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Language tourism: The drivers that determine destination choice intention among U.S. students

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ABSTRACT

Travel for educational learning represents a growing sector in the international tourism context. Specifically, language tourism develops communicative competence in acquiring foreign languages, and understanding its potential is a relevant topic to which little scholarly attention has been given. This study tries to fill this gap by analyzing the drivers that influence behavioral intention when choosing a travel destination for learning language skills. This research proposes a language tourism model that includes the direct influence of consumption values with a mediating role of perceived beneficial image. The empirical application is performed on the basis of a sample of U.S. university students to evaluate their interests in travelling to Spain to learn Spanish. A Partial Least Squares regression was used to evaluate the measurement model and contrast the hypotheses. The results provide insights for destination management organizations (DMOs) into tourists' value perceptions, presentation of destinations, and serve to increase their visibility among countries.

1. Introduction

Learning new language skills represents a huge potential for the workforce in global marketplaces (Redondo-Carretero, Camarero-Izquierdo, Gutiérrez-Arranz, & Rodríguez-Pinto, 2017). Despite the dominance of English as a world language, the ability to speak other languages increases the competitiveness of workers in the global economy (Iglesias, 2017; Leslie & Russell, 2006; Russell & Leslie, 2004; Strezovska & Ivanovska, 2012). English is the most widely studied language, following a broad concept in education systems called Teaching English as a Foreign Language (TEFL) that reflects the learning demand framework (Richards, 2002). In the last years, a growing group of private and public schools have adopted new policies and techniques to enroll children in bilingual language learning programs. Specifically, countries such as the USA include native Spanish-speakers in dual-language programs working on high academic and cross-cultural competence (Linton, 2004). In addition, travelling to foreign countries to improve communicative skills is generally accepted as one of the best forms to do so by academics and professionals. It is known as language tourism (Castillo, Rodríguez, & López-Guzmán, 2017; Redondo-Carretero et al., 2017). In this sense, this type of tourism represents a growing sector in the international tourism market (Drozdzewski, 2011; Noonan & Rizzo, 2017) that generates positive economic and socio-cultural impacts (Son, 2003).

Beyond the idea of holidays being linked to tourism, individuals who travel for business or training purposes are also considered tourists. Specifically, the student travel market has grown in recent years, as the number of students enrolled in study abroad programs has increased (Castillo et al., 2017). This growth is focused mainly on enhancing study abroad for young students in exchange programs, who represent an important segment in the tourism market (Kim, Hallab, & Kim, 2012). Language tourism is a healthy sector with great growth potential that belongs more broadly, to the domain of educational tourism, which represents a way of learning languages in an informal way (Abubakar, Shneikat, & Oday, 2014; Donaldson & Gatsinzi, 2005). However, despite the relevance of combining professional and touristic activities for educational purposes, tourism literature contains little research in language and educational tourism (Jason, Ahmad, & Azhar, 2011).

The three most widely spoken languages in the world are Chinese,

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Spanish and English (UNWTO, 2017). Among them, Spanish is the language spoken in the greatest number of countries, most significantly in Spain and South and Central American countries. Spanish is a language spoken by 447 million people, and > 21 million students have chosen to learn Spanish as a foreign language, of which almost 8 million are from the USA (Instituto Cervantes, 2017). Among the Spanish speaking languages, Spain is the country that receives the largest number of international tourists. Presently, Spain is in second place in the UNWTO (2017) international ranking with > 75 million international tourists last year. It receives language tourists mainly from Germany, the USA and France. However, notwithstanding the importance of Spain in the global tourist sector, the number of tourists who travel to Spain to learn Spanish could be much higher. In countries like the USA, Spanish language has the largest enrollment by far among languages being offered in the majority of schools and universities. Thus, language tourism in Spain presents a potential for growth in the coming years (Redondo-Carretero et al., 2017).

Motivation for language tourism is an important area of study, and knowing the drivers that influence behavioral intention regarding the choice of travel destination for language learning is beneficial for marketing strategy (Drozdzewski, 2011). An underlying consideration is the analysis of both direct and indirect forces that influence the drivers that lead to behavioral intentions (Lam & Hsu, 2006). It is generally accepted that perceived beneficial image plays a relevant role in travel decision-making (Baloglu & McCleary, 1999; Echtner & Ritchie, 1991; Kim et al., 2012). Most studies focus on image attributes of a destination without considering which components may influence travel behavior. Psychologists argue that such components are value driven. Thus, values should be studied in marketing research (Ramkissoon, Nunkoo, & Gursoy, 2009). In this sense, consumption values are presented as alternative elements that motivate visitors to choose one or another travel destination. Consumption values are multiple beliefs that directly affect the understanding of visitor behavior (Sheth, Newman, & Gross, 1991). In addition, the mediating nature of perceived beneficial image between consumption values and destination choice should be considered, as visitors evaluate their own image when choosing a future place to travel (Ramkissoon et al., 2009). Perceived beneficial image of the destination is defined as a function of consumption values that influence travel behavior. However, the image of a destination is a concept whose measure has been widely criticized (Beerli & Martin, 2004). Thus, it is believed that the additional use of consumption values in tourism destination choice presents a way forward in marketing research, influencing choice directly and indirectly through perceived beneficial image (Chon, 1991; Moutinho, 1984; Phau, Quintal, & Shanka, 2014; Tapachai & Waryszak, 2000).

For these reasons, the primary objective of the current study is to analyze the drivers of destination choice intention by language tourists who travel abroad in order to improve the development of tourism marketing strategies. This research aims to contribute to language tourism literature by an empirical application based on the interest of Spanish learning by U.S. university students. In this sense, the direct influence of consumption values on behavioral choice, and the mediating role of perceived beneficial image, have been analyzed in the context of language tourism in Spain. This paper is organized into several sections beginning with the literature review, which is followed by a description of the research method. The results will then be presented, followed by a discussion section, conclusions. Finally, implications, limitations and further research are considered.

2. Literature review and research hypotheses

2.1. Language tourism

Language tourism is defined as a study abroad experience that includes activities that heighten the language learning process and include culturally oriented activities (Bergin, 1992; Wissot, 1970). Language tourism is a type of cultural tourism that includes, for example, gastronomic, religious, museum and theatre activity (Castillo et al., 2017). Language teaching is an ever-changing field, as new foreign language teaching and learning methods are being innovated (Kalantzis & Cope, 2016; Richards, 2002). Language tourism presents a unique characteristic, as it is informed by resources that differ from others. Unlike other “natural” resources, language is enriched as much as it is expanded.

In spite of significant changes in the language travel market since the 70s, many authors agree that language tourism has garnered little scholarly attention (Bergin, 1992; Cohen & Cooper, 1986; Iglesias, 2017; Shu & Scott, 2014; Wissot, 1970). However, attention to the student travel market is growing in the field of tourism research, especially in the context of study abroad and exchange programs (Kim et al., 2012; Redondo-Carretero et al., 2017). Notwithstanding relatively little research in this area, educational tourism has been found to be directly relevant to decision-making in management (Donaldson & Gatsinzi, 2005; Jason et al., 2011; Shu & Scott, 2014).

Researchers suggest several motives for travelling for language learning, among them: educational, cultural and ancestral. First, travelling for educational purposes to learn a foreign language has been defined as the primary motivation for travel (Cohen & Cooper, 1986; Drozdzewski, 2011; Llewellyn-Smith & McCabe, 2008; Noonan & Rizzo, 2017; Redondo-Carretero et al., 2017). The educational system generally values and promotes the study of foreign languages at schools and universities (Russell & Leslie, 2004). Castillo et al. (2017) suggest that language tourism should be included in the transversal educational system. Presently, students can choose different forms of educational travel: cultural trips, language exchange, short courses, study tours, internship programs, including undergraduate- and graduate-level programs. Any of these forms offers students a touristic experience for recreation (Donaldson & Gatsinzi, 2005; van't Klooster, van Wijk, Go, & van Rekom, 2008). Language tourism is a kind of tourism where education and leisure go together (Uriely, 2001), and it has been defined as a typology in educational tourism (Iglesias, 2015). Learning a new language, along with recreational activities such as cultural altruism, fall under educational tourism. Educational tourism is any type of travel program outside a given environment whose principal motive is to experience new learning. It is a kind of service learning achieved by combining education and tourism (Abubakar et al., 2014).

The second, motivation for travel is to understand the culture of the foreign country (Roberts, 1992). Van't Klooster et al. (2008) highlight the importance of educational travel programs to increase cross-cultural competencies and to enhance levels of international understanding. Noels, Pelletier, and Vellerand (2000) suggest that cultural value is obtained from contact with members of a second language community, for which social interaction is crucial (Iglesias, 2017). Dörnyei and Csizér (2005) point out that intercultural contact and language attitudes are related. Kim et al. (2012) suggest that globalization and technology have increased the sensitivity and desire of young people to know world cultures. It is important that tourism activities are always linked with the culture and traditions of a host country, and they must be based on respect (Kennett, 2002; Li & Cai, 2012; Ryan, 2002). The synergy between tourism and culture determines language tourism's specification as a type of cultural tourism that is based on intangible linguistic resources (Noonan & Rizzo, 2017; Redondo-Carretero et al., 2017). In short, language tourism is focused on language as a cultural resource (Kennett, 2002).

A third motivator is the interest in learning the language of an ancestral homeland. Language reflects identity; i.e. where individuals come from motivates an interest in pursuing cultural heritage (Drozdzewski, 2011). This author highlights that the main motivation for many tourists who travel for language learning is rooted in their interest for their homeland. Individuals travel to countries from where their ancestors migrated to search for their language and cultural roots (Linton, 2004; Timothy, 1997). Thus, language tourism demonstrates

that where people come from, and how their interest in and awareness of their own cultural heritage can grow.

Some authors highlight the relevance of the connection between language tourism and international students' destination images, given the growth of the number of trips and, consequently, the concomitant economic and socio-cultural profits associated with them (Castillo et al., 2017; Son, 2003). Specifically, the identification of factors influencing perceived beneficial image, and the study of travel intentions, are considered interesting topics in language tourism. Regarding these factors, several authors highlight the important of consumption values to choose one or another destination for travel (Sheth et al., 1991). Thus, knowing the motivations or drivers for language travel determines destination choice, as well as the evaluation of touristic resources (Moutinho, 1984; Noels et al., 2000).

2.2. The relationship between consumption values and destination choice intention

In this section, the following two concepts, and the relationship between them, have been studied: consumption values and destination choice intention. The study of consumption values received little attention in literature reviews in the past (Vinson, Scott, & Lamont, 1977). More recently, interest in their study took hold in several disciplines linked mainly to concepts such as behavior, satisfaction and service quality (Gill, Byslma, & Ouschan, 2007). Consumption values represent beliefs that determine preferences for modes of conduct and behavior (Gutman, 1982), and they act as a guide for actions and judgments (Vinson et al., 1977). Consumption values are defined as beliefs that lead to actions in specific situations (Rokeach, 1973). In a marketing context, consumption values are not just limited to functional aspects, but are also linked to other components.

There has been a lack of well-developed measures of value, as several studies contemplated unidimensional measures. However, this presented a problem, since consumers have a shared meaning of value (Gill et al., 2007; Ming-Sung, Shih-Tse Wang, Ying-Chao, & Vivek, 2009). The unidimensional perspective of consumption values is not adequate in the service context due to its intangibility and subjectivity. Thus, multidimensional consumption values that include functional and psychological variables are used to capture the complexity of services and, specifically, the tourism perspective (Williams & Soutar, 2009). Sheth et al. (1991) proposed five consumption values from the disciplines of psychology and marketing that have been applied to different studies: functional, conditional, social, emotional and epistemic (Hur, Yoo, & Chung, 2012; Park & Rabolt, 2009; Tapachai & Waryszak, 2000).

Functional value is based on physical, utilitarian and practical attributes. It is derived from a product's fundamental characteristics; for instance, cultural history, nature, food or infrastructure would be included in this dimension, and it is linked to contacts, efficiency or administrative arrangements. The conditional value is defined as the perceived utility from a set of conditions that enhances the functional or social value. Conditional value refers to extrinsic function alternatives such as personal safety, good value for money or good quality of life. The social value is linked to social connection or acceptance in different groups. Products possess symbolic meanings in social context beyond their functional utility, generating positive or negative stereotype associations. Products or services that are shared with others, such as entertainment in tourism, are often determined by social value. In tourism, the relationships between tourists and the tour guide create social value. Emotional value is defined as the feelings associated with products or services. Marketing variables are usually linked to emotional responses that promote products. This theory is connected to the division in the human brain into functional and emotional hemispheres. In tourism, emotional value is related to affective feelings of entertainment or relaxation. In the tourist context, emotional values suggest adventure or excitement. And the epistemic value is defined as the capacity to stimulate curiosity, knowledge, innovativeness or novelty. Epistemic value suggests living new experiences, doing something different or enjoying another culture. Epistemic values are key factors in the tourism context (Sheth et al., 1991; Williams & Soutar, 2009).

Destination choice intention is defined as the decision-making process that determines the choice of a travel destination. Intention is the individual's future behavior that can be defined as the likelihood to act. Intention drives people's behavior when they visit a place. Thus, measuring intention is an appropriate way to predict behavior (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975; Quintal & Phau, 2015). The behavioral intention associated with choosing a destination leads to a specific effect on tourists' values, which affects willingness to choose or to continue choosing the service provided. Thus, intention is a consumer's plan to use a specific service or to enjoy it in a precise destination (Chang & Liu, 2009). Destination choice intention determines a person's expected future behavior (Phau et al., 2014). Lam and Hsu (2006) postulate that a set of subjective, perceived ideas determines behavioral intention. These authors suggest that the decision-making process is a complex procedure that depends on different factors, and understanding those factors, particularly internal motives, is beneficial to strategic managers. Future travel decision-making is the result of image formation (Kim et al., 2012). The expanded theory about behavioral intention establishes that values are an underlying determinant of consumer behavior (Li & Cai, 2012). Behavior is the result of particular person's values or beliefs (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975; Li & Cai, 2012).

Finally, several authors have studied the relationship between consumption values and future behavior (Ming-Sung et al., 2009; Vinson et al., 1977; Xiao & Kim, 2009). The knowledge that motivates customers to choose one or another alternative is very relevant. Consumption values determine consumer choice behavior, which explains why customers select different products for purchase. Multiple values that determine consumers' motivations contribute to market choices. Sometimes, consumers are not motivated just by one type of value, but by a mixture of them (Rokeach, 1973; Sheth et al., 1991). Consumption values are one of the options that influence the choice of new patterns, and such choice depends also on cultural differences. These values can influence people's behaviors more than any other component of culture. Thus, they are a great tool for understanding human behavior (Park & Rabolt, 2009; Yeonsoo, Jinwoo, Inseong, & Hoyong, 2002).

In this sense, the five values proposed by Sheth et al. (1991) (functional, conditional, social, emotional and epistemic) make differential influences in any choice condition and contribute to purchase intention. The influence of the five values on choice intention depends, of course, on the product or service. Traditionally, functional value has been considered the principal driver of consumer choice (Hur et al., 2012). Functional value is reflected in shopping efficiency (Ming-Sung et al., 2009). Conditional value acts as an antecedent of behavior. Social value determines that individual behavior is influenced by group influence. According to Ming-Sung et al. (2009), an increase in sociality has a positive impact on future choice intention. Consumer choice is also a consequence of nonfunctional motives, i.e. emotional values. Emotional values relative to emotions such as happiness or surprise act as predictors of purchase behavior (Ming-Sung et al., 2009). Epistemic value relative to experiencing or novelty seeking also activates consumer behaviors (Ming-Sung et al., 2009; Sheth et al., 1991).

Consequently, products, services, ideas or destinations are connected to these values when projecting consumption choice decisions (Gutman, 1982; Ryan, 2002). This means that consumption values determine the choice of products or services (Park & Rabolt, 2009) and marketing strategy could be improved, thanks to the influence of values on consumers' behavior (Gutman, 1982). The way in which each destination organizes its values creates an exclusive image (Prebensen, 2007; Ryan, 2002). In tourism, consumption values act as drivers or motivators for choosing a destination (Gill et al., 2007; Williams & Soutar, 2009), specifically in the context of language tourism

(Redondo-Carretero et al., 2017). This relationship is relevant, due to the importance of analyzing the main visitors' determinants of a holiday destination in the decision-making process (Yeonsoo et al., 2002). Based on these antecedents, the following hypothesis is proposed:

Hypothesis 1. (H1). Consumption values (CVA) have a direct and significant influence on destination choice intention (DCI) in language tourism.

2.3. The mediating role of perceived beneficial image between consumption values and destination choice intention

Consumption values have been qualified as a concept that directly influences destination choice intention. However, the direct relationship may not always be the only way to choose a destination (Phau et al., 2014). According to destination research, to choose a future place of travel tourists need to evaluate or perceive the image of a destination based on their own values. In this sense, to become successful destinations have to attract visitors from different regions or countries by working on their consumption values and perceived image (Prebensen, 2007). Thus, the mediating nature of perceived beneficial image is a relevant factor that has been examined by different authors (Phau et al., 2014; Tapachai & Waryszak, 2000). This section includes the study of perceived beneficial image and its mediating role between consumption values and destination choice intention.

The concept of beneficial image is defined as "perceptions or impressions of a destination held by tourists with respect to the expected benefit or consumption values, including functional, social, emotional, epistemic, and conditional benefits of a destination. These perceptions/impressions in turn lead to the decision to visit a country as a vacation destination" (Tapachai & Waryszak, 2000; p. 38). This definition is based on the theory of market choice behavior suggested by Sheth et al. (1991), which suggests that potential tourists will create an image of the destination based on these values, or on beneficial attributes in their evoked set, using this image in the vacation decision process. Perceived beneficial image is a complex concept that has been extensively studied (Tapachai & Waryszak, 2000). Even though proposals for measures vary, most authors highlight two main factors: relaxation and escape; and attractiveness of destination (Phau et al., 2014).

The mediating role of perceived beneficial image is intrinsic to its own definition. When visitors are deciding on travel destinations, image formation is developed based on their own values (Beerli & Martin, 2004; Chon, 1991). Consumption values act as antecedents of visitors' behavior through the dimensions of beneficial image of a destination. The choice of a product or a destination is the result of various values that act on the image of the item or the place (Ramkissoon et al., 2009).

Perceived beneficial image of a destination is formed through the individuals' own values or personality and the image projected by the destination, i.e. the holistic image of a destination (Kim et al., 2012; Kim & Richardson, 2003; Leisen, 2001; Moutinho, 1984; Oh, 2003). Consumption values are considered precursors of a product or service's image (Kotler & Barich, 1991). Gensch (1978: p. 385) proposes that "the more subjective the attribute measurements, the more likely image will be a significant interactive variable in determining brand preferences". Perceived beneficial image refers to the impression that visitors develop in their own minds from the combination of different associations, positive or negative perceptions (Echtner & Ritchie, 1991). These authors suggests that products or services will have a strong marketing image if consumers perceive high values from the company. They highlight that consumers create the image based on the exchange value that they expect to receive from the product or service. Perceived beneficial image consists of the subjective interpretation made by a visitor (Bigné, Sánchez, & Sánchez, 2001) and is the result of destinations' communications and tourists' perceptions (Kim et al., 2012). Consumption values affect perceived image formation, which involves the cognitive and affective image of the destination (Beerli & Martin, 2004) and functional and psychological factors (Ramkissoon et al., 2009).

Perceived beneficial image is an influential component of the visitor's destination choice intention (Baloglu & Brinberg, 1997; Gallarza, Gil, & Calderón, 2002; Kim et al., 2012; Tasci & Gartner, 2007). Destination brands present specific characteristics, such as flexibility and memorability, which condition brand choice (Chang & Liu, 2009). Crompton (1979) proposes that perceived image is essential when making a vacation decision. The image of a destination affects the visitors' decision to visit a specific place, and a destination positioning strategy is required to be successful (Echtner & Ritchie, 1991; Tapachai & Waryszak, 2000). Bigné et al. (2001) add the importance of providing good experiences in the destination to connect perceived image and visit's intention. Images are a fundamental basis for destination choice and decision making (Son, 2003) due to their effects on tourist behavior (Baloglu & McCleary, 1999; Tasci & Gartner, 2007). Kim et al. (2012) study the relationship between the perceived image and the intention to visit based on students' travel experience.

Thus, the identification of the values that influence market choice through the perceived beneficial image is an interesting topic (Tapachai & Waryszak, 2000) in the general context of tourism, and in the language tourism context in particular (Redondo-Carretero et al., 2017). Based on this literature review, a second hypothesis has been proposed.

Hypothesis 2. (H2). The relationship between consumption values (CVA) and destination choice intention (DCI) is mediated by perceived beneficial image (PBI) in language tourism.

The language tourism model includes the preceding discussion of consumption values, perceived beneficial image and destination choice intention (Fig. 1):

3. Research methodology

3.1. Survey instrument, data collection and measures

This research employed a quantitative design using a cross-sectional sampling with an online survey, following current trends in the literature (Baggio & Klobas, 2017; Mehmetoglu, 2011). If tourism is to mature effectively as a subject of scholarly inquiry, research should welcome rigorous quantitative study (Baggio & Klobas, 2017; Dann, Nash, & Pearce, 1988). Regarding the online questionnaire, Nederhof (1985) pointed out that self-administered questionnaires are optimal for reducing response bias, and there is ample scholarship in support of using online data collection (Baumgartner & Steenkamp, 2001; Cooper, 2008;

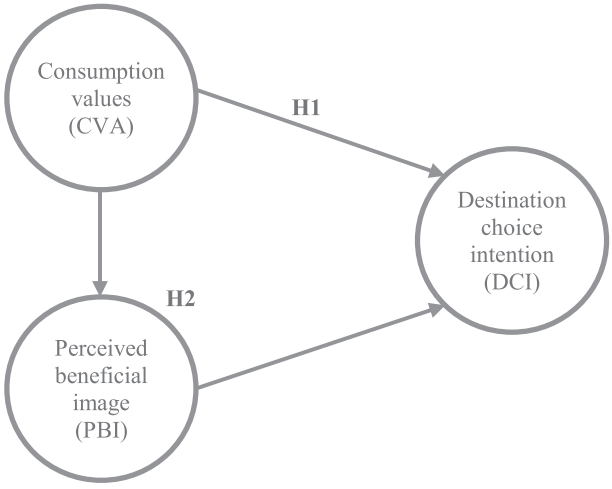

Fig. 1. Model proposed for destination choice intention in language tourism. H1: direct effect of CVA on DCI; H2: indirect effect of CVA on DCI through PBI.

Table 1
Measures.

Concept/Dimension		Items	References
Consumption values (CVA)	Functional values (FV)	FV1 Proximity to my country FV2 Natural beauty FV3 Variety and quality of food FV4 Historical or cultural sites FV5 Quality of infrastructure FV6 Educational reputation	Gill et al. (2007); Hur et al. (2012); Ming-Sung et al. (2009); Park and Rabolt (2009); Sheth et al. (1991); Tapachai and Waryszak (2000); Vinson et al. (1977); Williams and Soutar (2009); Xiao and Kim (2009); Yeonsoo et al. (2002)
	Emotional values (EV)	EV1 Make me feel good EV2 Having fun/being entertained EV3 Pleasurable experience EV4 Relaxing physically or mentally	
	Conditional values (CV)	CV1 Friendliness of locals CV2 Feeling safe CV3 Good value for money CV4 Good quality of life	
	Social values (SV)	SV1 Developing close friendships SV2 Meeting people with similar interests	
	Epistemic values (TV)	TV1 Learning new knowledge TV2 Experiencing new/different places TV3 Escaping from the routine TV4 Increasing curiosity	
Perceived beneficial image (PBI)	Relaxation & escape (RE)	RE1 Variety of activities to do RE2 Away from demands of everyday life RE3 Relaxation RE4 Getting away from crowds	Baloglu and McCleary (1999); Beerli and Martin (2004); Bigné et al. (2001); Echtner and Ritchie (1991); Phau et al. (2014); Tapachai and Waryszak (2000)
	Attractiveness of the destination (AD)	AD1 Cheaper travel AD2 Competitive prices AD3 Political stability AD4 Economic development AD5 Family orientated destination	
Destination choice intention (DCI)	Unidimensional	DC1 Intend to visit in the next 12 months DC2 Want to visit the country DC3 Likelihood to visit the country in the next 12 months	Kim et al. (2012); Lam and Hsu (2006); Li and Cai (2012); Quintal and Phau (2015)

Hulland, Baumgartner, & Smith, 2018; Lavrakas, 2008). Because response rate can be considered a quality criterion, it was important to adequately define the population, which was achieved by focusing on students who were already learning the language.

Participants were recruited from a U.S. university during the Spring Semester 2017. They had to evaluate their interests in choice intention to visit Spain for improving their Spanish skills based on consumption values and perceived image of the destination. Following Echtner and Ritchie (1991), visitors can develop an image of a place even though they have never visited it before. The items were confirmed in interviews with six experts involved with the tourist sector professionally and academically. After the questionnaire was designed, a pilot study was conducted personally in the USA with a group of 10 potential university student travelers to Spain. After that, > 500 online survey invitations were successfully delivered with information about the research and also about data privacy. Two weeks after the first contact, a reminder was sent out to the non-respondents. These efforts resulted in 210 usable responses, representing a 38.9% response rate.

The survey instrument for this research began with a careful review of previous contributions in relevant literatures to find measures for the key variables. The scales were adapted to the context of this analysis. The survey was divided into four sections. First, information relative to demographic characteristics, academic status and Spanish language learning. A screening question to ensure that the respondents had not been to Spain before was included in this section, as some authors suggest that the drivers for language tourism can differ depending on previous travel experience in a foreign country for language learning (Drozdzewski, 2011). Second, 20-item relative to consumption values were adapted from the study recommended by Sheth et al. (1991). The five consumption values include functional, conditional, social, emotional and epistemic. The instrument contains functional value and contains six items: proximity, nature, food, culture, infrastructure and educational reputation. Conditional value includes four items relative to locals, safety, good value and quality of life. Social value contents include friendships and meeting people. Emotional value includes positive feelings when travelling. And epistemic value contains information on how service provides intellectual curiosity and new experiences. Third, the 9-item measure for perceived beneficial image proposed by Beerli and Martin (2004) was adapted. Specifically, two factors were chosen: “relaxation and escape” and “attractiveness of the destination”, as suggested by Phau et al. (2014). And, fourth, a 3-item scale relative to destination choice intention developed by Lam and Hsu (2006) was included. This concept is a unidimensional construct containing three indicators. The items are seven-point Likert-type scales, ranging from “totally disagree” (1) to “totally agree” (7) (Table 1).

The respondents' demographic characteristics indicate that there were more females (53.8%) than males (46.2%). The age distribution was 33.3% aged 19–20; 47.6% aged 21–22; and 19.0% over 22. Most were seniors (47.6%), followed by sophomores (21.4%), graduate students (16.7%) and juniors (14.3%). They have varied majors, the most representative of which are education and international studies (14.3% for both), management (11.9%) and accounting/finance (9.5%). Their level of Spanish study also varied (1st semester: 9.5%; 2nd semester: 19.0%; 3rd semester: 11.9%; 4th semester: 19.0%; 3rd year: 19.0%; and 4th year: 21.4%).

3.2. Data analysis

An exhaustive analysis of the scales was developed to formulate the theoretical language tourism model following a composite proposal, with simple or unidimensional concepts (destination choice intention) and multidimensional (consumption values and perceived beneficial image). Specifically, it was considered that the dimensions present reflective design approximation related to their indicators, but formative ones relative to the construct. Thus, this research proposes a second-order model in which consumption values are conceptualized based on five approximately formative dimensions (functional, conditional, social, emotional and epistemic), while perceived beneficial image is based on two (relaxation and escape, and attractiveness).

The technique used to the model's estimation was Partial Least Squares (PLS), a variance-based structural equation modeling preferable in different factor conceptions (Nitzl & Chin, 2017; Rigdon, 2016; Sarstedt, Hair, Ringle, Thiele, & Gudergan, 2016). This technique was used because: (1) the research model is complex, based on direct and mediated hypotheses and two levels of dimensionality (first and second order concepts); (2) the differences between common factor analysis (i.e., CB-SEM) and composite analysis (i.e., PLS path modeling); (3) the predictive orientation of PLS path modeling; (4) the test of mediating effects in a complete model; and (5) the application of a two-stage approach for modeling the multidimensional concepts. This research presents a composite measurement model with a reflective design approximation (Mode A, the arrows point from a construct to the indicators) for destination choice intention, and a formative design approximation (Mode B, the arrows point from the indicators to the construct) for consumption values and perceived beneficial image. Thus, these two concepts include a list of dimensions that capture distinct aspects. A composite measurement means that the construct is made up of the items that generate a new entity from the elements. The measurement model has been designed according to the nature of the constructs (Henseler, 2017). According to this author, behavioral constructs should be measured by means of common factor models, while the design of artifacts should be measured by composites. This research uses SmartPLS 3.2.7 software (Ringle, Wende, & Becker, 2015).

4. Data analysis and results

4.1. Measurement model

First, the psychometric properties of the scales of constructs of reflective character estimated in Mode A were examined from the first-stage model. The reliability was tested using rho, composite reliability (CR) and average variance extracted (AVE). The rho indexes were all > 0.7 (Dijkstra & Henseler, 2015); CR values were higher than 0.8 (Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994); and factor loadings were above 0.6 (Bagozzi & Yi, 1988), providing support for scale reliability. Following Gadermann, Guhn, and Zumbo (2012), Cronbach's Alpha was not used for reliability's contrast. Eight items with standardized factor loadings lower than 0.6 were removed, providing evidence of convergent validity (AD1, AD2, FV1, FV5, FV6, TV4, RE4, and DC3). The significance of the loadings was determined through the bootstrapping resampling procedure (5000 subsamples of the original sample size), and all the indicators were significant with 99% of confidence level (Gefen & Straub, 2005) (Table 2).

The discriminant validity was tested by Fornell and Larcker test and the severest Heterotrait-monotrait ratio (HTMT). The first criterion confirmed that each latent variable accounts for more variance with its associated items than with any other construct (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). Henseler, Ringle, and Sarstedt (2015): p. 121) define the HTMT criterion as the “average of the heterotrait-heteromethod correlations (correlations of indicators across constructs measuring different phenomena) relative to the average of the monotrait-heteromethod (correlation of indicators within the same construct)”. Following the suggestion of Hair, Hult, Ringle, and Sarstedt (2016), all the HTMT values were under 0.9 (Table 3).

4.2. Structural model

After evaluating the measuring instrument and confirming its validity and reliability, the structural model was estimated from the second-stage proposal. The significance of the estimated structural path coefficients was executed using bootstrapping (5000 resamples) to

Table 2
Measurement model evaluation.

		Indicators	Factor loadings	rho	CR	AVE
Consumption values (CVA)	FV	FV2 Natural beauty	0.831*** (40.954)	0.824	0.881	0.712
		FV3 Variety and quality of food	0.840*** (28.420)			
		FV4 Historical or cultural sites	0.860*** (30.615)			
	EV	EV1 Make me feel good	0.787*** (22.297)	0.870	0.903	0.699
		EV2 Having fun/being entertained	0.882*** (48.653)			
		EV3 Pleasurable experience	0.838*** (31.110)			
		EV4 Relaxing physically or mentally	0.834*** (35.998)			
	CV	CV1 Friendliness of locals	0.752*** (16.846)	0.824	0.874	0.634
		CV2 Feeling safe	0.805*** (27.765)			
		CV3 Good value for money	0.763*** (18.185)			
		CV4 Good quality of life	0.862*** (36.777)			
	SV	SV1 Developing close friendships	0.949*** (113.900)	0.897	0.950	0.905
		SV2 Meeting people with similar interests	0.954*** (113.803)			
	TV	TV1 Learning new knowledge	0.824*** (24.231)	0.852	0.897	0.744
		TV2 Experiencing new/different places	0.850*** (37.635)			
		TV3 Escaping from the routine	0.911*** (61.080)			
Perceived beneficial image (PBI)	RE	RE1 Variety of activities to do	0.883*** (51.685)	0.857	0.873	0.698
		RE2 Away from demands of everyday life	0.889*** (38.469)			
		RE3 Relaxation	0.724*** (14.679)			
	AD	AD3 Political stability	0.851*** (33.964)	0.827	0.889	0.727
		AD4 Economic development	0.902*** (54.222)			
		AD5 Family orientated destination	0.803*** (22.961)			
Destination choice intention (DCI)	DC	DC1 Intend to visit in the next 12 months	0.864*** (16.495)	0.890	0.900	0.819
		DC2 Want to visit the country	0.944*** (93.129)			

FV: functional values; EV: emotional values; CV: conditional values; SV: social values; TV: epistemic values; RE: relaxation & escape; AD: attractiveness of the destination; CR: composite reliability; AVE: average variance extracted.

*** $p < 0.001$.

Table 3
Measurement model. Discriminant validity.

Fornell-Larcker criterion								
	AD	CV	DCI	EV	FV	TV	RE	SV
AD	**0.853**							
CV	0.422	**0.796**						
DCI	0.317	0.296	**0.905**					
EV	0.411	0.510	0.499	**0.836**				
FV	0.365	0.536	0.388	0.663	**0.844**			
TV	0.196	0.428	0.172	0.442	0.603	**0.863**		
RE	0.601	0.536	0.510	0.717	0.607	0.399	**0.835**	
SV	0.395	0.533	0.281	0.527	0.527	0.554	0.332	**0.951**
Heterotrait-Monotrait ratio (HTMT)								
AD								
CV	0.496							
DCI	0.375	0.316						
EV	0.452	0.549	0.566					
FV	0.413	0.644	0.446	0.793				
TV	0.244	0.505	0.192	0.517	0.746			
RE	0.771	0.626	0.569	0.819	0.703	0.439		
SV	0.446	0.597	0.330	0.556	0.627	0.646	0.376	

AD: attractiveness of the destination; CV: conditional values; DCI: destination choice intention; EV: emotional values; FV: functional values; TV: epistemic values; RE: relaxation & escape; SV: social values; in Fornell-Lacker diagonal elements (bold) are the square root of the variance shared between the constructs and their measures (average variance extracted); off-diagonal: the correlation among constructs.

generate t-statistics and confidence intervals.

The proper fit of the structural model was confirmed with R^2 value that represents the explained variance of dependent constructs. The model explains 29.3% of the variance in destination choice intention (13.5% from consumption values & 15.8% from perceived beneficial image), and 58.0% in perceived beneficial image. R^2 values are between relatively moderate and high (Hair, Ringle, & Sarstedt, 2011). Furthermore, positive Q^2 values obtained by means of blindfolding confirmed the model's predictive relevance presenting a moderate effect ($0.15 \leq Q^2 < 0.35$) (Chin, 1998; Hair et al., 2016). The global model fit was tested with the standardized root mean square residual (SRMR). The value was of 0.055, below 0.08 (Henseler, Ringle, & Sarstedt, 2016; Hu & Bentler, 1999). To assess the degree to which an exogenous construct contributes to explain a particular endogenous construct in terms of R^2, the study of the size of the f^2 was considered. F^2 values are above the base level of 0.02; specifically, there is a large effect between consumption values and perceived beneficial image ($f^2 = 1.379$; over 0.35) (Roldán & Sánchez-Franco, 2012). The evaluation of the path coefficients and their significance level using t-value is described in Table 4. The results show that there is a positive and significant influence of consumption values on destination choice intention (H1: $\beta = 0.268$, $p < 0.001$, $t = 2.862$). Thus, the direct effect of consumption values on destination choice intention (c') is supported. Consumption values act as a significant predictor of destination choice intention. Moreover, all the variables represent significant antecedent constructs of their respective dependent variables (consumption values on perceived beneficial image: $\beta = 0.761$, $p < 0.001$, $t = 21.236$; perceived beneficial image on destination choice intention: $\beta = 0.309$, $p < 0.001$, $t = 3.373$). In addition, confidence intervals were reported to assess the statistical significance through bootstrapping. As the 0 value was not included in the confidence interval, the proposed hypotheses were also accepted by the percentile method (Henseler et al., 2016).

Table 5
Mediating effect tests.

Direct effect of CVA on DCI		Indirect effects of CVA on DCI			
Coefficient path	*t*-value		Bootstrap 95%		VAF
			Percentile	BC	
0.268_{**}	2.862	H2: a_1b_1 (via PBI)	[0.016; 0.190]	[0.225; 0.332]	46.7%

CVA: consumption values; PBI: perceived beneficial image; DCI: destination choice intention; t (0.05; 4999) = 1.645_{*}; t (0.01; 4999) = 2.327_{**}; t (0.001; 4999) = 3.092_{***}; BC: bias corrected; VAF: variance account for.
* $p < 0.05$.
** $p < 0.01$.
*** $p < 0.001$.

To test the mediation hypothesis (H2), the analytical approach recommended by several authors was applied (Cepeda, Nitzl, & Roldán, 2018; Nitzl, Roldán, & Cepeda-Carrión, 2016). The indirect effect of consumption values on destination choice intention through the mediator perceived beneficial image (H2: a_1b_1) is included in Table 5. The bootstrapping procedure using percentile and bias corrected confidence intervals was chosen to test the indirect effect. As indicated above, the direct effect of consumption values on destination choice intention was supported (H1: c'). Additionally, the indirect effect was also significant and supported, as 0 value was not included in either interval. The contrast reveals that perceived beneficial image mediates the relationship between consumption values and destination choice intention (H2: a_1b_1). This mediation was also tested by applying the variance accounted for (VAF) index to determine the size of the indirect effect over the total effect (Hair et al., 2016). VAF presents a value under 80% (46.7%), so partial mediation was supposed (VAF > 0.8, full mediation; $0.2 \leq$ VAF ≤ 0.8, partial mediation).

Additionally, the results confirm that five dimensions proposed for consumption values contribute positive and significantly. In order of importance, the dimensions that present highest weights are emotional ($\beta = 0.748$, $p < 0.001$), functional ($\beta = 0.268$, $p < 0.001$) and conditional values ($\beta = 0.235$, $p < 0.001$). In relation to perceived beneficial image, relaxation and escape is the dimension with higher contribution in the formation of destination choice intention.

4.3. Impact-performance map analysis (IPMA)

IPMA was used to illustrate the relationship between the impact and

Table 4
Structural model.

	Relation	Direct effect	*t*-value	Contrast	R^2	Q^2	f^2	Mean	5%	95%
H1	CVA → DCI	0.268_{**}	2.862	Do not reject	29.3%	0.202	0.043	0.278	0.125	0.430
H2	PBI → DCI	0.309_{***}	3.373	Do not reject			0.057	0.299	0.149	0.450
	CVA → PBI	0.761_{***}	21.236	Do not reject	58.0%		1.379	0.763	0.700	0.817

CVA: consumption values; PBI: perceived beneficial image; DCI: destination choice intention; t (0.05; 4999) = 1.645_{*}; t (0.01; 4999) = 2.327_{**}; t (0.001; 4999) = 3.092_{***}.
* $p < 0.05$.
** $p < 0.01$.
*** $p < 0.001$.

value of one variable with another based on a graphic instrument from the outcome of PLS path modeling. The x-axis represents the "importance" (impact) of a target construct, and the y-axis the "performance" (average value; values between 0 and 100). Some researchers recommend drawing two additional lines in the importance-performance map: the mean importance value (vertical line) and the mean performance value (horizontal line) (Ringle & Sarstedt, 2016). Thus, IPMA allows the identification of parts for enhancement based on the PLS predictive capacity (Nitzl & Chin, 2017; Ringle & Sarstedt, 2016). According to this technique, it is important to improve areas that present a greater importance even though their current performance is weak.

The IPMA for the destination choice intention in language tourism reveals that social and epistemic values and attractiveness of the destination (SV: −0.0583; 62.8956; TV: −0.0216; 52.5021; AD: −0.0033, 52.6757) may have a negative impact. Moreover, these three dimensions present the lowest performance. Emotional values and relaxation and escape have higher importance and performance (EV: 0.3319; 73.3793; RE: 0.2740; 77.6541). Consequently, per each unit increased in any of these two dimensions, the performance of destination choice intention will be increased by 0.3319 and again by 0.2740. Functional and conditional values present average values in terms of importance and performance (FV: 0.1188; 67.0763; CV: 0.1042; 67.3010) (Fig. 2).

5. Discussion and conclusion

This study adds value to the literature of language tourism, as there is a lack of research in this field (Abubakar et al., 2014). Understanding the educational context and knowing the motives that determine destination choice for language tourism purposes is a significant contribution. This paper examines the drivers of language tourism from the perspective of U.S. university students. Specifically, the study presents a model that examines the direct influence of consumption values on destination choice intention and the indirect influence through perceived beneficial image in the language tourism context. This study contributes to the general understanding of visitor choice behavior through the theory of consumer choice values and perceived beneficial image (Sheth et al., 1991; Tapachai & Waryszak, 2000; Vinson et al., 1977), filling an existing gap in the field of tourism and, specifically, in language tourism, which lacks research in this area (Iglesias, 2015). By researching these relationships, the results of this study suggest relevant theoretical and empirical conclusions, as well as practical implications for destination management organizations (DMOs), both host communities and local professionals.

This study contributes to language tourism theory in several novel respects. First, there is an important contribution in language tourism by addressing new dimensions of the decision choice. This information was emblematic of a step towards a broader understanding of the linkages between the language, educational, cultural and vacation motives (Drozdzewski, 2011) taking into account the little research conducted in language and educational tourism (Shu & Scott, 2014). Second, this research provides new insights for the study of consumption values as a multi-dimensional concept, based on the classic proposal developed by Sheth et al. (1991). The use of consumption values contributes to marketing research due to its predictive capabilities and its utility for market analysis and promotional strategies. Third, this paper contributes to the definition and measure of image of destinations, a concept that presents a lack of agreement about its conceptualization and measurement (Baloglu & McCleary, 1999; Beerli & Martin, 2004; Echtner & Ritchie, 1991; Tasci & Kozak, 2006). Specifically, it is based on the concept developed by Tapachai and Waryszak (2000) called perceived beneficial image, a useful measurement defined by several consumption values that allow a proper understanding of image and destination choice intention. Fourth, a model that examines composite concepts –consumption values and perceived beneficial image– and their influence on destination choice intention was proposed. The model proposed adopts a two-stage approach that represents an actual and accurate measurement method, which shows the direct effects of consumption values on destination choice intention and a mediating role of perceived beneficial image between both concepts (Henseler, 2017). This study adds value to the few scholarly studies that analyze the influence of consumption values on perceived beneficial image and travel. Along these lines, this paper demonstrates that PLS is an analytical technique that provides results and insights into data analysis as an accurate alternative to CB-SEM methods. PLS path modeling presents an extensive variety of data analyses, such as mediation or IPMA

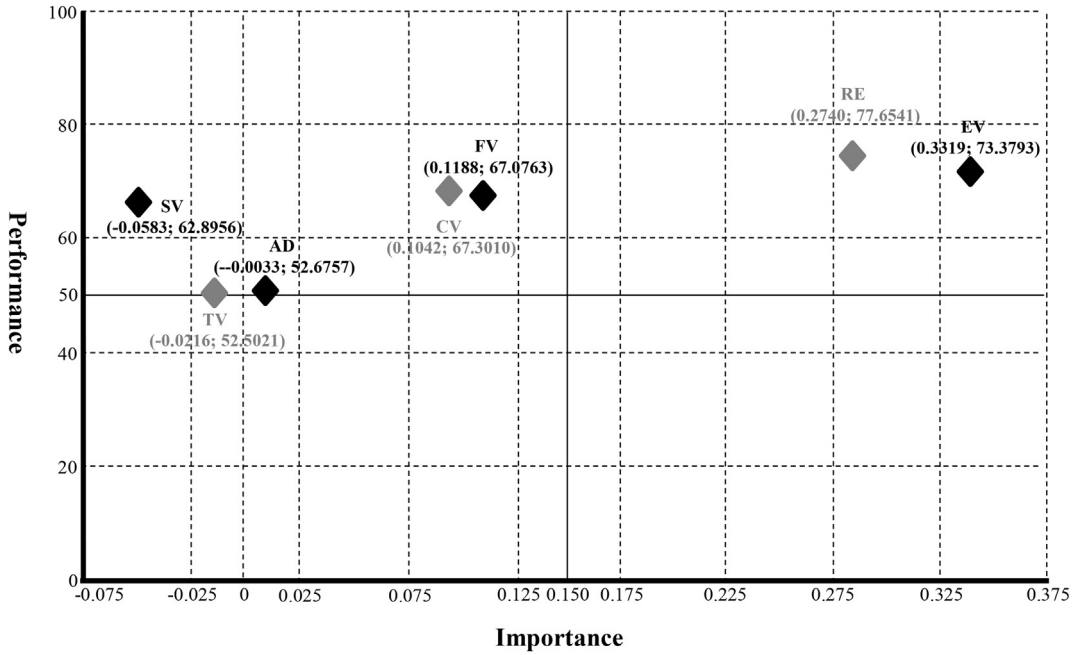

Fig. 2. Importance-Performance Map Analysis (IPMA) for destination choice intention.
AD: attractiveness of the destination; CV: conditional values; EV: emotional values; FV: functional values; RE: relaxation & escape; SV: social values; TV: epistemic values.

matrix. Specifically, this last instrument is a useful analytical tool for the practical interpretation of results, giving indications to improve the relevant drivers (Nitzl & Chin, 2017). Fifth, this study contributes to the lack of research relative to language tourism despite it having longer in-country stays in comparison with other types of tourism, and its importance for students in many fields (e.g. for improving their competences to be mobile workers or to enhance their international competitiveness, among others) (Iglesias, 2015). Finally, the application of the model proposed to test the drivers of destination choice intention in language tourism represents a novelty in this area, allowing a better understanding of this process.

The findings of this study support previous claims offering relevant empirical conclusions. First, this study examines the educational and leisure nature of language tourism through the choices of a group of Spanish language learners, whose conclusions represent young generations of students that are willing to travel to learn foreign languages. This research provides insights into how students process information when choosing a study destination, suggesting high relevance for developing effective communication strategies in language tourism. While these students are not experts in the educational area, they would be perceived as trustworthy ambassadors (Shu & Scott, 2014). Second, tourists perceive key consumption values as mainly emotional, functional and conditional (Hur et al., 2012; Sheth et al., 1991; Xiao & Kim, 2009). Despite the importance of functional value as a primary driver, these results strongly suggest that others consumption values are also relevant (Hur et al., 2012). Third, the direct effect of consumption values on destination choice intention was supported in line with previous findings (Gill et al., 2007; Ming-Sung et al., 2009; Xiao & Kim, 2009). The results support the argument of Sheth et al. (1991), who suggest that decision choice involves multiple values. Specifically, this study implicates the understanding of destination choice intention for language tourism purposes based on students' consumption values. Fourth, the partial mediating effect of perceived beneficial image between consumption values and destination choice intention was supported in the educational context of studying languages abroad. This study brings theoretical and empirical contributions to perceived image research to better understand the role of values in travel behavior (Ramkissoon et al., 2009). On the one hand, the results indicate that consumption values are a significant predictor of perceived beneficial image (Tapachai & Waryszak, 2000). On the other hand, perceived beneficial image significantly contributes to destination choice intention (Baloglu & McCleary, 1999; Beerli & Martin, 2004), acting as an antecedent (Bigné et al., 2001). Fifth, this study confirms the key role of relaxation and escape in the formation of perceived beneficial image in line with other authors (Phau et al., 2014). Finally, based on the IPMA matrix for destination choice intention, the results suggest that dimensions with greater importance should be improved, even though performance in both cases is already high (Nitzl & Chin, 2017). Thus, enhancing emotional values and relaxation and escape should be recommended (Phau et al., 2014; Sheth et al., 1991).

6. Practical implications

Relevant practical implications can be drawn from the results of this study. The multi-dimensional measure of students' consumption values allows DMOs to understand how they can improve value perceptions across a number of areas. Therefore, DMOs should offer a balanced strategy and focus on a number of ways to improve value perceptions of language learning destinations. Marketing strategies should highlight emotional, functional and conditional values due to their relevant role. An understanding of consumption values and their influence on destination and travel behavior is relevant for destination marketing programs. Following the recommendations of IPMA matrix, the main value that should be enhanced would be the emotional area. Along this line, the emotional value could be improved through an enhancement of the intangible image of the destination. For that goal, word-of-mouth (WOM) is a proper way to transmit the pleasure experience, and promotion should be focused on the program of activities proposed for having fun. Secondly, in relation to functional values, it would be recommended for destination developers and marketers to focus more on nature, quality of food and/or cultural sites in order to attract the interest of students that want to travel abroad for language learning purposes. Relative to conditional value, working on prices to offer "good quality for money" and safety could be interesting, and also training and educating professionals could contribute to a hospitable welcome. Consequently, tangible and intangible aspects are relevant. DMOs should work on the combination between educational and touristic activities. Presenting destinations as places for relaxation, far away from routine places, would be positive for developing affective associations to destinations (Leisen, 2001). In this sense, relaxation and escape activities, getting away from the demands of everyday life and from crowds should be improved, thereby enhancing the performance of destination choice intention.

Generally speaking, marketers need to position the destination more visibly and in more detail on websites, social media, brochures and travel itineraries. And they should pay more attention to researching this novel type of tourism by surveying language tourists to improve the offering appeal, and they should develop a relationship with past tourists to spread a positive WOM experience. The use of techniques that allow recognition of individuals' knowledge and opinions of places is important in studying tourist images (Prebensen, 2007). Language tourism is a type of tourism that involves longer stays than conventional tourism, so promotion and researching should be enhanced. Satisfaction with the country and the university should be the main goal for tourism and education managers. Language tourism is an emerging type of tourism with a great potential that can be presented with a complementary cultural tourism offering (Kennett, 2002). Specifically, in the case of learning Spanish, the number of Spanish speakers is increasing, so Spain should work hard to present a better destination offering than other Spanish-speaking countries. In the case of Spain, the collaboration with *Instituto Cervantes*, as a reference institution highly involved in Spanish language learning, should be enriched. Strengthening the relationship with universities located in Germany, USA or France is important, as the majority of study abroad students comes from these countries. Moreover, other potential countries should be explored, such as those in Eastern Europe, Brazil, Russia, India or China.

7. Limitations and further research

This research presents some limitations that should be considered for future research. First, this study is limited to only U.S. university students, and all of them were studying at the same university. For future research it would be recommended to extend this survey to other geographical locations or universities with different cultural perspectives, as value structures can be different (Yeonsoo et al., 2002). In this sense, it would be interesting to do a comparison between current and future students to identify the main differences. Second, this research is limited to the analysis of a single language, Spanish, and to the study of tourism only in one country, Spain. Future studies could examine others languages and/or other countries. Third, the consequences of consumption values and perceived beneficial image were limited to future intentions. However, other relationships could be proposed for further factors to be studied, such as perceived quality or satisfaction (Bigné et al., 2001; Williams & Soutar, 2009). In addition, individuals' heritage could be considered, due to its relevance on language tourism destination choices (Drozdzewski, 2011), its motivations for learning a second language (Van't Klooster et al., 2008), or even the interaction between educational and leisure motives when travelling for language learning. Finally, market segmentation analysis could be developed from consumption values to analyze their implications for marketing strategies, as travelers have varying values and images of destinations (Sheth et al., 1991).

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