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Second homes vs. residential tourism: A research gap

Abstract

Residential tourism and second homes are two closely related phenomena that constitute a growing research field, but the different names given to the concepts by researchers have led to a fragmented and disconnected literature. These two categories are essentially the same – or share many elements – but the research seems to be disjointed, which, in our opinion, has created a gap in the existing literature on this subject. Specifically, the research on "residential tourism" has expanded to integrate not only second home ownership issues, but the rental of holiday homes to tourists. This commercial use of second homes has been only occasionally referred to by second home authors. Mainstream literature, mainly focused on North American-Canadian and Scandinavian destinations, uses the term "second homes". Conversely, researchers in Mediterranean countries – e.g. Spain or France – prefer the term "residential tourism". Both phenomena are also related with a third concept, to take into account in this context, the visiting friends and relatives tourism (VFR). This note advocates an unified approach to studying this kind of tourism that will extend knowledge in the field and optimise future research efforts.

Key words: residential tourism; second home tourism; research gap

Introduction

Residential tourism and second homes are two closely related phenomena that constitute a growing research field. The internationalisation of these types of tourism is giving rise to a proliferation of studies on their implantation and effects. However, both second homes and residential tourism are linked to issues such as demographics (migrations of people from their place of origin), tourism (second homes are mainly located in consolidated tourist resorts) and economic motivations (concerning the second home as an investment), which means that the phenomena can be studied from different perspectives. In addition, the different names given to the concepts by researchers have led to a fragmented and disconnected literature. These two categories are essentially the same - or share many elements– but the research seems to be disjointed, which, in our opinion, has created a gap in the existing literature on this subject.

So, unlike the literature on "second homes", the research on "residential tourism" has expanded to integrate not only second home ownership issues, but the rental of holiday homes to tourists (holiday *non-hotel-based* tourism) – *who have been* visiting the Southern European Mediterranean coasts en masse each season since the 1960s. This commercial use of second homes has been only occasionally referred to by second home authors – examining the phenomenon for the case of South Africa, Visser

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(2006) constitutes an exception as it considers the different types of use (commercial, investment and non-commercial), tourist accommodation (flats, apartments, villas), effects (economic and non-economic) and destinations (rural, coastal and peri-urban) that come under the term "second homes". The mass tourism in Mediterranean destinations based on non-hotel accommodation reflects the types of destination and differentiated cases found in northern Europe or North America. Therefore, environmental issues, such as refuse collection, planning needs, the use of water resources, massification problems, etc. have been studied under the heading of residential tourism since the 1970s, in addition to issues relating to tenants and not just property owners. This valuable contribution is lost in the international literature. This research note advocates a comprehensive and unified approach to studying this kind of tourism that will extend knowledge in the field and optimize future research efforts; especially if we consider that the generalization of the collaborative economy has given rise to a globalizing trend in the commercial use of second homes throughout the world.

Second homes and residential tourism concept and uses

First, according to Hall (2014), the mainstream literature, mainly focused on North American-Canadian and Scandinavian destinations, uses the term "second homes". Both traditions analyse spatial and human aspects of second homes, such as geographic distribution (Pitkänen, 2008), mobility (Haldrup, 2004), transnational tourism (Hannonen, Tuulentie & Pitkänen, 2015), social interactions between second home owners and local residents (Girart & Gartner, 1993; Overvag & Berg, 2011) and the economic and environmental impacts of this phenomenon (Marjavaara & Müller, 2007; Hiltunen, 2007), by focusing on local case studies.

In addition to these localized studies, there is a vast body of international literature on this topic. This international tradition dates back to the books by Coppock (1977) and Hall and Müller (2004). Most authors prefer the term "second homes", and only a minority refers to this topic as "residential tourism". As in the previous cases, a wide range of topics for several countries are covered, the most important being environmental aspects (Long & Hoogendoorn, 2013), the economic impact (Gascón, 2015; Mottiar, 2006), the interactions between owners and residents (Barnett, 2014) and their governance (Hall, 2015).

On the other hand, there is a research cluster in Mediterranean countries - such as Spain, France, Italy, etc. - with some extensions to South American destinations. Based on the pioneering works of Gaviria (1976) and Jurdao (1990), this literature on Mediterranean destinations analyses the demographic aspects relative to foreign residents, owners and tenants, on the Spanish coasts - mainly retirees from Northern Europe - and the impact of this type of tourism on rural or small fishing villages. However, unlike the international literature, many authors focusing on Mediterranean destinations use the term "residential tourism".

The issues studied are basically the motivations of residential tourists or semi-residents (Gaviria, 1976; Casado, Kaiser & Warnes, 2004), and their economic (Perles, Ramón, Sevilla & Moreno, 2016), social (Mazón, 2006; Mantecón, 2010) and environmental (Vera, 1990) impact on the destinations. International publications can be found that deviate from the mainstream as they use the term "residential tourism" (Rodríguez, 2001; Sastre, 2002; Morote, Saurí & Hernández, 2016; Marcelpoil, & François, 2009; Volo & Giambalvo, 2008, among others). However, the emphasis that the literature on residential tourism places on the impact that the commercial use of second homes has on destinations, together with the emergence of the sharing economy that will increase this kind of commercialization, will enhance the relevance of this literature.

Visiting friends and relatives as a related concept

A third phenomenon to take into account in this context, which has its own name but which is also related to both residential tourism and the second home concept is visiting friends and relatives tourism (VFR). The pioneer study by Jackson (1990) brought attention to this type of tourism which the official statistics had been underestimating. However, over time, it has become clear that visiting friends and relatives is a relevant motivation for many tourists and constitutes a significant part of the tourism market.

Although the main reason for tourists travelling to a destination may be to visit friends and relatives, this does not mean that they necessarily stay in the home of their friends and relatives; similarly, the fact that travelers stay with friends and relatives does not imply that the main purpose of their trip is to visit their hosts (Backer, 2010). Therefore, it can be observed that the type of accommodation commonly used by many of these visitors is a second home, either that of their host family or friends or rented through other means due to the longer length of stay that this type of tourism implies (Yuan, Fridgem, Hsieh & O'Leary, 1995; Moscardo, Pearce, Morrison & O'Leary, 2000). In addition to the increased interest in this type of tourism, it can be understood that the use of a different term for the phenomenon – without going into the justifications for it – has also contributed to the fragmentation of the literature on these concepts.

Conclusions

Therefore, to gain a better understanding of all the implications of this phenomenon on an international level, the fragmentation of the existing literature must be reduced. First, it would be advisable to use the same term for a phenomenon that is essentially the same, or at least the two names should be treated as synonymous. Currently, to obtain a complete perspective of the phenomenon and its scope it is necessary to use both terms in the bibliographic engines. It would be useful to improve the research beyond the myriad of case studies that present difficulties in the generalization of the results. Finally, coordinating international research in a way so as to avoid the aforementioned clusters, and promoting the diffusion of results is also recommended. This will enable the existing literature to be integrated into a single corpus so that we may learn from the pioneering experiences in this field and draw important lessons to apply to today's framework of a gradually increasing globalization of this important phenomenon.

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