

Tourism Management and its Impact to the Economy

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ABSTRACT

Since the first researches on tourism, several authors have paid attention to the action of public authorities oriented to the phenomenon. However, there is a notable lack of precision in the use of four concepts that designate different realities: tourism government, tourism policy, planning or public management. The aim of this paper is to reflect on these concepts, trying to understand how they relate to and delimit their use to specific phenomena of public action in the field of tourism. Our proposal is to group them into a relational approach or a rational approach, each with its own questions and with determined budgets, although with closely related concerns and work proposals. Improving the understanding of these concepts and approaches will allow us to develop a more solid research agenda on public action in tourism.

KEYWORDS: *Tourism management; policy; planning; Public management*

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1. INTRODUCTION

When working on what governments do in relation to tourism, the terms tourism governance, tourism policy, public management and tourism planning are used. Although one question is to reflect on what governments can and/or decide to do in relation to tourism in political terms (which would correspond to the term *polity*); another is the objectives and instruments that, in the context of a public policy, they pursue and implement in relation to tourism (*policy*); a third is the management principles and techniques used by the organizations in charge of implementing these public actions (*public management*) and, finally, a fourth question is the activity planning practices and processes that are promoted by public actors (*planning*)¹.

This article discusses how these ideas are used in different ways by different researchers without making explicit the theoretical and epistemological frameworks that they are based on, especially in the literature of our country and Latin America, which causes many difficulties to advance in multidisciplinary debates.

Our intention is to reflect on the limits of concepts and the levels of analysis associated with them. It is not a question of establishing a univocal definition of each one for all areas of research and with a universal character, but rather of discussing some conceptual boundaries that will allow us to be more rigorous and broaden the coherence of theoretical debates. And to do so without forgetting that the phenomena to which we refer are always intertwined and it would be impossible to search in

reality for these dimensions in their pure state.

Only if we improve their delimitation on a theoretical level can we advance in the investigation of the different phenomena that we intend to observe. To this end, research into the interaction between government action and tourism must go deeper into the denotation of the terms we use, deepening their capacity to designate different realities, even if we lose some of their elasticity for use in other contexts.

With this intention, the work has a first epigraph in which these notions are reflected upon and a proposal of delimitation is made. In a second section, the existence of two approaches that could articulate the previous concepts is considered, one more linked to the idea of power and another to the idea of rationality. Finally, in a third section, conclusions linked to a possible research agenda are proposed to be discussed with other researchers.

2. METHODOLOGY

It is not very common to read in tourism literature the term tourism government. However, it is very common to find in many texts references to the functions or capacities of governments linked to the idea of tourism policy (WTO, 1983; Hall, 2004). In principle, when we use the term government it seems that we are referring to the executive power and the functions and capacities that the executive, at any territorial level, can deploy in relation to the phenomenon. This concept of tourism government has

been filled with content from the legal literature, precisely from the notion of competences.

From this legal dimension, in our political system, the executive branch is responsible for taking the main political initiative within its territory; exercising direction, coordination and supervision of the public administrations that depend on it; managing crises; playing the role of social leader and assuming symbolic representation.

Let us consider some examples of each of these five functions in relation to tourism. With respect to the **first**, it takes the main political initiative in its territory when it decides to develop a tourism model committed to environmental sustainability and decides to draw up and implement a plan. For the **second**, it directs, coordinates and supervises the administrative structures and other autonomous bodies involved in tourism when it appoints or removes senior officials, creates or suppresses a particular unit or assesses the effectiveness of the provision of a tourism service. We have pointed out, as a **third** function, that the government is responsible for taking decisions in times of crisis, reacting to unforeseen events such as, for example, a public health problem that spreads rapidly in a tourist area. **Fourthly**, governments can play a leadership role when they incorporate new values, such as quality or new ways of working. **Finally**,

their role of symbolic representation means that governments represent and commit their territories in meetings with other actors or in the signing of international agreements. These are functions that explain to us what powers the government has, according to the legal system (Arcarons, 1999).

The last of the political capacities is to represent diffuse and unorganized interests and to give voice to concentrated and well-organized interests. As we have just stated, not all subjects or actors have the same capacity to generate coordinated and well-organized structures for dialogue with governments. The structuring of interests entails a high cost, in terms of economic and personal resources, so it is more bearable for those actors who have more initial resources. In the case of tourism, it is clear that the concentrated and well-organized interests are those of the tourism industry in general, given that we are talking about a situated phenomenon, the interests of the industry geographically linked to the specific territory, the hotel industry. It is the accommodation sub-sector of the strongest and best organized when it comes to positioning itself as an actor with a voice and criteria in the design of public actions for tourism. The intermediation sub-sector is also well structured through articulated and represented associations. The rest of the actors have more diffuse interests and little organisational capacity (Jamal and Getz, 1999).

Choosing and maintaining priorities in the face of diverse and conflicting demands	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Develop strategies for the conservation of the natural and urban environment, making them compatible with tourist activity ➤ Supporting new models of tourism development based on the social economy
Decide how to use the resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Invest different amounts in: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Tourist infrastructures ➤ They recover tangible and intangible cultural heritage. ➤ Grants to companies to generate new tourism product or carry out modernization plans ➤ Training plans for private sector workers ➤ Destination Promotion
Coordinate the objectives faced in a coherent whole.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ To design a tourism development model integrating different objectives ➤ Writing strategic plans ➤ Coordinate objectives of different sub-sectors (accommodation, intermediation, transport and incoming)
Be able to impose losses (or limit gains) on powerful groups.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Growth limitation ➤ Eliminate businesses that cause negative impacts ➤ Hotel Moratorium
Representing diffuse and unorganized interests, as well as concentrated and well organized ones.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Promoting new networks of actors ➤ Creation of joint tourism management bodies ➤ Information to society ➤ Incorporation of non-represented community actors into discussion and decision-making spaces

Table 1: Government capacities and their reflection in actions

2.1. Tourism policy: objectives and instruments to achieve them

Once the decision was made to do so, the process of designing, elaborating and implementing a public tourism policy would begin. In real life the processes are not so clear, successive and ordered, but on an analytical level we can make use of this image with the intention of determining the conceptual boundaries.

Tourism policy would be the set of activities, decisions and processes promoted by government actors -sometimes in collaboration with other actors- with the intention of achieving diverse objectives related to tourism.

To analyze the set of actions that are designed and implemented to achieve certain objectives in a given situation, we must consider two dimensions: the proposed objectives and the instruments that governments use to achieve them.

Tourism policies combine, in a variable way, five main objectives, all of them very related to the very nature of the phenomenon and how it is perceived. Of course there are differences in intensity and nuance depending on the political system, the degree of general economic development and the degree of tourism development of the country or level of government considered, but all of them appear in practically all policy proposals.

The first, classic objective is to pursue the growth of the activity or its reconversion in order not to lose competitiveness, in the case of mature destinations. To date, it has been the positive impacts that have attracted the attention of public decision-makers and therefore the image of a clearly beneficial phenomenon, prevails.

In the case of destinations in the development phase, the aim is to grow to become a consolidated tourist destination. The aim is to increase foreign exchange earnings, economic activity and employment. But it is also about supporting the right to travel freely and the idea of tourism as an instrument for peace. To this end, the destination is promoted, it is a matter of improving the offer by convincing entrepreneurs that tourism is an economic activity of interest, even turning governments into tourism entrepreneurs and creating specialized administrations and the organizations that, from the government, will provide services to the tourism sector.

In consolidated destinations the purpose and objectives are adapted. In this case it would be a matter of maintaining the level of competitiveness of the destination through promotion and, where appropriate, with actions that allow for its reconversion, together with actions that incorporate concern for the social and environmental sustainability of the model. The undeniable nature of tourism as a situated territorial phenomenon explains that a second group of objectives is linked to the idea of planning. In this sense, it is a matter of creating the right conditions so that tourism activity can be developed generating the least possible conflicts with other uses of the territory. Some of the most recurrent goals are:

- Formulate a strategy for the development of tourism as a whole or of a specific sub-sector through various instruments (strategic plans, tourism planning, etc.)
- Build mobility infrastructures (basic instrument for the design of tourist flows in the destination), basic public services in the destination or specific tourist infrastructures (marinas or leisure parks, for example).
- Develop public resources for tourism use, such as hunting and fishing reserves, the development of coastal areas, or the recovery of cultural and natural heritage.
- Tourism is also an experience lived or a service consumed by people, so there are also frequent objectives related to the protection of the tourist and to guarantee the good result of his experience. These are common goals:
- Protecting the consumer-tourist more effectively
- Improve the regulation of the business sector's action, through the approval of regulations governing the different sub-sectors or products: accommodation, travel agencies, active tourism, etc.
- To promote actions that improve the quality of the tourist product and the customer service, normally actions of training of the workers.
- Another characteristic of the phenomenon is its cross-cutting nature, which requires several actors to work together. This implies that tourism policies often appear as objectives:
- Coordinate actors from different backgrounds and different sub-sectors through the creation of coordinating bodies of decision-makers with competence in other areas (culture, environment, infrastructure, among others).
- The promotion of destination management platforms involving all subsectors
- Promote joint work platforms of business sub-sectors (such as product clubs or tourism clusters).

Finally, tourism is a young phenomenon that is in a process of constant change. In order to act in the tourism market with a strategic vision, it is necessary to have updated information and expert knowledge that can be applied by diverse actors. The tourism sector is mostly composed of small and medium-sized enterprises. Generally, these business structures cannot assume the cost of researching and producing knowledge, even though they are the ones in daily contact with the reality of the activity. The very youth and dynamics of the phenomenon also make public decision-making or understanding difficult for citizens. For all these reasons, one of the classic objectives in tourism policies is to invest in research and knowledge production, as well as to help spread ideas and tools that allow innovation and improvement. This type of objective is specified in:

- To create research and analysis institutes or entities, in order to have a more precise knowledge of the tourism phenomenon and its changes
- Generate knowledge that will help business decision making (new management tools, new market niches)
- Disseminate information to assist in business decision-making (economic data from issuing countries)
- Supporting innovation processes in the sector

2.2. Public management of tourism

Once the major political objectives have been determined, actions have been designed and implemented which we call policies or programmes, or a specific tourism planning instrument has been approved, it is the turn of implementation. The implementation of public actions aimed at tourism is carried out by the different organisations that, with a diverse nature but sharing their more or less direct dependence on the public sector, work for this purpose.

Public management is an area of knowledge that gathers reflections coming from very diverse disciplines and whose purpose is to propose improvements in organizational designs, structures, processes or management techniques in such organizations. It brings together, therefore, contributions from economics, planning, organizational theory, financial management, human resource management, public policies, etc., that are made to improve the performance of the democratic public sector (Brugué, 1996).

Public organizations have changed significantly in recent years. Ideas of effectiveness and efficiency have been incorporated while trying to implement actions closer to citizens, although one of the greatest lessons learned has been that it is not possible to apply to the public sector management philosophies and methods that have emerged and developed in the private sector. Strategies that work well in private organizations cannot be transferred and implemented in public organizations, it is necessary to make an effort to understand the public context and not a direct transposition from the private sector. So, despite the progress, (Table-2) it is difficult to manage public organizations.

Administrative Structures	Reductions or modifications of structures dedicated to tourism	Privatization, outsourcing or design of new formulas
Regulatory streamlining	Streamlining tourism regulations and administrative processes	Simplification and coordination
Human Resources	Motivation and accountability systems for staff working in public or mixed organizations	Development of personnel policies
Transparency	Transparency and accountability	Communication, real transparency actions

Table 2: Possible areas of work in public tourism management

2.3. Tourism planning

Planning and management are two of the most elastic terms in the social sciences. The concept of planning and/or management is present in many areas of knowledge. It is a basic concept in architecture, engineering, geography or business administration or management of organizations. In general, planning means deploying various strategies, knowledge and methods with the intention of influencing the future, always starting from a principle more or less close to the logic of rationality. Using a concrete definition is the *"set of practices of reflection and prospective studies or prefiguration of the future for the definition of means and courses of action that will be developed in pursuit of the fulfillment of certain objectives with the purpose of intervening in a certain reality"* (Kuper et al., 2010).

As we point out in table 3, and we explain below, the relational approach and the rational approach would differ in the basic dimension they observe, for some policies, for others techniques; in the theoretical starting concept; in the central element they consider and in the questions they try to answer.

Focus	Dimension	Concept	Central element	Key Questions
relationship	policy	tourism governance	actor	What power does he have? Who wins and who loses from his decisions?
		policy tourism	objectives and instruments	What to do given the current situation? With what instruments?
rational	technical	planning tourism	methodologies	What do we know? How to articulate actions to modify the future?
		tourism governance	public organizations and processes	How to improve the performance of organizations?

Table 3: Concepts and approaches: core element and key questions

The relational approach, on the other hand, has as its main object of inquiry the legitimate process that empowers some actors to make collective decisions and impose them on the rest. In other words, the political, the management of the collective or the distribution of power is its basic concerns. The questions that arise are: who has the power in tourism, who bears the losses and gains with the different models of tourism development, what are the objectives of the actions that are designed and implemented from the public or what are the instruments that public actors prefer to achieve them. The rational approach would have as a central objective to improve the processes that involve applying intelligence to address problems and seek solutions. That is, scientific knowledge, technical capacity and the possibility of influencing the future development of a space, organization or sector are its essential concerns. The questions that arise are what is the framework in which it is planned, who has the competence, who could collaborate in the process, who would bear positive or negative impacts, what previous technical knowledge is needed; what is the best methodology to work with or how to measure results.

There are also several themes that are developed in this approach. In this case, we propose to group them in works that are better framed in a prescriptive or strategic normative dimension.

In a normative dimension we find proposals linked to the idea of ideal planning processes or normative guides (Burns, 2004, Schulte, 2003).

3. Conclusions

Whether the analysis of public action in tourism is approached from a relational or a rational approach, there are shared issues: the interest in the nature of negotiation scenarios, action orientation, concern about scale, destination concept or coordination problems.

In relation to the convergence of views, both approaches share a vision of negotiation scenarios with decision-making processes far removed from the model of rationality that was extended in the 1950s. This is clear when analyzing government or its policies, although it is equally present in reflections on planning and/or public management. A common learning in all social sciences is that rationality, as a principle of decision-making, does not occur in reality. All the evidence points to the fact that there is a lack of capacity and time to gather and thoroughly analyze all the information on a problem; that it is not possible to design alternatives by knowing exactly the implications of each one and separating our own objectives from their prioritization and that, therefore, we tend to limit our options to those that we know and that agree with our values. Moreover, it is stated that, since all decisions are made in organizational spaces, the tendency will be to maintain the same actions that worked relatively well and only concentrate innovation efforts in the face of new dilemmas. In both the political and technical dimensions, we have moved from a scenario of rational decision to one of negotiation, between actors, ideas, groups, experts... Although the negotiation scenario is dominated by argumentation and consensus or, in its case, technical analysis and knowledge.

In both approaches, too, the indefiniteness of concepts and the confrontation of values is an inherent part of the observed reality. In order to advance in spaces of negotiation it is frequent to resort to ideas and concepts whose indefiniteness allows them to be accepted by diverse subjects both in the construction of agreements and in planning processes.

Moreover, both perspectives are familiar with the clash of values that are difficult to prioritize: efficiency versus equity; innovation versus tradition; development, inequality, empowerment, effectiveness. The confrontation of controversies, although it has not appeared expressly in the field until recently has been observed by researchers of both approaches, trying to understand how the very limits of the discourses between agents are constructed.

In both cases we also find a basic concern that research and work should not lose its action orientation. It is a question of reflecting on the resolution of problems suffered or caused by tourism, but without losing sight of the fact that the conclusions must be able to be transferred to the world of public action. And, in both cases, there is sensitivity to the scale of what is observed and its relation to the proposal of models or procedures, as the following table-4 shows.

	Relational approach	Rational approach
Macro	Government or governance	Ideal planning process
Meso	Policies	Strategic Management
Micro	Policy instruments or public management systems	Intervention guides

Table 4: Scale of analysis

One concept that would benefit from studies that combine both approaches is that of destination. From both perspectives, the main limitation is the lack of relationship between the legal-administrative borders of the territories and the reality of the destinations. And, always linked to this, the concept of coordination. Many analyses of tourism policy and planning end up concluding that coordination systems need to be improved, but progress must be made in the content of this hackneyed term (Peters, 2015).

To conclude, we believe that a better demarcation between the concepts analysed would allow us to improve research in the area, overcoming the image of partial contributions, which are little related to each other. However, this would also require progress in the following directions:

- We need to improve our theories and models to make exchange and dialogue possible. We need to move beyond research based on descriptive logic to research that
- confirm or refute theoretical approaches or models, which can travel from one case to another. The literature on public action in tourism has generated little reflection that is useful for other cases or other contexts, it is too descriptive and this hinders mutual conversation.
- Once the concepts have been rigorously transferred from the disciplines in which they were born to the reflection on tourism, it is necessary to address the proposal of new concepts, linked to the specificities of the area. This will allow us to overcome disciplinary fragmentation through joint research into new areas.
- We should also move beyond research based on disciplinary logics and move towards research that works on concepts that can be built between scientific communities (such as those marked by fate or scale or others such as ideas of resilience).
- Finally, we need to ask important questions that generate relevant answers. We need to overcome research that only responds to a single glance: let us incorporate the complexity of the sector into the complexity of research designs and give importance to the possibility of our knowledge facing challenges and providing solutions so that we are able to manage destinations in a coordinated, comprehensive and fair way.

These could be the starting points for a discussion on a possible joint research agenda whose results would improve our knowledge of the phenomenon and our ability to propose more contextualized actions to public decision makers.

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