

Connection of tourism with the landscape as a fundamental element for sustainable development in rural areas

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Abstract: Tourism and landscape are two closely related realities. The image most frequently used to promote a given tourist center is, precisely, its landscape. Hence the importance of having landscapes of a certain quality, and knowing how to manage them in a rational way, as they are very fragile natural resources. If we take as a reference that any recovery process, once degraded, is costly and, in more complex cases, impossible to achieve. Landscape is a fundamental element in tourism and its promotion. In general, the importance of landscape in the processes of tourism development and its sustainability is unknown. In this sense, this study describes the evolution of the concept of tourism, analyzes the relationship between tourism and landscape, its valorization and landscape stereotypes. In order to respond to these objectives, a bibliographic review was carried out in high impact and regional scientific databases. As a result, the importance of the landscape for tourism, its valorization and integral development is transversally detailed. In general terms, it is essential to take advantage of the landscape for tourism with a focus on sustainable development. Finally, the different landscapes and their elements must be managed in a responsible and sustainable way where environmental, social and economic aspects are valued.

Keywords: Landscape, economy, sustainable development, waterfalls.



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1. Introduction

Nature tourism is directly related to development and sustainable tourism, and practically refers to natural habitats and their biodiversity, where natural parks, protected reserves, ecotourism, the rural environment, agrotourism and the involvement of the population belonging to the specific area of tourist implantation acquire great relevance [1,2]. This segment of tourism represents an enormous opportunity to contact with the natural and healthy roots that people need in the habitats in which they live, and can act as a compensation for the "comfort" of the polluted urban habitat and its stressful pace of life [3]. The development and progress of modern life have worn out the environment and acted with negative impacts through the conventional tourism model. With nature tourism comes ecotourism, which contributes to the conservation of the environment and its people and, although there is no shared definition, at least there is agreement on four basic ideas: 1) travel to pristine natural environments, 2) internalize the experience obtained in pure natural environments and in contact with local people, 3) promote the conservation of natural resources, and 4) educate in environmental and cultural values of the places visited [4,5]. The ecotourist is a traveler who enjoys his leisure time with a sense of ethics that motivates him to participate in rehabilitation works in degraded places, and helps in tasks for the development of local populations [6].

The problem of landscape in general and its role in tourism in particular has been the object of scientific concern especially since the 1960s [7]. The intervention of geography in its different phases of disciplinary development and, in general, the so-called earth sciences or environmental sciences, have incorporated in their development important contributions to their conceptualization and approach methodologies [8]. The same is true of the contributions of urban planning, landscape architecture, ecology, environmental sciences – in general – sociology and phenomenological psychology, among others [9]. However, and despite these contributions, there are still difficulties of understanding and intervention, given the complexity and conceptual, methodological and technical diversity it has acquired from its increasingly holistic consideration, the overcoming of its almost exclusive treatment as a mere aesthetic-visual-perceptual experience as an artistic phenomenon, and the growing need for a more open and convergent participation in terms of disciplines and actors at the time of its evaluation and intervention [10].

In tourism studies, landscape should be considered more often as a tourism resource. The landscape is certainly a much more valuable resource than other tourism resources when it comes to consolidating a given tourism offer (Figure 1). It is, however, a more delicate resource than the others, because it is somewhat fragile and difficult to manage and because its recovery once degraded is very costly, if not impossible [1]. Although more delicate, the landscape is certainly a much more valuable resource than other tourism resources when it comes to consolidating a particular tourism offer. This is so because, ultimately, landscape is a consubstantial element of the tourism phenomenon. Landscape and tourism are, therefore, two closely related realities.



Figure 1. Landscapes; a) Natural landscape – San Rafael waterfall (Ecuador), nowadays disappeared possibly by anthropic actions. b) Urban landscape – Eiffel Tower (France), one of the most famous urban landscapes in the world. c) Rural landscape – Punta Gallinas (Colombia), the northernmost urban area in South America.

In this context of scientific and technical evolution, it is possible to note that the holistic and increasingly responsible understanding of development in terms of sustainability, habitability, and ecological balance also implies positioning the entity of landscape in the context of development, of tourism production in particular, and even more so in the context of planning and management of development in general and of sustainable tourism development in particular. In this sense, the present study aimed to describe the evolution of the concept of landscape, to analyze the relationship between tourism and landscape, and to understand the valorization and stereotypes of landscape. In order to respond to these objectives, a simple bibliographic review was carried out in high impact databases such as Scopus and Web of Science; this search was complemented in regional databases in Spanish such as Scielo and Redalyc.

2. The concept of landscape

Initially, it is useful to recall the meaning commonly given to the term landscape. They are not usually very academic definitions, but they are interesting, since they recall the colloquial and everyday origin and use of the words, to which it is sometimes convenient to resort. One of the definitions of landscape given by a dictionary is "Extent of countryside seen from a site", "The countryside considered as a spectacle", "Painting representing an extension of countryside" [11]. Landscape is here conceived as the visible and perceptible aspect of space. It is interesting to note that all these definitions imply the existence of an observer, of someone who contemplates and analyzes this

portion of space from a given point of view. This observer will be, in our case, the tourist [11]. Landscape is here conceived as the visible and perceptible aspect of space. It is interesting to note that all these definitions imply the existence of an observer, of someone who contemplates and analyzes this portion of space from a given point of view. This observer will be, in our case, the tourist.

In everyday usage of the term, landscape usually designates a spatial unit that exists as real and independent of an observer. In scientific disciplines such as geography, the term landscape was increasingly rejected because of theoretical deficits and its ambiguity, although it never completely ceased to be used [12,13]. Since the 1990s, the concept of landscape has increasingly made its way into human geographic research using socio-constructivist approaches. These socio-constructivist perspectives experienced their heyday in the course of the cultural turn, a major shift towards constructivist approaches in geography in general. This approach was ideal in tourism, as the process of construction constantly occurs before, during, and after the trip [14,15]. Landscape is a "way" of looking at a space and depends on the attributions of meaning that people negotiate in social interaction. When confronting a person with secondary information such as tourist advertising or other forms of communication about landscapes (e.g., movies, social networks), stereotypical landscapes, so-called landscape stereotypes, emerge. They guide our ideas of spaces, which deviate from our native landscape [16,17]. However, these are not images of the world, but representations of the spaces we know.

Landscape can be subdivided into four dimensions: social landscape (knowledge and ideas about landscape existing in society), individually actualized social landscape (individual knowledge and ideas about landscape), external space (objects of physical space) and appropriate physical landscape (objects of external space that are used to construct the landscape) [16,18].

On the other hand, the habitability of the landscape is the condition that supports the responsible articulation of the objectives of quality of the tourist experience (social welfare) and ecological balance. While sustainability is the condition that sustains the responsible articulation of the objectives of development of the tourism product system (production) and ecological balance [2,6]. Likewise, the availability and accessibility of the landscape is the condition that sustains the responsible articulation of the objectives of development of the tourism production system (production) and quality of stay and tourist experience of tourists, recreationists and residents [19,20]. In this sense it is possible to interpolate the objectives and conditions expressed in the generic conceptual map of sustainable development, applicable to the conception of any responsible intervention of the territorial scenario and with the conceptual map of sustainable development of tourism. Integrated system in the articulation of the social, socio-cultural, economic-productive, and environmental dimensions that also integrate its holistic conception [21-24].

A similar conception can be transposed to a holistic and sustainable conception of the development of a system of sustainable tourism products included in product

marketing [25,26]. Thus, it is possible to conceive a sustainable product development, where the landscape in tourist function forms a holistic entity that transcends the excluding physical–environmental and aesthetic–perceptual–artistic uni–dimensionality to include the socio–cultural and socio–economic dimensions. Thus, the landscape as a tourist function forms a macro–product or system of tourist products operable in the market that transcends the mere consideration of one more resource [2,27]. In this way, the landscape as a tourist function forms a disciplinary corpus that transcends the directionality of a particular discipline, without prejudice to understanding the historical influence that geography and urbanism exerted on its conception.

It is significant to note that the definitions of the term landscape clearly respond to the idea of landscape that began to develop in Western European culture from the beginning of the 15th century [28,29]. Landscape relates to the artistic–pictorial representation of the visible world. Landscape indicates the scenic beauty seen by the viewer. The influence of this conception of landscape on our current conception of landscape is enormous. In our everyday language, the words' "view", "panorama", "panoramic" and "landscape" are used interchangeably. It is as if the landscape could not exist without someone contemplating it [8,15]. Landscape is, therefore, a concept enormously impregnated with cultural and even ideological connotations. Landscape is not only the world as it is, but it is also, a construction, a composition of this world. Landscape is a way of seeing the world.

The definition of landscape as simply the visible and perceptible aspect of space is interesting, but perhaps excessively generic. More specifically – and considering that we live in an extremely humanized world – the landscape should also be defined as the final and perceptible result of the dynamic combination of abiotic, biotic and anthropic elements, a combination that makes the whole unique and in continuous evolution [8,30]. In western latitudes the term landscape includes, necessarily, the anthropic factor: our landscape is, to a large extent, a cultural landscape. "Landscape" and "natural landscape" are not, therefore, two synonymous expressions, even though, often, when we speak of landscape, we tend to think exclusively of natural or, at least, non–urban landscapes. The expression "natural landscape" presupposes the existence of landscapes in which the action of man is null or insignificant: relief, climate and vegetation would be its only elements [28,31]. It is often forgotten that this type of landscape is practically non–existent in the Old Continent and less and less frequent in the rest of the world. The few truly natural landscapes existing today in Europe are limited to small marginal areas, which, because of their special characteristics, have not been or have been little inhabited and exploited by human societies [2,31].

The confusion between natural landscape is at the basis of the almost total bewilderment in which the treatment of landscape is found in this and other countries. It may have been more or less difficult and conflictive to achieve the protection of those landscapes in which human intervention has been null or minimal, but the fact is that they are being protected. In fact, this is where most of the efforts of the European and North American conservation movement have been directed over the last century [32,33].

Society and public authorities are fully aware of the unavoidable need to preserve these small areas of exceptional natural interest for the future, which has been translated into appropriate legislation. Contrary to or perhaps precisely as a result of this conservationist philosophy, there is no agreement, neither implicitly nor explicitly, on how to treat the rest of the territory from a landscape point of view. There is, in short, no real "landscape consciousness", which translates into an adequate body of legislation. This is the crux of the matter.

If we recognize this intense anthropic action on the landscape and if we accept the intrinsic cultural value of this concept, it will probably be easier for us to approach the issue of the relationship between tourism and landscape correctly.

3. Relationship between tourism and landscape

When opening a debate on the relationship between tourism and landscape, it is necessary to pay attention, albeit briefly, to the conceptual framework in which nature tourism and landscape develop [34]. No consensus has been reached on the definition of tourism. Partly because it has implications of different nature (socioeconomic, socio-cultural, territorial and anthropological). Also because it is subject to internal changes (in its organizational structure, and in its capacity to generate product) and demand (increasingly flexible and changing) [35]. The processes of transformation have generated a more specialized and intensive tourism, which has an unquestionable impact on the space in which it is produced, and which has led to new developments and perceptions of tourist destinations. But this tourism changes and generates an imprecise relationship between leisure and tourism, which is subject to pernicious effects due to the problems derived from congestion and in which new destinations and products are incorporated [34,36].

The concepts of tourism, nature tourism and landscape lend themselves to interpretation and are subject to in-depth debate. There is agreement in assuming that, from the territorial point of view, tourism is developed in rural and natural landscapes. These natural activities (because there are several modalities involved and developed in this area) are associated with specific types of accommodation, with a demand with specific characteristics, and with certain types of products. This reality leads us to pay attention to one of the essential parts of the process: the territorial tourism resources in the natural environment, and in particular the role played by the landscape [37]. Three fundamental elements come together in the process of building nature tourism: facilities, resources and demand. In the case of resources, which are the raw material that feeds the tourism system, the landscape plays an undisputed leading role. There is a close communion, with marked interdependencies, between natural tourism and the landscape [1,38]. The reasons that justify this last statement can be explained by the fact that within nature tourism, the main motivations of demand are associated with the enjoyment of the environment in the different modalities: ecological tourism (active enjoyment of nature), green tourism (tourist and sports activities in the natural environment), agro-tourism, sports tourism, health tourism, rural-cultural tourism [37]. All of them have in common that the motive of attraction or the territorial support in which they are developed

are the natural landscapes, which become not only the setting but also the main object of consumption.

It is therefore important to make some notes on the very geographical concept of landscape. The term has a double component: the natural and the social [39]. A body of theory has emerged that has focused attention on objective aspects of landscape, understood as spatial units associated with the physical structure of the territory, on which anthropic action has been leaving a secular imprint. But alongside objective definition proposals, others have appeared in which subjective values are dominant, associated in this case with meanings, representations, qualities and values, which in this case are expressed through feelings of identity about these territories [40]. These dimensions, the natural and the cultural, are closely linked, they are a consequence of the joint action of nature and human action, resulting in aesthetic, natural and ecological, productive, historical, social, spiritual and mythological, symbolic and identity values.

These aspects relate it to the possibilities of exploitation of rural spaces, where the landscape becomes a resource, an element of consumption, but also a territorial potential and an important asset for rural tourism. Some landscapes, which are the result of agricultural or forestry activities, become increasingly valuable, and their social value increases [14,41]. Sometimes they are charming natural landscapes that are a must-see and have the capacity to give a social identity to those who visit them. At other times they are simply invisible landscapes of history, of memory, of the past, which are on the border between yesterday and today, and which acquire prominence for some recreational and tourist functions and activities. Sometimes for the simple real or symbolic value of the landscape. In other cases because they are accompanied by programmed traditional cultural events [14,42].

Most of the actions aimed at correcting and conserving the landscape have been concentrated in protected areas, which are assumed to have a high environmental and natural value. In recent years, there have been documents and laws worldwide in which the landscape has taken on a leading role. This means giving some of them the status of heritage, because of the value assumed and shared by the community and because of the strong cultural component [43,44]. But it is also true that a massive approach to nature implies transferring to these territories part of the conflicts and problems of the post-industrial and consumerist society.

The landscape has become a territorial potential, and therefore an undisputed asset for rural tourism. It is becoming increasingly valuable because there is growing interest in the use of quality rural and natural landscapes (which are the result of pre-tourist activities) to which a significant social price is assigned. Visitors and tourists perceive the rural world with greater complexity, overcoming the traditional identification of the rural economy, where the role of providing agricultural products is now complemented by that of providing environmental, landscape and cultural goods. For this reason, there is a growing awareness of the need to enhance the value of the landscape and encourage responsible social use.

4. Valorization and stereotypes of the landscape

Landscape is undoubtedly an argument for economic and tourist development and promotion [45,46]. At a time when the question of landscape is opposed to development and preservation in the major issues of land-use planning (wind projects, sustainable development, etc.), what is its importance? What value do we place on it? An approach is necessary to better understand landscapes, the specificities that characterize them and the possibilities they generate in terms of sustainable local and regional development [47,48]. A clear example of the importance, value and interest in landscape led the Council of Europe to approve the European Landscape Convention (2000) more than a decade ago [8,49]. The definition provided by this Convention indicates that "landscape shall mean any part of the territory as perceived by the population, the character of which is the result of the action and interaction of natural and human factors", and its importance lies in the fact that it contributes to the formation of local cultures, is considered an important element in the quality of life of populations, is a source of economic resources, and is subject to profound changes associated with abandonment or new uses [49,50].

The central concern of the landscape initiative, to strengthen the separation of the construction area from the non-construction area, is fundamental for tourism [36,49]. Because with the protection of the no-build area, the most valuable resource for tourism, the beautiful landscapes, is protected. The natural value is increased, the construction culture is preserved. The landscape initiative thus contributes to the qualitative development and protection of typical landscapes, especially in pristine areas. In other words, tourism benefits from pristine natural and cultural landscapes.

Intervening to improve the quality of landscapes takes time and is a major challenge in a context where the pace of awareness is slower than that of the development and evolution of landscape valuation and management practices. Basic phases (Table 1) have been identified to safeguard landscape values [48,51]. Being an important issue of sustainable development that involves so many actions of preservation, enhancement, management and development of the territory in relation to the values and concerns of the communities. Not being the preserve of any profession, the landscape should be the subject of consultation and be built on the basis of a collective agreement.

Table 1. Phases to safeguard the value of tourism.

Phases	Description
Reconnaissance	Public recognition of landscape issues, inseparable from the education and awareness of local populations and stakeholders.
Landscape diagnosis	To take a multiple view (identity, historical, economic, visual, social, political, utilitarian, etc.) that requires various skills, to determine the characteristics and potential of a territory in order to make an overall assessment of the possibilities and limitations.
Project statement	Statement of the public landscape project – to determine in a concerted manner the objectives to be achieved in terms of

	preservation, valorization, management and development of the territories; it must translate a common vision of all stakeholders (population, local and regional authorities, other actors concerned by landscape policies).
Action and implementation frameworks	Legislative and regulatory tools, promotional tools (dissemination, awareness-raising, recognition, etc.), projects (landscape charters, conferences, competitions, support measures for local initiatives).
Monitoring and auditing	Taking into account the evolution of the physical-spatial characteristics, evaluating the coherence and relevance of policies, programs, public tools and interventions, and the adequacy of the objectives.

If the phases and their actions are complied with, it will often allow to generate important economic benefits, understanding that the landscape is composed of a mosaic of elements, and its analysis cannot be limited only to the visual aspect, but to the whole territory [49,50]. Considering that worldwide it is possible to find diverse attractive landscapes, cultural-historical and natural. Proper management of landscapes has been shown to promote health, physical, psychological and social well-being. An intact landscape also has important economic effects. Thus, they are a prerequisite for enhancing tourism [52,53].

Landscape theory addresses the importance of landscape in tourism and explains how tour operators reproduce landscape ideas to influence the individually actualized social landscape of potential customers [54,55]. This happens from a commercial logic, because landscape stereotypes shape mental imaginary geographies, i.e., internal ideas of destinations, and consequently influence the choice of travel destinations [56,57]. Landscape stereotypes initially anticipate the image of a destination and intermingle with individual projections in the form of fantasies and desires, which arise as superfluous needs in everyday life. In addition to the reception of tourism advertising, the consumption of films, television, literature, magazines, paintings, photographs or visual arts also contributes significantly to the emergence of mental imaginary geographies [58-60]. Another source of mental imaginary geographies is the accounts of friends and acquaintances who have been to a given tourist space before a potential traveler.

Stereotypical representations of landscapes in particular can be used strategically for tourism marketing [58], as they allow tourism providers to position complex structures such as regions as products, easily condensed into a comprehensible statement. On the other hand, landscapes are broken down by reductions to make them tangible for tourists [61]. Because the more complex tourism marketing becomes, the greater the risk of sensory overload, from which the tourist wants to escape with his trip.

It is necessary to keep in mind that nature tourism worldwide is mostly based on a demand of national origin, heterogeneous in its composition and mainly of urban origin. It is associated with weekend trips, long holidays, residential vacations or stays with family and friends [62]. The main attractions are associated with the growing interest in nature and rural areas for leisure, or the existence of personal and emotional relationships

between the tourist and the destination [63]. In short, it is the tourist guided by the approach to nature and rural life, who is sensitive to the environment or is fond of outdoor activities. This justifies the growing attention for the landscape, as it is becoming an object of desire on the part of users (tourists or visitors), and in the actions of the administration, which tries to enhance its value for tourist use [52,64]. These two realities, on the one hand, the growing interest of tourists in nature tourism and especially in the landscape, and on the other hand, the actions of different tourism stakeholders to promote the use of areas of outstanding environmental or landscape value, have prompted to pay attention to the preferences of tourists and to the actions to be able to use natural spaces and landscapes in a particular territory.

5. Challenges

It is important for the actors of nature tourism in an area or jurisdiction to situate conceptually the entity of the landscape in its univocal relationship with the conception of habitat, environment and place, as well as its entity as a resource susceptible of becoming a tourist product, and its implications in the integrated conception of sustainable tourism development. As well as to establish the need for multidisciplinary consideration in its conceptual and technical approach. On the other hand, it is also essential to focus efforts to establish the need for its central consideration in the approach to the planning of the enhancement and sustainable tourism development and to establish the need to understand the economic valuation of the landscape and its contribution to the valuation of the resources that integrate it in a holistic conception of its entity as a tourism macro-product.

The entire tourism sector is directly involved in the environmental, socio-cultural and economic problem. But not all the actions of transformation and introduction of activities produce negative impacts, since tourism, in many areas, has contributed in an important way to the conservation of biodiversity. For poor local communities, nature tourism represents a fundamental way out of the limited possibilities in their way of life, and favors the maintenance and escape from the circle of poverty. It is also essential to manage and protect the world's ecosystems and their landscapes so that they do not fall prey to anthropogenic pressures. It is here where the actors directly and indirectly related to nature tourism should focus their efforts on promoting sustainable environmental education to conserve the different landscapes in the natural environment.

In the era of globalization, tourism is breaking away from its traditional circuits. In Latin America, Africa and Asia, some small rural communities face a challenge: to seize the opportunity to improve their living conditions without damaging their heritage. While in Europe, efforts are focused on enhancing the most urbanized landscapes and preserving the few sites that have not been affected in areas of difficult access and enhancing seasonal tourism. However, the issue of tourism development in the different regions of the world continues to be an important topic of analysis and is one of the declared objectives of national and local governments that are committed to maintaining a balance between the environmental, social and economic aspects.

6. Conclusions

Worldwide, the image most frequently used to publicize or promote any of the segments of tourism is precisely its landscape. Hence the importance of having landscapes of a certain quality, and knowing how to manage them in a rational way, as they are very fragile natural resources. If we take as a reference that any recovery process, once degraded, is costly and, in more complex cases, impossible to achieve. At present, the management of landscape concerns is still more the fruit of local and specific initiatives than the result of a global and integrated framework on the part of governments, despite the explicit recognition of the importance of landscape in some policies and laws worldwide.

Landscape and tourism are undoubtedly two closely related realities, although their harmonious balance is often difficult to achieve. Paradoxically, being the landscape a fundamental value in any tourist offers, we find that tourism is today one of the most important causes of its degradation. Public and private tourism promoters do not seem – or do not want – to realize that the landscape is a much more fragile and delicate tourist resource than other tourist resources and that its destruction is detrimental, in the short or long term, to the economic profitability of the tourist settlement itself. It must be admitted that, worldwide, the impact of mass tourism on the landscape has been negative and has affected both natural and humanized landscapes. In both cases, their optimal state of equilibrium has been destroyed, either the "climax", in the first case, or what we have called "anthropoclimax", in the second case.

List of abbreviations: Not applicable

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