

# THE CONCEPT OF SUSTAINABLE TOURISM IN ENGLISH FOR TOURISM COURSE BOOKS

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

As every sector related to human activity, the tourism industry, from the beginning, has been adapting to the new society lifestyles. One of the biggest changes suffered by both the industry and the tourist himself in recent years is the awareness of the influence they can have on the environment in which they operate and on the possible negative consequences that their behavior may entail, that is, on the sustainability of tourism. This trend is reflected in the tourism books of different disciplines and, as it cannot be otherwise, should also be transferred to the textbooks of English applied to Tourism, which, likewise, have to be a mirror of those changes in the society as well.

Consequently, the objective of this study is to check the inclusion and treatment of contents on sustainability in such textbooks, as well as the conceptual evolution over the years as a reflection of these new scenarios. To this end, a detailed analysis of a selection of books used in the teaching of English for tourism at tertiary education has been carried out. These textbooks have been published mainly since 1992 (when the Earth Summit of Rio de Janeiro was held and where the term “sustainable tourism” was coined), to the present day.

## 2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

### 2.1. Sustainable tourism

Today tourism is considered one of the most important industries worldwide, as there is a constant flow of travellers of all kinds. In recent years it has experienced a steady growth and a deep diversification, despite the profound international economic crisis. The flow of international tourists grew by 3.9% in 2016 to reach 1,235 million. Forecasts in January 2017 pointed to a growth of between 3% and 4% (WTO, 2017a). These tourist

flows are closely related to the development of the destination countries making tourism a key driver of their socio-economic progress. Between 2010 and 2030, the growth rate of arrivals in these emerging destinations (+ 4.4% per year) is expected to double arrivals in advanced economies (+ 2.2% per annum). (WTO, 2015)

Nowadays, the search for sustainability seems to be an important factor for the responsible tourist when choosing a destination (Pérez, 2004). Therefore, the attempts to integrate sustainability in the tourist experience are increasing, not only from the environmental point of view (Agrusa, Lema, Tanner, Host & Agrusa, 2010), but also from tourism management itself (Reynolds, 2013) and from quality management through on-the-job processes (González, Frías & Gómez, 2014).

## **2.2. Sustainable Tourism in Textbooks of English for Tourism**

The command of English, as a determining global language in the development of tourism and the commercialization of its products and services, is a basic competence in the promotion of future professionals of this industry and, as such, it must play an important role in their training. This is why many articles refer to its role as a trigger for tourism (Loera & Escalera, 2014, Vidal, Berlanga de Jesus & Rumold, 2008) and the need for its use in any type of tourism; Pérez (2010) underlines its importance in the case of wine tourism, for example.

This need is evidenced by the increasing presence of tourism topics in general English textbooks, as well as in Business English, where they were traditionally included, showing a clear tendency towards their own individual identity through a greater editorial production of English textbooks for tourism in the recent decades (Varela, 2007).

Thus, we can say that the competence on sustainability has been and is widely studied in the teaching of tourism English, but mainly from one of its multiple aspects, interculturality. We have not found any specific study on the incorporation of other aspects on sustainable tourism that do appear in its WTO definition, such as healthy lifestyles, the impact of tourism on the host community, from the perspective of the industry workers or the inclusion of environmental issues

Nevertheless, it seems that the concept 'sustainable' is already beginning to be taken into account in the teaching of languages: Prádanos (2015) includes it in the classes of Spanish as a foreign language; in the tourism field, González (2012) comes closer to this approach in its study on translation in the texts of adventure tourism and Sanmartín (2015) provides a pragmatolinguistic analysis of "what is ecological and sustainable", in regulations and tourist promotion web pages without mentioning their inclusion in specialized textbooks in the industry.

That is why what we have approached this study and included these parameters in addition to the existing ones.

## **3. METHODOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK**

In order to verify the inclusion of this current trend of tourism towards a sustainable concept, we have carried out a detailed analysis of the 43 books commonly used for

the teaching of tourism English in the University of Cadiz. The selection criterion has therefore been to analyze texts whose contents have actually been implemented in the classroom during the long history of tourism studies in this province, whose origin, through different institutions, dates back to academic year 66-67. Although the oldest copy dates from 1976, most of them have been published since 1992.

Adapting the five key parameters of the environmental and socio-cultural dimension of sustainability established by the WTO (2017), four categories have been established:

- a) The first group, and gradually from a basic approach to a complete development of the concept 'sustainable', includes books that incorporate a vision of tourism focused on healthy lifestyles, usually aimed at the tourist himself.
- b. The second group encompasses texts that transfer sustainability to the workplace, including patterns of responsible behaviour, safety and occupational risk prevention models focused on the quality of service, directed mainly to the tourism professional.
- c. The third group comprises books dealing with interculturality and values of tolerance and understanding between equal or different linguistic communities in direct contact in the tourism context.
- d. A fourth and broader group, given that its treatment in the texts is deeper, brings together those manuals that include sustainability from the environmental point of view.

First, the textbooks are analyzed according to the topics they deal with. The following sections include the presence of the four previous categories, as well as their treatment either as individual activities or as complete units. Special emphasis is placed on interculturality and environment, as they are the most usual ones.

#### 4. CONCLUSIONS

Although sustainability is a current term in vogue, on which current tourism development projects are based, the distinction of all the nuances included in this concept began to be included in the English for Tourism books from the coinage of the term itself in the 1990s, when the tourism industry began to give it more relevance. In the previous decades these topics were not usually incorporated in the books for the teaching of tourism English or they did so tangentially.

Since the 1992 World Summit they began to appear on a recurring basis and become habitual in most current textbooks. However, their treatment is usually restricted to the environmental and/or cultural dimensions of sustainability established by the WTO. The fact that only 10 of the analyzed samples include other possible dimensions of sustainability among their contents implies that the holistic concept of tourism is not yet fully consolidated in textbooks of English applied to Tourism and it is usually dealt with from a particular point of view.

It has been verified how the different approaches in which the concept 'sustainable' has been categorized are included in the textbooks to a greater or lesser extent, depending on their specialty: labour sustainability plays an important role in books of English applied to

the hotel and restaurant industry; interculturality and healthy lifestyles are mostly included in books on general tourism; the environmental impact of tourism is basic to the sector, usually included in general tourism books as well.

In the latter case, the use of several overlapping terms to refer to the same concept reveals the existing terminological variety. Consequently, we can see how the definition of sustainable tourism in these specimens presents difficulties, since the terminology used to refer to the same concept is not consistent.

From the year 2000 there has been a boom in the publication of textbooks on tourism English (Varela, 2007: 335). They do not show a temporal gradation in the inclusion of sustainability issues that imply an increase and consolidation of the use of a fully defined terminology. There is a trend towards specialization, focusing the concept of sustainability mainly on the environmental sphere, where the most common terms, environmental and sustainable, have been used in a recurrent basis to refer to sustainability in general tourism books, as has been observed in the previous section.