

EXTENDED ABSTRACT

A CONCEPTUAL APPROACH TO TOURISM TYPOLOGY: A CLASSIFICATION PROPOSAL

José A. Larrosa Rocamora

Universidad de Alicante

ja.larrosa@ua.es

<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-9951-1702>

Xavier Amat Montesinos

Universidad de Alicante

xavier.amat@ua.es

<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-5332-6122>

Carlos Cortés Samper

Universidad de Alicante

carlos.cortes@ua.es

<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-6232-9667>

1. INTRODUCTION

Tourism emerged in the seventeenth century as a minority activity linked to the elites. In the mid-twentieth century, however, it turned into a mass phenomenon. Like any new and successful activity, production and consumption came together, forming a highly standardised Fordist model of development. It was characterised by: (1) an offer implemented by large corporations, with a predominance of organised trips; (2) homogeneous demand, oriented towards basic leisure; and (3), a tourist environment with a reduced range of individualised offers.

In this context, tourism corresponds to a single type of activity, mostly characterised by sun and beach, warm and exotic destinations for the large (European and North American) tourist-producing regions, in which labour and prices are cheap. In this scenario, tourist modalities or a tourist typology is hardly useful. However, in the late twentieth century, signs of change appeared. Although the Fordist tourism market did not disappear, the (post-Fordist) production system became much more flexible and, consequently, tourists have since been given a wider choice of options, not only regarding products, but also destinations, kinds of stays, forms of accommodation, prices, etc.

In this new context, it is perhaps more relevant to refer to multiple forms of tourism, i.e., types of tourism. Indeed, the flexibility and diversification of the tourism market has affected supply, resulting in a growing number of products on offer (Fraiz Brea, 2012) – but not only. The consequences actually go far beyond the expansion of the travel catalogue. New ways of traveling and consuming mean that ever more types of tourism can be

distinguished, associated with the numerous components of tourism: various motivations or reasons for traveling, stays, physical sites, activities, etc.

2. OBJECTIVE

The main objective of this work was to explore, identify and classify tourism modalities. We also sought to study the concepts of modality, tourism typology and tourism product more in depth.

In recent years, several publications have defined and characterised a tourist typology, but without delving into a conceptual approach to tourist typology. In the absence of such an analysis, the increasingly common lists of types of tourism may be putting all modalities on the same footing, therefore suggesting they are comparable. Yet these types of tourism have been defined using very distinct categories of elements. The main objective of this article was to advance a typology classification based on a set of essential criteria: motivation, geographical site or area, demand, time, development/production processes, and forms of travel.

Worthy of note, the proposal of tourism modalities set out here is broad from a conceptual viewpoint.

3. METHODOLOGY

The categories or criteria to distinguish and classify types of tourism proposed in this work derived from a literature review and its subsequent discussion. Two essential sources were taken as a reference. The first was the *Diccionario de Turismo* [Dictionary Tourism] by Blanco Romero *et al.* (2021), which provides an interesting introduction to the concept of tourism modality. Some of the criteria proposed here are based on this definition. In this dictionary, the authors also cite a reference document, the UNWTO's 2018 *International Recommendations for Tourism Statistics*, which considers people's motivations as the main factor of differentiation in tourism travel (UNWTO, 2018). The second was the bibliographic review of scientific publications in the field of typology and tourist modalities. In this regard, notable are the contributions of Pulido Fernández and Durán Román (2022), Fraiz Brea (2017), Cheng (2015), BlascoPeris (2006) and López Palomeque (1993), among others.

4. RESULTS

In a tourist typology, a type of tourism is one that is identified and classified, along with other related types, based on the existence of common features. It is therefore a broad and flexible concept. The term (tourism) modality has been used more in the field of tourism studies in Spanish and can be defined as a form of tourism that manifests itself in a particular way, based on a specific attribute. Clearly, there are no major differences between the term's "modality" and "type". Therefore, their indistinct use is perfectly acceptable in tourism work.

Addressing the main objective of this study, the essential criteria to identify and classify existing types of tourism are proposed below.

4.1. Motivation as a classification criterion

Motivation within the framework of tourism activity is the reason that leads people to visit areas or sites beyond their usual place of residence. From this perspective, tourist motivations depend both on an action – the will of those who wish to perform an activity – and on an attraction – coming from a destination’s resources. This is why some authors refer directly to activity segmentation (Serra Cantallops, 2002; Torres Hechavarría, 2011): indeed, these types of motivations are based on practices (seeing, admiring, acknowledging, knowing, tasting, photographing, etc.). These practices take place according to specific resources, which act as an element of attraction, and sometimes also as a support for these activities.

Motivations, generally understood as activities or practices are perhaps the most commonly used classification criteria for tourism modalities, considered simply as thematic tourism or types of tourism (López Palomeque, 1993).

Tourists’ practices, associated with their motivations, can be organised according to similar thematic domains. In this work, five major domains and as many sub-domains were identified: sport, work, health and the components of the two major tourism resource categories: culture and nature.

The motivational criterion engenders an almost inexhaustible list of types of tourism (golf tourism, nautical tourism, archaeological tourism, shopping tourism, birdwatching, etc.). This is because today, motivational trends on the demand side are diversifying and the amount of offers based on resources and activities is rising.

4.2. A site or area as a classification criterion

Tourist domains can be classified according to their geographical characteristics: coastal sites, rural sites, urban sites and natural sites (López Palomeque, 1993; López Olivares, 2010). This same classification can be used to propose and classify tourist modalities. We thus refer to tourist modalities proposed and classified according to the type of site in question and in relation to its differentiating geographical features. Worthy of note, this proposal does not classify tourist sites, but tourist modalities on the basis of a spatial criterion, insofar as that criterion, the geographical consideration of the site, also distinguishes the main resources that give the destination its content and identity.

The application of this criterion allows to differentiate three major types of sites, according to the territory’s degree of humanisation and urbanisation (from lower to higher): nature tourism, rural tourism, and urban tourism. These modalities can be considered as types of tourism based on the basic resources of the type of represented site. Rural tourism, therefore, would be the rural site modality, although rural sites can also accommodate other types of tourism.

Added to these three major types of site tourism, at least two more could be identified: coastal tourism and inland tourism. These two forms of tourism rest on a dual approach to

geographical sites: by the sea or inland. Coastal and inland areas can also contain natural, rural or urban sites.

4.3. Demand as a classification criterion

The popularisation of tourism has led to an extraordinary growth in the number of tourists (García Pascual, 2017; Milano, 2018), but it has also caused notable qualitative changes in demand. Tourism demand is now more complex, heterogeneous and unpredictable (Flores Ruiz, 2012). The differences are visible in the composition of demand, composition being based on what tourists are like – which age group they belong to – or on their distinguishing sociocultural traits. Until the last third of the twentieth century, these features were easily identified. Today, however, the question is much more complex, since tourism has become a global social phenomenon involving a growing number of people, regardless of age, family situation or even economic status. It is thus now essential to understand demand, since its characteristics decisively influence needs, motivations and consumption decisions.

Demand characteristics, therefore, can serve as a classification criterion. The present proposal uses three specific classification elements: demographic, cultural and socio-economic traits. The resulting modalities can be considered as types of tourism, as each type reflects a specific demand segment (and thus its needs and possible motivations) as well as a concrete way of how tourists consume a tourism product. Family tourism, Islamic tourism, single tourism or LGTBI tourism, among others, are examples of types of demand segmentation.

4.4. Time as a classification criterion

Tourism is a spatial phenomenon, although it also has a notable temporal component. Almost all international organisations define tourism as an activity based on the movement of people outside their usual area of residence, for a period of more than 24 hours (therefore involving an overnight stay) and for less than one year between the moment of departure and the return to their residence. However, tourists are not evenly distributed across this temporary consumption scale, because for most people, a series of common conditions limit the practice of tourism to a more or less reduced period of time.

This time (and unequal) scale of consumption tourism is undoubtedly a basic criterion that has traditionally been used to classify modalities, owing to well-defined behaviour patterns. In this way, types of tourism can be distinguished according to tourism consumption seasonality: winter tourism, summer tourism, etc.

On the other hand, it is essential to mention the recent communications and transport revolution, which has led to highly interesting developments in the movements of people. These improvements have made it possible to travel more times a year, over longer distances and at a lower cost, benefitting the tourism sector (Eugenio Martín & Inchausti Sintes, 2016). A good illustration is the increase in offers and promotions of trips that last only a few days, i.e., short break tourism as it is called.

4.5. Other classification criteria

The criteria used so far (demand, site, time and motivation) are key defining elements of tourism, but the tourist phenomenon can be read and interpreted in many other ways as well. Other secondary criteria bring us closer to identifying other forms of tourism. For example, the tourism defined as a singularised manifestation of tourism development processes (sustainable tourism, responsible tourism, mass tourism, etc.). They also include the types of tourism that derive from a mode of travel/consumption (safe tourism, slow tourism, etc.). Both elements constitute types of tourism that emerged as a manifestation of production and consumption modes.

4.6. Types of tourism and products

In recent decades, the concepts of “types of tourism” and “tourism products” have been used interchangeably. This conceptual assimilation is undoubtedly due partly to the recent evolution of the tourism market, whose strategy has gone from marketing a few tourism products to substantially diversifying the offer, including products associated with a wide range of thematic destinations. The qualitative and quantitative leap from a single product, “tourism”, to many products, multiple types (or a typology) of “tourism” (López Palomeque, 1993), has clearly strengthened this relationship. And indeed, many forms of tourism can be developed as products, marketed in the tourist market, and consumed by the demand at the destination where they are offered. However, it is important to note that not all types of tourism are tourism products.

There is a consensus among the authors who have studied the tourism product concept regarding the basic content that defines a tourism product: tangible and intangible goods and components (Torres Bernier, 2006; Fraiz Brea, 2012). Undeniably, a highly significant component is tourism resources, which constitutes the key input of a tourism product.

Visibly, upon analysis of the four basic criteria used in this work to identify and create a tourism typology, not all are related to tourism resources. This is the case of demand and time. These two criteria allow us above all to single out consumption segments, but they do not infer basic tourist resources, whether cultural or natural.

The typology-product binomial is found mainly in the modalities classified according to spatial and motivational criteria. In the latter, tourism resources are directly invoked. They are the ones that ultimately give content and identity to the resulting types of tourism. In these cases therefore, we can refer to tourism types or tourism products interchangeably, when this modality is implemented in the market and made available to demand.

5. CONCLUSIONS

A tourist typology, also identified as tourism modalities, can be defined as ever-diversifying forms or types of tourism. In its broadest sense, any form of tourism understood as a new demand segment, such as a tourism product or a time scale of consumption, is likely to be considered as a type of tourism.

The classification criteria adopted in this study (“demand”, “site”, “time” and “motivation” as essential criteria, and “development processes” and “forms of travel” as secondary criteria) correctly represent the three major meanings of the tourism typology concept. First, types of tourism can be modalities/products (space and motivation criteria); second, modalities can be demand segments (demand criterion); and third, they can be ways of producing/consuming (time criteria, production processes and forms of travel).

The most cited tourism modalities in the sector are motivational. Most have emerged recently, and many are termed using English-language neologisms. Motivation types predominate because they are regarded as specific tourism modalities and products. In addition, developing, offering and marketing motivational tourism constitutes an essential strategy for tour operators and destination managers. This has led the term type of tourism to be directly related to that of product, although not all types of tourism can be regarded as products.

All these criteria generate a highly comprehensive and updated tourist typology. This classification, however, cannot be considered as final. Due to the sector’s dynamism, the tourist typology map is constantly expanding. However, neither conceptual delimitation difficulties nor the emergence of new types of tourism undermine the validity of the identified criteria or the developed classifications. This proposal is of interest in the field of tourism conceptualisation and for didactic purposes. Yet it also presents an applied utility.

It has become essential to characterise and analyse types of tourism in order to address the necessary diversification of tourism products – a key factor when competing in increasingly segmented and demanding markets. Tourism modalities and types of tourism are increasingly relevant in the geography of tourism and other related subjects. A correct understanding will support the training and education of future professionals in the field of tourism.