



Renovation strategies for accommodation at mature destinations: A tourist demand-based approach

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to identify the different needs for accommodation renovation at mature destinations, as well as to analyse the effect of these needs on a tourist's overall impression regarding the need to renovate the accommodation. From the literature review, six categories of accommodation renovation are identified and tourist attitudes towards them are assessed using the case of Gran Canaria, a mature coastal destination in Spain. Results include a model explaining tourists' overall impression concerning the need to rejuvenate the accommodation based on the different categories of renovation. A significant negative association between a tourist's evaluation of the overall need for renovation and his/her overall satisfaction is also confirmed. Professional implications in terms of policies and strategies for rejuvenating accommodation on Gran Canaria are suggested, most of which could be of interest for other mature destinations.

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1. Introduction

The evolution of tourism destinations emerged as a research topic in the sixties and seventies, with the rise and development of mass tourism (Agarwal, 2002; Ivars-Baidal et al., 2013). Since then, the conceptual framework of the tourist area life cycle (TALC) has been extensively used to understand and explain the development of tourism destinations over time (e.g., Cooper, 1990; Kozak and Martin, 2012; Ma and Hassink, 2013; Toh et al., 2001; Zhong et al., 2008). The most significant and comprehensive TALC model was proposed by Butler (1980, 2006a, 2006b), who describes the development of a destination in terms of six life stages defined according to infrastructures and the number of visitors: exploration, involvement, development, consolidation, stagnation or maturity, and post-stagnation. This last stage could be characterised by a period of decline, rejuvenation or stabilisation.

As is pointed out by Butler (1980), not all tourism destinations experience the stages of the cycle as clearly as others. In addition, the model cannot be applied in exactly the same way to all tourism destinations (Zhong et al., 2008). In that respect,

there is evidence regarding the following: (1) one or more stages could be avoided by tourism destinations (Weaber, 2000), (2) different stages could coexist for a tourism destination, particularly the later stages of the TALC model (Getz, 1992; Hovinen, 2002), (3) alternative stages could exist in the post-stagnation stage, such as exit, reinvention or an extensive maturity stage (Agarwal, 1997; Baum, 1998). Moreover, the evolution of tourism destinations is a long-term continuous process, involving many life cycles in which, for instance, 'dead resorts' can be revived and new branches can emerge (Agarwal, 2002; Aguiló et al., 2005; Ma and Hassink, 2013; Singh, 2011).

In general, mature destinations that do not recognise their needs for renovation and, consequently, begin to decline, show a negative evolution of major tourism indicators (e.g., number of visitors, overnight stays) and experience a negative impact on their image (Butler, 1980; Ma and Hassink, 2013). With the purpose of avoiding a period of decline, mature destinations and tourism enterprises at these destinations could adopt renovation strategies in general and, in particular, rejuvenate the tourism offer (Ma and Hassink, 2013).

The majority of existing studies on the TALC model and the evolution of tourism destinations refer to mature coastal destinations (Zhong et al., 2008). This literature has mainly focused on the evolution of major tourism indicators that enable the assessment of the maturity and possible decline of a destination (e.g., tourist arrivals, tourist overnight stays, accommodation capacity), as well as the renovation strategies that could be adopted to rejuvenate

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the destination as a whole (Faulkner, 2002; Garay and Cànoves, 2011; Ivars-Baidal et al., 2013; Sedmak and Mihalić, 2008). It is less common to pay explicit attention to the renovation needs of the accommodation providers at these destinations and the regeneration strategies they could adopt (Chapman and Speake, 2011; Claver-Cortés et al., 2007; Coles and Shaw, 2006).

A number of reasons suggest that a destination's renovation strategy includes strategic actions to rejuvenate its accommodation offer (Claver-Cortés et al., 2007; Faulkner, 2002; Medina-Muñoz and Medina-Muñoz, 2014; Sharpley, 2000): (1) tourism accommodation is a basic element of a destination's tourism offer, (2) the attractiveness of accommodation firms (i.e., the ability to attract visitors and satisfy them) contributes to a destination's overall attractiveness and competitiveness, and (3) the adoption of sustainable tourism practices by accommodation firms positively affects a destination's sustainability. In fact, according to Faulkner (2002) and Sharpley (2000), planning for destination renovation should consider the appropriate renovation policies that need to be adopted by accommodation providers and by other tourism-related businesses at the destination.

Consequently, a major challenge for managers and policy-makers of a mature destination is to understand the needs to rejuvenate the destination as a whole, including the accommodation offer, in order to select appropriate renovation strategies. This study focuses on the needs for renovation in accommodation establishments at mature coastal destinations. Since most of these establishments were designed in the sixties and seventies, renovation should have occurred with the purpose of adapting facilities and services to major changes and trends in the tourism industry (Aguiló et al., 2005; Claver-Cortés et al., 2007; Knowles and Curtis, 1999).

The accommodation industry on Gran Canaria, which is part of the Spanish archipelago of the Canary Islands, has been chosen as a case study. The favourable climatic conditions, together with the attractiveness of its beaches and coastline are vital factors that lead to the Canary Islands, including Gran Canaria, being considered a year-round destination with an ideal and stable climate, making it the leading winter destination in Europe for sun, sand and sea (Canarian Government Department of Tourism, 2009). The Canary Islands in general and, in particular, Gran Canaria, can be considered a second-generation destination following Knowles and Curtis's (1999) classification.

In the sixties, with the development of air transport, the tourist accommodation offer on Gran Canaria started to emerge with a lack of differentiation and high product standardisation that pursues economies of scale (e.g., Claver-Cortés et al., 2007). Specifically, 65% of the accommodation establishments were built in the sixties and seventies, essentially due to the rapid increase in the number of tourist arrivals on the island for sun and beach tourism (Government of Gran Canaria, 2006). This study will examine the specific renovation needs of the accommodation establishments on Gran Canaria by considering the different types of renovation that have been suggested by previous research.

Since a tourist's assessment of the needs for renovation in his/her accommodation establishment could influence overall satisfaction with the accommodation and, thus, the overall attractiveness and competitiveness of the accommodation (Aguiló et al., 2005; Bernini and Cagnone, 2014; Faulkner, 2002; Roos, 1993; Sharpley, 2000; Taplin, 2012), this study argues that the choice of renovation strategies for the accommodation industry at mature coastal destinations should take that assessment into account. According to Aguiló et al. (2005), the increase in tourist satisfaction levels explains the efficiency of the renovation initiatives adopted in the Balearic Islands at both the enterprise level and the level of the destination as a whole. Similarly, Ivars-Baidal et al. (2013) suggest that hotels in Benidorm have undergone continuous

refurbishment and maintenance, and that their rejuvenation policy has progressively adapted to the new quality requirements demanded by the market. In the case of Teignmouth, in South Devon, Coles and Shaw (2006) also conclude that accommodation providers renovate properties to meet the standards the entrepreneurs perceive as adequate for their clientele.

By adopting a tourist demand-based approach to assessing the needs for accommodation renovation, mature coastal destinations could also improve their overall current attractiveness, competitiveness and sustainability (Aguiló et al., 2005; Bernini and Cagnone, 2014; Chapman and Speake, 2011; Faulkner, 2002; Kozak and Martin, 2012; Kozak and Rimmington, 1999; Enright and Newton, 2004; Sharpley, 2000). In that respect, the ability to satisfy international tourists represents a major dimension of the concepts of destination attractiveness and competitiveness (Enright and Newton, 2004; Ritchie and Crouch, 2003). In addition, tourist satisfaction is an indicator to measure destination sustainability (Faulkner, 2002; Vera-Rebollo and Ivars-Baidal, 2003). Consequently, this study argues that mature coastal destinations should increase the level of satisfaction tourists experience with the accommodation offer, as a means to improving current attractiveness, competitiveness and sustainability.

Taking all the above into account, the purpose of this research is fourfold. Firstly, it aims to analyse the approaches that have been used when designing renovation strategies at mature destinations, as well as the different types of renovation that have been suggested for accommodation. Secondly, by considering tourists' evaluations, the need for each type of accommodation renovation will be assessed using the case of Gran Canaria. Thirdly, as an approach that could be considered in the choice of renovation initiatives, the influence of the need for each type of renovation on a tourist's overall impression as a whole will be examined. In line with this approach, accommodation establishments should give priority to the types of renovation most influencing a tourist's overall impression regarding the need for regeneration. Fourthly, there will be an assessment of the influence a tourist's evaluation of the overall need for renovation has on his/her overall satisfaction with the accommodation.

This research seeks to fill three major gaps in the academic literature on renovation strategies for accommodation at mature destinations. The first gap is the lack of a comprehensive list of possible strategies to rejuvenate this accommodation based on the analysis of previous research. A list will be proposed in this study and it will be considered as a useful reference point for the design of the exploratory quantitative research on Gran Canaria. A second gap refers to the need to adopt a tourist demand-based approach in the choice of renovation initiatives. This approach will be adopted in the case of Gran Canaria to identify the types of renovation needs that most influence the overall need to rejuvenate the accommodation. A final gap is the lack of empirical evidence regarding the association between a tourist's evaluation of the overall need for renovation and his/her satisfaction with the accommodation.

2. Accommodation renovation at mature destinations

2.1. Approaches to designing renovation strategies at mature destinations

The rejuvenation of a mature destination by creating new attractions and accommodation establishments or finding natural resources that have not yet been exploited may only postpone its final decline (Aguiló et al., 2005). Similar arguments are also used to justify the adoption of theoretical frameworks other than the TALC model to suggest renovation strategies for mature destinations and accommodation sectors (see Table 1). Based on the

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