

EXTENDED ABSTRACT

TOURISM AND IDENTITY IN SAN MIGUEL DE ALLENDE, MEXICO

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The technification and industrialization of the economic process has taken to transform ideologycal and organizational structures that impact directly in groups and individuals. Also, the opening of markets has knock down geographic and symbolic boundaries, giving the human being the opportunity of grown and experience in real time, scenes outside their context.

It is important to mention that privileged tourist destinations with patrimonial resources (cultural, historical, natural) faced gradually complex processes of social intervention as the contact with other entities (individuals, groups, institutions, organization, cultures, among others). In those spaces, the public sector impulse speeches and practices to solve the conflicts, social problems and local needs. In that sense, public and private initiative in their different areas promotes the interchange of information and cultural background between local and foreign, altering realities that reconfigure the identity, not only of local population, but also of visitors.

Specifically, societies are in a latent dilemma that demands to modernize or exclude local economy; in other words, the integrity of the social groups it has been threatened by an invasive process that affects the sectors that have fought to preserve their culture and to maintain their values that have given identity through the years. In summary, the human being possess innate defense mechanisms (awareness) that allows to compare and guard those useful manifestations or the ones that have a certain affinity, considering that the identity integrates a cluster of elements that reply to the need of being different from others, through the assignment of social labels that recognize geographical, cultural, historical and even ideological differences.

In summary, the identity implies to figure out correlated elements that keep proximity with the history and the cultural background inherited; therefore, it leads to recognize in its totally the complexity of the culture in all their representations, which means that the identity it's in a metaphorical process of constant creation and recreation from de defined action known as "socialization".

Based on the above, its relevant to say that, as a discipline, tourism has faced a series of challenges in incorporate in its investigation lines topics about culture and identity; in this challenge, the turismologists had support in disciplines such as anthropology, sociology and psychology to make a huge bibliographic corpus that uphold, from multidisciplinary advances, complex and dynamic categories such the discussed in here.

Said the above, the theoretical – methodological speech has to be rethink over and over again because of the nature of the object of study; so, the present collaboration discuss and sum the trinomial analysis "tourism, identity and culture", from the results of the investigation "San Miguel de Allende Mexico. An identity analysis from tourist discipline".

Specific, the place is full of particular characteristics that make it benefit for the identity analysis, this is because of the interaction with visitors and tourist has made that the native population of SMA rediscover day to day their identity attributes (individual and collective), allowing the conservation, adherence, fusion or elimination of cultural particularities that impact all over the identity of the host community (local population), forming itself a multicultural society where an unnumbered of identities converge fighting to prevail inside of the same context.

Having said the above, the intention of this collaboration is to show how the native population of San Miguel de Allende has fragmented their identity but also reconfiguring their sense of belonging from tourist activity.

Based on consulting specialized literature it has been reconstructed a study of the case, taking in count as a central topic the trinomial analysis: identity, tourism and culture; the first two categories focus on the object of study, while the culture serve as an alternate category to detect identity referents (cultural elements from a specific group) and cultural assets from SMA (cultural heritage material and intangible).

Culture as a nodal category between tourism and identity, it can be understood as a mechanism of distinction among groups and individuals; which refers an ordered set of attributes that form the social life of men in different dimensions (economical, political, religious, etc.). This means that it doesn't exist an individual without culture, neither culture without an individual, regarding that the human being is a cultural individual by nature that reinvent and internalize the objective forms (material culture) and subjective forms (cognitive schemes) which are part of the culture (Giménez, 2005).

About the identity case, it has been retaken the statements of Melucci, 1997; Larraín, 2001; and Giménez, 2017, whom agree that this is made from 1) *Collective Memory*: Historical legacy that has constructed societies through the time.; 2) *Sense of belonging*: Several sociocultural manifestations that men use to create human relationships with the geographical space and the social groups inside it; and 3) *Social recognition*: A collective value which compares features that define or characterize the human being. This three above were retaken as subcategories.

In that sense, tourism is understood not only as an economic activity, but also as a social fact linked to the benefit and/or patrimonial exploitation to obtain economic, telecommunications and services benefits. (Leite y Graburn, 2009). Therefore, tourism as a social case, preserves, reaffirms or threat the particularities of this location and with it the references that give identity to the members of a social group (André, 2011).

Given that, the investigation was developed from the touristic perspective, the methodological proposal link tourism and culture as related categories of the identity analysis; in that sense, it was collected information of the public sector (Secretaría municipal de Turismo); social (native population with more than five years living in SMA; as visitors and tourist that arrive to the place); private (national and international businessmen involved in hotels, restaurants and selling art items). The purpose was to identify how they had rescue the tangible and intangible heritage, perceiving the identities references and the cultural assets that conform the structures of San Miguel de Allende identity.

In the first place, it has been retaken the point of view were the population has lived in SMA for more than five years (desirable profile of the sample); previously, the elements and people that this group consider matched with a SMA profile were identified; additionally, it was retaken the opinion of visitors and/or tourist to know which cultural assets they notice with the location, moreover the identity references that, seen from the outside, are unique in favor of the native people of San Miguel de Allende (emic perspective). To achieve this, different semi-structured interviews were designed, and according to Ortiz (2007), are flexible into the order or how the questions are done. The design of this tool, included a pilot test with methodology specialist in the investigation directed to tourism and with the objective population, shortly was finished.

As a complement, a serial of interviews allowed a deeply research about the sociocultural processes as a product of tourist activity in San Miguel de Allende. This was useful as an adaption of the information gathering instrument of Piqueras (1996); the new version has as purpose to achieve a closing view to cultural manifestations (patrimonial and identity) that distinguish native population; coupled with information related to individual and collective perceptions of SMA.

As a context of the elements that are part of the identity of native population (local population perception), family nuclei point out because they have turned in a central element to grant the legacy that characterizes SMA, which also defines its population; this represents an endoculturative process where oral tradition has made easier the local knowledge diffusion between local population and general public. In that sense, the oldest generations had been in charge of transmit a conceptual baggage to the youngest, who had assumed the challenge of preserve representative aspects of their history and culture; an example of it are Mexico's independence facts happened in San Miguel de Allende territory, as well as the festivities of the liturgical calendar. At the same time, the educational institutions at their different levels, consider historical and local tradition topics that encourage since early ages the appreciation of native population roots.

Additionally, some of the interviewed people declare have acquired by their own knowledge about the history location; tools like books and websites had cleared their doubts about specific themes. However, the collective memory of native population has been decreasing because of the disinformation, the lack of interest and the reconfiguration

of the face to face relationships. In this situation, is necessary to admit that the preservation of the historical legacy and the internal exploration of “I” and “the other one” magnify the cultural and identity conceptions from the individual to the collective.

In the same way, native population are certain that the local history has allowed them to know more about who they are and what they have done in benefit for SMA, this thought is taken both the ancestors and actual families. The original population agree to feel an emotional link to inherited assets; as well as the actual residents (people that have lived in there from 5 or more years), declare that cultural assets of their actual “home” has let them appreciate their place of origin, additionally of having created social relationships that make them feel part of a group.

San Miguel de Allende has remained in an active satisfaction of the national and international community for various reasons: historical, natural and cultural resources; the variety of products and services, together with the hospitality of people. The tourism model that has been jointly promoted by the public, social and private sectors, it has also adequate to international standards that allow to experience the traditional Mexico with a vanguard sense, an example of it is the hotel and restaurant offer in the city. In the light of this situation, elements of the local culture have been rescued to spread the region’s wealth in the global context, reaffirming the use and representation of demonstrations; as well as the adoption of new alternatives that promote art and culture in their different representations (dance, music, cinematography, literature, sculpture, painting and architecture).

Native population admit that the use and preservation of heritage has impulse the economic growth of the location and raised the standard of living of its people; nevertheless, the foreign community is the one that most benefits get from tourism, as they have enough economic resources to invest in improvements (infrastructure, customer service, quality in the product, etc.) that that favor them and instead represents a disadvantage among those who lack the resources to compete in a dynamic and increasingly select market. With this in mind, local groups have found in culture a convenient alternative to distinguish from the rest, since tourists and visitors desire to experience the essence of destiny.

In addition, tourist activity has repaired the social fabric between native population, who work collaboratively to preserve the history and culture that have given them identity for decades and that distinguish SMA all over the world. Being a destination with international recognition has promoted public and private investment, channeling resources to the preservation of spaces and to strengthen a tourist image that favors the center of the town since it houses the greatest number of attractions, because of it, residents, neighbors and tourists have benefited from infrastructure and the concentration of public and private services. Furthermore, the local population has strengthened relationships with people outside the context, being receptive with visitors or with those who decide to reside there.

After all, identity as an unfinished process has sociocultural variations that adapt to individual and collective needs or demands. Given the global context that permeates 21st century societies, it is inevitable that cultural manifestations mutate or transform according to the context where they are found and to the factors that fracture their structure and function; it is to recognize that identities such as San Miguel de Allende, has become flexibles, as a result of socialization processes are increasingly aggressive with globalization and tourism activity.