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The Definition and Scope of Tourism: a Necessary Inquiry

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Abstract

Throughout the 20th century international bodies recognized the need to define the basic concepts of tourism with a view to obtaining comparable statistics. At the same time, scholars and researchers tried to define tourism, no longer with the concern of compiling statistics, but in the attempt to characterize a complex activity which emerged at the beginning of the century. However, these definitions do not provide a clear understanding of the phenomenon of tourism, nor do they comprehend the whole reality. The present paper aims to identify the insufficiencies of various definitions with the purpose of contributing to finding a definition which may merit acceptance from the scientific community.

Keywords:

visitor, motives, travel, resources, activities

Introduction

The perception of tourism as a new human activity generating multiple effects was slowly formed but the first attempts to define it emerged in the transition period from the 19th to the 20th century.

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Before that, philosophers – Montaigne (1581), Locke (1679) or Francis Bacon (1612) – emphasised the educational and instructive elements of travel; much later, writers drew attention to its economic effects. This is the case of the French author Stendhal (1830), considered to have coined the word '*touriste*', or the Portuguese writer Herculano (1838) who almost at the same time highlighted the gains the country received due to the visits from foreigners who came to enjoy the landscapes (according to the former writer) or the heritage (according to the latter).

For quite a long time, tourists were "the English travellers who journeyed to France, Italy or Switzerland" merely for purposes of instruction, curiosity and relaxation (Litré, cited by Boyer, 2002) but as travelling expanded to include other nationalities and other purposes, two profound changes took place: a) journeys were no longer merely wanderings (nomadism) but gained a sedentary nature as well, giving rise to the creation of tourist destinations as organized spaces with the purpose of attracting and receiving temporary visitors; and b) the growing record of motives for travelling (rest, health, amusement) increased the number of travellers who also came to be considered tourists.

Tourism then emerged as an economic activity, and the first attempts to identify it began to be made so as to help understand and characterize it. It is, however, from the birth of modern tourism, in the 1950s, that the need to define it arises, first, from a technical, statistical, point of view, and then from a conceptual perspective, so as to frame its scope and understand its working. From then on, definitions have grown in number, and there are "as many [definitions] as the number of authors discussing the topic", which may be justified by "the fact that tourism is practically connected to nearly all the sectors of human social activity" (Beni, 2005). Obviously when this happens it is not possible to identify the reality which is the object of reflection and action; then tourism will be whatever anyone wishes it to be.

From a technical point of view, a long path has been trodden, generally under the auspices of the UNO, but it is doubtful that the definitions currently in force, which

act as guides for governmental organizations, can prove lasting due to the ambiguities they contain. From a conceptual point of view, some emphasize economic aspects, other social and cultural features, others anthropological elements, and others still geographic aspects - thus "tourism can be stretched to encompass a wide range of phenomena" (Tribe, 1997).

The diversity of existing definitions must not be underestimated because they may contribute to find a concept to "supply the theoretical stronghold to identify the essential characteristics of tourism" (Theobald, 2001). Still, in its present condition, they do not help the scientific credibility of tourism and much less its acceptance as a discipline or science. Rather, they cause confusion, make it harder to understand the concept, and they often help lend seriousness to activities that demand political recognition or acceptance from the public opinion, and which thus obtaining the classification of "tourism activities", which indeed a rigorous analysis would deny them.

The present paper aims to critically identify the more common definitions and thus contribute to establish a holistic definition that can be used to: provide the necessary framework to tourism activities; enable the distinction between what falls in the scope of tourism and what does not; establish parameters for the contents of research; draw the limits of tourism studies and their categorization (Tribe, 2006); enable the economic and social evaluation of tourism and its effects; and provide a clear and precise reference for public policies.

The knowledge of tourism has seen a very positive evolution and has drawn the attention of researchers from various branches of knowledge, but the various meanings attributed to tourism have not been narrowed. Therefore, the epistemological analysis of tourism will continue to be "subject to confusion unless a clear distinction is made between the various meanings of the term tourism" (Tribe, 1997). What will prove useful, however, is not the distinction of 'various meanings' but rather coming to a meaning which is convenient to all researchers, regardless of their field of knowledge.

A Review of the Definitions

Historically, the first concept to be outlined was that of tourist; only later did the first attempts at defining tourism emerge, having the former concept as fundamental reference. The concept of '*tourist*' arises in dictionaries, and that of '*tourism*' in academia. Later, for reasons deriving from international relations, it became necessary to specify the meaning of '*tourist*', leaving aside the term '*tourism*'. Due to the fact that one of them – *tourist* – started out to be fundamentally used for statistical purposes and the other – *tourism* – to identify an activity, it is convenient to analyse the evolution of each concept separately.

The operational definitions of tourist

The first official definition of '*tourist*' can be found in 1937, in the League of Nations (LON), to help establish comparisons regarding international statistics. To this end, the term '*tourist*' was then applied to any person travelling for a period of 24 hours or more in a country other than that where he/she usually resides. To facilitate the concept's applicability, the LON's Council decided to list the categories of people considered to be tourists and those that were not (IUOTO, 1973), but did not set any maximum limit for the duration of the journey.

Years later, the IUOTO recommended changes to the previous definition, among which the exclusion of '*excursionists*' and of '*transit travellers*' from the term '*tourist*'. The Statistical Commission of the UN, which replaced the League of Nations, decided in 1953 to introduce the term '*visitor*' with the following definition: "non-resident intending to remain for a period of one year or less without exercising an occupation remunerated" and established 12 months as maximum limit to the stay duration.

The following year, the United Nations Convention on Customs Facilities for Touring provided a definition of tourist which was different from the previous one. It considered a tourist to be "any person (...) who enters the territory of a contracting State other than that in which the person normally resides and remains there for not less than 24 hours and not more than 6 months, as long as that journey is due to a legitimate non-immigrant

motive such as tourism, recreation, sports, health, family reasons, study, religious pilgrimages or business”.

Later, in 1963, the United Nations Conference on tourism and international travel, held in Rome, adopted the term '*visitor*'. Emphasizing that it is meant for statistical purposes, this body submits that the term “describes any person visiting a country other than that in which he has his usual place of residence, for any purpose other than following an occupation remunerated there”. This text adds that this definition covers two categories of visitors: '*tourist*' and '*excursionist*' (IUOTO, 1963).

This definition came to be accepted by the UN Statistical Commission in 1968, but allowed each country to decide how to use the category '*excursionist*' or '*day visitor*'. However, the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) issued a series of Directives regarding the establishment of tourism statistics, which were published in 1971. From then on, the definitions recommended by the IUOTO were used; in them the term '*visitor*' kept the meaning given to it in 1963 with its subdivisions:

'*Tourists*': visitors who stay for over 24 hours or who spend at least one night at an accommodation establishment in the country visited and whose travel purposes may be grouped into: i) leisure (recreation, holidays, health, study, religion and sports) and ii) business, family, mission, meeting.

'*Excursionists or day visitors*' are visitors who remain under 24 hours in the visited country or who do not stay overnight at an accommodation establishment.

In 1983, considering that these definitions referred only to international tourism, the World Tourism Organization (WTO), which by then had taken the place of the IUOTO, started integrating '*national visitors*', in other words domestic tourism, into the definition of tourism.

Finally, in 1993, the UN Statistical Commission adopted the definition which has been used since then, according to which the term '*visitor*' is the basic concept of the whole tourism statistical system, divided into the categories of '*tourists*' and '*day visitors*', with the following meanings (United Nations, 1994):

Visitor is any person travelling to a place other than that of his/her usual environment for less than 12 months

and whose main purpose of trip is other than the exercise of an activity remunerated from within the place visited;

Tourists: visitors who stay at least one night in a collective or private accommodation in the place/country visited;

Same-day visitors: visitors who do not spend the night in a collective or private accommodation in the place/country visited.

This last definition constitutes the apex of a long 56-year period in the evolution of the concept of tourist, and determines an economic and social reality of a very different nature and scope than that which guided the original concept. Due to the change in concept, tourism now comprehends professions, companies and activities which formerly lay outside it, and seeks to correspond to "the changes in nature and significance of tourism worldwide and its potential for future growth" (United Nations, 1994, p. 4).

The path trodden has given rise to important conceptual differences based on the reasons and durations of travel, the origin of visitors, the territories visited and the use of accommodation. In fact, this evolution has impacted the following elements of the definition:

Purposes of travelling: the present definition does not significantly change the list of purposes considered previously but now organizes them so as to "evaluate the segments of tourist demand", and includes some new ones which derive from the evolution of society itself (some of a professional nature and others for health reasons);

Duration of stay: at the beginning it was set as minimum duration only, then it included a maximum duration as well, which was abandoned later, and finally afterwards just a maximum duration was defined;

Origin of visitors: the initial concepts of tourist and visitor, adopted later, implied the absence of 'usual residence', which is now replaced by that of 'usual environment';

Visited territory: until 1983 only people who travelled to a foreign country were considered tourists but from that year onwards the same concept included people who travelled in their country of residence, thus giving rise to the concept of domestic or internal tourist;

Use of accommodation: it is this use that now separates tourists from same-day visitors, a term which replaced 'excursionists' although it was already part of the 1963 definition;

Non remunerated activity: this was introduced in 1953 by the UN Statistical Commission and was resumed in 1963 by the Rome Conference on a proposal from the IUOTO. It has been kept ever since as the fundamental element which characterizes tourism travel.

Despite the degree of sophistication achieved by the present definitions, some questions continue to be raised, in particular regarding the usual environment and the overnight stay at a tourism accommodation.

The introduction of 'usual environment' aimed at excluding from the concept of visitor those people that every day or every week go from their home to their workplace or their study-place (frequency dimension) as well as to places near their residence (distance dimension). This being "partly a mental construction that depends on people" (WTO, *Manuel Technique*, p. 23) and having an arbitrary nature, the usual environment may not be a specific geographical space, but rather a criterion to identify people with a certain lifestyle as a result mainly of the broadening of urban spaces and the ease of travel. In that sense Govers et al. (2008) concluded that "the part of physical space that can be termed 'usual' is determined by people's individual experience, sense and construction of the space". And in this case some difficulties persist that the criterion does not solve.

Let us consider the case of residents in a country that live close to the border with another country where better conditions are offered regarding the quality and price of some products or services. Since there are no limitations to people's movements, mainly in the European Union, these residents frequently travel to the neighbouring country to shop, in which case they would be excluded from the concept of visitor. Nevertheless, they transfer to that country wealth generated in their place of residence by spending money (importing). Now, just as goods exports to a nearby country do not lose their nature by reason of the distance between the production and consumption centres, so travellers do not lose their

nature as visitors by the fact that they usually travel an arbitrarily-set minimum distance. Still, the WTO only includes them if they travel outside their usual environment (*Manuel Technique*, p. 84).

In the same way, people who, every week, for professional reasons, travel to a place far from their residence, say 200 km away, where they earn their salary, thereby staying one or two nights at an accommodation there, cannot help but be considered tourists. And yet by the frequency criterion implicit in the concept of 'usual environment' they should not.

The applicability of the concept of 'usual environment' presents serious difficulties, is arbitrary, and not even the consideration of the administrative units, or the minimum distance or its duration, allows one to overcome the difficulties it creates. It is a more useful concept than that of residence, but, because it is more imprecise, it introduces lack of rigour in the determination of tourist flows, in their evaluation or in the research into the economic and social effects they cause. Thus it is necessary to have "a standard that goes beyond the current opacity, without enforcing common statistical thresholds that would ignore regional or national circumstances" (Govers et al., 2008).

As regards the issue of staying overnight at a tourism accommodation, this does not raise any questions when it takes place in one of the accommodations that constitute the primary groups of UN classification (1994), provided one considers overnight stay to be the occupation of a room. However, the WTO regards 'night' when the date of arrival and the date of departure do not coincide, which is neither practical nor correct: a person who arrives at a hotel at 3 am and leaves at noon occupied the room and the hotel registered a stay, and this person cannot be excluded from the number of visitors. If this happens, we will have a night stay without a visitor!

Moreover, an unclear situation occurs when a private home is used by friends or relatives. The WTO's statistical norms exclude it, but the Tourism Satellite Account considers that providing private accommodation by a family to members of another family is included in tourism consumption (OMT, 1999, p. 28-29).

Still the problem becomes worse when someone spends the night at the visited place having fun in a nightclub, sleeping in their own vehicle outside an "establishment for tourism camping", attending an open-air show where they stay the night and then return home, or in any other similar situation. They stay overnight but not in a collective or private accommodation, and therefore cannot be classified as tourists. Still, this generated the economic effects that a tourist does. These may not be significant situations, but they do occur.

However, the greatest difficulty derives from the definition of tourist accommodation. The United Nations and the WTO (1994) define it as "any establishment which, on a regular or occasional basis, provides tourists with overnight accommodation". Still, at the same time, tourists are defined as such for staying at least overnight in a collective or private accommodation establishment. We thus have that this accommodation is a tourist accommodation because tourists spend the night there, while a tourist is a visitor that stays there overnight. This is a vicious circle that does not allow us to define either concept.

Conceptual definitions of tourism

In a very simplistic approach, we might say that tourism is what visitors do, which, moreover, is implicit in the UN/WTO definition when it identifies tourism with "the activity of persons travelling", but in this case the object of tourism would be confused with its subject. It would be the equivalent of rejecting tourism as a system, as do Kaspar (1976), Leiper (1979), Baud-Bovy and Lawson (1998), Gun (1994), Lainé (1989), and Go (1998), among others.

Many researchers see it as a phenomenon, among which Figuerola (1985), Burkart and Medlik (1981), Tribe (2006), Mathieson and Wall (1982) or Papadopoulos (1986), but for others "tourism is neither a phenomenon nor even a simple set of industries" because it is a human activity which encompasses human behaviour, use of resources, and interaction with other people, economies and environments (Bull, 1995).

From this derives that tourism can be observed from different points of view due to "its close relationship with

other social sciences, including economics, politics, sociology, cultural anthropology, psychology and even law and statistics" (Papadopoulos, 1986).

The various perspectives from which tourism can be observed are a matter that raises no objections because one can have various perceptions and interpretations of a phenomenon which above all concerns human beings in their integrity, and nothing human is alien to them: as concerned beings who search outside their environment for satisfaction or experiences, or as people who welcome those who travel and are thus benefited or harmed by this.

The important thing is to find a concept that can earn general consensus so as to ensure a common framework for those who devote toil and reflection of any nature to tourism. The difficulty in achieving this derives from the complexity of the activities and relations which tourism travel creates, from the quick and constant changes that take place in this area and from the "immaturity of tourism as a field of study" (Cooper et al., 2001). This latter reason for the difficulty is the one which should warrant particular attention from researchers.

However, the definitions that have been suggested throughout time may give an invaluable contribution to progress along the path to consensus. By identifying the main definitions, or the most disseminated, we will realize that we can find in them common elements or denominators which suggest that the 'fast and constant change' tourism has been subject to, especially in the past 50 years, does not constitute an insurmountable obstacle.

The first definition may have been produced in 1910 by the Austrian economist Herman von Schullern zu Schratzenhofen (Bernecker, 1965); according to him, tourism is "the set of all the phenomena, especially economic ones, produced by the arrival, stay and departure of travellers in a certain commune, province or state and which, as a consequence, are directly linked to them" (cited in Bernecker, 1965). Although it does not reject phenomena of another nature, this definition nonetheless gives pride of place to economic issues, and comprehends solely foreign visitors who, according to the time's views, were the

only ones to be considered tourists. Still, it identifies the emergence of new phenomena (economic ones, but also those of 'transport production' and of 'social life') and emphasizes their interdependence.

In the same year, Edmond Picard, of Brussels University, also cited by Bernecker, explains that the Traveller's Industry is "the range of its organs and its functioning" not only from the travellers' point of view but mainly from the perspective of the values they carry with them and of those who, in the visited countries, directly or indirectly benefit from the expenses travellers make to satisfy their needs for instruction or pleasure" (Bernecker, 1965). The definition does not stand out for its clarity but it highlights the functioning of bodies that result from the movement of travellers and also the expenses they incur in and which drive some bodies directly and others indirectly: the author understands the mechanism of the direct and indirect effects of tourism.

The definitions of the various authors identified up to the 1930s do not mention the lack of remuneration earned during travel because it was inherent in the concept. There is, however, an explicit reference to this issue in the definition of tourist proposed by Norwall (1936) which is that of a person who "... spends in the country where he is temporarily staying money that was earned elsewhere" (cited in Fuster, 1967), and which may have influenced that which Hunziker and Krapf formulated in 1942. According to these authors, tourism "is the sum of relations and phenomena resulting from the travel and stay of people outside their usual place of residence, provided that these travels and experiences are not used for the practice of a main lucrative activity, permanent or temporary".

From this definition, four elements of interest may be highlighted: i) tourism is a sum of relations and phenomena, which are not made explicit, though; ii) it requires a displacement to a location outside the usual residence; iii) it cannot be used for the practice of a remunerated activity; and iv) it comprehends anyone, whether resident or not, and any place of destination, in other words, it includes domestic and inbound tourism. Nonetheless, it does not limit the duration of the stay, and

the movement can be undertaken for any reason except for those that involve the practice of a paid activity. This definition was adopted by the International Association of Scientific Experts in Tourism (IASSET) and prevailed for a long time.

More recently, Burkart and Medlik (1974) suggest the need to distinguish between the concept and technical definitions, believing that the former should allow us to identify the essential characteristics and distinguish tourism from similar phenomena, which are often related but which are also different (in Papadopoulos 1986).

One of the older approaches to the concept of tourism, in a holistic manner, comes from Leiper (1979), who, based on the identification of the elements that comprehend the touristic system, proposes the following definition: "It is the system involving the discretionary travel and temporary stay of persons away from their usual place of residence for one or more nights, excepting tours for the primary purpose of earning remuneration from points en route. The elements of the system are tourists, generating regions, transit routes, destination regions and a tourist industry."

In the first place, in this definition Leiper expressly eliminates from the concept of tourism the "day-trippers", which are one of the subdivisions of the concept of visitor, "partly because overnight stays influence the psychological sets of the participants" (Leiper, 1979). This is a subjective reason, it removes from tourism the economic effects these day-trippers generate, which in many countries are quite considerable. Where should they be included? In which economic activity? Secondly, Leiper only refers "to the discretionary travel use of time monetary resources", but many travels have a compulsive nature, and do not depend on a discretionary use of time, such as travel to fulfil obligations or duties of a family or social kind or business. Thirdly, Leiper considers tourism to be one single industry, which is not a consensual concept and one which he himself would later replace with the concept of "tourism industries" (Leiper, 2008).

In turn, in 1982 Mathienson and Wall attempted a broader approach considering that tourism "is the

temporary movement of people to destinations outside their usual places of residence and work, the activities undertaken during the stay and the facilities created to cater for the needs of tourists". This definition underlines the complexity of the tourism activity, hints at the relationships it involves, and seeks to comprehend tourism supply and demand.

Nevertheless, it also reveals some weaknesses. In the first place, it does not expressly mention the lack of remuneration that a touristic travel implies; secondly, it is not only in the stay destinations that those who travel carry out activities, but also before and during travel; and thirdly, it excludes the uncreated 'facilities' which in the places of destination satisfy travellers' needs and which are essential to the concept of tourism and indispensable to the identification of its characteristics, namely natural as well as historic and cultural resources.

Some years later McIntosh et al. (1995) propose a definition according to which tourism "is the sum of phenomena and relationships arising from the interaction of tourists, business suppliers, host governments and host communities in the process of attracting and hosting these tourists and other visitors".

When he analysed this definition, Tribe (1997) considered that it could be improved, first because the last part seems to be unduly complicated and its omissions would enhance the economic effects; secondly, the term "host communities" could be extended to consider the physical environment and the human community; and thirdly it is necessary to consider not only the businesses and individuals in tourism-generating countries but also governments, communities and the environment in these countries. In this sense Tribe changed the mentioned definition, replacing it by "the sum of the phenomena and relationships arising from the interaction, in generating and host regions, of tourists, business suppliers, government, communities and environments". In Tribe's opinion, this definition reveals the key dimensions of tourism: those related to tourists (motivations, choice, satisfaction, interaction); those related to business (including marketing, organization and planning of transport companies, hospitality and recreation); those

relating to the host community (including perceptions, economic, social and cultural impacts); those relating to the host environment (including ecological impact); those relating to host governments (including measurement of tourism, policies and planning); and those related to generating countries (including economic, environmental and cultural effects).

Obviously this 'broad definition' can be used for the study of tourism provided that, as the author submits it, it is accompanied by a list of what it can contain. Still, that could have already been the case with Hunziker and Krapf's definition because it can include all one wants – although for that no definition is necessary. At least for the purposes intended by Burkart and Medlik.

The concept established by Tribe eliminates the reference, contained in McIntosh et al. (1995), to "other visitors", that is, to same-day visitors, which, after the list he makes of the dimensions of tourism, is not relevant. However, this leaves out a reality of enormous dimensions: in 2006 Spain (second tourism destination in the world) welcomed 37.6 million same-day visitors (excursionists), which represent about 40% of the total number of visitors (Datatur, 2006) and this proportion, or an identical one, is very common in other countries.

Many other definitions could be mentioned (Go, Ryan, Przeclawsky, etc.) but our intention was to select some of the most representative presented throughout the 20th century, in an attempt to identify common elements which could help us on the path to a unifying sense.

Still, due to the particularities it involves and the viewpoint from which it considers tourism, we will mention the definition proposed by Jafar-Jafari according to which "tourism is the study of man away from his place of residence, of the industry that satisfies his needs, and of the impacts that both him and the industry generate on the physical, economic and socio-cultural environment of the receiving area" (cited by Beni, 2001). It is a definition that is not concerned with identifying an activity but rather with selecting study fields or areas in tourism. It is nonetheless relevant because it also draws attention to the variety of phenomena and relations tourism gives rise to.

It is however important to mention, finally, the 'official' concept adopted by the UNWTO, which is the most commonly used today, according to which "tourism comprises the activities of persons travelling to and staying in places outside their usual environment, for not more than one consecutive year, for leisure, business and other purposes" (United Nations, 1994). One should also add that this concept includes tourism between countries as well as intra-countries, and that it refers to both 'tourists' and 'same-day visitors'.

To better understand the concept, the UN points out that the motives (purposes) which it refers to are not the motivations of the people who originate the decision to travel, but rather of those who choose the specific place or country visited, grouping them into: 1. Leisure, recreation and holidays; 2. Visiting relatives and friends; 3. Business or professional; 4. Health treatment; 5. Religion, pilgrimage; 6. Others.

Considering the concept of visitor, which is the basic concept of the whole statistical system of tourism, one does not realize the scope of the definition of tourism mentioned above. In fact, when it speaks of 'persons' it strays from the concept of visitor by abandoning the 'lack of remuneration', which is a basic element in the definition. Still, bearing in mind the concept of visitor, then the definition presented merely states that 'tourism are visitors' activities'. All the rest is tautology. Nevertheless, by reducing the concept of tourism to 'visitors' activities', it takes us to the notion that tourism is merely what visitors do. It is then a useless definition.

In the list of motives, made so as to "measure the key segments of tourism demand for purposes of planning, marketing and promotion", the first group – leisure, recreation and holidays – confuses concepts and is absurd. First, tourism is essentially and for the most part a form of recreation which, in turn, derives from leisure time (v.g. Gearing et al., 1976; Boniface et al., 1982; Baud-Bovy et al., 1998) and, secondly, 'holidays' constitute the time of yearly interruption of professional activities and is consequently part of leisure. Therefore one does not choose a place or a country for 'holidays'. Holidays are an opportunity to travel and not a purpose either of

travel or of the visit. Besides 'holidays' is not a "segment of tourism demand", at least for purposes of "marketing and promotion".

Thus, of all the definitions presented that which turns out to be the more fragile is the UN/WTO's definition, which does not allow us to identify the essential characteristics of tourism or distinguish it "from other similar phenomena" (Burkart et al., 1981).

Summary

The review made above of the operational definitions of visitor (for statistical purposes) and of the concepts of tourism reveals some of the weaknesses but also highlights progress in the search for a common understanding of a dynamic phenomenon whose scope expands as lifestyles change.

Essentially, we can identify the following elements highlighted by the various concepts of tourism which emerged throughout the 20th century: - Distinction between technical definitions and concepts of tourism based on them; - Temporal displacement outside the usual environment of residence, leading to the notion of generating and receiving areas or countries; - Absence of remuneration in the place or places visited presupposing the transfer of wealth from the places where it is obtained to the places visited; - Purposes of travel provided by leisure (recreation), business or others, which may be the result of professional, social or individual reasons of a compulsory nature; - Generation of phenomena and relations resulting from the temporal displacement and which arise from the interaction, in generating and receiving regions, between visitors, goods and service suppliers, governments, communities and environments; - Interdependence of the generated phenomena; - Activities carried out by those who travel as visitors, and facilities created to satisfy their needs.

None of the definitions listed encompasses all these elements simultaneously, although many of them are common to a large part. Nonetheless, even if one were to include them all, others would be left out which are necessary to understand and characterize tourism as a multi-dimensional activity. Granted, a definition cannot

be a 'bag' transformed into an incomprehensible amalgam, but it has to be sufficiently enlightening of the object one wishes to define.

The Need to Revise Concepts

At the conceptual level there are two elements that give tourism its own specificity: consumers' centrality and the importance of resources. By the former, it is the act of consuming, and not the productive act, that qualifies an activity as touristic; and secondly it becomes apparent that tourism supply largely surpasses tourism production because it entails the use of natural, cultural and historic resources, with the nature of public goods which, by themselves, originate a large portion of tourism demand.

It is the consumer's centrality, the acts of consumption with no relation to income, which shape the concept of tourism, but consumers' decisions and the satisfaction of their needs are in direct relation to the attractions and their attributes in the visited regions: the pull factors of Crompton's model (1974). On the other hand, while tourism cannot abandon the "demand-side definition of its scope" it must seek to "delineate a supply-based conceptual structure" (United Nations, 1994), so much so that many of the factors on the supply-side influence the volume of demand (Lickorish et al., 1997).

Indeed, people travel to places where there are attractions corresponding to a large variety of needs which in order to be satisfied in turn require a large variety of goods and services: transport, food, accommodation, recreation, health care, sports and many others. The places where there are attraction elements linked to nature and to the work of man give rise to destinations which become complex territorial spaces and where the production of goods and services is provided by widely varied organizations, companies and professions with similar purposes: to provide visitors with experiences and satisfaction.

Touristic travels always imply displacement but most of them are made to places where there are attractions (tangible or intangible) with the nature of public goods which were not created to satisfy visitors' needs. Tourism

must then be seen as a movement of people as well as the whole set of phenomena and relations that they originate, as “a social act that enables people to express themselves” (Go, 1998), but also as a system of attractions, accessibilities, businesses and organizations.

Some definitions do not forget the “activities carried out by visitors” or “the facilities created to satisfy their needs”, but they are insufficient. In other words, the definition of tourism will not be complete if it does not consider, besides the elements already mentioned, also the following items which contribute to characterize it: - Absence of lasting relationships with the places visited, implying absence of re-composition of new ways of life; - Places characterized by the existence of elements, both tangible and intangible, with the ability to attract people; - Emergence of activities and equipment which are different from those required by residents; - New economic, social, cultural, psychological and environmental effects; - Generation of phenomena by the transformations operated in the destinations and in access routes with the purpose of attracting and welcoming visitors.

In these past years, created by the media, literature, travel agencies, public entities as well as development plans and programmes, a wide range of tourism terms have arisen which risk making the concept incomprehensible and devoid of content (see list). Sometimes, they are tourism types or products, but others they are market segments, or merely ‘advertising slogans’. Almost always they are presented as something distinctive, with their own content, and as ways of structuring a specific activity within tourism.

However, in many cases, we can observe that certain terms have emerged to exploit the benefits provided by tourism (v.g. residential tourism, medical tourism), to cover repugnant or illicit activities (v.g. sexual tourism, drug tourism) or to create a certain image (v.g. charm tourism, sensorial tourism). In spite of that, they are the object of research and scientific publication at the same level as tourism products created and structured with the purpose of implementing tourism development policies, such as ecotourism, wine tourism, cultural tourism, sun and beach tourism, business tourism, ecotourism or

health and wellness tourism, and this contributes to giving them identical dignity and a role of similar nature.

List of Tourism terms

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| Gay and lesbian tourism | Theme tourism |
| Cultural tourism | Historic tourism |
| Wine Tourism | Poverty tourism |
| Gastronomic tourism | Volunteer tourism |
| Sexual tourism | Agro-tourism |
| Sensorial tourism | Ecological tourism |
| Health tourism | Eco-tourism |
| Wellness tourism | Sports tourism |
| Ornithological tourism | Sightseeing |
| Ethnic tourism | War tourism |
| Geo-tourism | Business tourism |
| Sun and beach tourism | Golf tourism |
| Recreation tourism | Mountain tourism |
| Gathering tourism | Snow tourism |
| Touring | Proximity tourism |
| Rural tourism | Thermal tourism |
| Nautical tourism | Talassotherapy |
| Shopping tourism | Climatism |
| Charm tourism | Adventure tourism |
| Residential tourism | Industrial tourism |
| Medical tourism | Hunting tourism |
| Senior tourism | Religious tourism |
| Youth tourism | Spiritual tourism |
| Elderly tourism | Green tourism |
| Nature tourism | River tourism |
| Environmental tourism | Cruises |
| Urban tourism | Social tourism |
| Alternative tourism | Trekking |
| Gastronomic tourism | Desert tourism |
| Diving tourism | Space tourism |
| City breaks | Active tourism |
| Catastrophe tourism | Dark tourism |
| Holocaust Tourism | |

Source: newspapers, magazines, books, internet, leaflets and brochures

Society's dynamics, changes in lifestyles and in the relation between human beings and nature, as well as other agents of social and cultural change have led to new types of tourism and the creation of new products, but they do not necessarily imply the often irrational proliferation of terms devoid of content. Such terms do not enrich tourism but rather lessen its ability to gain scientific credibility because they deprive it of rigour.

It is then necessary to be careful when adopting terms that aim to integrate untested and un-evaluated realities in the concept of tourism, realities which lack scientifically validated content. Indeed, the epistemology of tourism aims to "inquire into the nature of tourism" and the "use of concepts" (Tribe, 1997), among other purposes.

When the concept of tourism is disconnected from the supply, as has often been the case, it becomes harder to define its scope, which is by nature impossible to delimitate, and tourism is severed from its base. There is always a motivation in the decision to travel (push) but there is always an attraction, a quality or attribute (pull) which leads to travelling. Consequently, it is necessary to consider the inter-penetration between supply and demand to completely and integrally understand the tourism phenomenon.

Let us exemplify with the so-called medical tourism. On the one hand, hospital stays prescribed by a doctor, and stays in other medical institutions, are not decided as a voluntary act by the patient, and are paid for by the State or a health insurance company (Luthico, 2004); on the other hand, a hospital is not a tourism accommodation establishment, and cannot therefore be classified as a characteristic activity of tourism. Consequently these stays cannot be considered tourism and neither can the activities caused by the trip. However, it is common to speak of 'medical tourism' or of 'health tourism' with the same meaning.

We could take an identical line of thought in the opposite direction. A destination designed and planned to welcome tourists, with suitable infrastructures and equipment, by the criterion of consumer centrality, is only touristic when it starts to be used by visitors, that is, when the acts of tourism consumption classify it as

such. If, by any circumstance, this destination is temporarily unproductive, and cannot receive tourists, by the same criterion, it would lose its tourism classification. Nonetheless, that can only happen if this destination starts to be used only by residents because its nature is touristic and the activities which are developed there are characteristic of tourism.

Conclusion

Throughout the present paper we aimed to identify the aspects, ambiguities and contradictions of the existing definitions of tourism, both from the technical and the conceptual points of view, which raise serious difficulties to understanding the concept and identifying what fits in it and what does not. At the same time, the elements that characterize tourism were identified, those elements which should be present in its definition and those that should be excluded from it.

We concluded that the existing definitions, by the insufficiencies they reveal or by the ambiguities they suffer from, are not adequate nor do they comprehend the entirety of tourism. Not in the sense of establishing unacceptable limits in a field subject to constant changes and transformations, but with in the sense of understanding it as a human phenomenon with implications that are simultaneously economic, social, cultural, psychological, geographical, environmental and political.

With a view to contributing to establishing a consensual definition, we suggest the following as basis for discussion:

Tourism: is the set of licit activities developed by visitors by reason of their displacements, including the attractions and the means that originated them, the facilities created to satisfy their needs and the phenomena and relationships resulting from all of the above.

This definition comprehends the following elements:

Set of activities developed by visitors: these are all those that can be found in Annex D of the *Manuel Technique* (WTO), expressly excluding illicit activities;

Visitors, which, according to the UN/WTO definition, involve the purposes of the visit described by it (United

Nations, 1994) with the explicit refusal of 'holidays' as a purpose;

Displacements, seen as movements of visitors from their places of origin to their destinations (generating, transit, and receiving zones), as well as the activities carried out before and during travel, stay, transports and accessibilities;

Attractions and means, considered to be natural and artificial elements, both tangible and intangible, which give rise to travel, expressions and manifestations of a cultural nature or not, events, meeting and exhibition centres, promotion and trade;

Created facilities, which are the infrastructures, characteristic activities and connected activities of tourism, hospitality and welcoming;

Phenomena and relations, in other words, economic, psychological, social, cultural, political, geographic and environmental phenomena caused by visitors' travels but also caused by the transformations carried out with a view to attracting and welcoming them; interactions between visitors and communities.

The elements contained in the definition proposed are not thorough but merely indicative of their meaning.

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