



Case Study

Tourism and nation in Galicia (Spain)

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ABSTRACT

Galicia played a secondary role in Spanish tourism policy throughout the 20th century. Located in the northwestern corner of the Iberian Peninsula, it barely participated in the early 20th century trend that transformed and popularized the Cantabrian beaches. It also did not take part in the significant tourism boom of the 1960s and beyond. However, in this article, we argue that tourism played a significant role from an ideological standpoint, reinforcing the image of the Spanish versus the Galician nation. Two elements can be identified here: the Way of Saint James acquired a great symbolic value with regard to the unity of Spain and Spanish links with European roots, while ruralism and sentimentality associated with tourism propaganda of Galicia helped reinforce the image, originating in literature, of a feminine and submissive territory. Both of the features explored in this paper have been consolidated.

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1. Introduction

Spain is one of the major global tourist destinations with over 70 million tourists per annum, meaning it is continually ranked among the world's three leading destinations. In the 2015 Travel & Tourism Competitiveness Report, Spain occupied the leading position (World Economic Forum, WEF, 2015). The robustness of its touristic sector has gradually increased since the 1950s, offering almost exclusively 'beach and sun' holidays to growing western European middle classes. In the subsequent decades, this growth in tourism had little impact on inland regions, as well as coastal regions that lacked the weather conditions favoured by tourists. This was the case for most of the northern Atlantic coast of the Iberian Peninsula, from the French border down to the northern frontier with Portugal. This does not mean, however, that such regions were entirely detached from the development of tourism. On the contrary, they played an active role but with some differential characteristics.

There is an abundant bibliography (Afinoguénova & Martí-Olivella, 2008; Barke, Towner, & Newton, 1996; Correyero & Cal, 2008; Pack, 2006; Poutet, 1995) analyzing the meaning and consequences of touristic development in Spain from various perspectives. The main focus of such research has been the period of Franco's dictatorship (1939–1975), and the islands and the Mediterranean regions. As a consequence, other territories have been underrepresented in academic

research because of their presumed inferior touristic relevance. This is the case with Galicia, an Autonomous Community located in the northwest of the Iberian Peninsula.¹ In recent years, Galicia has attracted somewhat more attention due to the significance of the Way of Saint James (Barreiro, 2009; Frey, 1998; Graham & Murray, 1997; Lois & Santos, 2015; Murray, 2014; Murray & Graham, 1997; Nilsson & Tesfahuney, 2016; Pack, 2008, 2010; Sánchez y Sánchez & Hesp, 2016; Slavin, 2003).

This contribution will demonstrate that, although Galicia has often been excluded from the main tourism policies of the Spanish government, an ideological reading in terms of national politics and identity can be developed. This means that, in terms of tourism, the national politics of Spain has attempted to understand Galicia from the national Spanish (rather than Galician) perspective. This can be explained by considering the following elements.

On the one hand, Galicia is considered to be a cohesive element of the Spanish national identity, and a tool for the dissemination of the values that were particularly useful for the promotion of national unity. On the other hand, tourism has contributed towards the establishment of an image of Galicia as a gentle territory that is submissive to the State; i.e., tourism has been used as a tool for the dismantling of Galician nationalism, the strength of which was particularly apparent during the 1920s and 1930s, and has been resurgent since 1975.

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E-mail addresses: xosemanuel.santos@usc.es (X.M. Santos), juanmanuel.trillo@usc.es (J.-M. Trillo-Santamaría).¹ Democratic Spain after Franco's death developed a (semi)federal political system, with 17 Autonomous Communities (see Sala, 2013 for a short introduction to the Spanish territorial administration).

These elements are related, respectively, to the city of Santiago de Compostela and the Way of Saint James, and to ruralism. As regards the former, we intend to demonstrate that the Way was not only ideologically utilized during the years of Franco's dictatorship, but was conceived in the late 19th century and has lasted until the present day. With regard to ruralism, we will show its link with the landscape discourse that originated in 19th century Romanticism. A canonical landscape was established from the interpretation of Rosalía de Castro's work, one of the greatest poetesses in Galician literature; this was reflected in a touristic image that conveyed a stereotypical idea. The third element in the discussion will show how cultural and political expressions of Galician nationalism eventually reinforced the image of Galicia forged by the central Spanish state.

2. Tourism and national unity

Considerable developments have taken place in the exploration of the relationship between tourism and politics (Chaney, 2015). Tourism has often been used to convey values, and as such, it is a phenomenon with clear political connotations (Henderson, 2003). Zhang, Decosta and McKercher (2015: 169) go beyond this when they state that 'The discourse of tourism is quintessentially politically charged'. In fact, according to Kavoura (2007: 397), 'The promotion of national identity can be an ideological concern of tourism'. Shaffer (2001) explains how tourism, both from the production and the demand side, has greatly contributed to the creation of culture and a national identity in the United States. According to Shaffer (2001), between 1880 and 1940, domestic tourism became a ritual part of citizenship for the middle classes who consolidated the canon of tourist attractions. These classes, managed by public and private interests that invented and idealized stories, had both a symbolic and economic function as they were closely linked to the deployment of transport infrastructure. Moreno (2012) writes that, in the period between the Great Wars, tourism in Europe, as well as having economic value, was also understood as a mass mobilizing agent, one which disseminated the virtues of political regimes and created identities on behalf of governments.

Palmer (1999) also relates tourism to national identity. Tourism selects certain identity symbols as representing heritage and, therefore, a shared inheritance, which is directly linked to the concept of the nation (Shaffer, 2001). Palmer (1999) recalls Smith's (1991) words, arguing that heritage is thus turned into a sacred place that reveals the singularity of the nation. According to Palmer (1999), constructed landscape and heritage are elements that serve to identify a more harmonious past with which people can identify, thus creating the essence of the nation. MacCannell (1989) states that tourist attractions have a special meaning and represent something in particular, which is why, echoing Shaffer's (2001) argument, only those elements related to what is meant to be conveyed are highlighted; 'it is this idea of nation which is so powerful to present in the language of heritage of tourism (Palmer, 1999: 316)'. For Palmer (1999), the game of identity played by tourism goes beyond the purely commercial, given that it speaks to people's hearts. Thus, the promotion of heritage is not at all a neutral activity; on the contrary, it is presented and represented in order to elicit feelings among the population (Kavoura, 2007). Of course, heritage cannot boast to be exclusively responsible for the creation of a national identity. Nevertheless, as Palmer (1999: 319) points out, although they do not act in isolation, the protagonist roles acquired by those images associated with heritage in promotional campaigns, both internationally and domestically, turn them into 'the main definers of the nation'.

Throughout the extensive bibliography, we repeatedly encounter concepts related to the nation as an imagined community and heritage. The imagined community defined by Anderson (1991) is configured by habits and traditions (Nairn, 1977). Within this context, heritage acquires a particular relevance, to the extent that, as pointed out by Lowenthal (1998: 2, as cited by Pretes, 2003:126), 'Heritage... is the

chief focus of patriotism'. Pretes (2003: 139) concludes that tourist sites 'may contain a discourse of nationalism allowing hegemonic cultural producers to project their values of national identity and national inclusivity'.

If the relationship between tourism and heritage contributes to the creation of an image and a feeling of a particular and differentiated nation, then the same can be said for landscape. Schama (1995: 61) points out that 'Landscapes are culture before they are nature', relating the concept to national identity. Cosgrove (1984) refers to landscape as an ideological concept. Nash (1970) links the invention of National Parks with some of the key elements of the American identity, such as progress and democracy. Similarly, Hall and Page (2002) demonstrate that the naturalist vision was secondary in the creation of the National Parks, at least in the English-speaking world. Similarly, Burden (2006) refers to symbolic landscapes and their connection with national identity.

It is also possible to establish a further relationship between tourism and national identity, through global events or exhibitions. When such mega-events began to appear in the mid-19th century, they had a considerable impact on tourism, by fostering a 'touristic consumer culture (Roche, 1998: 17)'. Their organization was also linked to the exaltation of the progress of nations; indeed, Clendinning (2006) points out that international exhibitions were specific places for the construction and expression of national identities. In this regard, Rojek (2013) analyzes the current meaning of events: they entail a means of moral governance and social order. Events, as a tool of moral control, can be useful in charging national identities through the three characteristics pointed out by Rojek (2013): catharsis, emotionalism and exhibitionism.

Finally, Simone-Charteris and Boyd (2011) introduce an interesting debate on political tourism, a typology that is not frequently explored. They state that, while there are politically-engaged tourists, others will visit a specific location for a variety of other reasons, such as ideological or educational reasons, or simply out of curiosity. In their analysis of Northern Ireland, they highlight a series of motivations in common between religious and political tourism, such as historical or patriotic reasons, and the search for authentic experiences. Introducing the concept of political tourism, Simone-Charteris and Boyd (2011) acknowledge the ideological nature of many of the trips made, and the role played by public administrations.

3. Tourism, propaganda and national identity

In this section, the use of the word propaganda, rather than the more widely used term marketing, is deliberate. Although they can often be used interchangeably, O'Shaughnessy (1996) and others have stressed the difference between them. While they acknowledge that neither is neutral, marketing refers more to the impact that it had on the individuals' purchasing decisions as consumers; therefore, there is a need to interpret and to know consumers' wishes. The concept of social marketing, developed later by Kotler and Levy (1969), incorporated non-commercial areas, such as institutions, universities, etc., which need social support and recognition, as well as financial support, in competitive contexts.

Propaganda, on the other hand (O'Shaughnessy, 1996), has a different and often pejorative meaning (Black, 2001), in so far as it entails some ideological messages that attempt to influence people; it too can take the form of social propaganda. For O'Shaughnessy (1996), this does not mean that marketing, and social marketing in particular, are neutral. The main difference between the terms is that marketing at least seeks to obtain a certain amount of knowledge about what the audience wants, whereas propaganda does not. Their objectives, therefore, are not exactly identical. Although it is true that both terms often appeal to the emotions, propaganda may take on much more eclectic forms (O'Shaughnessy, 1996).

According to O'Shaughnessy (1996), governments are often embarrassed to engage in social propaganda, and so will resort to

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