. Thus, this research extends our knowledge of the different basic segments of tourists, focusing on the differences between group-tour package travelers, independent travelers, first-time visitors and repeat visitors. The study has raised the importance of differentiating between typologies of Chinese outbound tourists and has found significant differences between segments. Hence, failing to segment travelers may lead to fragmented or non-generalizable findings. On a theoretical level, this study confirms that experiential familiarity and mode of travel are valid segmentation tools.

The findings of this study show significant differences in the independent variables between the analyzed tourist groups. Previous studies found that repeat visitors

tend to give higher motivational scores to visiting the destination and higher satisfaction scores after the trip (X. Li et al., 2008). However, segmentation by independent travel produces a similar result: FIT are more motivated to visit the destination and more satisfied with the trip. The results also show that independent tourists and group-tour travelers have different previous travel experience and demographic profiles. Independent travelers have more social motivations and, similarly to repeat visitors, are motivated by a wider range of destination attributes. Group-tour tourists are essentially motivated by visiting new places, scenic landscapes and famous sightseeing spots. Independent tourists are more satisfied with the destination and the trip, but are more exigent about tourism information in the Chinese language and accessibility of information, which are the worst valued elements of Spain as a destination. On the other hand, group-tour tourists are less satisfied overall with the destination, and they especially give the worst ranking to the trip's relaxation factor. Destination marketers can extract practical guidance from the findings of the study by orienting their marketing efforts toward different segments and acknowledging their preferences.

This study found that, for the outbound travel market in Spain, repeat visitors are mostly independent travelers, but first-time visitors can be divided into FIT and GTT. Independent travelers are significantly younger ( $p < 0.01$ ) and tend to have more travel experience on long-haul travel. Correspondingly, a relationship exists between experiential familiarity and the choice of travel mode. It has been stated that the overall tendency in Chinese outbound tourism is the sharp reduction in the number of group package travelers and the increase in independent travelers (King & Gardiner, 2015). For instance, Singapore, which is culturally and geographically closer to China, receives roughly 90% of Chinese tourists who travel independently (Singapore Tourism Board, 2017). The results of this study suggest that —because of the greater cultural, idiomatic and geographical distance to the destination and due to the lack of previous travel experience— there is an important segment of Chinese tourists that still prefer to travel with a group-tour package.

The findings of the study further show differences in motivation and satisfaction between independent and group-tour travelers. In addition to visiting new places and sightseeing, independent tourists are more motivated by their inner desire for increasing their knowledge and experiences, socializing, acquiring prestige and status, and visiting friends and relatives. Therefore, independent travelers give more importance to the fact that the destination is suitable for traveling comfortably with family and friends or alone. These results show that group-tour tourists do not give as much importance to developing new knowledge, acquiring new ex-

periences, and socializing factors. A possible explanation for these aspects is that the group-tour tourist remains inside a “group bubble” that protects him or her from external inconveniences, unexpected issues and cultural differences at the destination (Weaver & Lawton, 2014). The results suggest that group travelers and first-time visitors are similar in their main motivations: They are more motivated by the act of visiting new places per se, and they are eager to visit characteristic scenic landscapes and complete a long list of must-do activities at the destination.

Similar to previous studies, this study’s results show that repeat visitors are more motivated by visiting friends and relatives (X. Li et al., 2008; Oppermann, 1997). Furthermore, the findings of this paper show that repeat visitors are more interested in a wider range of secondary attributes of the destination: Repeat visitors value more than first-time visitors the ideal climate, beautiful beaches, local culture and lifestyle, and shopping facilities. With these results, it is possible to indicate that the destination is superficially known to first-time visitors, who have a lower number of motivational factors for traveling. Since repeat visitors are able to more greatly appreciate the wide possibilities of the destination and its different attributes, they report a higher range of motivations.

### *Why Europe is different*

In general, Chinese tourists’ Push motivation for traveling abroad is focused on their inner needs. Ma (2009, p. 153) found that “relaxation, looking for new things, appreciating cultural and historical sites and events as well as looking for fun are the major reasons for Chinese outbound tourists”. Consistent with previous research, this study has confirmed that, for Chinese outbound tourists, the desires to discover new places and relax are often considered the main Push motivations. However, it is important to understand how the choice of different destinations implies the existence of different underlying Pull motivations (Kozak, 2002).

Among the motivational items that are considered more important for Chinese outbound tourists, traveling to more culturally similar destinations such as Macau and Hong Kong include visiting friends and relatives (H. Zhang & Lam, 1999) and, in the case of Macau, also fun, gambling and entertainment (Park et al., 2015). In this study, those items are not depicted as the most important motivational items for Chinese tourists to Europe. In Spain, Chinese tourists are being targeted because they are considered high-spending tourists (Ying, 2016) and because of their shopping motivations. However, the results of this study suggest that shopping is not their first motivational item when choosing the destination. For short-haul travel, such as Chinese tourists to Singapore, the motivations are “escape/relax, adventure/excitement and exploration” (Kau & Lim, 2005); but, according to this

study, long-haul travel involves greater motivation to discover new things, new destinations and different cultures. As stated by F. Li & Ryan (2015), the trip to a culturally distant destination is driven by a desire to know a “mysterious or different” place.

In the analysis of Pull motivational items for long-haul Western destinations, other elements appear as top reasons for travel. Natural attractions such as Niagara Falls in the US and Canada or the Great Barrier Reef and tropical rainforest in Australia are found to be top motivations for traveling to those countries (Hua & Yoo, 2011; Z. Lu, 2011; Y. Zhang & Peng, 2014). In addition, security at the destination and the reputation for safety also affect the choice of Western destinations. In 2016 there were 20% fewer Chinese tourists to Paris and 41.2% fewer tourists from Japan due to the terror fears coming from previous terrorist attacks in France (The Local, 2017). In addition to natural resources and safety, the results of this study show that what makes Europe different is its history and heritage. European destinations, such as Spain, are regarded as rich in cultural and material heritage wealth, and this is the top Pull motivation for first-time visitors. In Spain, for second- and third-time visitors, first place is occupied by the ideal climate, beaches and sunny weather, followed by material heritage and Spanish culture and lifestyle. Despite the differences based on experiential familiarity, the results are consistent with the attributes of Europe that are more valued by the Chinese tourists: the cultural difference and the rich heritage (Andreu, Claver, & Quer, 2014).

### *Practical and managerial implications*

A number of practical implications arise from this research. The standard knowledge regarding Chinese tourism in Spain considers these travelers to be shopping tourists because of their high expenditure pattern (Ying, 2016; Lojo, 2016). However, the results of this study show that shopping is not the main motivation for visiting Spain: Even though the tourist really appreciates the shopping opportunities, they are ranked as low important motivational items. This study shows that, for first-time visitors (and for both the GTT and FIT groups), the most important Pull motivational elements are Spanish architecture and heritage as well as the culture and lifestyle of a different and new destination.

In addition, this study has found that different attributes of the destination are valued by Chinese tourists who are more familiar with the destination. For instance, Spain's Official Tourism Agency does not consider that the Chinese tourist may be interested in the beaches and natural resources of the country (Turespaña, 2016); however, this study's findings show that repeat visitors consider the ideal climate, the beaches and sun to be the most important motivational Pull items for visiting



Spain. From a marketing perspective, these study findings can help destination managers and marketers better direct the tourism product to different kinds of tourists and identify segments. In response, Spanish tourism managers should take action to better promote the different attributes of the destination to different segments. In order to motivate additional travel in the future, it is also important that the first-time visitor have enough information available while at the destination to be able to realize the wide range of attractions that the country has to offer. Following from the results, it is to expect that the new, young and independent Chinese traveler will be more interested in experiences rather than shopping in Europe. Different artistic, heritage and natural resources should be promoted in the first place along with elements from the Spanish culture and lifestyle, such as sports and gastronomy.

Regarding satisfaction with the destination and the revisit intentions of travelers, this study is consistent with the results by Y. Chen et al. (2016), which established that Chinese group-tour travelers report lower satisfaction on short-haul trips. In this study, the biggest difference appears in the trip's contribution to relaxation, the intention to revisit the destination again and positive word-of-mouth. Group-tour travelers enjoy the destination less and are also less relaxed and satisfied. According to previous studies, group-tour tourists visiting Spain prefer multi-destination itineraries, which incurs a tight schedule and visiting more than one city on some journeys, which can lead to exhaustion (Lojo, 2016). In this study, group-tour travelers report higher satisfaction than independent travelers with the Chinese language services. This result further supports the idea that group-tour tourists remain inside a comfort bubble and do not face language issues at the destination. In contrast, independent tourists and repeat visitors indicate the lowest satisfaction item with the availability of services in the Chinese language. For example, as of June 2017, the official tourism website of the city of Barcelona does not offer their information in Chinese, Japanese or Russian. The results show that if European destinations want to be more competitive, they must still dedicate more efforts to facilitating independent travel by providing tourism information in the Chinese language along with Chinese-speaking staff while also increasing the accessibility of information.

### *Limitations and future research*

Although this study provides important insights into the segmentation by between experiential familiarity and travel mode for motivations and satisfaction in Chinese outbound long-haul travel, several limitations may interfere in the ability to generalize the results to a wider population. First, even though snowball sampling has

been recognized as a valuable technique in exploratory and descriptive studies (Voicu and Babonea, 2007), it is not exempt from limitations. This technique may produce selection bias, depending on the first elements of the referral chain, which is the main constraint in non-probabilistic samples. Secondly, another limitation is the division of travel modes between only two variables: group-tour traveler and independent traveler. Because intermediate travel modes exist —such as partially independent travel organized by travel agencies, or group tour without a group guide— further comparative studies will be valuable for understanding this unique and large outbound market. This study also highlights the importance of researching group-tour travel arrangements to improve the performance of the organized trip and to increase traveler satisfaction. Collaboration between travel agencies and destination tourism managers should be addressed. Finally, it is of particular interest to develop qualitative studies in order to, first, grasp the inner differences in behavior and attitude between travel segments for outbound destinations and, second, deepen the knowledge into motivational and satisfaction items for these tourists to specific destinations.

#### Bridging Section 4

| This article  |   |   |
|---|---|---|
| <p>Experiential familiarity and travel mode are used as a priori segmentation variables.</p> <p><b>Results:</b> Socio-demographic characteristics of Group tour travelers, free independent travelers, first time visitors and repeat visitors.</p> | <p>Tourist behavior and segmentation</p> <p><b>Article 3</b></p> <p><b>Results 2:</b> For all the segments, the main factor motivating travel to Spain is a search for “novelty and relaxation”. The least motivating factor is “shopping and socializing”.</p> | <p>Comparison of pre-trip travel motivations, post-trip travel satisfaction and intentions to revisit</p> <p><b>Results 3:</b> The group tour travelers are less satisfied with the trip. The repeat visitors appreciate more different attributes of the destination (such as shopping, beaches and natural areas)</p> |
| <p><b>Result 4:</b> A surprising finding is that the lowest satisfaction is reported in regard to “services in the Chinese language” and “tourism information availability”</p>   |   |   |
| <b>Suggested future research line: tourism information sources about the destination</b>  |   |   |
| <p>How do different (local and Chinese) information sources compare? Are there important differences between them regarding the information available?</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Article 4</b></p>                                      | <p>How is the destination tourism image affected by different information sources available to Chinese tourists?</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Article 5</b></p>  |   |

**Note:** This table is not included in the published article. It adds to the overall flow of the dissertation

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# Understanding tourism information sources: Textual communication, efficiency and information gaps



## Abstract

This study compares the contents of different online tourism information sources. In addition to developing a quantitative linguistic framework for comparing heterogeneous tourism information sources, a case study of the city of Barcelona in Chinese sources is presented. To understand the structural characteristics of textual communication, efficiency and information gaps, this research examines texts not only from the websites of the Barcelona Tourism Office (local DMO) and a set of Mainland Chinese travel agencies, but also from Chinese online travel guidebooks and Chinese travel blogs. The findings reveal that the local DMO website texts are, overall, lower in lexical density and keyword density while higher in entropy. Chi-

nese travel agency texts have lower entropy values while keyword and lexical densities are higher. Travel blogs are the most diverse and richest sources. The results explain the easiness of comprehension as well as the concentration, distribution and repetition of information among the different sources. The findings also identify descriptive-subjective and procedural-propositional knowledge as the main semantic dimensions that affect the information gaps. Lastly, theoretical and practical contributions are discussed.

*Keywords: Online information sources; marketing; linguistic analysis; Chinese outbound tourism; comparative study.*

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## Introduction

Good communication is essential for affecting potential tourists' decision-making and for effectively promoting destinations (Chang, Wang, & Lin, 2017). Tourism activity is based on acts of communication and verbal exchange, as tourists need information to prepare before a trip as well as during the decision-making process and travel experience (Kruger, Botha, & Saayman, 2012). Some aspects of the relationships between linguistics and tourism have been studied previously, such as the role of humor (Ge & Gretzel, 2017; Pabel & Pearce, 2018), language and small talk (Jaworski & Thurlow, 2010), marketing and communication (De Ascaniis & Gretzel, 2013) and translation (Gandin, 2013, 2015).

Consumer studies report that textual information provides more detailed knowledge that is processed in slower and more deliberate ways than is visual information (Townsend & Kahn, 2013). This is crucial, because travel involves spatial mobility and discretionary funds, which means travelers must usually make deliberate decisions. To analyze text-based information, linguistic analysis focuses on the displayed content of texts through an understanding of its lexicogrammar characteristics and textual indicators (De Ascaniis & Gretzel, 2013; Ge & Gretzel, 2017; Xiang, Gretzel, & Fesenmaier, 2009). In the social sciences, linguistic analysis is applied in practical endeavors such as identifying imprecise and undefined messages or the failure to adapt to consumer needs, among others (C.H.C. Hsu & Song, 2012; Jaworski & Thurlow, 2010).

Here, a knowledge gap has been identified: tourism scholarship rarely studies differences in heterogeneous online information sources (Standing, Tang-Taye, & Boyer, 2014). A comparative study of linguistic structural patterns in different sources would fill this gap by helping to diagnose textual efficiency and design better messages. Accordingly, this work compares textual communication from different sources of tourist information and tries to answer the following questions:

- What linguistic characteristics define different sources? How does this affect communication efficiency?
- What type of knowledge is transmitted and what information gaps exist between different sources of information?

For this purpose, this case study analyzes tourist information about Barcelona in the Chinese market, which is one of Spain's fastest growing market segments (Lojo & Li, 2018). Barcelona is used to empirically inspect the corpus of texts from four types of information sources: local DMO websites, Chinese travel guides, Chinese blogs and Chinese travel agencies.



## Literature review

### *Tourism information sources*

Tourism is an information-intensive industry, namely in that it produces, communicates and consumes huge amounts of information. Information is a crucial component of the vacation planning process. Most travelers consult different information sources to help make purchase decisions, form a destination image, enhance trip quality, and plan their journey (Santana & Sevilha Gosling, 2018). Not only have several non-digital information sources been identified in the tourism literature, such as word-of-mouth, brochures, guidebooks, photos, signs, maps, information kiosks, television, magazines, newspapers, movies, books, other media and broadcasting channels, but also digital sources such as email, websites, online travel agencies, social media, booking engines, mobile apps, blogs, social networks and review sites.

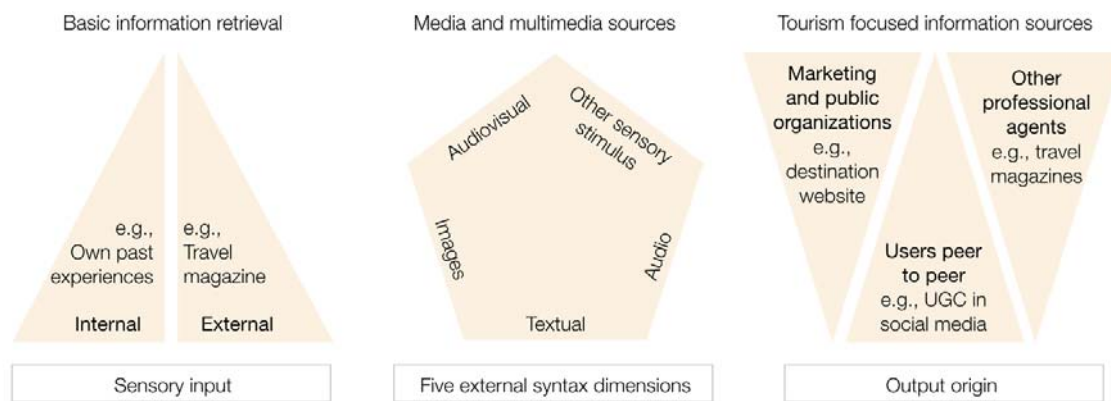
Nowadays, internet-based platforms constitute a powerful channel through which service providers and tourists interact. The internet has had a profound impact on travelers by making it much easier to gather information about a destination. However, because knowledge is disseminated on multiple online platforms, it is difficult to be fully aware of the differences and contributions from the various sources. Most research on online sources focuses on analyzing one specific channel, such as blogs, websites or social media (e.g., Alderman & Modlin, 2008; Chen, Guevara, & Alarcón, 2017; Muldoon & Mair, 2016; Sun, Lin, Gao, & Lin, 2019). Despite the importance of different online sources, some scholars have pointed out an important research gap in case studies and comparative analyses of information sources (Standing et al., 2014).

Tourism information is primarily retrieved from internal sources such as past experiences and memories, or from external sources such as printed outlets, internet-based platforms and friends' advice. Considering information transmission as a semiotic exchange, external sources of information are built upon syntax, semantics and pragmatic characteristics. In information systems, "pragmatics" refers to the purpose of communication; "semantics" refers to the meaning and use of the information; and "syntax" refers to the form and signs used (Beynon-Davies, 2009). Contemporary platforms and channels of tourism information sources can use different syntax systems, such as textual, visual, audio, audiovisual and other sensory stimulus-based platforms (Malik & Agarwal, 2012).

A summary of previous research allows making basic distinctions between the origins of tourism information (**Figure 1**). The information emitter (output) intending to communicate tourism-related knowledge is a tourism-focused source of infor-

mation (TFSI). Some of the previously researched TFSI are: destination marketing organizations (DMO) and other marketing agents (Bender, Gidlow, & Fisher, 2013); travel magazines and corporate travel blogs (e.g., C. H. Hsu & Song, 2013); travel agencies (e.g., Lojo, 2016b); travel guidebooks (e.g., Mazor-Tregerman, Mansfeld, & Elyada, 2017); and trip-related user-generated content (UGC) (e.g., Chen et al., 2017). On the other hand, if the output agent has other primary communication intentions, such as entertainment, storytelling or world news (Sun et al., 2019), it is an unfocused tourism source.

Figure 1. Summary: origin of tourism information



### *Tourism-focused sources of information*

Previous communication research (Townsend & Kahn, 2013) has shown that images and audiovisual messages are processed by consumers in a faster and less deliberate way than text is. On the other hand, textual information is processed more slowly (and often in a focused way) and provides more detailed information. Because traveling involves a considerable amount of time, discretionary spending and mobility, potential tourists still rely heavily on textual information for planning. This article analyzes and compares textual information from distinct outputs of tourism-focused sources of information (TFSI), namely, a DMO, private and professional organizations, and non-professional users of online platforms. Each selected information source adopts different communication strategies based on the communication platform (e.g., website, social media, or forum).

First, DMOs and official local marketing organizations use different communication channels, but the most text-rich channels are official destination tourism websites and official guides (Bender et al., 2013). These sources represent the destination with an aim toward attracting tourists and managing tourism with positive messages. Authorized organizations include official tourism agencies, such as municipal visitors' bureaus or national tourism boards. Public tourism agencies act as

central sources of travel information, and they are responsible for “positioning destination image, designing marketing strategies, promoting the destination and distributing information” (Tang, Choi, Morrison, & Lehto, 2009, p. 81).

Secondly, other important brokers of focused tourism information are private organizations: companies that sell travel information products such as guides or travel magazines; and agencies or other intermediaries that sell travel packages or other tourism-related products without their main goal being to sell information per se. To do so, travel retailers communicate attractive and positive images of destinations and travel products. Both travel guides and travel agent-provided information may limit the possibilities of new tourist experiences by impeding movement with boundaries ensconced in predefined tour circuits and itineraries (Lohman & Panosso Netto, 2017). Guidebooks and tour operators offer the richest text-based information about a tourism destination, particularly in comparison with accommodation retailers or other agents.

Thirdly, user-generated content (UGC) is a result of travelers aiming to share travel experiences. UGC is available on multiple platforms, including social media, photograph sharing, review sites and blogs. The most text-rich databases for UGC are online reviews, forums and non-professional travel blogs. Blogs provide valuable data for studying textual and discourse analysis (e.g., Muldoon & Mair, 2016), tourists’ perceptions, destination image, branding and reputation (e.g., Chen et al., 2017; Marine-Roig & Anton Clavé, 2015).

### *Text mining research and the employed linguistic framework*

Text mining research involves “information retrieval, text analysis, information extraction, clustering, categorization, visualization, database technology, machine learning, and data mining” (Tan, 1999, p. 65). For analyzing online text data, the first steps are usually web identification and web scraping, which allows researchers to obtain simple text files. Later, text refining is needed to obtain text in an intermediate form. Text mining has different applications, such as: classifying texts by identifying semantic domains of knowledge (Xiang et al., 2009); understanding consumer sentiments and perceptions (Xiang, Du, Ma, & Fan, 2017); and identifying linguistic characteristics, engagement and the efficiency of messages (De Ascaniis & Gretzel, 2013; Ge & Gretzel, 2017; Lee & Gretzel, 2014).

In tourism, text mining is used mostly to analyze UGC. Different authors have uncovered sentiments, opinions, identities, needs and involvement issues on UGC platforms (Burgess, Sellito, Cox, & Buultjens, 2009; Lee & Gretzel, 2014; O’Connor, 2008). Analyzing images is another application that retrieves images, perceptions and descriptions of destinations (Choi, Lehto, & Morrison, 2007; Tang et al., 2009).

Text mining is also used to analyze social representations on the web (Alderman & Modlin, 2008). Research on text mining employs the analytical techniques of sentiment analysis (such as polarization analysis and emotion analysis), keyword analysis (including frequencies and correlation between words), and probabilistic topic models (identifying key topics in texts) (Godnov & Redek, 2016).

This study takes a comparative quantitative linguistic approach to understanding the current characteristics of heterogeneous tourism information sources. The study of texts through linguistic analysis is to focus on the form, meaning and use of information (Beynon-Davies, 2009). Previous research highlights the importance of several linguistic indicators for understanding communication processes, engagement, and optimal communication strategies (Cortés & Corral, 2016; Garlock, Walley, & Metsala, 2001; Ge & Gretzel, 2017; Lee & Gretzel, 2014; Piantadosi, 2014; Potočník Topler, 2018).

A syntactic textual analysis reveals the distribution, diversity and entropy of information. Regarding the distribution of information, a Zipf's Law (ZL) analysis shows the frequency of word terms and short phrases in relation to the total number of words or phrases. "Words occur according to a famously systematic frequency distribution such that there are few very high-frequency words [...] and many low-frequency words" (Piantadosi, 2014, p. 1112). ZL allows the creation of word clouds and word scatter plots. A short tail in the scatter plot means specialization in information sources.

Word frequency and keyword density are analytical indicators based on the percentage of times a keyword appears in a text divided by the total number of words present in the same text. keyword density is directly related to search engine optimization (SEO) and the positioning of information resources in external databases (Pérez-Montoro & Codina, 2016). Moreover, word density affects the ease of comprehension and the cognizance of messages for all information receivers (Garlock et al., 2001). Previous studies indicate values between 1% and 3% of keyword density for optimum SEO (Pérez-Montoro & Codina, 2016) and values between 0.45 and 0.55 of lexical density for average good readability in texts (To, Fan, & Thomas, 2013). Within this range, higher density values are expected for more demanding texts and lower values for easier-to-read texts.

Diversity indexes show richness and detail of information. Entropy is a measure of the relationships that order, uncertainty, and unpredictability have with chunks of information. As such, information entropy depicts information randomness (Osanova, 2013). Previous cognitive experiments show that higher diversity indicates higher richness in text. Higher entropy indicates disorder and competition

between information transfer (Luce & Large, 2001), which leads to less accurate representations and a more difficult understanding of the information platform. An efficient information platform with good readability offers higher diversity, but with lower entropy values than its competitors (Febres & Jaffé, 2017).

Lastly, semantics analyzes the meaning of the information, which leads to associating the knowledge contained in each information source. A semantics analysis can identify the different kinds of contents, knowledge gaps between sources, and information needs of the consumers.

In this study, efficiency is understood as a communicative situation in which the textual messages convey good content, with good readability, and adapted to the consumer's needs. Linguistic literature indicates the plausibility of using the previous indicators for a quality assessment of texts (Febres & Jaffé, 2017; Garlock et al., 2001; To et al., 2013). Thus, among other factors, an efficient communication strategy should consider taking into account word frequency and keyword density, the diversity and entropy of information, and knowledge gaps.

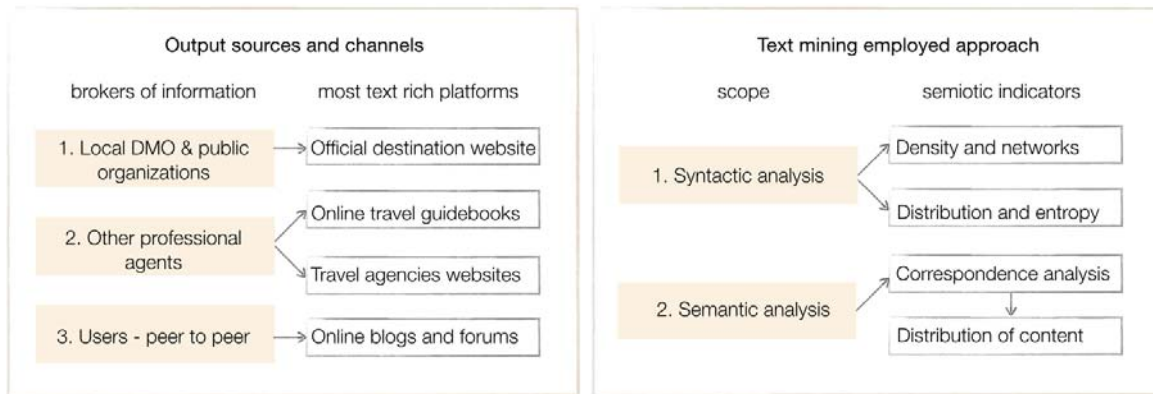
## Methods

### *Study setting and methodological stance*

This study analyzes the tourism destination information provided by three types of information brokers and four types of text-rich online platforms, as presented in Figure 2. This study takes a quantitative computational linguistic approach to compare larger datasets and various sources of information. To investigate a contemporary phenomenon with real-world relevance, the city of Barcelona was chosen for examining the similarities and differences between heterogeneous local and Chinese information sources. European destinations are culturally very dissimilar to those of East Asia, which contributes to Chinese travelers' dependence on external information sources (Lojo, Li, & Cànoves, 2018).

Barcelona is a world city with a high diversity of services, culture, heritage, and tourism resources. However, in recent times, problems have arisen due to overtourism and residents' discontent (Ayuntamiento de Barcelona, 2017), and the city faces the challenge of diversifying its tourism market (Lojo & Cànoves, 2015). The local administration and local public tourism office are currently targeting the Chinese market segment, as it is considered an opportunity for destination development (Barcelona Turisme, 2018), because these tourists are not as voluminous as the British, French or German markets and they tend to be more interested in cultural sites rather than general leisure, night life and the bar scene.

Figure 2. Output sources and analytical framework of this study



### Sample and data collection

To achieve representativeness of different information sources, the most text-rich platforms from different information brokers were chosen as data sources (see **Appendix 1**): two official DMO websites produced by the Barcelona Tourism Office DMO; 108 online tour products that are promoted on three Chinese travel agency websites and include Barcelona as a destination; 9 online travel guides about the city of Barcelona issued by Chinese private enterprises; and 17 Chinese travel blogs about the city from the platform Qyer.com.

In this sample, every source had an approximate number of 50,000 words, totaling more than 208,000 words and over 600 pages (**Table 1**). To obtain comparable data, the units of analysis are textual references (words, phrases and sentences) (**Figure 2**). The content of the websites was gleaned by a web-scraping procedure during April and May 2017. The downloaded hyper-text data were structured into text-only archives containing text-structured content.

Table 1. Sample distribution

|                      | DMO    | Agencies | Guides | Blogs  | Total   |
|----------------------|--------|----------|--------|--------|---------|
| No. of websites      | 2      | 3        | 8      | 1      | 14      |
| No. of tour products |        | 108      |        |        | 108     |
| No. of guides        |        |          | 9      |        | 9       |
| No. of blogs         |        |          |        | 17     | 17      |
| No. of words         | 60,908 | 46,667   | 50,167 | 50,606 | 208,348 |

### Data processing

The information from the DMO websites was extracted in English (which shared the same content as the Catalan and Spanish language versions), while the Chinese information was translated into English from Chinese. The translations were done

by a bilingual translator with the assistance of computer tools. To enable further analysis, texts were pre-processed to create linguistic units from the stream of written symbols. Stop-words such as “the”, “a”, “at” or “an” were deleted from the original text. Linguistic units based on word form were created by compounding and creating multi-word phrases (word parts were joined, and apostrophes were eliminated), and proper names were normalized. To avoid stylistic variations, synonyms and similar words were homogenized. For example, proper local names in multiple variations on Chinese websites were simplified and standardized in all the documents.

## *Analysis*

### *Syntactic structure: density and conceptual networks*

First, the density indicators determine how much information can be found in each text (Johansson, 2008). To this end, it was necessary to differentiate between stop-words and lexical words. Stop-words are those with less meaningful content in a sentence but are important for sentence structure, while lexical words are content expressions. The density of meaningful words (pd) can be obtained by dividing the number of different words (S) in each text by the total number of words in the text (n). A density of different words can be calculated as  $pd = S/N$ . To obtain the lexical density (pL), the number of lexical words ( $N_i$ ) should be divided by the total number of words in the text (N) using the formula  $pL = N_i/N$ .

Zipf’s Law (ZL) is useful for studying the distribution of information. In this case, it was applied in order to grasp the distribution of word frequencies in the texts. If  $\alpha \approx 1$ , the rth most frequent word has a frequency  $f(r)$  according to:

$$f(r) \propto \frac{1}{r^\alpha}$$

Therefore, ZL compares whether or not the more recurrent words have higher frequencies in some sources than in others. The ZL scatter plot shows a graph that distributes the words according to their frequency in the text by following a simple mathematical distribution that can be summarized in a general trend line ( $y=mx+b$ ). In the scatter plot, the angle of the trend line indicates how frequent the most used words are, and the lower R2 values indicate shorter right tails in the scatter plots.

The Shannon-Wiener (SW) distribution index quantitatively measures how different units of information in the datasets are distributed among different sources of information and different ecological systems (Jost, 2006). The SW diversity index ( $H'$ ) is calculated by taking into account the proportion of different units (different

words) ( $p_i$ ) within one dataset (source of information). As such, the higher the values of  $H'$ , the higher the diversity of information in the source.

$$H' = - \sum_{i=1}^R p_i \ln p_i$$

Finally, to compare and visualize the heterogeneity in the four information sources, an entropy profile plot was obtained with the software Past 3 (Hammer, 2017). Past 3 uses an exponential version of the Reny entropy index, which measures order and entropy. The lower the values of the plot, the more ordered and predictable the information source is. For the entropy scales, the x axis ranks in negative numbers; for the y axis,  $a=0$  gives the total species number;  $a=1$  graphically represents a number that is proportional to the Shannon index; and  $a=2$  represents the Simpson index (Hammer, 2017).

#### *Semantic structure: Correspondence Analysis*

A Correspondence Analysis (CA) identified the distribution of the more meaningful and frequently used words and terms across the four information sources. CA was performed with 147 degrees of freedom and in 3 dimensions of analysis. This procedure was performed with SPSS, and the results are shown in visual form. CA graphs portray the information sources' positions on a two-dimensional axis of keywords, which is ideal for understanding multivariate categorical data (Költringer & Dickinger, 2015). Here, the CA displays the distribution of the lexicon and of the information contents among the sampled sources.

## **Findings**

### *Density, frequencies and destination clustered topics*

As **Table 2** shows, the lexical density for the four sources of information ranges from 0.500 to 0.558. This indicates the validity of the sample, because it is common to obtain values between 0.48 and 0.58 of lexical density from text documents (Johansson 2008). In this study, the blogs have the characteristic lower lexical density (0.50) that one expects from more informal language and user-generated content, which may be more closely aligned to how people speak. The DMO websites also show low lexical density (0.522), which in this case indicates a mostly formal writing style. On the other hand, the guides and travel agency sites have higher lexical density (0.555 and 0.558), indicating that these sources use more lexical words, which provide more meaning and convey more information.



**Table 2.** Density indicators

|                                    | A     | B                | C               | D                |                 |
|------------------------------------|-------|------------------|-----------------|------------------|-----------------|
| <i>Profile</i>                     |       |                  |                 |                  |                 |
| N (total words)                    | 60908 | 46667            | 50167           | 50606            |                 |
| N <sub>l</sub> (lexical words)     | 31786 | 26048            | 27831           | 25317            |                 |
| S (Different words)                | 6797  | 2526             | 5608            | 5749             |                 |
| <i>Density</i>                     |       |                  |                 |                  |                 |
| P <sub>l</sub> (lexical density)   | 0.522 | 0.558            | 0.555           | 0.500            |                 |
| P <sub>d</sub> (variation density) | 0.112 | 0.052            | 0.112           | 0.113            |                 |
| Top keywords                       |       |                  |                 |                  |                 |
| (by density)                       | 1     | Barcelona (1.4)  | Barcelona (2.2) | Barcelona (2.0)  | Barcelona (0.6) |
|                                    | 2     | City (0.53)      | Building (0.91) | Spain (0.54)     | Ticket (0.45)   |
|                                    | 3     | Building (0.46)  | Gaudí (0.87)    | City (0.54)      | Time (0.44)     |
|                                    | 4     | Art (0.38)       | Tour (0.79)     | Reviews (0.41)   | Like (0.28)     |
|                                    | 5     | Catalonia (0.35) | Day (0.74)      | Bus (0.32)       | People (0.28)   |
|                                    | 6     | Area (0.35)      | City (0.68)     | Station (0.30)   | Gaudí (0.23)    |
|                                    | 7     | Architecture 0.3 | Time (0.63)     | Travel (0.29)    | Good (0.23)     |
|                                    | 8     | Museum (0.28)    | Spain (0.59)    | Catalonia (0.27) | Day (0.22)      |

Note: A = DMO; B = Travel agencies; C = Travel guidebooks; D = Travel blogs.

**Figure 3:** Relative sized word-clouds

Note: A = DMO; B = Travel agencies; C = Travel guidebooks; D = Travel blogs.

In this study, travel agencies demonstrate lower scores in the density of different words (pd), but higher scores in lexical density (pl). This characteristic makes it easier to rank travel agencies higher in search engine results, as the top most frequent keywords are more visible. The word clouds (**Figure 3**) show the main keywords. The relative size indicates the weight for each keyword compared to the other sources. As such, it is easier for an online search engine to relate the keywords “Barcelona” (score=2.21), “Gaudí” (0.91), “Spain”(0.87), “Tour” (0.79), and “City” (0.68) to online travel agency webpages than to other sources (see **Table 2** – Top keywords by density). In this sample, a lower pd and higher pl are positive

indicators that travel agency and travel guide contents are more direct, have simpler messages, and use certain effective keywords for easier readability.

### *Diversity & entropy of information*

Zipf's law indicates that the blogs in this sample are the most diverse and rich information sources, followed by travel guides, DMO websites, and travel agency webpages (Table 3). The Shannon-Wiener (S-W) index is a different valuable diversity indicator used to add to this result, and it shows that the most diverse sources are the DMO websites. In second place are travel guides and travel blogs with their similarly diverse information, followed lastly by travel agencies. The results from this sample of texts indicate that the blogs, travel guides and DMO offer more information about different aspects of the destination. Travel agency websites have significantly less dispersion of infrequent topics and tend to be more repetitive (Table 4).

**Table 3.** Zipf's distribution and diversity indicators

| Diversity measurements | A                 | B                | C                 | D                 |
|------------------------|-------------------|------------------|-------------------|-------------------|
| Zipf's Law trend line  | $-0.969x + 3.643$ | $1.240x + 4.237$ | $-0.994x + 3.667$ | $-0.962x + 3.530$ |
| Zipf's Law $R^2$       | 0,95705           | 0,93656          | 0.954779          | 0.95506           |
| Shannon-Wiener         | 7.834             | 6.626            | 7.686             | 7.717             |

Note: A = DMO; B = Travel agencies; C = Travel guidebooks; D = Travel blogs.

**Table 4.** Significance in SW difference between texts

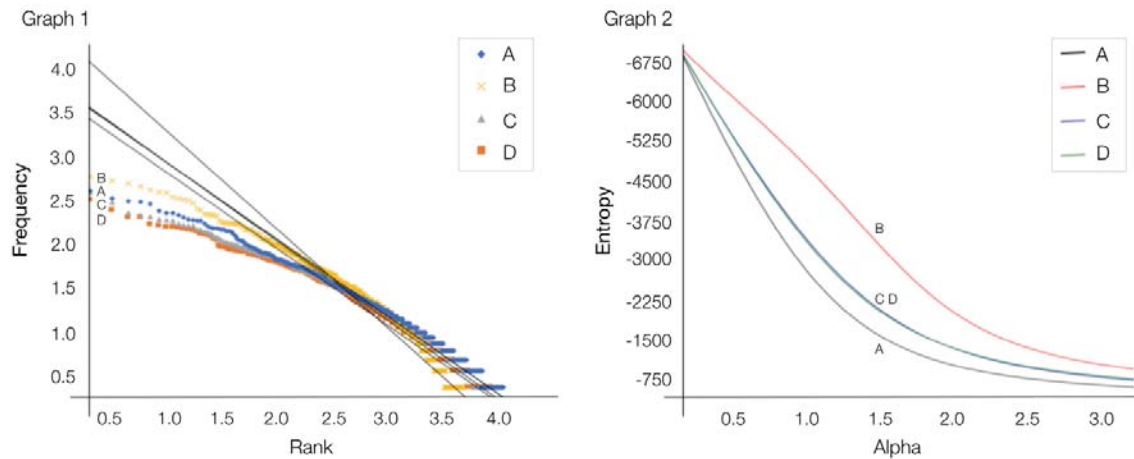
| T-test values | A-B     | A-C     | A-D     | B-C     | B-D     | C-D    |
|---------------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|--------|
| S-W values    |         |         |         |         |         |        |
| T             | 93.588  | 11.785  | 9,0617  | -81.586 | -81.9   | -2.397 |
| df            | 56370   | 59240   | 55328   | 53532   | 51360   | 52633  |
| p             | 0.000** | 0.000** | 0.000** | 0.000** | 0.000** | 0.01*  |

Note: A = DMO; B = Travel agencies; C = Travel guidebooks; D = Travel blogs.

Graph 1 in Figure 4 displays the scatter plot with the Zipf's Law (ZL) distribution values from Table 3. On the right (Graph 2), Figure 4 shows the entropy plot. The dissimilarities in these representations illustrate different communication strategies and information structures. The ZL scatter plot shows that the travel agencies' trend line is the sharpest, indicating that the most used words are more frequent in this source than in the others. Therefore, the most frequently used concepts and content words have a higher probability of appearing repeatedly in different tour products and on various travel agency websites. By contrast, travel blogs have the

bluntest trend line, indicating a higher dispersion and lower repetition of information in blog posts.

Figure 4. Zipf's Law distribution and entropy plot



In **Figure 4**, higher negative entropy values indicate more order, while lower negative values indicate greater disorder, uncertainty and randomness. Travel agency websites tend to have greater order, as represented by lower entropy values. In this case, lower entropy indicates that the sources are better ordered, and they are easier for travelers to use. On the other hand, the official website of the Barcelona Tourism Office shows higher values of uncertainty and randomness, which may lead to some users having difficulties grasping all the information offered. Regarding the blogs and travel guides, medium entropy values indicate that more diverse attributes of the destination are being discussed in intermediate ordered ways. Thus, it is possible for these two sources to draw more focused attention to eccentric topics.

### *Semantic structure*

Further differences are underscored in the correspondence map (**Figure 5**), which visually depicts differences in the content of the information sources. The correspondence analysis was calculated using the words as tokens, and the frequency rate of the words was used as a distance measure. Closer proximity means that content is more closely associated with a source of information. The results of this analysis are given as singular values, and the proportion is explained with each dimension. **Figure 5** represents the relative proximity of the most frequently used words and sources of information. **Table 5** provides the singular values of each dimension and its proportion of inertia. Dimension 1 (horizontal axis) accounts for 44.2% of the inertia. Dimension 2 (vertical axis) accounts for 39.6% of the inertia.

Both dimensions are able to represent the associations between words and information sources with an explanatory value of 83.8%.

Figure 5 shows the division of Dimension 1 information sources into blogs and guidebooks on the left, and DMO websites and travel agency web products on the right. It can also be seen that, on the left, the words ‘metro’, ‘tax’, ‘shop’ and ‘price’ appear more often while more descriptive words such as ‘sea’, ‘park’, ‘architecture’ and ‘Olympic’ tend to be on the right. The second dimension also divides the information: at the lower end of the plot are more frequent elements related to the Chinese blogs and Chinese travel agencies; at the upper end can be seen that regional and contextual topics from the local DMO website and online travel guides are more dominant, for example, ‘Catalonia’, ‘map’, ‘history’, ‘visa’ and ‘taxes’. As a whole, the plot shows that each source provides a clearly different type of information about the destination.

**Table 5.** Summary of the correspondence analysis

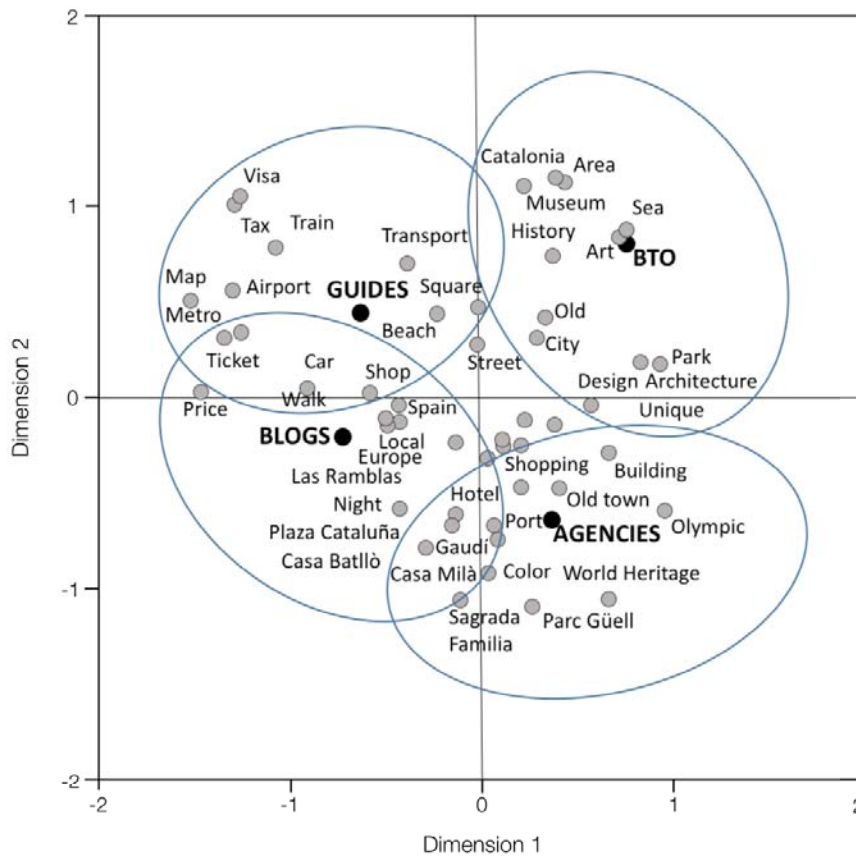
| Dimension | Singular value | Inertia | X <sup>2</sup> | Sig. | Proportion of inertia |        | Confidence singular value |       |
|-----------|----------------|---------|----------------|------|-----------------------|--------|---------------------------|-------|
|           |                |         |                |      | Accounted             | Cumul. | Std. deviation            | Corr. |
| 1         | 0.360          | 0.129   |                |      | 0.442                 | 0.442  | 0.157                     | 0.04  |
| 2         | 0.340          | 0.116   |                |      | 0.396                 | 0.838  | 0.162                     |       |
| 3         | 0.218          | 0.047   |                |      | 0.162                 | 1.000  |                           |       |
| Total     |                | 0.293   | 8.718          | 1.0  | 1.000                 | 1.000  |                           |       |

Note: 147 degrees of freedom

Two explanatory dimensions can be identified. First, the vertical axis shows a difference between objective and subjective information. In the lower part of the graph are blogs and travel agencies that tend to offer more subjective information about the destination, such as feelings, advice, and experiences that are attractive (or marketing lines) and personal; while the guides and DMO at the top tend to offer more descriptive and objective information.

Secondly, the horizontal axis shows differences between the types of knowledge conveyed. This axis divides the contents of the sources into procedural (know-how) and propositional (know-what) knowledge. The results show that guides and blogs fill the notable void of procedural knowledge in the travel agency and DMO texts, which focus more on propositional knowledge. Thus, both guides and blogs give more information about transportation, currency, visas, tickets and, more importantly, advice for the “Chinese experience” in Barcelona.

Figure 5: Correspondence map



## Discussion

Previous studies on travel information sources typically focus solely on one specific source (e.g., UGC) or platform (e.g., travel magazines or Twitter posts). However, this study denotes the differences in tourism information sources according to four distinct information-sharing brokers (DMO, travel agencies, travel guides and travel blogs) with focus on a broad corpus of texts. The findings of this study reveal important differences in the overall information and representation of the destination. Structural differences appear in measures of density, diversity, entropy, and semantic parameters. This is relevant because previous research notes that the characteristics—and manipulation—of linguistic parameters affect the comprehension and understanding of messages (Garlock et al., 2001; Johansson, 2008; Jost, 2006; Luce & Large, 2001; Pérez-Montoro & Codina, 2016; Townsend & Kahn, 2013).

Two main considerations can be taken into account regarding the syntactic parameters. First, blogs were identified as having low lexical density, which is expected of more informal language. However, the low lexical density of the DMO sources

indicate an excess of function and modal words, which ascribe less meaning to the information. Here, the issue of authorship is relevant. The representation of the information source and official rhetorical visions of the destination affect construction of the messages. In tourism, most DMO websites are produced by public tourism offices, and more formal language may be expected. Thus, more work is needed for understanding authorship representation and ascertaining whether it produces less lexically meaningful content that may negatively affect promotional texts.

Second, one valuable finding concerns the diversity and entropy of the samples. To ease readability, a lower entropy value is recommended for more diverse text in order to avoid chaos. Interestingly, the DMO websites and blogs in this study sample had the largest diversity profiles, although the DMO pages also had the highest entropy rates, while the blogs performed better by showing medium entropy values. This indicates that the way a web platform is constructed (i.e., with many distinct blog or as structured web travel guides) affects the order, composition and hierarchy of the information, as represented by the entropy values. Further research should include scales for entropy analyses, thus generating new empirical data on how this parameter affects readability.

Regarding the semantic structures, the findings reveal that the contents of tourism information sources can be differentiated by the following two dimensions: the descriptive-subjective information axis and the propositional-procedural type of knowledge axis. This finding indicates the existence of knowledge gaps between different sources of information. Here, in line with the current literature, semantic differences show that consumers' information needs are revealed on more interactive sites such as blogs, where users can actively create their own content and formulate questions as needed.

### *Managerial and case study implications*

DMOs face increasing competition but are required to attract tourist attention and manage tourism. Travel agencies must also compete with other companies to sell products. From a marketing perspective, understanding the structural characteristics of information sources is useful for easing readability. In addition, understanding the information gaps between sources is valuable for identifying consumers' needs and providing useful information. Thus, one implication of this study is that information brokers may want to adopt linguistic analysis techniques to improve marketing strategies.

In this study, lower values of meaningful words and higher lexical density are positive indicators that the website contents of travel agencies and travel guides are

more direct, use simpler messages, and utilize certain effective keywords that aid in message comprehension. The low lexical density identified on DMO sources is indicative of excessive functional and modal words, which ascribe less meaning to the information. It would be useful for the DMO to implement lexical density to construct a more meaningful, direct and easier to understand message. Regarding keyword density, having a higher proportion than other sources allows readers, potential tourists and search engines to identify the text with some key elements, facts and images. Therefore, this study recommends that the Barcelona DMO websites and travel guides increase keyword density.

The textual content of travel agency websites tends to have higher order values (lower entropy), and higher keyword density. This suggests good readability, search engine optimization, and fast consumer access to easily understood information. However, this study also shows less diverse and more uniform information on Chinese travel agency websites. Significant repetition characterizes these information sources, which means that different travel agency websites and tour products are extremely similar. This is consistent with previous studies of Chinese tour products (Lojo, 2016a), which found much repetition and overlap between tour itineraries. To diversify the Chinese experience in Barcelona and the rest of Spain, travel agencies would be wise to diversify travel products for specific niche markets.

Regarding the semantic analysis, one issue that emerges from the findings is that Chinese tourists to Western destinations seek procedural knowledge and are very concerned about practical information. Surprisingly, the second most frequent word identified in the blog samples was “ticket”, which indicates the consumer need for practical knowledge. The findings reveal that Chinese travelers in Barcelona need more information about heritage monuments, tickets, schedules, and transportation. In addition, the analysis reveals that travel guides and travel blogs supply information about Spain and Europe. In contrast, the DMO focuses mostly on Catalonia. It would be wise for the DMO to include instructions and recommendations for Chinese tourists who view Barcelona as a meaningful stop within a larger tour (usually through Spain or Southwestern Europe).

### *Limitations and future research*

The methodological, theoretical and managerial considerations discussed here are intended to serve as one step further in understanding tourism information sources, textual communication and semantics domains. However, four main limitations should be acknowledged as suggestions for further analysis. First, this study is based on a case study. As such, only one DMO was analyzed (the Barcelona

Tourism Office websites) while an array of Chinese sources were examined. Further studies should be developed for different destinations and/or by comparing different contextual cases. Also, the texts in this study were sampled from brokers of information who are social agents (DMOs, travel companies, and UGC); however, information nowadays can also be generated by machines (i.e., artificial intelligence and bots), which would be subject to further analytical considerations.

Second, even though Barcelona actively targets the Chinese market segment, the Barcelona DMO websites are not available in Chinese; thus, translations ought to be performed to compare the sources of data. To compare the sources here, the language was homogenized to avoid stylistic variations and synonymy issues, which significantly increases the reliability of the measures of density, entropy, distribution and semantics contents. However, the possibility should be acknowledged that the study may be affected to some extent by the language.

Third, this study indicates a high level of incongruence between the contents of various information sources, as seen by the unique position of each website on the correspondence map. This also suggests that different users and perhaps different nationalities have distinct information needs; or, at least, different information is provided. Therefore, future studies should attempt to understand differences in the tourism images projected by sources from different cultures.

Fourth, this work tested the validity of the methodological and theoretical approaches employed; and the results suggest that future research might delve deeper into how manipulating syntactic and semantic parameters could empirically affect information credibility, usefulness and readability. Thus, developing scales and indexes for the values of tourism information-seeking behavior would be a positive contribution for future studies.

## **Conclusion**

This research expands extant knowledge about tourism information sources, and it identifies variables that might explain the differences between the textual contents conveyed by heterogeneous information suppliers. A computational linguistic analysis was developed and carried out on the contents of local and Chinese sources about Barcelona. Together, the findings suggest that differences in the conveyed information can be explained by variables of density, diversity, entropy and gaps in knowledge. The results contribute to understanding competitive differences and to designing communication strategies.

This investigation complements earlier studies that noted significant differences in the contents of different information sources (Camprubí, Guia & Comas, 2014;



Choi et al., 2007; Tang et al., 2009). This study’s findings reveal that different information sources have different information structures that affect the online image of the destination. Building on an empirical study, this work shows differences in the content of a local information supplier (Barcelona’s DMO) and that of Chinese sources (travel blogs, travel guides and travel agencies). This research indicates the importance of studying information gaps and information needs among different consumer markets, specifically for improving the production of tourist information.

**Bridging Section 5**

| This article  |  |   |
|---|--|---|
| <p>Comparative analysis of a local destination management organization (DMO) (Barcelona Turisme), Chinese travel agencies, Chinese travel guides and Chinese blogs.</p> <p><b>Results 1.</b> Density of information: Travel agencies are the denser source. This is good for search engine optimization (SEO) and for readers to easily comprehend messages</p> | <p>Understanding tourism information sources and communication efficiency</p> <p><b>Article 4</b></p> <p><b>Results 2.</b> Diversity and entropy: blogs are the most diverse and richest source of information (this is good for obtaining knowledge about different topics. The DMO is the second most diverse source, with top entropy values (it is more difficult to grasp all the information contained in this source)</p> | <p>A Computational quantitative linguistic research approach to analyze textual contents is performed</p> <p><b>Results 3.</b> Semantic domains: the four sources contain very different information (see the correspondence map). The results, via blog analysis, show the tourists’ information needs that are not fulfilled by other sources</p> |
| <p><b>Research limitation:</b> It only analyzes textual contents</p>  |  |   |
| Suggested future research: to analyze the visual images of the destination  |  |   |
| <p>Analysis and comparison of Tourism Destination Image in local and in Chinese sources of information</p> <p><b>Article 5</b></p>  |  |   |

**Note:** This table is not included in the published article. It adds to the overall flow of the dissertation

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## Appendix 1. Input data sources

| Rationale & procedure   | Sources   | URL   |
|---|---|---|
| (A, B, C, D)  | (A)   | (A)   |
| The 14 websites were selected based upon relevance and popularity, using the ranking provided by Alexa ( <a href="http://www.alexa.com">www.alexa.com</a> ), a website traffic analysis tool. | Barcelona Tourism Office (official DMO). 2 main information websites aimed at tourists.   | <a href="https://www.barcelonaturisme.com/wv3/en/">https://www.barcelonaturisme.com/wv3/en/</a><br><a href="https://bcnshop.barcelonaturisme.com/">https://bcnshop.barcelonaturisme.com/</a>  |
| The blog platform QYER.com was selected because its popularity and widespread use led to it being used in previous content analyses of Chinese travel (e.g., Chen et al., 2017).              | (B)<br>The three biggest online Chinese travel websites by number of visitors: CTRIP TUNIUI and LY. 108 different travel products were retrieved from 37 different suppliers.           | (B)<br><a href="http://www.ctrip.com">www.ctrip.com</a><br><a href="http://bj.tuniu.com/">http://bj.tuniu.com/</a><br><a href="http://www.ly.com">www.ly.com</a>  |
| Text-structured content was downloaded from the websites using the Mozilla Scrapbook Add-on.  | (C)<br>9 different online travel guidebooks aimed at Chinese tourists, selected from 8 websites.  | (C)<br><a href="http://www.qyer.com">www.qyer.com</a> , <a href="http://www.Ctrip.com">www.Ctrip.com</a> ,<br><a href="http://www.tripadvisor.cn">www.tripadvisor.cn</a> ,<br><a href="http://www.yododo.com">www.yododo.com</a> ,<br><a href="http://www.elong.com">www.elong.com</a> , <a href="http://www.qunar.com">www.qunar.com</a> ,<br><a href="http://www.mafengwo.cn">www.mafengwo.cn</a> ,<br><a href="http://www.barcelonaTouristGuide.com">www.barcelonaTouristGuide.com</a> |
|   | (D)<br>Contents of 17 Chinese travel blog sites with information about Barcelona from Bbs.Qyer. Selection was based on higher numbers of views, more comments and detailed information. | (D)<br><a href="http://bbs.qyer.com">http://bbs.qyer.com</a>  |

**Note:** A = DMO; B = Travel agencies; C = Travel guidebooks; D = Travel blogs

# Destination image fragmentation and information sources. A comparative analysis of local and Chinese representations of Barcelona



## Abstract

Destination image is an important construct that influences destination marketing. First, we identified three variables that explain tourism image fragmentation: the multiplicity of social agents; the diversity of denotative contents; and the information-seeking behaviors. Second, with a case study the diversity in denotative contents on Barcelona is examined. A mixed quantitative and qualitative content analysis is performed on the contents of the local DMO, Chinese travel agencies, and Chi-

nese guides and blogs. The findings suggest that the major variables articulating the image of Barcelona and affecting its fragmentation can be classified as: segment-specific; function-specific; type of image (organic/induced) and epistemological types of knowledge.

*Keywords: destination image; image fragmentation; denotative image; textual & photographs analysis; Chinese tourism; Barcelona tourism.*

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## Introduction

Barcelona, located on the Eastern Mediterranean coast of the Iberian Peninsula, is a profoundly historic city that was founded by ancient Rome and evolved through different processes. Tourism developed mostly during the 1950s with Fordist tourism trends, but it was after the 1992 Olympic Games that the city entered the current post-Fordism tourism stage (Garay & Cànoves, 2011). Gaudí architecture, Las Ramblas Street, and the sea promenade are the main physical representations of the city (Lojo & Cànoves, 2015). In recent times, problems have arisen due to over-tourism and residents' discontent. In this new scenario, Barcelona faces the challenge of diversifying its tourism market. Chinese and other East Asian markets are perceived as an opportunity for destination development, because they are one of the most lucrative tourism segments and tend to be more interested in cultural sites rather than night life and the bar scene (Lojo & Li, 2018).

It is widely recognized that destination image (DI) is an important construct that influences tourism decision making, destination marketing and tourist behavior (Molinillo, Liébana-Cabanillas, Anaya-Sánchez, & Buhalis, 2018; Picazo & Moreno-Gil, 2019; Stepchenkova & Morrison, 2006; Zhang, Wu, & Buhalis, 2018). Scholars generally agree that the DI is divided between the organic and the induced image (Stepchenkova & Morrison, 2006). The induced DI is obtained from promotion and tourism-focused information materials; and the organic DI is obtained from non-commercial information (Education, books, TV news, etc.) and modified by actual visitations (Lin, Chen, & Park, 2012). There is also common agreement that DI consists of multiple facets, namely the cognitive, affective and overall impressions of the destination (Jani & Hwang, 2011; Lian & Yu, 2017); or the denotative/connotative dimensions (Hunter, 2016).

With the rise of the Internet, consulting different online information sources has become the new standard in tourism behavior (Camprubí & Coromina, 2017). The profusion of information available online might lead to multiple DIs. DI fragmentation occurs when different sources provide images that depict distinct, complementary, or contradictory behaviors, thus generating different tourist perceptions (Camprubí, 2015; Camprubi, Guia, & Comas, 2014). Even though previous research shows that there may exist important information gaps and incongruencies between information sources (e.g., Choi, Lehto, & Morrison, 2007; Tang, Choi, Morrison, & Lehto, 2009), studies that focus on only one type of information source have received most of the attention in academia (Standing, Tang-Taye, & Boyer, 2014; Picazo & Moreno-Gil, 2019).

Online DI is embedded in different tourist cultural needs and is conveyed by different sources that function as orientation messages. Understanding the differences

in these textual and visual representations might lead to creating tourism development agendas for Barcelona (and other globalizing cities). Based on these premises, the purpose of this study is to analyze the representations of Barcelona in different local and Chinese information sources. The specific goals are:

- To uncover different variables that affect denotative tourism DI fragmentation.
- To identify differences in denotative DI perceptions between locally marketed DI and Chinese DI.
- To understand the information needs of Chinese tourists regarding the city of Barcelona and identify the implications for the local Destination Marketing Organization (DMO).

## Literature review

### *Tourism online information sources*

The Internet is the most important source of communication and marketing for both private and public tourism organizations. (Akehurst, 2009). The online sources and social media, in addition to facilitating the accessibility and immediacy of the information, play a vital role in the promotion and transmission of the DI. Recent studies show that web content, social media and user generated content have become one of the most popular information source in the pre-trip stage and travel planning process (Leung, Law, van Hoof & Buhalis, 2013; Li, Lin, Tsai & Wang, 2015). Currently, understanding the information available on the web is a priority in designing better marketing strategies and understanding tourists' decision-making (Pesonen & Pasanen, 2017).

Tourism is an information intensive industry that heavily depends on the transmission of information and digital transactions. Prior to the trip, the potential tourist needs information to decide the destination choice, to assert his or her motivations, to get in touch with the DI, and to evaluate the services, costs, benefits and available time. During and after the trip, the tourist reflects on his or her tourism experience and acts as a source of information through word-of-mouth (WOM) and by sharing texts, images and videos on digital platforms (Jani & Hwang, 2011).

Recent research indicates the difference between traditional and digital information sources (e.g., Benckendorff, Sheldon, & Fesenmaier, 2014; Tan & Chen, 2012). Among traditional sources, those that have been studied are pamphlets, brochures, travel guides, travel agencies, newspapers, travel magazines, news, radio, television, films, family and friends (Camprubi et al., 2014; Fodness & Murray,

1997; Hunter, 2012). Regarding digital sources, a myriad of resources has been identified, namely e-mails, online travel guides, online magazines, digital books, web 1.0, web 2.0, forums, social networks, wikis, apps, blogs, and collaborative consumption platforms (Benckendorff et al., 2014).

Due to the increasing number of information sources and information agents, complexity increases in the formation of the tourism DI. As such, this study is built on the following conceptual assumptions: (1) different social agents of information (e.g., local institutions, companies, international operators, hotels, restaurants, actual visitors, and newspapers) supply different chunks of data about the tourism experience at a specific destination (e.g., Choi et al., 2007; Stepchenkova, Kim, & Kirilenko, 2015; Tang et al., 2009); and (2) the tourism destination image is a complex and multilayered structure formed by a relational network of information suppliers (Camprubí & Coromina, 2017; Camprubi et al., 2014). As a result, an actual fragmented destination image emerges from all the agents involved in this complex informational structure.

### *Fragmentation of the destination image*

Due to their heterogeneous and multifocal origins, a convoluted diversity of destination representations exists online. In online environments, various social agents produce and disseminate information on different platforms and digital media, which causes the DI to be fragmented and formed by a multitude of informational layers (Camprubí & Coromina, 2017). First, studies have established that tourism image fragmentation is a result of the structural patterns in the social origin of the information (Camprubí et al., 2014; Hunter, 2016). Social constructivism informs us that tourism places and images are socially negotiated and constructed (Larsen & George, 2006). Different social agents ascribe meanings, images and values to tourism destinations.

Regarding the information origin, Gartner (1994) identified four types of social agents that create the images of the destination: (1) overt induced agents, such as the DMO, tour operators, wholesalers or transport companies; (2) covert induced agents, such as travel magazines, and travel guidebooks or other sources that create and disseminate information about a destination; (3) organic agents, being the people that have traveled to the destination and gave information based on their travel experience and previous information; (4) autonomous agents, such as newspapers, TV, films, books, or other media sources whose aim is not creating a tourism image per se.

In the case of a particular destination, there may be attempts to unify the main destination image, and this affects the DI fragmentation. Thus, centralized image



fragmentation may occur when there is a central agent such as a DMO who directs the DI. Decentralized fragmentation occurs when most of the induced DI comes from different non-central agents. According to Camprubí et al. (2014, p. 139), centralization patterns of fragmentation may appear in a coordinated or uncoordinated way: “structural patterns of fragmentation obey structural criteria such as whether the image projection is carried out in a (de)centralized and/or (un)coordinated way”.

Second, the DI content patterns and denotative dimensions (cf. Hunter, 2016; Picazo & Moreno-Gil, 2019) may also determine its fragmentation. For example, if a DMO is trying to offer a family friendly DI while other sources focus on night-life and clubbing, there is a certain level of incongruence (Camprubi et al., 2014). Certain patterns of fragmentation in the denotative DI can be a purposeful marketing strategy for different segments of consumers or for different activities at the destination. Regarding the consumer-oriented patterns, “the contents will differ depending [on] whether the fragmented images are fully fitted and addressed to particular segments of the market”. Regarding the functional patterns of fragmentation, different DIs may arise if the information suppliers “focus on different particular aspects of the tourism experience, that is, services, activities, heritage, and so on” (Camprubi et al., 2014, p. 141).

Third, Tan & Chen (2012) have compared the use of books, guides, magazines, WOM, travel blogs, wikis and travel websites. According to these authors, information sources are used differently, based on familiarity with the destination: the more experience and proximity to the destination, the greater the importance of traditional sources; on longer trips there is usually less dependence on WOM and more web 2.0 searches are performed. Therefore, several traditional and digital sources presently coexist in influencing the formation of DI. The use and effect of one or another resource depends on tourist digital literacy, the tourist’s previous experience, the physical distance between tourist and destination, the cultural distance, age and specific educational level of consumers, and the specific segment of consumers (Hunter, 2016; Kambele, Li & Zhou, 2015; Tan & Chen, 2012).

When studying the concept of image fragmentation, analyzing the representations of different tourism information sources will result in different conveyed DI. This is explained by: (1) not only the structural patterns in the characteristics of the social agents acting as information sources, but also their (de)centralized and (un)coordinated strategies; (2) content patterns in the destination’s diverse denotative representations, its segment-oriented images, function-oriented patterns, and levels of (in)congruence; (3) the DI consumers and their information-seeking behavior patterns (**Table 1**). This article focuses on the second variable, the deno-

tative contents of the DI. In this context, the denotative image stands for the explicit or direct meaning of the representations and themes present in the DI. In contrast, the connotative meaning is associated with the suggested or indirect content of the DI. Studying the denotative image suits an etic perspective (cf. Bergman & Lindgren, 2018). That is to say, this article analyzes objectifiable and measurable DI without trying to discover the DI's hidden, suggested or connotative meanings.

**Table 1.** Three main variables that explain the fragmentation of the destination image

| Why does the consumer perceive a fragmented tourism image?   |   |
|--|---|
| 1. Multiplicity of social agents in the origin of the information <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• (Un)coordination of emitters of information</li> <li>• (De)centralization of agents</li> <li>• Induced agents, organic agents, autonomous agents</li> </ul> | Camprubí et al, 2012; Hunter, 2016; Mazor-Tregerman et al, 2016; Stepchenkova & Morrisson, 2006; Gartner, 1994. |
| 2. Diversity of thematic and denotative contents <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Functional patterns of information</li> <li>• Segment-oriented patterns of information</li> </ul>  | Camprubí et al, 2012, Camprubí, 2015; Camprubí & Coromina, 2017; Larsen & George, 2006; Tang et al, 2009.       |
| 3. Consumer information-seeking behavior <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Travel experience and familiarity with the destination</li> <li>• Information-seeking skills</li> <li>• Cultural distance / cultural background</li> </ul>                           | Akehurst, 2009; Camprubí & Coromina, 2017; Hunter 2016; O'Regan et al, 2015; Tan and Chen, 2012                 |

### *Case study and conceptual research stance*

#### *Information sources and Chinese travelers*

This article analyzes the case of the denotative tourism image of Barcelona in Chinese and local information sources. China is now the largest tourism source market in the world, and it is home to the largest number of internet users—802 million netizens as of Dec 2018 (Xinhua, 2018). Online travel sales transactions exceeded US\$31 billion in 2017 (China Internet Watch, 2017). In the whole Chinese e-market, mobile-based purchases account for 80% of the total e-commerce, and 55% of Chinese consumers have made mobile payments compared to only 19% of U.S. consumers (Stern, 2019). Thus, online information sources and online transactions are highly relevant in this market, due to the Chinese consumers having become extremely “digital”.

According to Sun et al. (2017), Chinese tourists currently consider international travel agencies to be the most important channel for gathering information about hotels, with Chinese agencies that operate globally being more important than local agencies. According to these authors, social media sources are the second most important element, as they offer information regarding the travel experience and attractions at the destination. However, the same authors indicate that the results may vary, and the importance of WOM could increase depending on the tourist's internet skills and online information retrieval skills.

Regarding the UGC, 361 million Chinese created tourism content on forums, blogs and social media platforms. Chinese culture is traditionally more collectivist-focused and less individualistic in nature. Therefore, blogs and blog users share less personal information and more general information, recommendations and useful suggestions for a wide group of possible travelers. Due to the collectivist nature, there is more interaction and communication in the blogs, which are similar in use to the forums (Lee & Gretzel, 2014).

In China, the platform QYER.com is a specialized forum for discussing tourism and creating travel-related blogs. This website is the most popular and interactive online community among Chinese outbound travelers (Wu & Pearce, 2014). Owing to its popularity and widespread use, QYER.com has been used in previous content analyses of Chinese travel perceptions (e.g., Chen, Guevara, & Alarcón, 2017; Wu & Pearce, 2014).

### *Research stance*

Following the previous considerations, this study conducts an empirical inquiry into the representations of Barcelona by focusing on the conceptual areas of tourism information sources and the denotative variables in the tourist destination image (TDI) fragmentation. First, we analyze the semantic domains of the information source contents based on textual representations (e.g., Xiang, Gretzel and Fesenmayer, 2009). Second, we examine the thematic areas portrayed in photographs (e.g., Wu & Pearce, 2014). The results obtained allow us to suggest new variables, factors and processes that affect the understanding of DI fragmentation. To our knowledge, no previous DI fragmentation studies have analyzed a particular segment of consumers in order to expand on the fragmentation concept. A quasi-positivist philosophical position is employed, and an inductive method has been followed, for which there were no research hypotheses, but instead research objectives (cf. Arghode, 2012). The article is built on an empirical research design (cf. White, 2011) and the methodological stance and framework is explained in the following section.

## Methodology

This paper uses content analysis, which is an observational research method that examines a body of material in an effort to capture the denotative themes and meanings from selected information sources. Quantitative and qualitative approaches are the two main epistemological positions employed here. The quantitative approach involves inductive reasoning and is valid for classifying large sets of collected data into fewer categories of meaning (Stepchenkova, 2012). The qualitative approach requires interpretation of the results while focusing on complexity and detail of meaning (Wu & Pearce, 2014).

### *Sample and data extraction*

In this study, four sources of information are compared: (1) the Barcelona local DMO website; (2) 108 travel products to Barcelona offered by three Chinese tourism travel agencies (Ctrip, Tuniu, and Ly); (3) nine Chinese online travel guides; and (4) 17 Chinese travel blogs. The online travel agencies and the travel guides webpages were selected based on their popularity (using the web ranking tool [www.alexa.com](http://www.alexa.com)).

**Table 2.** Sampled sources

| Sources                      | Agency  | Platform                                | Address  |
|------------------------------|---|---|--|
| DMO                          | Barcelona tourism office  | 1 website                               | <a href="https://www.barcelona-turisme.com/wv3/en/">https://www.barcelona-turisme.com/wv3/en/</a>  |
| Chinese travel agencies      | 3 travel agencies (Ctrip, Tuniu, LY)  | 108 travel products (from 37 suppliers) | <a href="http://www.ctrip.com">www.ctrip.com</a><br><a href="http://bj.tuniu.com/">http://bj.tuniu.com/</a><br><a href="http://www.ly.com">www.ly.com</a>  |
| Chinese online travel guides | 9 travel guidebooks (Qyer, Ctrip, Tripadvisor, Yododo, Elong, Qunar, Mafengwo, Barcelona tourist guide) | 8 websites                              | <a href="http://www.qyer.com">www.qyer.com</a><br><a href="http://www.Ctrip.com">www.Ctrip.com</a><br><a href="http://www.tripadvisor.cn">www.tripadvisor.cn</a><br><a href="http://www.yododo.com">www.yododo.com</a><br><a href="http://www.elong.com">www.elong.com</a><br><a href="http://www.qunar.com">www.qunar.com</a><br><a href="http://www.mafengwo.cn">www.mafengwo.cn</a><br><a href="http://www.barcelonaTouristGuide.com">www.barcelonaTouristGuide.com</a> |
| Chinese travel blogs         | 17 travel blogs   | 1 website                               | <a href="http://bbs.qyer.com">http://bbs.qyer.com</a>  |

The blog platform QYER.com was selected because its popularity and widespread use led to it being used in previous content analyses of Chinese travel (e.g., Chen et al., 2017). The sampled textual contents and photograph representations were retrieved from the 13 source websites (Table 2) using a web scraping procedure

assisted by the software Web Scraper, a Mozilla add-on. The downloaded data was saved as only text archives and .jpeg pictures. The content of the websites was gleaned by a web-scraping procedure during April and May 2017.

### *Sample characteristics and processes*

First, photographs with sizes less than 3 kilobytes were deleted from the downloaded material, as their size on screen is not significant enough to convey a DI. The resulting data set had the following characteristics: 60,908 words and 671 photographs for the DMO website; 46,667 words and 1,114 photographs for the travel agencies websites; 50,167 words and 1,475 photographs for the travel guides; and 50,606 words and 1,730 photographs for the blogs (Table 3).

**Table 3.** Sample distribution

|                      | DMO    | Agencies | Guides | Blogs  | Total   |
|----------------------|--------|----------|--------|--------|---------|
| No. of websites      | 1      | 3        | 8      | 1      | 13      |
| No. of tour products |        | 108      |        |        | 108     |
| No. of guides        |        |          | 9      |        | 9       |
| No. of blogs         |        |          |        | 17     | 17      |
| No. of words         | 60,908 | 46,667   | 50,167 | 50,606 | 208,348 |
| No. of pictures      | 671    | 1114     | 1475   | 1730   | 4990    |

Second, it was necessary to homogenize the textual data. The local DMO information was already downloaded in the English language, and the Chinese language information was translated by a bilingual translator to the English language with the help of computer tools. To allow for further analysis, linguistic units were created and built on analogous basis: synonyms and similar words were changed into the same form; local names were simplified and standardized in all the documents. In addition, stop-words such as “a”, “the”, “at” —which contain less lexical meaning— were deleted from the original text.

### *Data analysis: a mixed approach*

To understand the fragmentation of the denotative dimension of the DI, first, a quantitative analysis of the most frequent words and phrases was used to grasp differences in semantic representations of Barcelona. The most frequent words and concepts were identified; then these words and concepts were compared, specifically in order to show the most frequent words in the datasets. AntConc (Text Analysis Software) was used to extract rankings of keywords (Anthony, 2016). This

allowed the authors to compare the main topics of each information source and the rankings of the most often mentioned attractions.

Second, the sampled data set contained 4,990 photographs that were examined. Tourism research on DI lacks a standardized criteria for measuring and assessing the visual content of photographs (Picazo & Moreno-Gil, 2019). Thus, a mixed approach that combines qualitative coding with hierarchical analysis of frequencies was used to understand the themes behind the photographs. To this end, all the photographs were manually examined and coded according to their denotative representations, the texts were carefully read in order to also perform manual categorization and coding.

To assure the validity and consistency of our analysis and results, the sample includes a substantial amount textual contents and photographs (**Table 3**) in order to accurately assess subgroup differences; the sampled contents are balanced among different information sources and a comparative perspective is taken. To operationalize the applied concepts, the main variables and themes were cross-checked by the authors and a translator. In addition, to increase reliability with the qualitative procedures, the coding process and emerged categories were also cross-checked among the authors of the study and a research assistant until the interpretations resulted in agreement. To this end, an established analytical qualitative approach was employed (Wu & Pearce, 2014). (1) the generated themes and codes emerged from photographs and texts were inductively identified. (2) The codes were examined and transformed into categories of meaningful and representative DI, patterns and phrases. (3) To interpret the research results, analytical relationships between sampled information sources were considered in light of the previous steps (Figures 1, 2 and 3). The blog authors were asked to grant permission to use their photographs when required.

## **Findings: Barcelona denotative destination image**

### *Fragmentation at the textual level*

**Table 4** shows the most frequent words in rank order for all four sources of information and reveals the different foci of the sources. First, the DMO website highlights Barcelona as an urban destination (city) that is rich in material heritage (buildings) and has different points of interest (areas). This source also highlights Barcelona within Catalonia (the northeasternmost autonomous region of Spain).

**Table 4.** A comparison of the top 20 most frequent words or phrases, in rank order

| Rank | DMO          | Chinese agencies | Chinese guides | Chinese Blogs   |
|------|--------------|------------------|----------------|-----------------|
| 1    | City         | Building         | Spain          | Ticket          |
| 2    | Building     | Gaudí            | City           | Gaudí           |
| 3    | Art          | City             | Bus            | People          |
| 4    | Area         | Spain            | Ticket         | Sagrada Familia |
| 5    | Catalonia    | Famous           | Airport        | Metro           |
| 6    | Architecture | Sagrada Familia  | Gaudí          | Spain           |
| 7    | Century      | Hotel            | Street         | Street          |
| 8    | House        | World            | Hotel          | Building        |
| 9    | Street       | Architecture     | Catalonia      | City            |
| 10   | Museum       | Parc Güell       | Museum         | Square          |
| 11   | Design       | Design           | Area           | Church          |
| 12   | Park         | Street           | Train          | Shops           |
| 13   | Market       | Las Ramblas      | Metro          | Casa Batllò     |
| 14   | Square       | Color            | Building       | Design          |
| 15   | Old          | Church           | Square         | Airport         |
| 16   | Sea          | Olympic          | Art            | Europe          |
| 17   | Sculpture    | Large            | Walk           | Hotel           |
| 18   | Gaudí        | Park             | Las Ramblas    | Old             |
| 19   | New          | Stone            | People         | Sea             |
| 20   | Modernist    | Casa Milà        | Car            | Night           |
| 21   |              |                  | Europe         |                 |
| 22   |              | Art              | Shops          | Color           |
| 23   | Church       | People           | Famous         | Large           |
| 24   | People       |                  |                | Walk            |
| 25   | Spain        | Casa Batllò      | Large          | Car             |
| 26   |              |                  | Sea            |                 |
| 27   |              |                  |                |                 |
| 28   |              | Night            | World          | World           |
| 29   |              |                  |                | Casa Milà       |
| 30   | World        |                  |                | Area            |
| 31   |              |                  |                | House           |
| 32   |              | Square           |                | Parc Güell      |
| 33   | Large        | Europe           |                | Architecture    |
| 34   |              |                  | Century        | Train           |
| 35   | Olympic      |                  |                |                 |
| 36   |              |                  | Architecture   |                 |
| ...  |              |                  |                |                 |
| 40   |              |                  |                |                 |

**Note:** the table shows the 20 most frequent words and phrases for each source and compares the position of other words that appear in other sources.

Overall, the DMO emphasizes the city attractions by focusing on its urban character and open spaces (area, street, park, market, square, sea) and on its material and artistic heritage (building, architecture, house, old, sculpture, modernist, new, design).

Second, the top 20 most frequent words used by Chinese travel agencies show that this information source places greater focus on the most iconic cultural attractions, such as the architecture and famous urban areas (building, Sagrada Familia, Parc Güell, Las Ramblas, Casa Milà). They highlight the renowned architect Gaudi and introduce many descriptive terms such as famous, world, large and Olympic. Third, the Chinese guides mention geo-contextual (Spain, Catalonia) and infrastructural elements (bus, ticket, airport, train, metro, walk, car), as well as the main attractions of the city (Gaudí, museum, street, art, Las Ramblas). Fourth, the Chinese blogs also provide much practical information about the destination (tickets), the infrastructure (metro, airport) and introduce the concept of leisure shopping (shop). The blogs also portray heritage elements of the city (Sagrada Familia, Gaudí, church, Casa Batlló), artistic elements (design, color) and natural elements that can be enjoyed in Barcelona (sea, night).

**Table 5.** Rank and frequency of the top 20 most mentioned attractions, by each source

| DMO               | Chinese agencies |                   | Chinese guidebooks |                   | Chinese blogs |                   |          |
|-------------------|------------------|-------------------|--------------------|-------------------|---------------|-------------------|----------|
| <i>Word</i>       | <i>%</i>         | <i>Word</i>       | <i>%</i>           | <i>Word</i>       | <i>%</i>      | <i>Word</i>       | <i>%</i> |
| Las ramblas       | 0.8              | Sagrada Familia   | 5.2                | Las ramblas       | 1.5           | Sagrada Familia   | 2.5      |
| Old town          | 0.5              | Parc Güell        | 3.4                | Montserrat        | 1.0           | Casa Batllo       | 1.3      |
| Gothic quarter    | 0.4              | Las ramblas       | 2.3                | Cataluña square   | 1.0           | Casa Milà         | 0.9      |
| Pg. de Gracia     | 0.3              | Casa milà         | 2.2                | Sagrada Familia   | 0.7           | Park Guell        | 0.9      |
| Barceloneta beach | 0.3              | Cataluña square   | 1.9                | Gothic quarter    | 0.7           | Las ramblas       | 0.7      |
| Parc Güell        | 0.3              | Casa Batllò       | 1.9                | Camp Nou          | 0.5           | Barcelona cathed. | 0.5      |
| Casa Milà         | 0.3              | Columbus square   | 1.6                | Barcelona Cathed. | 0.5           | Passeig de Gràcia | 0.5      |
| Barcelona cathed. | 0.3              | Old town          | 1.5                | Casa Batllò       | 0.5           | Gothic quarter    | 0.4      |
| Casa Batllò       | 0.2              | Roca Village      | 1.4                | Old town          | 0.5           | Cataluña square   | 0.4      |
| Music Palace      | 0.2              | Camp Nou          | 1.2                | Parc Güell        | 0.5           | Music Palace      | 0.4      |
| Sagrada Familia   | 0.2              | Pg. de Gracia     | 0.6                | Pg. de Gracia     | 0.4           | Camp Nou          | 0.3      |
| Boqueria market   | 0.2              | Olympic Port      | 0.6                | Casa Milà         | 0.3           | Boqueria market   | 0.3      |
| Montjuic hill     | 0.2              | National Palace   | 0.5                | Museum Picasso    | 0.2           | Old town          | 0.3      |
| Cataluña square   | 0.2              | Montserrat        | 0.4                | Columbus square   | 0.2           | Montjuic hill     | 0.2      |
| Magic Fountain    | 0.1              | Gothic Quarter    | 0.4                | Magic Fountain    | 0.2           | MNAC museum       | 0.2      |
| MNAC museum       | 0.1              | Boqueria market   | 0.4                | Boqueria market   | 0.2           | Magic Fountain    | 0.2      |
| Camp Nou          | 0.1              | Montjuic hill     | 0.3                | MNAC museum       | 0.2           | Barceloneta beach | 0.1      |
| Picasso Museum    | 0.1              | Barcelona cathed. | 0.3                | Barceloneta beach | 0.2           | Picasso Museum    | 0.1      |
| Columbus square   | 0.1              | Magic Fountain    | 0.2                | National Palace   | 0.1           | National Palace   | 0.1      |
| National Palace   | 0.1              | Picasso Museum    | 0.1                | Montjuic hill     | 0.1           | Columbus square   | 0.1      |



**Table 5** shows a comparison of the most frequent attractions for each source and its frequency rank. For instance, the DMO most mentioned attraction is Las Ramblas Street, followed by other public spaces such as the Old Town, the Gothic Quarter, Passeig de Gràcia and Barceloneta Beach. For the Chinese travel agencies, the main attractions are Sagrada Família and the Güell Park (architectural and urban landscape accomplishments of Gaudí). The Chinese guidebooks also include the Montserrat Mountain (some 60 km away from the city), Camp Nou soccer stadium, the Barcelona Cathedral, and the Picasso Museum. Finally, the four most frequently mentioned attractions in the blogs are Gaudí landmarks.

### *Fragmentation at the photographic level*

From the analysis of the photographs, the following denotative themes emerge: public space, monumental heritage, tangible art and culture, intangible culture, other tourism experiences, services, and tourism representations (**Table 6**). In this study, the greatest number of DIs among the DMO focus on elements of the immaterial culture—such as artistic events, art shows, and gastronomy. In second place, the public space receives more attention (with a variety of photographs of the streets, squares, and promenades). Overall, the DMO has a balanced distribution in the first six themes (**Table 7**).

Among the analyzed travel agencies, most of the photographs are dedicated to representations of Barcelona's traditional tourist attractions: photographs of the architectural and monumental heritage account for almost 50% of the total. Images of public spaces are also very important (27%). It should be noted that there is an absence of representations of museums, tangible art at the destination, artistic events, and festivities. The analyzed tourist guides focus their attention on the public space (27.25%) and on services (26.58%), such as accommodation, infrastructures and transport. In addition, the monumental heritage and intangible elements of the destination are also used to define Barcelona's DI. However, there is very little mention of the great variety of museums present in the city.

The travel blogs show that Chinese bloggers have an affinity for the monumental and architectural heritage (35% of the photographs), with Gaudí's buildings constituting the greatest amount of photographic expression. The elements of immaterial culture, such as gastronomy and urban markets, also attract a lot of tourist attention. This source stands out for the total absence of photographs of sports and mountainous landscapes like Montserrat, a UNESCO Natural World Heritage Site. Museums, artistic shows, and amusement parks (such as the Aquarium or Tibidabo) receive very little attention. Within the dimension of tourist representations,

**Table 6.** Distribution of photographic themes and categories, by each source

| Themes of pictures              | DMO (%) | Agencies (%) | Guides (%) | Blogs (%) |
|---------------------------------|---------|--------------|------------|-----------|
| Public Space                    | 19.76   | 26.21        | 27.25      | 17.63     |
| Streets                         | 3.77    | 3.62         | 10.51      | 4.22      |
| Squares                         | 3.32    | 0.34         | 3.53       | 1.85      |
| Sea and harbor                  | 4.37    | 3.28         | 5.56       | 5.20      |
| Parks & open spaces             | 3.62    | 2.07         | 2.85       | 1.33      |
| Mountains                       | 1.66    | 1.03         | 0.81       | 0         |
| Park Guell                      | 1.06    | 12.76        | 3.25       | 3.06      |
| Urban landscapes                | 1.96    | 3.10         | 0.75       | 1.97      |
| Monumental Heritage             | 16.14   | 42.76        | 15.19      | 35.38     |
| Buildings (others)              | 9.80    | 16.55        | 7.86       | 19.77     |
| Religious buildings             | 2.56    | 4.66         | 2.44       | 3.70      |
| Sagrada Familia                 | 0.75    | 19.14        | 3.86       | 10.92     |
| Arc de triomf                   | 0.15    | .00          | 0.14       | 0.35      |
| Street sculptures               | 2.87    | 2.41         | 0.88       | 0.64      |
| Art & Tangible Culture          | 12.97   | 1.72         | 2.85       | 3.99      |
| Paintings                       | 1.66    | 0.17         | 0.14       | 0.75      |
| Interior of museum              | 6.79    | 1.03         | 0.54       | 2.77      |
| Exterior of museum              | 4.52    | 0.52         | 2.17       | 0.46      |
| Intangible Culture              | 21.27   | 7.07         | 13.02      | 19.02     |
| Art events                      | 6.64    | 0.00         | 2.10       | 1.10      |
| Festival/festivities            | 1.36    | 0.52         | 4.34       | 1.27      |
| Gastronomy                      | 7.99    | 3.10         | 4.47       | 7.80      |
| Theater                         | 1.21    | 0            | 0.54       | 0         |
| Castellers                      | 0.30    | 0            | 0          | 0.40      |
| Market                          | 1.96    | 2.41         | 1.29       | 6.65      |
| Local people & life             | 1.81    | 1.03         | 0.27       | 1.79      |
| Other experiences               | 15.84   | 9.31         | 10.31      | 8.79      |
| Football Club Barcelona         | 0.75    | 7.24         | 5.29       | 3.47      |
| Theme parks                     | 2.87    | 0.00         | 0.95       | 0.12      |
| Shopping & souvenirs            | 2.26    | 2.07         | 3.19       | 5.20      |
| Sea sports                      | 6.79    | 0            | 0.14       | 0         |
| Other sports                    | 3.17    | 0            | 0.75       | 0         |
| Services                        | 13.12   | 6.72         | 26.58      | 6.82      |
| Restaurant                      | 2.11    | 1.03         | 3.73       | 2.49      |
| Transportation                  | 6.79    | 2.59         | 4.20       | 1.27      |
| Infrastructures                 | 4.07    | 2.07         | 6.37       | 2.14      |
| Accommodation                   | 0.15    | 1.03         | 12.27      | 0.92      |
| Tourist reality representations | 0.90    | 6.21         | 4.81       | 8.38      |
| Maps                            | 0.90    | 1.38         | 4.27       | 1.39      |
| Pictures of tourists            | 0       | 4.83         | 0.54       | 2.54      |
| Selfies                         | 0       | 0            | 0          | 0.23      |
| Screenshots                     | 0       | 0            | 0          | 1.97      |
| Tourist information offices     | 0       | 0            | 0          | 0.29      |
| Tickets                         | 0       | 0            | 0          | 1.97      |
| Total                           | 100     | 100          | 100        | 100       |

the bloggers add new categories of images: selfies and practical aspects of the trip, such as explanatory screenshots and photographs related to the purchase of tickets and locations.

**Table 7.** A comparison of themes in photographic representations of Barcelona

| Themes                 | DMO      | Agencies         | Guides           | Blogs            |
|------------------------|----------|------------------|------------------|------------------|
| Urban space            | ████████ | ████████         | ████████████████ | ████████         |
| Architectural heritage | ████████ | ████████████████ | ████████         | ████████████████ |
| Art, tangible culture  | ████████ | █                | █                | █                |
| Intangible culture     | ████████ | ██               | ████████         | ████████████     |
| Other experiences      | ████████ | ██               | █                | ██████           |
| Services               | ████     | ██               | ████████████     | █                |
| Tourist realities      |          | ██               | ██               | ████             |

### *Interpretive assessment of results*

#### *Segment-oriented patterns of fragmentation*

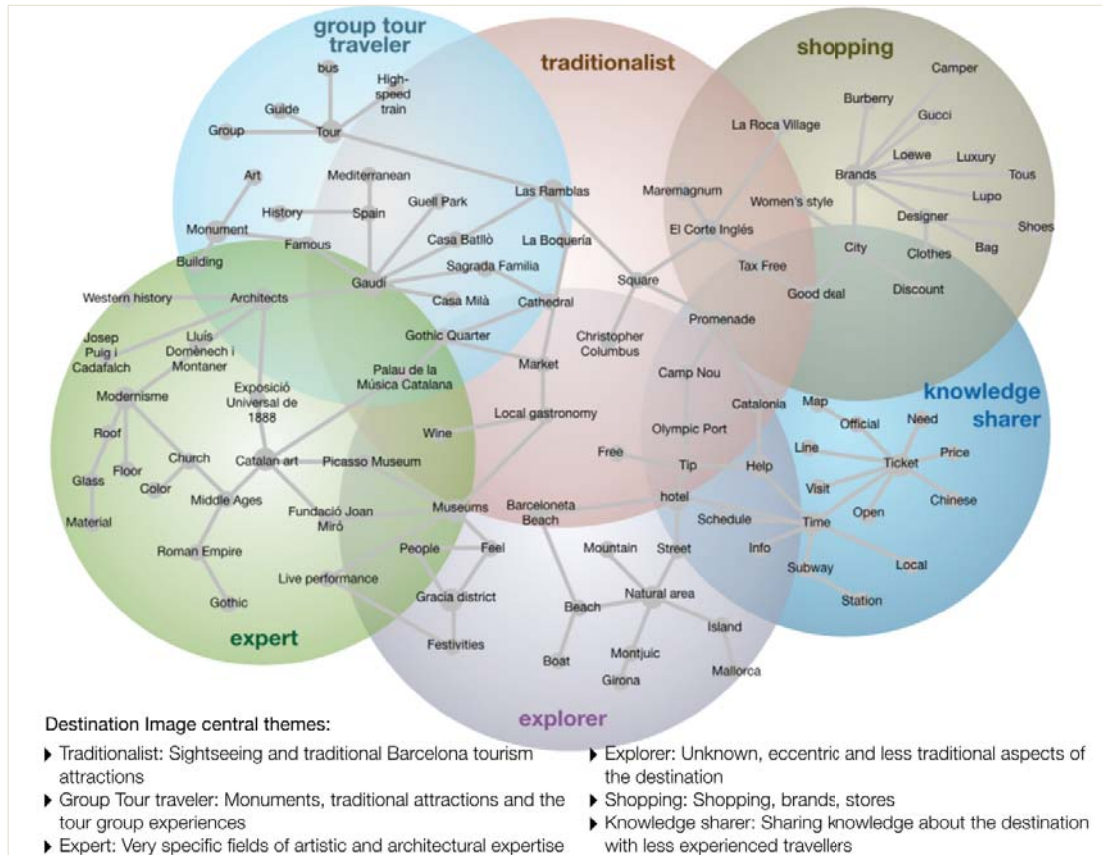
Comparing the denotative representations found in the previous analysis reveals various dimensions that explain the fragmentation in the cognitive DI among different sources. First, we find that different segments of Chinese tourists focus on different aspects of the DI. According to the analysis of the blogs, the level of coherence for the Barcelona image is higher for the traditional tourist attractions, with Gaudí and the architectural heritage being the primary congruent image. The incongruence is higher for the images of services, art, tangible culture, and other experiences. Based on the activities performed and the images shared online (in texts and photographs), we can identify different segments of bloggers/tourists (group tour traveler, traditionalists, shopping, expert, explorer, and knowledge sharer) (**Figure 1**).

#### *Function-oriented patterns and the induced-organic origin of images*

Second, the findings show that the highest level of incongruence occurs between the induced DI projected by the DMO and the organic DI portrayed in the blogs. While some coherence appears in the images of tourist attractions, the tourist activities and experiences are profoundly dissimilar (**Figure 2**). Nowadays, Barcelona DMOs project a complex DI of the city in which the public space constitutes the main attraction, although sports and several activity-based tourism images are included. Tourist ventures for the DMO include visits to museums, artistic spectacles, theme parks (such as the Aquarium and Tibidabo) and also a wide variety of sports activities —with a special focus on sea sports and sailing. However, the sampled blogs depict the tourist experience as a traditional sightseeing trip: the fun and

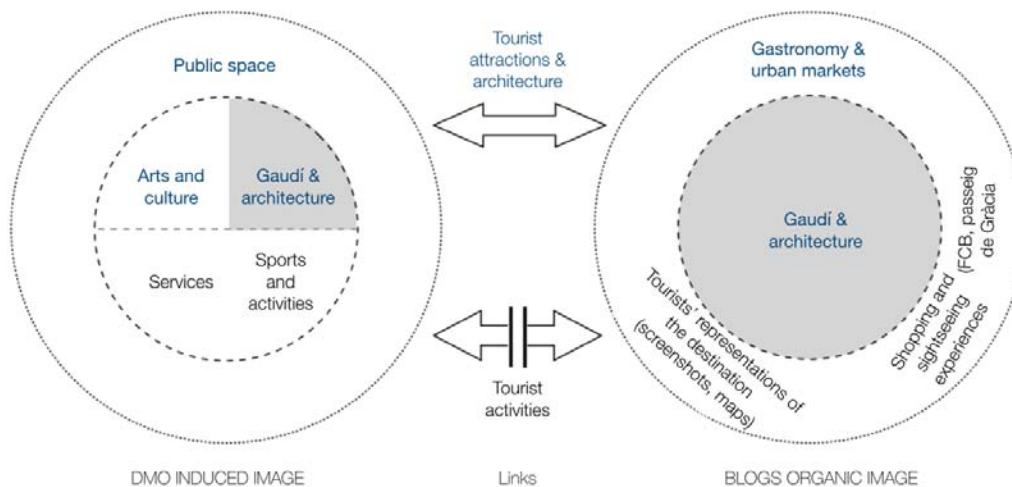
entertaining part of traveling to Barcelona is sightseeing (of architectural sites, monuments, markets and the FCB stadium), shopping activities, and enjoying the local gastronomy.

Figure 1. Segment oriented patterns of DI fragmentation in the sampled blogs



Note: Clusters of tourist segments as portrayed by shared images in blogs. The figure was created with the support of Leximancer Portal Software using the denotative contents identified by the authors as nodes of networks. Names of clusters were defined by the authors.

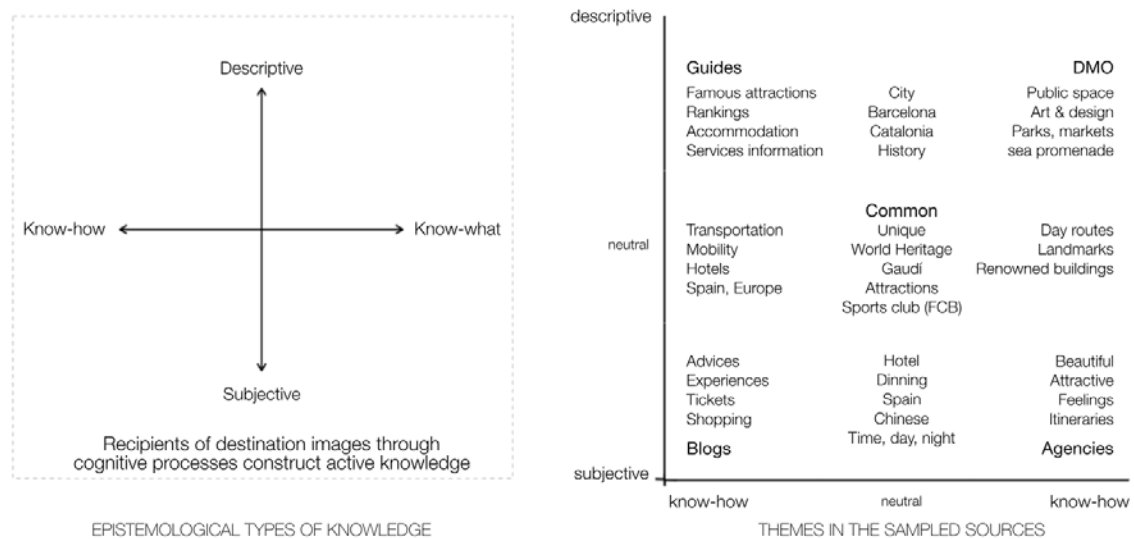
Figure 2. Comparison between the DMO induced DI and the blogs' organic DI



*Images as conveyors of different types of knowledge*

Third, the findings additionally show that the fragmentation is also based on the knowledge conveyed by the DIs. Two dimensions of epistemological knowledge emerge in the analyzed images: descriptive-subjective and know-what/know-how (Figure 3). These information sources can be divided into: on the one hand, the travel guides and the DMO, both of which provide more descriptive images and knowledge; and, on the other, the blogs and travel agencies, both of which include substantially more subjective DIs. Furthermore, the know-what dimension is linked to the imagery of traditional tourist attractions and sightseeing. This dimension is linked to the factual epistemological knowledge transmitted by the DIs; it conveys images of what is at the destination; and it involves a prescriptive description. This dimension is prominent on the DMO website and among the Chinese travel agencies

**Figure 3.** Types of knowledge and denotative DI fragmentation



In contrast, the know-how epistemological dimension is linked to procedural and practical knowledge, meaning that it provides images on the accessibility and availability of basic tourism services. In our analysis, the Chinese travel guides and blogs focus on this realm of knowledge. This category includes important tips and advice on accommodation, buying tickets, schedules, and routes. Usually, this kind of information generates thorough discussion in the blog comments sections, where users appreciate the information or request more advice, as shown in Blog#4: “this post helped me a lot, especially the airport introduction, including how to buy a ticket and how to rent a car. Thank you so much!”. On blogs, this knowledge dimension of the destination is framed not only in the visual imagery of tourists’ shared maps, screenshots and annotated maps, but also by the suggested apps for use on the trip (Figure 4).

Figure 4. Images related to the know-how aspects of the trip



Note: Images used with the permission of the bloggers.

## Discussion and conclusion

### *Fragmentation of the denotative destination image. Conceptual implications*

The results of this study indicate that the images from different information sources generate DI fragmentation, as identified by the levels of incongruence. The results pinpoint four different levels of fragmentation in the denotative DI: (1) segment-specific; (2) function specific; (3) organic-induced; and (4) epistemological types of knowledge. As shown in **Table 1**, the first two levels were previously identified in the existing literature (e.g., Camprubí et al, 2014; Camprubí, 2015). However, the findings add two more variables to the denotative fragmentation.

First, even at the segment-specific scale of this case study, the findings show that different actors and information suppliers affect the DI fragmentation the same way that they do at a broad or mass scale. For example, different blog creators on the same web-based platform (Qyer) and in the same cultural market (Chinese tourism) focus on different aspects of the destination (e.g., shopping, art, sports...) while sharing very different DIs. Differences are also found between different sources of information (e.g., UGC, travel guides, DMO, and travel agencies). Hence, the representations of a social phenomenon depend on understanding the social agents, their networks, and purposes. This observation is consistent with Hunter's examinations (2016), where the construction of Seoul's city image was analyzed using Naver, Google and Baidu search engines.

Second, according to the analysis of the denotative contents, fragmentation appears if different information sources focus on different activities and experiences of the destination. In this study, leisure activities are revealed as the most incongruent elements of the DI among different sources. Conversely, a higher level of coherence exists for traditional tourism attractions. The results indicate that the DMO tends to project a wider range of tourism activities, which may be out of consonance with the interests of the Chinese expectations. This suggests that differ-

ences in cultural expectations and behaviors lead to differences in the functional activities and tourism experiences at the destination (Hunter, 2016; Stepchenkova, Kim, & Kirilenko, 2015), which also affect the fragmentation of the available DI.

Third, the previous functional patterns of fragmentation can also be explained by the differences in the induced DI that is projected (cf. Lin et al., 2012; Stepchenkova & Morrison, 2006) and in the perceived organic DIs that are shared on blogs and in autonomous information sources (cf. Gartner, 1994). The findings show that the existing two-dimensional concept of induced and organic image affects the fragmentation. As it forms part of a sequential continuum of the tourist experience, the blogs' organic DI has meaningful elements that are incongruent with the induced image of the DMO and travel agencies.

Fourth, the two epistemological variables are the axes descriptive-personal knowledge and factual-procedural knowledge, which are related to the tourist's need for information. These also explain the fragmentation in the DI. This fragmentation variable appears because we perceive the images as symbols that provide knowledge about the destination (Paivio, 1977). Through imagery-based cognitive processes, the DIs are used by the consumers of information to stimulate and construct active knowledge about the destination (cf. Adaval, Saluja, Jiang, 2019).

On the one hand, certain sources of information emit DIs that provide knowledge tending towards objectivity (e.g., accurate, stored information that describes the destination without aspects influenced by personal feelings or beliefs) or towards subjectivity (e.g., information about the destination based on the feelings, emotions and beliefs of the emitters) (Carlson et al, 2008). On the other hand, the second epistemological dimension refers to the know-how (procedural, or practical) and know-what (factual, or prescriptive) knowledge (e.g., Fantl, 2008). This study highlights how both axes affect the fragmentation and it also reveals the information needs of the consumers.

### *Practical implications of this case study*

The findings show that various representations of Barcelona exist, all of which complement, contradict and add to each other. Since the 1990s, the Barcelona traditional tourism image, as marketed by the local DMO, has been firmly linked to Gaudi, architecture and culture. **Table 4** shows that more elements have been added in recent times, and the top 5 most mentioned attractions in Barcelona's DMO website are related to the city's public space: Las Ramblas (street), The Old Town (city area), the Gothic Quarter (neighborhood), Passeig de Gracia (avenue),

and Barceloneta Beach (open and natural space). In addition, the induced DI at this source is being constructed by art, tangible and intangible culture, festivities, festivals, sports, tourist activities, and services.

After analyzing the Barcelona image in Chinese information sources, we find that the sampled blogs and travel agencies construct the DI upon the most traditional city representations, namely, Gaudí and the city's architectural heritage. **Table 6** show that both sources are mostly lacking in imagery related to arts, museums and other tangible elements of local culture, sports, and events. The absence of these elements suggests that Barcelona's DI in the Chinese market is not in line with the local DMO's objectives of expanding the DI. In addition, **Table 4** reveals that the Chinese travel agencies and blogs mediate the image of Barcelona through its country representations—Spain is for them, respectively, the top 4 and top 6 most frequent word. This might be explained because the East Asian tourist in Spain usually prefers to travel through different cities in the same country (Lojo, 2016).

According to this analysis, the following marketing suggestions can be put forward for the tourism marketing of the Chinese segment traveling to Barcelona and, by extension, Spain. The DMO should facilitate the travel information that Chinese tourists demand. This study revealed that a widespread number of bloggers and online communities demand practical information about the city. Surprisingly, the word “ticket” is the most frequently used in the sampled blogs, and an extensive number of threads and images are related to ticketing, understanding the city maps, their distribution, schedules, and route options.

This study identified important incongruence in the attractions that are of interest to the Chinese tourist and the new DMO international DI. If the DMO wants to expand the image of the city and increase the number of potential tourism activities, efforts should be taken to market activities, sports, festivities, festivals, and other tourist attractions that are not linked to Gaudi and heritage. Consequently, in order to make the destination more attractive and provide a more complete experience, efforts should be directed toward increasing experiential tourism consumption and interactive experiences for the Chinese market.

In addition, more research into DI fragmentation is needed in order to determine the appropriate information supply and DI strategy for each market. We highly advise pursuing a segmentation strategy that meets consumer demands and provides systematic and comprehensive information in different languages. Accordingly, more tourists will use the DMO information sources and will thus be positively affected by its induced DI and marketing strategies.



### *Concluding remarks*

The literature on tourism images is vast. This study has analyzed a new phenomenon. First, we examine here the differences and fragmentation in the DI, specifically at a denotative textual and photographic level. Second, we study the images of Barcelona among the local and Chinese sources. This work relied on three aspects: identifying the textual representations of the destination from a comparative perspective; recognizing the available photographic representations of Barcelona; and understanding the links and differences between sources of information and the available pieces that build the multimodal online DI.

A mixed quantitative and qualitative approach was employed to assess the study objectives. After identifying the current variables that explain the DI fragmentation in the tourism literature, this study adds to the existing knowledge about the denotative variable of the DI fragmentation. The findings suggest that the denotative fragmentation among different online information sources is affected by elements that are: (1) segment-specific; (2) function specific; (3) organic-induced; and (4) epistemological types of knowledge.

A few key elements emerge from this particular case study. The findings show that the current multimodal DI in the Chinese market segment is generated by: (1) the DMO, which shows a particular induced image built on descriptive-factual elements and a well-balanced array of tourism activities; (2) the tour operators, who act as overly induced sources of DI and tend to be positioned at the extreme end of the know-what epistemic spectrum as they show traditional Barcelona DI themes; (3) the travel guidebooks, which disseminate a blend of procedural and descriptive epistemic DI while focusing on the city's urban spaces and services; and, finally, (4) the travel blogs and forums, who act as organic agents in depicting the activities performed at the destination and the tourist information needs (know-how realm), all of which are centered around specific thematic interests.

This analysis is intended to be one step in understanding differences in tourism destination representations and DI fragmentation. However, its limitations should be acknowledged. Here, we developed a specific case study that is efficient for understanding a particular phenomenon in selected cultural environments (Barcelona and Chinese information sources). Researchers should be very cautious when extrapolating research results to other populations. Accordingly, it may be necessary to replicate the experiment with other populations in order to obtain predictable outcomes. In addition, it is recommended that further research analyzes DI fragmentation sampling different information sources (like social media), in different cultural environments, and with different analytical approaches.

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甲午九月朔畫

項香讀



## Part III

# General discussion and conclusion

Water fades back from blue to jade,  
guiding young rainbows high.  
Flowers bloom into red and whites,  
quenching our hearts when they run dry

I may know the answers.  
Journeys over snow and sand.  
What twist in fate has brought us  
to tread upon this land?

Daisuke Watanabe & Izumi Masuda. 2012



## Part III

# General discussion and conclusions



### Dissertation overview

The emergence of global tourism and the evolution of new tourism markets are areas of growing interest within the academic world (e.g., Lau, & Demir, 2019). Recent studies confirm that there is not a single theory or methodology that can be applied to understanding tourism phenomena in their entirety (Cohen & Cohen, 2019). This thesis aims to provide research approaches towards understanding new tourism markets and developing the tourist destination (**Figure 1**).

In regard to developing the tourism destination, Williams and Lew (2015) differentiate several sectors for study: the physical space (land), (2) economic, (3) socio-cultural, (4) environmental, and (5) business and marketing. According to the existing literature, the study of new consumer markets tends to be contained within the fifth sector (e.g., Burgess & Steenkamp, 2006; Mariani, Buhalis, Longhi, & Vitouladiti, 2014; Prideaux, Cave, Thompson, & Sibtain, 2012). This thesis is also related to the fifth sector, and five research approaches have been created.

The studies collected in this dissertation take an etic perspective (see Bergman & Lindgren, 2018). That is to say, the studies analyze objectifiable and measurable facts without trying to discover the meanings that the facts have for Chinese tourists in particular. From this logic, the methods and theoretical bases used in the compendium make a contribution that is also applicable to other emerging tourism markets.

The case study of Chinese tourism in Spain is used as a research strategy. With this case, the thesis contributes to the main objective of improving the understanding of Chinese tourism in Spain. To this purpose, the collection of articles is aimed at

solving practical problems related to this tourism source market in Spain. This approach coincides with recent studies. Han (2018) and Moutinho & Vargas-Sanchez (2018) suggest that using an applied and practical perspective is the most common strategy when studying new tourism markets.

**Figure 1.** Development of the tourist destination & general contribution of the thesis



After summarizing the general purpose and contribution of the thesis, I include in this part five sections: a summary of the results; discussion of the theoretical and conceptual implications of this thesis; discussion of the practical implications for developing the tourist destination; limitations and future areas of research; and the concluding remarks.

## Summary of results

This thesis is built upon five specific research objectives. **Article 1** responds to the objective of obtaining a clear idea of which authors have studied Chinese outbound tourism and what has been studied (at the international scale). First, the results reveal that the main collaboration networks emerge around four clusters formed by authors Brian King, Samuel S. Kim, Hayan Song and Mimi Li. The main universities involved are The Hong Kong Polytechnic University, University of South Australia and Sun Yat-Sen University. Secondly, regarding the topics studied, the study reveals and explains six study areas: tourist behavior; policies and impacts of Chinese tourism; development of the local tourism industry; studies on consumer segments; services; and Chinese cultural values and tourism.

The purpose of **Article 2** is to understand the tourism product and the use of the territory with respect to the case of Chinese tourism in Spain. The article analyzes the main Chinese travel agencies, and the results show patterns and similarities among their itineraries in several cities of the country. The main cities visited are Barcelona, Madrid, Seville, Granada, Toledo, Mijas, Ronda and Córdoba. The study also indicates that Chinese tour operators formulate the product through cultural



and experiential dimensions of the trip. The cultural dimension comprises mainly history, culture (especially Andalusian) and architecture. The experiential dimension is composed of the convenience of an organized trip, the presence of a tour guide, the different services offered and, finally, shopping.

**Article 3** is developed in response to the objective of understanding the profile of Chinese tourists in Spain, their experience, tourist behavior and the main segments of Chinese tourists. Firstly, the results define the demographic profile of tourists. Secondly, the findings show the differences between Group Tour Travelers (GTT), Free Independent Travelers (FIT), first time visitors, and repeat visitors. The results illustrate that, overall, the Chinese tourist is more motivated by novelty and relaxation on their trip to Spain. The second motivating factor is the heritage and culture of the destination. It is interesting to highlight that tourists who visit Spain for the third time (or more) are motivated more by climate, nature and shopping than by culture and heritage.

**Article 4** addresses the objective of knowing the differences between local and Chinese information sources in the case of Barcelona, based on studying the textual contents of websites. This research analyzes four types of information providers: the local destination marketing organization (DMO) known as “Barcelona Turisme”; Chinese travel guides; Chinese travel agencies; and Chinese travel blogs. The results demonstrate that it is easier for an online search engine to relate the keywords “Barcelona”, “Gaudí”, “Spain” and “Tour” with the websites of travel agencies (due to the keyword density). Blogs are the most diverse and rich sources of information, followed by travel guides and the DMO. In contrast, travel agencies tend to be more repetitive. In addition, the results reveal that each source of information offers different types of content.

**Article 5** responds to the objective of understanding the tourist representations and the image of the destination Barcelona in the Chinese market. The article proposes a conceptual framework to explain the diverse representations of a tourist destination, and it identifies variables that explain the fragmentation of the tourist image. The results show that several representations of Barcelona exist that complement and contradict each other. For Barcelona Turisme (local DMO), the rich and diverse image of Barcelona is built on: the concept of public space (streets, neighborhoods, avenues and parks); elements of local art; tangible and intangible culture; festivities; and sports. In contrast, Chinese sources have a much more traditional and limited image that is based on Gaudí’s architecture and monumental heritage.

## Theoretical implications

The research design of this thesis is empirical and applied. Following an empirical approach, the studies gather and observe measurable data. As applied research, the focus is on solving practical problems related to understanding Chinese tourism at the destination. Since theoretical development is not the main aim of the dissertation, the employed conceptual bases are occasionally left implicit (see Dulany, 2012). Specifically, **Article 2** and **3** use implicit concepts and underlying constructs behind the articles research design, and these are discussed in the next paragraphs. Furthermore, all the theoretical bases are discussed in this section. In addition, each article explicitly mentions the theoretical implications of the results.

In all the articles, a scientific method with inductive reasoning is used (see Argghode, 2012). Thus, without previous hypotheses, the empirical results induce conceptual explanations (by interpolation). The conceptual implications stated in the articles explain why the results are obtained. Through this process, the studies suggest new variables, factors and processes that affect the theoretical understanding of the facts. The following four sections summarize the theoretical contribution of the thesis.

### *Social production of tourism research*

Regarding the analysis of Chinese outbound tourism research, we use (explicitly) the conceptual framework of the theory of Networks of Social Agents (NSA) (see Benckendorff & Zehrer, 2013). The results support the idea that scientific production is socially negotiated and produced through social networks of scholars (Belhassen & Caton, 2009). Adding to previous studies, the results (**Article 1**) show increased density in collaboration networks (as shown in the co-author network). A more collaborative research environment than in previous tourism studies (see Racherla & Hu, 2010) could be explained by the sample used or the study period. Thus, the network of research collaboration is affected by a smaller sample of articles (this paper considered 121 articles), the topic addressed (Chinese outbound tourism), and the selected dates (2005–2015).

The results add depth to NSA theory and scientific production in the social sciences. The findings suggest that the density of collaboration in a field of study varies due to different factors. Research into the novel and unknown phenomena of new markets produces greater density of collaboration. It is possible that new links between researchers are needed in order to ease the study of new tourism actors. In addition, the results show that recent trends in scientific production tend toward multidisciplinary. The authors within our networks collaborate between several academic disciplines (such as management, geography, economy, etc.). Greater collaboration also produces denser collaboration networks.

### *The tourist product in group tour packages*

Study of the tourism product is built upon implicit conceptual bases (**Article 2**). As an underlying construct, the tourism product is defined as all the elements of the destination that are valued and promoted (Xu, 2010). In tourism, the product is a complete experience that must satisfy the needs of the consumer. Xu (2010) considers that the physical plant of the destination is at the center of the tourist product model. The physical plant refers to the physical site and physical quality of the infrastructures (with land, shape, aesthetical, natural and historical qualities).

Benur and Bramwell (2015) differentiate between the primary product (attributes and attractions of the destination) and the secondary product (services, accommodation, transportation, and other amenities). The results of **Article 2** complement the previous conceptual models through the study case of the organized tour packages to Spain offered by Chinese travel agencies. Representing a departure from previous research, the findings identify two main dimensions in defining the tourism product: (1) the cultural and territorial dimension of the destination; and (2) the experiential dimension of the trip. In addition, the findings show that group tour travelers (GTT) find the experiential dimension of the trip, the services and the tour guide to be as important as the attributes of the destination. Thus, in this case study, the results do not validate the previously identified center-periphery model of the tourism product.

### *Tourist behavior, travel mode and experiential familiarity*

One of the main contributions of this thesis lies in expanding our understanding of experiential familiarity (previous tourist experience), the mode of travel, and both of their effects on tourism behavior. The experiential familiarity variables in the study are first time visitor (FTV) and repeat visitor (RV); while the modes of travel considered are free independent traveler (FIT) and group tour traveler (GTT) Previous studies show that RVs tend to give higher motivation and satisfaction scores (Li, Cheng, Kim, & Petrick, 2008). However, the findings (**Article 3**) show that segmentation by mode of travel produces a similar result: the FIT is more motivated and more satisfied with the trip than the GTT, same as with RV and FTV.

The results also show that the FIT and GTT have different travel experiences and demographic profiles. In addition, FITs are similar to RVs in that they give higher value to social motivations. The results show that, compared to FIT, the GTT are less motivated by “acquisition of new knowledge and new experiences” and “socialization” factors. One possible explanation for these results is that the GTT remains within the “bubble” of the organized group that protects it from cultural differences and unexpected inconveniences.

### *Sources of information: effectiveness and destination image fragmentation*

The analysis of information sources is implicitly based on the concepts of communication and effectiveness. Communication refers to the exchange of messages and the creation of meanings (Gudykunst, 2004). Effectiveness refers to the transmission of meaning that achieves the most positive result (DiStefano, Imon, Lee, & DiStefano, 2004). Normally, research in tourism information sources has focused on a single source, such as blogs, twitter, travel magazines, etc. (e.g., Fatanti & Suyadnya, 2015; Sevin, 2013). To contribute to the existing literature, we performed a comparative and linguistic analysis. Through a comparison of different sources of information, the syntactic and semantic factors have been identified.

The results suggest that authorship affects the construction of messages. The analysis of the Barcelona Turisme website (local DMO) indicates an excess of modal and function words (with low density of meaning). The results show that the effectiveness of the message can be compromised due to using the message as a representation. Because social agents use the message as a representation, the DMO official webpage needs to use a specific vocabulary and official rhetoric. As a result, the expressions affect the easiness of comprehending messages. Second, the DMO website has the highest entropy rates. This result suggests that the way in which a web platform is built (that is, comprising many different blogs or structured web travel guides) affects entropy (which also influences the effectiveness of the message).

The study of the sources of information also delves into the concept of fragmentation of the tourist image. Due to its heterogeneous and multifocal origin, there is complex diversity in the tourism destination image (TDI) (Camprubí & Coromina, 2017). The results of this study highlight the major variables articulating the image of Barcelona and affecting its fragmentation, which can be classified as: segment-specific; function-specific; organic-induced; and epistemological types of knowledge. First, even at the segment-specific scale of this case study, the findings show that different actors and information suppliers affect the DI fragmentation the same way that they do at a broad or mass scale. Second, according to the analysis of the denotative contents, fragmentation appears if different information sources focus on different activities and experiences of the destination. This suggests that differences in cultural expectations and behaviors lead to differences in the functional activities and tourism experiences at the destination. Third, the functional patterns of fragmentation can also be explained by the differences in the induced DI that is projected. As it forms part of a sequential continuum of the tourist experi-

ence, the blogs' organic DI has meaningful elements that are incongruent with the induced image of the DMO and travel agencies. Fourth, the results imply that the TDI can be understood as a conveyor of knowledge. The conveyed TDI acts as a vehicle for knowledge transfer about the destination. From this point of view, the epistemological variables of descriptive knowledge (know-what) or applied knowledge (know-how) reveal another dimension of TDI fragmentation.

## **Managerial and practical implications**

The knowledge obtained about the tourism product, tourist behavior and the use of information sources is useful for understanding the Chinese consumer. The developed observations provide guidance for managing the tourist destination. In accordance with rational choice theory (RCT), the results allow making rational decisions based on the acquired and interpreted data. Thus, the articles of the thesis also offer practical contributions for managing Chinese tourism in Spain. This section summarizes the practical implications of the research for Chinese travel agencies, as well as for the local administration and businesses.

### *For travel agencies*

The results show that Chinese tour operators offer very little variety in their tour products. The analyzed companies offer very similar itineraries, all visiting the same cities, with Barcelona and Madrid being the destinations where the most time is scheduled (**Article 2**). Also, the planned activities offered at the destination are very similar in their products (guided tour, sightseeing, monumental architecture, gastronomy and shopping) (**Article 4**). The results suggest that tour operators would benefit from expanding their tour packages with a greater variety of travel products and offers.

Firstly, many Chinese travelers do not want to spend their whole trip in an organized group and following a Chinese group guide. In line with the evolution of consumer trends (**Article 3**), Chinese tour products through Spain could benefit by offering a mixed-mode of travel. Mixed travel products combine the guided tour with elements of the free independent traveler and the group traveler. These products would grant greater freedom at the destination and greater travel personalization. Mixed (or semi-independent) products offer the possibility of more free time, greater independence, agreements with certain services, and maybe the presence of a tour guide on only specific occasions. This modality is already used in other regions (WTCF, 2018). It would be positive to offer this mode of travel to attract younger and more experienced Chinese travelers to Spain.

Secondly greater diversity can also be achieved by increasing the range of tourism activities at the destination. The tour operators could offer different travel products to differentiated segments (logic of post-Fordist consumption) and design new products based on different activities (nature tourism, sports, luxury consumer travel, gastronomic tourism, shopping, medical, etc.). As an example, food and wine arouse much interest in specific segments of Chinese tourists (Zhu, 2017). Although Spain has a rich culture of food, wine and viticulture, there are no products in Spain specifically targeted at the Chinese tourists interested in this segment.

Third, collaboration between Chinese tour operators and the local tourism industry will also be useful for diversifying the itineraries and services offered in Spain. In a bidirectional way, it is also recommended that the local industry establishes coordination plans with the main Chinese tour operators. This collaboration will be useful for designing itineraries that include secondary destinations or that are outside current routes (**Article 2**). It would also be useful to design alternative activities at the destination. These alternative experiences could reveal a cultural profile that is complementary to the more traditional image of Spain and its cities (**Article 5**). The tourist would benefit from knowing that Spain is much more than “flamenco”, “tapas” and “paellas”. As an example, Spanish Carnivals (de Cádiz, de Santa Cruz de Tenerife, de Águilas), las Fallas, or Galician Culture, just to name a few, are not considered by travel agencies. These and other Spanish local and cultural resources could add an extraordinary level of diversity to the products of travel agencies.

### *For the local administration and tourism industry*

According to the knowledge spread by the media (Tobar, 2019; Ying, 2016) and the Ministry of Industry, Commerce and Tourism of Spain (Turespaña, 2019), the Chinese tourist is still considered to be a shopping tourist. This thesis analyzed and compared four travel segments: group tour travelers (GTT), free independent travelers (FIT), first time visitors (FTV), and repeat visitors (RV). However, the results (**Article 3**) reveal that shopping is not the first motivational element for any of the analyzed Chinese tourist segments. Therefore, it is important to understand that, in general, Chinese tourists do not view Spain as a shopping destination (**Articles 2, 3 and 5**).

In this study, the GTT, FIT, FTV and RV are characterized according to their demographic profiles and on the basis of 28 motivational and satisfaction items (Likert-scale rating). In this way, specific marketing strategies can be developed by means of segmenting Chinese tourists and identifying their socio-demographic profiles, motivations, and satisfaction with the destination.

RVs are more familiar with the destination (on their second or third trip) and have a different appreciation of the attractive attributes of the destination (**Article 3**). The results show that this segment of consumers prefers artistic, patrimonial and natural resources (including the beach) along with elements of the Spanish culture and lifestyle, such as sports, festivities and gastronomy. In addition, this tourist is more interested in shopping than the tourist traveling to the destination for the first time. Thus, even though shopping is not their main motivational item, RVs value shopping activities more than FTVs do. A possible explanation for this difference may lie in the fact that Chinese FTVs do not view Spain as a shopping destination. While France, the United Kingdom and the United States of America are easily associated in the Chinese imagery with shopping for Western goods, only RVs know that Spain is also a valuable shopping destination. Thus, the shopping motivation factor is higher for RVs than for FTVs, even though it is not their first motivation item in any of the analyzed segments.

The results show that the GTT is less satisfied with the trip. The organized trips are not perceived as relaxed (**Article 3**) or novel (**Article 2**), so the tourist reports less intention to return to the destination or to spread positive comments about the destination. Because a large number of Chinese tourists still prefer to travel through an organized group (especially if they do not know foreign languages or have less travel experience), it would be favorable for local tourism administrations to collaborate with tour operators to design more authentic, varied, and relaxed tour products. With new tours in collaboration with the local industry, the image of Spain in China would improve, and the tourists would be more satisfied with the destination.

In a complementary way, the young and more experienced Chinese tourist wants to travel independently and freely manage their own tourism experience. However, European destinations are culturally and geographically very distant and dissimilar from China. Therefore, the tourist needs information beforehand to plan the trip. The results show that independent travelers and frequent visitors are dissatisfied with the information and services offered in the Chinese language (**Article 3**). For example, the official tourism website of the city of Barcelona does not offer information in Chinese, Japanese or Russian (**Article 4**). The absence of information in the Chinese language hinders any increase in visitor numbers. If Spain and other European destinations want to be more competitive and attract young Chinese tourists, more efforts are needed to facilitate independent travel and to tackle the information needs of this type of tourist.

In this regard, the thesis shows the absences and deficiencies in the sources that provide most of the information. Analysis of the blogs identifies the questions and

interests of tourists, as well as the information they need. In addition to offering information in the Chinese language, it would first of all be advisable to offer organic and dynamic information. Also beneficial would be the development of platforms coordinated by local agents that allow Chinese language spaces for questions, answers, and greater interaction.

Second, more applied information is needed. A significant proportion of Chinese travelers do not yet have travel experience in Europe. Most of these travelers have never traveled to Spain. Thus, information providers must take into account that any tourist planning a trip needs to know: (1) what is at the destination and (2) how to visit the destination as well as its attractions. The second type of information—procedural knowledge—is mostly lacking on the official platforms. The local administration focuses its efforts on displaying “what is” at the destination. Tourists with limited knowledge of English, or who have never been to Spain, more greatly value information related to practical issues (means of transport, tickets, accommodation, basic services, and other practical advice) before deciding on the destination and planning the trip.

## **Limitations and future research areas**

This study is not exempt from limitations. Specific detailed limitations are included in each article. In this section, observations on the general limitations of the research project arise as a result of conceptual, methodological and research design choices. In addition, future research areas are proposed (see **Table 1**).

### *Conceptual choices*

Within the study of the development of the destination, this dissertation is contextualized in the business and marketing area of study (**Figure 1**). However, more topics remain to be studied in regard to this sector. Future research may consider the study of promotional and advertising strategies in China and in the West; the use of itineraries, cities and territories to generate promotional strategies; the analysis of the networks of social agents that build the Chinese tourist industry (such as travel agencies, intermediaries, tourist guides, and local companies); the study of business plans; and the existing points of contact between the Chinese travel market, the Chinese diaspora and Chinese businesses located in Spain; among other topics.

Future works on Chinese tourism (or other emerging markets) in Spain could additionally contemplate other sectors of study. From the physical and land perspective, it may be interesting to study: the suitability of transportation methods; adap-



tation of tourism facilities; and how conveniently services are located within the tourism industry framework. From the perspectives of economic development and econometric analysis, it would be especially interesting to know: how new tourism markets affect the creation of local job positions; are there new needs for human resources; how wealth is distributed; and forecasts for economic impacts.

The sociocultural sector can expand the study to include issues of perception. How is the group tour travel perceived by the tourists? And what is the opinion of the independent traveler? How do the tourists perceive the local culture and the authenticity of the tourist resources? It is also pertinent to know how this tourism affects the residents' social structure and local life. In addition, it could be of interest to know if there is integration or segregation of new tourists in the existing tourism social structure. In addition to the previous considerations, research by the environmental sector is also important for the positive development of the tourist destination. It may therefore be necessary to recognize the impacts from incorporating these new tourists into the natural environment and how they affect the consumption of resources and waste management.

Finally, across all sectors, it is necessary to study the general impacts of tourism on the residents' society. Different theoretical perspectives (which go beyond the concept of destination development) can be used to study relationships between tourists and residents. In particular, it is interesting to study relationships between new tourism markets and the problems arising from tourism (such as over-tourism or *tourismphobia*). The long-term development of the destination must be studied from a transversal perspective. Organizational management, business ethics, local participation, and community-based tourism are elements that could be studied to achieve sustainable development at the tourist destination.

### *Methodological choices*

The techniques for obtaining the data used in this thesis include survey-questionnaires and extracting the contents of websites. Although both techniques focus on obtaining objective data, this may limit the investigation. Using other techniques of data collection and other types of data can be positive for future studies. For example, in-depth interviews with open questions would allow obtaining more detailed observations, complete stories, and subjective perceptions of the tourist. This would allow understanding Chinese tourism (or other new markets) by using its own terms and contextual references.

**Table 1.** Future research possibilities

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Questions to lead future research

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New conceptual areas

*Business and marketing issues*

1. What are the characteristics of effective promotional and advertising strategies regarding the Chinese tourism in Spain? Are there differences between China and the West concerning promotion?
2. What networks of social agents (e.g., travel agencies, guides, transportation, services, local administration, etc.) exist concerning the Chinese tourism in Spain? What networks should be developed?
3. How successful business plans are developed in order to introduce local companies into the Chinese tourism market?
4. What relationships exist (or could be developed) between the Chinese tourism, the Chinese diaspora, and Chinese businesses in Spain?

*Physical space (land) issues*

5. What is the use of the territory and the transportation in the case of Chinese travelers' itineraries through Spain?
6. Are the transport, and tourism facilities adapted and convenient to the Chinese tours?

*Economic issues*

7. How new tourism markets affect the creation of job opportunities in the destination?
8. How the evolution of the economics in the source market (China) affect the Chinese tourism in Spain/Europe?
9. How the tourism income is distributed in the case of the Chinese tourism in Spain? Are there differences with the general local tourism industry distribution of wealth?
10. What economic impact is forecasted for the Chinese tourism in Spain?

*Sociocultural issues*

11. How is the group tour travel perceived by the tourists? And the independent travel? Why the tourist prefers to travel within a group even though it produces lesser satisfaction?
12. How the tourists value the local culture, local attractions, and the authenticity of tourist resources?
13. What are the effect of Chinese tourism on the residents' social structure and the local life?
14. Is there integration or segregation of new travel markets in the existing tourism structure? What are the main behavioral differences between different tourism source markets?

*Environmental issues*

15. What are the environmental impacts of new travel markets? Are new tourism markets adding to the previous tourism footprint?
16. Is there a significant impact into the consumption of resources, and waste management

*General sustainability*

17. What are the general impacts of Chinese tourism on the residents' society? How these impacts differ from other source markets?
18. How are the relationships between tourists and residents?
19. Can new tourism markets (or the Chinese tourism) affect positively towards a sustainable development of the tourist destination?
20. Can organizational management, business ethics, local participation, or community-based tourism, be employed in the study of the Chinese tourism in Spain?

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### New Methodologies

21. Would in-depth interviews with open questions allow to obtain different and more detailed results?
22. Can qualitative analysis techniques, such as grounded theory, assist to develop new theories and concepts regarding the Chinese tourism in Spain?

### New research designs and new contexts of study

23. What are the characteristics of Chinese tourism tours through Europe? How are constructed the networks of itineraries in this new type of Grand Tour?
  24. What can we learn about the multi-destination tourism trips and theories from the case of the Chinese tourism in Europe?
  25. From a theoretical research perspective. Are Western theories and constructs valid to study and understand the Chinese (or other emerging markets) tourism?
  26. From a theoretical perspective. The study into the Chinese market (or other emerging markets) has been able to develop new tourism theories or constructs?
  27. How the travel is experienced and perceived by the own Chinese travelers? (*emic* perspective)
  28. How the unique socio-cultural characteristics of China (or other new markets) affect the perception of the tourist event?
  29. Are the tourism learning impacts internalized and perceived in a different way for Chinese travelers (or other emerging markets tourists) than for Western tourist?
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The analysis techniques used in this dissertation are mostly quantitative (with exceptions in Articles 1, 2, and 5, in which quantitative analysis is combined with modest qualitative approximations). Using qualitative analysis techniques, such as grounded theory, could be useful for extracting interpretations and new theories about the meaning of tourism in emerging tourism markets. Qualitative techniques would also be useful for the study of cultural values: motivations, from the point of view of the tourist; and details about their travel planning and decision making.

The case study is the main research strategy used. In this thesis, various procedures for increasing the quality and reliability of the results have been used. Translators, researchers, and professors from different backgrounds have collaborated on this study. Their help and assistance have been very valuable in designing data extraction techniques and in establishing contact with Chinese tourists. In addition, pilot tests have been developed. Texts, questionnaires and ideas have been adapted to fit the Chinese culture. However, despite the consistency of the procedures, the case study has limitations due to its circumstantial nature. Therefore, we must be cautious when extrapolating the results to other populations. The theoretical and practical discussions have an exploratory value and should be understood in their context. It may be useful to replicate the research approaches with other samples and other contexts.

### *Research design choices*

Finally, I would like to mention three limitations of the research design that restrict the contributions made here. First, I study the context of Spain for this thesis. However, understanding the tourism product can be researched at different scales, from the city scale to the wider region scale. Chinese tourism in Europe is especially suitable for studying multi-destination tourism (or visiting several countries on one trip). The results show that this type of tourist prefers to travel to several countries. In the case of Spain, the trip usually includes Portugal and sometimes the South of France. It would be especially interesting to study Chinese tourism throughout Europe. Regarding this new type of Grand Tour, with its particular networks of itineraries and main destinations, future studies are warranted.

Secondly, this thesis has developed an empirical research work of a practical nature. Therefore, the theoretical contributions are explorative. Future studies could have a completely theoretical research perspective (documentary or conceptual). As an example, most of the conceptual and theoretical constructs used in tourism research have emerged from Western contexts, values and premises. It would be interesting to study and reflect on the validity of these theories when applying them to emerging market contexts. Additionally, it would be advisable to theoretically analyze if studying new tourist markets can be useful in developing existing theories (or creating new theories) in the social sciences. A review of the literature from a conceptual perspective and focused on this last question could be very interesting.

Thirdly, I take an emic and not an etic perspective in this thesis. An etic approach considers the outside perspective, that of the social science researcher. That is to say, the facts are understood from the perspective of the observer (a Western, Spanish researcher) through objective measures. This choice limits the results and the design of the investigation. In future works this may be appropriate for understanding how the trip is experienced and perceived by the travelers. Therefore, an emic perspective could be used. An emic viewpoint refers to understanding the tourism phenomena from within one's own social group. To understand the subject's view of reality is one of the concepts guiding qualitative research (see Bergman & Lindgren, 2018). From the emic perspective, we can also ask how the characteristics of China (or other new markets) affect the perception of the tourist event. Are the tourism experience and its impacts internalized and perceived in a different way than by Western tourists? To address these issues, it would surely be appropriate to use other non-positivistic paradigms to explore the new travel markets from a critical, interpretative, or symbolic interactionism perspective.

## Concluding remarks

This thesis has obtained two types of results that I consider significant. Firstly, the collection of articles is a productive contribution to the research area and, as a whole, the thesis offers a number of academic and practical implications. Secondly, this study brings to light a positive learning experience and a rich formative stage.

### *Academic implications*

Regarding the academic implications, the new markets represent a challenge and an opportunity for the development of consolidated tourist destinations. For practical purposes, this thesis carries out a study on Chinese tourism in Spain. In addition, the obtained results allow formulating theoretical and practical inferences. Firstly, it is my hope that we have contributed both in quality and quantity regarding the data we extracted and analyzed. Secondly, I also hope that our adopted multidisciplinary perspective and the derived scientific production shall serve as a small and useful contribution to extending knowledge on Chinese tourism. Thirdly, the thesis provides evidence on the feasibility of studying new tourism markets: several research approaches are developed and could be used to study other tourism markets. A closing summary of academic research implications can be found in **Table 2**.

### *Learning experience implications. Personal conclusions*

In parallel, this study has provided me an opportunity to extend my knowledge about philosophy of science, epistemology, methodology, research designs, and research publications. Aside from learning autonomously, conducting independent research and being the sole author of some articles, the research work conducted for this thesis allowed me to collaborate on some other articles with coauthors from different disciplines and countries who have distinct ways of working and communicating. Working with supervisors, researchers, teachers, colleagues and friends from different cultures has expanded my perspectives and teamwork skills. To complement my previous training in which I worked on qualitative studies (in pursuing my Master's and Bachelor's degrees), this dissertation required that I apply and use quantitative methodologies and statistical analysis of data. During the development of the thesis, I also acquired experience in the fields of: academic publications; the presentation of research at conferences; and the dissemination of research to the general public. I am grateful to all the people who collaborated on this research and I am happy to consider the completion of this work to represent a highly positive stage in my personal, academic and professional learning.

**Table 2.** Academic research implications

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| Academic summary of conclusions  |
| <i>What has been done, how and why?</i>  |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Research into Chinese tourism in Spain (as a paradigmatic new tourism market).</li><li>• Contexts of study: a systematic literature review, and various aspects of Chinese tourism in Spain and in Barcelona.</li><li>• It is difficult to obtain data through face-to-face interviews and surveys. After a pilot study at the Barcelona city airport, it was decided to use less intrusive data collection techniques, such as internet-based questionnaires (distributed via WeChat with a snow-ball sampling methodology) and web scraping the contents of different relevant sources of tourism information.</li><li>• The collected data are measurable items, specifically Likert-scale ratings, texts and photographs. They were analyzed mostly through quantitative analysis. Thus, employing an etic perspective, the research approaches can be used in other contexts (such as other emerging tourism markets).</li></ul>  |
| <i>What has been found. The thesis findings highlight...</i>   |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Networks of researchers, institutions and geographical areas devoted to studying Chinese outbound tourism. This is relevant for finding collaborative pathways, strategic collaborations, and relevant academic institutions.</li><li>• The main topics that are being studied and understudied in Chinese outbound tourism research. This is significant for planning future research and understanding the current thematic structure.</li><li>• The elements, itineraries and attributes of Spain that are given prominence by Chinese travel agencies. This is used to understand the theoretical formulation and practical issues of the tourism product.</li><li>• The differences in tourism motivations and satisfaction among the four main segments of Chinese tourists in Spain: group tour traveler, free independent traveler, first time visitors, and repeat visitors. This segmentation is valuable for marketing purposes.</li><li>• The effectiveness of textual messages found on the webpages of a local destination marketing organization, a set of Chinese travel agencies, travel blogs and guides.</li><li>• The fragmentation of the Barcelona tourism image within the Chinese market. This is relevant for understanding the formation of and the (in)congruent elements in the Barcelona tourism image.</li></ul> |
| <i>Why the results matter. This dissertation provides...</i>   |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• An expansion on the previous theories regarding: (A) the tourism product; (B) tourism behavior, experiential familiarity, and mode of travel; (C) tourism sources of information; (D) fragmentation of the tourism image.</li><li>• Practical and managerial implications for the Chinese travel agencies, local administration and local tourism industry.</li><li>• The first coherent and general study regarding various aspects of Chinese tourism in Spain.</li><li>• An explorative contribution to research approaches that will allow studying new tourism markets at well-established tourism destinations.</li></ul>  |

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# Addendum

Afoot and light-hearted I take to the open road,  
Healthy, free, the world before me,  
The long brown path before me leading wherever I choose.

Walt Whitman, 1856



## Addendum

# Resumen

El crecimiento del turismo chino hasta ser el primer emisor mundial de turismo es uno de los fenómenos más excitantes que ha ocurrido en los últimos años. Sin embargo, entender al turista chino supone un desafío en destinos occidentales. Esta tesis tiene el objetivo general de mejorar la comprensión del turismo chino en España para desarrollar el destino. A este fin, se generan propuestas de investigación a partir de cinco objetivos: (1) revisar la literatura existente, (2) comprender el producto turístico, (3) entender el comportamiento del turista, (4) conocer las fuentes de información, y (5) comprender la imagen del destino.

Esta es una tesis formada por un compendio de publicaciones. Se diferencian tres partes: La introducción general (**Parte I**); una colección de cinco artículos (**Parte II**); la discusión y conclusiones generales (**Parte III**). Desde una posición filosófica cuasi-positivista, en todos los artículos se trabaja mayoritariamente con datos y metodologías cuantitativas. Se ha seguido un método inductivo (no se ha partido de hipótesis previas, sino de objetivos de investigación). El diseño de la investigación es empírico y la estrategia de investigación es el estudio de caso. Para la extracción de datos se han utilizado dos técnicas (encuestas y *web scrapping*), que se han analizado mayormente con técnicas cuantitativas.

Los resultados del **Artículo 1** revelan que las principales redes de producción científica en el estudio del turismo chino surgen alrededor de cuatro clústeres de investigadores. En cuanto a los temas estudiados, el estudio identifica y explica seis clústeres: comportamiento del turista; (políticas e impactos; desarrollo de la industria; segmentos del consumidor; servicios; valores culturales y turismo. El análisis de los productos ofertados por las agencias de viaje chinas (**Artículo 2**) halla patrones y similitudes en sus itinerarios. Las principales ciudades visitadas son Barcelona, Madrid, Sevilla, Granada, Toledo, Mijas, Ronda y Córdoba. El producto se formula mediante dimensiones culturales y experienciales. La dimensión cultural está formada por la historia, la cultura (especialmente, la andaluza) y la arquitectura. La dimensión experiencial, por la conveniencia de un viaje guiado, organizado por la agencia de viajes, y los servicios ofrecidos.

En el **Artículo 3** se define el perfil demográfico, motivaciones y satisfacción con el destino del turista. Los resultados muestran que, en conjunto, el turista chino está más motivado por la novedad y la relajación en su viaje a España y, en segundo lugar, por el patrimonio y la cultura. En cambio, los turistas que visitan España por tercera vez están más motivados por el clima, la naturaleza y las compras que por la cultura y patrimonio. Tras analizar las páginas web de cuatro tipos de proveedores de información, los resultados del **Artículo 4** muestran, el posicionamiento de las fuentes en los buscadores online, la densidad, diversidad y dominios de información. Los blogs son la fuente de información más diversa y rica, seguidas de las guías de viaje y Barcelona Turisme. En cambio, las agencias de viajes tienden a ser más repetitivas.

En el **Artículo 5** se propone un marco conceptual para comprender la fragmentación de la imagen turística. Los resultados muestran que para Barcelona Turisme, la imagen de Barcelona está construida sobre el concepto de espacio público, elementos de arte local, cultura tangible e intangible, festividades y deportes. En cambio, las fuentes chinas tienen una imagen mucho más tradicional y limitada (basada en la arquitectura de Gaudí). Tal y como se muestra en las conclusiones, los métodos y bases teóricas empleados suponen una contribución también aplicable a otros mercados turísticos emergentes. En la **Parte III** se incluye la discusión de resultados, las implicaciones académicas y prácticas, las limitaciones y futuras áreas de investigación.

*Título: Planteamientos para comprender un nuevo mercado turístico y desarrollar el destino: El caso del turismo chino en España*

*Palabras clave: Turismo chino, nuevos mercados turísticos, desarrollo del destino*

**Note:** This is version of the abstract on Spanish language.

## Addendum

# Scientific production

**This section contains the scientific production created by the author between 2015 and 2019. It contains both the collected articles (Part II) and complementary articles not included in this dissertation.**

### 2015-2019. Published articles [1-7]

1. Lojo, A., & Cànoves, G. (2015). El turismo chino en Barcelona. Elementos clave de un fenómeno reciente. *Documents d'Anàlisi Geogràfica*, 61(3), 581-599.  
<https://doi.org/10.5565/rev/dag.267>
2. Lojo, A. (2016). Turismo Chino Emisor: Estado de la Cuestión y Agenda. *Boletín de La Asociación de Geógrafos Españoles*, (72), 471-500.  
<https://doi.org/10.21138/bage.2348>
3. Lojo, A. (2016). Chinese tourism in Spain: An analysis of the tourism product, attractions and itineraries offered by Chinese travel agencies. *Cuadernos de Turismo*, (37), 243-268.  
<https://doi.org/10.6018/turismo.37.256231>
4. Lojo, A., Li, M., & Cànoves, G. (2019). Co-authorship networks and thematic development in Chinese outbound tourism research. *Journal of China Tourism Research*. 15(3), 295-319.  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/19388160.2018.1512433>
5. Lojo, A., & Li, M. (2018). Segmentation by experiential familiarity and travel mode of the Chinese outbound market to Spain. *Journal of China Tourism Research*, 14(1), 100-121.  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/19388160.2018.1442278>
6. Lojo, A., & Timothy, D. (2019 accepted). Understanding tourism information sources: Textual communication, efficiency and information gaps. *Tourism Analysis: An Interdisciplinary Journal*. (Accepted).
7. Lojo, Aureli (2016). Turismo chino en España, 2015. "Cuando el turista chino llega a Barcelona". In: Grotsch & Vera (ed.): II Vol. Libro Blanco del Turismo Chino en España: Chinese Dream, pp. 128-136. Chinese Friendly Publications.

### 2019. Articles under review [8-9]

8. Lojo, A. & Cànoves, G. (2019 submitted). Tourism behavior of Chinese Generation Y in Europe: Experiences and new trends.
9. Lojo, A., Li, M. & Xu, H. (2019 submitted). Destination Image fragmentation and information sources. A comparative analysis of local and Chinese representations of Barcelona.

### Thesis objectives (A, B, C, D, E) and scientific production [1–9]

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| <p>A. To get a clear idea of who has studied about Chinese tourism and what has been studied (on an international scale).</p> <p>Publications [2] &amp; [4].</p>  | <p>D. To know the differences between local and Chinese information sources, in the case of Barcelona.</p> <p>Publication [6].</p> |
| <p>B. To understand the tourist product and the use of the territory, regarding the case of Chinese tourism in Spain.</p> <p>Publications [1], [3] &amp; [7].</p> | <p>E. To know the differences between local and Chinese information sources in the case of Barcelona.</p> <p>Publication [9].</p>  |
| <p>C. To understand the profile of Chinese tourists in Spain, their experience and tourism behavior.</p> <p>Publications [5] &amp; [8].</p>                       | <p><b>Note:</b> Bold [numbers] indicate articles included in the thesis by compendium of publication.</p>                          |

### Information regarding the journals (for published articles, July 2019)

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Journal of China Tourism Research. Scimago SJR Q1 Cultural studies &amp; SJR Q2 Tourism, leisure and hospitality Management. SCOPUS, WoS-ESCI, IBZ, EBSCO, CABI, etc.<br/><i>[H Index: 16; SJR Index: 0.552]</i></li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Documents d'Anàlisi Geogràfica: Top 2 Geography journal in Spain (Ayllón et al., 2016), FECYT — Ministerio de Ciencia de España, SCOPUS, WoS-ESCI, Scimago SJR, etc.<br/><i>[H Index: 14; SJR Index: 0.21]</i></li> </ul>   |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tourism Analysis. Scimago SJR Q2 Tourism, leisure and hospitality Management. SCOPUS, WoS-ESCI, ABSCO, CABI, Thomson Reuters Web of Science, etc.<br/><i>[H Index: 31; SJR Index: 0.420]</i></li> </ul>                     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Boletín de la Asociación de Geógrafos Españoles. Top 3 Geography journal in Spain (Ayllón et al., 2016), FECYT — Ministerio de Ciencia de España, SCOPUS, WoS-SSCI, WoS-JCR, Scimago SJR, etc.<br/><i>[JCR Index: 0.598; H Index: 14; SJR Index: 0.26]</i></li> </ul> |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cuadernos de Turismo: Top 1 Geography journal in Spain (Ayllón et al., 2016); FECYT — Ministerio de Ciencia de España, SCOPUS, WoS-ESCI, Scimago SJR, etc.<br/><i>[H Index: 5; SJR Index: 0.162]</i></li> </ul>             |  |

## Addendum

# Co-authorship statement

This section contains the co-authorship statement for the collection of articles (Part II) of this dissertation. All persons who meet authorship criteria are listed as authors, and each author certifies that these publications have not been used (and will not be used) in the evaluation of another doctorate project.

The following people and institutions contributed to the publications undertaken as part of this thesis:

- Aureli Lojo, Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona = **Author 1**
- Gemma Cànoves, Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona = **Author 2**
- Mimi Li, The Hong Kong Polytechnic University = **Author 3**
- Dallen J. Timothy, Arizona State University = **Author 4**
- Honggang Xu, Sun Yat-sen University = **Author 5**

*Article 1. Co-authorship networks and thematic development in Chinese outbound tourism research*

**Author 1** was the primary and first author. Author 1 conceived the design, acquired and analyzed the data, and discussed the results. Author 1 drafted the manuscript. **Author 2** and **Author 3** encouraged Author 1 to extend the data analysis to bibliometrics and contributed to the research design. Author 3 verified the analytical methods and the results obtained. Author 2 verified the discussion section. All authors discussed the findings. All authors read and commented on the final version.

*Article 2. Chinese tourism in Spain: An analysis of the tourism product, attractions and itineraries offered by Chinese travel agencies*

**Author 1** was the sole author on this paper.

*Article 3. Segmentation by experiential familiarity and travel mode of the Chinese outbound market to Spain*

**Author 1** was the primary and first author. He conceived the original idea, the conceptual framework, acquired the data, analyzed the data and drafted the manuscript. **Author 3** supervised the research design and verified the analyti-

cal framework, statistic procedures, and results. Both authors contributed to the discussion of results. Both authors discussed the results and contributed to the final draft of the manuscript. Both authors read the final version and commented on the final version for important intellectual content.

**Article 4.** *Understanding tourism information sources: Textual communication, efficiency and information gaps*

**Author 1** was the primary and first author. Author 1 designed the study, acquired the data, performed the analysis and discussed the results. Author 1 drafted the manuscript. **Author 4** contributed to the research design, and also encouraged Author 1 to extend the conceptual framework. Author 4 supervised the work. Both authors discussed the findings and the conceptual areas. Both authors contributed to the final draft of the manuscript and revised the manuscript critically for important intellectual content.

**Article 5.** *Destination Image fragmentation and information sources. A comparative analysis of local and Chinese representations of Barcelona*

**Author 1** was the primary and first author. Author 1 designed the study, acquired the data, performed the analysis and discussed the results. Author 1 drafted the manuscript. **Author 3** supervised the research design. **Author 5** revised the conceptual framework and encouraged Author 1 to extend the conceptual framework. Author 3 revised the analytical framework and revised the discussion section. All authors read, commented and revised the manuscript critically for important intellectual content.

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## Addendum

# About the author

Aureli Lojo Blesa was born on August 9, 1986, in Barcelona, Spain. In 2014, he obtained his degree in Humanities with mention in Cultural Management (UAB, extraordinary award). Then he began to collaborate with the tourism research group, TUDISTAR. In 2015, he obtained the degree of Master in Territorial and Population Studies with specialization in Territorial Planning (UAB, top honors). The same year, in October 2015, he joined the Geography Department of the Autonomous University of Barcelona (UAB) as a predoctoral researcher and assistant professor (FPU). Between 2015 and 2019, he has been completing his thesis on new tourism markets and the case of Chinese tourism in Spain. During this doctoral stage, he has participated in eight international academic congresses (in China, the United States of America, and Portugal among other countries). He has completed research stays in the USA (Arizona State University, 2017) and in China (Sun Yat-sen University, 2018), and he has collaborated on research projects in Spain (CSO2013-41374-R, CSO2016-74861-R) and Europe (ICI+/2014/348-005). Since 2016, he has taught under-graduate and master's students at the UAB. He has been a guest lecturer for the London South Bank University. He has also worked as a content creator for the TUDISTAR Group website and as a reviewer of academic articles for the journals *Tourism Geographies* (Taylor and Francis), *Journal of Heritage Tourism* (Taylor and Francis), *Cuadernos de Turismo* (University of Murcia) and *Documents d'Anàlisi Geogràfica* (University of Girona, UAB). He has shared his knowledge and expertise in several ways. His knowledge transfer activities include publishing in the online journal *Geocritiq*, in the newspaper *El Periódico de Catalunya*, and participating in "De Boca a Orella" (*Radio 4*, radio show). He also organized (as the conference general coordinator and academic secretary) the *9<sup>th</sup> International Conference on Tourism and Hospitality between China and Spain*, held in Barcelona (October, 2019). Part of the results of his doctoral thesis are described in this dissertation.



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### Image credits

The author gratefully acknowledges the Metropolitan Museum of Art for the photographs of the images used in this thesis (from the MET Collection – open access):

**Cover:** Shen Xun (14th century). 元/明 趙原 傲燕文貴范寬山水圖 元/明 沈巽竹石 合卷 Bamboo grove, late. [Hand scroll; ink and color on paper].

**Page 6:** Anonymous (17th - 18th century). 清康熙 妝花龍紋門簾 *Door valance and side panels with dragons*. [textile - Silk and metallic thread brocade].

**Page 8:** Gao Xiang (1700-1730). *Ink prunus*. [Hanging scroll; ink on paper].

**Pages 18, 32 & 162:** Xiang Shengmo (1654). 明/清 項聖謨 秋景圖 冊頁 Autumn Landscape [Ink and color on paper].

**Page 182:** Xugu (Zhu Huairan) (19th century). 清 虛谷 蝶貓圖 軸 Cat and Butterfly [Hanging scroll; ink on silk].

### Poetry references

**Page 9:** Catullus (1st Century CAN). Excerpt from *Poem 46*. Translated by: Rebecca Armstrong (2013). Journeys and nostalgia in Catullus. *The Classical Journal*. 109(1). pp-43-71.

**Page 19:** Li Bai (8th Century). *Quiet Night Thought*.

**Page 33:** Robert Frost (1916). Excerpt from “*The road not taken*”. In: *The mountain interval*.

**Page 163:** Daisuke Watanabe & Izumi Masuda (2012). Excerpt from “Distant Worlds”. In: Final Fantasy XI VanaïCon Anniversary 11.11.11. Square Enix.

**Page 183:** Walt Whitman (1856). Excerpt from “Song of the open road”. In: Leaves of grass.



## Colophon

The work described in this thesis was performed at the Department of Geography at the Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona (2015–2019, Spain), the School of Community Resources and Development at the Arizona State University (2017, USA), and the School of Tourism Management at the Sun Yat-sen University (2018, China).

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*Finit dicendo: Ludid. Quicunque scriptor scribit / Leti ut scribunt scribae.*

Thank you, dear reader.

