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**Accepted version**

## **Cultural differences, language attitudes and tourist satisfaction. A study in the Barcelona hotel sector**

In most service activities, customer satisfaction depends largely on the direct interaction with service providers. In the case of tourism, this interaction often occurs between people from different countries and whose mother tongues are different. In this context, concepts such as cultural proximity, linguistic accommodation, expectations and language attitude enrich the analysis of tourist satisfaction. This study uses an interdisciplinary approach that integrates cultural and linguistic elements in the analysis of tourist evaluations in the hotel sector. In particular, the technique of Content Analysis is applied to comments made by hotel guests on Booking.com to determine the extent to which cultural differences, understood in terms of country of origin, influence two relevant aspects of the tourist destination experience: their language attitudes and level of satisfaction with the service received. The findings confirm that the country of origin influences guests' evaluations and the choice of the language in which the experience is assessed and reveal that comments concerning language reflect this influence. In particular, linguistic experiences seem to be more important for tourists who emphasise the role of their mother tongue (Italians and French) than for tourists more open to the use of other languages (German and Portuguese).

Keywords: Cultural differences; language attitudes; linguistic accommodation; hotels; tourist reviews; satisfaction.

### **Introduction**

Tourist satisfaction is one of the most important concepts in the field of tourism

marketing and the sociology of tourism (Schofield 2000). There are at least three reasons to justify this: (1) a very satisfied tourist makes recommendations to family and friends through positive word of mouth communication, which in turn translates into the acquisition of new clients; (2) repeat customers are created because they have been satisfied the first time and this provides a source of income without the need to invest in additional marketing efforts; and (3) complaints and refunds that are expensive, time-consuming, and negative to the firm's reputation are limited (Swarbrooke and Horner 2001).

Although tourists may be different in terms of their behaviour and supply requirements, there is little doubt that, regardless of where they travel, the more they are provided with access to information and services, the more welcome they feel and the greater the probability that they will return to the destination or promote it through word of mouth (Cohen and Cooper 1986; Koliou 1997). But a good experience cannot be achieved without quality communication between the host and the tourist.

Communication in the tourism sector is very important because it constitutes the first contact between the consumer and the service provider and, undoubtedly, influences the consumption experience (Blue and Harun 2003), representing an important factor that determines satisfaction levels (Huisman and Moore 1999).

In the case of international tourism, tourists almost inevitably come into contact with languages foreign to them or with non-native speakers of their own language. In this context, communication takes place between people who come from different cultural and linguistic backgrounds, so a prerequisite for this communication is the existence of a common language. The touristic language is the language that facilitates such communication between the host and the visitor (Gursoy and Rutherford 2004; Nield, Kozak, and LeGrys 2000; Ryan 2002). In fact, intercultural contacts fostered by

tourism are seen as a medium and an important motive for learning a new language (Dörnyei and Csizér 2005). It should not be surprising, therefore, that language plays a fundamental role in tourist satisfaction (Kozak 2001; Tuna 2006).

However, the knowledge levels of different languages that exist in a destination, particularly among the providers of the different tourist services, varies considerably, as does the degree to which the international tourist has to accommodate linguistically at that destination. Country of origin has also proved to be an important predictor of the language attitudes of the tourist.

At present, it is usual that communication between host and visitor continues after the trip through the online platforms where tourists post their comments evaluating their experiences. In this context, language is the vehicle (Ma 2014; Ouane and Glanz 2010) through which tourists from different places communicate their assessments, culturally conditioned, of the service provided. So, the language attitudes of the tourist can also be seen in the reviews.

Given the importance of tourism and its obvious relationship with culture and language, a very relevant field of multidisciplinary research has opened and has been progressively growing in recent years. This paper, which aims to contribute to this multidisciplinary approach, analyses whether tourists from different cultures, understood in terms of their countries of origin, have different language attitudes and evaluate their hotel experience in significantly different ways on an online environment. Specifically, based on the information contained in the comments and ratings of tourists on a reservation portal, it is intended to address the following research questions:

1. Does country of origin influence the choice of the language in which the hotel experience is assessed? Do the comments concerning language reflect this influence?

2. Does country of origin influence the evaluations that tourists make of their hotel experience, that is, in their satisfaction with it? What role do interactions with staff play in the evaluations, particularly those where the use of language is significant?

It is worth noting the existence of other recent contributions that also analyse the influence of cultural and linguistic elements on the judgments or assessments made by tourists, reflected in their online reviews on reservation portals. In particular, Goethals (2016) analyses the comments made on Booking.com by German, French and Spanish-speaking tourists, focusing on language-related judgments and not on tourist satisfaction. For their part, Hale (2016) analyses whether the ratings given by speakers of 16 different languages to London tourist attractions on TripAdvisor are similar to each other. Liu et al. (2017) look at the online comments left on TripAdvisor by guests, in Chinese and in eight other foreign languages (English, German, French, Italian, Portuguese, Spanish, Japanese and Russian), to analyse the relative evaluations of different attributes (Room, Location, Cleanliness, Service and Value) of the Chinese hotels where they stayed. At last, Cenni and Goethals (2017) focus on negative hotel reviews on TripAdvisor written in three different languages (English, Dutch and Italian) to determine whether some features of these reviews (types of speech acts, specific topics evaluated and up-scaling and down-scaling strategies) reveal similar or divergent cross-linguistic tendencies. In contrast to this present study, in these works the analyses focus on language and not the provenance of the international tourists. That is, they focus on the language groups. As Liu et al. (2017) recognise, this precludes consideration of the fact that English or another language may be a second language, i.e. the lingua franca used in the comments. This limitation is not shared by the present

work, in which it is possible to analyse the influence of the country of origin on the choice of the language of the comments.

### **The influence of culture in the evaluation of tourism services**

As tourism research has grown and consolidated, the need to analyse cultural influences on tourism has been recognized (Kang and Moscardo 2006), in particular in the hotel industry (Ayoun and Moreo 2008). In this regard, Hofstede's cultural dimensions provide a theoretical background for the analysis of the influence of cultural differences on behaviour, and for evaluating tourist agents, that, despite being criticized from different perspectives (Eringa et al. 2015), have been used by various authors (Kuo 2007; Manrai and Manrai 2011; Mattila 1999a, 1999b; Ngai et al. 2007; Risitano et al. 2012). Hofstede (1980) underlines the influence of national cultural value systems on individuals' patterns of thinking, feeling, and acting. In particular, cultural differences between tourists from different countries lead to differences in their ways of thinking and behaving, which are reflected in the way in which they evaluate service received.

The literature shows that, when assessing a tourism service, perceptions about service quality, expectations, the emphasis put on the different aspects of service and complaining behaviours differ according to the cultural origin of the tourist (Schuckert, Liu, and Law 2015). For example, Legohérel, Daucé, and Hsu (2012) found that cultural differences create different perceptions of service quality, propensity to repeat the purchase and the frequency with which the service is recommended to others, which ultimately leads to significant differences in evaluation of an experience. In addition, tourists from different cultures have significantly different expectations during their stays (You et al. 2000). A relationship between culture and complaining behaviour has also been found (Huang, Huang, and Wu 1996; Ngai et al. 2007), especially in the case of poor service (Kwortnik and Han 2011). According to Ngai et al. (2007), since

complaints allow hotel managers to understand what displeases their customers and thereafter to address them, they should pay attention to cultural differences in complaining behaviour.

### **Intercultural communication: the role of language in tourism service provision**

Since the core of consumer participation in a service encounter is constituted by interaction with the providing staff (Bitner et al. 1997; Zeithaml, Berry, and Parasuraman 1996), it is obvious that language plays a fundamental role in service provision, especially when the interaction is in an international context (Holmqvist and Grönroos 2012). In the case of tourism, customer service is provided in a cross cultural context (Devereux 1998). Therefore, the level of use of foreign languages and the language attitudes of those staff who interact with tourists become very relevant. It has been claimed that there is a correlation between the quality of communication between the tourist and the host, who must be sensitive to cultural differences (Hogg, Liao, and O'Gorman 2014), and tourist satisfaction levels (Cohen and Cooper 1986; Dann 1996; Huisman and Moore 1999). Both employers and employees recognize the importance of competence in foreign languages, especially in oral and listening skills, in order to properly interact with clients and improve service quality (Davies 2000). Obviously, language barriers are very important obstacles to intercultural communication. Tourists are well aware of this difficulty, which has important effects on the choice of potential destinations, planning for the trip and interaction with local residents, as well as on the quality of the experience (Cohen and Cooper 1986). Specifically, where language barriers exist and communication is more difficult, tourist spending at a destination is negatively affected (Chen and Hsu 2000). In short, language is vital in tourism, with its abundant intercultural and multilingual contexts (Goethals 2014), especially if it is

accepted that tourism has a discourse of its own, to which contributes both the tourism industry and the tourists through the communication of their experiences (Dann 1996).

### **The selection of the language in tourism service: linguistic expectations and accommodation**

The selection of the language of the service encounter can be explained through Communication Accommodation Theory, which maintains that a person adapts his or her conversation, gestures or paralinguistic aspects to converge with the interlocutor (Giles, Bourhis, and Taylor 1977). Change of language is one of the most observable forms of linguistic accommodation. In the European Union multilingual zone, where this phenomenon is very common, we have the three options (Goethals 2014): the use of the mother tongue, the use of the language of the destination or a lingua franca, such as English.

It is important to bear in mind that, when an international tourist is catered for in his native language, or in English as a lingua franca, there are different implications, both ideological and affective, where there are no native English speakers in the interaction (House 2003). That is, feelings towards their own language or a foreign language have the potential to influence tourists, just as they affect the perceptions and evaluations of any consumer (Gopinath and Glassman 2008). In this regard, recent research has found that consumers prefer to use their native language (Puntoni, Langhe, and van Osselaer 2009) and even consumers who are fluent in more than one language expressly state that the use of their mother tongue influences their perceptions of service quality (Holmqvist 2011).

In the planning phase of the trip, the emotional connotations of the use of one's mother tongue suggest that a consumer will prefer and select those companies that are willing to operate in their native language, in comparison to those that are not,



demonstrating, for example, that clients are more likely to make a reservation if someone speaks their language (Leslie, Russell, and Govan 2004). Consumers who prefer to use their own language may choose a provider who communicates in another language if they perceive a much higher quality level, or perceived risk or price is much lower.

On the one hand, during the trip, communicating in their native language with tourists who have little knowledge of the local language helps them to feel more relaxed and welcome, especially when problems arise (Cocoa and Turner 1997; Russell and Leslie 2002). On the other hand, because quality of communication influences the consumer's perceptions about overall service quality (Parasunaman, Zeithaml, and Berry 1985), the use of the consumer's native language will also have a positive influence on their evaluation of the service and loyalty (Holmqvist and Grönroos 2012).

Although English has become a global lingua franca (Crystal 2003), it is necessary to be aware of the different attitudes that tourists can manifest towards its use. In this regard, Goethals (2014), who warns of the risk of considering English as the most desirable alternative for tourism sector communication, argues that linguistic accommodation in the mother tongue of the tourist does not have the same effect as when using linguistic accommodation in English as a lingua franca. In the first case, it will be understood by the tourist as a specific effort to communicate and, therefore, as positive. In the second case, it will not give the same sense that the host is making a particular effort, since it can be interpreted that both parties are making similar efforts to communicate. Even the tourist may feel that he makes a greater effort than the professional who attends him, since he will start from the premise that, in the countries with the most developed tourist offer, at least part of the staff, such as receptionists or

guides, should be multilingual and capable, therefore, of communicating with the tourists of the main visiting countries in their own languages.

Also, because, from a sociolinguistic perspective, it is noted that in interactions where two partners do not share the same native language, the person with the lower status usually accommodates by speaking the language of the person with the higher status (Callahan 2006). As the client decides the outcome of a service encounter (Grönroos 2008), applying this logic to a meeting with a tourist, his linguistic expectations will lead him to believe that it is the service provider that should adapt to the situation (Callahan 2005). These expectations may vary according to, among other factors, the linguistic group to which the tourist belongs (Tuna 2006). For example, members of linguistic groups of reduced size and / or who have a low importance in international outbound tourism flows (such as Greek speakers), probably do not expect to be served at their destination in their native language. Of course, language preference will also be influenced by the linguistic proficiency of the tourist (Callahan 2006). That is, the linguistic proficiency of the tourist may be the factor that makes you opt for your mother tongue or another language in which you consider yourself competent enough to address whoever provides the service.

In short, the influence of cultural and language aspects on tourist evaluations can be analysed from a multidisciplinary perspective. This work addresses this task, using as a data source the online reviews posted by foreign tourists (German, French, Italian and Portuguese) on the booking platform Booking.com, in their respective mother tongues, in Spanish (language of the destination) and in English as a lingua franca, after their stays in hotel establishments in Barcelona (a city in a non-English speaking country).

## **Data and methodology**

In order to achieve the objectives set out in the research, Content Analysis methodology is used. According to Krippendorff (1990), this technique seeks to understand data, not as a set of physical events, but as symbolic phenomena, and directly analyse them.

Content analysis is, therefore, a scientific method capable of offering inferences from essentially verbal, symbolic or communicative data. Taking Bigné (1999, 259) as a reference, content analysis is a ‘technique for collecting, classifying and analysing information in oral or written communications through an objective, systematic and quantitative procedure whose purpose is descriptive and inferential with respect to the context where they are generated’. In particular, in this study content analysis is used as a quantitative research method, since the relevant information is extracted and codified into different categories, which are then analyzed by statistical techniques (Hsieh and Shannon 2005).

The main data source of this study is the opinions posted by tourists on the internet about the hotel establishments where they stayed. The hotel industry is important in the tourist industry, both as a fundamental subsector of the tourist value chain (Romero and Tejada 2011), as a key element in the tourist experience and, therefore, in the formation of the image of the destination (Mak 2017). The decision to use online reviews is also due to the importance they have for the tourism industry, especially in the hotel sector (Mauri and Minazzi 2013). Consumers base their travel buying decisions on electronic word-of-mouth communication and feedback that other consumers leave on travel web pages or on booking platforms (Zhang and Mao 2012). In addition, more and more travellers rely on online hotel rankings and leave comments that help other tourists (Zhong et al. 2012). These classifications are updated reflections of online tourist satisfaction, and are considered as more objective, broader based and

less biased sources of information than traditional questionnaires, since the reviews are generated spontaneously by the tourist (Yacouel and Fleischer 2012). The easy accessibility for the tourist to the self-generated content in the network solves the traditional difficulty of collecting comments that tourists spontaneously share with their friends and family (Giles, Otab, and Foley 2013).

After searching among the world's best-known booking platforms that include customer reviews, Booking.com was chosen as the most appropriate to collect secondary data for this study, as it offers more than 23 million rooms in 214 countries and is available in 40 languages. We decided also to focus on a single destination, the city of Barcelona, as it is the main city in Catalonia, which is the Spanish region most visited by international tourists, almost 18 million in 2016, 23.8 % of those who visited Spain (INE 2017), which itself is the third most visited country and the first one by international tourism revenues (UNWTO 2016). Barcelona has a wide range of hotels on Booking.com (501 out of a total of 678 existing in the city according to the National Statistical Institute in 2016), which provides a large number of comments for analysis.

In particular, we evaluated the comments made over the one-year time period 01/07/2015 to 06/30/2016 by international tourists of French, German, Italian and Portuguese origin about all the establishments in Barcelona available on Booking.com on July 7, 2016 . A one-year period was chosen in order to avoid seasonal bias. In two of the hotels no comments were found that met the criteria. In total, 48,491 comments were collected and analysed, of which the variables of research interest were extracted and codified by the researchers without using any **automatic software** (Table 1).

**[Table 1 near here]**

As can be seen in Table 1, hotel establishments of all categories were considered. In addition, the Booking.com portal identified the characteristics of the

commentators, in terms of the size of the visiting groups and reasons for travel. The overall numeric evaluations given to the stay were also provided.

The four countries chosen meet two requirements: they are neither multilingual European (where there are different official languages) nor English speaking countries. They are countries with great importance for tourism in Barcelona, since in the year 2015 the French accounted for 8.2% of tourists staying in hotels in the city, Italians 6.5% and Germans 6.0%, with the Portuguese forming part of the 21.6% of visitors from the rest of Europe (Observatori del turisme a Barcelona i comarques 2016).

As for the languages, following the Goethals (2014) approach, the four native languages of the countries of origin of the tourists were chosen, Spanish as a local language and English as a lingua franca.

With regard to comments on staff, we collected those that explicitly refer to aspects related to the service provided, such as friendliness, professionalism, good treatment of the tourist (positive) or, on the contrary, bad manners or incompetence (negative).

The comments referring to the language used during service provision have also been classified as positive or negative, but, in addition, consideration has been given to the possibility of the classifications being moderated or reinforced. Following Goethals (2016), it is considered that a comment is reinforced if it supposes a specific and important point for improvement, is accompanied by an explanatory text, punctuation marks such as exclamations, , is linked to comments made by other tourists or if expressions are used which emphasise the linguist competence of the interlocutor (perfect, very fluent, ...). On the other hand, a comment has been labelled as moderated when it has elements excusing a behaviour, expressions used as counterpoints or which try to mitigate negative consequences. Similarly, to meet the need to analyse the

linguistic comments in depth we established a scheme of taxonomy. The 10 categories considered, 4 positive and 6 negative, are also inspired by Goethals (2016).

A first characterization of the sample allows us to verify, in relation to the reason for making the trip, the predominance of the holiday motive (93.4%), while the remaining 6.6% were business travellers. The distribution by traveller group is much more heterogeneous. The majority of the comments are made by tourists who travelled as a couple (52.5%), followed by those who travelled as a family (17.4%), with friends / group (16.0%) and alone (14.2%). As regards the tourist country of origin, the French made 45.7% of the comments, followed by the Italians (31.0%), the Germans (19.1%), while the Portuguese contributed only 4.2%. This order corresponds to the relative importance of these countries in the distribution (given above) of international tourists staying in hotels in the city of Barcelona.

## **Results**

### ***Cultural differences and tourist language attitudes***

The chi-square test associated with the corresponding contingency table shows that there is an association between the origin of the tourists and the language used to make comments ( $\chi^2 = 124,265.78$ ;  $gl = 15$ ;  $p = 0.000$ ). The tourists of the four nationalities have been clearly inclined, especially the French and the Italians, to use their mother tongues when making comments (Table 2). English, as a lingua franca, was the second most used language for the four nationalities. Finally, only a minimal proportion of tourists (1.2%) used Spanish, that is, the language of the destination.

**[Table 2 near here]**

The Germans and Portuguese were the most likely to take the two linguistic accommodation foreign language options to make comments. Specifically, 16.1% of the

Portuguese made their comments in English, two percentage points more than the Germans. Tourists from both countries also accommodated in the destination mother tongue to a greater extent than the French and Italians. Another relevant fact is that 1.3% of the comments made by the Portuguese were in the mother tongues of the other three countries, in French, especially, and in German.

The analysis of the taxonomy of the comments made on language confirms the obtained results. It should be noted that the analysis disregarded the 10 Portuguese comments on language, since this small number distorts the reliability of the statistical tests. Regarding the taxonomy of positive comments (Table 3), the most numerous, by far, are references to the use of the tourist's mother tongue by service providers. However, statistically significant differences can be seen depending on country of origin ( $\chi^2 = 321.40$ ,  $gl = 6$ ,  $p = 0.000$ ). Thus, the Germans highlight to a greater extent the use of English as a lingua franca. In the case of France and Italy, the majority of references are to the use of their mother tongue, followed in both cases, although at a great distance, by the existence of multilingual staff.

**[Table 3 near here]**

As regards the taxonomy of negative comments (Table 4), the main complaint was about the poor use by staff of the tourist's mother tongue (8 comments on xenophobic attitude of staff were disregarded, as this small number distorts the reliability of the statistical tests). Again, we can see statistically significant differences according to the country of origin ( $\chi^2 = 133.67$ ,  $gl = 8$ ,  $p = 0.000$ ). Thus, Germans criticize the poor use of English as a lingua franca, while the French, especially, and Italians focus their criticism on the poor use of their mother tongues by staff. In addition, the latter also complain to a greater extent than the rest about the exclusive use of Spanish.

**[Table 4 near here]**

### ***Cultural differences in tourists' ratings***

Regarding the second research question, the overall average rating of hotels for the whole sample is high (8.06). The Italian (8.14) and German (8.08) ratings are above the average and the French (8.01) and Portuguese (7.93) below (Figure 1). Despite the similarity of these figures, statistically significant differences (Welch Statistic = 25.32,  $gl_1 = 3$ ,  $gl_2 = 8824.24$ ,  $p = 0.000$ ) were identified in all through the performance of ANOVA and subsequent post hoc tests, except between the French and Portuguese evaluations. In short, Italian evaluations are significantly higher than those made by the other international tourists. The same is true for the Germans with respect to the French and the Portuguese.

**[Figure 1 near here]**

To analyse the possible influence of interactions with hotel staff on tourist evaluations, firstly, we considered the 21,584 comments related to staff (44.5% of the total comments). It should be noted that the distribution by country of origin of the comments on staff virtually coincides with the distribution by country of origin of the 48,491 comments analysed.

90.9% of comments on staff are positive (Table 5). The chi-square test associated with the corresponding contingency table shows that there is an association between the orientation of the comments on staff and the origin of the tourists ( $\chi^2 = 102.44$ ,  $gl = 3$ ,  $p = 0.000$ ). In relative terms, the Germans speak most positively of the staff, while the French and, above all, the Portuguese are the most critical.

**[Table 5 near here]**

It was verified by means of an ANOVA that the overall assessment of those who made positive comments on staff (8.56) is significantly higher (Welch Statistic =



3647.12;  $g11 = 1$ ;  $g12 = 2166.30$ ;  $p = 0.000$ ) than those who made negative comments (6.11) (Figure 2). This is true for all of the countries of origin. Given the magnitude of the sample, we note that negative comments have a greater influence on overall lodging evaluation, in this case negatively, than have positive comments. In addition, the Germans who make negative comments also give the lowest average score (5.87). That is, they criticise staff less, but it is an aspect of the service received that negatively influences their assessment. On the other hand, the Portuguese who make negative comments on staff also give the highest average rating among those who criticise staff (6.24). That is, it is an item that does not have such a negative influence on their evaluation of the establishments.

**[Figure 2 near here]**

In the context of experiences with staff, language is especially relevant in international tourism. In order to analyse its possible influence on tourist evaluations, language related comments were studied. Specifically, 1,674 comments (3.5% of the total) referred to the language in which tourists were provided service. In this case, the distribution by country of origin of these language related comments does not coincide with the distribution by country of origin of the comments analysed, or with the comments on staff. As can be seen in Table 6, the French show a strong propensity to refer to language, whereas the Italians, the Germans and, above all, the Portuguese are quite reluctant to express their opinions about their language experiences.

**[Table 6 near here]**

67.8% of the comments on language are positive (Table 7). Similarly, the general comments, that is, those in which the message is neither reinforced nor moderated (e.g., 'they speak Italian') are the most numerous (38.3%), followed very closely by the moderated (e.g. 'The staff were very friendly and they understood a bit of

Italian') (36.8%). The least numerous were the reinforced comments (e.g., 'the reception lady spoke only Spanish and so was difficult to understand') (24.9%). The chi-square test associated with the corresponding contingency table, which excluded the 10 comments on language made by the Portuguese, shows that there is an association between the typology of comments on language and the tourist's origin ( $\chi^2 = 62.63$ ,  $g1 = 10$ ,  $p = 0.000$ ). In relative terms, the Germans were most inclined to comment negatively, both moderated and reinforced, while positive comments have tended to be moderated. The Italians, for their part, in relative terms, chose to comment the most positively, especially in their general comments.

**[Table 7 near here]**

The ANOVA indicated that the overall evaluations of those who made positive comments on language (8.58) were significantly higher (Welch statistic = 226.82;  $g1 = 1$ ;  $g2 = 804.47$ ;  $p = 0.000$ ) than those who made negative comments (7.33). This result is repeated for each of the countries. Therefore, the downward influence of negative comments on language is much lower than in the case of comments on staff. It is noteworthy that Italians gave the highest average valuation (8.78) when making positive comments regarding language, but they score lower when making negative comments (7.06). For their part, the Germans give the worst appraisals of those who commented on language (7.87), due in large part to the fact that the positive ratings are not very high (8.35).

In comparing the influence of the orientation of comments on staff and language related comments on overall tourism appraisals, we find that the difference between the ratings associated with positive comments and negative comments is much higher in the case of interactions with staff than in the case of language issues (Table 8). That is, bad

experiences with staff produce much more dissatisfaction than negative language experiences. This is especially true in the case of the Germans whose satisfaction seems to be greatly affected by poor interactions with staff. On the other hand, the Italians tend to extreme evaluations in both cases, rewarding or punishing the hotel for their good or bad experiences, both with staff and as regards language use.

**[Table 8 near here]**

### **Discussion and conclusions**

Regarding the first research question, of the three options highlighted in the literature, the clearest choice when commenting was the use of the mother tongue. It seems to confirm not only the preference of consumers for their native language, detected by Puntoni, Langhe, and van Osselaer (2009), but the extension of the preference for the mother tongue in the planning stage of the trip, verified by Leslie, Russell, and Govan (2004), to the post-trip stage.

In cases where there has been linguistic accommodation in another language, this has been done, mainly, using English as a lingua franca. Although it might be thought that the proportion of comments in English should be greater, since it is considered one of the languages most widely used at the global level (Tuna 2006), it is also true that in the European Union it is estimated that only 38% of the population speaks English as a foreign language with enough fluency to hold a conversation (European Commission 2012). In relative terms, English was more used by the Germans and, above all, by the Portuguese (16.1% of the Portuguese comments were in English). Regardless of the possible influence of linguistic competence in this linguistic accommodation strategy, in the latter case, the Anglophilia that exists among the Portuguese, deriving from the historical political and economic relations that existed between the countries, is evident (VV. AA. 1986).

For its part, the language of the destination, in this case Spanish, was scarcely used. This contrasts with the evidence concerning the importance given to the study of Spanish throughout the world (Instituto Cervantes 2016). In fact, in a survey of tourists taking courses in Spanish in the Spanish city of Valladolid (Redondo-Carretero et al. 2017), it was noted that one of their main drivers to study Spanish was their desire to travel to Spanish-speaking countries, thus implying their intention to practise linguistic accommodation.

Finally, the Portuguese most use the native languages of the other three countries, especially French and, to a lesser extent, German. Behind this would be the intense migratory dynamic of the Portuguese, who during the second half of the twentieth century had among their main destinations Francophone and German-speaking countries such as Germany, Switzerland and France (Mahnig and Wimmer 1999; Teixeira and Albuquerque 2016).

The analysis of the taxonomies of comments on language confirms the pattern in the differences in language selection according to the provenance of the tourist. Both the French and Italian speak mainly, positively and negatively, about the use of their native language. The Germans, however, focus their attention on the use of English as a lingua franca. These results are similar to those obtained by Goethals (2016), who identified that French-speaking tourists emphasised the role of their mother tongue in their language assessments, while German-speakers tended to disregard it.

The fact that tourists cling to their mother tongue in the destination suggests a low degree of multilingual and cultural awareness, which would be harming intercultural communication in host-guest interactions, necessary for an adequate development of tourism and hospitality services (Sindik and Božinović 2013). In addition, from the perspective of the Plog's tourist typology (Plog 1974; 2001), it seems

that these tourists who defend their mother tongue can be classified as psychocentrics or dependables, not very fond of adventurous situations, who opt for familiar destinations where they expect to speak to them in their mother tongue (Hashimoto 2016).

As for the second research question, assuming that the evaluation that a tourist makes of his experience post purchase is the most appropriate tool for measuring satisfaction (Gu and Ye 2014), it was verified that the provenance of the tourist influences his level of satisfaction. In the context of high overall assessments and positive experiences with staff, but not so much in the case of language interaction, Italian tourists are the most satisfied with their experience, given that their evaluations are significantly higher than the other three nationalities, with the second highest percentage of positive comments on staff and they are the most likely to make positive comments on language use. Next, are the Germans, whose overall evaluations are significantly higher than the French and Portuguese, and have the highest percentage of positive comments on staff, although they are the most likely to make negative comments on the use of language, as well as to moderate their positive ratings. Less satisfied are the French, who give the second worst overall ratings, significantly lower than that of Italians and Germans, and the second lowest percentage of positive comments on staff, although they are quite likely to make positive comments on the use of language. Finally, the Portuguese are the least satisfied, since they make the worst overall assessments, significantly lower than that of Italians and Germans, and have the lowest percentage of positive comments on staff.

Tuna (2006) argues that tourist satisfaction levels tend to be higher when the host culture is similar to that of visitor, due to the higher cultural proximity, especially linguistic. This hypothesis could explain why the Italians are more satisfied, but not why the Germans are more satisfied, especially as regards their interaction with staff,

than the French and Portuguese, whose cultural-linguistic proximity is obviously greater. The cultural dimensions of Hofstede (2001) can help shed light on this issue, which, on the other hand, shows that cultural-linguistic proximity does not equal geographical proximity. Specifically, following the arguments of Mattila (1999b), tourists from countries with greater power distance, which reflects the degree to which society accepts inequalities, have higher expectations regarding the quality of the hosting service (they expect greater courtesy and consideration from employees who they consider as having inferior status), so tend to give lower evaluations. The highpower distance of France and Portugal, which is much higher than that of Germany , can help to explain the relative levels of satisfaction of tourists from these countries in a way that the hypothesis of cultural proximity cannot. Similarly, Kuo (2007) argues that individuals from countries with greater uncertainty avoidance are less tolerant of poor service attitude, even though providers try to compensate them for this and, therefore, they are more difficult to satisfy and prone to give lower evaluations. Thus, the very high uncertainty avoidance of Portuguese and French, far superior to that of the Germans, would also contribute to explain the evidence obtained.

A first aspect verified by placing a focus on the interaction between tourists and the direct hotel service providers is that the overall assessments always move in the same direction as the orientation of the comments related to staff and, specifically, the use of language. Good experiences are linked to significantly higher ratings than those associated with poor experiences. In addition, regardless of the differences due to country of origin, the results show that negative comments on staff, much more than those specifically on language, most affect overall evaluations. That is, tourists are very sensitive to negative staff attitudes (antipathy, apathy...) punishing establishments when they consider these are present. This evidence would corroborate the importance

attributed to complaining behaviour as a fundamental determinant of satisfaction with the hosting service (Kwortnik and Han 2011; Yuksel, Kilinc, and Yuksel 2006). Italians and, above all, Germans, who are less likely to make negative comments on staff, are the ones who penalize such negative experiences.

Finally, linguistic experiences seem to be more important for tourists who emphasise the role of their mother tongue (Italians and French) than for tourists more open to the use of other languages (German and Portuguese). In this way, a greater sensitivity to one's mother tongue translates into a greater proclivity to comment on the linguistic experience and/or these experiences more strongly affect overall assessments. In line with the approach of Gopinath and Glassman (2008), it is confirmed that own-language preferences influence tourist evaluations. The same pattern, although centred solely on the proclivity to make linguistic comments, is verified in Goethals (2016). One aspect that could be influencing this issue is the quantity of each nationality visiting the destination. Thus, the French represent almost 26% of foreign tourists in Barcelona (IDESCAT 2016), making France the largest emitting country, while the Portuguese barely represent 1.3%. Following Callahan (2006), it can be assumed that, since the French make up the greatest proportion of the international tourists at the destination, they expect to be served in their native language, that is, they have significantly higher linguistic expectations than the other tourists. In this way, the majority group would be showing that it perceives the strength of its (ethnolinguistic) vitality (Giles, Bourhis, and Taylor 1977). The opposite is the case with the Portuguese, who represent a small proportion of the tourists who visit the destination, and exhibit lower linguistic expectations, so it is not strange that they scarcely make comments related to language. It is very likely that, in addition, the linguistic proximity between

Portuguese and Spanish, by virtue of which linguistic accommodation is not even an imperative need for the Portuguese, also contributes to explain this result.

In short, the present work provides evidence confirming the influence of cultural and linguistic aspects on the way in which tourists of different nationalities evaluate their hotel experiences. In this regard, its main limitation may be that it does not consider the sociodemographic profile of tourists, i.e., aspects such as age, gender or education level, which was not provided by the source used, that authors such as Ngai et al. (2007) have shown can affect the complaining behaviour of hotel customers and, therefore, their satisfaction with the service received. On the other hand, it would be interesting to study to what extent the results obtained in other destinations, with similar or different characteristics to Barcelona, are replicated.

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Table 1: Variables and coding categories

<b>Variable</b>	<b>Categories</b>
<b>Establishment category</b>	B&B and others, 1*, 2*, 3*, 4* and 5*
<b>Tourist country of origin</b>	Italy, France, Portugal, Germany
<b>Comment language</b>	German, Spanish, French, English, Italian, Portuguese
<b>Travel/trip type</b>	Vacation/leisure, Business
<b>Travelling group</b>	Single, Couple, Family, Friends/Group
<b>Hotel ratings</b>	Score between 0-10 given by the tourist to the establishment
<b>Comments on staff</b>	Positive, Negative
<b>Comments on language</b>	Positive, Positive Reinforced, Positive Moderated, Negative, Negative Reinforced, Negative Moderated
<b>Taxonomy of positive comments on language</b>	Use of the mother tongue of the tourist, Use of English as a lingua franca, Existence of multilingual staff, Other aspects
<b>Taxonomy of negative comments on language</b>	Poor use of the mother tongue of the tourist, Poor use of English as a lingua franca, Exclusive use of Spanish, Exclusive use of English as a lingua franca, Communication problems, Xenophobic attitude of staff



Table 2: Relationship between tourist country of origin and language of comments

	<b>German</b>	<b>Spanish</b>	<b>French</b>	<b>English</b>	<b>Italian</b>	<b>Portuguese</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>Germany</b>	83.6%	1.5%	0.3%	14.1%	0.2%	0.3%	9,264
<b>France</b>	0.1%	1.1%	92.8%	5.7%	0.1%	0.1%	22,161
<b>Italy</b>	0.2%	1.2%	0.2%	5.7%	92.7%	0.1%	15,039
<b>Portugal</b>	0.3%	1.8%	0.9%	16.1%	0.1%	80.8%	2,027
<b>Sample</b>	16.1%	1.2%	42.6%	7.7%	28.9%	3.5%	48,491

NOTE: %ages are horizontal (reflecting the weight of each language).

Table 3: Taxonomy of positive comments on language by tourist country of origin

	<b>Tourist mother tongue</b>	<b>English as a lingua franca</b>	<b>Multilingual staff</b>	<b>Others</b>	<b><i>Total</i></b>
<b>Germany</b>	35.6%	50.0%	12.2%	2.2%	<i>90</i>
<b>France</b>	77.2%	2.5%	17.8%	2.5%	<i>793</i>
<b>Italy</b>	80.8%	2.4%	15.9%	0.8%	<i>245</i>
<b><i>Total positive comments on language</i></b>	<i>74.6%</i>	<i>6.3%</i>	<i>16.9%</i>	<i>2.1%</i>	<i>1,128</i>

NOTE: %ages are horizontal (reflecting the weight of each taxonomy option).

Table 4: Taxonomy of negative comments on language by tourist country of origin

	<b>Poor use of mother tongue</b>	<b>Poor use of English</b>	<b>Only English</b>	<b>Only Spanish</b>	<b>Communication problems</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>Germany</b>	36.0%	53.3%	5.3%	4.0%	1.3%	75
<b>France</b>	80.1%	6.2%	2.8%	3.9%	7.0%	356
<b>Italy</b>	57.1%	14.3%	5.1%	12.2%	11.2%	98
<b>Total negative comments on language</b>	69.6%	14.4%	3.6%	5.5%	7.0%	529

NOTE: %ages are horizontal (reflecting the weight of each taxonomy option).

Table 5: Orientation of comments on staff by tourist country of origin

	<b>Positive</b>	<b>Negative</b>	<b><i>Total</i></b>
<b>Germany</b>	93.9%	6.1%	<i>3,929</i>
<b>France</b>	89.5%	10.5%	<i>9,848</i>
<b>Italy</b>	91.9%	8.1%	<i>6,891</i>
<b>Portugal</b>	85.8%	14.2%	<i>916</i>
<b><i>Total comments on staff</i></b>	<i>90.9%</i>	<i>9.1%</i>	<i>21,584</i>

NOTE: %ages are horizontal (reflecting the weight of each possible orientation).

Table 6: Distribution of comments on language and of all comments analysed by tourist country of origin

	Analysed comments	Comments on language	
		Number	%
<b>Germany</b>	19.1%	165	9.9%
<b>France</b>	45.7%	1,155	69.0%
<b>Italy</b>	31.0%	344	20.5%
<b>Portugal</b>	4.2%	10	0.6%
<b><i>Total comments on language</i></b>	<i>100.00%</i>	<i>1,674</i>	<i>100.00%</i>

NOTE: The %ages are vertical (reflecting the weight of each country).

Table 7: Orientation of comments on language by tourist country of origin

	<b>Positive Reinforced</b>	<b>Positive</b>	<b>Positive Moderated</b>	<b>Negative Moderated</b>	<b>Negative</b>	<b>Negative Reinforced</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>Germany</b>	12.1%	7.3%	35.2%	21.2%	8.5%	15.8%	165
<b>France</b>	15.8%	31.0%	21.9%	13.2%	9.4%	8.7%	1,155
<b>Italy</b>	16.6%	31.1%	23.5%	9.3%	11.0%	8.4%	344
<b>Total comments on language</b>	15.6%	28.7%	23.6%	13.2%	9.7%	9.3%	1,664

NOTE: %s are horizontal (reflecting the weight of each possible orientation).

Table 8: Range of the overall rating by the orientation of comments on staff and comments on language by tourist country of origin

	<b>Range of evaluation associated with comments on staff</b>	<b>Range of evaluation associated with comments on language</b>
<b>Germany</b>	1.44	1.15
<b>France</b>	1.38	1.15
<b>Italy</b>	1.43	1.24
<b><i>Total</i></b>	<i>1.40</i>	<i>1.17</i>

NOTE: The range is calculated as the ratio between the overall rating associated with positive comments and the overall rating associated with negative comments.

Figure 1: Overall rating as a function of tourist country of origin

Figure 2: Overall rating by orientation of comments on staff by tourist country of origin