

Trips of the Tongue: Language Tourism in Barcelona

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Abstract

■ This article reports on inbound language tourism in Barcelona (Spain) as a result of a research project conducted at CETT-UB School of Tourism, Hospitality and Gastronomy. The language tourism providers operating in Barcelona were identified, the services they offer were pinpointed, the language tourists' profile was examined, the effect of accommodation on the relationship between language tourists and the host community was studied, and the influence of language tourists in the local community members they interacted with was analyzed. In order to achieve these objectives, an exploratory research was designed with a qualitative approach mainly based on in-depth interviews with local residents and language tourism providers. According to the main outcomes, Barcelona has a varied language tourism offer provided by third party exchange providers, language tourism agencies, language schools and higher education institutions. Language tourists' favorite accommodation option is usually shared apartments so as to be more independent rather than staying with host families, which would allow them to integrate better and learn more Spanish. Their main motivation for choosing Barcelona as their academic destination is the city itself and its attractions.

Key Words:

Educational Tourism, Language Tourist, Study Abroad, International Students.

Resumen

■ Este artículo da cuenta de la situación del turismo idiomático en Barcelona (España) a raíz de un proyecto de investigación realizado en CETT-UB Campus de Turismo, Hostelería y Gastronomía. Se identificaron los proveedores de turismo idiomático que operan en Barcelona y los servicios que ofrecen, se examinó el perfil del turista idiomático, se estudió cómo afecta el alojamiento a las relaciones entre los turistas idiomáticos y la comunidad anfitriona, y se analizó la influencia de los turistas idiomáticos en los miembros de la comunidad con los que interactúan. Para lograr dichos objetivos se diseñó una investigación exploratoria con un enfoque cualitativo basado en entrevistas en profundidad a residentes locales y proveedores de turismo idiomático. Los resultados obtenidos evidencian que Barcelona tiene una variada oferta de turismo idiomático, proporcionada por intermediarios de intercambios académicos, agencias de turismo idiomático, academias de idiomas e instituciones de educación superior. La opción de alojamiento preferida por el turista idiomático suele ser el apartamento compartido para poder disfrutar de una mayor independencia en vez de alojarse con familias anfitrionas, hecho que le permitiría integrarse mejor y aprender más español. Su principal motivación al elegir Barcelona como destino académico es la propia ciudad y sus atractivos.

Palabras clave:

Turismo Educativo, Turista Idiomático, Estudiar en el Extranjero, Alumnos Internacionales.

Introduction

■ Over the last decade the number of students moving abroad to learn a language has been steadily growing, and it will keep increasing due to globalization. Surprisingly, even though there are thousands of international students following this trend and their length of stay is very significant for the destination, the importance of this type of tourist is still underrated.

This article analyses the phenomenon of language tourism in Barcelona (Spain) and is part of a more comprehensive research project on this topic carried out at CETT-UB School of Tourism, Hospitality and Gastronomy, located in that city. Whereas there is a considerable volume of publications on language tourism in other fields of study, more concerned with linguistic development, there are very few studies that map this tourism niche in a city like Barcelona.

Barcelona is located in the Spanish region of Catalonia, which nowadays is the scene of controversial political conflicts, as the Catalan separatist movement seeks the independence from Spain. The official languages in Catalonia are Catalan and Spanish, and they coexist in daily communication, so the language is not an obstacle for learners of Spanish as a foreign language, who have the opportunity to get to know both the Spanish and the Catalan cultures. Our research project focused on those students from a socio-cultural point of view.

To start with, we aimed at identifying the language tourism providers operating in Barcelona and the services they offer. Due to the large number of providers of language tourism in Barcelona we wanted to analyze the services, extra services, the usual channels to reach students and the promotions devised to attract the different segments, the reason why students choose one provider or another, and how a provider meets the students' expectations.

Moreover, the language tourists' profile and behavior in Barcelona was examined. We looked at which language tourist chooses Barcelona as a language tourism destination, as well as the motivations, expectations and attitudes of these tourists towards the city.

In addition, we intended to find out the relation between accommodation and integration in the local culture, the different kinds of accommodation options offered in the city of Barcelona for students and the outcome of each in socio-cultural terms.

Last but not least, we wanted to discover whether international students have an influence in local residents -meaning by that host families or friends- or if there is no connection at all due to the international bubble they create with other exchange students.

To sum up, our specific research objectives were the following:

SO1. Identify the language tourism providers operating in Barcelona and the services they offer.

SO2. Examine language tourists' profile and behavior in Barcelona.

SO3. Analyze the effect of accommodation on the relationship between language tourists and the host community.

SO4. Analyze the influence of language tourists in the local community members they interact with.

Before moving on to the methodology we used to collect and process information to achieve our objectives let us delve into the idiosyncrasy of international academic mobility, with a closer look at the US as this is the main (or even unique) outbound market for some of the providers we analyzed.

Literature review

■ According to the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), in 2014 the leading countries in numbers of international arrivals and receipts were France, the US, China and Spain. More than 50% of the total tourists in 2014 travelled for holidays and leisure motivations, while only 14% travelled for business. The rest of the tourists travelled for other motivations such as visiting friends or relatives, religious reasons or educational matters, among others (UNWTO, 2015).

The fluctuation of educational tourists has been changing drastically over the past two decades, when the trend of studying abroad started.

Educational tourism

■ Educational tourism is a way of international academic mobility in which students spend time abroad for educational purposes. Based on the definition of tourism formulated by UNWTO, language tourism as a subtype of educational tourism may be defined as a tourist activity undertaken by those travelers (or educational tourists) taking a trip which includes at least an overnight stay in a destination outside their usual place of residence for less than a year and for whom language learning is a primary or secondary part of their trip (Iglesias, 2016).

Study abroad programs entail a significant tourist activity with an important economic and social impact on the destination due to the educational tourists' length of stay. These programs are also very multidirectional since

student exchanges involve arrivals and departures to several countries. In fact, an Australian study found that this group of tourists spent 29% of the total nights spent in the destination travelling (Jarvis and Peel, 2008). Study abroad programs play an important role by offering students international experience and an increased global awareness.

Goodman and Berdan (2014) make a direct connection between globalization and international academic exchanges. They state that international experiences, language skills, and cross-cultural communication are the necessary skills to succeed in the global economy we are experiencing nowadays. Studying abroad forces the students to get out of their comfort zone and experience another culture, language and education system. While studying abroad, students learn to appreciate difference and diversity on first hand, which enables them to recognize and dismiss stereotypes. It teaches them how to deal with people from different countries and with different cultures. Furthermore, it helps them to accept other points of view and breaks cross-cultural borders.

International mobility in secondary education

■ International academic experiences during high school are rising. The US is the principal inbound destination for exchanges during high school. According to the latest report of The Association of Boarding Schools, there are approximately 70,000 international secondary school students currently studying in the US, and China is the largest sending country of secondary education students (The Association of Boarding Schools, 2016). In particular, the Chinese students believe that they will have many more chances to access an American university if they own an American high school diploma. However, different reasons explain the leading position of the US in this field such as the language, the availability of host families and the reputation of American high schools.

The programs are offered to students by particular organizations, in which the participants choose to study up to one year at an accredited public or private American secondary school. Throughout their stay, students live with a host family or reside at accredited US boarding schools. The programs aim to involve international students with the local culture and society. They connect with the local community thanks to the host families and the local high school.

The primary motivation for participants to study abroad during high school is mostly learning another language. Secondly, the US is a vast market with a very patriotic welcoming community that wants to show their customs and lifestyles to the newcomers. That is one of the main reasons for hosting, since the economic benefit of taking part in these programs is minimal. Lastly, the perception that is given to young teens about the American high

school through movies makes participants seek a similar experience.

There are a number of organizations that offer and specialize in this sort of programs, most of which only work with the US as a receiving country. However, recently some organizations have seen the advantage to open to worldwide markets due to the globalization and the high demand for other nations besides the US. Some of the leaders are AFS Intercultural programs, ASSE International Student Exchange programs, AYUSA Global Youth Exchange, Council on International Educational Exchange (CIEE), EF Foundation for Foreign Study, International Cultural Exchange Services (ICES), PAX - program of Academic Exchange and Youth For Understanding USA (YFU USA).

Higher education programs

■ The international mobility of students in higher education has become a growing trend. More and more countries are developing international agreements to send their students abroad as part of their tertiary education. Tertiary education or higher education can refer to bachelor's (lower higher education) and master's or doctorate degrees (higher/advanced higher education).

Universities offer study abroad programs that can range from a few weeks to a full academic year program. During their time abroad, students enroll in different subjects implemented by the host university and, usually, gain credits that can be validated in their home university, although it works differently in each university.

The Institute of International Education reports that in 2015/16 a total of 1,043,839 international students enrolled in American higher education colleges and universities, which meant that 85% more international students were studying at colleges and universities across the United States than were reported a decade ago. The largest growth was in the number of students from India, primarily at the graduate level and in optional practical training, whereas China remained the top sending country. The continued growth in international students coming to the US for higher education has a significant positive economic impact, as they contributed more than \$35 billion to the US economy in 2015 (Institute of International Education, 2017).

Looking at the US as an outbound educational market, study abroad by American students has more than tripled in the past two decades according to the Institute of International Education. Although the majority of students -around 72% in the US- still participate in programs sponsored by their institution, at least 28% of the approximately 260,000 Americans who studied abroad in 2008 did it through an external program. Numbers have increased from 205,983 American students in 2004/05 to 313,415 in

2014/15. Thus, for students pursuing a Bachelor's degree, approximately 15% studied abroad before graduating in 2015. Experiential learning is reported to become a growing trend, as shows the increasing interest in study abroad experiences that involve work, internships, and volunteering abroad. Europe remains the top destination for American students going abroad, with a third of all those studying abroad heading to the UK, France and Spain (Institute of International Education, 2017).

Within Europe academic mobility in higher education may be achieved through exchange programs or individually as free movers. There are different ways in which a student can study abroad through exchange programs, which can be facilitated by means of Erasmus programs, international exchanges and third-party providers.

In Europe, academic mobility is mostly done through an Erasmus program, one of the flagship programs implemented in the European Union. It was created in 1987 with the purpose to enable study abroad periods in order to develop a pool of graduates with direct experience in European co-operation that would provide a broader basis for intensified economic and social co-operation and strengthen the ties between the citizens with a view to consolidating the concept of a People's Europe (Corbett, 2003). In 2013 nearly 270,000 students from 33 European countries spent time abroad with an Erasmus grant. Spain sent 40,000 international students abroad and was the most popular inbound Erasmus destination among European students, as it received 40,200 international students (European Commission, 2014). Nowadays, there are more than 4,000 higher institutions actively participating from the 37 countries involved in the Erasmus program.

A bilateral agreement also allows a student to spend a semester or year abroad at a partner university. This international exchange is an agreement signed by two higher education institutions which choose to become partners to achieve shared goals, usually related to students' mobility.

A study abroad provider or third-party provider, unlike the Erasmus program and the bilateral agreements, is an independent organization that facilitates or manages study abroad programs acting as an intermediary between universities. It is mostly used by American and Canadian universities or independent students that want to go abroad with an all-inclusive package.

Some of the leaders in this field are: Academic Programmes International (API), Centre for International Studies (CIS), Central College Abroad (CCA), Council on International Education Exchange (CIEE), Cultural Experiences Abroad (CEA), Institute for the International Education of Students (IES Abroad) and International Studies Abroad (ISA).

Based on its own data and data provided by UNESCO, the OECD calculated that in 2000 there were 2.1 million

international students in the world and this figure doubled in 2010 to 4.1 million. This only accounts for 2.3% of the total students studying tertiary education in higher education institutions. This percentage increased to 6% in 2014, and it is expected that 6.7 million students will be studying abroad by 2020 (OECD, 2016).

Push and pull factors

■ There are different reasons why a student might or might not decide to take a part of their tertiary studies abroad. Some research has been done concerning this matter, usually focusing on two approaches. Firstly, analyzing the elements that affect the students' refusal to leave their home country during higher education; often these elements are related to family, friends, and fear of loneliness. Secondly, looking at the factors that influence the decision to study abroad.

McMahon (1992) introduced for the first time the push and pull model, which has become an essential theory in this field and has been redefined by various professionals in the sector over the years. McMahon designed this model after examining the flow of international students from eight developed countries during the 1960s and 1970s. The global pattern of international student flows may be explained by a combination of factors that encourage students to study overseas (Mazzarol & Soutar, 2002). Push factors work within the home country and push students to make the decision to study abroad, whereas pull factors work within the host country and make it considerably attractive to international students to study there.

The push factors, or outbound factors, operate within the source country and initiate a student's decision to undertake an international study period (Mazzarol & Soutar, 2002). This can depend on economic weaknesses, involvement in global economy, emphasis on education, available education and political stability.

The pull factors, or inbound factors, operate within a host country to make that country relatively attractive to international students (Mazzarol & Soutar, 2002). It is suggested that students' attraction to a host country is influenced by international trade with the sending country, economic power and tuition fees (as compared to other nations).

The growth of study abroad during higher education around the world has led researchers to analyze how countries are capable of attracting these exchange students and what makes them an attractive destination besides their level of education. Naidoo (2007) distinguished between socio-cultural, economic and political factors.

The above mentioned factors are relevant to the decision-making process to choose a destination, but it can be assumed there are many more aspects to be taken into

account. Other elements identified by Eder, Smith and Pitts (2010) as key in the choice of a country and overseas institution were personal growth, language, career, college issues, physical geography, and local culture, while other structural aspects such as visa requirements and cost of living were regarded as constraints.

The significance of tourism related attractions is considered an important factor of the decision-making among international students for choosing a study destination. When students are choosing a country to study abroad, they pay particular attention to the location, the climate and the distance from their countries of origin. Apart from that, some studies have shown that some students make their destination choice based on a city as a destination, due to the desire of living in a big city during their exchange period (Counsell, 2011). Residing in a city has advantages such as the wide choice of accommodation, the access by public transport, more social life for students and continuous events held in the city.

Language also plays a significant role in the destination choice. In fact, English-speaking countries are the most attractive, with the US as the leading destination for international students. Some destinations are connected through language and culture, as happens with Spanish-speaking countries, where there has always been a constant flow of students. The same occurs between Portugal and Brazil as they share a common language, or in countries that are former colonies of the student's home country.

Some students see travelling abroad for academic purposes as an opportunity to acquire a foreign language. Living and studying in another country with a different language provides an opportunity for an overall immersion in another language and culture.

To sum up, many variables influence educational tourists in the decision of a destination, either positively or negatively. When it comes to language tourism, it is crucial for providers to identify the preferences, behaviors and attitudes of language travelers to meet their expectations, since their trip is not only focused on educational objectives, but rather on the overall experience (Iglesias, 2016), hence the importance of researching this specific niche.

Methodology

■ Due to the lack of academic studies and literature on this particular topic, we decided to conduct exploratory research to gain further insight of the situation of language tourism in Barcelona. We relied on different methods for the collection of both primary and secondary data, as illustrated in Table 1.

Following a qualitative approach we obtained first-hand, accurate information from language tourism providers operating in Barcelona and from local residents. Thus, we carried out two in-depth interviews. For this qualitative technique, the tool we designed was a specific semi-structured script for both sources of information.

The secondary source research entailed doing some literature review and internet exploration in order to extract the relevant information through content analysis, which helped contextualize the subject and elaborate the underlying theoretical framework, as well as to locate the providers of language tourism for international students wishing to study Spanish in Barcelona.

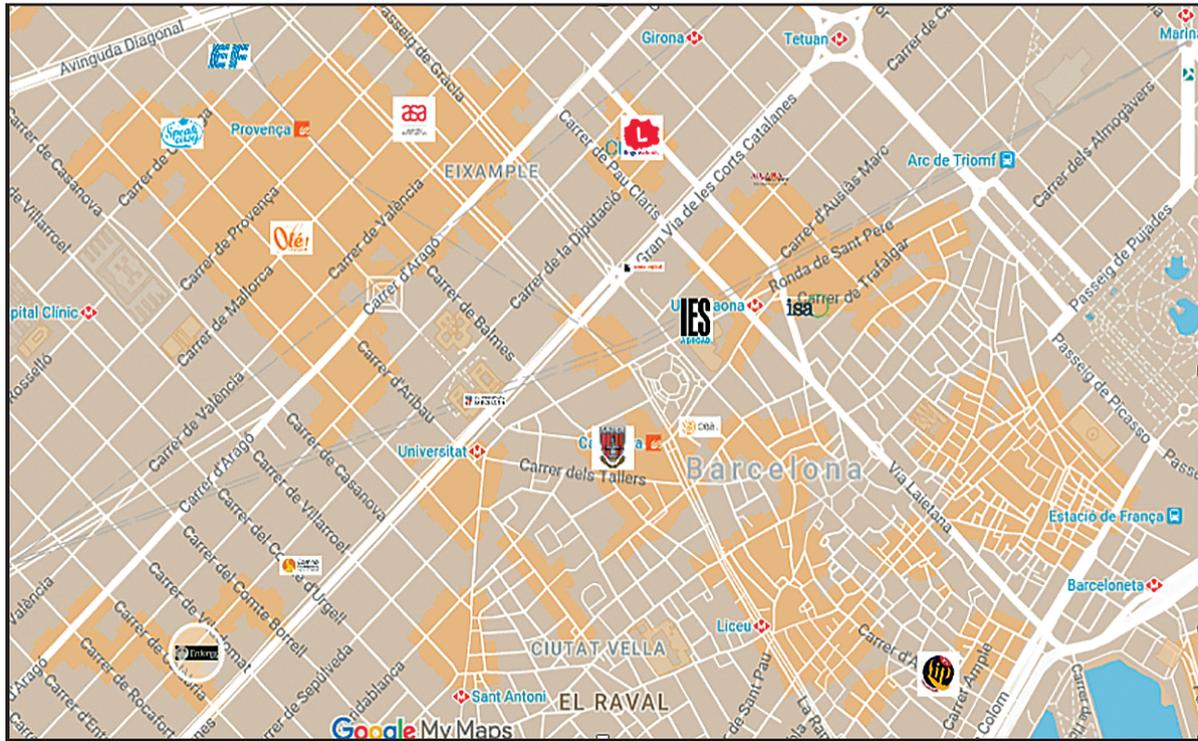
Once the perspective about the different types of language providers was clear, we analyzed the content and created

Table 1 Methodology used in relation to specific objectives

Objectives	Techniques	Tools
SO1. Identify the language tourism providers operating in Barcelona and the services they offer	Secondary data content analysis	Fact sheets
	In depth-interview	Script providers
SO2. Examine language tourists' profile and behavior in Barcelona	In-depth interview	Script providers
SO3. Analyze the effect of accommodation on the relationship between language tour-ists and the host community	In-depth interview	Script providers
	In-depth interview	Script locals
SO4. Analyze the influence of language tour-ists in the local community members they interact with	In-depth interview	Script locals

Source: Prepared by the author

Figure 1 Map of the language tourism providers in Barcelona



Source: Prepared by the author

a fact sheet for each one of them with the name, services offered, accommodation options, location and contact details. When the fact sheets were finished, we selected the providers that could be used for the project and the ones that could not. The reason why some providers were rejected was their lack of Spanish courses, since we established that to be considered a language tourist a minimum of four hours a week of Spanish classes needed to be taken. That is why we discerned between the indispensable and the superfluous language providers. After that, we immediately sent an email to the chosen language providers to arrange a meeting so as to interview them. Figure 1 locates the providers involved in our research. To open the interactive map, click [here](#).

Finally, for the interviews with locals, we contacted friends of some international students who had used the services of two providers we were familiar with: BAS and ISA.

We started the process of data collection on March 13th 2017, when we sent out the email to the possible participant providers. In order to have time to process the data and have the results by the due date, we decided to set a deadline to finish the collection of data by May 25th 2017.

The universe for our fieldwork is hardly quantifiable, as a different statistical approach and timing would be needed to carry out probability sampling. To be more specific,

we focused on two different population segments: all the language schools and the tourism language providers in Barcelona which offer at least 4h of Spanish courses per week, and all the local community members that interact with the language tourists during their stay, such as their host families, the local educational institutions' staff, their local classmates, etc.

To get the results of our empirical research we worked with a sample mean composed of 12 language tourism providers and 5 local community members.

The language tourism providers operating in Barcelona were interviewed in accordance with the following interview script:

1. How many students usually book their language trip with you each year?
2. What services do you offer?
3. Who are your competitors? What makes you stand out from them?
4. Do you organize activities for the students involving locals?
5. What profile of students is your target?

6. How do you reach the students?
7. How do you market your services?
8. How do you adapt to different segments?
9. What kind of accommodation do you recommend to the students? Why? Which are the pros and cons of each accommodation?
10. How do you reach the host families? Which are the pros and cons of being a host family?
11. What do you offer host families that they are willing to host? Do they have any economic benefits? (No need to say how much)
12. Have you ever had a bad experience with a host family? And how did you manage that? Do you follow any kind of protocol for inconvenient situations?
13. What are your criteria to select a family? Do you think Catalan interferes?
14. Do you think Catalan is a threat? Do you think you're losing students due to this matter?

On the other hand, another specific script was designed to interview the local residents:

1. How and when did you meet the international students?
2. Do you do any activities together? Do you spend time in each other's company?
3. What kind of activities do you do together?
4. In which language do you communicate? Spanish, his/her mother tongue or mixed?
5. What motivated you to start a relationship with an international student?
6. Due to the fact of doing more activities in the city (cultural, sports, leisure...) have you learnt more about Barcelona and your own culture?
7. What do you value positively about getting to know an international student?
8. Would you like to have an international experience in another country to learn the language?
9. How often do you see each other?
10. When your friend leaves Barcelona do you think you will keep in touch? Why or why not?

11. What have you learnt from your friend? (culture, way of living...) Do you think your friend has learnt something from you? Did he/she change your perspective of his/her country? In which way?
12. Do you think your friend has adapted and integrated in his/her new city, new life, new culture and new language? Why do you believe so?
13. Do you think he/she liked and enjoyed the experience? Why do you believe so?

The interviews were mostly recorded and transcribed, and the information was analyzed in order to elaborate the results and conclusion. To do so, we processed the data collected through these semi-structured interviews through categorization. We created distinct categories, broke down the answers into first level concepts and transferred these into two spreadsheets, one with the providers' replies and the other one with the local residents' replies. This method gave us a clear vision of the responses of the individuals and helped organize our thoughts in order to write down the results. Table 2 (next page) shows the different categories in relation with the research objectives.

The database we created can be used for future projects in the matter, since the data corpus collected through the primary research methods is very rich and has not been analyzed extensively due to time constraints.

Once the results had been obtained, we built the final conclusions by connecting data through the triangulation of perspectives and methods. To do so, the information we obtained through our initial online search was put in relation to the one we gathered by means of in-depth interviews. Moreover, we linked different answers about the same issue acquired from the various subjects of the investigation so as to contrast information from the providers and the locals' perspectives.

Results

■ An analysis of the results for each one of the segments under study will be reported separately before presenting the correlations between different data corpus.

Providers

■ Concerning the language tourism providers operating in Barcelona and their offer, Table 3 (next pages) shows an overview of the information gathered on the fact sheets. The providers marked in bold are the ones that participated in the fieldwork.

Table 2 Relation between categories and objectives for in-depth interviews.

Technique	Category	Subcategory	Objective
Interview providers (P)	P1. Identification & contextualization		SO1
	P2. Offer		SO1
	P3. Marketing	P3.1. Target	SO2
		P3.2. Promotion & contact	SO1
	P4. Accommodation	P4.1. Types	SO3
P4.2. Host Families		SO3	
	P5. Linguistic		SO2
Interview locals (L)	L1. Contextualization		SO2
	L2. Motivations & expectations		SO4
	L3. Outcomes for tourists		SO2
	L4. Outcomes for locals		SO4

Source: Prepared by the author

Table 3 Summary table of the providers' fact sheets

Provider	Program	Accommodation	Target
API	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - International studies - Intensive language summer - Language & Culture - Hispanic & European Studies - Integrated Studies Program 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Home stay - Shared apartment - Residence 	University students
Arcadia University	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Hispanic & European studies - Economics & business courses + extra Spanish courses 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Home stay - Shared international apartments - Residence - Independent housing 	University students
ASA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Language program 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Home stay - Shared apartment 	University students
BAS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Language courses - Customized programs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Hotel - Residence 	Students
BCNLIP	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Spanish language courses 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Home stay - Loft - Independent housing - Residence 	Anyone
BSS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Intensive Spanish - Regular Spanish - Private Spanish classes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Home stay - Shared apartment - Residence 	+ 18 years old

Provider	Program	Accommodation	Target
BSS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - DELE - Business Spanish 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Hostels 	
Camino Barcelona Spanish School	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Intensive - Semi-intensive - Super intensive courses - DELE - Club 50 - Spanish & Salsa courses 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Home stay - Shared apartment - Residence - Shared studios - Private studios 	+ 18 years old
CEA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Spanish language & culture 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Home stay - Residence - Independent Housing - Shared apartment 	University students
CIEE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Language & culture 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Home stay - Shared apartment - Residence 	University students
CIS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Spanish language courses 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Home stay - Shared apartment 	University students
EF	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Intensive Spanish course - EF general program 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Home stay - Shared apartment - Independent housing 	15 - 25 years old
Enforex	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Intensive - Intensive plus Spanish courses - Special Spanish course - DELE & SIELE preparation - Spanish courses for young people 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Home stay - Shared apartment - Residence Hall 	+ 14 years old
IAU College	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Spanish courses - DELE - Spanish language & culture 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Home stay - Shared apartment 	University students
IES abroad	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Language intensive - Advanced Spanish Studies - Language & studies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Home stay 	University students
ISA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Spanish language & Liberal arts - Spanish language & Culture - Hispanic studies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Home stay - Residence - Independent Housing - Shared apartment 	University students & adults
Linguaschools	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Intensive Spanish course - Intensive courses + Individual lessons - Semi - Intensive Spanish courses - Extensive Spanish courses - DELE 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Home stay - Shared apartment 	+ 16 years old
Ole Languages	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Intensive - Semi-intensive - Evening - Conversation courses - DELE 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Home stay - Shared apartment 	+18 years old
SAE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Hispanic studies - Intensive Spanish Language & Culture 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Home stay - Shared apartment - Residence 	University students
Spanish Abroad	Spanish courses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Home stay - Shared apartment 	Anyone
Speakeasy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Intensive - Evening - Super intensive 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Home stay - Shared apartment - Private apartment 	+ 18 years old

Provider	Program	Accommodation	Target
Speakeasy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Semi intensive - Long-term - Express - DELE - Conversation lessons - University preparation 		
Teenagers abroad	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Intensive Spanish course 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Home stay - Residence 	14 - 21 years old
UAB	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Intensive Spanish courses - Semester Spanish courses - Summer Spanish courses 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Residence - Housing service 	Pre-university & university students
UB	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Spanish courses - DELE 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Home stay - Residence 	University students
Version Original	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Standard intensive courses - Extensive courses - Private courses - DELE 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Home stay - Shared apartment 	+ 18 years old

Source: Prepared by the author

We interviewed four different types of providers: third party exchange providers that mostly arrange stays for American university students (API, Arcadia University, BAS, CEA and ISA), language schools whose main business priority is language classes (BCNLIP, Linguaschools, Ole Languages and Speakeasy), language tourism agencies (EF and Enforex), and higher education institutions (UB). The most outstanding results obtained through the in-depth interviews are the following.

Every year between 60 international students (in small-scale business units) and 2,500 (in the case of large-scale intermediaries) are received by providers in Barcelona. Before arriving at the destination, most tourists already have purchased their package which may be composed of accommodation (student's residence, home stay, shared apartments or individual apartments), university classes or providers' campus classes, city activities, excursions, weekend trips, medical insurance and a shuttle service. Focusing on the integration, providers plan different activities with local residents so that language tourists can discover their neighborhood, cook or even participate in NGO programs.

As for the providers' competitors, the language schools' competitors are located in Barcelona. They are the other language schools and universities that offer language classes. Regarding language agencies, we could only interview EF, and they do not feel threatened by other competitors due to its high market share in the sector. However, the third party exchange providers' competitors are differently structured. They do not consider local agencies as a competitor; it is more about the relationships and partnerships/agreements previously established bet-

ween the providers and universities in the US. Their principal duty is to convince and sign agreements with American universities to start selling their academic experience to the students. In terms of differentiation, they are similar. Higher education institutions believe they are unique due to the services they offer, for example in terms of teaching quality standards.

If we focus on the language students' profile, we can divide them into three different targets. Language agencies receive students from 16 to 25 years old, and they can come from around the world. Language schools do not have a specific target; they can be between 15 and 50 years old and come from anywhere. Third party exchange providers have a more specific target: mainly American students between 19 and 21 years old, with a majority (60%) of female students. Regarding the reasons for choosing Barcelona as a destination, they mainly consist in the weather, leisure offer, culture, food and it being a cosmopolitan city. In fact, almost all providers agreed on two main aspects: Barcelona is considered a trendy city and it has a good connection to the rest of Europe by means of low-cost airlines, so language students can visit other European countries easily.

Their methods to attract the tourists are completely different from each other. Third party exchange providers and universities reach the students through agreements with universities, whereas language schools and language tourism agencies do it by recommendation, internal agencies, social media and fairs. Furthermore, the way providers commercialize their services and target the students is basically online -e.g. social media, own web page or e-mail-, but also trade fairs and overseas agencies

in the sending countries. In order to adapt to the different segments they realign their packages, and for big groups they also design more tailor-made packages. Nevertheless, some language schools prefer to offer the same language courses to everyone regardless of their countries of origin because they want to mix as many nationalities as they can.

With respect to accommodation, the best option to learn Spanish and integrate in the local culture is through accommodation with a host family. Yet, international students can feel frustrated for not having fluent communication with their local families, among other daily routine adaptation problems. The second option would be staying with local students in a shared flat. The advantages of being with a host family are that you can be part of them, learn their culture, improve your language skills, meet locals easily, etc. In general terms, it all boils down to having an authentic experience, thus improving their language skills in a quicker way. Despite the fact that home stays are the most recommended type of accommodation, students prefer to live in a shared apartment with their own friends, which for them means having more independence and sharing their space with well-known friends. The providers explained that they have worked with the same families practically since they started working in Barcelona. The way they reached them was initially through printed journals or online, but then it was all through word-of-mouth from families who had already been working with them for some time. In addition, one of the providers expressed that their first contact with families was in a women's entrepreneurial forum. There is no consensus on the host families' profiles. The majority of the providers work with retired hosts that live alone and see this little money as an extra incentive in addition to their pension plan. Notwithstanding, few of them do not consider a pensioner as a suitable host family, and they require at least two people living in the apartment or house. It may seem obvious that host families become hosts for economic reasons, but the lonely pensioners have the motivation of not living alone, while families with children do it to show their children different cultures. Their tasks as a family are offering half or full board to students, cleaning their rooms and clothes, and having conversations with them in Spanish.

The essential conditions for being part of the host family community for most for the providers are speaking Spanish with the international student and living near the language school or the agency. In addition to fulfilling these requirements, they must eventually have a phone conversation, send some pictures of their homes and finally hold a meeting in their homes. In that way providers are completely sure that language tourists will speak Spanish and live in good conditions.

With regards to the fact that the two official languages in Barcelona are Spanish and Catalan, the providers do not think that Catalan interferes in the selection process of the host families because the families already know in advance

the language they have to speak with international students is Spanish. As a matter of fact, they do not consider the Catalan language a threat that can damage or impact them negatively, and some of them even sell it as a plus. They claim that every year they receive more language tourists willing to learn Spanish. They also state that international students do not know about Catalan before their arrival, and once they are in Barcelona they do not consider it inconvenient because it is a multicultural, cosmopolitan city. Nonetheless, universities in outbound markets are previously informed that Catalan will not interfere, but it is true that some American universities are not keen on having two languages in the same city and they decide to have agreements with other Spanish cities. They also do it because of the Spanish image: the Spanish culture is usually related to flamenco, paella, bullfighting and other local topics in some Spanish cities, which is not so much the case in Barcelona.

Local community

■ Let us move on to the main findings deriving from the in-depth interviews with the local community members that interacted with the language tourists. All the locals met the international students either through university or volunteer work/activities. Getting involved in extra activities or coming to Barcelona to attend classes at a higher education institution is the perfect door for international students to open to the local students. Even though the language of communication is not Spanish in almost all the cases, these activities allow them to become more familiar with the local culture and do some activities with people from Barcelona.

Locals are curious and craving to expand their vision of the world, which is the main reason why the interviewees wanted to start a relationship with the international students. Some of them experienced a kind of empathy to the exchange student due to their own experiences abroad, which pushed them to start the contact with the international students. All of the locals interviewed have international friends that have already returned to their home countries, and they affirm they are still in touch. In fact, one interviewee had already visited her international friend in her home country.

There are different outcomes of this relationship, both for the tourists and for the locals, since they have experienced it differently. Regarding the international students, from their friends' points of view they all loved their experience and felt very integrated in the local culture. They are looking forward to repeating the experience or coming back to Barcelona and all they left behind. On the other hand, the locals not only learned from the international students and their culture, but four out of five interviewees said that they had also rediscovered Barcelona from another perspective. One of the locals we interviewed actually stated that he had seen Barcelona as an open-minded, multicultural city.

Conclusions

■ The first specific objective of this study sought to identify the leading providers of language tourism in Barcelona, how they are positioned and the services they offer to their customers. There are a number of different providers that offer language courses and study abroad experiences in Barcelona. The most common are third party exchange providers, language tourism agencies, language schools and higher education institutions.

Generally speaking, third party exchange providers (API, Arcadia University, BAS, CEA and ISA) sell their programs mostly through American universities, fairs and conferences such as NAFSA, which is why the office based in Barcelona is not in charge of the promotion or attraction of the students. They sell complete packages in order to satisfy the students' needs, including accommodation, course registration at the Spanish university, and activities, among others. Their education programs combine Spanish courses with other academic content to gain credits and transfer them to their home universities in the US. Furthermore, these providers offer a full range of activities such as cultural visits, excursions or culinary activities.

The language tourism agencies (EF and Enforex) use a similar methodology. They both offer language tourism products at a bigger scale. Their packages are all-inclusive and are sold in the source countries. They include activities, accommodation, a various range of activities and intensive Spanish classes. The price of the program is very high due to the exclusiveness of the package.

Language schools (BCNLIP, Linguaschools, Ole Languages and Speakeasy) use a different approach and sell their services at a smaller scale. They focus their programs on the language learning instead of the full package deal. Even though some offer accommodation, their target is usually students that are already living temporarily in Barcelona and want to learn or improve their language skills.

Lastly, higher education institutions (UB) play a different role. They do not offer a complete package, only classes and accommodation in the university campuses for an extra cost. Students are more independent and have to organize their own trip.

As for the second objective of our research, in relation to tourists' profile and behavior most of the providers agreed that Barcelona is becoming increasingly trendy for young students in their early twenties due to the weather, the local culture and its geographical location, as it is well connected to the rest of Europe. Except from BAS, which has a worldwide scope, the third party exchange providers we interviewed (CEA, ISA, API and Arcadia University) only specialize in the American market. That explains the large number of students coming from this specific country. Regardless of their country of origin, the information collected from the providers remarks the

poor communication language tourists have with locals in Spanish due to the activities they undertake. The activities are principally done with other international students and not many with locals, which reduces their chances to practice Spanish.

Concerning our third specific objective, the types of accommodation used by this kind of tourists are usually home stay, shared apartments and student residence halls. Each type of accommodation can have a different impact on the relationships between students and locals and vice versa.

The students that choose to stay with a host family do it to integrate better in the local culture and learn better Spanish. This is the reason why providers recommend students to stay with host families, to learn more Spanish and have a complete cultural immersion. However, the students, in most cases, make the final choice of accommodation. The students that want to learn Spanish but also be more independent opt for a shared apartment in the city. Conversely, the ones that choose to stay in student residence hall aim to meet more international students in the same situation as them, which creates the so-called international bubble.

As far as the fourth research objective is concerned, all the local students we interviewed met the foreign language students they eventually became friends with through university classes, activities or volunteer work. This corresponds to our findings from the in-depth interviews with the providers. Providers try to involve the language students with the local community by offering language exchanges and volunteer work, among other activities.

The results obtained from in-depth interview with the local community members showed that even though the international students' language of interaction with their local friends is English, they feel very integrated in the culture, in their friends' view. Thanks to the language tourists and the activities they do with them, their local acquaintances usually rediscover their city and the Spanish culture. Moreover, the local friends affirmed that the relationship and links created with the international students are strong, and they are still in touch with them once they go back to their home country.

All in all, it can be stated that this project has reached its aims. Notwithstanding, its representativeness is limited due to the sample size, which is why this research is considered an empiric study. We encountered obstacles to get in contact with the different language providers. In many cases, the e-mail requests were not answered, and we had to go to the offices and ask for an interview physically. On the other hand, the providers' marketing strategy or advising strategy could have been included in the fact sheets we elaborated if we had carried out interviews in their home offices to find out more about these strategic aspects. Since most on site offices at the

language tourism destinations deal with the language tourists only upon their arrival, the question of how providers reach their customers and how they impact on their selection process might have been better answered by the home based offices.

As reaching the language tourists may also have to do with the partnerships providers have with the home universities, it would be interesting to know how much influence the home universities have on the students' decision. Besides, the relevance of living costs at the destination could be explored to analyze how accommodation, transport or food expenses intervene in language tourists' choices, particularly in the case of those who also pay for tuition additionally.

Since this study did not investigate lodging arrangements for international students deeply, it would also be of value to conduct further research to determine the situation of accommodation for these tourists in Barcelona, the associated accommodation costs and the economic impact of language tourism for this destination. A number of questions could be investigated in this respect: Is the language tourists' preference for shared apartments due to lack of information prior to their arrival? Do they really have less independence with the host families? Are they aware of the cultural differences with the expectations of the host families and those of their families from their home countries? Are the host families trained to host and if so what does the training have to say about independence?

As language tourists' integration is one of the key challenges in the language tourism experience, i.e. a threat and an opportunity at the same time, other issues could be raised. How easy is it for them to integrate? What can Barcelona or the organizations and institutions that bring them do to make them an integral part of the city, program, organization, etc and not just part of the party scene? How accepting is the local community? Do the local students that haven't yet studied abroad connect less to the international students or have a minor motivation to connect with them?

Although this project has provided a general picture of the situation of language tourism in Barcelona, there are still abundant topics for further research. Two data corpus were created during this investigation with the information we obtained from local friends and language tourism providers. From this starting point, other studies could be carried out and the sample size could also be enlarged. Other language tourism destinations could be compared with Barcelona to discover why the latter does not receive more language tourists. Furthermore, trends in outbound markets could be examined. As language studies in higher education seem to be less popular nowadays, will language tourism numbers decrease? Will language tourism providers attract individuals with other motivations and try to offer them innovative products in combination with language learning?

Finally, with respect to the language tourism providers operating in Barcelona, future investigations could find out if they also work with other Spanish destinations and which type of differentiated product they offer in each one of them. Conversely, in the case of those study abroad providers whose programs do not include language learning, it would be relevant to detect why. Our research trip has just begun.

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