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## Responsible Management of Cultural Tourism

### ABSTRACT

Cultural tourism is a product with a strong development within the international tourism market. The cultural component is, increasingly, more present in the tourist market and configures a whole series of products, services and equipment that meet the motivations of many tourists when traveling. The consumption of the cultural offer in the destination is a common practice, both for tourists and residents, as it forms a pattern of consumption and behavior typical of the so-called advanced societies. This article will analyze the capacity of the tourism sector to promote, order and manage the set of historical assets and cultural manifestations that build up the identity of a country, territory or town in order to ensure that the cultural offer generates social and economic benefits and at the same time it is consumed in a responsible and sustainable manner in the tourist destinations.

**KEYWORDS:** tourism, culture, service consumption and responsible management

### STRESZCZENIE

*Odpowiedzialne zarządzanie w turystyce kulturowej*

Turystyka kulturowa jest produktem intensywnie rozwijającym się w segmencie międzynarodowego rynku turystycznego. Element kulturowy jest coraz bardziej obecny na rynku turystycznym i stwarza

całą serię produktów, usług i sprzętu, który wychodzi naprzeciw motywacjom wielu podróżujących. Wykorzystanie oferty kulturalnej u celu podróży jest powszechną praktyką zarówno turystów jak i rezydentów i kreuje wzorzec zachowań konsumenckich charakterystycznych dla tak zwanych „społeczeństw rozwiniętych”. Artykuł przedstawia analizę udziału sektora turystyki w promowaniu, porządkowaniu i zarządzaniu zasobami historycznymi oraz kulturowymi fenomenami tworzącymi tożsamość kraju, regionu lub miasta. Ma na celu ocenę, roli oferty kulturalnej w generowaniu korzyści społecznych i ekonomicznych, przy uwzględnieniu rozsądnego i zrównoważonego sposobu wykorzystania obiektów turystycznych.

**SŁOWA KLUCZOWE:** turystyka, kultura, usługi konsumenckie, odpowiedzialne zarządzanie

## Introduction

The 21st century is immersed in the revolution of information and communication technologies and is characterized by the phenomenon of globalization that promotes the homogenization and standardization of cultural models, values and lifestyles.

Cultural diversity, in terms of living manifestations of culture, tends towards uniformity and, therefore, to the impoverishment of cultural expressions. However, the technological environment and its trend to social alienation, tourist flows generate new forms of diversity that constitute the differential fact along with the heritage and historical legacy of destinations today.

There has not been a single universally accepted definition of “cultural tourism” (Dolnicar, 2002; Hughes, 2002). In part it can be explained, because as Donaire (2008) proposes cultural tourism is a confrontation between tourism and culture and, like all contact areas, is an imprecise concept. Cultural tourism is a form of tourism, which is characterized by the fact that visitors’ eyes focus on cultural manifestations. From the point of view of culture, tourism can be considered one more cultural manifestation. The tourist experience is one of the possible experiences that relate individuals with the different cultural manifestations. And cultural management would consist of the management activities of visitors, rehabilitation, preservation, research, cataloging, information or dissemination of cultural spaces.

Cultural tourism can also be so linked to a growing type of tourism, where an increasing number of tourists travel mainly to learn about a significant cultural resource of the destination they want to visit. Thus, cultural

destinations can include sites as diverse as museums, festivals, architecture, heritage, and tourist attractions related to food, language, and religion (Stylianou-Lambert, 2011). Other times resources or cultural products play for tourists a complementary role that is used tangentially during their stay at the destination. In these cases, the cultural component is not the main motivation of the tourist to travel, however, all the manifestations, products and cultural assets or facilities offered by a tourist destination boost the consumption of cultural offer, promoting and favoring this way the development of the local economy. At the same time, and through the consumption of the cultural offer at the same place, the visitor and / or tourist together with the resident, enrich each other, increasing their degree of intellectual knowledge through their interrelation and shared experience at the destination.

## Cultural component and tourist development

Cultural component is at the base of any society or community. Societies have been characterized always to inhabit a given area where a series of specific cultural manifestations based on material and immaterial environmental resources have taken place and have evolved over time. According to Gosden (2004) an isolated culture does not exist. As all cultural forms are essentially in contact with others, cultural contact is, therefore, a basic human element (Gosden, 2004). Tourism is increasingly offering a range of cultural heritage products, from visiting monuments to discovering unique ways of life as supply for increasing cultural and heritage tourism demand. UNESCO defines culture tourism as “to create a discerning type of tourism that takes account of other people’s cultures” (UNESCO, 2006). Indeed culture and heritage tourism has been gaining importance recently not only for its’ economic gains but due to more sustainable approaches. Tourists, as a floating population visiting the destination inevitably interact with the local community patterns of behavior, mixing cultural models, values, and lifestyles that gradually transform the cultural component of the local society. Simultaneously, tourists themselves often adopt particular local features as a part of the cultural component of the society they visit. Local language, customs and traditions, among other current cultural manifestations of the community destination are fundamental attractions of the cultural component that contribute to explain the patterns of conduct of tourist demand repeaters and the scope of the interrelations between tourists and residents.

From this perspective we can affirm that the whole of the cultural offer of a certain geographic space conforms the essence that permeates the

different social estates and characterizes the idiosyncrasy of the tourist territory. The appeal of any tourist destination is therefore subject to its environmental and territorial dimension. It is in the tourist destination where the local social identity, heritage and its transforming landscape converge to produce a specific cultural offer with a given degree of authenticity (Cohen, 1988; Tilley, 2006; Feifan Xie et al, 2007).

The living culture of a specific destination society is therefore the result of a historical process that determines its resilience, vitality and uniqueness in relation to global cultural manifestations linked to the technological and current predominant patterns of consumption. At the same time, destination historical, artistic and cultural heritage is subject to constant redefinition and reinterpretation for tourist uses by the locals and their social and political agents (Official Gazette of the Generalitat of Catalonia, 2006).

These same types of processes also take place at the municipal level where they also voluntarily recreate spaces of the past in search of a pretend authenticity “By means of the disposal of the old boats restored to the beach, an ideal beach landscape has been created. This process was given in an ideological context in which ... the beach becomes an identity sign of the city, the place where tourists plant their beach parasols in the sand, as conquerors their flags (Carbonell, 2012).

Culture is also an essential component within the national state political discourse and its objective to operate effectively for the integration of “national society” as a homogeneous totality. To avoid any negative effect on this objective to achieve a “national society”, the quality of the design and the implementation of tourism policies and activities should be defined in order to maintain the understanding of culture and its sustainability, which involves the participation of communities in the protection, preservation and enhancement of cultural heritage in the long term (UNESCO, 2006). Otherwise, without good management, poorly planned tourism can lead to environmental degradation, the destruction of heritage resources, social alienation and the naturalisation of cultural stereotypes (UNESCO 2000). This is important because with a good planning and policy making of tourism is possible to avoid the overcrowded sites, exploitive tourism behaviour, hegemonic attitudes of some tour operators, and the poor awareness by local populations of ecosystems and the touristic value of heritage resources, and all these situations can have effects contrary to the cultural tourist destination sustainability (UNESCO, 2006).

Delimiting physical and symbolic boundaries and exercising several degrees of public control and discipline through patronizing symbols,

values and legitimate language is an essential component as well (Yúdice, 2002). In other words, in the current time culture has been converted into a product or merchandise that is sold and bought just like other physical good or service. In this sense, Yúdice understands culture as a phenomenon transformed by the current technological revolution characterized by devourer patterns of consumption that boost the development of the global capitalist economic system around the world.

According to Yúdice, *“the role of culture has expanded in an unprecedented manner in the political and economic sphere, at the same time as conventional notions of culture have been considerably cleared, ... culture has simply become a pretext for sociopolitical progress and economic growth”*.

### Cultural tourism as a vehicle for new forms of cultural diversity

In dynamic terms, cultural tourism implies inevitably new spaces of cultural diversity and social regeneration characterized by the exchange of cultural components between tourists and residents in the destination. However, from a static and / or unidirectional analysis, cultural tourism can simply be interpreted as a large container of activities (see table 1) such as a visit to a monument or interpretation center, an itinerary to know the historic center of a city, the attendance at a concert or the enjoyment of the typical gastronomy of the destination.

Table 1. Components of Cultural Tourism

CULTURAL TOURISM	1	Contact and / or interest in heritage (monuments, museums and places of historical and artistic interest).
	2	Contact with assets and / or liabilities as intangible heritage (festivals, rituals, crafts, landscape, gastronomy, daily life ...) of the tourist destination visited.
	3	Consumption of the so-called culture of masses or culture of leisure (theater, dance, concerts, festivals, shows ...) during the stay at the destination.
	4	Have a cultural attitude. Cultural tourism is also or can also be an attitude that occurs when the tourist looks „culturally” on an object, space, element ... In this case, the object is not important in itself (it does not need to be cultural), but the way it looks (the ability to read, interpret, understand, decipher the element). This is what some authors like Donaire (2008) have called cultured tourism.

Source: own elaboration from the Catalan Institute for Cultural Heritage Research (2009).

It should be noted at this point that cultural tourism, beyond the mere description of different patterns of conduct or purchasing tourist attitudes

related to the consumption of cultural products, services or facilities, must be studied from the analysis of the interrelations that occur between tourists and the local community at the destination through their constant interaction. In fact, cultural and social interrelations are the ones that determine in every moment the scope of the cross-cultural experiences and their consequences for both tourists and residents in cultural terms.

The multiplicity of interrelation generates new forms of authenticity and cultural diversity derived from mutual recognition. Therefore, cultural tourism is characterized by the result of shared experiences, among tourists and local community, generating and multiplying new forms of cultural diversity in time and space.

Some authors have also been interested in establishing a pattern of different cultural tourist profiles moving away from the concept of cultural tourism as a practice linked to the generation of cultural experiences. In statistical terms, and in order to be able to add, compute and quantitatively analyze the evolution of the number of visitors to a specific cultural facility, these characterizations of the cultural tourist and their motivations have proved to be relatively useful; especially when it comes to the elaboration of feasibility studies and economic profitability (Ministry of Education, Culture and Sports, 2013) of some cultural facilities. However, this type of analysis, more directly linked to determining the consumption of cultural products, has a limited and biased character with respect to the practice that constitutes cultural tourism and that is characterized by the experience of each tourist and its degree of interrelation to any cultural offer at the destination.

### Cultural heritage: management and profitability of the monumental, artistic and cultural legacy

On the other hand, the historical legacy in the form of monuments, historical urban centers or art collections, among others, is a permanent challenge in terms of its economic management and its use both in social, cultural and tourist terms.

The so-called *knowledge and leisure society* has integrated these set of cultural assets and facilities for the benefit of economic development (Bonet i Agustí, 2003; Barretto, 2007; European Commission, 2010), and in particular to the tourism sector, promoting among tourist new patterns of behavior and consumption linked to cultural travelling. As a result of the growth of the services economy and its high profitability, the market for equipment and cultural assets has multiplied, in recent decades, as

a strategy of local, social and economic development, for both historical urban centers as well as for rural, coastal, inland and mountain areas.

However, the last economic crisis has slowed down the growth of some of the major projects linked to this type of assets cultural offer. A paradigmatic example, in the context of the deep economic crisis that hit Spain in the recent past, was the paralysis of the construction of the City of Culture of Galicia. This a macro architectural, cultural and entertainment complex, partially built and located in Santiago de Compostela. The complex was finally paralyzed at the end of March 2013 due to lack of budget. Its objective was to reconcile and strengthen heritage in relation to knowledge, research, creation and cultural consumption (El confidencial, 2013).

To avoid the waste of public resources linked to the promotion of culture, it is necessary to study in depth the relationship between culture and development (Rey, 2009; Mariscal Orozco, 2007). On the other hand, it is necessary to adapt heritage to tourist uses encouraging cultural tourism without compromising the economic viability of the equipment and products that make up this offer. It is crucial to implement some basic instruments in the processes of interaction between the tourism sector and the cultural heritage sector that allow not only to find the balance between the two but to improve the performance of the two sectors (Velasco González, 2009).

In this sense, some basic instruments such as analysis, planning, monitoring and evaluation in the context of a systematic and integrated management and exploitation of cultural and natural resources and assets must be put in place to achieve successfully the three fundamental dimensions of sustainable development.

It is therefore indispensable to balance the benefits and profits in socio-economic terms matching cultural offer with tourism activity in a sustainable manner over time.

## Conclusion

Rapid social transformations derived from the advent of a glaring and full-fledged technological revolution alter the future integrity of cultures compromising their identity. It is therefore necessary to invest in cultural diversity and dialogue between cultures (UNESCO, 2009) to ensure its continuity over time.

It is in the territory where cultural components, such as social identity, heritage and transformed natural landscape converge (Boyra 2015) characterizing the fundamental offer of the tourist destination. The territory

is the result of the use made by its economic, social and political agents; These agents organize and plan the tourist space determining their social and cultural character and ensuring the viability and the economic profitability of its resources in terms of production and consumption from a global capitalist economic system outlook.

The intrinsic value of cultural tourism lies in the cultural interrelation between tourists and the residents that inhabit the territory where the tourist destination is located. The scope of this interaction between tourists and the local community can be approached through the analysis of the degree of cultural authenticity of the tourist experience. This mutual interrelation generates new forms of authenticity and cultural diversity derived from the recognition of one's own through contact with the host community one. Therefore, cultural tourism is based on personal experiences that continuously evolve in new forms of cultural diversity in space and time.

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