

THE ROLE OF CLIMATE ON SEASONALITY TOURISM AND EMERGING TOURIST PRODUCTS CONFIGURATION. THE CASE OF MALLORCA

Miquel Àngel Coll Ramis

Miguel Seguí Llinás

Universidad de las Islas Baleares
msegui@uib.es

Reviewing the literature generated regarding the seasonality of the tourism (Barón, 1975; Hartmann, 1986, Butler, 1994; Allock's, 1994, Butler and Mao, 1997, Lee et al., 2008), some general consensus can be observed about the factors that may explain its existence: the climatic features of the destiny, the behavior of the demand (the leisure period for the workers and the school holidays from the country of origin, motivations, fashion, among others), and the characteristics that determine the tourism supply. However, the influence of the climate characteristics over the tourism destination decision, has been historically, one of the tourism conditionings on which less specific literature have been made, maybe because it is implicit on a choice decision, but that does not mean that its importance is lower, as this paper tries to analyze.

The climate (natural resource) becomes a tourist attraction, when it is positively valued by tourists to influence the purchase decision. However, the resource value changes according to social changes (the value that society gives, according to the tastes and fashions of the moment), in addition of the influence that advertising and social media can produce on it. For example, certain atmospheric elements, such as high (strong) winds or isolation, were formerly conceived as limiting factors for tourism development, whereas, today is a key attraction for certain types of tourism such as the sun and sand or some water sports (surfing, windsurfing, ...). Moreover, there are a lot of studies (Lise and Tol, 2002; Hall and Higham, 2005; Amelung et al., 2007, Rossello, 2011) that analyze and warn of the possible impacts the climate change can produce on the tourism, as a result of the alteration of the initial conditions of the natural resources.

This circumstance must be taken into account, since as discussed below; the tourism model implemented on the island of Mallorca has a high degree of dependence on the weather, whose, viability over time will be conditioned by the possible changes in climate conditions and its social value. This dependence or independence of the tourist activities, with the climate is what defines its temporality along the year. Starting from this point, and in order to determine the temporal distribution of the main tourist products in Mallorca

(sun and beach, cycling, hiking, golf, sailing, and cultural), a general criteria is defined based on the optimal maximum daily temperatures, which is one of the aspect that presents a higher interest by the tourist (Gómez, 2003) regarding the practice of every kind of tourism activity. Furthermore, in the case of tourism of sun and beach and nautical (although less so), it has also taken into account the temperature of the sea water, to be a limiting factor for their practice (Segui and Servera, 2001). The present methodology have some limitations such as: that the object of study are the monthly average temperatures so, some daily particularities are not represented, in addition, the sensibility of the tourist in front of this factor, that can change depending on the tourist origin, age and gender among others, is not fully considered. However, it allows obtaining in a simple way an idea of the climate- tourism potential of a given territory.

The obtained results show the great climate-tourism potential that the island of Mallorca has, since all the months of the year, presents favorable climate conditions for the practice of certain tourism activities. Some of them even offer ideal conditions throughout the year, such as, golf tourism, and cultural tourism. In contrast, the other activities analyzed, exhibit a seasonal behavior

Thus, the climate of the island, despite limiting the practice of tourism of sun and beach during part of the year, it plays a vital role in the creation and promotion of new emerging products to address the seasonality problem. On one hand, we find that, these products (cycling, golf, boating, hiking, etc.), have not managed to reduce the weight of the sun and beach tourism during the high season (June-July-August-September), but on the other hand, they have contributed to slightly contain the seasonality, favoring on this way the arrival of tourists during the middle season (April-May-October-November) and also but to a lesser extent, during the low season (January-February-March-December).

Nevertheless, despite the climate-tourism potential that Mallorca has in order to offer tourist products that are attractive during all the year, the reality shows the persistence of a seasonal behavior over tourism. To analyze the phenomenon of the seasonality, different indexes can be used as well as different variables. The majority of the reviewed studies (Aguiló and Sastre, 1983; Lundtorp, 2001, Fernandez and Mayorga, 2008; Halpern, 2012) that measure the seasonal variations are based on annual estimations of the Gini index, which allows to analyze the seasonality of the supply or demand during a certain period of the year and, also, to detect the temporal evolution or trend, comparing for different years. For measuring the seasonality of demand and supply, have been used in the number of tourist arrivals and the percentage of the open hotels during the period ranged from 2001 to 2010.

The public and private sector have made numerous efforts to promote new products to help breaking the typical seasonal pattern of the sun and sand model, so rooted in Mallorca. However, the obtained results, show that despite small variations have occurred, their evolution over the period analyzed is more or less stable; This trend is associated with the more or less stable evolution that the social factors such as the travel motivation of the tourists that visit the island (predominance of weather and beaches) or the rigidity of the school vacation period (summer concentration).

Despite that the climate provides a wide range of possibilities to break this seasonality, which ones apparently seems to not be properly used. In this sense, is necessary to

transform the offer, which implies a change on the business mentality, a part of which is very well off the operation and performance of the tourism of sun and beach. The data regarding the hotel industry that is working during the low season (a 13% during the year 2010), shows the lack of interest of this sector to keep their establishments working during the low season, since that requires them greater efforts to attract customers and, its economic performance is much lower than the one they obtain during the rest of the year.

This disinterest in increasing tourist pressure during the off season has the acceptance of much of the public opinion, which needs to have a space and time for them (Seguí, 1995). Thus, it is surprising that year after year, the need to initiate campaigns with the aim to break this seasonality is one of the priorities of the government. All this leads us to wonder whether there really exists, a desire to end with the seasonality of the tourism by entrepreneurship and public authorities, or if they are simply interested in extending the duration of the high season to increase its performance.

A true end of the seasonality, with a high attendance throughout the year could result in significant social and environmental problems. Therefore, the problem of traditional tourist destinations such as Mallorca is to find a balance between the welfare of the local population and the tourist satisfaction. This leads us to think that there is a certain not written consensus between the social and economic agents of the island, regarding the need for a seasonal pattern of tourism. That allows them to satisfy a number of basic needs like keeping a time and a quiet space for the local population, the possibility of planning the new season, the rehabilitation of supply or the reduction of the reduced pressure on natural resources, among others. Thus, in the end, the climate would just be the great excuse used to justify the tourism seasonality that Mallorca is suffering.

