CHINESE OUTBOUND TOURISM. STATE-OF-THE-ART IN RESEARCH AND FUTURE AGENDA

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I. INTRODUCTION AND METHODS

The articles analysing the Chinese outbound tourism create a rich and varied field of knowledge. To facilitate further research, it is necessary to synthesize current and emerging trends to understand the contributions in this field of knowledge. As such, this research aims to enrich the academic literature on tourism through a review of current articles published studying Chinese Outbound tourism, paying particular attention to the geographical perspective. In order to offer a state-of-the-art review, two working questions have been established:

1) Which research lines and themes have been studied regarding the Chinese outbound tourism?
2) From a geographical perspective, what are the major research gaps that can be addressed in the future?

The data sources used were tourism academic journals and only have been considered research articles. Four rankings of tourism magazines have been used: The Social Science Citation Index and the rankings of Hall (2011), McKercher et al. (2006), Ryan (2005) and Pechlaner et al. (2004). Following the model of Jin and Wang (2016), we have selected 15 journals that were included in three of the four rankings. In addition, we added the *Journal of China Tourism Research*, because it was the only magazine which had Chinese tourism as its main focus. Subsequently, it has been established a criterion for inclusion and exclusion based on a first review of the content of the articles (Briner and Denyer, 2012). The exclusion criteria were formulated from the research questions of this study and articles that only studied the econometric demand or do not address the topic of the Chinese tourism directly were removed. In this study, the Chinese outbound tourism is understood as tourism from

Mainland China to any other destination. Studies on outbound tourism exclusively from Hong Kong, Macao or Taiwan have been omitted. Studies on demand forecasts following econometric models have also been excluded because they provide little knowledge of Chinese tourism as a social phenomenon. Finally, articles focusing on domestic Chinese tourism have been excluded as well. After applying the above criteria, a total of 124 articles have been selected for an in-depth analysis.

II. RESULTS

Approximately 33% of the articles selected are based on studies that do not analyse any particular destination but attempt to understand the general characteristics of Chinese tourism. These articles provide an understanding about political and economic contexts, legislations on tourism, socio-economic determinants of tourism and demographic characteristics of the population. There are also contributions that analyse the tourist behaviour establishing relations with modern and traditional Chinese values, motivations in relation to Chinese cultural elements and impacts of tourism on Chinese society. Finally, these articles have also analysed aspects of the tourism industry and proposed methodologies and models to study the tourist behaviour. These contributions generate a macro-context that defines the intrinsic characteristics of this source market. The review of the literature allows us to understand that the Chinese outbound market is evolving and in a first phase of growth, some of the results are not static and will vary according to the changes that are taking place in China today. For example, we can see some of the new patterns in the dynamics of tourism: there is an increasing interest in independent travel; tourists who have already visited several destinations and prefer increased immersion into the local culture; and in recent years it has been identified a growing number of tourist segments with different preferences, motivations and travel expectations.

This literature review shows that there is a large community of researchers trying to understand the Chinese outbound tourism regarding specific destinations: approximately 67% of the selected articles are case studies. These case studies intend both to explain the phenomenon of Chinese tourism in a particular destination and to draw more general conclusions which can be extrapolated to various destinations. These studies seek to know the profile of the tourist, their travel motivations, their experiences, and the impacts of the tourism activity. According to the analysed articles, firstly, researchers have been interested by the experience previous to the trip: studying sources of information, destination choice factors, motivations, and tourism images. Secondly, researchers have studied the experiences in the destination: shopping, various leisure activities, and catering and accommodation issues. Moreover, researchers have developed studies on the impacts of tourism: satisfaction with the trip, learning from the tourism experience, and impacts on the local community. Finally, researchers have been concerned with understanding the features of the tourism industry at the destination. It is noteworthy to mention that not in all destinations have been studied for all these aforementioned elements. For example, impacts on the local community have been focused on research related to Hong Kong, which is a destination that receive a greater number of mainland Chinese tourists and their presence provokes negative reactions among residents. These case studies are circumstantial and allow us to understand the Chinese tourism in specific destinations.

Tourism is a multidisciplinary field of research and knowledge. It stems from disciplines such as Geography, Sociology, Psychology, Economics, Political Science, and Philosophy, among others (Tribe and Liburd, 2016; Benckendorff and Zehrer, 2013). The Geography of Tourism is centrally concerned with the relationship between tourism and space and the human and natural environment in which this tourism activity is developed (Williams and Lew, 2015). The Geography of Tourism helps to understand tourism as a phenomenon explained as binary relations between human/physical and applied/theoretical knowledge (Michael Hall, 2013) and paying particular attention to the tourism management (Hall and Page, 2009). The present study reveals that none of the reviewed articles have used conceptual frameworks from Geography or Geography of Tourism. In addition, previous reviews of the Chinese outbound tourism literature have noticed the absence of work with an approach from Geography (Jin and Wang, 2016). After analysing the articles published in the last ten years, we try to offer possible research areas taking into account the geographical perspective to supply these shortcomings.

First, it should be noted that there are some international destinations absent of study. The most analysed destination countries are Australia, Macao, the United States, Hong Kong and Taiwan and the most studied regions are Asia, Oceania, America and Europe in this order. Several research reports have noted that the destinations to which the Chinese tourist target are first in Asia, followed by Europe, America, Oceania and Africa (Ipsos, 2016, The Wall Street Journal, 2015). The places with the largest Chinese tourists' expenditure are the United States, Europe and Japan. These considerations allow us to point out that European countries have been under-studied and should be positive to pay greater attention to the phenomenon of Chinese tourism on that continent. France and Spain are countries placed first and third in the tourism ranking by number of visitors, though hardly there have been developed studies on Chinese tourism in both countries. Similarly, Japan is a destination that has been under-studied although it is one of the most visited destinations for Chinese tourists.

Second, another aspect that may be considered from the Geography of Tourism perspective is how the tourism activity is distributed in a specific destination. Out of the 124 articles analysed, only two of them offer insights into the geographical distribution of the tourism in a destination, while in all the other articles this element is omitted. Li and Stepchenkova (2012) have drawn a map of the United States and the levels of consciousness of the United States territory for potential Chinese tourists. Ryan and Gu (2007) tried to understand how Chinese tourists planned their time drawing routes in California (USA) and its results show the dispersion and concentration of the preferred routes. This present article allows us to state that the routes, itineraries and geographical distribution of the tourism activity (regarding the Chinese tourism) in a destination is a research gap. We suggest that future studies might try to clarify how the Chinese tourism is distributed in the territory of a particular destination. The geographical distribution of tourism is key to understand the distribution of benefits from the tourism and this is an aspect that can be studied in-depth in order to manage the destination (Lojo, 2016).

Finally, it has barely been studied the perceived authenticity respect the cultural heritage of the destinations (Nguyen and Cheung, 2016). Images of places and heritage are critical in the cultural tourism since tourism demand originates from individual and collective perceptions of particular and distinct places and cultures (Williams and Lew, 2015). Tourism

Geography can try to understand how the Chinese tourism is affected by cultural constructs about a destination, the theming of the urban landscape, and the relationship between authenticity, heritage and culture. All these aspects have not been properly researched on Chinese outbound tourism and can contribute to understand this source market.

III. CONCLUSIONS

In this article we have identified existing study areas of Chinese outbound tourism research following a systematic review to provide a current state-of-the-art. We have seen that the efforts in research have contributed substantially to understand this tourism and have focused on providing understandings of the tourism context, tourist behaviour, and tourism industry. Researchers have considered relevant to understand the dynamics of this source market and also the impacts produced by this tourism among the local community in destinations. Depending on whether they are general studies or studies applied to a specific destination, the articles investigate the macro-context or case studies about destinations. In addition, the large number of contributions presented about this topic informs us that this is a fertile field of research that has attracted the interest from the Academia. The temporal distribution of publications indicates that this is a topic of growing importance. The results suggest that Chinese tourism management involves knowing the Chinese context and tourist behaviour to ensure a satisfactory development of the activity for tourists and sustainable for destinations and its residents.

Finally, we have found that the geographical perspective is mostly absent in the existing research on the analysed articles. We have seen that Europe and Japan are under-studied in relation to the high number of Chinese tourists they attract. In addition, we have proposed future research areas that are directed to understand the relationships between geographical areas, culture, and tourism. Similarly, understanding itineraries, routes, and stops through the territory can help managing tourism. Tourism is studied from a wide range of scientific disciplines and research on Chinese tourism can be developed using the geographical perspective, since it has hardly been considered previously.