

© *Journal of International Students*  
Volume 11, Issue 1 (2021), pp. 60-80  
ISSN: 2162-3104 (Print), 2166-3750 (Online)  
doi: 10.32674/jis.v11i1.1670  
ojed.org/jis

## **The Touristudent: How International Academic Mobility Can Contribute to Tourism**

Mateus José Alves Pinto  
Eduardo Henrique Moscardi  
Ewerton Lemos Gomes  
Marcia Shizue Massukado Nakatani  
*Federal University of Paraná, Brazil*

---

### **ABSTRACT**

This research aims to analyze how the activities and motivations of international students resemble those of a tourist. The survey-based study of international students enrolled in academic mobility programs in Curitiba (Brazil) demonstrated that the main motivation for students to participate in international mobility relates more to personal motivation (i.e., cultural exchange) than to academic purposes. International students also acknowledged that they enjoyed the city's tourist attractions and overall services. The motivations for choosing Curitiba are mainly the quality of life and the perceived safety of the city. Based on how students visit attractions and utilize tourist services, we propose the idea of the touristudent. Understanding international students' motivations for mobility and their destination choice reinforces the significance that academic mobility programs have for tourism, and the implications of these findings are discussed for the tourism sector in Curitiba.

**Keywords:** Brazil, international academic mobility, international students, student mobility, touristudent, tourism

---

The number of international students in mobility doubled to reach 4,056,680 students from 2000 to 2013. One out five (850,000) are regionally mobile international students “who are seeking global education while staying close to their home country” (Choudaha, 2017, p. 830). According to the UNESCO Institute for Statistics (2020), the total outbound internationally mobile tertiary

students studying abroad in 2017 was 5,309,240. Between 2012 and 2017, Brazil hosted 94,836 international students. These students accounted for 9.86% of all international mobility in Latin America and the Caribbean. Although not representative on a global scale (only 0.38% of all international students), those numbers are significant to the country, justifying the growing significance of international academic mobility (Krainski et al., 2019; Prolo et al., 2019; Soares et al., 2019; Taschetto & Rosa, 2019).

The largest inbound cohorts who enrolled in Brazilian institutions during 2016 came from Spanish- and Portuguese-speaking countries, and the top 10 source countries were: Colombia (10%); Peru (4%); Argentina, Angola, and Mexico (3% each); and Germany, Spain, Portugal, Bolivia, and Chile (2% each; Robles & Bhandari, 2018). However, little research has examined the factors that draw international students to Brazil's higher education institutions.

The Brazilian Ministry of Tourism (Ministério do Turismo [MTUR], 2010b) uses a wide range of terms synonymously to define travel with educational purposes: educational tourism, exchange tourism, scientific-educational tourism, university tourism, pedagogical tourism, scientific tourism, student tourism, and study tourism. Researchers, on the other hand, use the term academic tourism (Amaro et al., 2019; Bento, 2014; Rodríguez et al., 2012). According to the Brazilian Tourism Thesaurus (Rejowski, 2018), rather than academic tourism, "exchange tourism" relates more to sociocultural impacts and cultural exchange while traveling.

Since 2010, academic tourism has been a priority segment for Brazilian international tourism (MTUR, 2010a). It "consists of tourist movement generated by learning activities and programs and experiences for purposes of qualification, knowledge expansion and personal and professional development" (MTUR, 2010b, p. 15). Academic mobility programs are one of the main modalities for strengthening the internationalization process of universities around the world (de Oliveira & de Freitas, 2016) and are the most visible element of this process (Silva et al., 2013). Studying abroad is also an important element for knowledge transfer from destinations to places of origin, since, upon returning to their home institutions, the students bring with them information, practices, habits, and values that were acquired during their experience abroad (Coelli, 2014; Lombas, 2017; Sheller & Urry, 2006). Above all, leisure activities are not able to define all tourist motivations for travel, as tourism can manifest itself at different levels and for several reasons. Therefore, the present study fills this research gap by describing how the activities and motivations of students in international academic mobility resemble those of a tourist (Amaro et al., 2019; Jamaludin et al., 2018; Roberson, 2018).

Indeed, research on international students takes place from a myriad of academic fields and theoretical perspectives, including education, sociology, economy, migration studies, and other related disciplines. Therefore, one of the contributions of this article is to understand the international student also as a tourist—a touristudent—using a tourism perspective to analyze international academic mobility within a Brazilian destination. Through an empirical setting, we conducted a survey with international students enrolled in academic mobility

programs in Curitiba, Brazil. In short, this article offers an understanding of the motivations that led students to participate in academic mobility and to choose Curitiba as their destination, along with the students' demographic information. Finally, we present practical implications of the touristudents' contribution to the tourism sector in Curitiba.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **International Academic Mobility and Academic Tourism**

The internationalization of higher education has been a subject in educational research (Dolby & Rahman, 2008), emerging as a separate field during recent decades (Bedenlier et al., 2017). Studies on the internationalization of higher education have had three phases. During the early years, studies focused on sociopolitical concerns such as policy analysis. Economic priorities then led studies from the 1990s to the early 2000s. International student migration has been a more in-depth field of migration studies since Lejeune's (2002) research. Finally, the focus changed to academic and sociocultural aspects of international education, such as international students' experiences at their destinations (Dolby & Rahman, 2008).

Understanding the changes in the student profile and needs, Choudaha (2017) analyzed the shifts in international academic mobility through the lens of three waves between 1999 and 2020. Wave I (1999–2006) had its origins in the search for highly qualified professionals (talents) focusing on science, technology, and engineering (or the actual STEM curriculum) to generate cutting edge research in the host institution. Wave II (2006–2013) began during the global financial crisis, which drove institutions' efforts to recruit international students who could afford to pay for their education. This fact also changed the demand for programs, which became concentrated in the business field. In its turn, Wave III (2013–2020) originated from demographic changes and the emergence of new destinations for international students, pointing an increased market share concurrence that drove institutions' innovation and new modes of programs, including transnational and online education (Choudaha, 2017). International students' displacement for academic purposes appears in Wave III including both short stays (meetings and visits at universities and participation in scientific events) and long stays (higher education courses and research training).

Given the scenario of international academic mobility, academic tourism is, in some ways, part of it, since the student or scholar moves from their home country to an international institution motivated by academic purposes (Mota, 2009). Rodríguez et al. (2012, p. 1583) suggested that academic tourism is "a distinct type of tourism that would include any stays in higher education institutions in places outside their [the students'] usual environment," so the student could complete degree-level studies or attend language courses organized by these institutions. Coelli (2014) identified three phases of academic tourism. The first is the pre-exchange phase when the student prepares for the trip. It includes, for example, decisions about which destination and university to go to,

the application process, financial planning, visa issues, and still, the emotional mindset about traveling abroad. The second phase, named trans-exchange, is the period when the student enrolls and participates in the mobility program. The post-exchange is the moment of return. In this last phase, the students seek reintegration into their pre-exchange daily life, and the accumulated experience reveals a new role for them in their society of origin (Coelli, 2014).

To this end, the present study focuses on international students enrolled in higher education programs offered by universities located in Curitiba, Brazil. These students remain for a period that normally varies from 5 to 10 months (equivalent to an academic semester or year, respectively), and in other cases can include completing the full undergraduate, master's or doctoral degree in Brazil. Some universities in Curitiba also accept higher education students to attend language courses or internships or to participate in research projects. This research considers both undergraduate and graduate students as well as students coming to other programs as international academic mobility students, as they are in the university milieu.

### **International Academic Mobility in Brazil**

The Brazilian National Education Plan, approved in 2014, has one strategy to consolidate programs, projects, and actions that aim to internationalize Brazilian research and graduate degrees (Nunes & Silva, 2018). Nunes and Silva (2018) stated that Brazilian higher education internationalization is “a goal to be pursued, with legal support, and not just an expectation” (p. 88). Nevertheless, the internationalization of Brazilian universities has proceeded slowly and, in general, has been concentrated in public universities (Silva et al., 2013). Conversely, the country has a strong tradition of domestic mobility due to its geographic dimensions and the lack of substantial investments in internationalization programs (Martinez, 2018).

In the past, Brazil has had significant programs for sending undergraduate students and scholars to renowned universities around the world. One example was Science without Borders (Ciência sem Fronteiras [CSF]), which existed between 2011 and 2014. However, even CSF received some criticism, mostly regarding its aims to qualify only professionals instead of developing research projects. Besides that, CSF reinforced the idea that only countries from the Northern Hemisphere hold knowledge and development, and therefore Brazilian students ought to study abroad (Martinez, 2018). According to Martinez (2018), this notion is common in higher education systems of Latin American countries. The internationalization of peripheral countries ends up fostering European and Anglo-Saxon universities and diminishing the attraction of more international scholars to study and conduct research within Latin America (Martinez, 2018; Silva et al., 2013).

This phenomenon contrasts with the reality of international academic mobility in Europe. The European Union (EU) has developed several programs to stimulate mobility inside the continent, mainly after the Bologna Process. One of the series of ministerial meetings and agreements between European countries

was to improve the internationalization of European higher education and, thus, foster educational, professional, personal, and cultural exchange between the community's countries. Erasmus is the most widespread program of the EU. It started in 1987 and has already facilitated mobility experiences for approximately 3 million students among European universities (Lesjak et al., 2015).

The Erasmus program has made considerable contributions to students' individual, academic and professional development. Mizikaci and Arslan (2019) interviewed 12 students from public and private universities in Ankara (Turkey) who attended Erasmus between 2015 and 2017. They asked questions about the students' personal, professional, and academic development. On a personal level, this program supported the students' self-esteem, as well as facilitated the adaptation and development of social and leadership skills. Regarding professional development, the students identified that they had the opportunity to turn theoretical knowledge into practice, to learn new and different techniques, and to observe practice sessions from other disciplines. Lastly, one of the primary development areas of the program was academics, wherein the students mentioned acquiring new knowledge and skills, learning new concepts and research processes, and improving English language skills in their field of study and everyday life.

Hereupon, academic mobility does not exist only for study purposes. It also provides means for the student to know and experience the routine of another country (Tamião, 2010). Sebben (2009) claimed that if someone goes to study, work, and live daily life in another country, then this person is doing an exchange since the cultural exchange is the relationship between different people regardless of the activities performed by the individual. Therefore, exchange depends more on the willingness for intercultural learning than on the mere displacement of the individual (Sebben, 2009).

### **Motivations for International Academic Mobility**

International academic mobility has three main motivations: professional, academic, and personal (Lesjak et al., 2015; de Oliveira & de Freitas, 2016; Silva et al., 2013). In a study with Brazilian and foreign undergraduate and graduate students and Brazilian university scholars, de Oliveira and de Freitas (2016) identified activities related to each of the motivations. The professional motivations include a drive to an international career, an easier transition into the labor market, a search for professional opportunities or professional enhancement, and an alternative to an internship experience. The academic motivations include improving language learning, upgrading curriculum, meeting mandatory requirements, and desiring to study at an internationally renowned university. Personal motivations focus on discovering another culture, achieving personal maturity, facing a personal challenge, getting to know oneself, broadening one's worldview, braving the new and the different, and for leisure, fun and travel purposes.

Lesjak et al. (2015) identified 14 motives for Erasmus students to participate in a mobility program, including professional, academic, and personal

motivations. The motives for Erasmus students are: to improve my academic knowledge; make new contacts in the field of studies; receive academic support for my thesis; experience different educational system; meet requirements; have a semester away from home; improve a foreign language; learn about different cultures; enhance employment opportunities; meet new people; grow personally; experience European identity; experience something new; and take advantage of an Erasmus grant. The study also identified 12 motives for Erasmus students to choose the destination. The Erasmus motives for choosing a particular destination are: the popularity; richness in culture, arts, and history; event offerings; low cost; low tourist profile; ease of access; safeness and security; rich natural attractions and sights; interesting nightlife; familiar language and lifestyle; sustainable and ecological living opportunities; and high living standards. According to Lesjak et al. (2015), personal growth and entertainment were the main factors for a student to participate in the academic mobility program and to choose the destination.

In another study, Silva et al. (2013) conducted five in-depth interviews with foreign students from Germany, Austria, Chile, France, and The Netherlands all studying in Brazil. The authors identified that academic aspects, personal aspects, and the destination image are important factors for students to enroll in mobility programs. The cultural characteristics attributed to Brazil—friendliness, people festivities, pleasant weather, fun, and entertainment—all connect with personal motivations. Academic motivations were also intertwined with foreign students' knowledge about Brazilian universities since the interviewees mentioned that they had friends or colleagues who had attended the same university in Brazil. Another factor was the ease of mobility created by the agreements between home and destination universities, which facilitated student decision-making. Moreover, the researchers identified components of Brazil's destination image related to culture, people, and typical elements of the country in the interviewees' discourse. Based on these findings, international academic mobility should be associated with destination image, bearing in mind that "both academic mobility and destination country image also reflect on how each of these themes may be relevant to or influenced by the other" (Silva et al., 2013, p. 249).

The commonality in these studies is the cultural motivation to participate in international mobility programs (Sebben, 2009). In de Oliveira and de Freitas (2016) motivations mentioned included "know another culture" and "brave the new and the different." In Silva et al. (2013) when asked about how culture relates to the destination image, participants responded with reasons such as "friendliness and people festivities," "pleasant weather," and "fun and entertainment." The desire for cultural experiences also showed up in the Erasmus students' motivations such as their desire for "rich natural attractions and sights" and to "meet new people" (Lesjak et al., 2015).

Given these findings, motivations connected to vacation and travel (i.e., tourism) emerge as drivers for many students to pursue these programs. In research about motivation, expectation, and experience conducted by Salyers et al. (2015), "Some students discussed the value of gaining course credits while also having the opportunity to travel as a strong motivator" for global learning

experiences (p. 372). This may benefit not only the creation of policies for academic mobility but also for tourism (Lesjak et al., 2015).

Research involving Erasmus students demonstrates the relation between international academic mobility and tourist activity (Amaro et al., 2019; Roberson, 2018). According to Amaro et al. (2019), the behavior of international students is similar to a leisure tourist. This fact is important to national and regional tourism authorities mostly because these Erasmus students usually travel to several tourist attractions within the country. During these trips, students' costs include accommodation, food, transportation, and souvenirs. It is worth noting that in Roberson's (2018) study of travel experiences, Erasmus participants identified themselves as budget travelers. Furthermore, many international students hosted friends and family for visits during their academic year in the host destination, and some also traveled back after the program ended (Amaro et al., 2019). Likewise, Jamaludin et al. (2018, p. 935) counted that "international students share similar characteristics with tourists" because the experiences with the destination will influence their destination loyalty, or the intention to return.

## **METHOD**

This study adopted a descriptive approach to analyze the profile of international students enrolled in academic mobility programs in Curitiba, their motivations for mobility and destination choice. The review of literature on international academic mobility and academic tourism (Choudaha, 2017; Coelli, 2014; Dolby & Rahman, 2008; Rodríguez et al., 2012) and motivations for mobility (Amaro et al., 2019; de Oliveira & de Freitas, 2016; Lesjak et al., 2015; Silva et al., 2013) set up the analytical bases to understand international students' specificities and similarities to leisure tourists. This study is an exploratory effort to consider international students as tourists—therefore called touristudents—since an epistemological perspective of tourism (Panosso Netto, 2005; Triviños, 1987) can also enlighten the dynamics of international students, broadening its research scope.

### **Sample**

The city of Curitiba, in the southern region of Brazil, is the capital of the state of Paraná. The city is considered a national and international reference in urban planning (De Bona et al., 2016), quality of life, innovation, and education (Fryszman et al., 2019). Nowadays, the city's technological park, industries, and start-up environment are the main forces regarding local efforts to develop Curitiba as a smart city (Instituto Municipal de Turismo de Curitiba [IMT], 2013). These elements created a socioeconomic environment that encouraged the IMT to come up with academic tourism as a target market segment, fostering Curitiba to become an "educating city." This visitor segmentation aims to integrate several initiatives related to education occurring independently in the city to make Curitiba a destination choice for international students.

The sample selection was based on accessibility and convenience (Pires et al., 2006; Veal, 2011) since one of the authors is a volunteer at the Exchange Students Network Association of Curitiba (REI Curitiba). REI Curitiba is a nonprofit civil association founded in 2012, whose mission is supporting and promoting cultural and educational integration for international students through projects and events during their stay in Curitiba (REI Curitiba, 2013).

The organization is a partner of the two largest universities in the city: Federal University of Paraná (UFPR) and Pontifical Catholic University of Paraná (PUC-PR). Besides, exchange students from other universities in Curitiba—the Federal Technological University of Paraná (UTFPR), Positivo University (UP), and FAE University Center—also connect with REI. Due to legal reasons, the higher education institutions do not give REI a list of exchange students who are coming to the city. Thus, international students get in touch with REI through suggestions of friends who have previously studied in Curitiba, by recommendations from the universities, or by searching and finding the organization on the internet.

Given this scenario, this sample does not comprehend all international students enrolled in academic mobility in the city, but instead those who were part of REI's social media groups. We published a survey questionnaire created with Google Forms on groups managed by REI Curitiba between 2011 and 2019 (nine groups on Facebook and one on WhatsApp). These groups include international students and local volunteers of the organization, with a total of 2,115 members.

## **Instrument**

The questionnaire had 20 open-ended or multiple-choice questions divided into three sections. The first section collected students' demographic data: the year they came to Curitiba; which educational program they participated in; length of the program; main activities performed during mobility; which university they attended; major studied; if the student received a grant; home university; nationality; birth year; and gender.

The second section focused on motivations for academic mobility and destination choice (in this case the choice of Curitiba). Since international inbound mobility in Brazil proceeds slowly (Silva et al., 2013) and the geographic dimensions of the country allow different educational systems between universities (Martinez, 2018), we did not have a national parameter to measure the motivations. That is why we replicated the motivational statements from Lesjak et al.'s (2015) study (as detailed in the Literature Review), which derived from the Erasmus Student Network Survey 2010, a reference mobility program worldwide. The use of the same statements of the Erasmus (2010) survey for measuring motivation for mobility and destination choice reinforced the internal consistency of the questionnaire since an alternative way to minimize validity problems is to use previously documented measurement scales (Baker et al., 1994). We modified some statements, as the context of inquiry did not include Erasmus students. The motivation "experience European identity" was excluded and "take advantage of Erasmus grant" was replaced with "take advantage of a grant"; "very popular" with "it is a popular destination"; "easy accessible" with



“easy access to and from other cities”; and “is sustainable and ecological” with “the city is sustainable and ecological.”

The respondents rated the importance of 13 items for motivations for mobility and 12 items for destination choice, using a 5-point Likert scale (1 = *of little importance*; 5 = *very important*). Cronbach’s alpha coefficient tested the internal consistency of the scale. The coefficient for motivations for mobility was (.88) for the 13 items and (.87) for the 12 items for destination choice motivations, which evidenced values above acceptable level (Hair et al., 2005). The questionnaire was available to respondents in Portuguese, Spanish, and English, so each participant could choose the language they felt most comfortable with to answer the questionnaire.

The last section inquired about the students’ tourist experience in Curitiba. We asked which tourist attractions the students visited; the events they attended; which tourist services they used while they were in the city; and what was the first thing that came to their minds when they thought about Curitiba.

## **Data Analysis**

We used Microsoft Excel and SPSS Statistics (Version 20) to analyze the data obtained with the questionnaires (available from April 26 to May 5, 2019). The tests indicated that the distribution of all the variables was not normal. Therefore, the use of nonparametric data analysis demonstrated the presence or absence of differences between groups.

## **RESULTS**

The first section of the questionnaire shed some light on the characteristics of the international students who came to Curitiba between 2011 and 2019 (see Table 1). The sample comprised of 103 respondents. All of them were born between 1980 and 2000, with 61.17% females ( $n = 63$ ), 38.83% males ( $n = 40$ ), and a mean age of 25 years (range 19–39 years old). Although this gender representativeness does not confirm the Brazilian inbound internationally mobile students (in 2017 comprised of 43.7% females and 56.3% males; UNESCO, 2020), it is similar to the findings of Lesjak et al. (2015).

The main motivations considered to be “very important” to participate in international academic mobility were to grow personally, to learn about different cultures, to experience something new, to meet new people, and to improve a foreign language. The motive “it was compulsory” had the lowest value, which shows that international academic mobility programs are not usually mandatory activities in most universities’ curriculum.

The Kruskal-Wallis test for independent samples indicated a statistically significant difference between males and females in two motivations for mobility: to have a semester away from home ( $p = .016$ ) and to improve a foreign language ( $p = .022$ ). The test also confirmed the existence of a statistically significant difference between European and Latin American students in one motivation for mobility: academic support to my thesis ( $p = .039$ ). The mean score for

respondents who came from Latin America was 2.51, whereas European respondents' mean score on the scale was 1.95.

**Table 1: Participant Demographics**

Demographic	<i>n</i>	%
Gender		
Female	63	61.17
Male	40	38.83
Home continent		
Europe	55	53.39
Latin America	42	40.77
North America	5	4.85
Africa	1	0.99
Program duration		
Up to one academic semester	69	67.00
Up to one academic year	17	16.50
More than one academic year	17	16.50
University in Curitiba		
UFPR	53	51.45
PUC-CR	39	37.86
UTFPR	6	5.82
UP	3	2.91
FAE	1	0.99
ILAPEO	1	0.99
Type of degree		
Bachelor's	67	65.04
Master's	25	24.27
PhD	2	1.95
Missing	9	8.73
Study topic (major)		
Business	15	13.51
Architecture and Urbanism	12	10.81
Engineering	12	10.81
Design	6	5.41
Sociology	6	5.41
Medicine	6	5.41
Other	46	41.44
Missing	8	7.20
Grants		
With scholarship	77	74.75
Without scholarship	26	25.55

*Note.* *N* = 103, except Study topic *N* = 111, due to multiple subjects. UFPR = Federal University of Paraná; PUC-CR = Pontifical Catholic University of Paraná; UTFPR = Federal Technological University of Paraná; UP = Positivo University; FAE = FAE University Center; ILAPEO = Latin American Institute for Dental Research and Teaching

**Table 2: The Rankings, Means, and Standard Deviations for Motivations for Mobility (N = 103)**

Motivation	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Grow personally	4.49	1.03
To learn about different cultures	4.44	1.00
Experience something new	4.41	1.10
Meet new people	4.31	1.10
Improve a foreign language	4.20	1.21
Experience a different educational system	3.95	1.31
To improve my academic knowledge	3.77	1.27
To have a semester away from home	3.66	1.47
New contacts in the field of studies	3.44	1.29
Enhance employment opportunities	3.37	1.42
Take advantage of a grant	2.79	1.65
Academic support for my thesis	2.33	1.40
Compulsory	1.82	1.16

Considering the type of degree, undergraduate students and master's students represented 89.31% of respondents, and the main purpose for mobility was the same for both groups: to grow personally (undergraduate's mean = 4.57 and for master's mean = 4.16). Opposite to what de Oliveira and de Freitas (2016) showed in their study, this research did not find significant discrepancies between the groups. The other four major motives for mobility were the same for both groups, although in different rankings: to learn about different cultures (second for undergraduates and third for master's students); to experience something new (third and fourth, respectively); to meet new people (fourth and fifth); and to improve a foreign language (fifth and second).

Further analysis between students coming from Europe and Latin America showed that for the Latin Americans, the motivation to improve academic knowledge equals the number of answers to improve a foreign language. Thus, due to cultural familiarity and idiomatic ease, it is possible to imply that Latin American students can focus more on academic studies.

Despite the differences between groups, the major motivations for international students to enroll in mobility and study abroad programs remain nonacademic. This acknowledges the finding of Lesjak et al. (2015) since motives related to personal growth and cultural exchange were also the main factors in the decision-making process for participating in international academic mobility among Erasmus students. It is worth noting that two participants spontaneously listed "party and travel" as their main activity during mobility!

The top five motivations for choosing Curitiba as a destination for mobility were the city's safety and security, high living standard, easy access to and from other cities, rich natural attractions and sights, and familiar language and lifestyle. The least important motivation was the city offering a lot of events.

**Table 3: Rankings, Means, and Standard Deviations for the Motivations for Destination ( $N = 103$ )**

Motivation	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Safe and secure	3.29	1.26
High living standard	3.23	1.37
Easy access to and from other cities	3.20	1.32
Rich natural attractions and sights	3.13	1.30
Familiar language and lifestyle	3.07	1.37
Not very expensive to live in	3.05	1.22
The city is sustainable and ecological	2.93	1.26
Rich in culture, arts, and history	2.84	1.30
Interesting nightlife	2.73	1.23
It's a popular destination	2.66	1.42
Yet to be discovered by tourists	2.60	1.29
Offers a lot of events	2.58	1.21

For destination choice motivations, the Kruskal-Wallis test for independent samples indicated a statistically significant difference between males and females in two destination choice motivations: safe and secure ( $p = 0.042$ ) and sustainable and ecological ( $p = 0.049$ ). The mean score for male respondents was 2.98 and 2.63, whereas female respondents' mean score on the scale was higher, respectively 3.49 and 3.13.

The test indicated no differences between European and Latin American students, although the ranking of motivations presented relevant divergences. For European students, elements such as security, quality of life, sustainability, and nature appear to be the most important reasons taken into account to select the destination. For Latin Americans, the ease of arriving in the city due to the proximity of the countries, familiar language, lifestyle, and the popularity of Curitiba were the most cited reasons to study in the city. These results show that criteria such as accessibility and adaptation are also essential for students. The main destination choice motivations are align with Curitiba's national and international reputation for the quality of life and urban planning (IMT, 2013).

The tourist attractions most visited by students were iconic landmarks of the city, with the botanical garden being the most visited attraction, followed by the city's municipal market, railway, Barigui Park, Oscar Niemeyer Museum, and Tiradentes Square. Even so, it was noticeable from the answers that the students still visited other parks, monuments, museums, and theaters, actively participating as tourists in Curitiba.

Unlike, the students did not attend city events frequently. Carnival was the most relevant event cited, in which 54 students participated, followed by Curitiba's birthday and the theater festival (with 37 students attending each), and the biennial of Curitiba and the cinema festival (22 students each). The low participation in the city's events agrees with the fact that the motivation "offers a lot of events" was the least important for the students when choosing the destination for international mobility.

International students may receive information about events when they are already in the city or they do not have any knowledge about the local calendar of events, therefore ending up not interested in enjoying these events. Entertainment and transportation services were the most used tourist services, while few students booked accommodation or hired a travel agency. Even the tourism bus line—one of the lead tourist products of Curitiba, which in 2018 had over 500,000 boardings (IMT, 2018)—had little demand. These may be the main differences found in the results between students and leisure tourists, showing that even though international students contribute to tourist activity in the destination, they also may require targeted promotional actions to influence their pretravel decision-making and satisfy their in-destination needs.

The results show similarities between leisure visitors and students, strengthening the argument that the international student is, in fact, a tourist (Amaro et al., 2019; Jamaludin et al., 2018; Roberson Jr., 2018). For Tamião (2010) the student “must firstly live as a resident of that country” (p. 5). However, the Brazilian Ministry of Tourism (MTUR, 2010b) states that incoming tourism operators, accommodation, food services, transportation services, and local entrepreneurs are responsible for complementing the offer of tourist services for international students.

Furthermore, the overall definition of tourist excludes certain travelers. This definition considers elements (such as the type of establishment or overnight spent) that answer mainly to economic needs and disregard the social and cultural characteristics of tourism. This ends up misrepresenting and reducing tourism to economic activity, creating a phenomenon distinct from what tourism truly is.

Seeking an understanding of what qualifies international students as tourists, the student enjoys the attractions and tourist services as well as the leisure tourist. Additionally, the motivations for the international student to undertake a mobility program have a strong relation to cultural exchange, also observed in the tourist definition. Although the students interact more often with locals and have more time to enjoy the city and try different experiences, they remain tourists. Therefore, they can be called touriststudents, mainly because they do not have to stop being one to become another.

### **Practical Implications for the Tourism Sector in Curitiba**

The student is a tourist who does not fit into tourist activity seasonality, as they live in the city during the academic year and return to their home country or continue traveling around the host country or region during vacations. For this reason, international students generate economic income in low tourist seasons, which may become a reason to draw them to the city. Curitiba’s Tourism Institute indicates the possibility of “the creation of tourism products in the academic tourism segment” (IMT, 2013, p. 353). However, data shows that those actions are expendable and not profitable since the touriststudent can enjoy the same products of other visitors’ segments.

Touriststudents are a business opportunity for travel agencies and tour operators, who can organize trips and sell products that suit students’ specific

needs (Amaro et al., 2019). Consequently, the city should improve some attractions, events, and services given singularities of the touriststudents' behavior for them to better enjoy their experiences in the destination. One example found in this study was that the Cultural Foundation's events calendar, which is not widespread in the international students' community, does not have promotional actions in the pre-exchange period (Coelli, 2014) and is available only in Portuguese. Incoming travel agencies can prepare itineraries and specific trips so the students can get to know the regions around Curitiba. Tour operators can put together flight tickets, hotels, and tours to other Brazilian cities that might interest touriststudents looking to make the most out of their experience in Brazil. Accommodation providers can coordinate with universities to give discounts and payment plans for the students when they arrive in the city and do not have a place to stay, or even when they host their family and friends who come to visit them. The tourism bus line may extend the 24-hour restriction of its boarding pass since the touriststudent stays at least one academic semester in the city and can visit fewer known attractions in a broad range of time.

Additionally, Curitiba's Tourism Institute should know the motivations that lead students to participate in international mobility programs and to choose Curitiba, as tourist activity connects with motivations related to cultural exchange, to the abundance of natural resources, landscape, quality of life, and the accessible city location. Thus, and in partnership with universities, the institute has a substantial role in creating policies that foster academic mobility alongside tourism (Lesjak et al., 2015). However, the municipality does not have any demographic data about foreign students and does not conduct continuous surveys to identify these tourists. The lack of information about touriststudents creates difficulties for improving actions to retain them and to help the internationalization of local universities.

Considering that one of the roles of a destination management organization is to collaborate with universities to better promote the destination (Amaro et al., 2019), IMT, together with other organizations that work with these students (i.e. REI Curitiba), may join forces with higher education institutions to increase the promotion of Curitiba as a destination for academic tourism. To outline this relationship and considering that international academic mobility and destination image cannot be dissociated (Silva et al., 2013), the questionnaire asked the respondents to write the first word that came to their minds when they thought about Curitiba. The word cloud (Figure 1) presents the results.



**Figure 1: The Word Cloud of Curitiba's Image for International Students**

The results show words related to tourist activity—parks, culture, nature, green, Botanical Garden, *Araucária* (type of tree endemic to the region of Curitiba), and XV Street. “Quality of life” and “safe” were motivations cited for destination choice, reinforcing the concept of Curitiba as a planned and developed city. The weather image of the city, the coldest capital of Brazil, appeared in the words rain, cold, and cloud. Some cultural aspects related also with the major motivations for mobility appear in words like exchange, friends, *curitibanos* (person born in Curitiba), family, life, and, mainly, *saudade* (feeling of missing someone or something).

## CONCLUSION

This study aimed to examine international academic mobility in the city of Curitiba, Brazil, to understand international students' specificities and similarities to leisure tourists. The main contribution of the research is the idea of the touristudent, for the sake that being one (a student) does not exclude the other (a tourist) and showing that international academic mobility students have similar motivations and experience similar activities to leisure tourists. We found the major motivations for students to participate in international mobility programs were personal rather than academic. Personal motivations and cultural exchange have an important role in the students' decision-making process and the leisure activities experienced at the host destination. The results also point out that

international students acknowledged that they enjoyed the city's tourist attractions and overall services.

Tourist students create a bond with their destination. They build relationships with the locals. They visit the attractions. They engage in the destination cultural scene. They carry the city with them when it is time to return home (Sheller & Urry, 2006). Even though learning is intrinsic to the very concept of academic mobility, both the literature and the results show that cultural, personal, and touristic motivations complement its definition. The students' motivations to participate in international academic mobility demonstrate that leisure activities can enrich their experience abroad beyond academic knowledge.

The practical implications of how international mobility contributes to academic tourism in Curitiba were outlined. As some countries are concerned with mobility as a form of academic, cultural, and economic growth (Yu & Moskal, 2018), public administrations should gather data on inbound and outbound international students.

The tourist student is a real tourist and visitor segment for Curitiba, since it exists and renews itself semiannually following universities' calendars. However, Curitiba's Tourism Institute does not have enough information about the international student, impairing the improvement of actions that might satisfy this type of tourist. For this reason, the students' demographic profiles and motivations are important findings of this study, as they have the potential to point out the benefits of hosting international students and to show why the municipality should reinforce its efforts to promote and develop academic tourism in Curitiba.

Ultimately, we acknowledge the limitations of this research. Though the results may not be generalizable to all international students enrolled in academic mobility programs in Curitiba, they are likely to provide direction and insights for future researchers to build upon the impact of mobility programs in tourism. Moreover, further studies could focus on tourism organizations' perspectives on the impact of international students on local tourism, developing a stronger base for practitioners to improve tourism in destinations. In terms of theoretical foundations, new research on tourist students can also be conducted within the new mobilities paradigm (Hannam, 2009; Sheller & Urry, 2006) if taken into account that what characterizes academic tourism is the mobility itself—that is, the displacement of students and scholars to another country to gain further educational, professional, and personal deepening (Lombas, 2017). In sum, the understanding of international students' motivations for mobility and destination choice reinforces the significance that academic mobility programs have for tourism.

## REFERENCES

- Amaro, S., Barroco, C., Martins, C., & Antunes, J. (2019). Erasmus students in Portugal: From students to tourists and advocates. *European Journal of Tourism Research*, 22, 94–106.
- Baker, K. G., Hozier, G. C., Jr., & Rogers, R. D. (1994). Marketing research theory and methodology and the tourism industry: A nontechnical discussion.



- Journal of Travel Research*, 32(3), 3–7.  
<https://doi.org/10.1177/004728759403200302>
- Bedenlier, S., Kondakci, Y., & Zawacki-Richter, O. (2017). Two decades of research into the internationalization of higher education: Major themes in the Journal of Studies in International Education (1997–2016). *Journal of Studies in International Education*, 22(2), 108–135.  
<https://doi.org/10.1177/1028315317710093>
- Bento, J. P. C. (2014). The determinants of international academic tourism demand in Europe. *Tourism Economics*, 20(3), 611–628.  
<https://doi.org/10.5367/te.2013.0293>
- Choudaha, R. (2017). Three waves of international student mobility (1999–2020). *Studies in Higher Education*, 42(5), 825–832.  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/03075079.2017.1293872>
- Coelli, T. (2014). Turismo de Estudos e Intercâmbio: Antes, Durante e Depois – Uma análise sobre ex-intercambistas da Universidade Federal de Juiz de Fora (Minas Gerais, Brasil) [Tourism Studies and Exchanges: Before, During and After – An analysis on former exchange students from Federal University of Juiz de Fora (Minas Gerais, Brazil)]. *Turismo & Sociedade*, 7(4), 733–754.  
<http://dx.doi.org/10.5380/tes.v7i4.36677>
- De Bona, A. A., Fonseca, K. V. O., Rosa, M. O., Lüders, R., & Delgado, M. R. B. S. (2016). Analysis of public bus transportation of a Brazilian city based on the theory of complex networks using the p-space. *Mathematical Problems in Engineering*, 2016, 1–12. <https://doi.org/10.1155/2016/3898762>
- de Oliveira, A. L., & de Freitas, M. E.. (2016). Motivações para mobilidade acadêmica internacional: A visão de alunos e professores universitários [Motivations for international academic mobility: The perspective of university students and professors]. *Educação em Revista*, 32(3), 217–246.  
<http://dx.doi.org/10.1590/0102-4698148237>
- Dolby, N., & Rahman, A. (2008). Research in international education. *Review of Educational Research*, 78(3), 676–726.  
<https://doi.org/10.3102/0034654308320291>
- Erasmus Student Network. (2010). *ESNSurvey 2010: E-value-ate your exchange*. <https://esn.org/ESNSurvey/2010>
- Fryszman, F., Carstens, D. D. S., & Da Cunha, S. K. (2019). Smart mobility transition: a socio-technical analysis in the city of Curitiba. *International Journal of Urban Sustainable Development*, 11(2), 141–153.  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/19463138.2019.1630414>
- Hair, J. F., Black, W. C., Babin, B. J., Anderson, R. E., & Tatham, R. L. (2005). *Análise multivariada de dados [Multivariate data analysis]*. Bookman.
- Hannam, K. (2009). *The end of tourism? Nomadology and the mobilities paradigm*. In J. Tribe (Ed.), *Philosophical issues in tourism* (pp. 101–113). Channel View Publications.
- Instituto Municipal de Turismo de Curitiba. (2013). *Plano de desenvolvimento integrado do turismo sustentável [Integrated development plan for sustainable tourism]*.  
<http://multimedia.turismo.curitiba.pr.gov.br/2015/3/pdf/00000485.pdf>

- Instituto Municipal de Turismo de Curitiba. (2018). *Perfil do turista da Linha Turismo [Tourism line tourists' profile]*. <http://multimedia.turismo.curitiba.pr.gov.br/2019/3/pdf/00003118.pdf>
- Jamaludin, N. L., Sam, D. L., Sandal, G. M., & Adam, A. A. (2018). The influence of perceived discrimination, orientation to mainstream culture and life satisfaction on destination loyalty intentions: The case of international students. *Current Issues in Tourism*, 21(8), 934–949. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13683500.2015.1119102>
- Krainski, L. B., Schimanski, É. & Schimaleski, A. B. C. (2019). Internacionalização da educação superior: Estratégias institucionais na valorização da mobilidade acadêmica [Internationalization of higher education: Institutional strategies in the valuation of academic mobility]. *Proceedings of Encontro Internacional de Política Social, Vitória-ES*, 7, 1–14. <http://periodicos.ufes.br/einps/article/view/25351>
- Lejeune, M. (2002). *Student mobility and narrative in Europe*. Routledge.
- Lesjak, M., Juvan, E., Ineson, E. M., Yap, M. H. T., & Axelsson, E. P. (2015). Erasmus student motivation: Why and where to go? *Higher Education*, 70(5), 845–865. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10734-015-9871-0>
- Lombas, M. L. de S. (2017). A mobilidade internacional acadêmica: características dos percursos de pesquisadores brasileiros [The international academic mobility: Characteristics of Brazilian researchers' paths]. *Sociologias*, 19(44), 308–333. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1590/15174522-019004413>
- Martinez, C. A. F. (2018). Geografias da mobilidade acadêmica internacional brasileira (ou por que a internacionalização da educação superior é um problema geográfico?) [Geographies of Brazilian international academic mobility (or why is the internationalization of higher education a geographic problem?)]. *Terra livre*, 1(50), 13–33. <https://www.agb.org.br/publicacoes/index.php/terralivre/article/view/1433/1385>
- Ministério do Turismo. (2010a). *Segmentação do turismo e o mercado [Tourism segmentation and the market]*. Ministério do Turismo. [http://www.turismo.gov.br/sites/default/turismo/o\\_ministerio/publicacoes/downloads\\_publicacoes/Segmentaxo\\_do\\_Mercado\\_Versxo\\_Final\\_IMPRESSxO\\_.pdf](http://www.turismo.gov.br/sites/default/turismo/o_ministerio/publicacoes/downloads_publicacoes/Segmentaxo_do_Mercado_Versxo_Final_IMPRESSxO_.pdf)
- Ministério do Turismo. (2010b). *Turismo de estudos e intercâmbio: Orientações básicas [Study and exchange tourism: Basic guidelines]*. Ministério do Turismo. [http://www.turismo.gov.br/sites/default/turismo/o\\_ministerio/publicacoes/downloads\\_publicacoes/Turismo\\_de\\_Estudos\\_e\\_Intercxmbio\\_Versxo\\_Final\\_IMPRESSxO\\_.pdf](http://www.turismo.gov.br/sites/default/turismo/o_ministerio/publicacoes/downloads_publicacoes/Turismo_de_Estudos_e_Intercxmbio_Versxo_Final_IMPRESSxO_.pdf)
- Mizikaci, F., & Arslan, Z. U. (2019). A European perspective in academic mobility. *Journal of International Students*, 9(2), 705–726. <https://doi.org/10.32674/jis.v9i2.1138>
- Mota, K. C. N. (2009). Turismo de intercâmbio [Exchange tourism]. In A. Panosso Netto & M. G. dos R. Ansarah (Eds.), *Segmentação do mercado*

- turístico: Estudos, produtos e perspectivas* [Tourism market segmentation: Studies, products and perspectives] (pp. 389–406). Manole.
- Nunes, F. W. B., & Silva, I. S. R. (2018). Ações de treinamento e desenvolvimento de pessoal com foco na internacionalização: Um estudo nas universidades públicas federais brasileiras [Training and personnel development actions with a focus on internationalization: A study in the Brazilian federal public universities]. *Gestão Universitária na América Latina*, 11(4), 82–99. <https://doi.org/10.5007/1983-4535.2018v11n4p82>
- Panosso Netto, A. (2005). *Filosofia do turismo: Teoria e epistemologia* [Tourism philosophy: Theory and epistemology]. Aleph.
- Pires, N. C. M., Arantes, E. C., Silva, W. V., & Kato, H. T. (2006). Diferenças e semelhanças nos métodos de amostragem de pesquisas Top of Mind: Um estudo comparativo [Differences and similarities among sampling methods in Top of Mind research: A comparative study]. *RBGN*, 8(22), 37–45. <https://rbgn.fecap.br/RBGN/article/view/67/61>
- Prolo, I., Vieira, R. C., Lima, M. C. & Leal, F. G. (2019). Internacionalização das Universidades Brasileiras - Contribuições do Programa Ciência sem Fronteiras [The internationalisation of Brazilian universities: Contributions of the 'Science Without Borders' programme]. *Administração: Ensino e Pesquisa (RAEP)*, 20(2), 1–27. <https://doi.org/10.13058/raep.2019.v20n2.1330>
- REI Curitiba. (2013). *Estatuto Social* [Social Statute].
- Rejowski, M. (2018). *Tesouro brasileiro de turismo* [Brazilian tourism thesaurus]. ECA-USP. <http://www.livrosabertos.sibi.usp.br/portaldelivrosUSP/catalog/view/208/187/876-1>
- Roberson, D. N., Jr. (2018). Learning while traveling: The school of travel. *Journal of Hospitality, Leisure, Sport & Tourism Education*, 22, 14–18. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jhlste.2017.11.001>
- Robles, C., & Bhandari, R. (2018). *Expanding vistas - International academic mobility in Brazil*. IIE Center for Academic Mobility Research and Impact. <https://www.iie.org/Research-and-Insights/Publications/Expanding-Vistas>
- Rodríguez, X. A., Martínez-Roget, F., & Pawlowska, E. (2012). Academic tourism demand in Galicia, Spain. *Tourism Management*, 33(6), 1583–1590. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tourman.2012.01.010>
- Salyers, V., Carston, C. S., Dean, Y., & London, C. (2015). Exploring the motivations, expectations, and experiences of students who study in global settings. *Journal of International Students*, 5(4), 368–382.
- Sebben, A. S. (2009). *Intercâmbio cultural: Para entender e se apaixonar* [Cultural exchange: To understand and fall in love]. Artes e Ofícios.
- Sheller, M., & Urry, J. (2006). The new mobilities paradigm. *Environment and Planning A*, 38, 207–226. <https://doi.org/10.1068/a37268>
- Silva, C. C. dos S., Lima, M. C., & Riegel, V. (2013). Os fatores de motivação na definição de estudantes estrangeiros em mobilidade acadêmica internacional no Brasil [Motivation factors of the definition of foreign students in

- internacional academic mobility in Brazil]. *Gestão Universitária na América Latina*, 6(3), 232–251. <http://dx.doi.org/10.5007/1983-4535.2013v6n3p232>
- Soares, C. C., de Lucena-Neto, C. S., & Onofre, E. G. (2019). O processo de internacionalização de instituição superior: Universidade Estadual da Paraíba em foco [The internationalization process of the higher education institution: Paraíba State University in focus]. *Research, Society and Development*, 9(2), 1–22. <http://dx.doi.org/10.33448/rsd-v9i2.1887>
- Tamião, T. S. (2010). *Revisão da literatura sobre intercâmbio cultural estudantil: renovação das práticas turísticas* [Literature review on student cultural exchange: Renewal of tourist practices]. *Proceedings of Seminário de Pesquisa em Turismo do Mercosul, Caxias do Sul*, 6, 1806-0447. Retrieved from [https://www.ucs.br/ucs/eventos/seminarios\\_semintur/semin\\_tur\\_6/arquivos/02/Revisao%20da%20literatura%20sobre%20intercambio%20cultural%20e%20studantil%20renovacao%20das%20praticas%20turisticas.pdf](https://www.ucs.br/ucs/eventos/seminarios_semintur/semin_tur_6/arquivos/02/Revisao%20da%20literatura%20sobre%20intercambio%20cultural%20e%20studantil%20renovacao%20das%20praticas%20turisticas.pdf)
- Taschetto, L. R., & Rosa, G. C. (2019). Mobilidade acadêmica internacional: Caminhos para vínculos transculturais [International academic mobility: Pathways for transcultural connections]. *Textura*, 21(47), 300–319. <https://doi.org/10.17648/textura-2358-0801-21-47-4783>
- Triviños, A. (1987). *Introdução à pesquisa em ciências sociais: A pesquisa qualitativa em educação* [Introduction to social science research: Qualitative research in education]. Atlas.
- UNESCO. (2020). *UIS Statistics*. Retrieved January 20, 2020, from <http://data.uis.unesco.org/>
- Veal, A. J. (2011). *Metodologia da pesquisa em lazer e turismo* [Research methods for leisure and tourism]. Aleph.
- Yu, Y., & Moskal, M. (2018). Missing intercultural engagements in the university experiences of Chinese international students in the UK. *Compare: A Journal of Comparative and International Education*, 49(4), 654–671. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03057925.2018.1448259>

---

**MATEUS JOSÉ ALVES PINTO**, BA, is a master's student and researcher in the Department of Tourism at the Federal University of Paraná. His major research interests lie in the areas of higher education in tourism, information and communication technologies, tourist information, smart tourism destinations, and tourism communication. Email: [mateusjose.trilhas@gmail.com](mailto:mateusjose.trilhas@gmail.com)

**EDUARDO HENRIQUE MOSCARDI**, BA, is a master's student and researcher in the Department of Tourism at the Federal University of Paraná. His major research interests lie in the areas of tourist information, research methods, tourism communication, destination marketing, and information and communication technologies. Email: [moscardi.eduardo@gmail.com](mailto:moscardi.eduardo@gmail.com)

**EWERTON LEMOS GOMES**, MSc, is a researcher in the Department of Tourism at the Federal University of Paraná. His major research interests lie in the areas of tourism communication, tourism semiotics, smart tourism destinations, tourism marketing, and destination image. Email: ewertonlegomes@gmail.com

**MARCIA SHIZUE MASSUKADO NAKATANI**, PhD, is a professor and researcher in the Department of Tourism at the Federal University of Paraná. Her major research interests lie in the areas of methodologies and knowledge construction in tourism, tourism communication and information, and higher education in tourism. Email: marcia.nakatani@ufpr.br

---