

# DETERMINANTS AND ECONOMIC IMPACT OF LANGUAGE TOURISM: ANALYSIS OF A SPANISH DESTINATION

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## Abstract.

The economic potential of language tourism is manifested in the number of summer courses organized by some countries. Even if learning the language is the main motivation for traveling, the tourists also take into account other characteristics when choosing a destination, such as the location, the safety, the quality of the language, or the cultural attractions. The objective of the current study is to analyze the profile of language tourists according to their motivations to study Spanish and their perception of the destination and to examine this profile as a driver of tourists' expenditures. Specifically, this work analyzes a sample of tourists who attended Spanish courses in language schools and academies in the city of Valladolid (Spain). The analysis of their expenditure during the stay reveals that expenditure is affected by visitors' motivations and perceptions.

**Keywords.** Language tourism; economic impact.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

After Mandarin Chinese, Spanish is the second-most widely spoken language in the world in terms of those for whom it is their mother tongue, and it is also the second most widely-spoken overall. According to data from the 2015 Cervantes Institute Report, Spanish is the native language of almost 470 million people. If we include fluent speakers as well as those who have a limited command of the language and those who study it as a foreign language, the total figure exceeds 559 million, in other words 6.7% of the world population. The strength and drive of Spanish is becoming more evident every day as the number of Spanish speakers continues to grow (Marca España, 2014). Spanish is currently the official language in 21 countries, in addition to being an

official language in many international agencies and the third most widely used in Internet (7.8% of the total) and in science. In addition, the International Forum of Spanish held in Madrid in April 2015 reported that the purchasing power of the 470 million native Spanish speakers represents 9% of world GDP.

The growing importance of Spanish is arousing ever-increasing interest in it as a second language. The 2015 Cervantes Institute Report shows that 21 million students have chosen to learn Spanish as a second language, making it the second most-widely studied language in the world (Marca España, 2014). This interest in learning Spanish has sparked a particular kind of tourism whose main goal is precisely to learn the language. Apart from the language's demographic importance, it should be pointed out that Hispano American culture is another of the main reasons driving foreigners to include Spanish in their skill set (El País, 2015).

Even if learning the language is the main motivation for travelling, tourists also take into account other characteristics when choosing a destination, such as the location, safety, the quality of the language, or the cultural attractions. The objective of the current study is to examine the profile of language tourists according to their motivations to study Spanish and their perception of the destination and to examine this profile as a driver of tourist expenditure. Specifically, this work analyses a sample of tourists who attended Spanish courses in language schools and academies in the city of Valladolid (Spain).

## **2. LANGUAGE TOURISM: SPANISH LANGUAGE AS AN ECONOMIC ASSET**

For a definition of language tourism, we may take the one given by the Spanish Tourist Board, specified as «activities undertaken by those during their trips and stays in places other than their usual place of residence for an uninterrupted period of less than one

year in order to engage in language immersion in a language other than the one used in their natural environment». The economic potential of language tourism is manifested in the number of summer courses organised by some countries (especially, English and Spanish speaking countries), the existence of language tourism plans, or the organisations devoted to promoting languages around the world. In addition to the economic impact, those who travel abroad to learn a foreign language devote a substantial part of their time to interacting with the local culture. They are therefore more aware of local traditions and heritage. This experience may foster positive attitudes, and these visitors may thus become ambassadors of the destination. The financial impact of this kind of tourism is also important for other sectors. Learning the language is merged with sightseeing and visiting places of greater sociocultural interest as well as the purchase of complementary products such as services and sports activities, the hospitality industry, cuisine and leisure.

This is the case of Spanish, one of the main assets of the Spain Brand. Its drive and universal nature make it one of the country's leading values and an increasingly important money-spinner for many firms in the tourist industry (Marca España, 2014). In fact, it is a decision which is influenced by more of the country's assets such as the climate, culture, the warmth of the people, the high standards of safety and welfare, its proximity to other European countries. Furthermore, the vast majority of those who travel to Spain to learn the language are so satisfied with the experience that they are willing to return. They therefore become the best ambassadors for the brand Spain.

In countries such as the UK, France, Germany or the USA, the main agencies and tourist associations have been including "Language Tourism" in their promotional activity for years now and it is seen as a highly attractive sub-segment of cultural tourism and one displaying enormous growth potential (Piedrola and Artacho, 2011). In

the case of Spain, the financial importance of language tourism is such that the authorities and industry have set up the brand “Studying in Spain”, a stamp which seeks to boost language tourism and convey a single message highlighting the qualities that make Spain the best place to study Spanish. The activities foreseen by Turespaña aimed at promoting tourism include specific action to boost and promote language tourism in Spain.

The academic offer of Spanish courses in Spain is to be found in public and private universities, official language schools and private centres offering Spanish for foreign students (FEDELE, 2009).

- a) Universities account for only 8.5% of the total number of courses, a figure which is growing in line with demand. Spanish as a foreign language is taught in 73% of Spanish universities, with the offer of courses coming mainly from public universities. University courses are taught mainly in summer, and tend to be intensive, although courses are also available throughout the whole year.
- b) Spain’s state-run official language schools account for only a fraction of the courses available (only 9%). There are 56 centres offering Spanish for foreign students.
- c) Private centres account for 82.5% of all the available courses at the moment. What these private centres offer is extremely important since they are including an increasing number of services linked to language learning, and thus creating a more comprehensive tourist product. The most frequently available services are accommodation and board, in addition to cultural and sports activities (Pardo, 2011).

Language tourism in Spain is located mainly in Andalusia, Castile and Leon, the Region of Madrid and Catalonia. At a local level, certain cities stand out particularly. These include both coastal locations, given their added appeal of sea and sand, and inland

cities, renowned for their monuments. Foremost amongst the cities where Spanish is taught are Salamanca (Pardo, 2011; El País, 2015) and Alcalá de Henares (Pardo, 2011). Another city which also stands out for its appeal to language tourists is Valladolid, which is the focus of the present study.

### **3. LANGUAGE TOURISM IN VALLADOLID: CHARACTERISTICS AND ECONOMIC IMPACT**

#### **3.1. Case study and sample selection**

Valladolid is a university city renowned for the quality its spoken Spanish, and which was indeed the capital of the Court when Spanish reached the Americas. In addition, Valladolid is part of the region of Castile and Leon and, as such, benefits from the policies aimed at promoting language tourism at a regional scale. The region of Castile and Leon has a comprehensive strategic plan to promote the sector of teaching Spanish as a foreign language. The value of the language as an economic resource is recognised as is Castile and Leon's leading the way in terms of the initiatives set up to foster the teaching of Spanish for overseas students. The plan is grounded on enhancing the availability of courses, strengthening innovation, promoting and encouraging demand, exploiting the cultural heritage, as well as business development and coordination (Pardo, 2011).

Castile and Leon also forms part of the "Road of the Spanish Language" route, recognised as a European Cultural Itinerary in 2002. This is a thematic route which promotes both tangible and intangible assets of the language and which runs through Logroño (San Millán de la Cogolla), Burgos (Santo Domingo de Silos), Valladolid, Salamanca, Ávila, and finishes in Alcalá de Henares, the birthplace of Cervantes.

In this context, the current study explores the profile of the tourists who choose Valladolid as a destination to learn Spanish. Specifically, the objective is to analyse the

main motivations to learn Spanish, the reasons for choosing Valladolid as a destination, and the influence of motivations and perceptions on tourist expenditure during their stay.

Spanish courses for foreign students are organised in Valladolid through two universities and through fifteen private centres<sup>1</sup>. The Touristic and Cultural Observatory of Valladolid, promoted by the Valladolid City Council, collects data concerning those who attend courses. From this information, we selected a sample of 1,331 tourists covering a period from 2012 to 2015. We chose people who had come to Valladolid specifically to undertake a course in Spanish and who stayed for no more than six weeks. The characteristics of the sample are shown in Table 1.

**Table 1. Sample characteristics**

Year	Origin	Age	Gender	Centre
2012	Italy	Younger than 20	Men	Universities
2013	UK	20 to 25	Women	Private centres
2014	USA	26 to 30		
2015	Brazil	31 to 40		
	Germany	Older than 40		
	Poland			
	Belgium			
	France			
	Russia			
	Other			

### 3.2. Language tourists' profile

Firstly, we analysed the main reasons to study Spanish. The individuals were asked why did they study Spanish (they can select several reasons). As we observe in Table 2, the main motivation is the pleasure for learning other languages, followed by the desire to travel to Spanish speaking countries. During the four years analysed, we observe that working motivations (the need of Spanish to improve the professional carrier) have become more and more important.

<sup>1</sup> See [http://www.info.valladolid.es/en\\_US/turismo/aprende-espanol](http://www.info.valladolid.es/en_US/turismo/aprende-espanol)

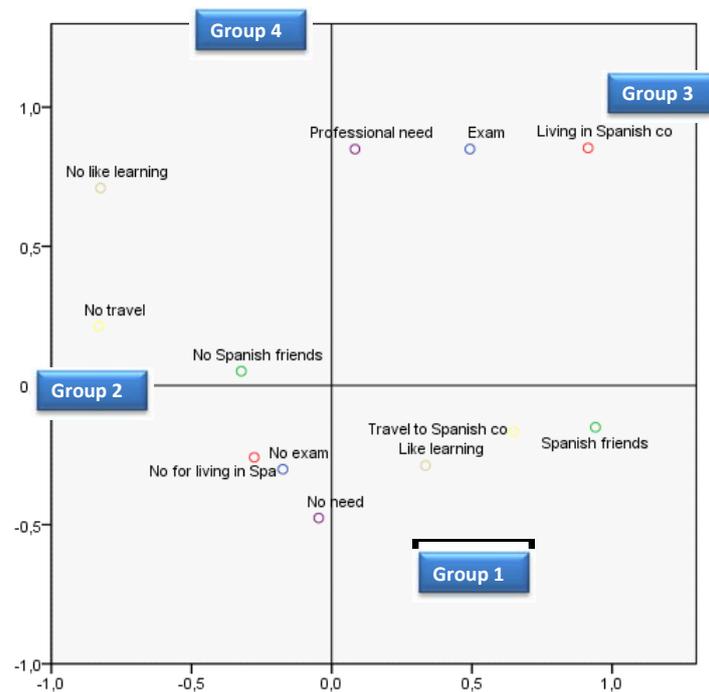
**Table 2. Motivation to study Spanish**

	<b>2012</b>	<b>2013</b>	<b>2014</b>	<b>2015</b>
I need Spanish to get a job or to improve my professional carrier	32.1%	38.9%	34.7%	43.1%
I have friends who speak Spanish	26.9%	28.4%	21.5%	23.5%
I would like to travel to a Spanish speaking country	47.0%	55.0%	64.8%	56.9%
I will do a Spanish exam (DELE or other exams)	27.2%	24.9%	26.5%	27.5%
I like learning languages	68.5%	70.6%	74.4%	66.7%
I will work or live in a Spanish speaking country	21.5%	24.7%	24.0%	13.7%

In order to classify the tourists according the main motivations to study Spanish, first we performed a multiple correspondence analysis in which two dimensions were obtained. Basically, Spanish learners in our sample may be studying Spanish for two major reasons (not incompatible): because they want to (i.e., because of relatively ludic motives such as having friends who speak Spanish, wishing to travel to Spanish speaking countries or just liking learning languages) or because they need to learn Spanish (i.e., they consider it will help them to get a job or improve the professional career or they aim to pass an exam such as DELE).

Then, we performed a k-means cluster analysis. The associations among the different categories of the variables as well as the centroids of the four clusters are represented in Figure 1. Cluster 1 covers those who study Spanish mainly for pleasure or more ludic reasons, and not for necessity. These are 498 respondents, 37.4% of our sample. In Cluster 2 are grouped 532 respondents (40.0%) who do not have clear motives for studying Spanish. Cluster 3 is formed for 218 respondents (16.4% of the sample) who claimed they study Spanish because they will live or work in a Spanish speaking country, so pleasure and necessity are combined. Finally, in Cluster 4 we have found a small group of 83 students (6.2%) who are learning Spanish for professional reasons.

**Figure 1. Classification of the tourists by motivation to learn Spanish**



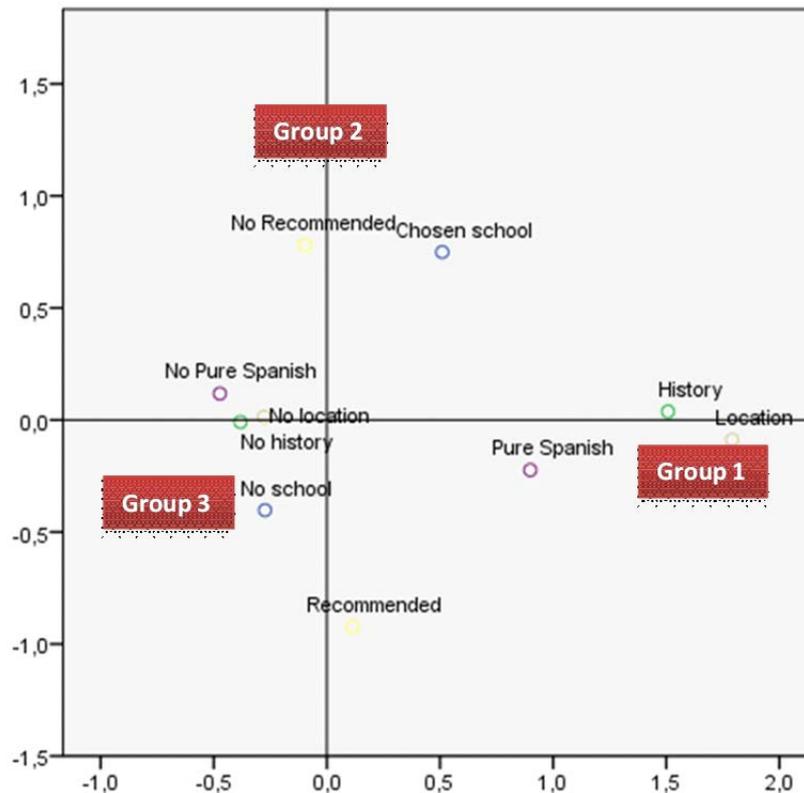
Secondly, we analysed the main reasons to choose Valladolid as a destination to learn Spanish. In Table 3 we observe that the main motivations are recommendation and the quality (i.e., clarity and purity) of the Spanish of Valladolid, although many respondents (39.2% in 2015) indicate that they did not choose city but school.

**Table 3. Motivation to choose Valladolid**

	2012	2013	2014	2015
The location of the city	19.8%	10.5%	11.0%	19.6%
My chosen school is in Valladolid	43.6%	29.8%	33.3%	39.2%
Its historical and cultural background	26.1%	16.4%	18.7%	29.4%
The Spanish in Valladolid is clear and pure	43.6%	27.0%	34.9%	41.2%
I was recommended	40.1%	45.6%	50.2%	49.0%

As in the previous case, we classify the language tourists in our sample according their main motivations to choose Valladolid. We performed a multiple correspondence analysis to summarise the information of this group of categorical variables, and then a k-means cluster analysis to identify groups of tourists according to the reasons for their choice. The results are represented in Figure 2.

**Figure 2. Classification of the tourists by motivation to choose Valladolid**



Two major motivations to choose Valladolid as destiny are identified. On the one hand, one dimension reflects that the decision was deliberate and based on the intrinsic values of Valladolid (i.e., its adequate location, its historic and cultural background or the clarity and purity of the Spanish spoken in Valladolid). On the other hand, the other dimension reflects that the choice could be accidental, based on recommendations or just because the chosen school is in Valladolid, not because the perceived merits of the city itself.

Depending on the greater or lower importance of the former two criteria in determining the choice of Valladolid, three clusters of students are identified. 246 individuals (18.5% of the total sample) form the group of students –Cluster 1– who were really attracted by the characteristics of Valladolid. Cluster 2 is formed by 271 individuals (20.4%) who did not truly choose Valladolid but came to this destiny because the chosen school was in this city. Finally, the great majority of respondents (814, 61.2%) came to Valladolid following a recommendation.

### 3.3. Satisfaction with the city

Finally, we analysed the influence of tourists' satisfaction in the expenditures during the stay. Several aspects were evaluated from 0, totally unsatisfied, to 10, totally satisfied). The descriptive statistics are shown in Table 4. It can be observed that satisfaction level is generally positive, with mean scores over 7.5 out of 10 in all the aspects evaluated and an average overall satisfaction of 8.41.

We performed a factor analysis to summarize the different aspects of the city which define tourists' satisfaction (Table 5). We did not take into account the best evaluated aspects since they hardly discriminate individuals. Three factors with Eigenvalue greater than 1 were obtained. The first one captures the satisfaction with the cultural offer and the services of the city. The second factor is mainly related to the perceptions about the value for money of the commercial services (shopping, restaurants, and accommodation) in Valladolid. The third factor captures the satisfaction with the environment.

**Table 4. Tourists' satisfaction with the city**

<b>Degree of satisfaction about...</b>	<b>2012</b>	<b>2013</b>	<b>2014</b>	<b>2015</b>	<b>Mean (s.d.)</b>
Safety in the city	7.82	9.11	9.12	8.53	8.76 (1.50)
Friendliness and kindness of people	9.19	8.52	8.54	7.80	8.67 (1.52)
General cleanliness of the city (streets, façades)	8.47	8.75	8.69	8.33	8.64 (1.31)
Architectural/monumental offer	8.56	8.46	8.51	8.16	8.49 (1.40)
Access to the city (plain, train...)	8.45	8.23	8.41	8.02	8.34 (1.44)
Touristic information	8.36	8.09	8.26	7.26	8.19 (1.57)
Cultural offer	8.14	8.12	8.33	7.68	8.18 (1.48)
Public transport	7.84	8.21	8.34	8.42	8.15 (1.57)
Value for money in regards of accommodation	8.67	7.55	7.89	8.04	7.98 (1.84)
Value for money in regards of restaurants	7.77	8.03	8.04	8.02	7.97 (1.53)
Value for money in regards of shopping	7.97	7.82	7.87	7.98	7.88 (1.37)
Air pollution	8.53	7.20	7.67	7.04	7.72 (2.34)
Leisure/entertainment offer	7.55	7.62	7.66	7.70	7.62 (1.59)
Acoustics pollution (noise)	7.86	7.20	7.78	7.16	7.56 (2.25)
Overall satisfaction	8.22	8.47	8.47	8.33	8.41 (1.20)

**Table 5. Factor analysis (principal components)**

	<b>Factor 1</b> Satisfaction with cultural offer and services	<b>Factor 2</b> Satisfaction with value for money in commercial services	<b>Factor 3</b> Satisfaction with the environment
Cultural offer	<b>.858</b>	.165	.065
Architectural/monumental offer	<b>.781</b>	.189	.126
Leisure/entertainment offer	<b>.776</b>	.188	.058
Touristic information	<b>.544</b>	.380	.111
Value for money in regards of shopping	.121	<b>.767</b>	.133
Value for money in regards of restaurants	.167	<b>.724</b>	.041
Value for money in regards of accommodation	.196	<b>.639</b>	.207
Public transport	.445	<b>.551</b>	-.025
Access to the city (plain, train...)	.456	<b>.530</b>	.060
Air pollution	.073	.129	<b>.901</b>
Acoustics pollution (noise)	.119	.118	<b>.884</b>
<i>Percentage of variance explained</i>	<i>39.07%</i>	<i>13.53%</i>	<i>9.45%</i>

In order to evaluate the relevance of each factor in predicting the respondents' global satisfaction we performed a regression analysis. As shown in Table 6, the two first factors (satisfaction with the cultural offer and services as well as the value for money in the commercial services of Valladolid) are highly related to overall satisfaction. The adjusted  $R^2$  is 44.4%.

**Table 6. Regression analysis**

<b>Independent variables</b>	<b>Standardised beta</b>	<b>Sig.</b>
Factor 1 - Satisfaction with cultural offer and services	.475	.000
Factor 2 - Satisfaction with value for money in commercial services	.435	.000
Factor 3 - Satisfaction with the environment	.168	.000

Dependent variable: Overall satisfaction with Valladolid

As in the previous cases, we classified the language tourists in our sample according to their main motives of satisfaction. From the k-means cluster analysis we obtained three groups (see Table 7). Group 1 (237 individuals, 26.6%) is formed by those respondents who are satisfied with the cultural offer and the services of Valladolid but who are dissatisfied with the value for money of the commercial services. Group 2 is formed by 365 individuals (41%) who reported a greater level of satisfaction with both the cultural

and service offer of Valladolid and the value for money of the commercial services. Finally, we identified a third cluster formed by 288 respondents (32.4%) who are less satisfied with the cultural offer and the services of Valladolid (although this group have a more positive perception of the city environment).

**Table 7. Classification of the tourists according to the three satisfaction factors (centroids of the final clusters)**

	<b>Group 1</b>	<b>Group 2</b>	<b>Group 3</b>
Factor 1 - Satisfaction with cultural offer and services	.430	.557	-1.028
Factor 2 - Satisfaction with value for money in commercial services	-1.174	.687	.045
Factor 3 - Satisfaction with the environment	-.231	-.018	.284

### 3.4. Relationship between the characteristics of the tourists and expenditure

In order to determine the influence of the profile of language tourists on the expenditure, we calculated the weekly expenditure of the tourists in our sample during their stay in Valladolid and through an analysis of variance (ANOVA) we examined its relationship with the motivations to study Spanish, the motivations to choose this city and the level of three satisfaction dimensions mentioned above. The evolution of average weekly expenditure is shown in Table 8 and the results of ANOVA are shown in Table 9.

**Table 8. Language tourists' weekly expenditure in Valladolid**

	<b>2012</b>	<b>2013</b>	<b>2014</b>	<b>2015</b>	<b>Mean (s.d.)</b>
Average weekly expenditure	287.41€	227.92€	239.98€	329.13€	251.37€(187.61)

The analysis of the weekly expenditure during the stay of the tourists in our sample reveals that it is related to visitors' motivations to choose Valladolid. Expenditure is significantly greater among those motivated by the cultural attractions of the city (Group 1) than among those who came to Valladolid because of a recommendation. Moreover, it is also related to the level of satisfaction with Valladolid, so that those who are more satisfied with the city cultural offer and services and who perceive that the city offers value for money with regards to shopping, accommodation, or restaurants (Group

2) show a greater expenditure during their stay than the other two groups who reported to be relatively dissatisfied either with the perceived value for money in commercial services (Group 1) or with the cultural offer and services (Group 3). Expenditure seems to be unrelated to the motivation to study Spanish. Nevertheless, it must be noticed that the effects on expenditure of the motivation to choose Valladolid and the satisfaction with the city are small.

**Table 9. ANOVA results**  
**Relationship between segments of tourists and weekly expenditure**

	N	Expenditure (mean)	F	Sig.	Significant between- groups differences <sup>a</sup>
<b>Groups by motivation to study Spanish</b>	1	498	242,17	1,170	,320
	2	532	258,48		
	3	218	262,16		
	4	83	232,63		
<b>Groups by motivation to choose Valladolid</b>	1	246	291,60	8,476	,000
	2	271	259,00		
	3	814	236,66		
<b>Groups by satisfaction</b>	1	237	226,72	12,487	,000
	2	365	292,19		
	3	288	227,57		

(a) Tukey's test

#### 4. CONCLUSIONS

Spain has understood the economic potential of one of the most important assets of its cultural heritage, the Spanish language. A considerable number of tourists are attracted because Spain is obviously one of the best destinations for learners of this increasingly widespread language, with the consequent economic impact for the regions or cities receiving this kind of tourists.

Once the learner of a language (in this case Spanish) has made the decision to travel abroad to a country (in this case Spain) where she/he can improve her/his level, a new decision has to be made: the choice of an adequate city for the stay. The perceptions about characteristics of the particular alternatives such as location, safety, quality of the

language or cultural attractions may determine the final choice of destination, and subsequently may affect the satisfaction experienced with the city. Furthermore, and what is the object of the current study, we examine whether the profile of language tourists according to their motivations to study the language (in our case Spanish), the reasons why they chose a city (in our case Valladolid, Spain), and their perception of the destination impact on tourists' expenditure level.

We analyse data gathered between 2012 and 2015 from a large sample of tourists who attended Spanish courses in language schools and academies in Valladolid. We selected those who stayed in this city up to six weeks and examined their main motivations to learn Spanish (necessity of learning the language versus pleasure for learning) and their criteria to choose the Valladolid as a destination (an accidental decision based on recommendations or driven by the choice of a particular school vs. a deliberate decision based on the intrinsic values of Valladolid in terms of location, historic and cultural background or the quality of the Spanish spoken in this city). We also identified the major components of the satisfaction with the city of the sampled tourists.

Using ANOVA we estimated how the level of weekly expenditure varies across groups of tourists identified according to their motivations to study Spanish, the reasons why they chose Valladolid, and their satisfaction with this city. No differences were found between the clusters formed based on the motivations to study Spanish. In contrast, although it is small, we do observe a significant effect on weekly expenditure depending on the criteria to choose Valladolid and on the level of satisfaction. Expenditure is greater among those tourists motivated by the suitable location of Valladolid, its historic and cultural background or the clarity and purity of the Spanish spoken in this city. Expenditure is likewise greater among those students who are more satisfied with the cultural offer and services of Valladolid and who perceive that the commercial services (accommodation, shopping, restaurants...) in this city provide a good value for money.

According to our findings, public administrations and language centres should promote a good image of the destination and raise awareness of the intrinsic values of a city to learn a language. As language tourists who choose a particular city knowing its characteristics tend to expend more, the economic impact of this kind of tourism will be greater if visitors are attracted by the intrinsic values of the destination rather than by recommendation or mere chance. Once the tourists are in the destination, a good cultural offer and convenient and varied commercial services should be provided. After all, if language tourism is to be monetized, these tourists should perceive they have good alternatives to expend their money. The interaction of the language tourists with the locals will be a component of the degree of learning (Iglesias, 2014), but also can contribute to motivate the tourists to get a greater knowledge of the destination and to devote more time and money to other activities. In order to achieve the interaction with residents and the immersion of the language tourists in the life to the city, it is recommendable a greater connection among the several organizations involved in the management of language tourism (educational centres, public institutions, local organizations, tourism agencies, etc.). The collaboration between the educational centres and the providers of other services can improve the educational experience of the tourists (greater interaction and practice of the language), but also can boost the commercial activity and the tourists' expenditure.

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