



LIFE CYCLES, STAGES AND TOURISM HISTORY

The Catalonia (Spain) Experience

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Abstract: To date, most analysis on the historic development of tourism has been limited to observing its evolution through a single Life Cycle identified with the mass tourism stage. However, many of the major destinations have a much longer history and seem to have passed through different consecutive Life Cycles related to different stages. Research shows the value of the Tourism Area Life Cycle combined with Regulation theory when analyzing the long-term historical development of tourism. In this article, we present the case of Catalonia, one of the main tourist destinations in Europe. The article shows how the combination of these theories can be especially practical for constructing a global model that groups tourism development by phases with its paradigmatic changes. **Keywords:** tourism history, life cycle, Catalonia, Spain, mass tourism. © 2010 Elsevier Ltd. All rights reserved.

INTRODUCTION

This article's initial goal was to carry out a re-envisioning of one of the most frequently used models to analyze tourism development, **Butler's (1980) Tourism Area Life Cycle** (from now on TALC), from a multidisciplinary historical approach. For this purpose, we have chosen as a case study the *longue durée* of the history of one of the main tourist regions in Europe: Catalonia. Because of its strategic location, Catalonia has traditionally been a bridge between Europe and the Mediterranean and has historically developed an open character for itself based on all kinds of relationships: cultural, social and commercial. In the last few centuries, it has traditionally been considered the economic motor of Spain and has often been referred to as "Spain's factory" by the most renowned historians of Spanish economics (**Nadal, 1985**) as a result of its significant industrial development. Nevertheless, over the last half of the 20th century and parallel to the general outsourcing process in Western economies, its structure

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was oriented towards the service sector and in this context tourism became one of the region's main industries.

In fact, over the last few decades, Catalonia has become the first most important international tourist area in Spain and the fifth in Europe (Generalitat de Catalunya, 2005). According to the Catalan Statistics Office (Institut d'Estadística de Catalunya, 1984–2009), those sectors that are directly attached to tourism have more than 10% of the region's Gross Domestic Product share and employ 16.7% of the active population, making it the most relevant cluster in the Catalan economy. Dynamism in Catalan tourism has been maintained during the last few years despite the changing situations of its main origin markets, growing both in arrivals and, most significantly, in their related incomes.

Nevertheless, the development process of tourism in Catalonia has scarcely been studied from a historical viewpoint. Moreover, although it has been clearly demonstrated that it was from the 50s when mass tourism emerged and the industry began to gain some importance in the regional economy, many elements indicate the existence of a prior long-term development. Our initial idea is that its origin can be established at the end of the 18th century and the beginning of the 19th, and that it has passed through various great stages (or paradigms) and Life Cycles to achieve its current economic and socio-cultural significance. We must add that although *pre-mass* tourism may be of little interest in terms of its economic impact, it has a relevant role from a cultural, social and technological perspective, and it laid the groundwork for the success of mass tourism in the 20th century.

Literature Review

Beginning with the literature that studies the origins and development of tourism in Catalonia, we have seen that the main studies have generally dealt with a medium term analysis from an economic geography and applied economics perspective (Barbazà, 1966; Cals, 1989). On the other hand, the international state-of-the-art shows that the history of tourism is a relatively recent matter (Butler & Wall, 1985; Town-er, 1988) and that the main research interests have focused on the cultural foundation of the historical evolution of tourism (Buzard, 1993; Inglis, 2000; Pemble, 1987). However, some other approaches have related the history of tourism to the development of new technologies for transport, the increase in consumption or the tourism industrialization process (Burkart & Medlik, 1981; Holloway, 1989; Smith, 2001). We must add that, in recent years, research on the history of tourism has experienced a significant advance and some new experiences are being studied (Walton, 2005).

However, there has been an absence of a long-term historical approach to regional historical development, especially in relation to the Mediterranean destinations, and this was the main aim of the reference material (Garay, 2007) that this article is based on. It was our opinion that this review should reveal the changes in production, organizational methods and technological innovations, as well as the

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