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TOURISM RESEARCH IN SPAIN: THE STATE OF THE ART

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ABSTRACT

This paper analyses the evolution that Tourism Research has undergone in Spain in the last few years as well as its present situation, on the basis of four different variables: (i) the PhD dissertations carried out in the last ten years; (ii) the papers published in any ISI source during the last five years; (iii) the scientific journals on Tourism edited in Spain; (iv) and finally, the active research groups, centres and networks concerned with Tourism that exist in the country at the moment. In general terms, it will be shown that, despite becoming more and more multidisciplinary and a subject matter of interest for a larger number of higher education institutions, the research carried out on Tourism in Spain seems to be still restricted to very few fields of knowledge, universities and regions.

KEYWORDS

Tourism; Research; Spain.

ECONLIT KEYS

L830; I230; O300.

1. INTRODUCTION

This paper is the transcription of the lecture delivered at the INVTUR 2010 International Conference, held in Aveiro (Portugal) on March 12th, 2010.

Focusing on the proposed topic for the launching issue of this Journal, its main objective is to offer a global view of the present situation of Tourism research in Spain and its recent evolution. Spain has been chosen as the country object of study

for two reasons: on the one hand, for being a country ranked worldwide at the top of the tourist destinations; and however, on the other, for being a country where the research on the tourist industry has not received enough attention, at least until recent times. Notice in this regard that between the two important dates that should be taken into account there is quite a long time span:

a) 1963, which is the year in which the first definition of Tourism is to be found in Spain; specifically, in the Regulation Act 48/1963: “Movement and stay of people outside their normal place of work or residence for reasons different to professional ones”.

b) And 1996, which is the year when the studies on Tourism start to be recognized as part of the Spanish Higher Education System.

In order to achieve the objective mentioned above I have carried out an exhaustive analysis of three different variables, which will be detailed in the following sections:

1. The evolution of the PhD dissertations written during the last ten academic years (1999/2000-2008/2009), according to the TESEO database (<http://www.educacion.es/teseo>).
2. The evolution of the publications in any of the sources included in the ISI Web of Knowledge database during the last five years (2005-2009).
3. And finally, the scientific journals edited in Spain, together with the research groups, centres and networks on tourism being active in Spain at the moment.

2. PHD DISSERTATIONS

The 233 Doctoral Dissertations dealing with Tourism that have been written between 1999/2000 and 2008/2009 should be classified, according to the UNESCO fields of knowledge used by Talaya (2000), in three different groups, as shown in Table 1: (i) priority areas; (ii) intermediate areas; (iii) and related areas: DUDA

Knowledge Area	Nº	%
Group I - Priority Areas		
Economics	85	36.5
Geography	38	16.3
Total Group I	123	52.8
Group II - Intermediate Areas		
Sociology	22	9.4
History	19	8.2
Earth Science and Space	14	6.0
Legal Sciences and Law	13	5.6
Technological Sciences	10	4.3
Total Group II	78	33.5
Group III - Concerned Areas		
Linguistics	9	3.9
Psychology	7	3.0
Anthropology	6	2.6
Political Science	6	2.6
Pedagogy	4	1.7
Total Group III	32	13.7
Total	233	100

Table 1: Participation of fields of knowledge in doctoral thesis on Tourism (1999/2000 – 2008/2009 academic years).

Source: Own elaboration based on TESEO database (2008/2009 till July 31st).

These results, in comparison with Talaya's findings (2000), seem to suggest the following two assumptions:

-The number of PhD dissertations has increased considerably.

-Tourism is becoming an increasingly multidisciplinary field of study. Notice in this regard that, although Economics and Geography are still the dominant fields of knowledge, there are some other areas that have started to be interested in the study of Tourism, enriching, thus, such a complex phenomenon with new and diverse implications different from the traditional economic and geographical ones.

As shown in Table 2, within the discipline of Economics there are two specific areas that are by far the predominant ones in Tourism Research: namely, Sector Economics and Organization & Management:

Subjects	Nº	%
Accounting	2	1.4
Economic Activity	3	2.2
General Economics	3	2.2
International Economics	3	2.2
Industrial Organization and Public Sector	4	2.9
Economic Theory	5	3.6
Economic of Technological Change	6	4.3
Econometrics	9	6.5
Organization and Management	43	30.9
Sector Economics	61	43.9
Total	139	100

Table 2: Economic subjects: doctoral thesis on Tourism (1999/2000 – 2008/2009 academic years).
Source: Own elaboration based on TESEO database (2008/2009 till July 31st).

A more detailed analysis of these two outstanding areas reveals two striking facts. First, as illustrated in Table 3, that, within the field of Organization & Management, the two most prevailing areas are those of Marketing and Human Resources Management:

Subjects	Nº	%
Optimal Production Levels	1	1.6
Operational Research	2	3.1
Financial Management	2	3.1
Industrial Studies	3	4.7
Advertisement	3	4.7 (*)
Production Organization	8	12.5
Human Resources Management	9	14.1
Market Research	10	15.6 (*)
Marketing	26	40.6 (*)
Total	64	100,0

(*) $4,7 + 15,6 + 40,6 = 60,9$ (the three subjects can be considered as part of the same knowledge area)
Table 3: Organization and Management: doctoral thesis on Tourism (1999/2000 – 2008/2009 academic years).
Source: Own elaboration based on TESEO database (2008/2009 till July 31st).

And second, that within the field of Sector Economics there is a considerable number of doctoral thesis (65 have been found) devoted to the Hospitality and Tourism Sector, whose distribution by universities is represented in Figure 1 and by regions in Figure 2:

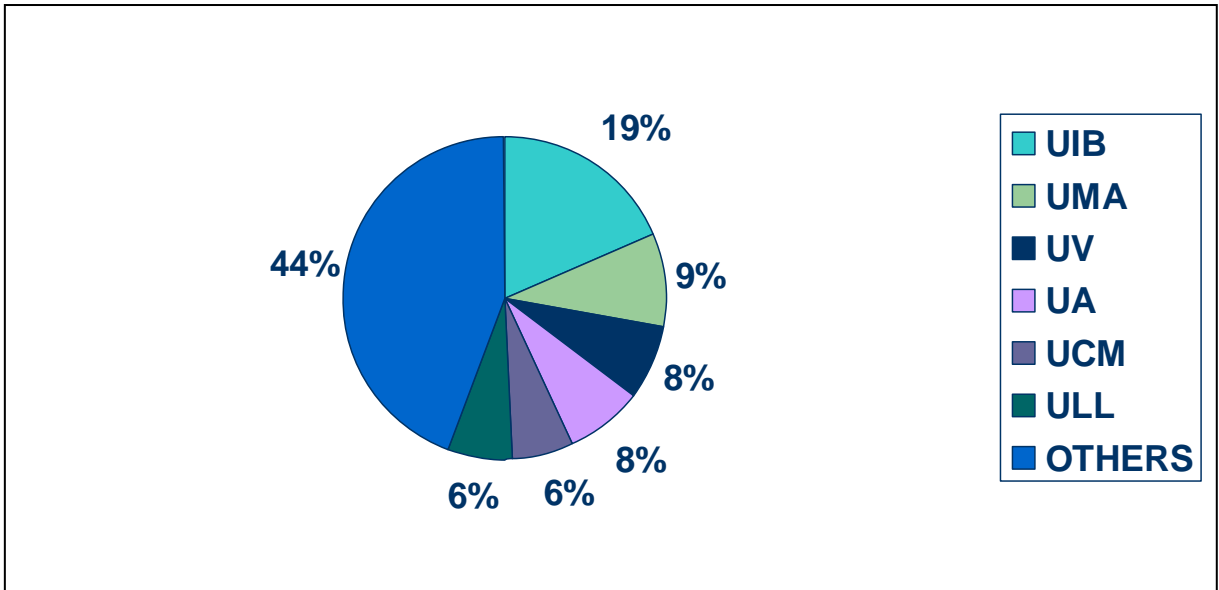


Figure 1: Doctoral Thesis on the Hospitality and Tourism Sector (Sector Economics).
Breakdown by Universities.
Source: Own elaboration based on TESEO database. 1999/2000-2008/09 (till July 31st).

As can be seen in the previous Figure, the University of the Balearic Islands is clearly at the top, followed by the following universities: University of Malaga (Andalusia), University of Valencia and University of Alicante (Valencian Community), Complutense University (Madrid) and University of La Laguna (Canary Islands).

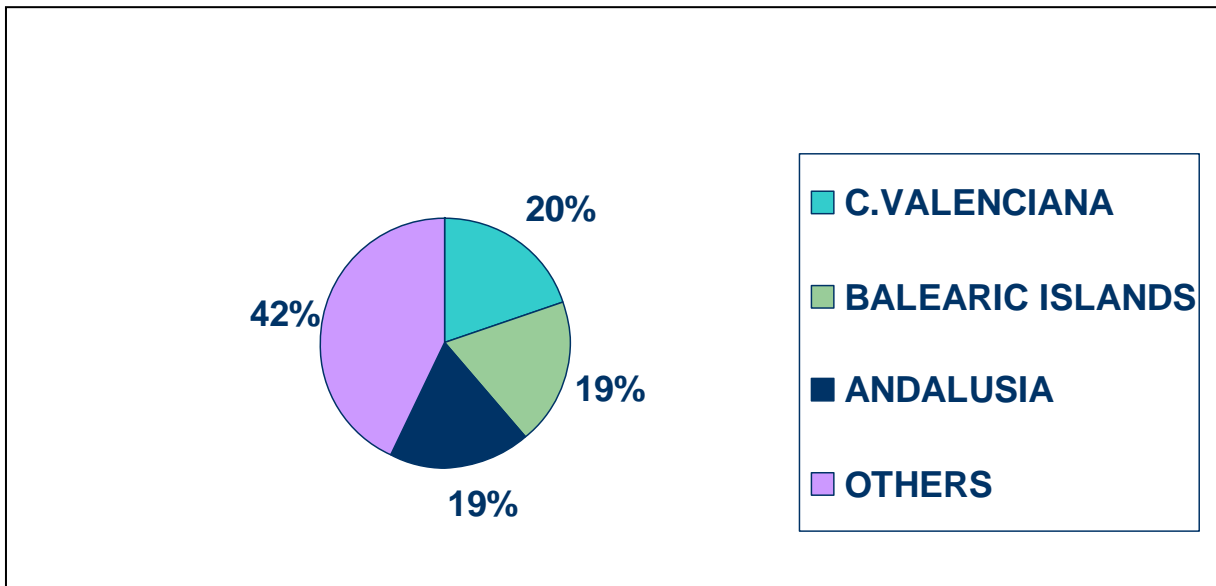


Figure 2: Doctoral Thesis on the Hospitality and Tourism Sector (Sector Economics).
Breakdown by Autonomous Communities.
Source: Own elaboration based on TESEO database. 1999/2000-2008/09 (till July 31st).

Taking broad descriptors, the discipline of marketing is the dominant one in the Doctoral Dissertations devoted to the Hospitality and Tourism Sector. As illustrated in figure 3, marketing is followed in this ranking by Geography, and then by Economics, Sociology, Psychology and Statistics-Econometrics:

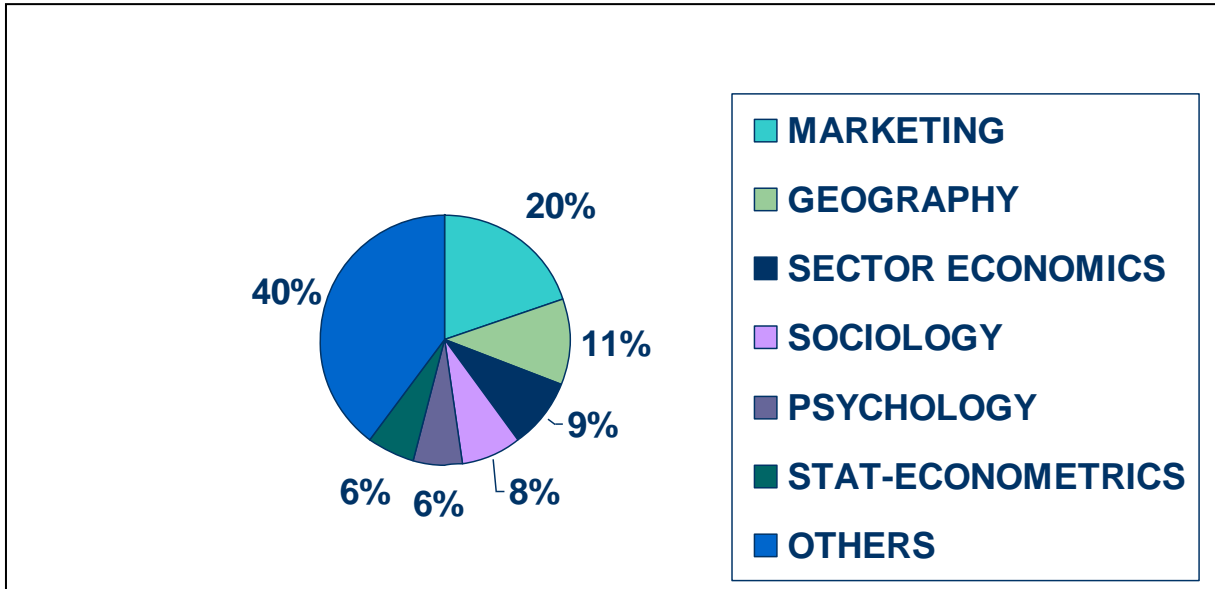


Figure 3: Doctoral Thesis on the Hospitality and Tourism Sector (Sector Economics).
Breakdown by Broad Descriptors.
Source: Own elaboration based on TESEO database. 1999/2000-2008/09 (till July 31st).

Narrowing the search criteria, 20 of these doctoral theses have a clear focus on organization and management. Their distribution by universities is shown in Figure 4:

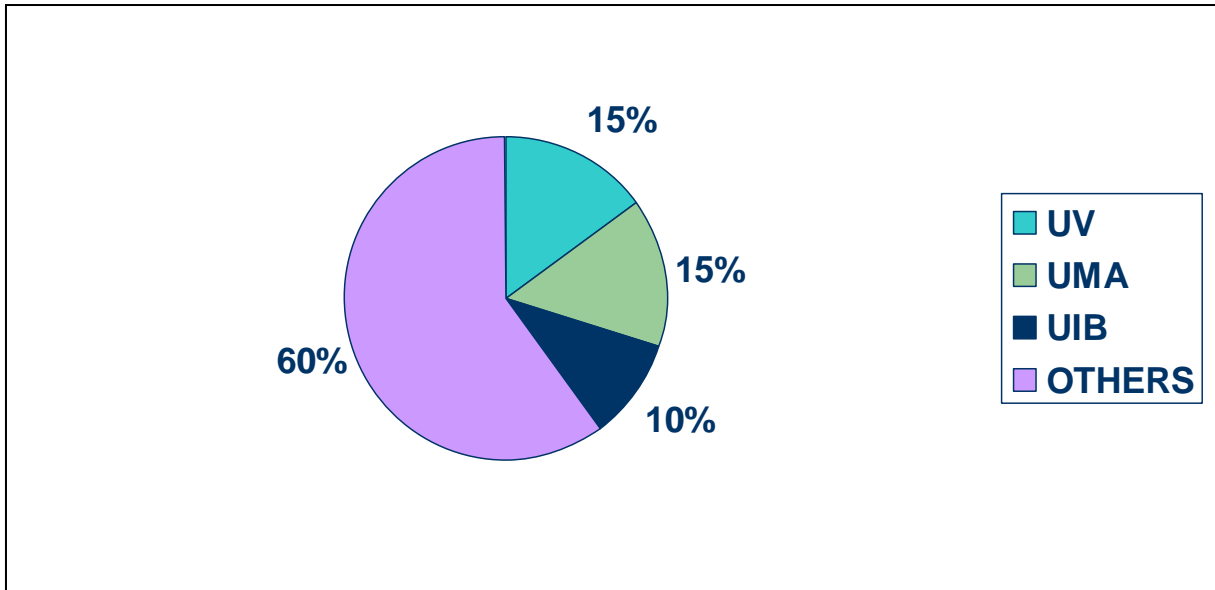


Figure 4: Doctoral Thesis on the Hospitality and Tourism Sector (Organization & Management).
Breakdown by Universities.

Source: Own elaboration based on TESEO database. 1999/2000-2008/09 (till July 31st).

Since the Universities of Valencia and Malaga are the leaders in this field, followed quite closely by the University of the Balearic Islands, the distribution of these thesis in terms of Autonomous Communities should be as represented in Figure 5:

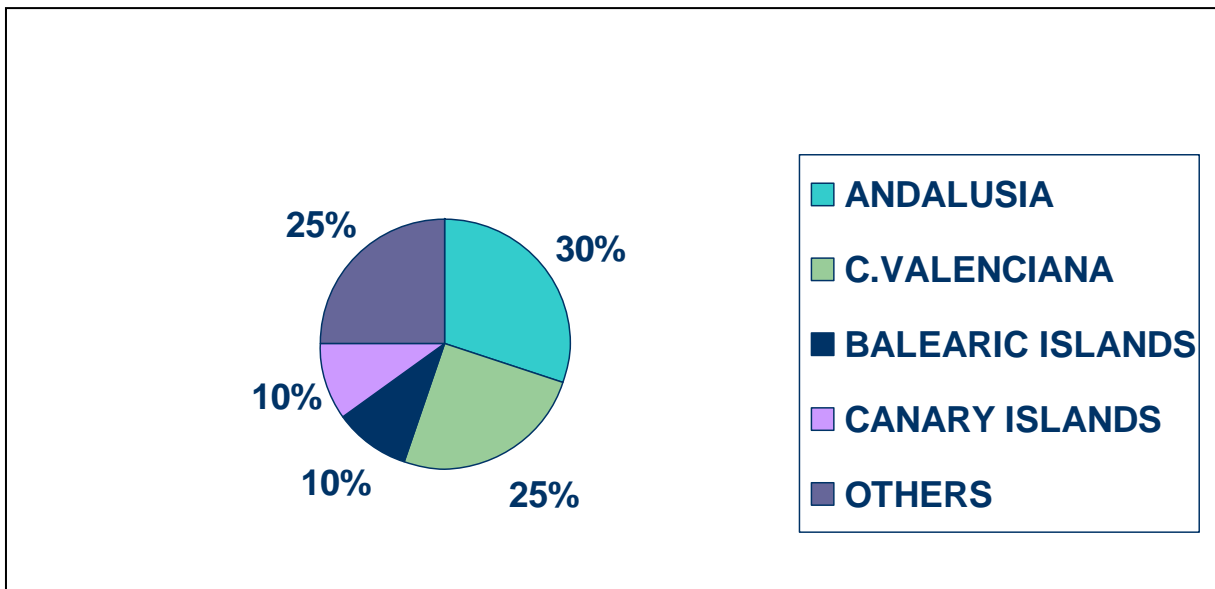


Figure 5: Doctoral Thesis on the Hospitality and Tourism Sector (Organization & Management).
Breakdown by Autonomous Communities.

Source: Own elaboration based on TESEO database. 1999/2000-2008/09 (till July 31st).

And finally, in Figure 6 I present the results concerning the different fields of knowledge involved in the 20 thesis focusing on organization and management. As can be seen, marketing is overwhelmingly, once again, the dominant area. Notice in this regard that, together with market research, both disciplines account for half of these studies. A particularly striking fact here is the lack of studies developed in other areas of great importance, such as human resources or finance:

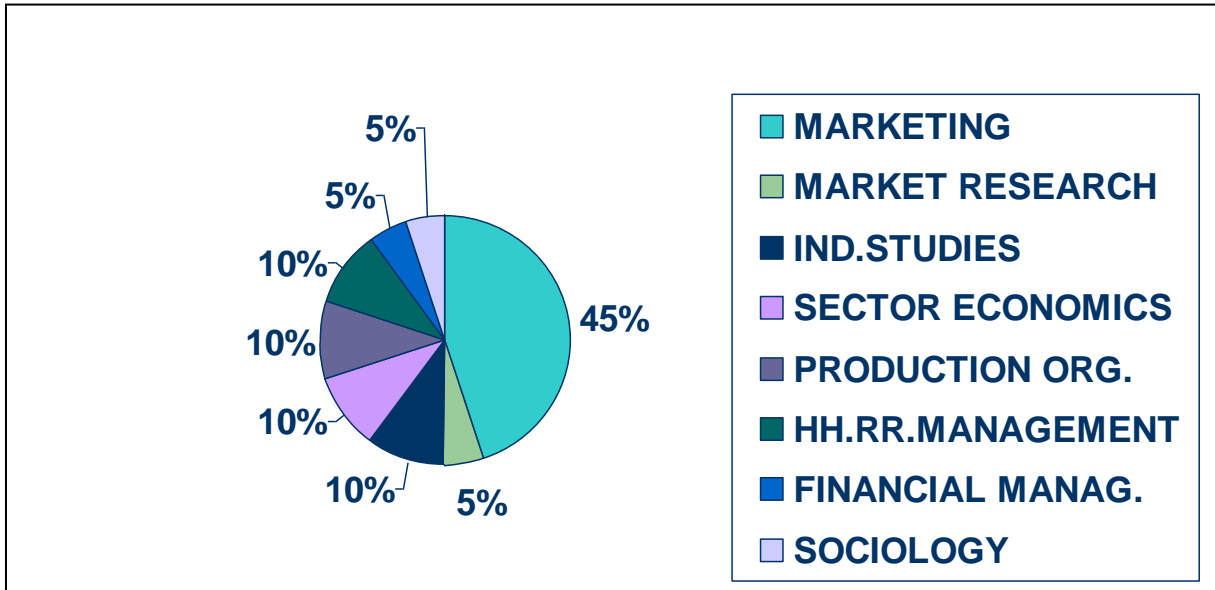


Figure 6: Doctoral Thesis on the Hospitality and Tourism Sector (Organization & Management). Breakdown by Broad Descriptors.
Source: Own elaboration based on TESEO database. 1999/2000-2008/09 (till July 31st).

3. PUBLICATIONS

This section analyses the different types of writing published in any of the sources included in the “ISI Web of Knowledge” database during the period of time comprised between 2005 and 2009, which fulfils the following two criteria: topic (Tourism) and author’s address (Spain). These search criteria have resulted in a total number of 354 documents which, according to the type of writing used in them, are to be classified as followed: 273 articles (77.1%), 60 meetings (17%), 16 reviews (4.5%) and 5 editorials (1.4%). As regards their temporal evolution (shown in Figure 7), there is a clear continuous increase from 2005 to 2008, which in 2009, however, has a slight fall:

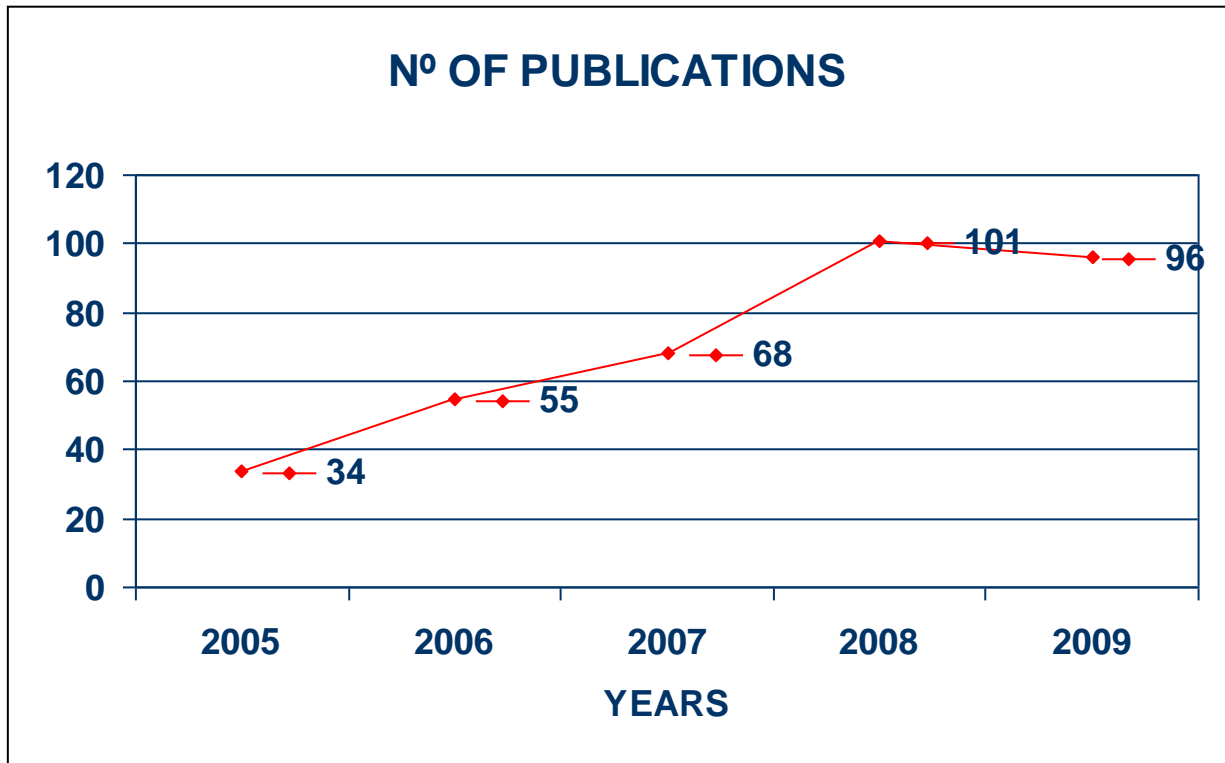


Figure 7: Evolution of the number of publications on tourism in Spain.
Source: ISI Web of Knowledge (2005-2009).

Taking into account their classification according to general categories, illustrated in Figure 8, it should be noticed, on the one hand, that most of these works have been approached from any of the Social Sciences (53%) or from any of the disciplines belonging to the general field of Science and Technology (44%); and on the other, that tourist studies ascribed to the general category of Arts and Humanities are extremely rare in Spain:

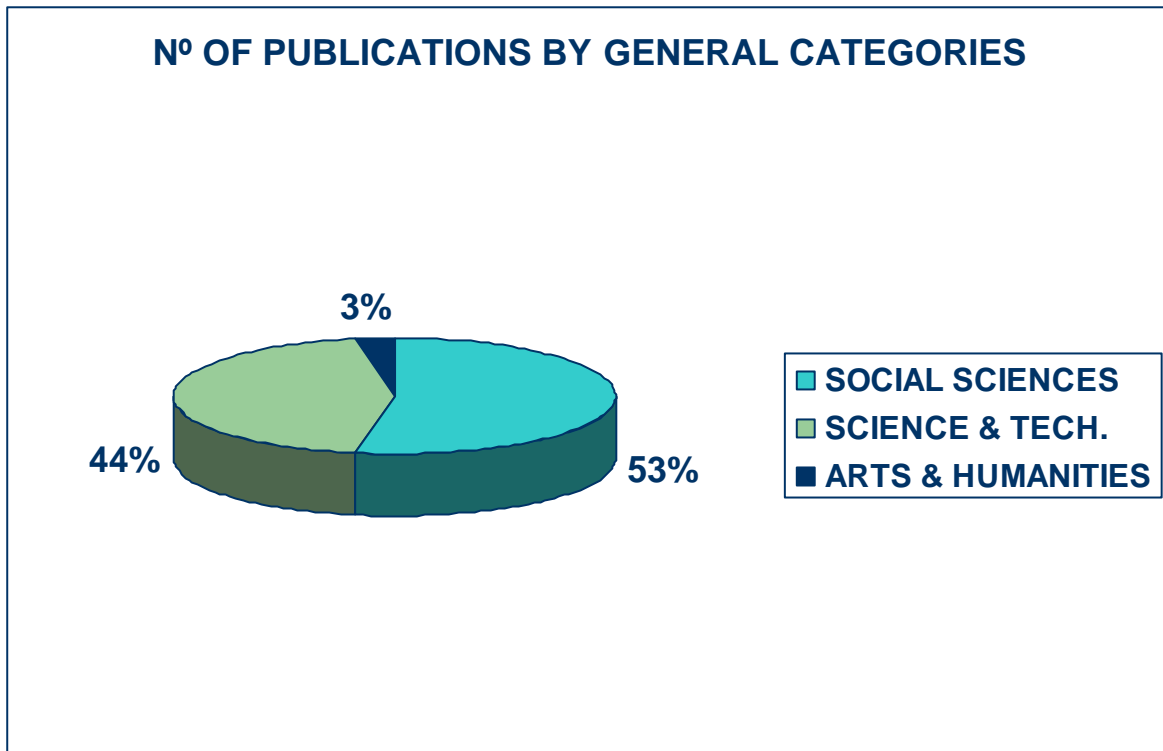


Figure 8: Breakdown of publications on tourism in Spain by general categories.
Source: ISI Web of Knowledge (2005-2009).

In terms of the subject areas dealt with in them, there are four specific ones that account for three quarters of the publications under study; namely, as can be seen in Table 4, Business & Economics, Environmental Sciences & Ecology, Social Sciences (other topics), and Geography:

SUBJECT AREAS	%
● BUSINESS & ECONOMICS.....	24.0
● ENVIRONMENTAL SCIENCES & ECOLOGY.....	21.2
● SOCIAL SCIENCES - OTHER TOPICS.....	16.7
● GEOGRAPHY.....	13.2
● BIODIVERSITY & CONSERVATION.....	5.3
● COMPUTER SCIENCE.....	4.4
● MARINE & FRESHWATER BIOLOGY.....	4.2
● PSYCHOLOGY.....	4.0
● WATER RESOURCES.....	3.7
● ENGINEERING.....	3.3
Total	100.0

Table 4: Breakdown of publications on tourism in Spain by subjects areas.
Source: ISI Web of Knowledge (2005-2009).

As regards the sources of publication, there are four journals that stand out from the rest for being the most popular ones among Spanish scholars, having published, as such, the highest number of Spanish papers on Tourism: specifically *Tourism Management* (47 papers), *Boletín de la Asociación de Geógrafos Españoles* (26 papers), *Annals of Tourism Research* (22 papers), and *Tourism Economics* (20 papers). Among the journals with a minor number of Spanish publications, the following titles should be listed: *Scripta Nova-Revista Electrónica de Geografía y Ciencias Sociales*, *Ecological Economics*, *International Journal of Tourism Research*, *Environmental Management*, *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research*, and *Investigaciones Económicas*.

Concerning the language of these publications, it should be noticed that English is, by far, the language most commonly used in them (86% of the papers), followed, though quite in the distance, by Spanish (12%). Among the languages with very little presence, Portuguese and French should be taken into consideration.

In relation to the institutional affiliation of the top ten authors that have published during the temporal period under study, the following regional distribution arises: 4 authors from the University of the Balearic Islands, 2 authors from Andalusia (University of Granada), 2 scholars from Catalonia (1 from the University of Girona and another one from the Polytechnic University of Catalonia), 1 scholar from the Valencian Community (University of Alicante) and, finally, 1 author from the University of Navarra.

Narrowing the previous search to the subject areas of Business and Economics, the number of publications decreases to 130, whose distribution, according to the type of writing in them, is as follows: 115 articles (88.5%), 10 meetings (7.7%), 3 editorials (2.3%) and 2 reviews (1.5%). Curiously enough, however, their evolution in time is quite similar, as can be seen in Figure 9, as that of the wider search previously commented on; that is, a slight fall in 2009, after a continuous rise from 2005 to 2008:

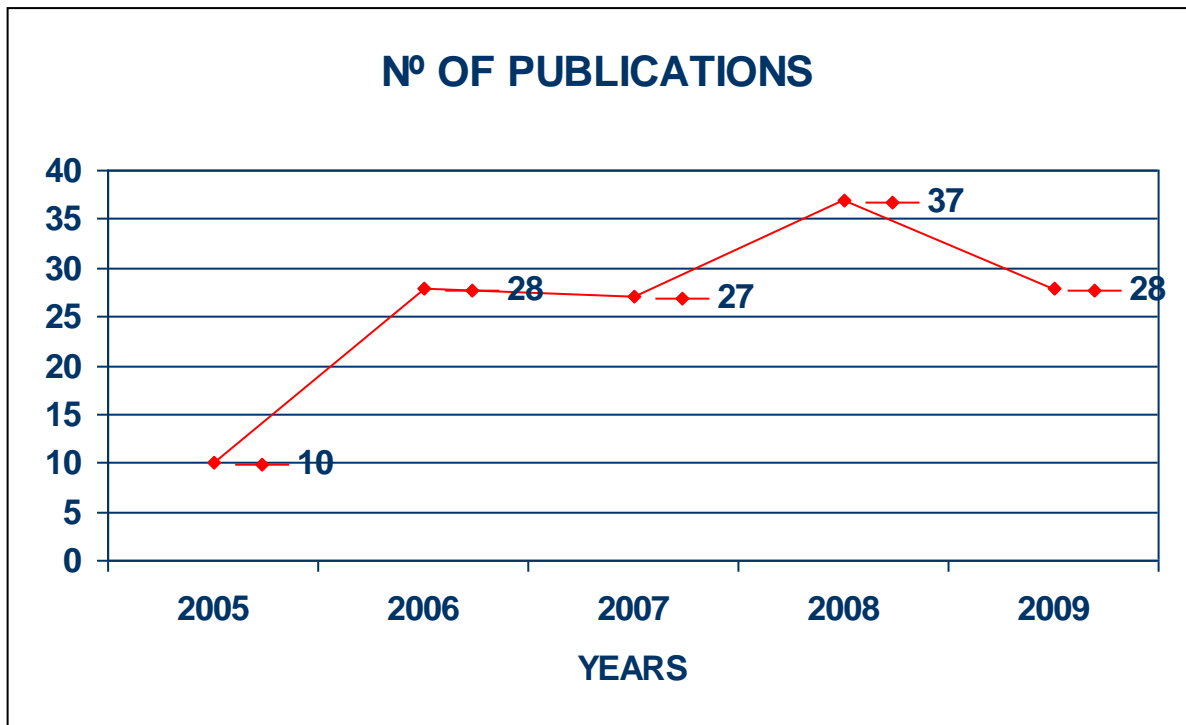


Figure 9: Evolution of the number of publications on tourism in Spain (business and economics).
Source: ISI Web of Knowledge (2005-2009).

Again here, the journals entitled *Tourism Management*, *Annals of Tourism Research* and *Tourism Economics* are those with the highest number of papers published. It should be noticed here, furthermore, that, according to Ballantyne et al. (2009), *Tourism Management* is, on the one hand, the journal with the highest proportion of applied and non-empirical articles, and *Annals of Tourism Research*, on the other, the journal with the highest proportion of articles with qualitative designs. Among the journals with a smaller number of publications, the following titles should be listed: *Ecological Economics*, *Investigaciones Económicas*, *Journal of Business Research*, *Service Industries Journal*, *Applied Economics*, *Defence and Peace Economics*, and *Environmental & Resource Economics*. As regards the language used in these publications, English far surpasses here, once again, any other language that could be used. Notice in this regard that 98.5% of the publications are written in English and the remaining 1.5% in Spanish.

And finally, in relation to the authors of these publications with a clear focus on Business and Economics, it should be taken into account that four of them come from the University of the Balearic Island and three of them from the University of Navarra.

4. JOURNALS

The following list presents all the Journals on Tourism edited in Spain:

- CUADERNOS DE TURISMO.
- ESTUDIOS TURÍSTICOS.
- PAPERS DE TURISME.
- PASOS, Revista de Turismo y Patrimonio Cultural.
- RESTMA, Revista de Economía, Sociedad, Turismo y Medioambiente.
- ANÁLISIS TURÍSTICO.
- REVISTA DE ESTUDIOS DE TURISMO DE CANARIAS Y MACARONESIA.
- ROTUR, Revista de Ocio y Turismo.
- TURYDES-Revista de Investigación en Turismo y Desarrollo Local.

Of all of them only three are well positioned (B) in the ERCE ranking for the Spanish journals belonging to the Humanities and the Social Sciences: CUADERNOS DE TURISMO, ESTUDIOS TURÍSTICOS and PAPERS DE TURISME. And, quite surprisingly since Spain is one of the major tourist detention in the world, there is no Spanish scientific journal with a clear international scope and dimension. With the intention to bridge this gap, the journal entitled *ENLIGHTENING TOURISM* has been launched. Intended to be a new path making journal, it will try to enlighten tourism development globally.

5. RESEARCH GROUPS, CENTRES AND NETWORKS

The following map presents a detailed list of the Spanish research groups and centres specialized on Tourism:

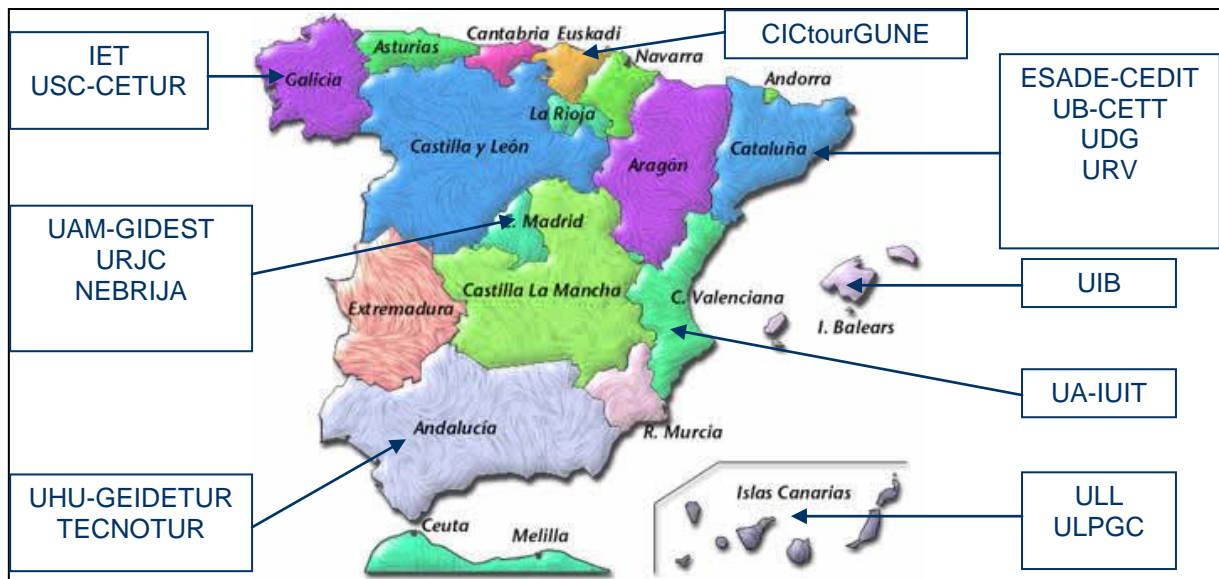


Figure 10: Location of research group and centres specialized on tourism.

As expected, most of them are hosted by universities located in regions with a long tourist tradition, especially both archipelagos and the Spanish south-east coastline.

Apart from the research groups and centres previously identified, there are three active networks working at the moment:

-The first one (RED-INTUR, <http://www.red-intur.org/>) was established in order to promote collaborative actions among master courses on Tourism. It is formed by the following universities: UA, UB, UDG, UDC, ULL, UMA, UNIOVI, USC, US, UNIZAR, UIB, URV, UV, UVIGO.

-The second one (REINTUR-HL, <http://reintur.blogspot.com/>), founded in 2009 and formed by the different Spanish and Portuguese universities (namely, UHU, US, UPO, UCA, UMA, UCO, UJAEN, UGR, UNEX, UVIGO, UALG, INUAF, UEVORA) focuses, in turn, on research projects.

-The third one, called IBERTUR (Ibero-American Network of Heritage, Tourism and Sustainable Development, <http://www.gestioncultural.org/gc/ibertur>) and coordinated by the Universities of Barcelona (Spain) and Buenos Aires (Argentina) and which, is devoted to heritage management. It is also open to professionals in this specific field.

6. CONCLUSIONS

As a result of the different analysis carried out in the previous sections, the following conclusions can be drawn:

- Research on Tourism still has a short academic tradition in Spain. Notice here that only after the insertion of tourism studies into the Spanish University System, in 1996, its scientific research began to raise.
- As a subject of research, tourism has been mainly tackled from economic and geographic approaches.
- Within the Economic subjects, Sector Economics & Organization and Management are the dominant ones.
- In the Organization and Management field, Marketing is the most predominant area.
- There is a direct and positive correlation between the regional development of tourism and its research in universities.
- Taking the ISI Web of Knowledge as source, it has been proven that tourism research in Spain mainly focuses on Business & Economics and Environmental Sciences & Ecology.
- Within the Business & Economics field, the journals entitled *Tourism Management*, *Annals of Tourism Research* & *Tourism Economics* are the most productive ones in papers on Tourism.
- There are very few well ranked Spanish journals, and almost all of them are national in their scope.
- Research networks are still at a very early stage of their development.
- There are some clear differences between the industry and the academy, summarized in Table 5:

	INDUSTRY	ACADEMY
CHARACTERISED BY	Intelligence/background	Developed research questions
USED FOR	Business decisions	Extending knowledge
TIME SPAN	Short-term	Medium/long-term
PRESENTATION	Short executive summary – highlights key points only	Long academic papers – referenced/refereed
NATURE OF RESEARCH	Mostly superficial – often drawn from commercial / unreferenced or unacknowledged sources (no form of methodology)	Detailed study. Formal methodology. Critical analysis.
OUTCOMES	Unsupported suppositions with writer's bias for predetermined outcomes. Internal use often commercial in confidence	Academic credibility – quantity of publications. Only valuable to researcher if published in journals.

Table 5: Differences between industry and academy.
Source: Jones & Phillips, 2003.

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