

Scenic postcards as objects for spatial analysis of tourist regions



Jean-Christophe Foltête^{a,*}, Jean-Baptiste Litot^b

^a Théma, UMR 6049 CNRS/Université de Franche-Comté, 32, rue Mégevand, F-25030 Besançon, France

^b TVES, EA477 Université Lille 1 et Université du Littoral Côte d'Opale, Cité Scientifique, F-59655 Villeneuve d'Ascq Cedex, France

HIGHLIGHTS

- Scenic postcards were considered through their dual locations, site depicted and point of sale.
- Four quantitative indicators were proposed to analyse dispersion links.
- The method was illustrated with sites and tourist resorts in Savoy, France.
- Analysis of the dispersion links may reveal spatial pattern of tourist regions.

ARTICLE INFO

Article history:

Received 11 March 2014

Accepted 7 February 2015

Available online 26 February 2015

Keywords:

Scenic postcards
Dispersion link
Dispersion area
Catchment area
Tourist resort

ABSTRACT

Among the media available for showcasing territories, scenic postcards on sale in tourist destination regions may be thought of as revealing relations among actors in the tourist industry and the spaces in which tourism develops. Scenic postcards have the peculiarity of being associated with a dual location in geographical space: the point of sale and the landscape or site that they depict. This dual location leads us to define several objects (dispersion links, dispersion area of the sites depicted and catchment area of the points of sale) and synthetic indicators. Two mountain peaks and two tourist resorts of Savoy (French Alps) are taken as examples to show the value of the indicators. This leads us finally to emphasise the potential of the offering of postcards for analysing tourist regions.

© 2015 Elsevier Ltd. All rights reserved.

1. Introduction

Territories looking to increase their tourist attractiveness are forced to 'showcase' themselves and define their specific identity in order to attract a clientele (Gold & Ward, 1994; Judd, 1995; Morgan & Pritchard, 1998). This marketing of tourism is largely based on iconography, including a substantial proportion of landscape photographs (Day, Skidmores, & Koller, 2002; Gallarza, Saura, & Garcia, 2002; Hunter, 2008). The use of scenic photographs for promoting tourism has already been the subject of much research aimed at identifying the criteria governing the choice of tourist destinations (Beerli & Martín, 2004; MacKay & Fesenmaier, 1997; Molina & Esteban, 2006; Zhou, 1997), at discovering the associations made with these destinations in people's imaginations (Markwick, 2001; Waitt & Head, 2002), at analysing the connection between promotion and the photographic behaviour of tourists

(Caton & Santos, 2008; Garrod, 2009; Jenkins, 2003; Stephenkova & Zhan, 2013), and at connecting photographs with the historical heritage to be found in landscapes (Milman, 2012; Wai, 2006).

Among the media for promoting tourist sites, holiday postcards have a place of their own, enabling tourists to send a message to their acquaintances (Hillman, 2007; Hossard, 2005). Despite the advent of electronic means of communication, postcards are still very popular (Milman, 2011; Yüksel & Akgül, 2007). Because they are so widely used, postcards have already been the subject of several investigations by academics. The most plentiful studies address sociological questions that critically analyse the stereotypes, messages and representations conveyed by the pictures (Cohen, 2007; Edwards, 1996; Kohn, 2003; Mellinger, 1994). The content of the images has also been studied from a historical perspective, as testimony to the changes in societies (Phillips, 2000) and in landscapes (Debussche, Lepart, & Dervieux, 1999), and also as a potential vehicle for nationalism (Winiwarter, 2008). In research on tourism, studies have been made primarily of the symbolic role of postcards in the representation of destinations (Markwick, 2001; Milman, 2011; Pritchard & Morgan, 2003; Yüksel & Akgül, 2007).

* Corresponding author. Tel.: +33 381 665 403.

E-mail address: jean-christophe.foltete@univ-fcomte.fr (J.-C. Foltête).

One original feature about postcards is the way they are sold. Postcards are generally produced by major publishers who supposedly cater to tourists' wishes by proposing idealised images (Milman, 2012; Stylianous-Lambert, 2012). The supply of scenic postcards is therefore part of a circle of reproduction, reinforcing the representations tourists forge of their holiday destination (Markwick, 2001). However, the commercial distribution of postcards is dependent on shopkeepers at the destinations. Although the tourist hosts' perception of these locations is not generally included in the production of images featured on postcards (Giles, Bosworth, & Willett, 2013), in certain tourist destination regions, it is these local actors who choose which images are put on sale from catalogues proposed by publishers. Even if the conditions in which photographs reproduced on scenic postcards were taken are often ordinary and standardised (fine weather, classical framing), the choice of places represented is information that may reveal a certain relationship between the actors of tourism, i.e. hosts and tourists, and the geographical space in which tourist activity takes place. Moreover, in some regions there is local production of postcards which, while marginal, may be informative about the locations that contribute to the territory's identity (Mayes, 2010).

Another original feature of scenic postcards is the pluralistic character of their relationship to geographical space. By connecting the place a postcard is sent from and the place it is sent to, the postal journey made by a postcard is its most obvious spatial feature. By systematically examining such postal journeys, Andriotis and Mavrić (2013) show that the communication link between sender and recipient may reveal old-established trading connections. But scenic postcards are part of space ahead of any postal journey they might make, that is, from the time they are put on sale, in that they are simultaneously related to two locations. A postcard displayed on a rack is associated with a first geographical location, which is the site featured in the photograph. It is also associated with a second location, which is the tourist site at which it is on sale. This double location is an interesting feature, since in each tourist resort, the set of sites represented on the postcards on sale there provides an indication as to the mental space associated with the resort, i.e. the representation that hosts have of the space of their tourist region and the sites and landscapes they consider suitable for promoting their region.

In this article, we start from the principle that the supply of scenic postcards in a rural area that is a tourist destination region

(sensu Leiper, 1979), through its double attachment to geographical space, may reveal territorial links, that is, links between two actors of tourism (hosts and tourists) and the spatial setting of that tourist activity. We therefore propose to examine, by means of quantitative analyses, how postcards sold in a tourist destination region fit into space. We begin by defining the spatial concepts associated with postcards as objects. We then illustrate this presentation by studying the offering of scenic postcards of a series of tourist resorts in Savoy, in the northern French Alps.

2. Concepts and methods

2.1. The postcard as a geographical object

In this section, we define the various ways postcards might be associated with geographical space. This first requires a definition of the spatial scale on which postcards are to be analysed since they can be apprehended on several levels, especially on the local level if we focus on a single tourist resort or on the regional level if a set of resorts in a given tourist region is considered. To understand the spatial organisation of tourist destination regions, the regional level is preferable, which is why postcards are examined on this scale in this article.

On the regional scale, the place where a postcard is on sale (referred to as a tourist resort in the remainder of the paper, but possibly a point of sale outside of any place of residence) may be represented by a point location (Fig. 1). The localisation of the landscape featured on a postcard poses more problems. First, this localisation may be facilitated by an explicit caption or by some recognisable feature, but the location may also be impossible to identify if the landscape is unnamed and nondescript. Let us accept that the analysis covers postcards depicting scenery that can be localised; the question now is how to represent that location. The landscape depicted on a postcard may be symbolised by a point location, i.e. represented by a couple of geographical coordinates (x,y) using GIS software. It should be noted that representing a landscape by a point is not suitable in every instance. A landscape corresponds to a viewshed, which is often subdivided into grounds, which are not necessarily adjacent in their spatial extent (Brabyn & Mark, 2011). However, mapping viewsheds is not readily compatible with an analysis of numerous postcards on a regional scale and it remains difficult to do in practice. Conversely, simplifying the spatial transcription of a landscape to a point leaves open many

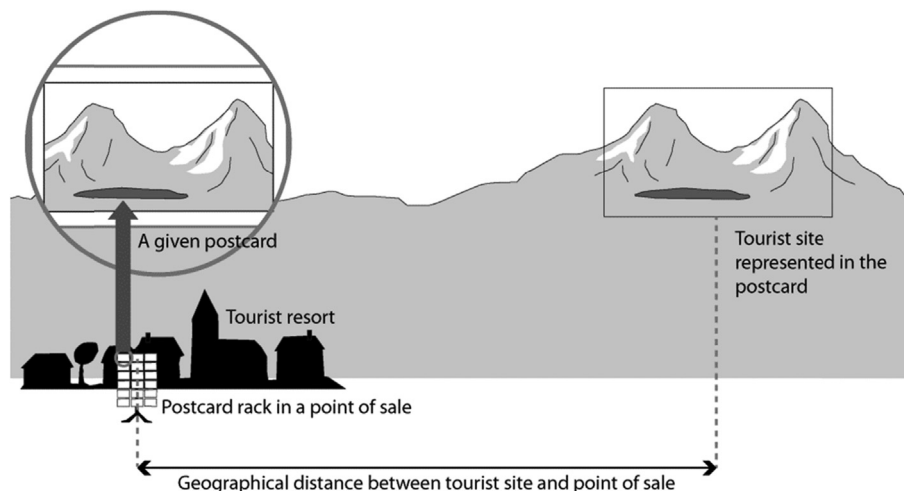


Fig. 1. The dispersion link between the two locations of a scenic postcard. The point of sale of postcards is usually in a tourist resort. The site depicted on the postcard is separated from the point of sale by a certain geographical distance.

Download English Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/en/article/1011939>

Download Persian Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/article/1011939>

[Daneshyari.com](https://daneshyari.com)