LUIZ FELIPE DIAS RANGEL KLING

BEYOND SEA, SUN AND FUN IN RIO DE JANEIRO:
UNDERSTANDING EXCHANGE STUDENTS MOTIVATIONS AND INTERESTS

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Beyond Sea, Sun and Fun in Rio de Janeiro:
Understanding exchange students motivations and interests

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Orientadora: Deborah Moraes Zouain

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“Travel is fatal to prejudice, bigotry, and narrow-mindedness, and many of our people need it sorely on these accounts. Broad, wholesome, charitable views of men and things cannot be acquired by vegetating in one little corner of the earth all one's lifetime.”

Mark Twain, The Innocents Abroad (1869)

"On peut voyager non pour se fuir, chose impossible, mais pour se trouver"

Jean Grenier, Les Îles (1933)
ABSTRACT

This study's goal is understanding what brings exchange students to Rio de Janeiro, what are their motivations and interests that lead them to choosing this location, a non-traditional exchange destination that is hosting an increasing number of students from developed countries. There is also a broader discussion about international education in the 21st century, placing student exchange programs as one of the possible initiatives for the internationalization of higher education institutions. To answer this question 20 students from 11 different countries were interviewed. Results show that there is much more in Rio de Janeiro than sunshine and beautiful beaches. There is a plethora of interests that explain why exchange students choose this destination. The sun, beach and carnival cliché was present in several answers, but it was never the driving factor. Students are interested in the city for several reasons besides the touristic attractions, such as learning Portuguese, improving their curriculum and being in an emerging economy. Internationalization recommendations for education institutions and a research agenda to further explore this topic are present in the final part.

Key words: International Education; Exchange student flow, Rio de Janeiro.
RESUMO

O objetivo deste estudo é compreender o que leva estudantes de intercâmbio ao Rio de Janeiro, quais são suas motivações e interesses que influenciam na escolha dessa cidade, um destino pouco tradicional para intercâmbios, que recebe um crescente número de intercambistas de países desenvolvidos. Também apresentamos uma discussão mais ampla sobre a educação internacional do século 21, posicionando programas de intercâmbio como uma das possíveis iniciativas para a internacionalização de instituições de ensino superior. Para responder essa questão, 20 estudantes de 11 países foram entrevistados. Os resultados indicam que existe muito mais no Rio de Janeiro além do sol e das belas praias. Há uma grande variedade de interesses que explicam porque estudantes de intercâmbio escolhem esse destino. O clichê sobre sol, praia e carnaval se manifestou em diversas respostas, no entanto, nunca como principal fator. Intercambistas se interessam pela cidade por diversos motivos além das atrações turísticas, como aprender português, melhorar o currículo e estar em uma economia emergente. Recomendações para a internacionalização de instituições de educação e uma agenda de pesquisa para o desenvolvimento desse tópico são apresentadas na parte final.

Palavras-chave: Educação Internacional; Fluxo de intercambistas, Rio de Janeiro.
Index

Introduction.........................................................................................................................10
Goals........................................................................................................................................12
Contextualizing International Education............................................................................13
Literature review................................................................................................................15
Methodology.......................................................................................................................20
  Questionnaire development.........................................................................................22
  Data analysis.................................................................................................................22
Analysis................................................................................................................................24
  Biographical Questions...............................................................................................24
  International Experience.............................................................................................25
  Educational Interest.......................................................................................................25
  Business Interest............................................................................................................27
  Personal Interest............................................................................................................27
  Other Items....................................................................................................................29
    Information about Rio de Janeiro and Brazil.............................................................29
    Recommendation and referrals.................................................................................30
    Image about Brazil.......................................................................................................30
    Image about Rio de Janeiro.........................................................................................31
    Image about Brazilians...............................................................................................32
    Expectations................................................................................................................33
    Cost of living...............................................................................................................34
    Final comments...........................................................................................................34
  Discussion.......................................................................................................................34
Conclusion........................................................................................................................41
References........................................................................................................................44
Appendix...........................................................................................................................46
Introduction

There were many motivations to undertake this research, the first one has to do with the fact that as an International Relations undergraduate student in Rio de Janeiro, I noticed the increasing number of exchange students in my school, to the point where the last course I took before graduating had a class in which fifty per cent of the students were French. Later on, as a masters student in another school, the same phenomenon took place: exchange students were massively attending classes and could be seen everywhere. It's opportune to say that I had interacted with many of these exchange students, making a couple of friends and several acquaintances.

Having an international background, living in Mexico for one year as an exchange student from the Rotary Club, traveling often and having international friends, I saw the opportunity to research this topic that has always interested me. I realized there was something relevant going on in Rio de Janeiro, a new fact that didn't exist just a few years before, but that now was getting stronger and each time more visible: the flow of university level exchange students to Rio de Janeiro.

Besides the strong personal motivation and the impression that I had found a fruitful and novel research topic, when I started reviewing the related literature, many gaps were there to be filled in by this research. Among these, the complete lack of studies concerning this new kind of student flow that is taking place in Rio de Janeiro, where most of the exchange students come from European countries; in other words, from developed countries to a developing country, confirming the novelty of this study.

The main goal of this study is to identify reasons why international students select Rio de Janeiro as a host city for their exchange program, also to explore and understand their interests, taking into consideration the international education context of the 21st century.

There are few studies analyzing international students decision making process from an integrated point of view, most of them focus on host institution factors, disregarding country and city factors, that have a significant impact in this choice (Cubillo, Sánchez, & Cerviño, 2006). Likewise, there aren't many empirical studies investigating what influences exchange students host university choice and how the city attributes impact on destination selection (Llewellyn-Smith & Mccabe, 2008).

According to Altbach and Knight (2007), developing countries do host a large number of international students, these countries see the attraction of foreign students
to universities as an improvement in the quality and composition of students, and a way to increase income and status. Notwithstanding, the authors give the example of India and the Philippines, that are important hosts for students from other developing countries; unlike what happens in Rio de Janeiro, that hosts a big contingent of students from developed countries.

This topic, which at first glance might look specific and narrow, is of great importance because it impacts areas such as: immigration, trade and commerce, culture and economic development (Knight, 2004). Nevertheless, not everybody is cognizant of this fact, especially in the case of Rio de Janeiro, and there is a lack of understanding on how to deal with this reality and make good use of it for business and education purposes.

In this line of argument, the amount of students traveling worldwide has augmented considerably, resulting in several economic impacts (Weaver, 2003), both direct such as their own spending with accommodation, leisure, transportation, etc. and indirect through family and friends that often visit them (Weaver, 2003 & World Travel and Tourism Council, 2012). Besides that, the majority of international students is self-funded, receiving no support from governments, academic institutions or philanthropists, representing the most significant source of funds for international education (Altbach & Knight, 2007).

Moreover, in the current state of affairs in which nations have become highly interdependent, universities and governments perceive student exchange programs as a key instrument to compete in the global marketplace and to acquire economic strength; also the majority of research indicates that exchange programs are a worthy and central component in the internationalization of colleges and universities (Sowa, 2002).
Goals

This study will tackle the following research questions: what attracts exchange students to Rio de Janeiro? What are their expectations? What kind of information they had before coming? What image they have of the country, the city and the people? To answer these questions 20 students from 11 different countries were interviewed. This was a unique opportunity to participate in the lives of those people I was interested in understanding, especially because some interviewees were my classmates while the research was in course.

The scope of this research is restricted to university level exchange students that will be defined as those attending regular undergraduate or graduate courses for at least one term in the host destination. Foreign students completing a program in Rio de Janeiro were not considered. The terms university, college and higher education institution will be used interchangeably throughout the paper, taking into consideration that different authors use them with the same meaning.

First, the broader discussion regarding international education will be introduced, making the reader familiar with the topic while positioning the study. Followed by a literature review of studies involving exchange and international students. Thirdly, some methodological considerations, proceeded by the results of the interviews that will be presented and discussed.

In the final part, this study will offer conclusions and implications for practice that shall be useful for superior education institutions in Rio de Janeiro and in Brazil, providing a comprehensive picture of what is attracting exchange students to the city, their perception and what can be improved to host even more students. As well as research contributions, being a pioneer is this topic, especially as South America is viewed as a nontraditional international study destination (Doyle et al., 2010).
Contextualizing International Education

According to Knight (2004), the expression 'internationalization of higher education' has several meanings, among them, a series of international activities that lead to academic mobility for faculty members and students; and international linkages of many sorts such as partnerships and projects. It might also mean the supply of education to other countries, as well as embracing a global and intercultural dimension to curricula. It's a process, conveying that education institutions must deal with it as a continuous effort (Knight, 2004).

Internationalization is frequently confused with globalization (Altbach, 2004), to clarify this point, globalization will be defined as "the economical, political and societal forces pushing 21st century higher education toward greater international involvement" (Altbach & Knight, 2007, p 290.). Globalization has several consequences impacting education institutions, such as the integration of research, the English language usage for scientific communication and the creation of an international labor market for scholars; globalization is a fact, an unavoidable trend, while internationalization has to do with choices to be taken (Altbach & Knight, 2007).

"The market for international higher education initiatives [...] ranges from students who cannot obtain access at home and seek almost any means to study, to carefully targeted elite students in small high quality programs" (Altbach & Knight, 2007, p 295). This points out how diverse is this market and the wide range of available approaches for education institutions’ internationalization.

Not only the internationalization of education institutions is regarded as highly important (Murphy, 2007; Trilokekar, 2010), but "the importance of internationalization in higher education has become axiomatic [...]" (Yemini, 2012 p. 161). There has always been competition between education institutions regarding academic standards and quality, lately the quest for an international profile has gained great importance, with international recognition and reputation as a major goal that can help attract the best scholars and students (Knight, 2004). In the last decade all aspects of education have been increasingly under pressure to be international or to internationalize (Dolby & Rahman, 2008).

Institutions of higher education react to the previously mentioned state of affairs in which international literacy is a key aspect of cultural, technological, political and economic situation, resulting in a widespread internationalization effort (Yemini, 2012).
International student exchange is one of the possible choices involving the internationalization of higher education, it encompasses students studying abroad as well as international students on campus and is the key to develop intercultural competence, awareness and tolerance (Horn, Hendel, & Fry, 2007).

There are several measures to increase the number of exchange students and the actual development of intercultural understanding, among them: having a comprehensive strategy, instead of isolated and uncoordinated initiatives. Making sure international students on campus socialize with local students, avoiding the common social isolation that leads to exchange students being among themselves and not interacting with locals (Doyle et al., 2010).
The research on why tourists travel started developing in the late 1970s, Dann (1977) tries to answer this question and argues that he couldn't find satisfactory responses, that were usually close to sociological assertions such as tourists travel to escape. The author develops a framework that can be tested at the hypotheses level, in order to understand it, a distinction must be made between push and pull factors. Pull factors are those that attract a tourist to a destination, push factors are those that predispose the tourist to travel. The study states that push factors come first, being the need to travel, followed by pull factors that lead the tourist to a certain location.

In that sense, regarding the prior need for travel, the motive would lie in the concepts of 'anomie' and 'ego-enhancement', the first originates in Émile Durkheim's work and relates to lawlessness and in tourism has to do with transcending everyday life and routine, getting away and finding more satisfying experiences. The second is the status that traveling brings, an opportunity for self recognition. In sum, travel could provide an alternative world from that in the daily life of the tourist (Dann, 1977). Two scales were created, measuring anomie and ego-enhancement, 422 tourists were interviewed in Barbados in 1976. As a conclusion two ideal types of tourists were identified, anomie and ego-enhancement are the extremes of a continuum in which the tourist is placed in between. Both extremes have a strong fantasy component (Dann, 1977).

Going further, Mazzarol and Soutar (2002) investigate why students choose to go overseas, they also use push-pull factors to determine what influences international students' destination choice. The paper presents the results of four different studies, conducted from 1996 to 2000 with 2485 students from Indonesia, Taiwan, India and China; not only with undergraduates and graduate students, also with English, secondary and other types of students, being very comprehensive.

According to the authors, there are three stages in selecting an exchange destination (Mazzarol & Soutar, 2002). The first one is the decision to study internationally, being influenced by several push factors in the home country, such as wealth, development and educational opportunities. The second stage is host country selection, with six pull factors influencing the choice: home country awareness and knowledge of the host country; referrals and recommendations; overall cost; environment, both physical and lifestyle related; geographic proximity of home country;
and social links with host country, such as friends or family living there. The third stage is host institution selection, influenced by pull factors such as: institution's reputation, profile, alliances and marketing effort.

The findings show that students identified the following factors motivating them to go abroad (Mazzarol & Soutar, 2002), the first is the perception that going overseas is better than studying in the home country. The second and third factors are the - lack of - availability and access to study programs in the home country. Fourth and fifth: a better cultural understanding and the migration possibility. Sixth and seventh: country profile or reputation and the knowledge and awareness the student has of the host destination. Eighth: parental involvement and recommendation from friends and family. Ninth: costs. Tenth: host country attractiveness.

Still about international students' decision making process Cubillo, Sánchez and Serviño (2006) propose a theoretical model that encompasses several factors related to the purchase decision process at the moment of selecting the destination country. The model has purchase intention as dependent variable and four factors with 19 independent variables. The first factor is personal reasons with the following variables: personal improvement in terms of employment, status and lifestyle; advice and recommendation, and ethnocentrism, when absent, as the interest of living in a different culture, meeting new people, improving language skills and making an international network.

The second factor is country image effect, with the following variables: cultural proximity, social and academic reputation, and socioeconomic level. City effect is the third factor, composed by city dimension, city image, cost of living and environment. Institution image is the fourth factor, related to: quality of professors, institution's prestige, international recognition, communication and facilities on campus. The fifth and final factor is program evaluation with the following variables: programs' recognition, suitability and specialization, and cost and finance.

Finally, the authors present the following eight propositions that can be tested in future studies (Cubillo et al., 2006): 1) Personal reasons, advice from family members, friends and teacher positively influence the decision to study abroad. 2) Ethnocentrism negatively influences the decision to study abroad. 3) Country image has a direct and positive relationship with the purchase intention. 4, 5, 6) Country image positively affects: program evaluation, institution image and city image. 7) City of destination plays an important role in the configuration of the purchase intention. 8) The institution’s image positively influences the evaluation of the study program.
Being more specific than the previous authors, focusing on exchange students, and undertaking a study to explore student motivations and factors in the selection of an university exchange program, Llewellyn-Smith and McCabe (2008) use a push-pull typology - already seen in the work of Dann (1977) and Mazarol and Soutar (2002) - and a structured questionnaire with 93 students who had been exchange students in an Australian university.

The authors argue that it is important to understand what motivates exchange students to go abroad, classifying them in two broad categories: education first and tourism first according to their main motivation (Llewellyn-Smith & McCabe, 2008). Nevertheless, they stress that other authors, such as Weaver (2003) propose that education and touristic choices are intertwined, influencing each other.

The paper presents 12 push factors, basically related to the previous desire to travel; fun, novelty and excitement; and socializing. 15 host country pull factors related to the weather; the people; environment; cost; safety; infrastructure; job opportunities and cultural similarity. Eight university pull factors, the most important ones: having a partnership with the home university and getting credits after the program; also services provided for the international student and information availability. Finally, four host city factors: cost, gateway to other destinations in Australia, accommodation availability and the city itself.

The main findings are that traveling, having fun and socializing are the main motivators for exchange students, that emphasize the leisure aspect over the academic activity. In other words, Australia hosts tourism first exchange students. Another interesting finding is that host university international partnerships were the main selection criterion, being of utmost importance (Llewellyn-Smith & McCabe, 2008).

Daly (2011) proposes a model of individual and contextual factors that influence Australian students to participate in an exchange program, as well as the destination choice. The author wishes to understand the decision made by outbound exchange students, those that are leaving the home country, complementing the previous paper that studied inbound students. The model takes into consideration contextual and individual factors. There are three contextual factors: international, national and institutional.

The international context is characterized by increased trade and the need to develop international skills; public opinion of cross-cultural interactions; and cost and safety concerns. The national context comprehends the governmental international
education policy with their projects and the awareness of the benefits brought by student mobility. The institutional context is the way in which the exchange program is managed, the opportunities, selection mechanisms, agreements with foreign universities, credit validation and financial support.

The first individual factor is personal characteristics; the second intercultural competences; the third travel interest and experience; the fourth education and discipline of study; the fifth career development; the sixth foreign language competence; the seventh personal relations; the eighth and final factor financial constraints. The decision to participate or not in an exchange program will result from the individual factors that are surrounded by contextual factors, their interaction leads to the decision (Daly, 2011).

Nyaupane, Paris and Teye (2011) examine the role of motivations, prior travel experience, social ties and destination choice in pre-trip attitude formation. Through attitudes people are able to process acquired knowledge into expectations, beliefs and behaviors, providing a basis to form critical opinions and make decisions. There are four motivation factors: international travel, escape, academic and social. Prior travel experience was measured by the number of international trips and the number of visited countries. Social ties were measured by relationships with people from other countries.

136 students from an American university were surveyed before their departure as exchange students. The authors propose a model in which destination choice mediates motivations, prior travel experience and social ties on pre-trip attitude formation. The results show that destination choice is highly influenced by academic motivation and friends living in a foreign country. Among the four dimensions, social motivation such as traveling with friends, and buying goods and gifts from the host country, is the one with the greatest impact on the formation of attitudes toward the exchange program host destination (Nyaupane, Paris, & Teye, 2011).

Distinguishable from the other papers of the literature review, this final study is the outcome of a multimethod research involving surveys, interviews and case studies that had the goal of identifying inhibiting and promoting factors related to exchange programs among New Zealand students, in other words, influencing factors on student participation in these programs (Doyle et al., 2010). This paper uses student survey and interviews as main data sources, the results of the former are useful for the literature review.
The results of the undergraduate students survey - potential exchange students randomly select from the student body - show that they weren't well informed about exchange programs, and that word of mouth was their most relevant source of information.

Students viewed the following items as benefits from overseas study: contact with a different culture and language; having the opportunity to find out if they would like to live and work abroad; enhancing their curriculum. The most cited obstacle to study abroad was the cost, followed by being away from friends and family; and studying in another language, even when there are English programs in non-English speaking countries.

In order to overcome the perceived obstacles, students identified four possible initiatives: increased financial support; emotional support, such as going with a group of students, or having a mentor in the host country; being able to study in English; and more information and assistance to organize themselves to get through the paperwork, find accommodation, etc.
Methodology

This study followed a qualitative method, this choice will be explained as follows. There was a single focus on a topic that needed to be explored, the goal was to find out what was going on, getting a detailed view of the topic, studying individuals in their natural setting by going to the field (Creswell, 1998). In the qualitative approach the researcher is actively learning, he is not the expert that judges participants, but an instrument of data collection that can tell the story from the participants' point of view (Creswell, 1998).

In order to achieve the above mentioned goals this research was done through interviews that aimed at obtaining a respondent's view of the world. "[...] Interviews have the capacity to be interactional contexts within which social worlds come to be better understood [...]" (Miller & Glassner, 2004 p. 135). Concluding, the qualitative approach offers

"explanations that take us 'back stage' in the culture in question, to let us glimpse assumptions and categories that are otherwise hidden from view. It is not intended to capture issues of distribution and generalization. It tells us what people think and do, not how many of them think and do." (McCracken, 1988, p. 49)

Interviews were recorded and previously transcribed with participant's authorization, their anonymity was assured, besides the ethical point, this was done to ensure the respondent would feel free to answer without feeling inhibited or fearing being politically incorrect. Accordingly, the fact that a fellow student was the researcher, and as a consequence, the interviewer, helped to create a very friendly and trustful setting in which the interviews took place.

All interviews were conducted in English, in one case the respondent had some trouble speaking, so answered some questions in French. Other French students also briefly complemented a couple of thoughts in their language1, the same happened with a French girl that spoke perfect Portuguese. Nevertheless, interviewees were always informed that the interview would be in English and there were no complaints.

It's pertinent to stress that all interviewees were current exchange students in their host destination, avoiding any kind of distortion that can take place in

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1This didn't pose a problem because the interviewer can speak French.
retrospective studies, such as post-purchase dissonance or justifying past decisions (Chieffo & Griffiths, 2004). Therefore, this study provides a solid picture of what they were thinking during their sojourn in the host country, especially because no interviewee had been in Brazil for more than two months by the time of the interview.

Interviews were conducted over a six week period, during August and September 2012, 17 were held on campus, while three took place in the respondent's residence. They varied in length, depending on the respondent, ranging from 8 to 29 minutes. 20 students from 11 different countries and 10 different schools were interviewed. Interviewees arrived in Rio de Janeiro in July and August, some had just arrived when they were interviewed.

Access to interviewees was relatively easy because, as previously mentioned, they were taking courses and could be seen everywhere in the school's building. Despite the fact that 17 out of 20 interviewees were in the same host institution, their profiles were so varied, that this fact didn't interfere on the results that reflected all this variety of interests, motivations and points of view. Demographic characteristics of interviewees are present in table 1.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interviewee</th>
<th>Country of birth</th>
<th>Country of study</th>
<th>Gender</th>
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Questionnaire Development

In order to develop the interview questionnaire, in an exploratory stage, Student Travel Reports from the Copenhagen Business School\(^2\) were used as a starting point. Students that answered these travel reports attended graduate courses at EBAPE/FGV from 2010 to 2011. In total I had access to reports from seven students, three from Denmark, three from Germany and one from Norway. They were extremely useful, reporting student motivation, preparation, arrival, accommodation, social life, costs and other practical information that only a person that lived in Rio de Janeiro could have.

After this stage, factors from the articles in the literature review were used to get to the first list of topics to be explored in the interviews. This list was improved and adjusted through informal conversations with three university level exchange students, two from France and one from Italy, their host institutions were FGV and Ibmec. Before starting the interviews, I went to the international office in my school to get their opinion, after that with my counselor's authorization I started interviewing the subjects.

The original questionnaire suffered minor changes after six interviews, they were necessary because some of these initial respondents had trouble understanding what was being asked. The goal was to improve interview dynamics and provide a better explanation of the issues being raised. Nevertheless, these six interviews were part of the analysis and contributed to the study like the subsequent ones. The second and final questionnaire version can be found in the appendix in the end of the text.

Data analysis

Qualitative analysis turns data into findings, but there is no universal formula for this endeavor - that involves making sense of big amounts of data - because each qualitative study is one of a kind, therefore, guidelines and directions should be applied carefully and be creatively adapted (Patton, 2002). In this sense, "unlike the analysis of quantitative data, there are few generally agreed rules of thumb for the analysis of qualitative material" (Bryman, 1992, p. 166). Qualitative researchers have flexibility as to how conduct their studies, methods should serve the researcher, not the other way

\(^2\) All CBS exchange students have to fill out the report after they are back at school, the goal is providing future exchange students with valuable information. The reports are only accessible to enrolled students, I was able to get them through a Norwegian friend that studies there and that was an exchange student in Rio de Janeiro.
around, when the researcher is enslaved by techniques and procedures (Taylor & Bogdan, 1984).

So, for this study that has an explicit focus, it is possible to analyze the data in a holistic manner, based on the whole text (Taylor & O’Sullivan, 2009); according to themes and topics that are being investigated, organizing interview responses question by question, getting a sense of the whole (Patton, 2002). Data will be aggregated into the key items of the questionnaire, being analyzed according to the original research goals. Topics elaborated on the interviews will be given conceptual coherence as well as extension to a wider theoretical domain (Bryman, 1992).

Transcriptions were reorganized by topic, each topic was analyzed separately to get the most relevant and emerging issues, later on data was reduced to key factors and aggregated into emerging categories or salient issues, within the bigger topic.
Analysis

Despite the questionnaire being structured in specific topics, there was expressive overlap between the answers; topics and factors influence each other. Therefore, there is a multifaceted answer, or several answers to the question 'what brings exchange students to Rio de Janeiro?'. Studies that propose narrow explanations, indicating that few factors impact study abroad choices don't seem to capture all the nuances and details that are shown in this research; specially when there are oversimplified models or continua with ideal types.

Basic differences between the educational systems in Brazil and in Europe must be clarified. Firstly, many European institutions have obligatory exchange programs according to students' course, something that's not common in Brazil. Secondly, the concept of master studies is very different, traditionally in Brazil people don't finish their undergraduate study and go straight to the masters, this happens for several reasons, among them exams or the development of a research proposal in order to apply. While in Europe it's common for students to have a double degree, undergraduate and master, in the same time period elapsed to complete an undergraduate degree in Brazil.

Biographical Questions

Table 1 shows basic facts about interviewees, still there is some relevant information that can be extracted from this topic. When it comes to language proficiency, some exchange students took Portuguese courses at their home country, some spoke Spanish or Italian and, according to them, could easily learn the host country language, Portuguese. In the words of interviewee 16 about his Portuguese level "it's still beginner, but it's improving and of course my biggest advantage is that my Spanish is nearly perfect".

Other students had no knowledge at all, while two of them were proficient: one French girl (I,4) had a Portuguese family, so she spoke perfect Portuguese; and a Danish boy (I,6) that besides having lived in Mozambique, had previously been an exchange student in Rio de Janeiro during his undergraduate studies.
The important point is that all of them were open and interested in learning the local language, some were sorry they couldn’t stay long enough to do that, while others were sure improvements would come naturally with time. Still, the vast majority of them had a Portuguese course at their host school and the Greek girl (I,12) was taking private lessons as well.

Few people in Rio de Janeiro and Brazil know there are many foreigners interested in learning Portuguese. The main explanation for this interest is getting business advantages, like working in companies that do business in Brazil and having this uncommon skill back home. Interviewee 19, a French girl stressed that she wanted to learn Brazilian Portuguese, not the one they speak in Portugal, according to her the former is what really matters.

International experience

The main reasons in order of importance that explain why interviewees travel are: learning and discovering a new culture; seeing life from a different point of view and getting their eyes opened. Most of them are used to traveling and simply love it. Besides that, meeting new people, having fun, learning in general and being global are cited as relevant factors.

Interviewee 9 summarizes the overall impression on traveling: "there is one quote that says 'travel is the only thing you can buy that enriches you'. It is true, because you can see everything from a different point of view, if you travel it really opens your mind". Interviewee 12 complements this idea, saying that she travels "to get wiser, to meet people, to see new places and redefine my life".

Most of the interviewees are experienced travelers, nine were exchange students in Rio de Janeiro while studying in a foreign country. Four of them had been exchange students before as undergraduates or during High School. Perhaps the most international one is interviewee 15, an Englishman from an Indian family that had lived in China and Peru and was an exchange student in Argentina during his stay in Brazil.
Educational interest

Interviewees raised five educational interest factors, they have similar importance in their perception, none being cited as the decisive, or key factor. The first one is learning Portuguese, that is composed of several sub-interests. Exchange students want to learn this language because they think it's important for their CV, since Brazil is an emerging economy and many companies are looking for people with this skill. Besides that, those that already knew some Portuguese wanted to improve it and take courses in the language.

The second factor is their perception of being in good institutions, consequently in good programs. The possibility of taking elective courses that weren't available back home and getting the Brazilian perspective on some issues was also relevant. "[...] so there was definitely and academic interest also. (I,6)" Many students were advised to chose FGV, because their professors knew about it and recommended it. Likewise, the presence of so many exchange students was perceived as a positive quality indicator: "I think it will be good because there are many exchange students here from all around the world." (I,8).

The third factor is getting in touch with a different educational system that has another dynamic. Students felt free to express themselves and were enjoying the opportunity to participate more in the classroom, when compared to most of the home schools.

The fourth factor is learning related to business interests. The view on the exchange program was quite positive, as increasing their employability in global companies, enhancing the curriculum in general and giving cultural knowledge to work in Brazil and with firms that do business with the country. In this sense, "[...] it's necessary to have an experience abroad nowadays specially in Europe that it's in crisis." (I,11).

The fifth factor is learning about and discovering Brazilian culture, understanding the society and how things work. One quote represents rather well the overall feeling: "I was looking for a balance between a good education and some kind of a good life, I think I finally found it." (I, 9).
**Business interest**

Overall benefits of participating in an exchange program were cited by most respondents, this can be interpreted in the sense that no matter where they go, there will be positive outcomes. It's a consensus among them that it's very important to go abroad, having this experience in the curriculum is good for their careers. Meeting new people that are potential employers or business partners in the future is also relevant. In that sense, an international background opens doors and gives new and improved career possibilities.

International experience is "really important, especially for business people; having experiences in other countries, in other places, speaking more languages, than other stuff in your CV. It's as important as grades, that's what they told us." (I,13).

The fact that Brazil is an emerging country was the key factor for respondents. They see the Brazilian economy as being part of the BRIC countries, having a good market, offering many jobs and opportunities. Accordingly, "right now the name Brazil is so strong in the UK, with Brazil's economy rising above UK. For sure having Brazil on my CV is very important." (I, 15).

The second most important factor is Brazilian business with their home country, or their home country business in Brazil. They think that being in Brazil will open them doors to take advantage of this flux, finding a good job for instance.

Most respondents would like to work in Brazil or in another Latin American country and they believe their careers can be improved after the exchange program. A good example of this is the following reply given to the question about improving career prospects with the exchange program: "I hope so, that's why I'm mainly here, otherwise it would just be a six month vacation." (I, 12).

**Personal interest**

There are seven personal interest categories, the first three being the most important ones. The first is the environment, that is, the warm weather, the sun, the beach, lots of opportunities to practice sports, beautiful landscape and similar items. Nevertheless, they choose Rio "not only because of the Christ and the beaches and
the beautiful landscape" (I, 20). Again there was overlap with the answers from previous topics.

The second factor is life in Brazil, a different lifestyle in a different culture. An opportunity to never get bored, to be in touch with a lot of diversity, acquiring new perspectives about life and having fun. Rio de Janeiro was viewed by some respondents as the best destination they had among all their other possibilities.

As the third factor, interviewees mentioned several business motives such as: doing business with Brazil, a place that has a future and lots of opportunities and job possibilities. Hence, "Rio is a big player now, it's not all for beach, sun and fun, it's actually a serious city with huge investments. That was the reason, to have that balance between the two." (I,15).

The fourth factor is the media, they show Brazil on television and movies, this was a relevant driving force for several respondents, interviewee 2 actually said he wanted to get his own picture of Rio, not the media portrait. The fifth factor is related to social goals, getting to know new people in an open and welcoming country.

The sixth factor is having visited Brazil previously, four respondents had been in Brazil before, three of them were traveling and one had been an exchange student as an undergraduate. This indicates that those that go to Brazil tend to visit the country again. Accordingly, "I think it's because I've been here before and I just knew that I always wanted to come back." (I, 10). The seventh and final factor has to do with the fact that Brazil is in South America and is also a Latin American country, students were interested in these regions.

Other interesting points of view are: "Brazil is very mysterious, nobody knows what it is, so I wanted to come here to see what's going on here" (I,8). "I speak the language and it was my dream to come here and to live here, so that dream has come true." (I,4). Finally, "I don't know, I just always wanted to go to Brazil my whole life. I don't know, I just see pictures and people who have been there and everybody talks so nicely about it." (I,18).
Other items

Information about Rio de Janeiro and Brazil

Exchange students had access to very contrasting information before coming. By one side there is touristic information about beaches, beautiful places, carnival and alike; on the other side there is widespread information about violence, poverty and danger. Stereotypes and clichés were present both in the good and the bad information, notwithstanding there is awareness on how to interpret and filter the information. According to a French girl: "we don't have the true information, because when you see on TV, I think you keep the most negative part that you see." (I,5).

There are two main information sources: media and word of mouth. The positive aspects shown on television, movies, newspapers, magazines and on the Internet are related to the abovementioned touristic attractions as well as references to the 2014 World Cup, the 2016 Olympic Games and Brazilian upcoming economy. The negative aspects have to do with slums, poverty, violence and danger, in this sense, "mainstream media has portrayed it as a somewhat dangerous place, where you can't just walk around at night." (I,6).

Word of mouth differs considerably from people that had been in Rio de Janeiro and Brazil and those that only received inputs from external sources. Those that had been in the country or the city gave positive feedback, those that hadn't been gave negative opinions. Friends and family that had been in Brazil were relevant in providing trustworthy information. The following quote exemplifies the importance of having been in the country to be able to judge it, "[...] people don't come here and don't see, they talk about rumors and if you don't come in the country you can't have an idea about the situation." (I,1).

Also, some respondents had very little information, among these certain students simply didn't have access to information, while others didn't want to make an effort to look it up and they made it explicit, saying that they wanted their own picture of the place when they get there. Professors and home institution were a secondary source of information, with the international office playing an important role in certain cases.
Recommendation and referrals

There were many bad recommendations and negative comments related to security aspects, very similar to the logic of the previous topic. Still, this didn't discourage the respondents, especially because many of them had already decided to go, no matter what they could hear from others. In this manner, personal choices were common between them, the following answers make the point clear, recommendations weren't important for at least seven students: "no recommendation at all, it was just my decision" (I,9); "not really, it was a personal decision" (I,3).

Also in line with the previous topic, friends' recommendation was important, as well as knowing Brazilian people. "A friend told me I must go to Rio." (I,12). "People also have friends coming here and they say it's different, so I wanted to try something different." (I,17). And "I never knew anybody that had been in Rio before, but in Brazil yes, they really convinced me to go." (I,13).

Home universities international offices and professors gave positive recommendation, in one case, a German girl came to EBAPE/FGV because a professor in Germany had recommended that she had classes with a specific professor of this Brazilian institution. Similarly, a Brazilian professor in Copenhagen and Brazilian friends recommended the same institution in other cases.

Image about Brazil

There are three main elements that create the Brazilian image in interviewees' minds. The first one is everything that's related with Brazil being an emerging country, a place with many opportunities, with immense potential and wealth. Brazil is seen as moving forward, changing quickly and where optimism is in the air. The general idea is captured in the following quote: "I think you have a good future." (I,3).

The second element encompasses all Brazilian contradictions, inequalities and the abyss between poor and rich people. Social disparity is the most remarkable element, followed by the view that there is still a lot of room to improve in all areas. The economy is seen as very closed and the striking underdevelopment in key areas such as low quality and high cost services impress. Respondents have strong opinions on these issues, such as: "you need to fix a lot of stuff here." (I,13); "you are going to have
the Olympics in the future, but then you have just one metro line." (I,9); and "you can't have your people starving and expect to become a world economy" (I,12).

The third element is the cliché about samba, football, sun and beaches, extremely clear in these quotes: "when I think of Brazil I think of coffee and caipirinha\(^3\) and sun and beaches." (I,10); "I think the typical image everyone has: lots of green, the Amazon, the sun, people are relaxed, also favelas [slums]. Sun, always hot and strange swimsuits." (I,11); "[...] when I think about Brazil I see happy people and samba and dancing, partying, beautiful nature, beaches, sun. Just happiness, maybe." (I,18).

Respondents are sensible that clichés are limited and that they need to get through them to really know the country, this point of view is depicted in the following quote: "I see aside from all the fun, the carnival, samba, there are problems. [...] you can easily get caught up in the fun, without actually understanding what's going on." (I,15).

Other noteworthy elements of the Brazilian image according to the respondents are: the size of the country and its diversity, that result in the feeling that there is still a lot to discover and explore. Hence, "I don't have an image of Brazil, it's so big and I've just been in Rio for two months." (I,19).

**Image about Rio de Janeiro**

There are two elements in this image, the first one related to the city beauty, attractions and growth. Not only natural beauty, but beautiful people as well and attractions such as the sea, sun, sports and party. The succeeding quote illustrates this: "great image, Rio is magnificent; it's really beautiful, it's really active and there are so many things to do, on a cultural level, for parties, hiking..." (I,19). Respondents believe the city has improved a lot lately, especially in terms of safety, only one mentioned security concerns in the city image. In this sense, "Rio has changed a lot, there is less violence." (I,4).

The second element depicts the variety that can be found in Rio de Janeiro, as a city with very different parts, a mix of cultures and remarkable social differences. Consequently, "you can't think of Rio de Janeiro as one city, it's like all these small places that are so different." (I,10), also "I think it's many cities in only one city." (I,9).

\(^3\) Typical Brazilian cocktail that's worldwide famous.
Besides that, the Olympic Games and the World Cup were also related to the city image, this is easily explained by the popularity of these events and their extensive media coverage.

**Image about Brazilians**

The majority of respondents said that Brazilians are nice people who are kind, welcoming, friendly, warm and helpful. They also believe it's easy to meet and get in touch with people in Brazil, because they are very open minded; besides being happy people that smile very often and don't take life so seriously, described with adjectives such as: easygoing, laid back and relaxed.

The succeeding quotes give an overview of how respondents perceive Brazilians: "very friendly, helpful, who love life, who enjoy life, dancing, playing music." (I,4); "they don't take anything too seriously, which is definitely a positive thing" (I,6); "If you need something, they are going to help you, if I compared people that work here with Milan, the pace when you work is kind of slow, but I understand it's part of the process of growing." (I,13); and "[...] are loud, they are very passionate, compared to European people." (I,20).

Respondents see a growing and upcoming society with good looking people that like to party, who are also peaceful and empathetic. A sincere opinion about this topic comes in the following quote: "maybe we have some idea about Brazilians from outside, that they could be more at the beach than working. But here, I can see they are hard working and serious people." (I,17).

However there is a substantial problem for students that cannot speak Portuguese, very few Brazilians speak English, something that creates communication difficulties that are, frequently, overcome with creativity and good will. Illustrating this perception: "I thought that it would be easier, at least possible to communicate in English here" (I,14).

There is one last remark that show a profound understanding about the country, a Norwegian girl mentioned how Brazilian society is hierarchical, something that is hard to capture at a first glance. This had already appeared, but not as she put it: "you still have this hierarchy" (I,10), in a way that challenges several popular opinions about growth and development in Brazil.
Expectations

Respondents were asked about differences between their previous expectations and day to day reality after arriving. There were three main responses, the first and most remarkable one is the feeling that it was safer, especially in Zona Sul, the richest and most visited part of the city, where they were all living. The succeeding quotes show this notion: "it's safer than I thought " (I,18) and "before coming here I thought it was very dangerous, I've been here for three weeks and it's dangerous but not so dangerous, it's the same like big cities" (I,1).

The second response indicated surpassed expectations, with students thinking it was better than they imagined. "Before, I thought it was a city totally not livable, now I think exactly the opposite." (I,11); and "I can say that my expectations were fulfilled, I have found more than I expected. I'm really happy to be here." (I,3).

The third response is from students with the same expectations, demonstrating no differences between what they thought before arriving and what they were thinking at the moment of the interview, such as: "I have a lot of matches with my expectations" (I,16); and "for me there are no differences between what I thought before coming here and what I think now." (I,4).

A small part of interviewees simply didn't have expectations, in two cases they were so sure about their choice that expectations didn't matter. In another case, one girl said she often had high expectations and was disappointed afterwards, so this time she went to Rio without expectations.

Despite the positive above mentioned description, many respondents raised negative surprises, the most relevant one being the issue of high living costs. This perception had appeared in other answers, but hadn't been reported by now, especially because the following questionnaire item is about it, but it was so salient in the expectations part that it must be reported in this part. The vast majority was unaware of the high prices in Rio de Janeiro, corroborating this thought: "the only complaint is the price" (I,8); "that's one thing I didn't expect, I thought it was cheaper." (I,13).
Cost of living

It's relevant to say that in approximately half of the interviews the item high prices appeared before it was brought up by the questionnaire, that's what happened in the previous item, expectations. This shows that prices are a major issue in Rio de Janeiro. In this part students will speak for themselves giving their opinion on this issue through quotes.

"Very expensive, it's just as expensive as in Norway. I'm living in Denmark and actually I find it cheaper there than here." (I,10). "Absurd, the houses are incredible, very expensive. Neither in Milan, nor anywhere you find this kind of prices." (I,11). "To be honest I don't think the price is worth it, you pay really high rent but the places are not so good, so that's weird." (I,13). "It's very high, the same prices you have in London and also the same as in Oslo." (I,14).

"[...] in general it's very expensive." (I,15). "It's European level, it's very expensive." (I,16). "Oh my god it's expensive! It's really expensive. For renting it's so expensive, for parties also, compared to France." (I,19). "I'm so shocked about the prices here, it's so expensive. The rents here are higher than in every country in Europe, even in Paris, even in London it was cheaper to live." (I,20).

The quotes clearly show that living costs in Rio de Janeiro are comparable or even higher than in major European cities. Besides that, the quality disparity was several times mentioned, students believe they pay a lot and don't get good quality for their money, unlike what happens in Europe. They complain, but in the end this doesn't make a difference, their satisfaction with Rio de Janeiro has been previously shown.

Final comments

In this part respondents could freely answer what was on their minds, something the questionnaire hadn't raised or something they judged important. From 20 interviews, there were 11 final comments. Some answers corroborate and support previous issues, while others summarize the reasons that lead to choosing Rio de Janeiro as a host city.

Several answers have to do with business opportunities, local weather and culture. Also with overall benefits of being an exchange student, such as living in a
different international environment. In this sense: "Brazil is emerging as a country, a strong country in the world, an important player." (I,15). The perception of Brazil being a closed country was once again mentioned: "I hope that Brazil opens more in a few years for the globalization." (I,5).

Summarizing why they were in Rio de Janeiro, some answers raised a combination of motives, such as the beauty of Rio, Brazil's economy and growth, as well as a different academic perspective from what was considered mainstream in home institutions. According to interviewee 20, she came to Rio de Janeiro to "learn a bit language, relax and also academic. And meet as much new people as I can, so it's a very good experience for me."

Final quotes: "I guess I wanted to do something very different. And also I always wanted to go to Brazil and when I could do that through my school I was really happy." (I,18); "I liked so much the country, the culture, the people, that I felt like coming back and be an exchange student here." (I,4).

Discussion

Push and pull factors can be easily identified in the previous topics. Beginning with push factors, predisposition to travel originates both in the expected benefits from exchange programs and in the overall positive effects brought by travelling. Regarding the latter, students believe travelling opens their mind and give them an opportunity to get in touch with different cultures and realities, being fundamental reasons for leaving their countries.

More specifically about exchange programs, they are seen as the means to acquire deeper international experience and an international background. Both require more time and bring career and professional advantages that can't be obtained in regular tourism. An exchange program improves language skills; allows students to live in a different cultural setting and interact with new and different people; and is seen as a requirement of a successful curriculum.

In the case of Rio de Janeiro exchange students want to learn Portuguese, be in a warmer and sunnier weather and have the experience of living in a developing country in their curriculum. These goals can't be achieved in their home countries, pushing students to go abroad.
However, it's not so simple to differentiate between push and pull factors. The preceding factors that explain what kind of benefit is expected from being an exchange student in Rio de Janeiro, that consequently push students from their countries could also be pull factors that attracted them to this location. Still they aren't able to explain Rio de Janeiro's specific choice. Students could learn Portuguese in other Brazilian cities, in Portugal or even in former colonies like Angola and Mozambique, they could also find warmer and sunnier weather and improve their curriculum in these places.

Pull factors specifically related to Rio de Janeiro can be seen when students summarize their motivations, saying that they were looking for a balance between a good life and good education. The best education they can find in Brazil is in São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro, the two biggest and most important cities; but the good life in terms of what they expect in a tropical country is in Rio. Other Brazilian coastal cities offer this good life, but they are not half as famous as Rio and can't compete in educational terms.

In this study there is a gray area between these concepts. Taking the sunshine as an example, it can be a pull factor in the sense that a sunny destination attracts the tourist, but also a push factor when this tourist wants to leave his country because of its lack. Therefore, the same idea or desire that predisposes the tourist to travel can also attract him to a specific destination. This doesn't mean the decision to travel and the destination choice are simultaneous.

Anomie and ego-enhancement were present in several responses. The first appears when students say they were looking for something different, taking them away from everyday life and routine. The second is the status that traveling brings, an opportunity for self recognition, this status goes beyond social benefits, encompassing business opportunities as well. Escape and fantasy components were also present, this time in line with what Dann (1977) argues, as the following quote indicates: "because when we come here, we are also looking to escape" (I,15).

After students decide they want to study abroad, host country and host institution selection do not happen simultaneously, corroborating Mazzarol and Soutar (2002) that believe these are three different stages. At least the vast majority of respondents spoke about these issues following this separate logic, with host country and host institution selection taking place in different moments in time.

Other items raised by Mazzarol and Soutar (2002) that explain motivation to go abroad are present in this study. These are: acquiring a better cultural understanding,
that was widely present in respondents' minds; host country profile or reputation, in the expected good life and their positive image about Brazil; and knowledge and awareness students had of the host destination. Nevertheless, the most salient issue was Brazil's developing economy and touristic attractions.

Parental involvement and recommendation from friends and family was important, but not determining, because many students had independently decided to go to Rio. What the authors call host country attractiveness is present in several responses from various topics and have been discussed throughout the analysis.

It's useful to stress that country profile and recommendation could have been unfavorable in the case of Rio de Janeiro, because of the negative violent and insecure image many people have about this location. Notwithstanding, this didn't happen, students stated they had very contrasting information, either extremely good or extremely bad, but the positive image and recommendations prevailed.

Cubillo, Sánchez and Serviño's (2006) theoretical model is partially aligned with respondent's answers in the current study. All variables in the personal reasons factor could be seen in several responses; advice, personal improvements, living in another culture and improving language skills were often cited. Contrarily, country image effect factor variables related to country image weren't there. Cultural proximity wasn't relevant, Rio de Janeiro and Brazil being considered unusual destinations was a highly important reason for students, in this sense: "after being in more traditional countries like the US, because everybody wanted to go to the US as an exchange student, now everybody wants to go to Brazil or Asia, the trend is changing a little bit." (I, 13). Academic reputation was not the most influential motive; while socioeconomic level being an attraction, exclusively, from the developing country point of view.

City image variables - such as safety and security and social facilities - can be seen in respondent's positive view about Rio de Janeiro; nevertheless, the complains about the high cost of living impact negatively on city image. Institution image variables were mentioned, as well, by many respondents that had had recommendations for a specific institution in Rio de Janeiro (FGV/EBAPE). Program evaluation factor wasn't relevant, it was hardly mentioned, institution image was more relevant, programs were considered good as a consequence of the institution, not the program itself.

From the authors' eight propositions, the results of the present study corroborate most of them. Proposition one is in line with the results, personal reasons and advice do influence the decision to study abroad, but, beyond this they also impact
destination choice. Rephrasing proposition two to its opposite, willingness to live abroad and meet new people has a positive influence on the decision to study abroad. Proposition three is consonant with the results, country image is a positive influence on the decision to be an exchange student in Brazil.

Propositions four and five go against the results, this happens because Brazil's image is not a positive influence on program evaluation and institution image. An emerging economy with lots of opportunities and wealth, but with several challenging issues to be solved that stand in the way of its development. On the contrary, country image does have a positive effect on city image, agreeing with proposition six. Still, in the case of Rio de Janeiro, these two images are highly interconnected.

In consonance with proposition seven, city of destination is a major factor in purchase intention, this wasn't an issue in the present study that wanted to understand the choice of Rio de Janeiro after the purchase. But, logically, the city played an quintessential role before the purchase, otherwise students would have chosen another destination. Finally, proposition eight is also in line with the results, respondents that had a good image about their host institution assumed they would take courses in a good program.

The present study goes against the dichotomy presented by Llewellyn-Smith and McCabe (2008) between education first and tourism first exchange students. Agreeing with Weaver (2003), that proposes that education and touristic choices are intertwined, influencing each other. Nevertheless, the current study shows other interests as well, among them, business interests play an important role and contribute to rejecting the dichotomy.

Therefore, exchange students in Brazil have broader interests, unlike the tourism first exchange students in Australia (Llewellyn-Smith & McCabe, 2008). Partially in line with the authors' results, host university international partnerships also are very important, but not the main selection criterion for students that came to Brazil, at least respondents hardly mentioned this factor in the interviews. Nevertheless, this issue is of extreme importance, if there were no partnerships with institutions in Rio de Janeiro there would be no exchange students.

Some items of the model proposed by Daly (2011) were seen in respondents' answers. The international context was often cited as pushing students to go abroad, but in a general way that takes into consideration the necessity to have international experience. The crisis in Europe was hardly mentioned, only two interviewees raised
this issue when explaining why they had chosen Rio de Janeiro, contrastingly, Brazilian emerging economy was a key factor. Although the crisis was not present in responses, opportunities in Brazil attracted them. Respondents seem to have reasoned that as the economic situation in Europe is not favorable, they had to go to emerging countries, acquire international experience and improve themselves when compared to competitors on a tougher job market in their home countries.

Personal characteristics, as an exchange student profile, are more related to non-observable items, unlike Daly (2011) that presents a physical profile of the typical Australian exchange student. Intercultural competences, career development and foreign language competence are major issues for interviewees, being greatly interconnected. Travel interest and experience play important roles, this point is clear as most respondents are experienced travelers and all of them are interested in going abroad. Personal relations as recommendations and family decisions are important, but not decisive, because many students weren't influenced by these factors.

At last, financial constraints weren't mentioned, students complained about the price, but the mentality was basically that of a tourist, that must take advantage and enjoy the experience despite high costs. Also, many interviewees seem to come from wealthy families, this can be deduced by their frequent trips and also home institutions, among the best and most expensive in Europe, another factor that helps explaining why the crisis was hardly mentioned.

Some items in Nyaupane, Paris and Teye's (2011) model can be found in the results of the present study. Among the motivation factors, international travel and escape are the most important ones, broadly discussed and cited by interviewees. While academic and social factors don't have such a decisive role in choosing Rio de Janeiro, simply because academic factors weren't the most important ones neither was traveling in group, the latter being the most important one according to the authors' results.

Prior travel experience is highly important, as respondents' international experience indicate. Social ties, as relationships with people from other countries are related to travel experience, but weren't so relevant, except in the case of relationships with Brazilian people that provided positive recommendation. Unlike the authors' findings, in the case of Rio de Janeiro, destination choice is not highly influenced by academic motivation and friends living in a foreign country.
Similar to what Doyle et al. (2010) argue, word of mouth was a very important source of information for the interviewed exchange students. Accordingly, the authors' list of benefits from overseas study is present in respondents' answers, thus contact with a different culture and language and enhancing their curriculum is relevant in both studies.

The results from Doyle et al. (2010) indicate that the most salient obstacle to study abroad was the cost, followed by being away from friends and family; and studying in another language, even when there are English programs in non-English speaking countries. The present study shows different results, the cost issue has been previously discussed and didn't affect students that were going to Rio de Janeiro, especially because most of them were unaware of this issue. Being away from friends and family was mentioned in one interview as something that could be easily overcome by technology. Language difficulties did come up because most Brazilians don't speak English, but this didn't deter students.
Conclusion

Unlike what some people said and expected before this research started - including a Lebanese exchange student who didn't want to take part in it - that the only interest of exchange students in Rio de Janeiro was to have fun and enjoy the good life of a tropical country, the results show that this is not true.

Before recapitulating and summarizing the results, it's relevant to stress that students' predisposition to travel and consequent travel experience play a major role, nevertheless the results are insufficient to say that only people with this profile will come to Rio de Janeiro. Especially because there is no search for generalization nor typifying, the goal is understanding the phenomenon. What the research shows is that most of the interviewees have such profile, so there seems to exist a strong relation between travel experience and choosing Rio as host city, because it's not a typical destination, despite the increasing flux of exchange students. This issue needs further clarification and could be investigated in future studies.

Having said that, there is a plethora of interests that explain why exchange students chose this destination. The sun, beach and carnival cliché can be seen in several answers, but it was never the driving factor. Confirming this and pointing out diametrically opposed interests, students also manifested strong business interests, as the following quote indicates: "Brazil was always a place I wanted to come for my career prospects; and to see everything and understand and enjoy. (I,15)".

Summarizing these interests is not the simplest task, students have different interests and goals, however it's feasible to extract explanations from all of them and get to key motivations.

According to this logic, Rio de Janeiro was chosen for the following reasons: it's a different place with an attractive culture and interesting, open, relaxed, welcoming and helpful people. Consequently it's easy to meet and interact with its inhabitants, a common goal shared by respondents. Rio has good weather, it's never cold and offers sunshine most of the year; the city is famous for its parties, music, agitated nightlife and natural beauties. Besides that, it's a place where there are many outdoor sports. This wide range of attractions isn't available in respondents' home countries, that were described as places with colder weather and less sociable people.

Learning in several aspects is something exchange students are looking for. Not only Portuguese, but learning about the culture and how the country and society
work. Also getting in touch with a different educational system that can offer them a new academic perspective. Based on the answers, exchange students expect to learn from their sojourn abroad something they wouldn't be able to do at their home countries; or improve previously acquired skills as is the case with those students that already spoke Portuguese and wanted to improve it. In both cases they acquire new knowledge that can have positive impacts in their personal and professional life.

Rio de Janeiro is located in Brazil, an emerging country that has become a global player and gained international attention in previous years. This contributes directly to the reported business interests, such as working in a multinational company that does business in or with Brazil. There are broader career interests, interconnected with learning reasons as well, students believe their experience in Rio de Janeiro will improve their curriculum as well as career prospects.

The 2014 World Cup and the 2016 Olympic Games have contributed to broadcasting Brazil and Rio de Janeiro, such that almost half the interviewees mentioned them. Global media showing the country and the consequent increased awareness about it is equally important. The image students have about Rio de Janeiro, Brazil and Brazilians is another reason, despite the contradictory image, the positive part was clearly more relevant in their choice. The same happens with recommendations, the positive ones were more seriously considered.

This study also provides some suggestions for people working in the internationalization of higher education in Rio de Janeiro and Brazil. First, exchange student programs are only one kind of available initiatives, among many others like: hiring international faculty members, having research projects with international institutions and offering courses and programs in English. Most importantly, there should be an integrated strategy, with specific goals and clear ways to achieve them, not only isolated initiatives.

Second, there is an unbalance between inbound and outbound students, with more foreigners in Rio de Janeiro than cariocas\(^4\) going abroad, at least as far as the research shows, in the two host institutions there were many times more foreigners on campus than outbound students. This unbalance should be solved by encouraging Brazilian students to take part in exchange programs, this is an effective way to promote education institutions and also to attract more foreign students by word of mouth.

\(^4\) Those that are born in the city of Rio de Janeiro.
Third, institutions should emphasize the fact that Rio de Janeiro is not only about having fun and being on holidays, stressing business and educational interests mentioned by interviewees. Fourth, institutions must sign more international agreements, allowing them to host more exchange students and providing more destinations for their students.

Fifth, institutions should provide Portuguese courses for exchange students as well as foreign language courses for outbound Brazilian students. Sixth, institutions should hire staff with foreign language skills and general information such as websites, pamphlets and signs, should also be in English. This study could give more suggestions, but for its purpose these six recommendations are enough to contribute to education institutions in their quest for internationalization.

Additional research possibilities are investigating other non-traditional exchange destinations, to better understand why students choose Rio de Janeiro, when comparing with people that go to other destinations in developing countries such as Mexico, Chile and South Africa. Also, extending the research to other Brazilian destinations, getting a better picture of why students choose Brazil. Finally, this same study could be extended to a broader range of institutions in Rio de Janeiro, possibly with a complementary quantitative approach to get an exchange student profile and other data related to expenses, trips in Brazil, etc.

Data from Brazilian authorities such as the amount of visas conceded to exchange students would be helpful for these purposes, even allowing to estimate the economic impacts of exchange students and how important they are when compared with other types of tourists. As a pioneer research on this topic, it unveils several research possibilities that become visible after realizing both the research and applied value of investigating exchange students flux in Rio de Janeiro and in Brazil.
References


Appendix - Interview Questionnaire

Biographical Questions

Gender
Age
Country of birth
School and program at home
School and program in host country
Portuguese level
How long have you been in Rio de Janeiro?
How long will you stay in Rio de Janeiro?

International experience as a whole

What's your motivation to go abroad?
Why do you travel?

Educational interest

Do you have any kind of educational interest in Rio de Janeiro?
Do you think your experience as an exchange student in Rio de Janeiro will add to your academic education?

Business interest

Do you have any kind of business interest in Rio de Janeiro (at the present time or in the future)?
Do you think your experience as an exchange student in Rio de Janeiro can improve your career prospects?

Personal interest

What kind of personal interest made you choose Rio de Janeiro?
Please comment on other reasons that haven't been mentioned that can help explain this choice.

**Other items**

What kind of information about Rio de Janeiro and Brazil you had before coming?

Did you have any kind of recommendation or referral before coming?

What image do you have about Brazil?

What image do you have about Rio de Janeiro?

What image do you have about Brazilians?

Were your expectations different from what you now see?

What do you think about the cost of living in Rio de Janeiro?

Do you have any other comments or remarks?