

# Marketing in international exchange of language courses: A study on the dimensions of the image

Marketing em intercâmbio internacional de cursos de idiomas:  
Um estudo sobre as dimensões da imagem

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## ABSTRACT

The present study sought to describe the image that potential customers, current customers and former customers have regarding the international exchange of language courses, based on three (cognitive, symbolic and emotional) of the four dimensions of the classification proposed by De Toni, Milan and Schuler (2004, 2005). To do so, it was opted for using the qualitative method, by means of 45 in-depth interviews with such groups of customers. During the interviews, the technique of drawings construction was used, which had the purpose to illustrate the content of the interviews. Furthermore, the information obtained was analyzed through the technique of content analysis by thematic units. The results show that the cognitive dimension can be classified into three broad categories: (a) the reasons that lead people to study abroad in international language courses; (b) Sources of information and groups of influence on the decision for language courses exchange; and (c) the criteria used for the choice of countries of destination for language courses exchange. Whereas in the symbolic dimension, the following categories were obtained: a) Growth and personal maturity; (b) Social status; c) Adventure, fun and challenge; d) Identity, freedom and independence; (e) New and different experiences. Finally, the emotional dimension can be divided into the following categories: a) Emotions and positive expectations; (b) Negative emotions and frustration of expectations; (c) Resources for the management of emotions; d) Emotions related to the mechanism of sacrifice-reward.

**Keywords:** Image, exchange, consumer behavior, marketing

## RESUMO

O presente trabalho buscou descrever a imagem que os clientes potenciais, clientes atuais e ex-clientes apresentam em relação ao intercâmbio de cursos de idiomas, com base em três (cognitiva, simbólica e emocional) das quatro dimensões da classificação proposta por De Toni, Milan e Schuler (2004, 2005). Para tanto, optou-se por utilizar o método qualitativo, por meio de 45 entrevistas em profundidade com tais grupos de clientes. Durante as entrevistas recorreu-se à técnica de construção de desenhos, que teve o propósito de ilustrar o conteúdo das entrevistas. Além disso, as informações obtidas foram analisadas por meio da técnica de análise de conteúdo por unidades temáticas. Os resultados mostram que a dimensão cognitiva pode ser classificada em três grandes categorias: a) Motivos que levam as pessoas a fazerem intercâmbio de cursos de idiomas; b) Fontes de informação e grupos de influência na decisão por intercâmbio de cursos de idiomas; e c) Critérios utilizados para a escolha dos países de destino para intercâmbio de cursos de idiomas. Já na dimensão simbólica, obteve-se as seguintes categorias: a) Crescimento e amadurecimento pessoal; b) Status social; c) Aventura, diversão e desafio; d) Identidade, liberdade e independência; e) Novidades e experiências diferentes. Finalmente, a dimensão emocional pode ser dividida nas seguintes categorias: a) Emoções e expectativas positivas; b) Emoções negativas e frustração das expectativas; c) Recursos para o gerenciamento das emoções; d) Emoções relacionadas ao mecanismo de sacrifício-recompensa.

**Palavras-chave:** imagem, intercâmbio internacional, comportamento do consumidor, marketing.

## INTRODUCTION

The image that people have of products, services, brands or companies have functional, cognitive, symbolic and emotional dimensions that are able to influence their buying behavior and consumption (Dobni and Zinkhan, 1990; De Toni, Milan and Schuler, 2004 and De Toni, Milan and Schuler, 2005). Such authors still highlight that, although these dimensions can be studied separately, are inter-related and undergo mutual influence.

For this reason, the understanding of the image that people have in relation to a particular object (products, services, brands, etc.) can offer subsidies for the development of marketing strategies, constituting an

important asset for companies that operate in different market segments (Grasseli, Souki e Mendes, 2009; Brandão *et al.*, 2011).

However, it may be, the companies that operate in the sector of language courses exchange, need to understand the consumers' needs and desires so that they can formulate and implement marketing strategies. Therefore, it becomes mandatory to understand the image that consumers have of this segment.

Ferreira, Moura and Souki (2016), Grasseli, Souki and Mendes (2009), and Souki, Amorim and Mendes (2008) emphasizes that the image that people have on products, services, brands or professions can be analyzed on the basis of the functional, cognitive, symbolic and emotional dimensions, according to the classification proposed by De Toni, Milan and Schuler (2004, 2005). It is known that the image can influence the people's attitudes, purchase and consumption behavior. Therefore, the present study sought to describe the image that potential customers, current customers and former customers have regarding the exchange of language courses, based on three (cognitive, symbolic and emotional) of the four dimensions included in such classification.

## THE IMAGE AND ITS DIMENSIONS

The literature review shows that there is not a consensus in relation to the meaning of the concept of image. This is because this concept has been used in several areas of knowledge such as Philosophy, Psychology, Mathematics, Physics, communications, computing, Psychoanalysis, Semiotics and the Marketing (Dowling, 1986 and Van Riel, 1995). There is, however, a great interest in the subject, which has been studied from several perspectives since antiquity (Salles, 2004).

The role of the image was discussed by Boulding (1956), who argues that human behavior is not directed only by information and knowledge, but is a product of the image perceived by the people. It should be noted that the attitudes and behavioral intentions that may be influenced by the image



are not formed exclusively by the people's experiences in contact with the products or services. In reality, they may suffer influences of ideas shared, derived from the experience of others, as well as by various sources of information and by groups of influence. For this reason, despite of being taken as a reality, the images are not always accurate, which may be true or false, real or imaginary. In addition, images can be modified to the extent that individuals receive new stimuli or information (Boulding, 1956). However, due to being a way of people knowing the world, images can influence their behavior and their decisions (Barich and Kotler, 1991; lasbeck, 1999).

Barich and Kotler (1991) define image as the representation of beliefs, attitudes and impressions that a person or a group have on an object. It is worth emphasizing that this may be a company, a product, a brand, a service, a person, a place or a profession. Dichter (1985) also points out that the image refers not only to the characteristics or the individual qualities of the object, but also to the impression that remains on it in the people's minds. Thus, the concept of image has a wide area of application, can be used in surveys about products, services, brands, professions, among other objects of study (Joly, 1996).

In the present study it was chosen the concept proposed by Dowling (1986: p. 112), which affirms that "an image is the set of meanings by which an object is known and through which people describe, remember and relate to it. That is, the net result of the interaction of a person's beliefs, ideas, feelings and impressions about an object". It is understood, therefore, that the concept of image is associated with the knowledge, beliefs, the perception or the interpretation that individuals have in relation to a particular information.

De Toni, Milan e Schuler (2004, 2005) proposed, based on studies carried out by Dobni and Zinkhan (1990), that the image has functional, cognitive, symbolic and emotional dimensions, which will be better described below:

The functional dimension is composed of a series of physical features that are perceived and valued by customers during the service provision process.

As examples, one can cite the appearance of people who are part of the team, the physical facilities, equipment available, the location, the design, among other attributes (Stern, Zinkhan and Jaju, 2001; De Toni et al., 2005).

The cognitive dimension refers to mental constructions about objects or services being used by consumers to evaluate the image of themselves. Such constructions are influenced by the beliefs and by the prior knowledge that individuals have in relation to the product or service. Thus, people evaluate the image of the services as a set of impressions, perceptions and attitudes concerning the service provider, as the professionals involved in the process and transactional aspects, such as the cost-benefit relationship (De Toni, Milan and Schuler 2005; Dobni and Zinkhan, 1990; Dichter, 1985).

Regarding the symbolic dimension, the services are evaluated not only by their intrinsic utility, but primarily by what they mean for the consumer. In this sense, the symbol consists of representing an indirect experience in which the service represents, as well as its own, other mental associations. Thus, with Levy (1981), when hiring a service, the individual may be motivated not only by a tangible final result, but also by symbolic aspects. According to De Toni (2005: p. 46), "the symbolic value, or image, is the extension that enhances the value of the person before his or her own eyes (self-esteem) and to the eyes of others (status)".

Whereas the emotional dimension is related to the feelings, like joy, pain, pleasure and/or fear, which are triggered by consumers and service providers to experience the production and consumption of the same (Reynolds & Gutman, 1984).

## **METHODOLOGY**

As previously mentioned, the aim of this work was to describe the image that potential customers, current and former customers have in relation to the language courses exchange. To do so, cognitive, symbolic and emotional dimensions of the image, according to classification proposed by De Toni, Milan and Schuler were used (2004, 2005).



It should also be highlighted that it was chosen to carry out a qualitative research, during which forty-five people were interviewed, being that 15 wanted to make exchanges (potential customers), fifteen had returned to language courses in different countries (ex-customers) and 15 were enrolled in language courses abroad on the occasion of the completion of the present research (current customers). However, the profile of the sample will be more fully described later during the presentation of results and discussion of this work.

The interviewees not residing in Brazil were contacted by means of telephone calls, e-mails, instant messaging programs available on the internet (MSN® e Skype®) with voice and video calls.

In addition, it is worth noting that the participants were selected by convenience and the interviews were transcribed in full (Malhotra, 2001). Although semi-structured scripts have been used which were developed specifically for each of the groups interviewed, the participants were encouraged to express themselves freely about the theme.

During the interviews, the technique of drawings construction was used, being that the interviewees were asked to associate keywords to them, with the aim of helping in their interpretation. The authors recognize that, although the technique of building drawings enables deep and complex analyzes of projections (Van Kolck, 1984), in this study the purpose of the use of designs was exclusively to illustrate the content of the interviews. It is understood, therefore, that in spite of the potential of this technique to be quite broad, allowing psychological and semi-discursive interpretations in greater depth, in this study it was sought to only use the graphical representation of the material obtained for purposes of illustration, as recommended by Souki, Amorim and Madureira (2007) and Grasseli, Souki and Mendes (2009).

The information obtained during the interviews were analyzed through the technique of content analysis for thematic units, according to classification proposed by Cooper and Schindler (2003). Adler (1999) emphasizes that this technique allows to analyze content from illustrations,

photographs, phrases, stories or any form of communication available in articles, books, newspapers, magazines, TV programs, movies, advertisements and speeches.

Figure 1 was developed with the purpose to promote the understanding of the way in which the present study was carried out.

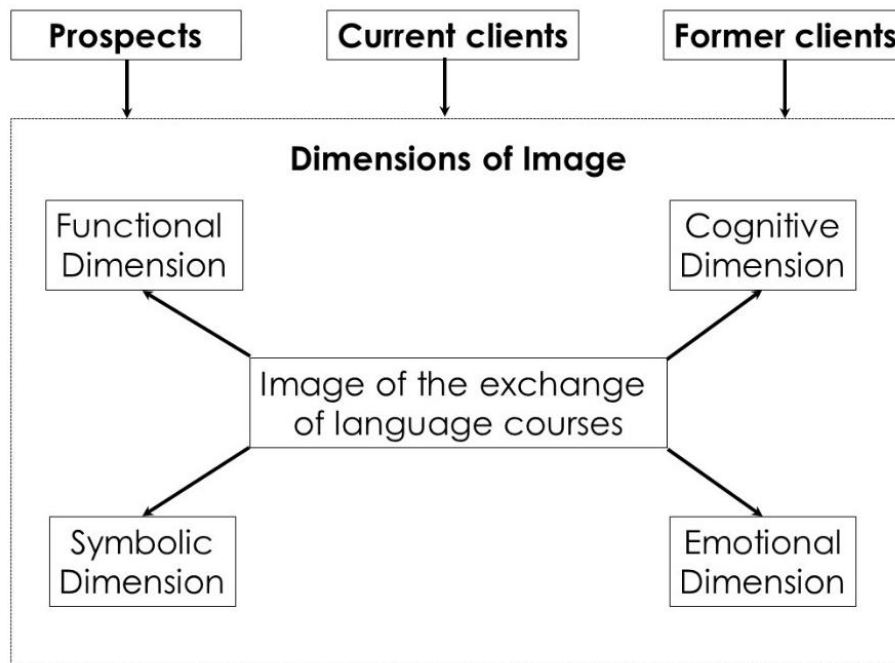


Figure 1: Dimensions of the image from the perception of potential customers, current and former customers.

Source: Elaborated by the authors.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

For the results presentation, it was ought to describe the image that potential customers, current customers and former customers have regarding the exchange of language courses, by means of cognitive, symbolic and emotional dimensions of the classification developed by De Toni, Milan and Schuler (2004, 2005). However, before responding to the objective proposed in this study, the sample surveyed will be described, as observed in Table 1. In this context the categories of respondents are presented, subdivided into potential, current and former customers, in addition to socio-demographic characteristics such as gender, income, age, marital status and schooling.

Table 1: Socio-demographic information of the interviewees.

Categories	Sex	Family income			Age	Marital Status	Schooling
		Up to R\$ 3,000.00	R\$ 3,001.00 – R\$ 7,000.00	Over R\$ 7,000.00			
Potential customers	M			x	32	Single	Specialist
Potential customers	M		x		21	Single	Incomplete Upper Education
Potential customers	M			x	18	Single	Incomplete Upper Education
Potential customers	M	x			29	Single	Incomplete Upper Education
Potential customers	M		x		43	Divorced	Specialist
Potential customers	F		x		21	Single	Incomplete Upper Education
Potential customers	F		x		23	Single	High School
Potential customers	F		x		29	Married	Master
Potential customers	F		x		18	Single	High School
Potential customers	F		x		29	Married	Master
Potential customers	F		x		24	Single	Complete Upper Education
Potential customers	F		x		23	Single	Complete Upper Education
Potential customers	F		x		19	Single	High School
Potential customers	F		x		22	Single	Incomplete Upper Education
Potential customers	F		x		20	Single	High School
Current Customers	M			x	31	Married	Complete Upper Education
Current Customers	M		x		22	Single	Incomplete Upper Education
Current Customers	M		x		27	Married	Complete Upper Education
Current Customers	M		x		28	Single	Complete Upper Education
Current Customers	M		x		25	Single	Complete Upper Education
Current Customers	M		x		32	Married	Complete Upper Education
Current Customers	M		x		29	Married	Complete Upper Education
Current Customers	M		x		43	Divorced	Master
Current Customers	F		x		26	Single	Complete Upper Education
Current Customers	F		x		17	Single	Incomplete Upper Education
Current Customers	F		x		42	Single	Specialist



Current Customers	F		x		34	Single	Specialist
Current Customers	F		x		32	Single	Complete Upper Education
Current Customers	F		x		23	Single	Complete Upper Education
Current Customers	F			x	34	Divorced	Complete Upper Education
Former customers	M			x	26	Single	Complete Upper Education
Former customers	M			x	21	Single	Incomplete Upper Education
Former customers	M			x	24	Single	Complete Upper Education
Former customers	M			x	27	Single	Complete Upper Education
Former customers	M			x	28	Single	Complete Upper Education
Former customers	M		x		23	Single	Complete Upper Education
Former customers	M			x	23	Single	Complete Upper Education
Former customers	F			x	24	Single	Incomplete Upper Education
Former customers	F		x		21	Single	Incomplete Upper Education
Former customers	F		x		24	Single	Complete Upper Education
Former customers	F			x	26	Single	Master
Former customers	F			x	34	Married	Master
Former customers	F		x		28	Single	Complete Upper Education
Former customers	F		x		23	Single	Incomplete Upper Education
Former customers	F			x	36	Married	Complete Upper Education

Source: Research data.

Among the 45 interviewees, it was noticed that most of them (about 67%) has a monthly family income between R\$ 3,001.00 to R\$ 7,000.00, followed by the group with an income higher than the R\$ 7,000.00, which corresponds to approximately 31% of those surveyed (Table 1).

25 people of female sex and 20 male were interviewed, with ages ranging from 17 to 43 years, and the mean was found to be 26.8 years and standard deviation of 6.4 years. Thus, there was a strong concentration of visiting exchange students aged between 20 and 30 years (66.7%).

In terms of the marital status of the interviewees, the present study showed that 34 were unmarried at the time in which the survey was carried out, 8 of them were married or had a stable union and three were separated or divorced.

Regarding schooling, it was found that 46.7% had a higher education course on the occasion of the completion of the interviews and other 20.0% had postgraduate level (Specialization or Master). In addition, 24.5% of the interviewees had an incomplete higher education course. Thus, it was verified that the level of schooling of the Exchange students is from high school to upper education.

## COGNITIVE DIMENSION

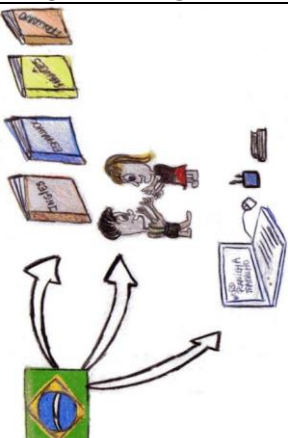
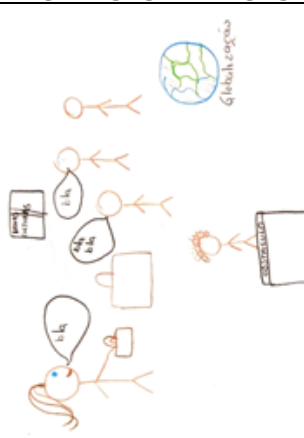
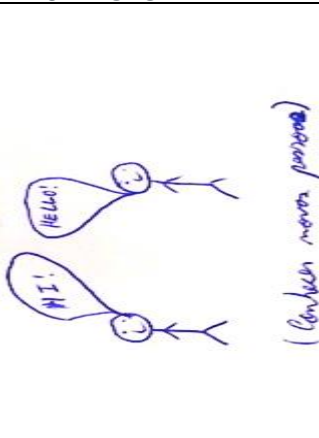
To perform the analysis of cognitive dimension of the image, it was sought to identify the beliefs and knowledge that potential customers, current customers and former customers had in relation to the language courses exchange.

The information obtained in this study indicate that the cognitive image of language courses exchange relate to the first three stages in the decision-making process of purchase (recognition of the need, search for information and evaluation of alternatives), as proposed by Engel, Blackwell and Miniard (2000). Therefore, such dimension can be classified into three categories: (a) the reasons that lead people to make language courses exchanges; (b) Sources of information and groups of influence on the decision for language courses exchange; and (c) the criteria used for the choice of countries of destination for language courses exchange.

The **reasons that lead people to make language courses exchanges** can be subdivided into six categories, namely: a1) possibility of learning a new language; a2) knowing other countries and new cultures; a3) meeting people and making friends; a4) professional development; a5) possibility of earning money, and a6) getting together work, study and leisure activities,

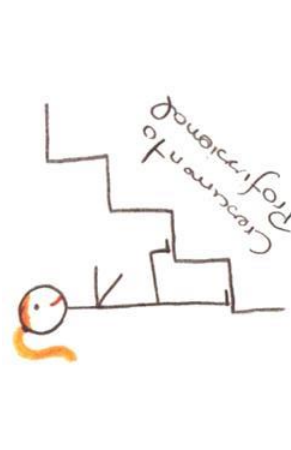
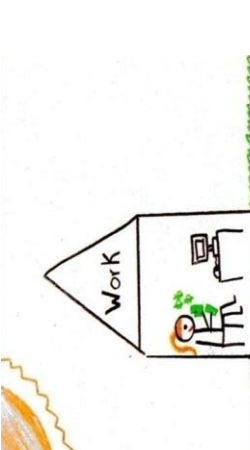

which can be observed by means of the testimonies and drawings presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Cognitive dimension of the image: reasons that lead people to make language courses exchanges.

Subcategories	Testimonies	Audiences	Drawings
<p><b>Possibility of learning a new language</b></p>	<p>By learning their own foreign language, which was very important. I think the first objective is the interest in studying another language.</p>	<p>Former client Potential Customer</p>	
<p><b>Knowing other countries and new cultures</b></p>	<p>Nowadays it is very important that you have a language, and the curiosity to know other cultures. The language courses exchange is of great importance for me, because I am acquiring new knowledge and having contact with a very diverse culture. I have always been willing to know another country, getting to know new cultures.</p>	<p>Potential Customer Current Customer Current Customer</p>	
<p><b>Meeting people and making new friends</b></p>	<p>Mingling with people totally different from me. Learning a new culture, making new friendships, getting to know another country, learning a new language, that is it basically.</p>	<p>Former client Current Customer</p>	

Source: Research data.

Table 2. Cognitive dimension of the image: reasons that lead people to make language courses exchanges. (continuation).

Subcategories	Testimonies	Audiences	Drawings
<b>Professional development</b>	<p>I did it because today is very important for you to have an experience abroad to get a good job, speak English so not to mention, it is a requirement of the market.</p> <p>Professionally is also good even if the person has already worked here, she will work out there, in a completely new area. [...] Mine was the a paid program, I was in the middle of the Tourism College then I needed to learn a language, and besides the exchange itself being already a professional experience for me.</p> <p>The other would be thinking of a professional growth, sometimes even in this country that she chose to make the exchange, thinking that the employment opportunities are better than in her country of origin.</p>	<p>Former client</p> <p>Former client</p> <p>Current Customer</p>	
<b>Making money</b>	<p>I am talking about making money. I discovered later when I came back, after I was there it was a paradise to work and earn money.</p> <p>There are people who will also work, that even if they are in sub-jobs, people get well and here in Brazil do not earn that much. Then they go to join some money, some wish to return, others want to stay.</p>	<p>Former client</p> <p>Potential Customer</p>	
<b>Associating work, study and leisure activities</b>	<p>At the time I did exchange, was a wonderful way to associate work, study and leisure. I had morning classes, had a lot of fun and at night I worked in a snack bar.</p> <p>I think it will be a chance to learn English to enter the masters and get some money to be able to enjoy myself in another country.</p>	<p>Former client</p> <p>Potential Customer</p>	

Source: Research data.

As mentioned in the methodology, although the drawings obtained in this research are purely illustrative, somehow contributed to the elucidation of the testimonies of the interviewees. In this way, it can be seen in the drawing on the Possibility of learning a new language the graphical representation of a person leaving Brazil to study languages, meeting people and being connected to the world.

The drawing regarding the category knowing other countries and new cultures illustrates that, despite the obstacles, there is an interest in obtaining new knowledge, in the context of a globalized world.

Whereas the drawing that illustrates the category meeting people and making friends shows two people talking in a foreign language and the explicit demonstration of the expected result: meeting new people.

The drawing on the category called Professional development shows a female figure climbing a ladder, which apparently represents a rise, associated with the phrase "Professional Growth".

The category Making money was well illustrated by the design in which a woman is working in an office, in front of a computer, holding several bills highlighted in green color and with the symbol of dollar signs (\$).

Finally, the category entitled Associating work, study and leisure time was represented graphically by means of a drawing that shows a woman looking for jobs to have money to pay her bills and improve her English. With that, she believes that at the end of the English course (program), it will be possible to travel to the United States, as it can be observed in the following sentence contained in the drawing: "I need to find a second job so I can pay my bills and improve my English! And then, at the end of the program, travel around USA!" In addition, in the same drawing, it can be established the existence of a plate in front of the snack bar of the network TGI Fridays, which presents the following sentence: "Now Hiring – Waitress and dishwashers", indicating that they are hiring waitresses and dishwashers.

As mentioned previously, still in the cognitive dimension of the image, the main sources of information and groups of influence reported by the

interviewees were surveyed. The testimonials below show that the internet, the exchange agencies and relatives and friends are the main of them.

*It was so simple, because I was in the second year which is a time that many people make exchanges, so I was picking up tips with friends at school, and had a great friend going to New Zealand, he even came to me to indicate the company, and I went and looked at this. (Former client's testimony)*

*I started my process of choosing doing research over the internet, making contacts with people who have already lived in New Zealand and analyzing the Language Schools in New Zealand. (Current customer's testimony)*

*[...] I talked to a tourism Professor of mine[...] So before choosing if I was going to make this exchange, I searched on the internet, in the company, in the organs of associations, tourism, researched with my tourism Professors, called for the Brazilian Association of Travel Agencies, and when I saw that the company was righteous, and that had a lot of experience in the field of tourism, so I opted to make its program. (Potential customer's testimony)*

In addition, drawings that illustrate these sources of information and groups of influence, as seen in Figure 2 were obtained during the interviews.

Figure 2 Sources of information and groups of influence on the decision for language courses exchanges.

Source: Research data.

Finally, the criteria used for the choice of countries of destination for exchange of language courses are presented in Table 3 and can be subdivided in the following subcategories: b1) geographic and climatic factors; (b2) Ease of access; (b3) the economic viability of the exchange;

(b4) security offered by the country of destination; and (b5) the cultural aspects of the country of destination.

The drawing that illustrates a subcategory of geographic and climatic factors shows in its upper-left corner the Pyramids of Egypt, with the presence of camels and sun. Whereas in the upper right corner of the drawing, it is possible to observe people practicing skiing. Whereas in the lower left part of the drawing, there is a representation of a beach, surrounded by mountains with a coconut tree, besides the presence of bathers and surfers.




The subcategory ease of access is represented by a drawing in which a person of the female sex is carrying a passport, which indicates the possibility of access to the desired country.

Already the subcategory economic feasibility of performing the exchange is illustrated by a drawing that shows the symbol of the dollar and a one-dollar bill.

The security offered by the country of destination is another subcategory mentioned by interviewees as criterion for the choice of countries of destination for exchange of language courses. It is observed in the drawing that is intended to illustrate this subcategory, the representation of a person being attacked and the possibility of a more peaceful and friendly coexistence among citizens in another country.

Finally, the subcategory called cultural aspects of the country of destination is illustrated by a drawing that shows people with different physical characteristics and the phrase "Access to various cultures".


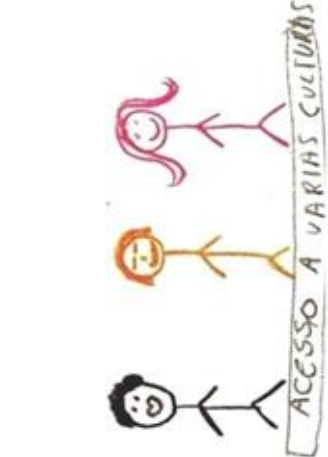
Table 3. Cognitive dimension of the image: criteria used for the choice of countries of destination for exchange of language

Subcategories	Geographical and climatic factors	Ease of access	Economic feasibility of carrying out the exchange
Subcategories	Testimonies	Audiences	Drawings
	<p>I was between New Zealand and Canada, but I heard about climate change and the possibility of finding mountain, beach and town in the same country. Then I chose New Zealand.</p>	<p>Current Customer</p>	
	<p>I tried Canada and my visa was denied and tried not to give up this time. Then, I kept trying new opportunities. In a second moment, my choice was to place easier to obtain a visa, because I did not want to have the visa denied once more. And then matched with my other needs that were cost and weight of the currency in relation to Brazil so I chose New Zealand</p>	<p>Former client</p>	
	<p>[...] when I was researching about New Zealand, I saw that the currency here is almost one-to-one with ours that is I did not have a second thought. Even the ticket being more expensive, I realized it would pay off.</p>	<p>Current Customer</p>	

Source: Research data.



Table 3. Cognitive dimension of the image: criteria used for the choice of countries of destination for exchange of language

Drawings	Audiences	Testimonies	Subcategories
	<p>Current Customer</p>	<p>The criteria for me were security, which is essential, people that hosted us well. Well, that is it! What I really searched for the most, was a country that spoke English and this here is the country that I saw that I had. Until when I researched about the police in here I found it interesting, they did not use weapons. Then I thought a country that should be very calm.</p>	<p><b>Security offered by the country of destination</b></p>
	<p>Former client</p>	<p>Everybody was going to the United States, I wanted a different culture.</p>	<p><b>Cultural aspects of the country of destination</b></p>

Source: Research data.

## SYMBOLIC DIMENSION

In the analysis of the symbolic dimension of the image it was sought to identify what the exchange of language courses represents or means to

potential customers, current and former customers. Although this is a subjective dimension typically, it was possible to realize some common meanings to the interviewees, being that this dimension was associated to the following categories: a) Growth and personal maturity; (b) social status; c) Adventure, fun and challenge; d) identity, freedom and independence, and finally, (e) new and different experiences. Such categories of the symbolic dimension of the image can be observed in the testimonies and drawings presented in Table 4.

The drawing which refers to the category called Growth and Personal maturity shows the transformation of a girl into a woman, which is part of the changes that can be triggered by the experience of a language courses exchange.

Whereas the illustration on the Social status category expresses the relationship between the exchange and the status that it can provide, showing that a person who experiences the experience of an exchange, can highlight in relation to other people, becoming symbolically higher even than her or his own world.

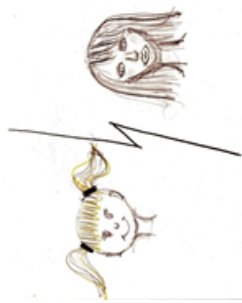

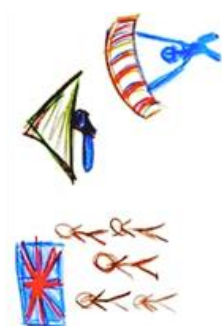
A third category was found regarding the Adventure, fun and challenge, which is illustrated by means of the drawing that symbolizes the practice of extreme sports, such as the parachuting and free flight.

The drawing on the category Identity, freedom and independence illustrates the representation of the sun between mountains, beyond a handcuff being broken and the word New (novo) between exclamation points. It is believed that, symbolically, such a drawing can represent the search for a new path, "Sunnier, with more freedom and independence.

Finally, the category entitled News and different experiences was illustrated by means of a drawing that shows a symbol of "different" between Brazil and New Zealand, with several yellow arrows pointing to it. This reveals the emphasis of the differences among the countries. In addition, considering that yellow is a color associated with the feeling of joy and excitement (VAN KOLCK, 1984), it is believed that this difference is perceived as something

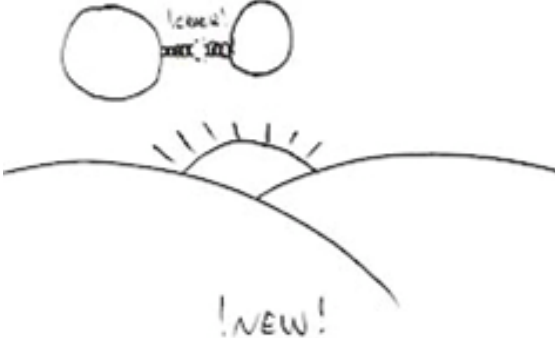

positive. However, there is also in this case, a clear rejection of the interviewee to the United States, as the country of destination.

Table 4. Symbolic dimension of the image.

Drawings	Audience	Testimonies	Categories
	<p>Former client</p> <p>Current Customer</p> <p>Potential Customer</p>	<p>After you arrived, you were so different, you had changed so much. I think I've changed much, I think that I became like that, I do not mean a woman, because I was young when I returned. But I think that I expand much to my mind, I matured a lot.</p> <p>The languages course exchange (...), helped me to a great extent to mature. Not only regarding the studies, as well as person, mature as a man. Because it is an inexplicable experience, only those who go have such experience will feel it.</p> <p>It is personal, it's a real self-development.</p>	<p><b>Personal growth and maturity</b></p>
	<p>Former client</p> <p>Potential Customer</p>	<p>And there is also the status issue. I lived abroad, I knew Canada, the US, ah, I went to other places as well. I had... Even today this happens. First because I think it has a social prestige of those who go abroad, status of society really!!</p>	<p><b>Social status</b></p>
	<p>Former client</p> <p>Potential Customer</p>	<p>But going to a different location, which could bring experiences that I liked, that this was the most radical also, going and jumping Bungee Jump And I was 16 years old at the time you know, then I liked it, I had adventurous spirit. Everyone has an interest in getting to know other cultures; it is a form of entertainment as well.</p>	<p><b>Adventure, fun and challenge</b></p>

Source: Research data.

Table 4. Symbolic dimension of the image (continuation)

Categories	Testimonies	Audience	Drawings
<b>Identity, freedom and independence</b>	<p>(...) The possibility also of having a greater interaction with myself, a greater independence, to know a little bit of the world inside of my thoughts, within what I believed, then it was kind of what only existed in my world, and all that new situation according to my head, my values, which I had and seek this independence.</p> <p>I was also stressed with work and thinking of the possibility jointly to give a relax for me, all this stress, of routine work, I had been working at the carnival for 12 years and also in my own area of physical education since 1996, give a break, and hence arose the idea, the whole process came up.</p> <p>It was a great learning experience for me to get by in an international travel, traveling through Europe alone with 16 years of age [...] That is the way I see it to be able to have a certain freedom or being more prepared to deal with day-by-day situations when I come back.</p>	<p>Former client</p> <p>Current Customer</p> <p>Former client</p>	
<b>Novelties and different experiences</b>	<p>I wanted to know another culture, live with another family, study in another school, live a different life, a place completely different from what I live.</p> <p>Coming here and bumping with a culture completely different from ours, in my case. And for me, it has been a new experience. It was experience, novelty, the unknown.</p>	<p>Former client</p> <p>Current Customer</p> <p>Former client</p>	

Source: Research data.

## EMOTIONAL DIMENSION

Through the emotional dimension of the image, it was sought to identify the emotions elicited during the experience of people in relation to language courses exchanges. Thus, the testimonies obtained in this study show the


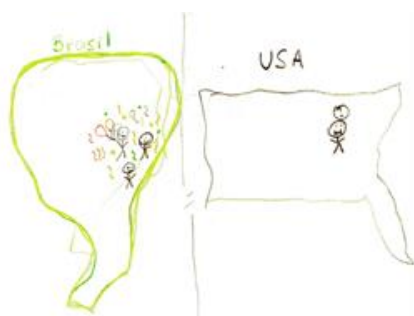
following categories of emotions that the exchange program can generate: a) Emotions and positive expectations; (b) negative emotions and frustration of expectations; (c) Resources for the management of emotions (friends, partners and family members) and, finally, (d) emotions related to the mechanism of sacrifice-reward. Such categories may be observed in the testimonies and drawings of various audiences surveyed and which are presented in Table 5.

In the drawing on the category Emotions and positive expectations, there is a heart with the colors of the flag of Germany, representing the love relationship of the interviewee by that country. It is observed still in this drawing, a clock with explicit mention to a cultural German feature, which is the punctuality. In addition, this drawing shows a train, which is a very common means of transport in Germany. Apparently, these characteristics of that country generate admiration at the interviewee.

Whereas the category Negative emotions and frustration of expectations was illustrated by means of a drawing in which Brazil is represented colorful, with people rejoicing and celebrating (balloons, confetti and serpentine). On the other hand, the same drawing shows the United States (which in this case was the destination of the exchange student) only in black color, with one person alone and, apparently, in doubt, as suggested in the question mark just above his or her head.



A third category found was called Resources for the management of emotions (friends, partners and family). This is because the Exchange students count on people of their circle of relationships and build new bonds in the eagerness to deal with the emotions arising from the experience of an international exchange student. In the drawing for this category, it can be observed on the part of the interviewee, the pursuit of family concordance to the initiative to hold a language course exchange. In response, the parents express their support and encouragement in relation to the desire of the daughter.

Table 5. Emotional dimension of the image.

Categories	Emotions and positive expectations	Negative emotions and frustration of expectations
<p><b>Testimonies</b></p> <p>It is an inexplicable experience, only those who go have such experience will feel it. There are the positive and the negative sides. Of course, that most of them are positive, but also, we spend some bad moments too. But on the whole it is very good!</p> <p>Now, in relation to the subjects, it surpassed my expectations in relation to the maturity also surpassed my expectations, I made many trips. It was great; I also had a lot of fun. I would never imagine that I was going to travel so much too. It was very good!</p> <p>My expectation is every day a new thing, always having different moments from one another by making the most of the places and different people, always having different things to do, leaving the usual always apart and doing different things.</p>	<p><b>Audience</b></p> <p>Current Customer</p> <p>Former client</p> <p>Potential Customer</p>	<p>But I remember that what really afflicts us is if the family will be good, before knowing from which city they are from you become kind of apprehensive in relation to this because it will define quite what will happen depending on which city, and then and if the young people, if you will be able to fit in. (...) This type of fear, whether you will like the others, whether they will like you, if you will be cool, this kind of thing...</p> <p>I did not let me down, but when it comes to financial issues I thought I would earn more money. Ins pity of earning money, I worked really hard, but I expected it would be a little better.</p> <p>I imagined that being away from families, friends, my wife, I would endure the sentimental part easily. But I spent a good deal of solitude so I was quite strong. I think that everything would be new, in a short period of time, that it would be calm, but it was not. Now that I got into the swing of things, but at the beginning, in the first two months it was a difficult experience for me.</p>
<p><b>Drawings</b></p> 	<p>Former client</p> <p>Former client</p> <p>Current Customer</p>	

Source: Research data.

Table 5. Emotional dimension of the image (continuation)

Categories	Testimonies	Emotions related to sacrifice-reward mechanism
<p><b>Resources for the management of emotions (friends, partners and family)</b></p>	<p>I had two friends in specific that we built a lot there, we went through so much together, we were really two confident, that I could go and talk about everything, and tell everything, happy hours and sad hours. [...] They are people that I will bring into my life, for the rest of my life. They are people that I will remember and that will be part of my world for the rest of my life.</p> <p>In the beginning I was thinking about Australia, then in the time that we saw that we also had New Zealand, we changed our mind. But I decided to go even for the sake of my cousin, I saw pictures, heard stories and had contact with the people there because of her.</p> <p>Yes, absolutely, the support of my family was crucial! First because I had no scholarship and I would not be able to work there, because I was going on a student visa. So, first I needed my parents' financial support while I was there, and in the second place of my boyfriend, I had never stayed away from him, we had been together for a long time, and ended up coinciding that at the same time he also arranged an exchange for him to go to the USA.</p>	<p>Look for me, in fact, difficulty was the work, family and also car, right? Because the car is a national passion in Brazil and I would have to sell my car and get away from all that I love, that are in my day-to-day, and also the agreement at work. But I only had the courage to give the kickoff.</p> <p>Then from the contact with the teachers, I went running after my goals to show that I was really concerned. I think that the biggest obstacle was really show that I had no interest, show my competence in both academic and language, which was also evaluated for me to go and achieve this position there. I think that this was the main goal.</p> <p>And of course leave my job behind, open hand of their material things to raise resources to accomplish this goal. However, I had to do this in order to be where I am today.</p>
<p><b>Audience</b></p>	<p>Former client</p> <p>Potential Customer</p> <p>Former client</p>	<p>Current Customer</p> <p>Former client</p> <p>Current Customer</p>
<p><b>Drawings</b></p>		

Source: Research data.



Finally, it was verified the occurrence of emotional aspects related to the Mechanism of sacrifice-reward. This is because the interviewee demonstrated through her drawing that she was having to make a sacrifice to not buy a dress she wanted with the purpose to save money to facilitate the achievement of the language course exchange.

## FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

The present study sought to describe the image that potential customers, current customers and former customers have regarding the exchange of language courses, based on three (cognitive, symbolic and emotional) of the four dimensions of the classification proposed by De Toni, Milan and Schuler (2004, 2005).

To do so, it was opted for using the qualitative method, by means of 45 in-depth interviews with such groups of customers. During the interviews, the technique of drawings construction was used, which had the purpose to illustrate the content of the interviews. Furthermore, the information obtained was analyzed through the technique of content analysis for thematic units.

Among the interviewees, it was noticed that most of them have a monthly family income between R\$ 3,001.00 to R\$ 7,000,00, followed by the group with an income higher than the R\$ 7,000,00. 25 females and 20 male people were interviewed, with an average age of 26.8 years, being observed a strong concentration of Exchange students aged between 20 and 30 years. Regarding the interviewees' marital status, the present study showed a higher frequency of single exchange students than the other groups analyzed. Approximately half of the respondents had already completed a higher education course on the occasion of the completion of the interviews, as well as a part of them had some title at postgraduate level (Specialization or Master). In addition, around a quarter of respondents had incomplete higher education course, what indicates a trend that the schooling level of the Exchange students is from high school to upper education.





Regarding the results obtained for the cognitive dimension of the image, it was verified that it can be classified into three broad categories: (a) the reasons that lead people to make language courses exchanges; (b) Sources of information and groups of influence on the decision for language courses exchange; and (c) the criteria used for the choice of countries of destination for language courses exchange.

The reasons that lead people to make language courses exchanges was subdivided into six categories, namely: a1) possibility of learning a new language; a2) knowing other countries and new cultures; a3) meeting people and making friends; a4) evolving professionally; a5) possibility of earning money, and a6) getting together work, study and leisure activities.

Whereas in the category called Information sources and groups of influence on the decision by language courses exchange, it was found that the internet, the exchange agencies and relatives and friends are the main ones.

The criteria used for the choice of countries of destination for exchange of language courses can be subdivided in the following subcategories: b1) geographic and climatic factors; (b2) Ease of access; (b3) the economic viability of the exchange; (b4) security offered by the country of destination; and (b5) the cultural aspects of the country of destination.

In the symbolic dimension, the following categories were obtained: a) Growth and personal maturity; (b) social status; c) Adventure, fun and challenge; d) identity, freedom and independence; (e) new and different experiences.

Finally, the emotional dimension can be divided into the following categories: a) Emotions and positive expectations; (b) negative emotions and frustration of expectations; (c) Resources for the management of emotions; d) emotions related to the mechanism of sacrifice-reward.

## RESEACH LIMITATIONS

The most expressive limitations of this work refer to the methodological choices. This is because there was a concern to understand the problem better, in detriment to obtain conclusive results. Thus, as the method adopted has a qualitative nature it does not either fit or is intended to perform statistical inferences, because this would only be possible with the adoption of the quantitative method.

It should also be noted that in the research a single cross sectional study was carried out that might change over time and vary according to different social, economic, historical, cultural and marketing situations. Therefore, different results might be found in other cities and countries, as well as in other historical moments.

Besides the above, the interpretations of the information obtained, because they involve some degree of subjectivity in the analysis, may undergo the researchers' influence. Also in this sense, the interpretations were performed under the marketing paradigm, using the classification proposed by De Toni, Milan and Schuler (2004, 2005). Thus, the interpretations found in this study could be different if another theoretical basis is used.

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