PERCEPTIONS ABOUT CULTURAL DIFFERENCES AND RISK: THE CASE OF CHINESE TOURISM IN LATIN AMERICA

Jianrong Peng*
Shaoxing University
https://orcid.org/0000-0003-2016-1349

Diego Quer**
Universidad de Alicante
http://orcid.org/0000-0002-5814-6411

ABSTRACT

Drawing on a cultural perspective, this article analyzes the relationship between cultural differences, perceived risk, and the behavior of Chinese tourists in Latin America. The results from a mixed-method research design suggest that Chinese tourists perceive Latin America as a destination with many cultural differences from China, which has a positive impact on their travel intention. Besides, proficiency in the language of the destination and previous international travel experience have a positive influence on travel intention and a negative impact on the level of perceived cultural risk.

Keywords: Outbound tourism; China; Latin America; cultural differences; perceived risk.

Percepciones sobre diferencias culturales y riesgo: El caso del turismo chino en América Latina

RESUMEN

Desde un enfoque cultural, este artículo analiza la relación entre las diferencias cultura-les, el riesgo percibido y el comportamiento de los turistas chinos en América Latina. Los

resultados de una investigación de métodos mixtos sugieren que los turistas chinos perciben América Latina como un destino con muchas diferencias culturales lo cual tiene un impacto positivo en su intención de viaje. Además, el dominio del idioma del destino y la experiencia previa en viajes internacionales tienen una influencia positiva en la intención de viaje y un impacto negativo en el riesgo cultural percibido.

Palabras clave: Turismo emisor; China; América Latina; diferencias culturales; riesgo percibido.

1. INTRODUCTION

Today, China has become the world's second-largest economy. Along with a trend of economic development, the average income of Chinese citizens has been increasing progressively. According to data from the National Bureau of Statistics of China, the middle-class population in China already exceeded 400 million people in 2017, being the country with the largest middle-class group in the world (National Development and Reform Commission, 2021). Thanks to improved quality of life, more and more Chinese people are considered consumers who participate in tourism activities. In addition, their trips are not limited to domestic tourism but also include international destinations.

The development of Chinese outbound tourism (i.e., tourists traveling outside mainland China) is attracting great interest. The number of outbound tourists from China reached 100 million in 2014, six years ahead of the World Tourism Organization's prediction. During the following years until the COVID-19 pandemic, the trend of Chinese outbound tourism maintained double-digit growth, even above 20%, becoming the largest outbound market in the world (UNWTO, 2019). Recent data indicate that China has regained its position as the top spender on international tourism in 2023 as it consolidates its recovery from the impacts of the pandemic (UN Tourism, 2024).

Additionally, it is also essential to take into account the great potential of this market. First, the percentage of the middle class in China is still small, less than 30% of the country's total population, providing room for future growth. Second, according to the latest available information, 180 million Chinese residents hold valid ordinary passports, accounting for about 13 percent of China's total population (Xinhua, 2019). Although there is no more up-to-date information on the total number of passports, this number is increasing, with 18.4 million ordinary passports issued in 2023 (National Immigration Bureau, 2024). Apart from this, it is worth adding that Chinese outbound tourists usually travel outside the traditional Western vacation periods, which serves as a useful tool to fight against seasonality (Quer and Peng, 2022).

In the case of Latin America, a strong growth in tourist flows has been detected in recent years. The countries receiving more Chinese tourists are Peru, Mexico, and Argentina. Since there is no information yet available on Chinese tourists arriving in Latin American countries after China lifted travel restrictions in 2023, we must resort to the latest pre-pandemic data. According to that, the number of Chinese travelers arriving in Peru showed a 31% percent increase from 2017 to 2019, while in Argentina and Mexico

the growth rates were 28% and 18%, respectively (UNWTO, 2023). Historical and cultural heritage, natural scenery, and friendly diplomatic relations that promote university student exchange programs and language learning are some factors that attract Chinese tourists to these locations (Ochoa-Galván, 2018; Solís, 2018; Vega, 2017).

Moreover, political and economic relations between China and Latin America are increasingly close. However, the relationship between people and mutual understanding still needs further development. Tourism can be a useful tool to promote human and cultural exchange as it is an activity based on direct interaction between people, which fosters a better mutual understanding. Accordingly, it is interesting to study Chinese tourism in Latin America from a cultural perspective.

Chinese outbound tourism has also drawn the attention of scholars, with the most researched destinations being Hong Kong, Macao, Taiwan, Australia, the United States, Thailand, and the United Kingdom (Jin and Wang, 2016; Jørgensen *et al.*, 2017; Lojo *et al.*, 2019). Studies on Chinese outbound tourism in Latin America are still scant and focused on a single country as a destination, namely, Argentina (Solari, 2019; Solís, 2018; Solís and Acosta, 2017), Cuba (Wen and Huang, 2019; Ying *et al.*, 2018), Ecuador (Manner *et al.*, 2020), Mexico (Ochoa-Galván, 2018), and Peru (Vega, 2017). Since most Latin American countries have some similar characteristics, like speaking the same language (Spanish) and sharing a similar culture (Latin culture), this article focuses on those Latin American countries where Spanish is the official language: Argentina, Bolivia, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Cuba, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Uruguay, and Venezuela.

The novelty of this article lies in combining Western concepts and Chinese values. In this way, it intends to make a theoretical and empirical contribution given the scant existing information on Chinese outbound tourism in Latin America, and the need to do that with an approach based on cultural aspects. Thus, our main objective is to investigate the behavior of Chinese tourists in Latin America from a cultural perspective. More precisely, we seek to answer the following research questions: How is the behavior of Chinese tourists in Latin America concerning cultural differences and perceived risk? And how is this behavior affected by certain personal characteristics? The remainder of the article is structured as follows. The next section presents the theoretical framework. The methodology used and the results obtained are then explained. After the discussion, some suggestions for future research are presented.

2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1. Perceived cultural differences

Prior research studies have linked tourism with culture, considering the latter as a possible reason to explain why tourists from different countries make decisions differently. Hence, Ng *et al.* (2007) point out that the behavior of tourists is influenced by four elements: the tourist's national culture, the tourist's individual level (internalized) culture, a destination's culture, and the "distance" between a tourist's home culture and a destination's culture.

In the case of Chinese outbound tourism, some studies have focused on national culture based on Hofstede's Model (Becker *et al*., 1999; Huang, 2016; Huang and Crotts, 2019; Qin *et al*., 2023; Quintal *et al*., 2010). This model suggests that cultural differences between countries are based on six dimensions (Hofstede *et al*., 2010): power distance (the degree to which inequalities are accepted); individualism vs. collectivism (the degree to which individual or group behaviors prevail); motivation towards achievement and success (preference for material rewards or quality of life); uncertainty avoidance (level of acceptance of future ambiguity); long term vs. short term orientation (perseverance to achieve rewards or search for quick results); and indulgence vs. restriction (level of permissiveness in the enjoyment of leisure activities). Additionally, traditional Chinese values such as harmony (*hexie*), interdependence (*guanxi*), face (*mianzi*), and modesty (*keqi*) have also attracted the attention of researchers (Cai *et al*., 2019; Gilbert and Tsao, 2000; Hoare and Butcher, 2008; Kwek and Lee, 2010; Mei and Lantai, 2018; Mok and DeFranco, 2000).

Cultural distance can be understood from two levels: national and individual. According to Shenkar (2001), cultural distance measures the degree to which a country's culture is similar to or different from another country's culture. Based on this, the cultural distance from country A to country B is the same as that from country B to country A. However, individuals in country A do not necessarily perceive country B to have the same cultural distance as individuals in country B perceive from country A (Liu *et al*., 2018). In addition, prior experience and knowledge about the destination can influence tourists' perception of cultural distance, which can change over time. Consequently, cultural distance at the individual level, also called perceived cultural distance, refers to the degree to which individuals perceive cultural differences (Fan *et al*., 2017; Liu *et al*., 2018).

2.2. Perceived risk

Risk is defined as the probability of an event occurring, combined with an accounting of the gains and losses that the event would represent if it were to occur (Dake, 1992). According to the cultural theory of risk (Douglas and Wildavsky, 1982), risk is socially constructed and interpreted differently across different social structures and cultures. Indeed, a substantial proportion of studies about risk have focused on perceived risk rather than actual risk (Yang and Nair, 2014). Following the cultural theory of risk, compared to the past, it may not be the risk that has increased, but rather the perception of risk that has increased. Moreover, the growth of the level of education and cognition can also increase the perception of risk. Likewise, groups from different cultural backgrounds may have different levels of risk perception. From this point of view, the change in perceived risk is the result of subjective awareness, related to culture and the heterogeneity of individuals.

Tourism is a relatively sensitive activity due to its idiosyncratic characteristics as a service industry affected by several factors. Among them, safety and risk, which are negative results that tourists can perceive in their travel behavior, and which are aspects that tourists inevitably consider when making travel decisions (Chen *et al*., 2009). Most studies agree that perceived risk impacts the travel decision and plays an inhibitory role (Han, 2005; Reisinger and Mavondo, 2005; Sönmez and Graefe, 1998; Um and Crompton, 1992).

In the case of Chinese tourism, research on perceived risk is still scant. Chen *et al*. (2009), Li and Kwortnik (2021), and Wang *et al*. (2023) found that perceived risks influence behavioral patterns of Chinese tourists. As for specific risks, Oshriyeh *et al*. (2022) and Ye *et al*. (2024) reported that infectious diseases and political and social instability are their main concerns. Drawing on traditional Chinese values and the cultural theory of risk, Zhang and Fang (2019) discovered the effects of traditional Chinese values such as "moderate thinking", "others-oriented" and "differential view" on Chinese tourists' risk perception of terrorist attacks when traveling abroad.

3. METHODOLOGY

This research adopts a mixed-method approach. The usefulness of mixed methods has been addressed in many disciplines (Molina-Azorín, 2012; Ross and Onwuegbuzie, 2012). Most prior research on Chinese outbound tourism has used a monomethod, mainly a quantitative one (Jørgensen *et al*., 2017). The use of mixed methods is recommended to offer different perspectives with greater depth. In this study, we use the QUAL→QUAN exploratory sequential design, which gives equal importance to both the qualitative (QUAL) and quantitative (QUAN) parts. The first QUAL part will allow us to explore the topic under study and develop hypotheses. Later, in the QUAN part, we will use a survey based on the QUAL part to collect quantitative data and test the hypotheses (Greene *et al*., 1989).

Several reasons justify the use of a QUAL→QUAN sequential design in this study. First, as pointed out above, Chinese tourists in Latin America represent an under-research topic. Hence, starting with the QUAL design allows us to broadly understand the context and better explore the phenomenon. Second, since this study focuses on cultural values, the QUAL stage offers more possibilities for interaction between researchers and interviewees to gain a deeper understanding of cultural values that are not normally evident or easy to discover. Besides, starting with the QUAL design makes it easier to consider the complexity and heterogeneity of Chinese cultural values.

3.1. Qualitative research design

To obtain individual evidence from different perspectives and enriching information to formulate hypotheses, in-depth interviews were conducted with nine Chinese individuals with different profiles: those who have visited Latin America (group 1); those with international travel experience who have not visited Latin America (group 2); and those who have never traveled abroad (group 3). Table 1 presents descriptive data of the interviewees.

The interviews were conducted in Chinese personally by one of the authors of this study, using WeChat, a communication application similar to WhatsApp that is widely used by the Chinese. The interviews lasted between 40 and 90 minutes. The conversations were recorded, after obtaining authorization from the interviewees. The interviews were conducted under semi-structured scripts, but all the questions were open-ended to give the interviewees more freedom when expressing their opinions (Eisenhardt and Graebner, 2007). The questions were related to perceived cultural differences, perceived risk, and the intention to travel to Latin America (see Appendices A and B).

Table 1
DESCRIPTION OF THE INTERVIEWEES IN THE QUALITATIVE STUDY

Group	Name	Age	Profile (profession)	Interview date
1	Interviewee 1	28	Former Chinese scholarship holder in Peru	15.01.2022
	Interviewee 2	42	CEO of the export company Hito	18.12.2021
	Interviewee 3	43	Professor at the Center for Latin American and Caribbean Studies, Southwest University of Science and Technology, China	16.12.2021
2	Interviewee 4	27	Employee of a state-owned company in China	09.01.2022
	Interviewee 5	37	Employee of an export company	12.01.2022
	Interviewee 6	20	Spanish major student	22.12.2021
3	Interviewee 7	28	Professor of English	23.12.2021
	Interviewee 8	21	Spanish major student	20.12.2021
	Interviewee 9	28	Public servant	25.12.2021

Source: Own elaboration.

3.2. Quantitative research design

The survey was conducted online and generated with *Wen Juan Xing*, which is a platform for collecting questionnaires in China. Using the contacts provided by the first respondents, the questionnaire was sent through WeChat and QQ (another popular social networking application in China). During this phase, the so-called "snowball sampling" has been used to obtain a representation of Chinese individuals with different characteristics in terms of international travel experience (including Latin America) and proficiency in Spanish. Numerous previous studies on Chinese outbound tourism have used this "snowball sampling" (Chen *et al*., 2021; Lojo and Li, 2018; Suntikul *et al*., 2020). This method has the advantages of avoiding experimenter selection bias and facilitating the collection of experimental data (Tung and Ritchie, 2011). The survey was conducted between March and April 2022, having received a total of 610 valid responses.

4. RESULTS

4.1. Qualitative research: Hypothesis development

Regarding the perceived cultural differences, most of the interviewees in the qualitative study stated that cultural differences attract them to travel to Latin America. For example, Interviewee 1 noted that "these cultural differences between China and Latin America

appeal to me. The newer something is, the more I want to see it and learn about it". Similarly, Interviewee 5 mentioned that "the cultural differences between China and Latin America attract me a lot. Traveling is going to new places to have fun and experience".

From these interviews, an open and inclusive attitude towards something different derived from cultural differences is observed. This can be explained by some dimensions of Hofstede's Model (Hofstede *et al*., 2010). China has low uncertainty avoidance, which implies that Chinese citizens are more open to differences. In addition, these differences can generate curiosity, as has been revealed in the interviews. From the dimension of individualism, Chinese society represents a collectivist culture, where people not only seek to satisfy their individual goals. In this regard, several previous studies have reported that tourists from a collectivist culture show a preference for traveling to destinations with different cultures (Andreu, *et al*., 2014; Jackson, 2001; Yang *et al*., 2016, 2019; Zhao and Tian, 2008). This may be because people from collectivist cultures tend to view issues from a holistic perspective, considering different cultures as attractive.

From the perspective of traditional Chinese values, the pursuit of harmony also influences the attitude toward cultural differences. In Chinese, several sayings indicate an inclusive and open attitude towards distinctions. For example, harmony in diversity (*he er bu tong*) and seeking common ground while preserving differences (*qiu tong cun yi*). In Chinese culture, different things are considered to have their own uniqueness and value. As for tourism, Zhang and Peng (2014) also reported that Chinese tourists have a strong desire to enjoy something different and acquire new knowledge and experiences.

Furthermore, from a more modern point of view, the Reform and Opening-up Policy (which in 1978 was the starting point for China's development) and the Belt and Road Initiative (the ambitious plan launched by China in 2013 to promote global integration between countries) are also signs of an open attitude, derived from Chinese culture. It should be added that openness and inclusion are not only limited to the economy but also encompass culture, which implies the appreciation of human and cultural exchanges. Exchanges and mutual learning with other civilizations (*wen ming hu jian*), an expression put forward by Chinese President Xi Jinping, is considered one of the most popular phrases in China today. All this denotes that Chinese culture is increasingly open and inclusive. Under this trend, the search for something different is more evident and can be reflected in Chinese outbound tourism. Therefore, based on the results of the interviews and the reasoning set out above, we propose:

Hypothesis 1. The perceived cultural differences between China and Latin America have a positive impact on Chinese tourists' intention to travel to Latin America.

Despite the above, two interviewees expressed nuanced opinions on the attitude toward cultural differences between China and Latin America. For example, Interviewee 7 argued that "cultural differences are obstacles for me because my major is English, so I have a good understanding of the culture of English-speaking countries (…) But if I go to a completely unknown destination, I will have a feeling of loneliness, and this overcomes my curiosity about that place". The issue of mastering the language of the destination was

also highlighted by Interviewee 9, who pointed out that "if I ignore the language barrier, cultural differences imply more attraction for me (…) When we come to a new place, a different culture will attract us to explore more, which will form different perspectives in our minds".

Looking at the profiles of Interviewees 7 and 9, we note that they have two aspects in common. First, they do not speak the language of the destination. Second, they have never traveled abroad, therefore, they lack international travel experience. We can observe differences regarding the opinions of Interviewees 2 and 5. Although the latter two interviewees are not fluent in Spanish, they have traveled abroad. Thus, in the face of cultural differences, the perceived obstacles are less important than the attraction. As for Interviewee 8, although she does not have international travel experience, she is learning Spanish for a bachelor's degree. For this reason, she feels that the obstacles derived from cultural differences are more controllable and less relevant than the attraction they represent. Consequently, we propose:

Hypothesis 2. Proficiency in the language of the destination and international travel experience positively moderate the impact of cultural differences on Chinese tourists' intention to travel to Latin America.

As previously stated, from the cultural theory of risk, the change in perceived risk is the result of subjective awareness, related not only to culture but also to the heterogeneity of individuals. Tourists may perceive large differences between the cultures of origin and destination. However, this does not necessarily imply that they perceive a high risk. Seven of the nine interviewees stated that cultural risk is less relevant or does not concern them, due to certain personal characteristics.

Thus, Interviewee 3 stated: "I do not believe that cultural differences mean risk (…) I think that these differences do not cause me any inconvenience, on the contrary, they predispose me to understand these people and get closer to them. The state of harmony in diversity (*he er bu tong*) means that you can have your position. I have mine, and we are mutually inclusive. Of course, there may be differences, but we can communicate with each other (…) It is clear that this also has something to do with China's culture of moderation (*zhong yong*)". Besides, Interviewee 4 pointed out that "the meeting of different cultures is one of my reasons for traveling. Therefore, if I find some cultural conflicts, I think it's normal and acceptable". Since Chinese culture is characterized by inclusiveness and respect for cultural differences, it is believed that cultural differences do not necessarily imply risk. As for Interviewee 6, she considered that improving Spanish proficiency helps mitigate perceived risks.

Despite this, Interviewees 7 and 9, who are not fluent in the language of the destination and have no international travel experience, consider the cultural risk, especially the communication barrier, to be more relevant and are very concerned about it. As Interviewee 9 pointed out, "language is essential; if I could communicate with them, many problems could be easily solved". As for Interviewees 2 and 5, despite not being fluent in Spanish, they perceive the cultural risk to be less relevant, because they have international travel experience. All this leads us to expect that the level of perceived risk due to cultural

differences in Latin America may vary depending on certain personal characteristics of Chinese tourists. Thus, we propose:

Hypothesis 3. Proficiency in the language of the destination and international travel experience have a negative impact on the cultural risk perceived by Chinese tourists in Latin America.

Figure 1 depicts the conceptual framework proposed in the hypotheses.

Figure 1
CONCEPTUAL MODEL
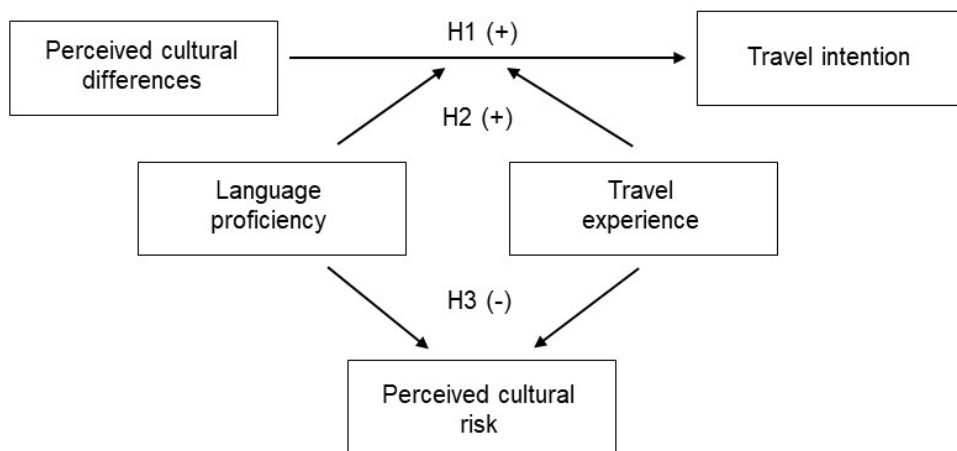
Source: Own elaboration.

4.2. Quantitative research: Hypothesis testing

As we previously explained, the quantitative research used to test the hypotheses has been based on a survey from which 610 valid answers were obtained. We employed a structured questionnaire including questions related to interest in Latin America, perceived cultural differences, perceived cultural risk, language proficiency, previous international travel experience, as well as other general characteristics of the respondents, such as age, gender, educational level, and income level (see Appendix C). The questions were elaborated drawing on previous studies and have been adapted considering Latin America as a destination and the results of the in-depth interviews carried out in the qualitative study. Table 2 summarizes the variables and measures, as well as their relationship with each hypothesis and the sources used to elaborate each question.

Table 2
VARIABLES AND MEASURES (QUANTITATIVE STUDY)

Question	Variable	Mean	Hypothesis	Source
1	Interest in Latin America; interest in traveling to Latin America; plan to travel to Latin America	5-point Likert scale: (1) Strongly disagree; (5) Strongly agree	H1, H2	Assaker and Hallak (2013); Bi (2017), Jang and Feng (2007); Promsivapallop and Kannaovakun (2017)
2	Perceived cultural differences regarding: language; food; values; lifestyle; customs and traditions; history; celebration of festivals; art styles	5-point Likert scale: (1) Strongly disagree; (5) Strongly agree	H1, H2	Bi (2017); Hofstede *et al.* (2010); qualitative study
3	Perceived risk regarding: communication with locals; adaptation to lifestyle; understanding; adaptation to food; local people not friendly	5-point Likert scale: (1) Strongly disagree; (5) Strongly agree	H3	Bi (2017); Bi and Gu (2019); Han (2005); Reisinger and Mavondo (2005); qualitative study
4	Spanish language proficiency	5-point Likert scale: (1) Don't understand; (5) Very fluently	H2, H3	Han (2005)
5	International travel experience	Dummy (Yes/No); No. of countries visited	H2, H3	Fakeye and Crompton (1991); Huang and Hsu (2009)
6	Age	No. of years	Control	Qualitative study
7	Gender	Categorical	Control	Qualitative study
8	Educational level	Categorical	Control	Qualitative study
9	Income level	Categorical	Control	Qualitative study

Source: Own elaboration.

4.2.1. Preliminary analysis: Common method variance

Before testing the hypotheses, we applied the Harman test to the variables used in the analyses. After performing an exploratory factor analysis, the non-rotated solution resulted in six factors that represent 72.51% of the total variance, the first factor only representing 26.09%. Since a single factor has not been obtained and the first factor does not represent more than 50%, it can be concluded that the variance of the data cannot be explained by a single factor. Therefore, it can be considered that the common method bias is not a major concern in this study.

4.2.2. Test of Hypotheses 1 and 2

We used an ordinal logistic regression to test Hypotheses 1 and 2. The dependent variable was the *interest in traveling to Latin America* (second item of question 1, measured on a 5-point Likert scale). The eight items of question 2 (related to perceived cultural differences) were considered explanatory variables. Before performing the regression, a principal component analysis was carried out, which made it possible to reduce these eight variables to a single factor. The value of the KMO (Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin) test was 0.925 (close to 1), the significance of Bartlett's test of sphericity was 0.000 and it was possible to extract a single factor that explained 66.86% of the total variance. This factor named *perceived cultural differences* was included as the independent variable. According to Hypothesis 2, we added two moderating variables: *Spanish language proficiency* (measured on a 5-point Likert scale in question 4) and *international travel experience* (measured as a dummy variable in question 5). Moreover, we added four control variables, referring to the personal characteristics of each respondent: *age*, *gender*, *educational level*, and *income level*.

Table 3 shows descriptive statistics, correlations, and collinearity diagnoses. All correlation coefficients are below 0.5, suggesting low multicollinearity (Dormann *et al.*, 2013). Despite this, a collinearity test was carried out, finding that all variance inflation factors (VIF) were lower than 10. Thus, we can rule out that multicollinearity is a concern (Cohen *et al.*, 2003).

Table 3
DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS, CORRELATIONS, AND VIF
(HYPOTHESES 1 AND 2)

Variable	Mean	DS	VIF	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1. Perceived cultural differences	0.00	1.00	1.06	1						
2. Spanish language proficiency	2.58	1.53	1.33	0.192**	1					
3. International travel experience	0.63	0.48	1.55	0.087*	0.341**	1				
4. Age	30.62	9.65	1.40	-0.072	-0.244**	0.216**	1			
5. Gender	0.42	0.49	1.11	-0.035	-0.155**	0.012	0.256**	1		
6. Educational level	3.34	0.74	1.16	0.146**	0.214**	0.315**	-0.024	-0.032	1	
7. Income level	3.82	2.00	1.47	-0.046	0.020	0.417**	0.424**	0.228**	0.155**	1

** $p < 0.01$; * $p < 0.05$

Source: Own elaboration.

Table 4 reports the results of the ordinal logistic regression. Model 1 includes only direct effects, while Model 2 includes the moderating effects through the interactions between the independent variable and the moderators.

Table 4
ORDINAL LOGISTIC REGRESSION (HYPOTHESES 1 AND 2)

Variables	Model 1	Model 2
Independent variable		
Perceived cultural differences	0.381***	0.401**
	(0.082)	(0.154)
Moderating variables		
Spanish language proficiency	0.393***	0.393***
	(0.063)	(0.064)
International travel experience	0.853***	0.835***
	(0.207)	(0.208)
Interactions		
Perceived cultural differences * Spanish language proficiency		0.038
		(0.060)
Perceived cultural differences * International travel experience		-0.165
		(0.171)
Control variables		
Age	0.007	0.008
	(0.010)	(0.010)
Gender	-0.049	-0.052
	(0.172)	(0.172)
Educational level	0.202†	0.205†
	(0.120)	(0.120)
Income level	-0.101*	-0.102*
	(0.050)	(0.050)
Chi-square	143.777***	144.768***

No. of observations: 610. Dependent variable: Interest in traveling to Latin America. Standard errors in parentheses. *** $p < 0.001$; ** $p < 0.01$; * $p < 0.05$; † $p < 0.1$
Source: Own elaboration.

We found a positive and statistically significant effect of perceived cultural differences on the intention to travel to Latin America, in both Model 1 ($\beta = 0.381$, $p = 0.000$) and Model 2 ($\beta = 0.401$, $p = 0.009$). This result provides support to Hypothesis 1. However, the interactions between perceived cultural differences and the two moderators are not statistically significant in Model 2. This indicates that neither language proficiency nor

travel experience moderate the positive effect of perceived cultural differences on travel intention. Therefore, Hypothesis 2 is not supported.

Notwithstanding this, it has been found that proficiency in the language of the destination has a significant positive effect on the intention to travel to Latin America in both Model 1 and Model 2 ($\beta = 0.393$, $p = 0.000$). Similarly, international travel experience positively influences the intention to travel to Latin America in both Model 1 ($\beta = 0.853$, $p = 0.000$) and Model 2 ($\beta = 0.835$, $p = 0.000$). These findings suggest that Chinese people with a higher level of language proficiency and prior international travel experience are more likely to travel to Latin America.

To ensure the robustness of these findings, we performed supplementary analyses. Hence, we replicated the ordinal logistic regression using other variables and alternative measures. First, we considered the interest in Latin America (item 1 of question 1) and having a plan to travel to Latin America (item 3 of question 1) as dependent variables. Second, keeping the original dependent variable (interest in traveling to Latin America), we used alternative proxies of the moderating variables. Spanish language proficiency was measured with a binary scale: low level (values 1-2 on the original Likert scale) or medium-high level (values 3-5). International travel experience was measured by the number of countries visited. As shown in Table 5, the results obtained with these robustness tests are similar to those reported in the main analysis.

Table 5
ROBUSTNESS TESTS - ORDINAL LOGISTIC REGRESSION
(HYPOTHESES 1 AND 2)

Variables	Dependent variable: Interest in Latin America		Dependent variable: Plan to travel to Latin America		Moderators: Spanish language proficiency (binary), international travel experience (No. of countries visited)	
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 1	Model 2	Model 1	Model 2
Independent variable						
Perceived cultural differences	0.359***	0.429**	0.147†	0.191	0.378***	0.299**
	(0.082)	(0.154)	(0.077)	(0.147)	(0.084)	(0.107)
Moderating variables						
Spanish language proficiency	0.422***	0.425***	0.465***	0.467***	0.990***	0.974***
	(0.064)	(0.064)	(0.059)	(0.060)	(0.183)	(0.184)
International travel experience	0.916***	0.882***	0.616***	0.610**	0.089***	0.092***
	(0.208)	(0.209)	(0.193)	(0.193)	(0,018)	(0.019)

Interactions

Perceived cultural differences * Spanish language proficiency	0.045		-0.011		0.171
	(0.060)		(0.056)		(0.187)
Perceived cultural differences * International travel experience	-0.288†		-0.039		0.011
	(0.172)		(0.164)		(0.019)

Control variables

Age	0.013	0.014	0.010	0.010	-0.006	-0.006
	(0.010)	(0.010)	(0.009)	(0.009)	(0.010)	(0.010)
Gender	-0.009	-0.013	-0.266†	-0.264†	-0.110	-0.118
	(0.172)	(0.172)	(0.160)	(0.160)	(0.176)	(0.176)
Educational level	0.248*	0.253*	-0.078	-0.079	0.283*	0.289*
	(0.120)	(0.120)	(0.111)	(0.111)	(0.121)	(0.121)
Income level	-0.137**	-0.137**	0.038	0.039	-0.060	-0.064
	(0.050)	(0.050)	(0.046)	(0.046)	(0.049)	(0.050)
Chi-square	156.431***	159.262***	134.539***	134.666***	132.232***	133.486***

No. of observations: 610. Standard errors in parentheses. *** $p < 0.001$; ** $p < 0.01$; * $p < 0.05$; † $p < 0.1$

Source: Own elaboration.

4.2.3. *Test of Hypothesis 3*

We ran a linear regression to test Hypothesis 3, considering *Spanish language proficiency* and *international travel experience* as the independent variables, in both cases using the same measurements as for the previous test of Hypotheses 1 and 2. The five items of question 3 (referring to the perceived cultural risk) were used to define the dependent variable. Before performing the regression, a principal component analysis was carried out, which made it possible to reduce these five variables to a single factor that explained 63.47% of the total variance (KMO = 0.850; Bartlett's test of sphericity significance = 0.000). This factor, coded as *perceived cultural risk*, was considered as the dependent variable in the linear regression.

In addition, the four control variables referring to the personal characteristics of each respondent were also included. Descriptive statistics, correlation coefficients, and collin-

earity diagnoses of the independent and control variables used in this analysis are similar to those previously presented in Table 3. As Table 6 reports, Spanish language proficiency has a negative and statistically significant effect on the perceived cultural risk (β = -0.204, p = 0.000). Likewise, we also obtained that previous international travel experience has a negative effect on the cultural risk perceived by Chinese tourists (β = -0.403, p = 0.000). These results support Hypothesis 3.

Table 6
LINEAR REGRESSION (HYPOTHESIS 3)

Variables	β coefficient (Standard error)
Independent variables	
Spanish language proficiency	-0.204***
	(0.027)
International travel experience	-0.403***
	(0.093)
Control variables	
Age	-0.007
	(0.004)
Gender	0.058
	(0.077)
Educational level	-0.095†
	(0.053)
Income level	-0.031
	(0.022)
F (Anova)	28.353***

No. of observations: 610. Dependent variable: Perceived cultural risk.
*** p < 0.001; ** p < 0.01; * p < 0.05; † p < 0.1

Source: Own elaboration.

To assess the robustness of these findings, we conducted several supplementary analyses. Specifically, keeping the original dependent variable (perceived cultural risk), we replicated the linear regression using the aforementioned alternative measures for the independent variables: Spanish language proficiency (binary scale) and international travel experience (number of countries). As shown in Table 7, the results obtained were similar to those of the main analysis.

Table 7
ROBUSTNESS TESTS - LINEAR REGRESSION (HYPOTHESIS 3)

Variables	β coefficient (Standard error)
Independent variable	
Spanish language proficiency (binary)	-0.615***
	(0.081)
International travel experience (No. of countries)	-0.015*
	(0.006)
Control variables	
Age	-0.005
	(0.005)
Gender	0.085
	(0.081)
Educational level	-0.176**
	(0.054)
Monthly income	-0.060**
	(0.023)
F (Anova)	19.985***

No. of observations: 610. Dependent variable: perceived cultural risk.
*** $p < 0.001$; ** $p < 0.01$; * $p < 0.05$; † $p < 0.1$

Source: Own elaboration.

5. DISCUSSION

This study has reported a positive effect of cultural differences perceived by Chinese tourists on their intention to travel to Latin America (Hypothesis 1). This finding is consistent with that of McKercher and du Cros (2003), who found that people from culturally distant countries are more likely to be motivated to travel for cultural reasons seeking a deeper experience. In addition, the positive effect of perceived cultural differences also supports the idea that tourists from a collectivist culture such as China show a preference for traveling to a destination with a different culture, as we previously argued (Andreu *et al*., 2014; Jackson, 2001; Yang *et al*., 2016, 2019; Zhao and Tian, 2008).

To analyze tourism behavior from a cultural perspective, we need to take into account not only general cultural characteristics, but also other factors such as history, value system, and individual characteristics of tourists (Wang *et al*., 2021). Effectively, cultural distance only reflects the cultural gap between the countries of origin and destination.

However, we do not know exactly the attitude of tourists toward cultural differences, as it depends on individual perceptions.

Academic research on Chinese outbound tourism has been based mainly on Western theories and paradigms. Therefore, studies from the perspective of Chinese culture are still scarce (Hsu and Huang, 2016). Our empirical research has found that Chinese tourists show a desire to learn about foreign and exotic cultures. The influence of cultural distance on tourist behavior is still controversial, and different conclusions have been reached, suggesting both a positive and negative effect. We posit that it is necessary to distinguish the intrinsic motivations and needs of tourists and the external and controllable constraints. Chinese tourists' interest in exotic cultures is an essential and intrinsic motivation, determined by their culture.

Li *et al*. (2022) have also reported that the discovery of new cultures and lifestyles is the most relevant "push" motivation. Despite that, when this intrinsic motivation becomes a reality, it can be limited by a series of external constraints (Li *et al*., 2011; Sparks and Pan, 2009). This is what we have tried to address in our study by incorporating language proficiency and previous travel experience as moderating variables. However, their effect on the relationship between cultural differences and intention to travel did not turn out to be statistically significant (Hypothesis 2). This suggests that the motivation to learn about different cultures is something intrinsic among Chinese tourists, even among those who do not know the language of the destination or who have not traveled abroad.

Notwithstanding this, we have obtained a direct positive effect of both Spanish language proficiency and international travel experience on the intention to travel to Latin America. The finding regarding the former allows emphasizing the relevance of the language of the destination for international tourism (Cohen and Cooper, 1986; Han, 2005). In comparison with other topics, few studies have paid attention to language in tourism research (Basala and Klenosky, 2001; Cohen and Cooper, 1986; Han, 2005; Li *et al*., 2022). Among them, it is worth mentioning that of Li *et al*. (2022), who also reported a positive effect of destination-language proficiency on travel intention.

As in the case of language proficiency, we have obtained a direct positive effect of international travel experience on the intention to travel to Latin America. This finding is consistent with the results of some previous studies (Fakeye and Crompton, 1991; Huang and Hsu, 2009). However, unlike them, our empirical research has not examined the effect of the experience of visiting a destination on the intention to revisit the same destination. Rather, we have explored the effect of prior international travel experience from a broader viewpoint, not limited to the destination. Furthermore, we have also reported that language proficiency and international travel experience have a negative impact on perceived cultural risk (Hypothesis 3). This suggests that these factors help Chinese tourists manage cross-cultural challenges and reduce uncertainty and perceived risk (Liu *et al*., 2018).

5.1. Contributions

Regarding theoretical contributions, this study has addressed cultural differences considering their complexity and dynamics through perceived cultural distance. Most prior studies have used indicators of cultural distance at the national level to explore its influ-

ence on tourists' behavior, mainly based on Hofstede's Model (Andreu *et al*., 2014; Crotts, 2004; Jackson, 2000, 2001; Yang *et al*., 2018, 2019). Instead of analyzing the national dimension of cultural differences, our study has considered the heterogeneity of people within the same nation. Thus, we based on the perceived cultural differences between China and Latin America, considering not only Western concepts but also traditional values of Chinese culture. In doing so, we contribute to the literature on cultural distance at the individual level, which is still scarce in tourism research (Bi, 2017; Li *et al*., 2022; Liu *et al*., 2018). Additionally, as noted above, the positive effect of perceived cultural differences supports the idea that tourists from a collectivist culture such as China show a preference to travel to a culturally distant destination. This result is in line with that of Zhao and Tian (2008), who reported that Chinese tourists are attracted by destinations with greater cultural distance. Moreover, in the qualitative study, several interviewees emphasized the attractive effect of cultural differences such as history, customs, cultural heritage, food, traditions, festivals, etc.

It is worth adding that our empirical study has not only measured the perceived cultural differences between China and Latin America and their impact on the intention to travel, but also the perceived risk from a cultural perspective. This has made it possible to deepen our understanding of the behavior of Chinese tourists from the cultural theory of risk. As we argued above, this theory posits that risk is socially constructed and interpreted differently across different social structures and cultures (Douglas and Wildavsky, 1982).

Our study has also made several empirical contributions. First, it has addressed the effect of proficiency in the language of the destination, helping to fill the scarcity of studies on its role in tourism (Li *et al*., 2022). In addition, it has focused on the Spanish language, the learning of which has been growing in China in recent years, where it is estimated that there are already close to 55,000 students of that language (Cervantes Institute, 2021). Second, we have focused on Latin America as a destination, which is under-researched in the context of Chinese outbound tourism (Lojo *et al*., 2019). Third, we have used a mixed methods research design, combining qualitative and quantitative analyses. This has made it possible to enrich empirical research from a dual perspective that allows a deeper approach to the intrinsic motivations and needs of tourists. As previously noted, most research studies on Chinese outbound tourism have traditionally used a quantitative methodology (Jørgensen *et al*., 2017).

Regarding practical implications, this study can contribute to deepening the knowledge of Chinese tourists' behavior in a region like Latin America, which, in recent years is playing a key role in China's foreign policy agenda. Understanding the cultural roots of such behavior can serve as a guide for the establishment of agreements between China and Latin American countries that contribute to increasing the flow of Chinese tourists to the region. This may have additional effects beyond tourism, by favoring the strengthening of cultural ties between people. This is precisely one of the key pillars of the Belt and Road Initiative, to which more and more Latin American countries have been joining in recent years. The positive effect of perceived cultural differences on travel intention also suggests that tourism planners should focus on promoting culture-related products and activities, for example, on the most representative civilizations of Latin America, such

as the Mayan, Aztec, and Incan. Besides, since a lack of language proficiency can be an obstacle to travel, it is necessary to offer customized services, including tourist information in Chinese, professional guides fluent in Chinese and Spanish, etc.

5.2. Limitations and future research

Our study has certain limitations that open avenues for future research. First, in the quantitative part of the empirical research, 77.7% of interviewees are under 35 years old, which means that the majority are young people belonging to the millennial segment. This may be a reason why a greater intention to travel to Latin America has been observed, even though they perceive greater cultural differences. In the case of older or senior tourists, their attitudes toward cultural differences may be different. Hence, future studies could consider segments of Chinese tourists based on age to make comparisons between them.

Second, perceived cultural differences, as assessed at the individual level, could vary depending on the level of familiarity with the destination. The study by Liu *et al*. (2018) found that self-rated familiarity and experiential familiarity negatively impacted perceived cultural distance, but the dimensions of familiarity could be expanded to include familiarity with the language of the destination. As previously mentioned, the role of language proficiency is a relevant finding in our research. Thus, in future studies, it would be advisable to include this concept to analyze the relationship between the perceived cultural distance and the level of familiarity in different dimensions, as well as their relationships with the intention to travel. Third, we have studied Chinese outbound tourism in a single destination region. Therefore, perceptions of cultural differences and risk may be conditioned by idiosyncratic factors such as the historical relationship between China and some Latin American countries like Peru, where there are many descendants of Chinese immigrants who arrived in the country between the 19th and 20th centuries.

6. CONCLUSION

Building upon a cultural perspective, this study has analyzed the behavior of Chinese tourists in Latin America. Our findings suggest that cultural differences between China and Latin America have a positive effect on the travel intention of Chinese outbound tourists. Furthermore, proficiency in the destination language and prior international travel experience positively affect travel intention and mitigate perceived cultural risk. Deepening our understanding of the factors underlying individual perceptions of cultural differences and risk is essential to fostering greater mutual understanding. In addition to favoring tourist flows, this may have additional favorable effects on bilateral relations between China and Latin America, a region that China considers strategic for its global positioning.

Authorship statement: The authors declare no conflict of interest. Conceptualization: Jianrong Peng and Diego Quer. Consulting and treatment of original sources: Jianrong Peng. Research and writing: Jianrong Peng and Diego Quer.

7. REFERENCES

ANDREU, R., CLAVER, E. and QUER, D. (2014): «Destination attributes and Chinese outbound tourism to Europe», *Journal of China Tourism Research,* vol. 10 (3), pp. 275-291. https://doi.org/10.1080/19388160.2013.855692

ASSAKER, G. and HALLAK, R. (2013): «Moderating effects of tourists' novelty-seeking tendencies on destination image, visitor satisfaction, and short- and long-term revisit intentions», *Journal of Travel Research,* vol. 52 (5), pp. 600-613. https://doi.org/10.1177/0047287513478497

BASALA, S.L. and KLENOSKY, D.B. (2001): «Travel-style preferences for visiting a novel destination: A conjoint investigation across the novelty-familiarity continuum», *Journal of Travel Research,* vol. 40 (2), pp. 172-182. https://doi.org/10.1177/004728750104000208

BECKER, C., MURRMANN, S.K., MURRMANN, K.F. and CHEUNG, G.W. (1999): «A pancultural study of restaurant service expectations in the United States and Hong Kong», *Journal of Hospitality* and *Tourism Research,* vol. 23 (3), pp. 235-255. https://doi.org/10.1177/109634809902300301

BI, J. (2017): *Research on Relationship between Cultural Distance* and *Tourists' Destination Choice*. Zhejiang University, China, Doctoral Dissertation.

BI, J. and GU, C. (2019): «Cultural distance and international tourists' intention to visit a destination», *Asia Pacific Journal of Tourism Research,* vol. 24 (8), pp. 839-849. https://doi.org/10.1080/10941665.2019.1635503

CAI, W., COHEN, S.A. and TRIBE, J. (2019): «Harmony rules in Chinese backpacker groups», *Annals of Tourism Research,* vol. 75, pp. 120-130. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.annals.2018.12.010

CERVANTES INSTITUTE (2021): *El español: una lengua viva. Informe 2021*. Madrid, Instituto Cervantes, https://cvc.cervantes.es

CHEN, L.H., LOVERIO, J.P., WANG, M., BU, N. and SHEN, C.S. (2021): «The role of face (mien-tzu) in Chinese tourists' destination choice and behaviors», *Journal of Hospitality* and *Tourism Management*, vol. 48, pp. 500-508. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jhtm.2021.08.009

CHEN, N., QIAO, G. and LIU, L. (2009): «A study on the preferred travel behaviors of outbound tourists based on perception of travel risks—Case on Beijing tourists», *Human Geography*, vol. 24 (6), pp. 97-102. http://rwdl.xisu.edu.cn/EN/Y2009/V24/I6/97

COHEN, E. and COOPER, R.L. (1986): «Language and tourism», *Annals of Tourism Research,* vol. 13 (4), pp. 533-563. https://doi.org/10.1016/0160-7383(86)90002-2

COHEN, J., COHEN, P., WEST, S.G. and AIKEN, L.S. (2003): *Applied Multiple Regression/ Correlation Analysis for the Behavioral Sciences*. Third edition. Mahwah, New Jersey, Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

CROTTS, J.C. (2004): «The effect of cultural distance on overseas travel behaviors», *Journal of Travel Research*, vol. 43 (1), pp. 83-88. https://doi.org/10.1177/0047287504265516

DAKE, K. (1992): «Myths of nature: Culture and the social construction of risk», *Journal of Social Issues,* vol. 48 (4), pp. 21-37. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1540-4560.1992.tb01943.x

DORMANN, C.F., ELITH, J., BACHER, S., BUCHMANN, C., CARL, G., CARRÉ, G. and LEITÃO, P. J. (2013): «Collinearity: A review of methods to deal with it and a simulation study evaluating their performance», *Ecography,* vol. 36 (1), pp. 27-46. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1600-0587.2012.07348.x

DOUGLAS, M. and WILDAVSKY, A. (1982): *Risk* and *Culture: An Essay on the Selection of Technological* and *Environmental Dangers*. Berkeley, University of California Press.

EISENHARDT, K.M. and GRAEBNER, M.E. (2007): «Theory building from cases: Opportunities and challenges», *Academy of Management Journal,* vol. 50 (1), pp. 25-32. https://doi.org/10.5465/amj.2007.24160888

FAKEYE, P.C. and CROMPTON, J.L. (1991): «Image differences between prospective, first-time, and repeat visitors to the lower Rio Grande Valley», *Journal of Travel Research,* vol. 30 (2), pp. 10-16. https://doi.org/10.1177/004728759103000202

FAN, D.X.F., ZHANG, H.Q, JENKINS, C.L. and LIN, P.M.C. (2017): «Does tourist–host social contact reduce perceived cultural distance?», *Journal of Travel Research,* vol. 56 (8), pp. 998-1010. https://doi.org/10.1177/0047287517696979

GILBERT, D. and TSAO, J. (2000): «Exploring Chinese cultural influences and hospitality marketing relationships», *International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management,* vol. 12 (1), pp. 45-54. https://doi.org/10.1108/09596110010305037

GREENE, J., CARACELLI, V. and GRAHAM, W. (1989): «Toward a conceptual framework for mixed-method evaluation designs», *Educational Evaluation* and *Policy Analysis,* vol. 11 (3), pp. 255-274. https://doi.org/10.3102/01623737011003255

HAN, J.Y. (2005): *The Relationships of Perceived Risk to Personal Factors, Knowledge of Destination,* and *Travel Purchase Decisions in International Leisure Travel*. Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University, USA, Doctoral Dissertation.

HOARE, R.J. and BUTCHER, K. (2008): «Do Chinese cultural values affect customer satisfaction/loyalty?», *International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management,* vol. 20 (2), pp. 156-171. https://doi.org/10.1108/09596110810852140

HOFSTEDE, G., HOFSTEDE, G.J. and MINKOV, M. (2010): *Cultures* and *Organizations*. *Software of the Mind*. *Intercultural Cooperation* and *its Importance for Survival*. Third edition. New York, McGraw-Hill.

HSU, C.H.C. and HUANG, S. (2016): «Reconfiguring Chinese cultural values and their tourism implications», *Tourism Management,* vol. 54 (4), pp. 230-242. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tourman.2015.11.011

HUANG, S. and CROTTS, J. (2019): «Relationships between Hofstede's cultural dimensions and tourist satisfaction: A cross-country cross-sample examination», *Tourism Management,* vol. 72, pp. 243-241. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tourman.2018.12.001

HUANG, S. and HSU, C.H.C. (2009): «Effects of travel motivation, past experience, perceived constraint, and attitude on revisit intention», *Journal of Travel Research,* vol. 48 (1), pp. 29-44. https://doi.org/10.1177/0047287508328793

HUANG, X. (2016): *Apply Hofstede's National Cultural Dimension Theory to Analyze Chinese Tourist Behaviors in Portugal Tourism*. University Institute of Lisbon, Portugal, Master's thesis.

JACKSON, M. (2000): «Predicting Australian mass tourism flow using Hofstede's cultural model», in M. Ewen (Ed.), *CAUTHE 2000: Peak Performance in Tourism* and *Hospitality Research; Proceedings of the 10th Australian Tourism* and *Hospitality Research Conference*. Bundoora, VIC, La Trobe University, pp. 47-56.

JACKSON, M. (2001): «Cultural influences on tourist destination choices of 21 Pacific Rim nations», in C. Pforr and B. Janeczko (Eds.), *CAUTHE 2001: Capitalising on Research; Proceedings of the 11th Australian Tourism* and *Hospitality Research Conference*. Canberra, ACT, University of Canberra Press, pp. 166-176.

JANG, S.C. and FENG, R. (2007): «Temporal destination revisit intention: The effects of novelty seeking and satisfaction», *Tourism Management*, vol. 28 (2), pp. 580-590. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tourman.2006.04.024

JIN, X. and WANG, Y. (2016): «Chinese outbound tourism research: A review», *Journal of Travel Research*, vol. 55 (4), pp. 440-453. https://doi.org/10.1177/0047287515608504

JØRGENSEN, M.T., LAW, R. and KING, B.E. (2017): «Understanding the past, anticipating the future – A critical assessment of China outbound tourism research», *Journal of Travel* and *Tourism Marketing,* vol. 34 (7), pp. 880-891. https://doi.org/10.1080/10548408.2016.1220889

KWEK, A. and LEE, Y.S. (2010): «Chinese tourists and Confucianism», *Asia Pacific Journal of Tourism Research,* vol. 15 (2), pp. 129-141. https://doi.org/10.1080/10941661003629946

LI, M., ZHANG, H., MAO, I. and DENG, C. (2011): «Segmenting Chinese outbound tourists by perceived constraints», *Journal of Travel* and *Tourism Marketing,* vol. 28 (6), pp. 629-643. https://doi.org/10.1080/10548408.2011.598747

LI, Y. and KWORTNIK Jr, R. (2021): «Chinese Tourism to the United States: The role of perceived cultural similarity», *Journal of China Tourism Research*, vol. 17 (3), pp. 323-340. https://doi.org/10.1080/19388160.2020.1781724

LI, Y., HERNÁNDEZ-MARTÍN, R. and RODRÍGUEZ-GONZÁLEZ, P. (2022): «Effects of destination-language proficiency on tourists' motivation», in Y. Luo, H. Zhang, J. Jiang, D. Bi, and Y. Chu (Eds.), *Tourism, Aviation* and *Hospitality Development During the COVID-19 P*and*emic*. Chapter 5. Singapore, Springer Nature, pp. 67-83.

LIU, H.B, LI, X., CÁRDENAS D.A. and YANG, Y. (2018): «Perceived cultural distance and international destination choice: The role of destination familiarity, geographic distance, and cultural motivation», *Journal of Destination Marketing* and *Management,* vol. 9, pp. 300-309. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jdmm.2018.03.002

LOJO, A. and LI, M. (2018): «Segmentation by experiential familiarity and travel mode of the Chinese outbound market to Spain», *Journal of China Tourism Research*, vol. 14 (1), pp. 100-121. https://doi.org/10.1080/19388160.2018.1442278

LOJO, A., LI, M. and CÀNOVES, G. (2019): «Co-authorship networks and thematic development in Chinese outbound tourism research», *Journal of China Tourism Research*, vol. 15 (3), pp. 295-319. https://doi.org/10.1080/19388160.2018.1512433

MANNER, F., CARVACHE, M. and CARVACHE, W. (2020): «The image of Ecuador in the Chinese youth market: Tourist preferences and motivations», *Journal of China Tourism Research,* vol. 17 (3), pp. 360-375. https://doi.org/10.1080/19388160.2020.1779158

MCKERCHER, B. and DU CROS, H. (2003): «Testing a cultural tourism typology», *International Journal of Tourism Research,* vol. 5 (1), pp. 45-58. https://doi.org/10.1002/jtr.417

MEI, X.Y. and LANTAI, T. (2018): «Understanding travel constraints: An exploratory study of mainland Chinese international students (MCIS) in Norway», *Tourism Management Perspectives,* vol. 28, pp. 1-9. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tmp.2018.07.003

MOK, C. and DEFRANCO, A.L. (2000): «Chinese cultural values: Their implications for travel and tourism marketing», *Journal of Travel* and *Tourism Marketing,* vol. 8(2), pp. 99-114. https://doi.org/10.1300/J073v08n02_07

MOLINA-AZORÍN, J.F. (2012): «Mixed methods research in strategic management: Impact and applications», *Organizational Research Methods,* vol. 15 (1), pp. 33-56. https://doi.org/10.1177/1094428110393023

NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND REFORM COMMISSION (2021): «中国中等收入群体已超4亿 中等收入大军如何"扩群" (China's middle-income group has exceeded 400 million, how to expand the middle-income group?)», National Development and Reform Commission of the People's Republic of China, 24 September 2021. https://www.ndrc.gov.cn/fggz/jyysr/jysrsbxf/202109/t20210924_1297381_ext.html

NATIONAL IMMIGRATION BUREAU (2024): «2023年全国出入境人员超4.24亿人次 (In 2023, the number of people entering and leaving the country will exceed 424 million)», National Immigration Bureau of the People's Republic of China, 20 January 2024, https://www.gov.cn/lianbo/bumen/202401/content_6927225.htm

NG, S.I., LEE, J.A. and SOUTAR, G.N. (2007): «Tourists' intention to visit a country: The impact of cultural distance», *Tourism Management,* vol. 28 (6), pp. 1.497-1.506. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tourman.2006.11.005

OCHOA-GALVÁN, M. (2018): *Estrategias para Incrementar los Flujos de Turistas Chinos hacia México*. Doctoral Dissertation. Mexico, Michoacan University of Saint Nicholas of Hidalgo.

OSHRIYEH, O., GHAFFARI, M. and NEMATPOUR, M. (2022): «Lines in the sand: The perceived risks of traveling to a destination and its influence on tourist information seeking behavior», *International Journal of Tourism Cities*, vol. 8 (4), pp. 965-982. https://doi.org/10.1108/IJTC-07-2021-0138

PROMSIVAPALLOP, P. and KANNAOVAKUN, P. (2017): «A comparative assessment of destination image, travel risk perceptions and travel intention by young travellers across three ASEAN countries: A study of German students», *Asia Pacific Journal of Tourism Research*, vol. 22 (6), pp. 634-650. https://doi.org/10.1080/10941665.2017.1308391

QIN, L., FANG, E.S., LAI, I.K.W. and ABBAS, S.K. (2023): «Cultural distance and Chinese outbound tourism: Exploring the moderating effect of geographical distance», *Sustainability*, vol. 15 (2), 1689. https://doi.org/10.3390/su15021689

QUER, D. and PENG, J. (2022): «Chinese outbound tourism segmentation: A systematic review and research agenda», *Journal of China Tourism Research*, vol. 18 (4), pp. 778-808. https://doi.org/10.1080/19388160.2021.1966563

QUINTAL, V., LEE, J. and SOUTAR, G.N. (2010): «Risk, uncertainty and the theory of planned behavior: A tourism example», *Tourism Management,* vol. 31 (6), pp. 797-805. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tourman.2009.08.006

REISINGER, Y. and MAVONDO, F. (2005): «Travel anxiety and intentions to travel internationally: Implications of travel risk perception», *Journal of Travel Research,* vol. 43 (3), pp. 212-225. https://doi.org/10.1177/0047287504272017

ROSS, A. and ONWUEGBUZIE, A.J. (2012): «Prevalence of mixed methods research in mathematics education», *The Mathematics Educator*, vol. 22 (1), pp. 84-113. https://openjournals.libs.uga.edu/tme/article/view/1978

SHENKAR, O. (2001): «Cultural distance revisited: Towards a more rigorous conceptualization and measurement of cultural differences», *Journal of International Business Studies,* vol. 32 (3), pp. 519-535. https://doi.org/10.1057/palgrave.jibs.8490982

SOLARI, S. (2019): *La Política Pública ADS (Destino Turístico Aprobado) de la República Popular China con Argentina: C.A.B.A como Caso de Estudio*. National University of La Plata, Argentina, Degree's thesis.

SOLÍS, M. (2018): *El Turismo Chino en Argentina: Posicionamiento Estratégico y Políticas Turísticas*. National University of La Plata, Argentina, Degree's thesis.

SOLÍS, M. and ACOSTA, D. (2017): «El rol de China en la redefinición de los destinos turísticos: caso Argentina», *Revista Realidad, Tendencias y Desafíos en Turismo*, vol. 15 (1), pp. 10-26. https://revele.uncoma.edu.ar/index.php/condet/article/view/1813

SÖNMEZ, S.F. and GRAEFE, A.R. (1998): «Influence of terrorism risk on foreign tourism decisions», *Annals of Tourism Research,* 25(1): 112-144. https://doi.org/10.1016/S0160-7383(97)00072-8

SPARKS, B. and PAN, G.W. (2009): «Chinese Outbound tourists: Understanding their attitudes, constraints and use of information sources», *Tourism Management,* vol. 30 (4), pp. 483-494. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tourman.2008.10.014

SUNTIKUL, W., PRATT, S. and CHONG, Y.W.J. (2020): «Factors that influence Chinese outbound tourists' intention to consume local food», *Journal of China Tourism Research*, vol. 16 (2), pp. 230-247. https://doi.org/10.1080/19388160.2019.1625841

TUNG, V.W.S. and RITCHIE, J.R.B. (2011): «Exploring the essence of memorable tourism experiences», *Annals of Tourism Research*, vol. 38 (4), pp. 1.367-1.386. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.annals.2011.03.009

UM, S. and CROMPTON, J.L. (1992): «The roles of perceived inhibitors and facilitators in pleasure travel destination decisions», *Journal of Travel Research,* vol. 30 (3), pp. 18-25. https://doi.org/10.1177/004728759203000303

UN TOURISM (2024): *China recovers its position as top spender in 2023 as Asia and the Pacific reopens to tourism*, UN Tourism, News release, 04 June 2024. https://www.unwto.org/news/china-recovers-its-position-as-top-spender-in-2023-as-asia-and-the-pacific-reopens-to-tourism

UNWTO (2019): *Guidelines for the Success in the Chinese Outbound Tourism Market*. Madrid, UNWTO. https://doi.org/10.18111/9789284421138

UNWTO (2023): *Yearbook of Tourism Statistics, Data 2017-2021, 2023 Edition*. Madrid, UNWTO. https://www.e-unwto.org/doi/book/10.18111/9789284424139

VEGA, M. (2017): *Análisis del Perfil de Turista Chino y su Relación con la Atención de Turistas en Lima, Perú, 2017*. University of San Martín de Porres, Peru, Degree's thesis.

WANG, D., CHEN, Y., TUGUINAY, J. and YUAN, J.J. (2023): «The influence of perceived risks and behavioral intention: The case of Chinese international students», *Sage Open*, vol. 13 (2), pp. 1-17. https://doi.org/10.1177/21582440231183435

WANG, J., ZHENG, M., HUANG, Q. and WU, Z. (2021): «How does cultural distance affect tourists? Literature review and research prospects», *Tourism* and *Hospitality Prospects*, 5 (3), pp. 1-37. https://lydk.bisu.edu.cn/EN/10.12054/lydk.bisu.168

WEN, J. and HUANG, S. (2019): «The effects of push and pull travel motivations, personal values, and destination familiarity on tourist loyalty: A study of Chinese cigar tourists to Cuba», *Asia Pacific Journal of Tourism Research*, vol. 24 (8), pp. 805-821. https://doi.org/10.1080/10941665.2019.1635504

XINHUA (2019): «护照"含金量"极大提升、走出"国门"越来越方便 (The "gold content" of passports has greatly increased, and it is becoming more and more convenient to go abroad)», Xinhua News Agency, 25 September 2019. http://www.xinhuanet.com/politics/2019-09/25/c_1125039799.htm

YANG Y., LIU, H.B., LI, X. and HARRILL, R. (2018): «A shrinking world for tourists? Examining the changing role of distance factors in understanding destination choices», *Journal of Business Research*, vol. 92, pp. 350-359. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2018.08.001

YANG, C.L. and NAIR, V. (2014): «Risk perception study in tourism: Are we really measuring perceived risk?», *Procedia-Social* and *Behavioral Sciences*, vol. 144, pp. 322-327. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.sbspro.2014.07.302

YANG, Y., LIU, H. and LI, X. (2016): «The influences of national cultural distance on international destination choice of Japanese and Chinese residents», *Tourism Tribune*, vol. 31 (10), pp. 45-55. https://www.cabidigitallibrary.org/doi/full/10.5555/20163393148

YANG, Y., LIU, H. and LI, X. (2019): «The world is flatter? Examining the relationship between cultural distance and international tourist flows», *Journal of Travel Research*, vol. 58 (2), pp. 224-240. https://doi.org/10.1177/0047287517748780

YE, H., CHEN, S., LAW, R. and ZHANG, M. (2024): «Perceived risk of Chinese outbound tourists in the risky world», *Journal of China Tourism Research*, vol. 20 (1), pp. 70-89. https://doi.org/10.1080/19388160.2023.2178574

YING, T., WEI, W., WEN, J., WANG, L. and YE, S. (2018): «Chinese cigar tourists to Cuba: A motivation-based segmentation», *Journal of Destination Marketing* and *Management*, vol. 10, pp. 112-121. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jdmm.2018.07.003

ZHANG, J. and FANG, X. (2019): «Research on risk perception of terrorist attacks on overseas tourists in China — Analysis of social network based on risk culture theory», *Tourism Forum*, vol. 12 (2), pp. 41-48. http://183.64.251.164:85/article/detail.aspx?id=7001938557

ZHANG, Y. and PENG, Y. (2014): «Understanding travel motivations of Chinese tourists visiting Cairns, Australia», *Journal of Hospitality* and *Tourism Management*, vol. 21, pp. 44-53. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jhtm.2014.07.001

ZHAO, B. and TIAN, Z. (2008): «Mainland of China tourists' preference for cultural distance and development level of their travelling oversea destinations», *Chinese Journal of Management*, vol. 5 (6), pp. 896-902. http://manu68.magtech.com.cn/Jwk_glxb/EN/Y2008/V5/I6/869

Appendix A
SEMI-STRUCTURED SCRIPT (INTERVIEWEES OF GROUP 1)

- Personal information: age, gender, education level, profession, level of proficiency in Spanish.
- How many international trips have you made and to which countries? How many times have you traveled to Latin America? What were the destinations? When did you travel?
- What was your impression before arriving in Latin America?
- What was your impression after arriving in Latin America?
- Before arriving in Latin America, what did you think the cultural differences were?
- Did you think these cultural differences attracted you or were an obstacle? Could you say specifically how the cultural differences attracted you or made it difficult for you to travel?
- Did you consider that cultural differences entailed some risks? If so, give an example.
- After traveling through Latin America, how did you perceive cultural differences or similarities? Could you mention any changes you perceive in this regard?
- Could you rate the perceived cultural distance on a scale of 1 to 5? (1 means low cultural difference and 5 means high cultural difference): before the trip (1-2-3-4-5) and after the trip (1-2-3-4-5)
- Before traveling to Latin America, what were the risks you had perceived? What did you think about these perceived risks? Which was the most relevant and least relevant risk for you?
- Did you take any measures to reduce these perceived risks? Give an example.
- Do you think there is any change in perceived risk after arriving in Latin America? If so, give an example.
- What were your motivations for traveling to Latin America? Did you think that some characteristics of the destination attracted you to travel? If yes, please indicate which ones.
- In your opinion, what were the obstacles to traveling to Latin America?
- If you were to revisit Latin America, what would be your motivations?
- After traveling, how is your overall satisfaction with the trip? Specifically, what aspects are you not satisfied with?
- After traveling, have you had any change in attitude about Latin America or a Latin American country? If yes, could you give some examples?
- Has this trip had any influence on you? If yes, could you give some examples?
- Would you like to recommend Latin America as a travel destination? Why?
- Will you revisit Latin America? Why? When will it be?

- Finally, what word do you associate with Chinese outbound tourism in Latin America? Why?

Appendix B
SEMI-STRUCTURED SCRIPT (INTERVIEWEES OF GROUPS 2 AND 3)

- Personal information: age, gender, education level, profession, level of proficiency in Spanish.
- Do you have international travel experience?
- How many international trips have you made and to which countries? (only for those with international travel experience).
- What is your impression of Latin America?
- In your opinion, what are the cultural differences between China and Latin America?
- Do you think these cultural differences attract you or could be an obstacle to travel to Latin America? Could you say specifically how cultural differences attract you or would hinder you in your decision to travel?
- Do you consider that cultural differences entail some risks? If so, give an example.
- If you were to travel in Latin America, what risks do you perceive? What do you think about these perceived risks? What is the most relevant and least relevant risk for you?
- How do these perceived risks affect your decision to travel to Latin America?
- If you were to travel to Latin America in the future, what would be your motivations? Do you think that some characteristics of the destination attract you? If so, please indicate which ones.
- In your opinion, what are the obstacles to traveling to Latin America?
- If you do not intend to travel to Latin America, what are the reasons?
- Finally, what word do you associate with Chinese outbound tourism in Latin America? Why?

Appendix C
QUESTIONNAIRE (QUANTITATIVE STUDY)

1) **Please rate your level of agreement with the following statements about Latin America:**

	1 Strongly disagree	2 Disagree	3 Neutral	4 Agree	5 Strongly agree
I am interested in Latin America					
I am interested in considering Latin America as a travel destination					
I have a plan to travel to Latin America					

2) Please rate your level of agreement with the following statement: "The biggest differences I perceive between China and Latin America are…":

	1 Strongly disagree	2 Disagree	3 Neutral	4 Agree	5 Strongly agree
Language					
Food					
Values					
Lifestyle					
Customs and traditions					
History					
Celebration of festivals					
Art styles					

3) Please rate your level of agreement with the following statement about possible concerns related to the perceived risk in Latin America: "If I travel through Latin America, I am worried about…":

	1 Strongly disagree	2 Disagree	3 Neutral	4 Agree	5 Strongly agree
Communication with locals					
Adaptation to lifestyle					
Understanding					
Adaptation to food					
Local people are not friendly					

4) How would you rate your level of Spanish language proficiency?

(1) I don't understand it or speak it.
(2) I understand it and speak it a little.
(3) I understand it and speak it at a basic level.
(4) I understand it and I speak it.
(5) I understand it and speak it very fluently.

5) Have you traveled abroad?

_____

If yes, how many countries have you visited?

_____

Finally, could you tell us some general information about yourself?

6) Age:

_____

7) Gender:

_____

8) Educational level:
(1) Elementary education.
(2) High school.
(3) University education (graduate).
(4) University education (Master's degree).
(5) Doctorate (PhD).

9) Income level:
(1) No income.
(2) Less than 2,500 yuan/month.
(3) 2,500-5,000 yuan/month.
(4) 5,001-10,000 yuan/month.
(5) 10,001-15,000 yuan/month.
(6) 15,001-20,000 yuan/month.
(7) 20,001-50,000 yuan/month.
(8) More than 50,000 yuan/month.