

EXTENDED ABSTRACT

NEW APPROACHES TO UNIVERSITY TEACHING IN TOURISM: DIDACTIC PROPOSAL FOR THE STUDY OF TOURIST TERRITORIAL RESOURCES

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The paper presented, a direct result of the praxis of university teaching, assumes a double character: on the one hand, reflective, and, on the other, eminently pragmatic and didactic. In this line, this article offers a clear and well-founded teaching project regarding a key subject in the Tourism University curriculum: *Tourist Territorial Resources*.

In the context of the characteristic transversality of tourism, this subject is framed within the thematic field that represents the analysis of its geographical aspect. This aspect, of increasing interest during the last decades, focuses on the study of the interrelation between the territorial base and the tourist function, where the *tourist territorial resources*, the factors that attract the activity, play a key role.

Despite the growing importance of the territorial study of tourism, the truth is that its concretion in the Spanish University System has not been simple nor homogeneous. In this case, the *White Paper of the Degree in Tourism* proposed some basic guidelines for the design of study plans. Those guidelines were based fundamentally on the definition of the called *Subject Blocks by Competences* (BMC), which established common minimum content. Based on them, it is up to each University to define the specific contents in which the various BMCs are articulated, which explains the lack of homogeneity previously indicated in the study plans. However, in the case of the territorial aspect of tourism, notable coincidences are observed between universities, defining a basic structure in three major thematic blocks: tourism geography, territorial tourism resources, and planning and management of the tourist territory. The divergences are above all in the concretion of these thematic blocks in subjects as well as in the denomination and structuring of the same, as it is deduced from the study that is provided in the study plans of several Spanish universities.

In this regard, there is a situation of marked disparity, and even contradiction, between faculties. This is particularly evident in relation to the delimitation between the conceptual and fundamental aspects of the territorial dimension of tourism, on the one hand, and

the more properly descriptive, alluding to the great types of spaces, flows and dynamics, on the other. The indiscriminate and heterogeneous consideration between plans of both blocks of questions, both in the subjects of *Tourism Geography* and in those of *Tourist Territorial Resources* (or of a similar name), requires a clarification, which can contribute to a minimum comparison between universities, in accordance with the provisions in this regard in the *White Paper of the Degree of Tourism* and in the BMC defined in it.

That is why the paper offers a proposal we consider coherent and that has been successfully developed at the University of Córdoba (Spain). In this sense, the subject *Territorial Tourism Resources* can assume an eminently analytical, conceptual and explanatory nature of the territorial aspect of tourism, approaching the study of resources as its primary factor. Secondly, *Tourism Geography* (or subjects of equivalent denomination) could adopt a more descriptive approach, considering the great dynamics of tourism development. After that, the *Tourism Territory Planning* would address the specific planning and management processes in the different types of destinations.

Once this proposal for structuring territorial content has been defined within the framework of University tourism studies, the article focuses specifically on the didactic and methodological proposal related to the subject of *Tourist Territorial Resources*. As it has been pointed out back lines, this subject would have to assume an eminently explanatory and founding character of the geographical aspect of tourism.

This explains why its teaching has been organized around a series of basic notions and ideas, clearly sequenced among themselves, that outline a sort of conceptual journey in a didactic and comprehensive way for students. The starting point is the systemic vision of tourism, that is the understanding of the phenomenon as a complex and dynamic reality resulting from the interaction of several components. Indeed, based on those that are proposed as the major components of the tourism system (users, operators, flows, space, resources and products), it is the last three, more specifically territorial, that largely support the conceptual path designed for the subject, based on the inescapable link and continuous interaction between the tourist function and the physical setting that welcomes it.

It is for this reason that *geographical space*, an essential basis for natural and human processes, constitutes the first milestone of the proposed route. The idea to highlight at this point is that, as has been pointed out, tourism always develops, locates and formalizes over a certain physical environment. From this, the concept of *territory* is directly inferred; it is identified as the space assigned to a community, the basic support of its activity and its reference in individual and collective memory. The territory becomes visible and perceptible through the *landscape*, and this in turn, when it has an intrinsic value, can be valued as *heritage*. The valuation of heritage as an attractive reality, capable of generating visitor flows, makes it a *tourist resource*, a key explanatory factor and trigger for tourism activity. But this activity is not real until the resource is not subject to a functionalization process, through the provision of infrastructures, equipment or services that generate the *tourist product*. The products are not generally found in isolation in the territory but in interrelation with each other. The set of tourism products linked to a territory generate the *tourism offer*. And when a territory becomes recognizable for its tourist functionality, with its own visitor flows and specific management, we speak of *destination*. Finally, a set of destinations that show functional relationships with each other can shape a *tourist region*.

This conceptual route has been used as a fundamental reference for the proposal of thematic and methodological structuring of the subject of *Tourist Territorial Resources*. At the thematic level, the subject is organized into five major blocks (topics), divided as follows: a first topic dedicated to explaining the foundations of the tourism system and the territorial aspect of tourism. A second topic specifically dedicated to the concept of tourist territorial resource and to the exposition and explanation of its typologies according to different criteria. A third topic where the factors of tourist location are analyzed, that is, those factors that, together with tourism resources, contribute to explaining the location and character of tourism in the territory. A fourth topic, of a clearly methodological nature, where the foundations of the cataloging and inventory of tourist territorial resources are exposed, that is, the set of techniques and tools aimed at collecting, knowing and evaluating the resources of a territory, facing its possible tourist functionalization. And a fifth topic where the process of functionalization of resources is specifically addressed, specified in the conformation of tourist products, the delimitation of tourist destinations, and the definition of synergies that allow the configuration of tourist regions.

This logical and coherent structuring of the subject content has been accompanied by an exhaustive and rigorous methodological framework that has been applied to both theoretical and practical content. In this sense, it must be highlighted the management of a very detailed and updated bibliography, both Spanish and international, which is incorporated into the teaching proposal. As for the more specific methodological tools, the article refers to those proposals in the development of the subject. The main tools used are: Synthetic scheme for the conceptualization of the tourist system and its components (Topic 1). Basic categorization of tourism resources proposed by the UNWTO and definition of different criteria for the classification of territorial resources from the bibliography handled, with the contribution of real examples of each type (Topic 2). Outline of the factors of tourist location, with compilation of specific sources for the study of each factor and contribution of real examples (Topic 3). Compilation and critical appraisal of various models of tourist resource inventory sheets and studies of proposals for weighting the value of resources for determining tourism potential (Topic 4). Analysis of specific tourism products and their components; description of the basic components of a tourist destination (in general) by applying the systemic territorial approach; study of the structuring of the tourist offer in various real tourist destinations, by applying the systemic approach to the analysis of its tourism management and promotion instruments; typological classification of tourist regions according to the different forms of interaction of tourist destinations (Topic 5).

In conclusion, it should be stated that the article focuses on proposing a didactic proposal for the subject of *Tourist Territorial Resources*. The interest of this contribution is fully justified by the fact that the subject addresses an essential theme among the competencies for the development of the Degree in Tourism: knowledge of the components of geographic space, essential for the activity, and which constitutes the basis on which support the subsequent study of tourist dynamics and the practice of planning and managing destinations.

The result is a model for the organization of the subject that we understand can be useful for those interested in the subject, which aims to move to reflection and serve as a reference when facing a possible restructuring of University education related to territorial aspect of the tourist phenomenon.