



Spatial patterns of cultural tourism in Portugal

Alexandre Sousa Guedes^{a,*}, M. Isabel Martín Jiménez^b

^a Department of Economy, Sociology and Management, University of Trás-os-Montes and Alto Douro, Portugal

^b Department of Geography, University of Salamanca, Spain



ARTICLE INFO

Article history:

Received 15 June 2015

Received in revised form 16 July 2015

Accepted 20 July 2015

Keywords:

Spatial patterns
Cultural attractions
Package tours
Clusters
Peripheral areas
Portugal

ABSTRACT

This paper analyzes recurrent spatial patterns that characterize package holidays for mainland Portugal by applying a cluster analysis to cultural attractions and the number of overnight stays assigned to each municipality. The empirical results show that organized tourist programs based on cultural heritage break reduce to some extent the asymmetry of the spatiality of the Portuguese tourism model that historically was concentrated around the Algarve. This research shows that the articulation of nodes and their Euclidean distance in the analyzed programming models does not have a deterministic relationship with geographical and physical proximity. Rather the analysis unravels cumulative attraction patterns based on a hierarchical network topology that drains tourism from strategic gateways (Lisbon and Oporto) to peripheral municipalities.

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1. Introduction

The exhaustion of modernism's "aggregating differentiation" (living together in separate worlds) coincides with the emergence of a new cycle of "unifying breakdown" (living apart in the same world) (Fortuna, 1999, pp. 20–21) which is consistent with the assertion of "diversity and difference as liberating forces in redefining the cultural discourse" (PRECIS 6 as cited in Harvey, 1989, p. 9). The new ideological current (postmodernism) manifests itself as a clear reaction to modernism by stating individualization, pluralism and cultural fragmentation (Lash & Urry, 1987). These changes triggered economic transitions to economies of scope supported on spatial clustering of economic activities as argued by Swyngedouw (1986) in order to provide individualized and differentiated responses as opposed to a universal and mass model.

The reversal of the previous logic that focused on rational tourism production methods to refocus on consumption and culture (Britton, 1991) sets forth new opportunities of recovery and repositioning of countries that based their tourism development paradigm on monolithic and highly concentrated spatial patterns (the case of Portugal).

The maturing of tourism originated the emergence of new supply segments in different niche markets (Richards, 1997, p. 7) by creating opportunities out of culture to the tourism industry (Smith, 1988). This process led to the spread of tourism into new geographies, giving

rise to "various cultural particularisms and heterogeneities" (Fortuna, 1999, p. 12). The territory is thus the element where culture and tourism bond, founding cultural tourism which according Narhsted (as cited in Richards, 1997, p. 26) is a postmodern phenomenon. The cultural content of spaces acts as markers (Culler, 1981; MacCannell, 1976) for the tourism experience and a reagent for identity differentiation in a growing fragmented and competitive tourism environment (Ritchie & Crouch, 2000).

Despite the intense spread of tourist destinations based on cultural heritage (Richards, 1997, p. 4) these seem to be subject to selection by tour operators and visitors, based on "the power of attraction of the tourist attractions" (Seguí-Llinás & Capellà-Cervera, 2006, p. 234). Although the implosion of vertical differentiation between high and popular culture has been a trend of post-modernism (Hall, 1994; Urry, 1990), tourism tends to apply semiotic mechanisms that bifurcate the importance and authentication value of cultural resources (e.g. World Heritage Sites meaning "genuine"). This action is evident in the use of "cool" authentication mechanisms of cultural resources which is formally granted by certification (Cohen & Cohen, 2012, p. 1298) (e.g. UNESCO heritage classification). Thus the importance of cultural resources as generators of tourism is set clear but also their capacity to regulate tourism spatial patterns by influencing choice. Moreover, the level of tourism seems to be also depending on the functional topology of spaces (concept applied to transport networks) (Rodrigue, Comtois, & Slack, 2006) and specifically of tourism destinations (Baggio, Scott, & Cooper, 2010). This issue involves the combination of cultural attractions (nodes according to Pearce, 1987) within spatial circuits (links). Hence it seems that cultural morphology of spaces is an asset that is a determinant to the expansion of capillary circuits that consolidate tourism within a destination as well as being able to reach more peripheral

* Corresponding author at: Rua Jaime Campos, Lote 5, Bloco E, 3.º Esq., 5000-436 Vila Real, Portugal.

E-mail addresses: aguedes@utad.pt, alexandreguedes@msn.com (A.S. Guedes), imaji@usal.es (M.I.M. Jiménez).

spatial units. According to Cluzeau (1998) tourism can often develop from more attractive and renowned poles to surrounding territories (and resources).

Lue, Crompton and Fesenmaier (1993, p. 297) use the concept of “cumulative attraction” to point out the relevance of tourist attractions as a leveraging element of tourism in a given space, a notion developed in the retailing milieu studies (Nelson, 1958) and applied to tourism (Fesenmaier & Lieber, 1987; Kitamura, 1984). Cumulative attraction means that the clustering of attractions in multi-destination patterns provides a critical mass that is not provided by individual entities (Lue et al., 1993). This idea dates back to Gunn (1972) and Leiper (1979)) who argue that tourist attractions can be analyzed in terms of the spatial distribution of sites of interest. This analysis, which seeks to clarify the importance of the spatial structure of complementary opportunities in tourism, shows a particular interest in how visiting patterns are influenced by the tourism industry, i.e. by tour operators (Mansfeld, 1990; Seguí-Llinás & Capellà-Cervera, 2006). Therefore, the observation of tour operator programs can reveal topological paradigms of functional nature which are based on clustering of cultural attractions within a limited timeframe (e.g. package tours).

This study aims to analyze recurrent spatial patterns that characterize organized tourism packages for mainland Portugal by examining cultural tourist attractions and the number of overnights scheduled/assigned to each municipality. The research seeks to recognize spatial patterns resulting from the combination of territorial units into clusters and recurring travel itineraries. These should represent an alternative to a polarized spatial outline that resulted from mass tourism since 1965 in Portugal, replicated in the Algarve after the construction of the international airport in Faro (Costa, 2005).

In the Portuguese case, a better understanding of the capillaries that link spatial units can reveal different mechanisms of integration. Moreover these linkages can uncover regional strategic opportunities that enable the repositioning of peripheral areas. Regional integration can have a regenerative impact on the social and economic fabric of the periphery.

2. Methodology

This study is based on a sample frame of tour operators that incorporate cultural resources in their package tours for mainland Portugal in varying degrees of expertise, thus supporting the theoretical generalization that seems to disclose (“...”) a new centering of the subjects guided by the appreciation of the new cultural signs” (Fortuna, 1999, p. 25) and simultaneously reveal alternative corridors of tourism practices.

Bearing in mind the general framework that sustains this research, it is our purpose to assess the porosity of mainland Portugal regarding organized tourism programs that combine cultural resources. This analysis will allow to extrapolate spatial patterns that can suggest latent functional archetypes able to propel higher levels of “tourist irrigation” (Cluzeau, 1998, p. 71) with a less asymmetric territorial impact.

The data will be used in order to identify concentration spots (clusters) of cultural resources (classified and non-classified) and simulate neural networks of hierarchical structures of nationwide and of regional scope. Furthermore, it will allow to uncover recurrent and dominant spatial patterns that display complementary opportunities, based on the “cumulative attractions” concept as well as interdependence of geographical units with different programming time-spans assigned.

Tour operators are regarded as a relevant information source (Baloglu & Mangalolu, 2001) being referred to by various authors as formal sources (Goodall, 1990), interpersonal sources (Hsiesh & O’Leary, 1993), external formal sources (Gitelson & Crompton, 1983), commercial sources (Mill & Morrison, 1985), overt induced II¹ (Gartner, 1993) and professional sources (Baloglu, 1997), capable of creating and changing

Table 1
Sample of tour operators analyzed.

Inbound markets	Sample frame (tour operators)	Sample (tour operators)	%	Source for data extraction (package tours)	%
Italy	123	28	23%	125	38%
Germany	312	24	8%	57	17%
Spain	126	13	10%	57	17%
France	141	18	13%	48	15%
UK	213	14	7%	30	9%
The Netherlands	71	6	8%	13	4%
<i>Total</i>	<i>986</i>	<i>103</i>	<i>10%</i>	<i>330</i>	<i>100%</i>

destination images as well as inducing consumer decision-making (Gartner, 1993; Gartner & Bachri, 1994; Reimer, 1990). These skills make tour operators a convenient and relevant data source for spatial analysis. Tour operators are selected from the six most important countries of origin for Portugal’s inbound markets: the UK, Germany, Spain, France, Italy and The Netherlands.

A database provided by Turismo de Portugal (the Portuguese central public authority responsible for promotion, enhancement and sustainability of tourism activities) containing 986 companies is the sample frame. A non-random sample has been drawn reducing the initial list to 103 tour operators that were chosen as a result of content analysis. From this sample a total of 330 package tours provided a source for data extraction (Table 1).

All tour operators with poor information on Portugal and supplying basic and generic seaside resort vacations with a strong real estate purpose were excluded.

The selection of tour operators was based on package tours that capture mainland Portugal according to more fragmentary patterns, regarding the level of cultural and geographical immersion by assessing the spatial units and cultural attractions assigned. The selected companies operate generic and specialized tours (e.g. culture; nature; religion).

Thus, the cultural and heritage substrates (cultural attractions) that make up the basis of travel experience constitute an important element that is mostly shaped into a *touring* pattern that tends to integrate different geographical units (Enoch, 1996), with a deeper spatial and territorial impact. *Touring* phenomenon is relevant for this research due to its founding rationale that intensifies and maximizes complementary opportunities (van der Heijden & Timmermans, 1988) between spatial units, challenging the assembly of the various cultural attractions and spatial fragments involved.

Two variables are selected to analyze package tour content, namely: cultural attractions (resources) and the length of stay assigned to each municipality. The presence of cultural resources was screened on all programs. The geographical occurrence of package tours programs was captured by intercepting all municipalities that configured the travel itineraries.

The average length of stay assigned to each municipality was corrected and converted into a program intensity indicator ($ms = m \times fs \times 100$)² to compensate for data imbalances, taking into account that each travel program consists of a different set of municipalities, and thus generated incomparable arithmetic means. A punctuation of 0.5 was attributed to all municipalities visited as a way of distinguishing them from unscheduled (and thus not visited or unseen) geographical units (Guedes, 2014).

The extracted data was calculated by inbound market and converted into a matrix to perform an agglomerative hierarchical cluster analysis. To support the cluster analysis the Euclidean distance was used to measure the level of similarity (and/or dissimilarity) between subjects. To find the number of “natural” groups in the matrix data, we applied the R-squared criteria (Maroco, 2003) for judging the degree of difference between each cluster, in each operation of the algorithm, by calculating the ratio between the sum of squares and the total sum of squares for

¹ Material received through travel agents and tour operators.

² m: arithmetic mean; fs: relative frequency.

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