

TOLEDO: A MODEL OF CULTURAL TOURISM FOR THE 21ST CENTURY

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The main goal of this paper is to analyse the balance and sustainability of the management that Local and Regional Institutions as well as Travel agencies and Wholesalers perform when exploiting the resources offered by cities which have been given the status of World Heritage Site. We will approach concise matters: Is the tourists' culture enriched by the offer? Is the available information adequate? Are the profits of this activity to the benefit of the city and the maintenance and growth of its cultural heritage?

We have chosen Toledo as a model because it is a traditional destination which has a series of remarkable features:

1. It is a World Heritage Site and is of international renown. It has a great historical and artistic tradition and is known as The City of Three cultures - Jews, Christians and Muslims. It has become a favoured destination of foreign tourists when visiting Spain and is included in most package offers.
2. Being near Madrid, it is also used as an addition to the capital's own offer, thus having both foreign and domestic visitors who see Toledo as a cultural destination.
3. Toledo's unique historical and artistic heritage makes it an essential destination for students and researchers.
4. It is also chosen as a religious destination, being a Sephardic capital and having the most important Cathedral in Spain.

Taking this into account we wonder: What image is given of Toledo by travel agencies and wholesalers? What policies are the Local and Regional Institutions following to prove that in spite of being a traditional destination Toledo offers alternatives that are less conventional and more attractive for the tourists of the 21st century?

In our study we have found that in Toledo there is mostly mass tourism with only basic information. Tourists usually leave the city completely unaware of the idiosyncrasy of Toledo (art, civilian and religious traditions, town planning, gastronomy) but thinking they know everything. This erroneous criterion determines the lack of a steady flow of tourists back to the city.

We also take into account the different private and public initiatives carried out in order to improve the quality and sustainability of tourism in Toledo, achieving immediate targets such as:

1. Overcoming drawbacks which arise from town planning, building escalators that increase comfort and provide access to new sites.
2. Improving railway facilities (AVE).
3. Controlling the quality of the information given to tourists and establishing regulations on training and information provided by tour guides.
4. Creating alternative routes that are less conventional and capable of showing the real essence of the city.
5. Promoting the local gastronomy and quality products.
6. Improving security and police surveillance and protection towards tourists.

We all have the same aim: making Toledo a model of sustainable tourism in the 21st century.