The destination attachment cycle. The case of academic tourism

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Abstract: Tourist satisfaction is a crucial issue for managers of tourism destinations. Scholars have analysed the motivations for academic tourism, but there is a lack of research on the emotional bonds with the destination. This study confirms the existence of a cycle with different stages of attachment and detachment with regard to destination, based on four phases: enchantment, coexistence, fatigue and nostalgia. These phases are analysed in relation to the cultural values of tourists and the time spent at the destination. A mixed-methods approach is used based on primary data collected by means of a focus group and a survey of 200 foreign students in Barcelona to validate the aforesaid phases. The results confirm this destination attachment cycle and show that when academic tourists come from a culturally similar society to the destination, this positively influences the stages of enchantment, coexistence and nostalgia, but not fatigue.

Key words: guest impact, cultural exchange, expectation and satisfaction, academic tourism, Barcelona

Introduction

The tourism industry is considered to have been a pioneer at creating a positive feeling of happiness among its customers (Pearce et al., 2011), which is derived from the encounter between different cultures (Bimonte, 2008), one that is more familiar, stable and known (permanent residents of a community), and another that is more unknown and variable (tourists and temporary residents). These interactions and experiences involve people from different cultural, social and economic backgrounds (Mazón, 2001). They influence both guests and hosts in their attitudes, opinions and lifestyles (Sharpley, 2008) and generate different moments of emotional bond with the destination, an issue that has barely been studied in the academic literature.

Much research has focused on residents' perceptions (Gursoy & Rutherford, 2004; Lee, 2013; Vargas et. al, 2015; Malik et al., 2017; Martín et. al, 2018), as well as those of tourists in relation to the designed image of destinations (Moreira & Iao, 2014). However, tourists' perceptions in relation to received emotional and sociocultural effects have been ignored (Sharpley, 2014). Social Exchange Theory is usually used to assess how much residents support tourism development in their communities (Ap, 1992; Dyer et al., 2007; Gursoy et al., 2010; Stylidis et al., 2014; Crespi-Vallbona & Dimitrovsky, 2017). From the demand side, motivations and interests that encourage people to travel have been analysed and related to self-fulfilment and personal satisfaction (Cohen, 1979); a diverse set of cultural, social, and other needs (Beard & Raghed, 1983); the travel career ladder (Pearce, 2005); and as a combination of push and pull factors (Dann, 1977; Crompton, 1979). However, these motivations and

interests have not been analysed from the Social Learning approach, that is, in terms of the effect and exchange that tourists, guests, visitors or temporary residents expect to receive and perceive while travelling. That is, all the knowledge, culture, experience and so on that is acquired by travellers and thus encourages them to continue to travel.

This research is therefore based on the conceptual approaches of the Social Exchange and Social Learning theories. It expects to measure the destination attachment of temporary residents, when they stay for prolonged periods for educational purposes, that is, so-called academic tourism. Prior research has focused on typology and characteristics of this specific group of travellers (Kusumah et al., 2021; Martínez-Roget & Rodríguez, 2021; Cerdeira Bento, 2014; Rodríguez et al., 2012). Other academics have analyzed the relevance of the destination image to guarantee the integration *in situ* of academic tourists (Rodrigues Soares et al., 2019).

In this regard, the main objective of this research is a better understanding of the different emotional phases experienced by academic tourists at the destination, specifically the evolution and phases of enchantment, coexistence, nostalgia and fatigue during the stay. This satisfactory sociocultural attachment can be followed by a detachment stage when exchange expectations are not met, and cultural imbalances create important moments of inadaptability. The intensity of this process of attachment and detachment depends on the intercultural competitiveness of each individual, influenced by attributes and social values that depend on the origin or nationality that culturally defines them. Definitely, this research focuses on academic travellers and their perceived attachment and detachment during their learning experience.

There is a lack of academic literature on these stages, which have practical implications for destination management organisations that are focused on academic tourism. Tourism satisfaction and well-being are aspects a destination must pursue in order to maintain its ratio of popularity, therefore is important to know these four attachment phases in order to know the visitors' feeling in different moments of their stay .

This paper begins with a review of the scientific literature analysing attachment and social exchange theory among temporary residents. Four different stages (Baloglu & McCleary, 1999; Camprubí & Coromina, 2017; Berry, 2003; Rogoff, 2003; Awang Rozaimie, 2011; Boym, 2001; Legg, 2004) are proposed to explain the sociocultural encounter experienced by academic tourists during the so-called *destination attachment cycle*. These phases are *enchantment*, a stage marked by the curiosity to know and discover the "new" culture of the destination; *coexistence*, which involves a degree of enthusiasm, tolerance and living together with the host culture; *fatigue,* which introduces periods of exhaustion, indifference and boredom; and lastly, *nostalgia,* which involves a feeling of absence and longing, and not wanting to leave. The paper studies how length of stay and cultural values determine the intensity of these phases.

In the methodology section, a mixed-method approach was used. The first step was carried out using the qualitative method of focus group in order to test the existence of the attachment cycle and its phases in the destination. The next step was the quantitative method by means of a survey of 200 foreign tourists with academic

motivations. The quantitative analysis validates the intensity of each phase according to the length of stay and tourists' cultural values. This is followed by the qualitative and quantitative results and, finally conclusions are derived.

Literature review

Any tourist activity involves social exchange and social learning as analysed by their respective theories. In the case of academic tourism, the intensity of these exchanges is higher as people tend to stay for longer than they would on a holiday. The destination attachment and detachment cycle that academic tourists experience on educational visits are considered to be a similar process to that of expatriates.

Tourism and social interaction

Tourism is a global phenomenon and is expected to continue to grow in the future. There has been a notable increase in individual trips of 7.1% since 1950, and further growth of 3.3% is expected by 2030 (World Tourism Organization, UNWTO, 2011), although COVID19 is sure to reduce this constant increase. Tourist activity involves an encounter between two communities, which can usually be differentiated between one that is more stable and known, and another that is more unknown and variable (Bimonte, 2008). Tourism is not just an industry. Essentially is a social phenomenon that entails interaction between temporary residents and a permanent society that involves the exchange of resources of monetary or symbolic value (Higgins-Desbiolles, 2006). These interactions and exchanges consequently imply learning, sharing different cross-cultural understandings, building relationships with people, immersing the local culture and enjoying local food and beverages. Cultural interaction is greater when people move from their own cultural environments to others for professional (expatriates), educational or personal reasons, and thus modify their lifestyles (Berry, 2003).

These interactions and experiences influence both guests and hosts in terms of their attitudes, behaviours and opinions (Sharpley, 2008). The nature and quality of this interaction affects the perceptions of both societies with regard to the other (Bimonte & Punzo, 2007; Reisinger & Turner, 2002) and consequently their will to pay for tourist services and to support tourist activity in their community, respectively (Andereck & Vogt, 2000; Harrill, 2004). Carmichael (2006) states that direct and indirect interactions between residents and tourists play a key role in the creation of positive experiences.

The conceptual approaches used to explain the relationship between guests and hosts are Social Exchange Theory and Social Learning Theory. Research has usually focused on residents' perceptions (Gursoy & Rutherford, 2004), and has ignored those of tourists (Sharpley, 2014). Many studies have examined residents' perceptions of the impact of tourism (Nunkoo & Ramkissoon, 2012; Stylidis et al., 2014), following Irridex Model (Doxey, 1975). This theoretical framework differentiates residents' attitudes toward tourism through four evolutionary stages: euphoria, apathy, irritation and antagonism. At the beginning of first tourism arrivals, residents show enthusiasm and interest face

to visitors, but to the extent flows increase, they disregard and even reject their presence, as they perceive costs of tourism exceed benefits. Concurrently, Butler's Tourism Area Life Cycle Model (1980) analyses the discovery or birth process of a destination until achieving its phase of maturity or consolidation. During this process, tourist infrastructures increase in parallel with the number of tourists. Other scholars have examined economic, sociocultural and environmental changes to destinations due to the impact of tourism in order to better manage and plan tourism activity. A cost-benefit assessment leads local communities to decide to refuse or support tourism development (Ap, 1992; Gursoy & Kendall 2006; Vargas-Sanchez et al, 2015). However, there is another dimension: visitor satisfaction (Moscardo & Hughes, 2018; Crespi-Vallbona et al., 2019), and destination attachment among visitors should also be considered.

Social Exchange Theory (SET) is defined as a sociological theory concerned with understanding the exchange of resources between individuals in an interaction situation (Ap, 1992). SET states that interpersonal interaction includes the exchange of resources, and the social learning and satisfaction generated in these social and economic exchanges. When individuals perceive more benefits than costs, they express more interest in immersing in these social interactions and the sharing of feelings. Social Exchange Theory thus highlights affectivity and satisfaction, i.e., positive emotions as a result of social exchange and solid relations (Lawler et al., 2000), as well as social learning. Additionally, Social Learning Theory states that learning process and social behavior is acquired by observing and imitating others (Bandura, 1977). In that sense, the own mental state and motivation play an important role in determining whether a concept or a behaviour is learned or not. In that sense, academic tourism spends lot of time sharing experiences and meanings, and living together with locals in a professional and leisure manner (Kusumah et al., 2021). This cultural and social immersion generates personal challenges, solid feelings, cognitive satisfaction and resilience behaviour during the academic stay. This research entails these unexplored factors in previous academic tourism literature and offers key constructs with a destination attachment cycle during the learning experience of academic tourists.

Academic tourism and the destination attachment cycle

There has been a significant increase in recent decades in the number of academic tourists looking to travel away from their homes and live in a different country for purposes of higher education (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, OECD, 2011; Martínez-Roget & Rodríguez, 2021)). This constant growth of international academic mobility has generated important opportunities for destinations and tour operators, transforming this tourism segment into a potential long-term investment for destinations (Davidson et al., 2010; Cerdeira Bento, 2014). Rodríguez, Martínez-Roget and Pawlowska (2012) consider the economic impact for cities that host academic tourists to be similar to that of more traditional visits.

Academic tourism is viewed as a new kind of tourism due to its distinctive features (UNWTO, 2010; Rodríguez et al., 2012). The UNWTO defines it as all students that travel away from their usual residence for a short period (less than one year), either within their own country (domestic academic tourism) or abroad (international academic tourism) for training, education and/or research.

The motivation for academic tourism resides in the interest to complete previous training (Weaver, 2003) and enhance one's personal career (Krzaklewska, 2008). González, Mesanza and Mariel (2011) analyse factors that affect the flows of Erasmus academic mobility, such as country size, cost of living, distance, educational background, university quality, language and climate. Rodríguez et al. (2012) examine determinants of the demand for academic tourism at Galician universities, i.e., the attractiveness of the university education system and the international prestige of universities located in a well-known pilgrimage destination. Cerdeira Bento (2014) concludes that 95% of students prefer to learn in environments with participants from different cultures; 93% state that they have improved their ability to deal with cultural differences; and 84% consider themselves more competent at solving problems, and especially coping with difficulties or unexpected challenges.

Academic tourists adopt a strategy to satisfy their interests (Li & Qi, 2019). They view their trips extremely highly and their motives are similar to those of a pilgrim. They recognise the responsible ethics that they should observe as tourists, and how these imply a respectful attitude that is focused on becoming involved in these places rather than appropriating them, and becoming a user and a customer who is ready to culturally absorb these new enclaves (MacCannell, 2003).

In this context, the destination attachment that an academic tourist or temporary resident feels is similar to the phases based on training and professional and personal development that corporate expatriates experience when moving to a new environment. The high and low phases that expatriates experience take the form of a U, from the 'honeymoon' at the beginning to the frustration and animosity that follow, to eventually return to a sense of enthusiasm, adaptation and acceptance. Church (1982) described this sojourner's cycle of adjustment and adaptation as a time function. In the beginning, there is excitement, but this is followed by a drop in acceptance, together with feelings of frustration and confusion. The sojourner then rallies back and becomes more aware of and favourable to the host culture. Academic tourists go through similar phases of enthusiasm, curiosity and enchantment that lead to coexistence, tolerance and acceptance of the destination, but not without moments of fatigue, exhaustion and indifference. This cycle culminates with a phase of nostalgia, longing and attachment to the host culture. In the so-called destination attachment cycle, we therefore consider the four following phases: enchantment, coexistence, fatigue and nostalgia.

Enchantment Phase:

Several studies state that tourists tend to choose a destination based on their perception, or preconceived image, of it (Baloglu & McCleary, 1999; Galí & Donaire,

2005; Camprubí & Coromina, 2017). They visualize it from home using books, guides, films or blogs before physically moving there (Urry & Larsen, 2011). Consequently, it seems reasonable to state that tourists, when they arrive at their destination, maintain their curiosity, excitement and will to "rediscover" and experience the destination. This leads to the following proposition:

H1. The first few days of the stay are the 'honeymoon'. That is, the moment of the greatest romance with regard to the destination, of the search for information, of curiosity, of enthusiasm about all that is new, unknown, or just theoretically suspected (pre-trip analysis).

Coexistence Phase:

Visitors put a lot of effort into being socially accepted, and into learning and understanding the expected behaviour as part of the cultural socialisation process when they are introduced to new cultural environments (Berry, 2003; Rogoff, 2003; Bornstein, 2002). In order to understand the host society's beliefs, behaviours and everyday activities, these need to be examined, learned and interiorised in one's own cultural context to achieve attachment, bonding and affection. This socialisation, enculturation or acculturation culminates in a cultural and emotional socialisation process (Cole & Tar, 2005). This leads to the following statement:

H2. At a certain point, there is absolute coexistence with the destination. Tourists feel comfortable with the host culture, they agree with it, they integrate and assimilate norms, values, beliefs, etc. Their tolerance, coexistence and mutual harmony with the host culture is total and this is reflected by adopting the same everyday habits as permanent residents (with no distinctions).

Fatigue Phase:

The destination attachment and adaptation that temporary residents feel does not exclude moments of certain weakness with regard to the host society, such as fear, insecurity, mistrust, and so on. They start to long for their home country. Negative, contrary and uncommitted feelings about the destination appear. Incompetence or denial cause this disenchantment, rejection and fatigue with regard to the destination, as occurs to sojourners when they are unable to adjust or adapt to the host cultures where they are working (Awang Rozaimie, 2011). This leads to the following proposition:

H3. During the fatigue phase, tourists feel exhausted, tired, bored, indifferent and disenchanted with regard to the host destination.

Nostalgia Phase:

The moments of euphoria and affection intensify when the moment to go back home gets closer. Individuals' experiences and perceptions with regard to the destination tend to intensify and are even constantly rekindled while they are still there. People and places shape and impact upon people's emotions (Boym, 2001; Legg, 2004). They are

overcome by a sense of yearning and distance, and perceive that time is racing by. This leads to the following proposition:

H4. As the date they will return gets closer, tourists view the destination as an unforgettable, nostalgic, magical and unrepeatable experience.

Culture clash

Culture is the aspect that determines individuals' characteristics and behaviours regarding their attitudes, beliefs, values and norms in their daily lives. These elements refer to a psychological and social system that is the basis of how we interact with others (Hofstede, 1983). People pass them down the generations through imitation and learning processes through specific behaviours, habits and traditions (Ward & Kennedy, 2001). Culture is society's expression of its tangible and intangible heritage, transmitted through the creations and interactions of people.

Cultural differences generate psychological and emotional challenges and include active decisions and evaluative moments as people have expectations of positive intercultural interactions (Ward & Kennedy, 2001). Temporary residents' attachment to the destination or host community is influenced by their sociocultural knowledge. Cultural shocks or clashes generate stress, difficulty and discomfort among both permanent and temporary residents. The latter can suffer much more due to the additional effort required to adapt and adjust their cultural mind-sets to the host culture. All processes of social exchange are immersed in emotions (Cole & Tan, 2005), which are a psychological reaction to cultural, social and other changes (Anand, 2006; Rich, 2005). Such a personal reaction has to do with feelings of happiness, sadness, fear, indignation, annoyance, surprise, disenchantment, and so on, and depends on learned culture. Therefore, ethnic, religious and linguistic aspects determine intercultural relations and appropriated emotional reactions (Gross, 1998).

Processes of cultural exchange involve acculturation (Laroche & Cleveland, 1997), which is the psychological and cultural change process as result of an encounter with another cultural group; it involves learning the host community's cultural standards, such as its language, typical food, and so on. This sociocultural impact depends on the traveller's capacity to interact with the host community, and his/her interest in adapting to the host culture's attitudes and values (Church, 1982; Befus, 1998; Littrell et al., 2006). Visitors have different intensities, timeframes and rhythms in their acculturation processes, i.e., in the phase when they modify their habits, lifestyles, behaviours, values and attitudes to the host destination (Laroche & Cleveland, 1997). This cultural adjustment depends on the cultural distance between the country of origin and the host country. Thus, individuals will have different ways to cope with the environment, and with common and unexpected everyday situations (Hofstede, 1983; Meyer & Geschiere, 1999). This leads to the statement that cultural values influence the intensity of different phases of the destination attachment cycle:

H5. Academic tourists' cultural values influence their experience of destination attachment in the four phases (enchantment, coexistence, fatigue and nostalgia) and the degree of intensity of each phase.

Furthermore, these different attachment and detachment phases are affected by the temporality factor. As individuals spend more time at the destination, cultural experiences increase, as do their negative feelings of anxiety, confusion, disruption, irritability, as well as such positive ones as enthusiasm, attachment, affection and nostalgia (Befus, 1998; Church, 1982; Littrell et al., 2006). This leads to consideration of the temporality variable as a determinant factor for dealing with the intense feelings triggered in the destination attachment cycle:

H6. The amount of time spent at the destination influences the four phases and their level of intensity.

Destination loyalty, to its culture and lifestyle, has been abundantly analysed by academia from a marketing lens with the aim to gain traveller loyalty and intention to revisit (Alegre & Cladera, 2009; Bigne et al., 2009; Moreira & Iao, 2014). Furthermore, other studies refer to sociocultural interactions and consequently generated well-being and satisfaction (Choo & Petrick, 2014; Chen & Tsai, 2007; Petrick, 2004). Exchanges meet academic tourists' tangible and intangible needs, and influence their sense of attachment and detachment while staying at the destination. Greater satisfaction is generated by these exchange relations, and greater enthusiasm and commitment to maintain these relations are established. Consequently, both participants work hard to achieve favourable interactions and exchange relations. This leads to consideration of the following statement:

H7. Academic tourism generates positive and affective experiences at the destination.

Case study: academic tourism in Barcelona

Context of the study

The international mobility of university and post-university students has expanded massively over the past two decades, from 2 million in 1998 to 5.3 million in 2017, growing at an annual rate of 5% in OECD countries (OECD, 2019). International students represent more than 15% of the overall number of students in countries such as Luxembourg, Australia, Austria, New Zealand, Switzerland and the United Kingdom (OECD, 2019). This mobility of students increases as higher levels of education are reached. In 2017, international mobility was 4% for university degrees and 22% for doctoral programs (OECD, 2019).

Spain received 109,522 international students[1] in the 2016-2017 academic year, 52,962 through mobility programs and 56,560 via ordinary enrolment (Table 1). Madrid (27,926), Catalonia (27,891) and Andalusia (15,539) were the regions with the highest

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[1] According to the Ministry of Science, Innovation and Universities (2019) "Incoming international students are considered to be those who have their regular residence outside of Spain and are either enrolled ordinarily at a face-to-face university, or are part of some mobility programme with a destination at an SUE university."

number of incoming international students (Ministerio de Ciencia, Innovación y Universidades, 2019). Note that Spain led the Erasmus ranking of host countries in the 2018-2019 academic year, with 42,537 university students, followed by Germany, the United Kingdom, France and Italy (Ministerio de Ciencia, Innovación y Universidades, 2019).

Table 1: Foreign students enrolled in first and second cycle studies at Spanish Universities (2018-2019 academic year)

	Total	Public university	Private university
European Union (28)	31,898	18,860	13,038
Rest of Europe	5,779	4,506	1,273
USA and Canada	705	224	481
Latin America and Caribbean	16,073	11,471	4,602
North of Africa	5,633	4,957	676
Rest of Africa	1,618	1,356	262
Asia and Oceania	7,640	6,430	1,210

Source: The authors based on data from Statista (2020)

In the 2017-2018 academic year, Catalan universities received 12,721 students from outside Spain (most of them from the rest of Europe and America), both from mobility programmes and ordinary enrolment, 70.32% more than the 2013-2014 academic year (Table 2). More than 90% were concentrated at universities located in the province of Barcelona.

Table 2: Evolution of the number of international students at Catalan universities (2018-2019 academic year)

Academic course	Europe	America	Asia	Africa	Oceania	Total number of students
2013-2014	4,665	2,259	482	15	48	7,469
2014-2015	5,155	4,178	806	19	39	10,197
2015-2016	5,603	5,255	906	21	43	11,825
2016-2017	5,760	5,270	956	56	53	12,095
2017-2018	5,989	5,525	940	196	71	12,721

Source: The authors based on data from the Department of Universities and Research. Government of Catalonia

Methodology and data collection

This study has been based on a mixed-method approach with a first qualitative and posterior quantitative methodology. The first qualitative part consisted in a focus group divided in two sessions in order to investigate the determine the 4 different phases of attachment with the destination, as well as the circumstances that influenced these phases and their degree of intensity. Focus group was conducted during spring of 2019 with 10 foreign university and post-university students who chose Barcelona as a study destination. In relation with the length of stay, 3 participants had been in the city for less than one month, 4 of them had been in the city between 1 and 6 months, while the rest were one month away from returning to their places of origin.

The second part started with the use of the information from the focus group to design the questionnaire and used to collect quantitative data. The questionnaire was also based on Church's (1982) expatriate adjustment and adaptation cycle, the Social Exchange Theory (Ap, 1992), and the results of the focus group. Thus, the questionnaire was designed to ask questions about the influence and intensity of the 4 attachment phases (enchantment, coexistence, fatigue and nostalgia), as well as variables of global satisfaction, cultural values and length of stay. The intensity of the phases experienced by academic tourists was measured with 19 questions (see Tables 3 and 4) on a 7-point Likert scale from "totally disagree" (1) to "totally agree" (7). For the measurement of cultural impact, the question used was "The cultural values of this destination fit your own", also on a 7-point Likert scale from "totally disagree" (1) to "totally agree" (7). In order to verify the validity of the questionnaire content, seven experts involved professionally and academically with the tourism industry were interviewed. Their expert opinions made possible to ensure that the scale covered the research objectives (Bryman & Bell, 2015; Aguinis & Solarino, 2019).

The authors collected data using paper-and-pencil interviews held between October 2019 and February 2020 in selected classrooms with foreign students at different public and private university centres in Barcelona, where they were continuing their university and post-university education. A total of 209 responses were initially obtained. Finally, 200 responses were deemed valid, and 9 surveys were discarded due to inconsistencies in their responses.

Concerning to quantitative analyses, correlation tests between the cultural impact and the length of stay with the 4 attachment phases (see Table 3) were performed. The study also uses analysis of variance (ANOVA) test to determine whether the attachment phases changes the origin of the academic tourists in Barcelona (see Table 4).

Results

The focus discussion group validated that academic tourists experience an attachment cycle during their stay and culturally adapt to the destination chosen to broaden their personal, academic, and professional training. The phases and intensities of the destination attachment life cycle depend on different aspects, such as how they fit with their own cultural values, their cultural competences, and their multicultural and emotional personalities, that is, their ability to assimilate and adapt to the new culture, and to the different cultural settings. Consequently, this social and cultural integration has different phases and different intensities depending on the established intercultural relationship, leading to affection with regard to the destination, and a specific understanding, fondness, and longing with regard to the foreign culture. The length of their stay also influences these phases and intensities. So the results from the focus groups determine how the destination attachment cycle has four different stages: enchantment, coexistence, fatigue, and nostalgia.

For this reason, the focus group validated the existence of Hypothesis 1: *The first few days of the stay are the 'honeymoon'. That is, the moment of the greatest romance with regard to the destination, of the search for information, of curiosity, of enthusiasm about all that is new, unknown, or just theoretically suspected (as it was in the pre-trip analysis)*. The anxiety and uncertainty that the first few weeks could generate disappear once plans to improve one's future personal and professional life start taking shape. Therefore, feelings of euphoria and curiosity support the initial phase of enthusiasm as part of the destination attachment cycle experienced by the academic tourist.

The focus group also confirms Hypothesis 2: *at a certain point, there is absolute coexistence with the destination, tourists feel comfortable with the host culture, they agree with it, they integrate and assimilate norms, values, beliefs, etc*. Their tolerance, coexistence and complicity with the host culture is absolute and their day-to-day lives resemble (and are not distinguished at all from) the residents at the destination residents. The coexistence phase verifies that tourists begin to feel comfortable at the destination, are fully adapted to their new day-to-day life, and are enjoying the adventures of a new life in the host society, assimilating its social and cultural values to the extent that they feel like they are residents too. Students live the cultural reality, build social networks, learn the language, participate in traditional customs and everything becomes less surprising because it has already been assimilated and they feel like they are an integral part of that society. That is, the tourist feels as if he/she were (almost) at home.

This phase does not prevent moments of frustration, tiredness or disaffection with the destination, therefore the existence of the fatigue phase is also verified, confirming Hypothesis 3: *during the fatigue phase, academic tourists feel exhausted, tired, bored, indifferent and disenchanted with regard to the host destination*. Despite the pleasure of living the experience, tangible and intangible cultural habits (such as cuisine and being with friends, etc.) are missed and mythologised. This is when a certain degree of exhaustion with regard to the destination is detected, as students grow weary of assimilating the destination culture, no longer feel the 'surprise factor' and tire of having to plan all their behaviours around the host community.

And, finally, the focus group results also confirm Hypothesis 4: *As the date they will return gets closer, tourists view the destination as an unforgettable, nostalgic, magical and unrepeatable experience.* Academic tourists confirm how wistful they feel when they are on the point of going back home. They feel nostalgic because of all the extremely pleasant, intense experiences they have had.

The results reveal the existence of the four phases, from enchantment to nostalgia with interspersed moments of fatigue and coexistence. It is confirmed that there is a period of tiredness during the first month, due to bureaucratic and logistical procedures and problems, like applying for residency permits, renting apartments, loneliness, etc. Such fatigue also appears from the fifth month in the destination as a result of an intense

perception of the cultural differences between their homes and the destinations, causing the students to feel fatigued and to miss their home culture.

The quantitative results are based on the relationship between the phases and variables that determine their intensity (length of stay and cultural values). Specifically, the degree of intensity of each phase is analysed in relation to the similarities and differences between the cultural values of the students and their destination.

Table 3 (first column) shows that cultural values are directly related with the enchantment, coexistence, and nostalgia phases. Moments of enchantment, affection, tolerance, acceptance and assimilation are easier to encounter the more social and cultural values are shared with the host society. It is also shown that the coexistence phase is valued more positively when the cultural values of the student fit more closely with those of the destination, possibly because the adaptation process is easier, more affordable, and accessible.

In contrast, in the fatigue phase, there is no significant relationship between disaffection and fatigue with the students' cultural values. The routine of doing the same things every day and feeling that nothing is changing generates frustration and intolerance rather than the sharing of sociocultural values. Also note that differences in cultural values do not necessarily mean that students do not tolerate them. The results show the existence of a fatigue phase but, regardless of the students' cultural values, it has no influence on the positive assessment of the experience. Nevertheless, if the cultural values are very different, this tiredness is more intense, since adaptation to the host community is more difficult. The routine itself sometimes causes fatigue, whereby students do not sense any major personal changes and some host cultural habits cause discomfort. These are the most hostile moments, and of the most intense culture clash.

Hence, Hypothesis 5 is partially confirmed: *Academic tourists' cultural values influence their experience of destination attachment in the four phases, and the degree of intensity of each phase*.

Table 3: Correlation between phases and cultural values and length of stay

Phases		Cultural values	Length of stay
Enchantment	1. At the start of the trip, you were intensely curious about the destination	.159*	-0.069
	5. At the start of the trip, you were not particularly curious about the destination	-.194**	-0.076
	9. At the start of the trip, you were not at all curious about the destination	-.257**	0.122
	13. You went through a stage of falling in love with the destination	.264**	-0.112
Coexistence	2. During your stay, you were intensely enthusiastic about the destination	.242**	-0.073
	6. During your stay, you were not particularly enthusiastic about the destination	-.361**	-0.052
	10. During your stay, you were not at all enthusiastic about the destination	-.276**	0.043
	14. You went through a stage of being tolerant of the destination	0.063	.153*

Fatigue	3. During your stay, you began to feel more tired of the destination	-0.095	-0.082
	7. During your stay, you didn't become particularly tired of the destination	-0.06	-0.07
	11. During your stay, you did not become tired of the destination at all	-0.129	-0.033
	15. You went through a stage of being tired of the destination	-.215**	0.122
Nostalgia	4. On return, you will have intensely nostalgic memories of the destination	.358**	-0.102
	8. On return, you will not have particularly nostalgic memories of the destination	-.307**	-0.02
	12. On return, you will have no nostalgic memories of the destination at all	-.148*	0.035
	16. You would recommend the destination	.245**	-.218**

*p<0.05; **p<0.01

Source: The authors

The correlation between the length of stay and the four phases (Table 3, last column) shows that the enchantment phase has no direct relationship with the time spent at the destination. It is a period of personal euphoria due to the new life project, the move to another place, etc. On the other hand, this phase does have a direct relationship with the cultural values of an academic tourist's origin (Table 4). Enthusiasm is highest when cultural values are most different. For this reason, the degree of enthusiasm among surveyed Asian students is higher than that of European students. During this stage, due to the novelty of the academic journey, the destinations are fully tolerated. Furthermore, it is found that time does not influence the fatigue phase either. After students have spent a certain time somewhere, there is natural inertia towards experiencing fatigue, regardless of any adaptation to or tolerance of the host society's cultural values. The routine factor is the main aspect of this fatigue phase.

As mentioned, it is demonstrated that there is a phase of nostalgia that occurs a few days before returning home and which does not depend on the time spent at the destination but on experiences. This phase is more intense if the cultural values of students and the destination are similar. For instance, South American students sense greater nostalgia than Chinese students. However, the length of stay is not decisive, but depends instead on situations that have been faced and overcome, on personality, and on the personal situation. Thus, Hypothesis 6: *the time spent at the destination has influenced the four phases, and their degree of intensity*, is partly supported.

Therefore, regardless of the coincidence or not of cultural values, when tolerance of the destination, adaptation, and positive experiences coincide, most respondents would recommend the destination and the academic experience. Note that the more time students spend at a destination, the less they would recommend it, possibly due to their more in-depth knowledge of cultural practices meaning they have a greater perception of the negative feelings aroused by irritating, difficult situations. So, Hypothesis 7: *academic tourists experience positive and affective experiences at the destination*, is proven.

Table 4: ANOVA test comparison of attachment phases across tourists origin

Phases		Europe	Latin America	Asia	Total	p-value
Enchantment	1. At the start of the trip, you were intensely curious about the destination	6,0	6,4	6,3	6,3	0,081
	5. At the start of the trip, you were not particularly curious about the destination	2,3	2,0	2,9	2,2	0,012*
	9. At the start of the trip, you were not at all curious about the destination	1,6	1,8	2,2	1,8	0,220
	13. You went through a stage of falling in love with the destination	5,2	5,0	5,1	5,0	0,574
Coexistence	2. During your stay, you were intensely enthusiastic about the destination	5,9	5,3	5,8	5,5	0,021*
	6. During your stay, you were not particularly enthusiastic about the destination	2,2	2,3	2,9	2,4	0,091
	10. During your stay, you were not at all enthusiastic about the destination	1,6	1,7	2,5	1,8	0,005*
	14. You went through a stage of being tolerant of the destination	3,7	4,7	4,0	4,3	0,001*
Fatiga	3. During your stay, you began to feel more tired of the destination	3,5	4,4	4,1	4,1	0,014*
	7. During your stay, you didn't become particularly tired of the destination	2,5	3,0	3,1	2,9	0,212
	11. During your stay, you did not become tired of the destination at all	2,2	2,7	3,3	2,7	0,074
	15. You went through a stage of being tired of the destination	2,5	3,0	3,2	2,9	0,158
Nostalgia	4. On return, you will have intensely nostalgic memories of the destination	5,6	5,6	5,6	5,6	0,999
	8. On return, you will not have particularly nostalgic memories of the destination	2,0	2,0	3,2	2,2	0,003*

	12. On return, you will have no nostalgic memories of the destination at all	1,8	2,0	3,2	2,1	0,000*
	16. You would recommend the destination	6,5	6,1	5,8	6,2	0,038*
	17. You will come back to the destination	6,0	6,1	5,5	6,0	0,058
	18. The cultural values of this destination fit with yours	5,7	5,4	4,8	5,4	0,056
	19. The cultural values of this destination fit your expectations before coming	5,6	5,4	5,0	5,4	0,251

*p-value <0,05

Source: The authors

Conclusions

This paper makes two main contributions. Firstly, in relation to the literature, it states that academic tourists experience an affection cycle when staying abroad for educational purposes. This process of attachment and detachment with regard to the destination is influenced by the length of the stay and by the similarity or difference between the cultural values of the destination and the student's origin. Secondly, this paper has managerial implications for destinations that look to attract academic tourism, which has a relatively greater economic impact than conventional tourism (Cerdeira Bento, 2014).

This proven destination attachment cycle features four different phases: an initial one of enchantment, a final one of nostalgia, and two intermediate phases of coexistence and fatigue. The initial phase of enchantment involves holistic enthusiasm because of the novelty of the destination and the excitement it generates (Anand, 2006; Rich, 2005), the "rediscovery" of the destination (Baloglu & McCleary, 1999; Galí & Donaire, 2005; Coromina & Camprubí, 2017) and because of the way it contributes to the academic experience: such as the creation of future professional networks, living with people from different cultures, the acquisition of knowledge, and experiencing immersion in another culture (Weaver, 2003; Krzaklewska, 2008; González et al., 2011; Rodriguez et al., 2012). The final phase, of nostalgia, means when the time to go back home gets nearer, feelings, memories and images generate a sense of positive emotional satisfaction with the whole experience and with the perceived and learned values.

The two intermediate phases involve a mixture of affection and disaffection with the destination in relation to the host community's values and cultural habits. The so-called coexistence phase is characterised by pleasant, tolerant acceptance of the destination's cultural practices and by cultural (Rogoff, 2003) and emotional (Cole & Tar, 2005)

socialisation. However, circumstantial elements or contingencies could trigger the fatigue phase, when the academic tourist presents symptoms of exhaustion with the host culture and misses his/her home life, the same kind of longing that expatriates experience (Awang Rozaimie, 2011). Length of stay and cultural values influence the degree of adaptability and interaction (Hofstede, 1983; Gross, 1998), the intensity of the academic journey experience (Laroche & Cleveland, 1997) and evaluation of and satisfaction with the experience (Choo & Petrick, 2014; Chen & Tsai, 2007; Petrick, 2004).

Another significant finding of this research is that this cycle of affection and disaffection experienced by academic tourists is similar to the lifecycle of expatriates (Church, 1982), as the results show that academic tourists also follow a U-shaped cycle over time, probably because their stays tend to be longer than holidays.

The research suggests that if there are relevant similarities between the cultural values of academic tourists and their destinations, the enchantment phase is richer and more intense since it is a period of curiosity and interest in the new life experience. Findings also suggest that similar cultural values shared by the student and the destination influence the coexistence phase, which is characterised by tolerance of and harmony with the host community's cultural practices. Likewise, it is shown that the coincidence of shared cultural values does not affect the fatigue phase, which depends on the ability to solve everyday problems. It is also shown that values shared by the destination and the academic tourist influence the intensity and positivism of the nostalgia phase that students go through as the time to go home draws closer, and they start looking back at their experience. However, this research indicates that, holistically, academic tourists view the life experience as positive.

The results also indicate that there is no specific rule regarding length of stay and experiences of these phases since they depend on more personal circumstances.

Therefore, destinations like Barcelona that focus on academic tourism should plan a public specific department, in collaboration with universities and other non-profitable academic organizations, to help these temporary residents during all these phases, especially in the fatigue one. The feeling that one is not alone despite the physical and cultural distance would surely mitigate the intensity of this phase of fatigue. Even in the initial enchantment phase, it would help students to settle into the destination. Furthermore, this department could establish a programme of activities to introduce foreign students to local culture with the aim of quickly integrating them and also offering a chance to build a social network. It is word to mention that nowadays in Barcelona there are a few number of volunteer initiative that aim to help Erasmus students to integrate in the city of Barcelona, but only for Erasmus students.

Limitations and future research:

A first potential limitation concerns the geographic location of the study. The research examines the attachment cycle of academic tourists in Barcelona. Would the same or similar results be found in other "academic" cities? Future research could address that

issue. Secondly, the research is focused on the whole attachment cycle. Future research should attempt to conduct in-depth investigations of each phase.

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