

KNOWLEDGE OF TOURISM AT REGIONAL LEVEL

Luis Valdés, Eduardo del Valle and Inés Sustacha

Universidad de Oviedo
lvaldes@uniovi.es

Despite the current context of global economic crisis, tourism activity is still growing, as well as being a dynamic activity in constantly development. The volume of visits and tourist spending makes tourism a major economic activity, which requires information systems for decision-making of all stakeholders who are involved in tourism management, also public and private, considering all administrative units: national, regional and local authorities because tourist activity is limited in many cases to local level.

This article discusses the information needs for tourism from a statistical and scientific perspective considering the different actors involved in tourism which have different information needs. In addition, this article analyses the structure of tourism statistical system in Spain, both nationally and regionally, with particular reference to the Tourism Information System of Asturias (SITA) as a model of knowledge system.

The World Tourism Organization shows the need for countries to have a Tourism Statistics System (SET) incorporated into the General Systems of Statistics and able to provide reliable, consistent and appropriate statistical information integrated in the socioeconomic and statistical structure, considering different territorial levels (national, regional and international).

The WTO specifically recommends understanding the phenomenon of tourism in all of its aspects, physical, social, and economic and at the same time, it is necessary to measure the economic contribution of tourism in a context of international comparability and into the national statistical structures. In this sense, the WTO has consistently worked to develop definitions, concepts, classifications, that allow have nowadays statistical methodologies for the analysis of tourism, since the first recommendations on tourism statistics dating from 1993 (Recommendations on Tourism Statistics (1993 RTS) to the most recent, the new *International Recommendations for Tourism Statistics 2008* (IRTS 2008).

In the tourism sector it is necessary to get the information needs from the viewpoint of Information Systems which should have a broad and dynamic view as well as providing answers to all these demands for information required by different users.

Furthermore, in the case of Spain, the complexity increases as a result of the assumption of tourism responsibility by the autonomous community. The regional governments of the autonomous community are the responsible for legislation, planning the tourism activity

and tourism promotion, so they need specific and concrete information as well as the private sector, who requires, in turn, specific knowledge more connected to their specific activity (accommodation, transport, distribution, catering...) which provides them the most appropriate business strategies.

Therefore, a Tourist Information System (SIT), apart from develop their own methodologies and operations for the study of tourism, it should also show and synthesize information from other entities, in this case the members of the System Tourism Statistics (SET), and thus allow the analysis and dissemination of that knowledge to different users of information. On the other hand, a Tourist Information System (SIT) should provide consistent, sustainable and comparable information in time and between regions.

In Spain, tourism statistics at the General State Administration, which would shape the SET are prepared by the National Statistics Institute (INE) and the Institute for Tourism Studies (IET).

In the case of INE, it develops occupancy surveys in hotels, tourist campsites, apartments and holiday accommodation given results about the quantification of the supply (number of establishments open squares estimates and estimated number) of demand (number of passengers and number of overnight stays, which are classified by country of residence, and autonomous region in the case of residents in Spain), the duration of a trip, the occupancy and staff. The surveys are conducted to the accommodations and companies.

The Institute for Tourism Studies (IET) analyzes the tourism from the demand perspective as the reporting unit. The three main operations performed are: Inbound Tourism (Frontur), Tourism Expenditure Survey (Egatur) and the Spanish Tourist Movements (Familitur).

Moreover, in the case of Spain, the organization for the production of official statistics is very complex, due to the decentralization of production statistics between the General Administration of State and the regional government, which have statistical systems that coexist with the statistics compiled by National Institutes. This has meant that in most of the Spanish regions there are regional statistical institutes. In some cases, these regional institutes develop their own statistical operations in tourism, while others use the regionalized information provided by the two national institutes.

Also, the regional tourism governments have their own needs of information so in some cases they have development information systems such as the Statistical Analysis System of Tourism in Andalusia (SAETA), established in 1995 and now is included in the Public institution «Turismo Andaluz» as a department of statistics and market research.

In Asturias appears in 1996 the Tourist Information System of Asturias (SITA) a model of cooperation between the University of Oviedo and the Government of the Principality of Asturias and whose statistical operations are currently integrated into the Regional Statistics Plan. More recently, in 2008, was created by the joint initiative of the Institute of Tourism and the University of Castilla-La Mancha, the System of Tourism Research of Castilla-La Mancha, which are carry out several research projects related to tourism in this community. Also it is worth mentioning some local observatories, such as the Observatory of Tourism of Costa Daurada established in 2001.

Tourist Information System of Asturias (SITA) is defined as «a permanent and systematic collection, processing, management and dissemination of accurate information

for the purposes of planning, action and evaluation for individual tourist travel agents and corporate public Asturias».

Since 1997, it performs a comprehensive analysis of tourism in Asturias, a region situated in the north coast of Spain, from a standpoint both structural and cyclical, through a series of research lines organized into four blocks of information, perfectly complementary and synergistic: the analysis of demand in destination and also doing market studies in origin, an annual analysis of the tourist accommodation, the calculation of the economic impact of tourism on the regional economy in terms of Gross Value Added and employment, using a methodology input-output analysis, and the fourth one, an area of research and knowledge.

Apart from the statistical operations, the Tourist Information System of Asturias (SITA) performs several analyses and reports according to different criteria: demand tourism by type of accommodation whether private or excursionist, local or municipal analysis, reports by tourist origin, etc. as well as carries out studies about other activities such as adventure tourism or the relative to the quality of tourist offices, and origin market studies.

